



May 2022

AsI Am Submission to the Department of Social Protection on the Reasonable Accommodation Fund

AsI Am welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Department of Social Protection on their review of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund. The Reasonable Accommodation Fund plays a significant role in supporting disabled people and Autistic people in securing employment.

Autistic people, like many cohorts of disabled people and other marginalised communities, are particularly underserved and excluded from the Irish labour market, and this bears out with the dismal statistics surrounding employment and disability in Ireland. EUROSTAT statistics showed that just 32% of people with disabilities were in employment in 2017, when compared to the EU average (50%) - one of the worst employment rates in Europe. Autistic people and people with intellectual disabilities are particularly underserved from the labour market - over 80% of Autistic people are unemployed or underemployed.

We welcome that the Department of Social Protection is conducting this review, the result of which should support more disabled people to enter the working world, particularly as we are rebuilding our ways of working in the aftermath of COVID-19. It should also help to make our ways of working more accessible and inclusive for everybody in society over the medium-to-long term, given that many people in the workforce are living longer and working longer, and they or somebody they know are likely to experience being disabled at some stage in their lives.

About AsI Am

AsI Am is the national charity and advocacy organisation for Ireland's autism community. We are working to create a society in which every autistic person is empowered to reach their own personal potential and to fully participate in society. We believe that by developing the capacity of the autism community and addressing the societal barriers to inclusion, we can make Ireland the world's most autism-friendly country.

Our organisation has made its mark on the national landscape since our founding in 2014, from our award-winning campaigns to lobbying lawmakers to prioritise autism on the Oireachtas' agenda. AsIAM has developed a range of supports for Ireland's autism community; as well as providing vital information and advocacy supports, we have also delivered several nationally and internationally renowned training and accreditation programmes for businesses and services to become autism-friendly.

Executive Summary

- **Amalgamate the four grants which comprise the Reasonable Accommodation Fund (the Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant, the Disability Awareness Support Scheme, the Personal Reader Grant, and the Job Interview Interpreter Grant) into one overall scheme, similar in structure to the UK's Access to Work Scheme.**
- **Establish a cross-education and employment system, in keeping with Universal Design principles, which Autistic people and disabled people can register at any stage of their education or career if they have a proof of their disability, or if they are considering or in the process of pursuing a diagnosis.**
- **Develop a portal for employers and employees to have accessible information around the workplace supports or accommodations available for their difference or disability.**
- **Adopt a more holistic and neuro-affirmative approach to disability assessment and providing support, in line with the Social Model of Disability and the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).**
- **Supports provided by the Department of Social Protection should reflect the full diversity of living experience of Autistic people, as well as other disabled and neurodivergent people. All people with disabilities, regardless of levels of support need, should be entitled to access reasonable accommodations at work if they so choose.**
- **Provide personal supports, such as Access Officers, who can collaborate with Autistic employees and disabled employees to figure out what supports they want at the start of the application process.**
- **The application process should take a person-centred, rights-based approach, designed in keeping with Universal Design Principles, and should prioritise the applicant's dignity, agency and preferences at all stages of the process.**
- **The Department of Social Protection should accept a wider range of options related to evidence of disability for applications to the Fund, in recognising that not every disabled person has equal access to services or supports. They should also ensure that people at all stages of their disability or autism journey they can access accommodations at work.**
- **Any requirement to produce information should not place either Autistic people or disabled people under pressure to prove how their difference or disability impacts them at work or living in society.**
- **Reimburse applicants for out-of-pocket expenses related to securing accommodations within the Reasonable Accommodations, including medical and therapist appointments, doctor's letters, etc**

- **Review and reform the Disability Awareness Support Scheme to ensure that employers and organisations, regardless of size or industry, can access disability equality training and Autism Understanding and Acceptance training.**
- **The Department should provide greater and more flexible access to funding for employers, particularly SMEs, for any training or accreditation they wish to receive around Autism, disability equality and rights and neurodiversity from Disability-led and disability-centred organisations, including Disabled Persons Organisations.**
- **Extend periods in which disabled people can retain any supports they use within the Social Protection system, such as the Medical Card, Free Travel, when they are in employment and so that they do not suddenly lose entitlements when they take up a role or if their employment status changes.**
- **Develop a co-ordinated support structure both within Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and within Intreo for disabled entrepreneurs to access timely, accessible financial support locally and increase funding allocated to support self-employment opportunities for disabled people and develop bespoke funding mechanisms in this area.**
- **Ensure that Autistic employees and disabled employees can avail of any proposed Cost of Disability payment.**
- **Provide a timely and transparent appeals process for people who are unhappy with the decision made with their application.**

