

Understanding Speech Apraxia at Work

An introductory leaflet for employers, managers and HR teams

What is apraxia of speech?

Apraxia of speech affects the planning and programming of movements for speech. Childhood apraxia may persist into adulthood; acquired apraxia can follow neurological injury or disease. Other persistent speech sound disorders can also affect intelligibility. Individuals vary greatly in their abilities and support needs.

Avoid common assumptions

Speech that is slow, effortful or difficult to understand is not evidence of low intelligence or poor job competence. Some people have additional language or cognitive needs, but these should not be assumed from speech alone.

What inclusive practice looks like

Address the employee directly, allow response time, ask how they prefer to communicate, provide written confirmation when useful, and avoid interrupting or speaking for them. Discuss adjustments privately and review what works.

Recruitment and progression

Assess candidates against genuine role requirements rather than assumptions about speech fluency. Consider accessible interview formats and whether communication tasks can be completed effectively with reasonable adjustments.

Personal notes / action worksheet

One assumption our team should challenge:

One communication barrier we could remove:

Who will discuss and review adjustments?

Further information

ACAS - Reasonable adjustments (<https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments>)

Information only. This resource is not a substitute for individual speech and language therapy, employment or legal advice.