

Job seeking toolkit

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Finding the right job for me

The [National Careers Service](#) website provides useful information about thousands of jobs. It is worth taking a look if you are not sure about the type of work you would like to do. It tells you about the qualifications needed for each job and the type of work involved. You can [explore careers](#) on their website.

The [National Autistic Society](#) has developed some online support for job seekers. The free [online module](#) focuses on the steps involved in applying for work, interview tips and starting a role. This is set out in an easy to follow format and is suitable for neurodiverse jobseekers and those with learning disabilities. There is a free online module covering the topics.

Barclays have some free employability and financial education programmes to help individuals develop their skills. [Barclays life skills](#) contains articles and online learning to help prepare you for work.

The Skills and Employment service at Cheshire West and Chester Council have a variety of tools to support jobseekers. Documents can be found on the [Resources page](#) under the heading Information Advice and Guidance for Learners and Programme Participants.

Job seeking

You can find jobs using any of the following:

- Internet jobs boards, such as

findajob.dwp.gov.uk

www.monster.co.uk

www.totaljobs.com

www.fish4.co.uk

www.candwoopportunities.co.uk

www.indeed.co.uk

www.reed.co.uk

- advertising on employer websites
- social media
- Jobcentre Plus
- Through your network of friends and family
- advertising in business windows



How to access computers and the internet

Local library	<u>libraries</u> have public computers (subject to availability) The service is free for one hour per day for library members
Jobcentre Plus	visit your local job centre to request use of a computer

CVs and cover letters

Your employment support officer will help you create an up-to-date CV and cover letter.

What is a CV?

CV stands for curriculum vitae. These are Latin words.

A CV is a document that employers will look at to see if you are the right person for the job.

What do you put in a CV?

A CV will be full of information about you that relates to the job you are applying for. It should contain information like:

- your name
- contact information like a phone number and email, but NOT your full address
- jobs you have had previously and the dates you did those jobs
- your education, training and skills
- work experience placements
- life experiences that are relevant to the role

Barclays Lifeskills has a section about how you can tailor your CV to the job that you are applying for.

Cover letter guidance

Your cover letter should be structured in the following way:

Paragraph 1

- State the job you're applying for
- Say where you found out about it (for example, "I saw this job advertised in The Guardian newspaper"). Organisations like to know which of their advertising sources are being successful
- When you are available to start work (and end if it's a placement)



Paragraph 2

- Why you're interested in the type of work
- Why the company attracts you (for example, if it's a small company say you prefer to work for a small friendly organisation)

Paragraph 3

- Summarise your strengths and how they might be an advantage to the organisation
- Relate your skills to the competencies required for the job

Paragraph 4

- Mention any dates that you won't be available for interview. Try and keep these to a minimum
- Thank the employer and say you look forward to hearing from them soon.

Final line

- If you started your letter with a name (for example "Dear Mr Bloggs") you should end with "Yours sincerely"
- If you started with "Dear Sir or Madam" you should end with "Yours faithfully"

Applications

Some employers prefer you to fill in an application form rather than send a CV. It is important to follow the application instructions, present the information in an organised way and draw attention to your most relevant skills.

Many jobs ask you to apply online. If they do, read the instructions on the screen and follow them very carefully. Take it step by step.

If you're filling in a paper form by hand, write as neatly as you can in black ink. Use block capital letters if the form asks you to. Take care of the form – don't spill anything on it or leave it in your bag to get creased.

Additional Information

Some job applications ask you for 'additional information' or 'personal statement'. This is an opportunity to really impress a future employer and you should spend some time planning your answer.

The application form might ask for this as an instruction or a question. For example 'please use this section to explain why you feel you are suited to this job and what you can bring to it' or 'please include further information relevant to the person specification, please write about relevant skills, knowledge and experience you have'.

The employer will see your qualifications and work experience in the previous sections on the form. The purpose of this section is for you to show you're motivated to do the job and that you have carefully considered why you feel you would be good at it. It's really important that you give examples because they provide evidence that you've got a skill and know how to apply it in real situations.

When it comes to structuring your answer, it should broadly cover three key sections:

- **Introduction:** Who you are and your professional background.

Example: 'I am an experienced retail assistant with good customer service skills. I have worked in a variety of shops for the last four years, including clothes shops and a supermarket.'

- **Main body:** Your key skills, experience, and achievements.

Examples: 'I am a great communicator and ensure that customers have a good experience when I talk to them. For example, recently I...'

'Organisation is really important in my current role; I carefully plan my tasks and prioritise to make the best use of time. For example, I recently...'

'Providing good customer service means that customers will use the shop again. I always listen carefully to what the customer needs and make sure they are happy with the help I am giving them. For example, I recently...'

- **Conclusion:** Your career goals and why you want the role you're applying for.

