

# Chapter 4

## Helping People with Employment Issues



Sharing Knowledge  
Working Together  
Improving Lives



[www.haloabletec.co.uk](http://www.haloabletec.co.uk)

Tel: 07749 982114

[iggy@haloabletec.co.uk](mailto:iggy@haloabletec.co.uk)

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## **Me, Work? But I'm disabled!**

Work can be defined a number of different ways. It does not have to be 9 to 5, five days a week. It does not even have to be a paid job. It could be voluntary or helping someone in the community. It is great to get out and mix with people. You may even be able to work from home. And no, you won't lose all your benefits. Why not try giving it a go?

Have a look at how it will affect your benefits:

<https://www.gov.uk/moving-from-benefits-to-work>

If you like the idea of giving working a go, to see if you can or are still capable of working, there is a scheme to help you do some paid work, whilst on benefits. This is called Permitted Working.

Under the Permitted Work rules for ESA you can:

- earn up to £20 a week
- work for less than 16 hours a week and earn up to £115.50 a week, for 52 weeks or less (or for any length of time if you're in the [support group](#))

You can also do 'supported permitted work' and earn up to £115.50 a week. This must be part of a treatment programme, or supervised by someone from a local council or voluntary organisation whose job it is to arrange work for disabled people.

You must tell the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if you start doing permitted or supported permitted work. They'll send you form PW1 to fill in and send back to them.

Remember to notify your benefits office before you start to have this approved.

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/eligibility>

## **Support whilst at Work**

If you need a carer or assistive technology to help you work, you may be able to get support and the assistance paid for you via the Access to Work Scheme. This can include travel to and from your work place. If you have a carer, he/she could go with you and you could claim the hours that he cares for you from the scheme.

Alternatively, you could use your Personal Budget/Direct Payment towards this.

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

## **If you feel under skilled**

Again, there is support via the governments Work Choice Scheme. The DWP also have specialist trained Disability Advisors to help support you through the employment process.

<https://www.gov.uk/work-choice>

## **Will they consider me if I'm disabled?**

The law under the Equality Act states that an employer must not discriminate against you if you are disabled. If you are suitable for the job, they must make reasonable adjustments in the work place to accommodate your needs. They can even get funding to help them buy any equipment or support needed (see section support whilst at work above). They must not ask you about your disability or sickness. However, you may wish to tell them what adjustments they may need to make.

## **Two Ticks Scheme**

Some employers are very positive about employing disabled people. They will sometimes advertise showing a symbol of two ticks.



<https://www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-youre-disabled/looking-for-a-job>

## **Before you start....**

Think of the skills and qualifications you have; the things that you have done; the experiences you have had in life. Often people underestimate their talents and do not appreciate the full range of skills they have. Say you help out at the local bowls club, and you are the chair of the club, you can say that you have managed a group and organised the year's activities. You may have taken meetings and insured that information is passed around. These are all management skills that you may have without even realising it. You need to put all these together to show prospective employers what you have done in life. The idea is to develop a Curriculum Vitae (CV) listing all these things.

## **Exercise 11**

Have a look at the topic areas listed below. See what you can fill in. Remember to think broadly.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Telephone:**

**Date of Birth:**

## **EDUCATION**

**Dates**

**Name/Address of School**

**Dates**

**Name/Address of Further Education**

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

**Dates**

**Type of exam/qualification**

**Grade/Pass**

## **PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

**Date**

**Type of exam/qualification**

**Grade/Pass**

You only have to do this once. When it is completed, you can use it to apply for jobs. Even if some employers have their own application forms, you can use the information within your CV to act as a reminder which can help you fill in the application form.

The CV will give you an idea of your strengths and perhaps help you decide what type of job you would like or would be good at.

## **Finding a Job**

Once you have decided, the next step will be actually finding a job. Even if you have not got experience, try volunteering or supporting a local group. It will get you out. You will meet people and gain valuable work experience. Other avenues you could try are the job centre, local newspapers, or even online.

If you are thinking of volunteering, you might wish to contact the Lincolnshire Community Volunteering Service:

<http://www.lincolnshirecvcs.org.uk/>

Or the National Health Service:

<https://www.ulh.nhs.uk/jobs/volunteering/>

Or even a local charity that you're interested in.

## **Applying for the job**

Most jobs will require you to fill in application form. You have already prepared your CV, so you can use this to fill in the main bits of information required. Don't forget to send it back. There is usually a space for a blurb. This is your opportunity to sell yourself. Talk about your experiences and what you have to offer.

You may already have an idea of where you would like to work but may not know if they have any jobs. In this case, write them a letter asking if they have any positions available. Give a short description of yourself and tell them why you think you would be a good employee. Attach your CV and see what happens. Don't get disheartened if you don't hear anything immediately; keep trying, it is early days.

## **Exercise 12**

See the draft letter below, which you can use as a template. Fill in the gaps, so you have an idea what you might want to write.

[Your Name]  
[Address]  
[Address]  
[Address]  
[Post Code]  
[Tel No]  
[Email]

[Name of Person/ Company/Employer]  
[Their Address]  
[Their Address]  
[Their Address]  
[Their postcode]

[Date]

Dear Sir or Madam,

Subject - e.g. Position of Shop Assistant

I am writing to see if you have any positions available within your company for the above mentioned position.

[I... Explain why you want the job, and any experience that you have briefly, and what skills you can offer, e.g. excellent customer service skills,

]

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future. I have enclosed my Curriculum Vitae for your perusal.