Through our extensive engagement with the community, many Autistic people are positively disposed towards employment and expressed a desire to find work - feeling that work, particularly in a role that matches their skills or interests, can provide a greater sense of dignity, purpose and independence in their lives. However, many Autistic people also believe that there are extensive and significant barriers to finding a job and to accessing reasonable accommodations at work. Through our engagement with the community, Autistic people also believe that there are not sufficient resources to support Autistic people to secure work in the open labour market, and to be supported to remain in employment once hired. This was highlighted in our 'Autism in the Workplace' Report, which we published in 2020 in conjunction with the recruitment platform IrishJobs. In this Report, we surveyed Autistic people on their experiences at work or looking for work, and we also surveyed employers on their perceptions around the recruitment and retention of Autistic people. We highlighted that just **20%** of Autistic people requested a Reasonable Accommodation from an employer¹ and **42%** of Autistic people believed that requesting Reasonable Accommodation would hinder their prospects of finding their preferred role.² Many Autistic people highlight issues around the interview processes and testing methods as barriers

¹ IrishJobs & AslAm, 'Autism in the Workplace', April 2021, p.9, https://www.irishjobs.ie/recruiters/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Autism-in-the-Workplace-Report-AslAm-IrishJobs-April-2021_FINAL.pdf, accessed 11 May 2022

² *Ibid.*, p. 9

to finding work. This was highlighted in The Same Chance Toolkit which we published in conjunction with IrishJobs.

Considering these findings and considering the findings of our 'Same Chance Report' published in March 2022, we set out the issues with the Fund which impact Autistic people and set out our proposals for changes to the Fund throughout our submission, which can make the process of accessing Reasonable Accommodations more accessible and inclusive.

Structure of Disability Assessment, Leaves Many Autistic and Disabled People Without Support

AsIAM finds that the current structure of the Fund, as well its approach to assessing disability, both rooted in the Medical Model of Disability, often leads to disparities in terms of who qualifies for benefits or supports, and inconsistencies around who might be entitled to support under the Fund. Often, whether an Autistic person might be entitled to support might hinge on which 'functioning label' a professional might perceive that an Autistic person might fall into, with little input from the Autistic person themselves. It also often does not consider that that attitudes towards disability and neurodiversity are changing as Ireland has ratified the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**. This fails to comply with Article 28 of the UNCRPD, as it leaves many Autistic and disabled people without any entitlement to support or access Accommodations if their support needs do not neatly fit into narrowly defined, often medicalised, conceptions of their disability or difference. These conceptions may often portray autism as a 'disorder' needing to be 'cured' or 'treated' or seeing a person's accessibility requirements as 'deficits,'. This often bears little reality to many Autistic people's experiences living in society, and leaves those who do not reach a 'functioning' threshold, to have to manage by themselves at work. This in turn leads to many Autistic people having to 'mask' their differences or support needs, and to being more likely to burnout, to feeling distressed, anxious or overwhelmed at work, and to being at increased risk of facing harassment, exploitation, discrimination or to unfair dismissal at work.

The European Disability Forum (EDF), highlight the barriers to accessing supports in their recent report on Social Protection across the European Union (EU). The Report highlights the barriers within the medical approach taken by some EU Member States, including Ireland, in assessing disability, and its ability to identify a person's support needs. The EDF state that:

"The challenges associated with disability assessment are numerous. To begin with, the process can be lengthy and arduous and, in some cases, undignified. The methods used can also be restrictive and fail to consider the true barriers people face in their daily lives as persons with disabilities. An assessment that does not truly consider the societal barriers the person with disabilities faces, combined with what are often restrictive social protection budgets foreseen for persons with disabilities, result in many persons with disabilities not getting the support they need after being assessed as having a disability.

We also see particular difficulties for persons with “hidden” or “invisible” disabilities who can be misdiagnosed or not diagnosed at all, meaning they lose all entitlement to the support and services they require. Women are also more likely than men to have a disability or a condition misdiagnosed or left undiagnosed”³

Proving Your Disability or Difference

A key barrier to accessing support for many Autistic people often lies with the Department’s assessment process which is used to determine whether a disabled person needs accommodations at work. The assessment process used by the Department is out of step with Articles 5 and 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We echo Towards Work/The Open Doors Initiative’s concerns that not taking a rights-based or person-centred approach to accessing accommodations leaves many disabled people who may wish to work without support, which can particularly happen for disabled people whose impairments may not be immediately apparent. Through AslAm’s engagement with the community, many Autistic people find navigating the system to be an intrusive and often humiliating process, as it places the burden of proof on the person to show the extent to which how their difference or disability impacts their day-to-day life, often with no supports in navigating the process. The lack of dignity that many disabled people experience in the assessment process makes it more difficult for many Autistic employees to seek supports at work. This can particularly be the case if there is uncertainty around both what supports might be available that can meet their support needs, and what supports the Department or employers are willing to procure through the Fund. There are often also difficulties in accessing supports for applications or interviews, with knowing which accommodations are available that the Fund supports, or even with how people might react to disclosing their difference or disability or to a request for workplace supports.