Examples: 'I am keen to progress my career in the retail sector. I enjoy working with customers and as part of a team. The advertised job will provide me with an opportunity to...'

'I would value the opportunity to be part of your team because my career goal is...'

'Working for [employer name] appeals to me because...'



Preparing for interviews

The secret to a successful interview is preparation. It's worth spending time thinking about the type of questions you might be asked and how you will answer these. If you stick to these guidelines, you'll have no problem handling the questions in your next job interview.

Before the interview

- Research the organisation, check their website and look at industry news on the internet
- Prepare answers to standard interview questions and practise them with someone you trust
- If possible find out the name of the person or people interviewing you and their role
- Check the format of the interview. For example, will it involve tests or a presentation?
- Always dress appropriately for the interview and prepare an interview outfit in advance. Make sure both you and your clothes are clean and look smart.
- Print out spare copies of your CV to take with you
- Re-read your CV and the job description prior to the interview
- Plan the journey to the interview; consider doing a practice run to check timings
- Check the news and traffic reports to make sure there are no delays
- Take a contact number for the company in case there are any problems on the way

At the interview

Interview styles can vary. Whatever the situation, remember to

- Switch off your phone
- Take off any heavy coats
- Smile and keep your body language positive
- Be friendly and courteous to everyone - you never know who might have a say in your appointment

When answering interview questions, focus on their key words and link this to relevant experience on your CV. If there is more than one person interviewing you, make sure you talk to everyone rather than to one person. Always let the interviewer finish before giving your response.



- If you didn't hear the question, ask for it to be repeated
- If you didn't understand the question, ask if it can be re-phrased
- Think about your answer before you speak
- Speak clearly and don't rush your answer
- Make the most of your research about the organisation and industry and quote it where appropriate

Never mention the salary unless prompted. If it is discussed, do not agree on specifics without time to think.

At the end of the interview, be ready with a few questions for the interviewer. This shows you're interested. For example, who would you report to? Why is the job vacant? What are the promotion prospects? Always ask when you can expect to hear back.

After the interview

It's always good to review your performance, learn from the experience and prepare for the next step.

Try to remember the interview questions you were asked and how you answered them to see if you could improve in future.

If you are unsuccessful in getting the job, contact the interviewer and ask for feedback. Use their comments constructively to improve your technique at your next interview.

The Skills and Employment Service has some tips about [body language](#) and Barclays LifeSkills has more information about how to [prepare for your next interview](#).

Disclosure

You do not have to tell your employer you are autistic and/or have a learning disability during recruitment or when you are in work. However, the National Autistic Society advise that there are some benefits to disclosing this at work including:

- identifying reasonable adjustments that could help you in the workplace
- providing you with protection from disability discrimination

Don't assume the employer will understand your disability without further information from you. Be prepared to describe your disability simply and briefly, avoiding jargon. Share information that is relevant.

Autistic people report that the potential benefits of disclosure include:

- increased understanding and acceptance from colleagues
- increasing the understanding of autism in the workplace
- reducing the pressure to mask your autistic characteristics
- helping to protect your mental health and wellbeing
- helping you to manage and sustain employment
- the opportunity to show that being autistic is an advantage in the job
- openness that autism is an integral part of your identity
- connecting with others in the workplace who are also autistic
- making other autistic colleagues feel more comfortable to disclose
- helping you to assess whether a job or workplace is suitable for you, and to filter out any employers that will not be accepting of your autistic identity
- helping your employer to understand you so they can support you better

The National Autistic Society offers [helpful guidance](#) about sharing information with your employer if you are autistic, including how and when you might choose to do so.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments refer to changes or modifications made to support neurodivergent individuals to enable them to thrive both throughout the recruitment process and within the workplace.

Some examples include:

- Clear and precise communication, with instructions broken down into manageable steps
- Use of explicit language and avoidance of jokes, sarcasm, or ambiguous phrasing that may cause confusion
- Provision of step-by-step processes, checklists or workplans that are easy to follow and understand
- Additional time allowed for processing information before responding to requests or tasks
- Access to a work buddy or colleague who can clarify instructions or provide support when needed
- Communication delivered in the preferred format of the individual (e.g. email, written notes, verbal)
- Avoidance of direct offers of additional shifts, as this may lead to difficulty declining and risk of burnout



- A desk or workspace located in a quiet area with minimal distractions, and flexibility to change position as needed
- Permission to use noise-cancelling headphones to reduce auditory distractions and support concentration
- Advance notice of any changes to routines, tasks, or environments to allow time for planning and preparation
- Encouragement for colleagues to avoid interrupting when the individual is focused on a task

There is information online about [reasonable adjustments](#) to support you in the workplace, including a [reasonable adjustment checklist](#).

