



Example Personal Development Plan – Autism at Work Programme

When hiring autistic talent into your organisation it is important that from day 1 of their employment you have a structured plan for their growth journey. A good personal development plan for autistic employees should be jargon free and have direct questions which avoid terms that might be confusing to a person on the autistic spectrum. Factor in that autistic people think and interpret language in a literal manner. A good personal development plan for your autistic employees should be unique to their needs and requirements in the workplace. The personal development plan must also be linked to their performance management appraisals and these assessments must be reviewed and updated as regularly as possible. Too often organisations make the erroneous assumption that an autistic employee's reasonable adjustments are unlikely to change once they have been implemented. Often, as with neurotypical employees these adjustments will change over the course of their employment for a varying number of reasons. Perhaps stress might see an autistic employee have issues with fluorescent lighting when previously this wasn't a reasonable adjustment they required. Perhaps they have moved to another part of the office and this change hasn't been managed well and this has affected the quality of their work but reasonable adjustments haven't been factored in here. Additionally, a good personal development plan should allow autistic employees to answer honestly and truthfully how they feel the employer is supporting them in the workplace. Take on board the feedback you are given from your autistic employees. Remember, years 1-3 of your autism at work programme are part of your learning and development phase and this is the key period to listen and improve upon what autistic employees are saying about working for your organisation. See example table below:

Digital Analyst Example Plan

What do they want from a career with Advance: The Disability Consultants?	What skills do they need to get to the next stage of their career?	What challenges might they experience?	How are they currently performing in the workplace?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factor in that it is possible that the autistic employee might not have defined what a career plan might look like at this time. • Consider with the personal development plan, has you're organisation implemented all the reasonable adjustments that the autistic employee requested. • Are these reasonable adjustments being reviewed regularly? Are they up to date? Are they in line with the autistic employee's current needs? • Have you thought about what skills and knowledge they will need to get to the next stage of their career within your organisation? What does the next role up from theirs look like? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about the autistic employee's current skill set. Where is there a current skills shortfall? What support do you need to give them to get to the next stage of their career with your organisation? • Have they got a workplace buddy or mentor that helps support and advise them in your organisation? If they are going to be successful in your organisation the chances are they going to need a structured support plan tailored to their needs. • Factor in that short term they may just be relieved to be in employment, perhaps they were long-term unemployed or have just left university. • Explore their career options with them but don't force them to come up with a career plan until it is something they want to commit to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an organisation your autistic employees line manager and workplace buddies should be working with them to factor in what challenges they might have to be successful in your organisation. • Are there other employees who struggle to accept their differences? If this is the case has your team had autism beliefs, values, and attitudes training? Has the other employee being spoken to about this matter? Are they aware that the colleague they have an issue with is autistic? • Are the reasonable adjustments they need consistent and being constantly reviewed at performance appraisals? • Is their work quality in line with your organisations expectations? If not are their line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When reflecting on an autistic employee's personal development. Always stress the positives first. • Factor in have performance meetings been regular, consistent, and well structured. Informal catchups are not helpful for autistic employees who thrive of certainty, structure, and routine in the workplace. • Have reasonable adjustments being constantly reviewed and updated accordingly. It is no good having reasonable adjustments that are out of date and no longer relevant to the autistic employee. • Have they got a workplace buddy? This is very important for the development in your organisation?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factor in that autistic people struggle with hypothetical questions. So, consider what language you use when implementing a personal development plan for them. • Perhaps they aren't sure what a career with your organisation looks like. As an organisation your line managers should be sitting down with your autistic employees to understand their motivations for coming to work and their strengths and weaknesses in the workplace. 	<p>manager and workplace buddy helping facilitate with improvements in work quality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they enjoying their job? Do they see a career future with your organisation? This is very important to know because if they aren't this could be a considerable blocker to them progressing in your organisation. • Are they coping with the pressure and high workloads in their current role? If not you might want to consider working with them to make their workload more manageable before looking at career progression. • Is change for an autistic employee being appropriately managed? Workplace change can be hugely stressful for an autistic employee and impinge upon the quality of their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When stressing areas of improvement emphasis, the importance of learning opportunities and try to avoid focusing the areas of improvement in a negative manner. • Explain that everyone makes mistakes and that it is an expected part of the job. • Develop rules to follow in the future to prevent similar mistakes from occurring. • Don't skip feedback sessions even if the feedback is positive. There are always opportunities to improve and a good line manager will ensure that these sessions will happen regardless.
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