Autistic and disabled people are also often expected to have to constantly prove their difference or disability, both when requesting workplace accommodations, and in living in society, which can cause considerable distress and anxiety, and take its toll on many Autistic and disabled peoples’ health and wellbeing. It may also add to the distress, anxiety, or trauma that many Autistic people and disabled people experience in living in society or having to work in environments and organisational hierarchies and structures, that are often built with neurotypical and non-disabled people in mind. It also does not consider the full range of barriers that Autistic and disabled people already experience living in society, and other factors including the gaps in support provision between education and employment and the increased exposure to poverty, isolation and social exclusion. All these factors influence both the career paths that Autistic and disabled people pursue and the workplace accommodations available. Apart from this, there are several barriers which can particularly impact Autistic and

³ European Disability Forum, *Social Protection and the Welfare State: What the EU can do to Support Persons with Disabilities*, 2022, p. 12.

Neurodivergent people, as well as people with differences or disabilities which may not be immediately apparent, including:

- As an organisation supporting the autism community, we often highlight that there are significant difficulties for many Autistic and disabled people to securing a diagnosis in the first instance, particularly for Autistic women and members of other marginalised communities. Moreover, as there are no pathways within the public healthcare system for Autistic adults to secure an official diagnosis or after-care support, there are often significant costs and waiting lists involved in getting a formal diagnosis and accessing after-care support which makes the process out-of-reach for many Autistic people. For these reasons, AsIAM believes that costs should not be a barrier to accessing workplace supports and that a helpful support that the Department can reimburse candidates for any out-of-pocket expenses related to applying for the Fund.
- Often because of the barriers to accessing timely services and supports across the healthcare system, there are many Autistic people who self-identify as autistic, but may be either waiting for a diagnosis, or considering pursuing a diagnosis but may not have the means or opportunity to do so. AsIAM believes that accessing the Fund should not necessarily be contingent on receiving an official diagnosis and that every Autistic and disabled person should be entitled to access support under the Fund should they need it.
- Information contained in many Diagnosis Reports may not be up-to-date or may be written when perceptions or attitudes towards Autistic people were different to where they are presently. This is arising as many Autistic people are now speaking more openly about their experiences across many avenues of society and feel more comfortable to be open about identifying as autistic. These Reports may portray a more medicalised perception of autism, which may portray autism as a 'disorder' rather than as a difference, neurotype or disability which many in the community prefer, and so may not fully capture a person's strengths, or what their support needs look like at work.
- Prevailing attitudes towards disability, Neurodiversity, and to neurodevelopmental differences or disabilities like autism, both within organisations and across society, can also influence whether an Autistic person might feel comfortable or safe to be open about being Autistic at work. Whilst there has been progress in workplace diversity and inclusion in recent years, this has not yet translated to significantly increased understanding of autism, disability and neurodiversity among employers. This can make it harder for many Autistic people to be open about being themselves at work, and to feel supported to fully be themselves at work. In our Autism in the Workplace Report, we found that 72% of people felt that they have to 'mask' or hide Autistic parts of themselves to fit in at work. This shows that many people feel that there is significant stigma around disability and around differences like autism within society and that these are pervasive and persistent barriers to getting support at work.

Extending the Fund to Include In-Person Support

AsIAm shares similar concerns with the Dyslexia Association of Ireland in that the Reasonable Accommodation Fund's streams currently have a disproportionate focus on providing access to Assistive Technology over in-person support, like access to a Job Coach or a Mentor, which many Autistic employees would find to be helpful at work. Many of the barriers that Autistic people experience often arise from navigating some of the more social aspects of being at work, like navigating workplace culture and social norms, with communication or sensory processing, with organising tasks or with meeting employer expectations, which may not always require the purchase of expensive technology to address. The Fund should also place an equal emphasis on providing in-person or peer support (including job coaching, Supported Employment, Understanding and Equality Training, or access to peer advocates or advocacy groups) which may be equally important in supporting an Autistic employee at work. The Fund should be broadened to meet the diversity and breadth of supports which disabled people have.