Yours faithfully

Your signature

Your Name

Enc.

**Quote: Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.**

## **Preparing for the Interview**

Hopefully it won't be too long before you have an interview. Once you have been invited for interview, let the organisation know if you have any disability related issues for which they need to make adjustments. For example, an interpreter for BSL, or a wheelchair accessible room, or the use of a computer with any special software for any tests they may ask you to take. As mentioned above, these are 'reasonable adjustments' the employer must make for you and is prescribed by law under the Equality Act.

It is time to prepare yourself for the interview. Give yourself a week or so. Firstly, try to find out as much as possible about the organisation you want to work for. Find out about their ethos, their current plans, how the business or voluntary organisation is doing. Check with people you know, who may already work there, or friends of friends. Check the internet, local newspapers etc.

It is important that you look smart on the day. If you know what the company ethos is, this will give you a head start. If you are on benefits and you need to smarten yourself up for the interview, did you know you can (in some instances) claim money back, including travel costs? Contact your local Job Centre for more information.

Before the interview, it might be helpful to go and have a look at where the premises are. Check transport, routes, times, accessible car parking etc. This will help you plan the time it will take for you to get there on the day.

## **The Interview**

On the day of the interview, remember to be a little early, so you have plenty of time.

Once there, make yourself comfortable. If you feel nervous, try to relax. Take a few deep calming breaths. The interviewers are only people and want to get the best out of you.

Try to smile and look at the interviewer(s).

TIP: If you feel intimidated by looking at people, look over the shoulder of the person asking the question and look at their ear. This often gives the impression that you are looking straight at the person.

Obviously, they will ask you some questions. The good news is that the majority of questions are standard and you can prepare for them beforehand.

## **Exercise 13**

Look at the interview questions below.

Practise how you would answer these a few times, with a friend or supporter. Make some notes with each one and, if necessary, take them in to the interview with you as a pointer (it is allowed!).

Practise interview questions:

**1. 'So, tell me a little about yourself?'**

They don't want your life story, just some brief pointers.

Education:

Work Experience:

Type of person you are:

Things you enjoy:

**2. 'Why are you looking (or why did you leave you last job)?'**

Don't mention money! Mention that you want to stretch yourself, learn something new, or give back to society.

**3. 'Tell me what you know about this company?'**

It helps if you have done your homework.

**4. 'Why do you want to work at X Company?'**

As above, preparation is the key. Do your homework.

**5. 'What relevant experience do you have?'**

Talk about any related work or experience you have. Remember to include anything you do voluntarily, or as a hobby. It is relevant.

**6. 'If your previous co-workers were here, what would they say about you?'**

Be positive about yourself. Sell yourself. Go back to your good points. Don't speak badly about previous co-workers or bosses.

**7. 'Have you done anything to further your experience?'**

Again, mention relevant hobbies, interests, night classes.



**8. 'How are you when you're working under pressure?'**

Be positive. You may work well under pressure. You may thrive under pressure. And you may actually PREFER working under pressure.

**9. 'What motivates you to do a good job?'**

Again, don't say 'money', even if it is! You should be motivated to try to help people, to give something back. You want to share your experience.

**10. 'What's your greatest strength?'**

This question and number 11 are difficult for most people. Ask some friends or loved ones. what do they say?

**11. 'What's your biggest weakness?'**

Again, be positive. Turn weaknesses into strengths. Say you have difficulty being motivated. You could say, 'Well it takes me a while to get going. I like to think things over to make sure I've got the correct information before starting. I'm a bit of a perfectionist'.

**12. 'Let's talk about salary. What are you looking for?'**

Prepare for this question. What do people in this type of job get paid? Do your research.

**13. 'Are you good at working in a team?'**

You always answer YES to this one. It is the only answer. Try giving them an example from your life, from any groups, friends or work experiences that you may have.

**14. 'Tell me a suggestion you have made that was implemented.'**

This can be wide as you want - anything you have done in previous employment or voluntary organisation.

**15. 'Has anything ever irritated you about people you've worked with?'**

The best way to answer this question is to think for a while and then say something like 'I've always got on just fine with my co-workers actually.'

**16. 'Tell me about any issues you've had with a previous boss.'**

Simply answer this question with extreme tact, diplomacy and if necessary, a big fat loss of memory. In short, you've never had any issues.

**17. 'Would you rather work for money or job satisfaction?'**

It is fine to say money is important, but remember that NOTHING is more important to you than the job.

**18. 'So, explain why I should hire you.'**

Here is where you sell yourself. Go back over all your positive points.

**19. 'Can you give me an example of when you've....?'**

Here, they are trying to bring you out. They want to check your practical experience, so again, prepare. Common questions relate to:

- where you have worked as part of team
- where a member of the public has been rude to you
- where you have had an issue with a work colleague - how have you resolved this?

**20. 'Finally, do you have any questions to ask me?'**

This is very important. Yes, of course you do - just a few. Here are some pointers;

'If I was taken on, how soon can I start?'

'Talk about some of the benefits the company has.'

'Can you just go over the leave entitlement/bonus scheme?' etc.

'What is the organisation currently working on/trying to improve?'

'What are the training /promotion prospects like in this job?'

Hopefully, practise will make you perfect, and in the not too distant future you will be employed.

**Once You Are Employed**

Let the benefits office know you are in employment. You may still be entitled to help.

<https://www.gov.uk/moving-from-benefits-to-work>

**Exercise 14**