Preparing for and starting work

Job offer

When you're offered a job, the employer will usually send you a conditional offer by letter or email. This means they would like to give you the job, but first need to check some details—usually by asking for references.

A reference tells the employer about your skills, reliability and how you work with others. References can be from:

- A previous employer or manager
- A colleague or someone you've worked with in a voluntary role
- Someone from an educational setting

Note: Family members cannot be used as references.

The employer will ask you to provide contact details for your references. Once they've received and checked them, you may receive a formal job offer.

A formal offer confirms that the employer is officially offering you the job. If you want to accept it, you need to respond to confirm you accept the offer and agree on a start date with the employer.

Starting work

You will need to make sure you are fully prepared before your first day in a new job.

- Make sure you know how to get to work. If you need to use a bus or train to get to work, try to do a practice journey before you start
- Make sure you know the address of your new workplace; have the company phone number with you in case of any issues. When you arrive on your first day, make sure you know the name of the person you need to ask for





- Use an alarm to wake you up and ensure you get to work on time. Make sure you plan enough time to travel to work and try to check the traffic or public transport times before you leave
- You will need to ask about work breaks, what time do you take a lunch break? Is there a rota?

Induction

A workplace induction is the process of helping you settle into your new job. It's a way for your employer to welcome you, explain how things work and make sure you have the support you need to get started.

During your induction you might:

- meet your manager and team
- learn about your job role and responsibilities
- be shown around the workplace
- get information about health and safety
- learn how to use equipment or systems
- be told about breaks, working hours, and workplace rules
- ask questions and talk about any support or adjustments you might need

Induction helps you:

- feel more confident and prepared
- understand what's expected of you
- know who to go to for help
- settle in more quickly and comfortably

Probation Period

A probation period is a trial phase at the start of employment where both the employer and employee can assess if the role and company are a good fit. During this time, the employer evaluates the new employee's performance, skills, and fit for the role, while the employee decides if they want to continue in the position. The terms of this period are set out in the individual's contract and usually last between three and six months, during this time you will be asked to attend probation review meetings with your manager. At the end of your probation period your employment is either confirmed, extended, or ended.

Training and line manager support

You will be trained to do the job you have been hired for. You may be asked to do some "work shadowing". This is when you watch another member of the team completing the



tasks you need to learn, to help you understand how to do it. You might like to take notes during this training to help you remember the tasks when you are doing the job independently.

Most workplaces arrange for you to meet with your line manager regularly to review your work, and discuss what is going well and what you might need help with. If you need any reasonable adjustments in this process, tell your manager as soon as possible. These meetings focus on developing your skills and will include things like setting goals for your work or making sure you are looking after yourself.

Expectations of the workplace

Personal presentation

Whatever the dress code of your workplace, it's important that you look neat and smart. It doesn't matter if you have a uniform or if you are allowed to wear casual clothes. Your clothes should be clean, ironed and fit properly.

Personal hygiene is about keeping your body and clothes clean. If you cycle or walk to work, you may need to make sure you use deodorant. Whatever your daily routine, it is important that you look and smell clean.

Work clothing

Wear suitable clothing for work, Your employer will explain what you need to wear but some of the standard rules include:

- Choose clothing that is safe and suitable for your role (e.g. closed-toe shoes)
- Avoid clothing with offensive language, images, or slogans
- Ensure clothing is not overly revealing or unsuitable for a professional environment
- Follow any specific dress code requirements for your role or workplace such as uniform, smart-casual, or personal protective equipment

Conduct

Whilst at work, remember:

- Make sure you know and follow the policies and procedures of the workplace at all times
- Do your best to arrive at work on time. Inform your manager as soon as possible if you are running late
- Try to always look alert and pay attention when you are at work

- Once you have completed your allocated tasks, identify other tasks that need to be done or speak to your manager or work buddy to ask them what you should do next
- Don't use swear words at work. You risk looking unprofessional and can upset other people
- It is not appropriate to talk about how much you get paid. This should just be between you and your manager
- Depending on your job, you might or might not be able to use your phone at work. If you are allowed your phone, you should not spend a lot of time on it. If you want to call or text someone, it is a good idea to wait until your break or lunch hour.
- Keep social media appropriate. If you are "friends" with colleagues online, remember nothing you post is private. Never complain about your manager, organisation or colleagues on social media.
- Be friendly and positive towards customers and team members, while keeping focused on your own tasks
- Avoid discussions about personal topics such as race, culture, religion, or other sensitive subjects, as these can affect people differently and may cause discomfort
- Maintain appropriate boundaries, such as respecting personal space, avoiding probing questions, and not sharing personal contact details without permission

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There is a lot of important advice in this toolkit but we don't expect you to remember every detail in one go. It is all written down so you can look at each section as you need it and refresh your memory while you're getting ready for work. Please keep it somewhere handy so you can refer to it regularly.