Accessing Training and Accreditation for Employers and Colleagues

As an Autistic led organisation with over half of our staff being Autistic, Neurodivergent or with other disabilities, we find that training and Accreditation can support companies and organisations to reduce barriers to access and participation at work. Our Training and Accreditation initiatives support organisations by updating their understanding of Autism to reflect how Autistic people perceive their Neurodivergence, and away from common misconceptions and stereotypes which do not reflect the breadth or diversity of experiences within the Autistic community. In our 'Autism in the Workplace' Report, we found that less than 10% of respondents felt confident enough in their colleague's knowledge of autism to disclose or otherwise be open about their Autistic identity.⁴ This can dissuade many Autistic people from being open about being themselves at work, and speaks to the fact that there is often a 'double empathy' problem in terms of understanding and acceptance between Autistic people and often neurotypical people in society and in the workplace. Confirming this statistic, three-quarters of respondents believe that disclosing being autistic would help colleagues and managers to better understand and support them at work.⁵

Providing information About Accessibility Requirements at Work

AsIAm believes that there should be more clarity as to the information that is required for applications for reasonable accommodations. Given that autism, and other types of neurodiversity, can be particularly diverse in terms of presentation,

⁴ IrishJobs & AsIAm, 'Autism in the Workplace', April 2021, p.8, https://www.irishjobs.ie/recruiters/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Autism-in-the-Workplace-Report-AsIAm-IrishJobs-April-2021_FINAL.pdf, accessed 11 May 2022.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

and that no two Autistic people have the same profile of strengths and support needs, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to supporting Autistic people at work. This stresses the need for a more holistic approach to identifying supports, with the employee, with support from mentors or supporters if needed, having direct involvement in the process of securing workplace supports. This helps to address an issue highlighted in our 'Autism in the Workplace' Report, where 66% of respondents felt they would find it difficult to explain being Autistic to colleagues or managers, and 63% of respondents they may have to deal with outdated perceptions or attitudes surrounding autism at work.⁶ We also highlight in this Report that just 20% of Autistic people requested a Reasonable Accommodation from an employer⁷ and 42% of Autistic people believed that requesting Reasonable Accommodation would hinder their prospects of finding their preferred role.⁸ The onus on the employee to research supports available and having to seek prior approval from the employer can act as chilling factors to securing the accommodations they are looking for. For these reasons, The Department should offer more support for Autistic and disabled applicants in navigating the process, including in-person assistance as well as additional supports when needed in making applications to the Fund. Applicants may also find having a repository of available accommodations for their access needs, like the Job Accommodation Network, can be helpful in deciding which accommodations or supports they wish to pursue.

Opportunities for Self-Employment

Some Autistic people may also have a desire to pursue self-employment for a variety of reasons. These can include a desire to work for themselves or on their own terms, the opportunity to set their own working hours or to set their workspace according to their sensory or access needs or preferences, the opportunity to work from home how they want, to avoid having to navigate workplace politics, or having a greater sense of job satisfaction from working in an area that aligns with their skills or interests. However, as Towards Work/the Open Doors Initiative rightly point out in their submission, there are few supports available for disabled entrepreneurs, and very few Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) providing bespoke or consistent supports for disabled entrepreneurs who wish to start their own business or social enterprise. The lack of resources or any kind of national infrastructure directed at supporting entrepreneurs leaves many people who might otherwise wish to start their own business without support. The lack of resources for disabled entrepreneurs is disappointing for a business-friendly country which often welcomes enterprise and innovation. Indeed, the underdevelopment of supports in this area speaks to an underfunded and underdeveloped local infrastructure for LEOs to support entrepreneurship. We also agree with Towards Work/the Open Doors Initiative's assertion that disabled

⁶ IrishJobs & AsIAm, 'Autism in the Workplace', April 2021, p.8, https://www.irishjobs.ie/recruiters/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Autism-in-the-Workplace-Report-AsIAm-IrishJobs-April-2021_FINAL.pdf, accessed 11 May 2022.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

entrepreneurs also face significant barriers with accessing support through their Local Enterprise Office, where there is often a significant amount of bureaucratic obstacles involved in applying for these grants which can make the process inaccessible to many disabled and Autistic entrepreneurs.

What are some other barriers to accessing Reasonable Accommodations at work?

There are other barriers which many Autistic people and disabled people experience when seeking reasonable accommodations for their access needs, which may include, but are not limited to:

- Some employers may not have official policies and procedures, lack the capacity to produce policies in this area, or refuse to comply with existing laws around reasonable accommodations which already exist in the Statute Books, such as the Employment Equality Acts.
- The Reasonable Accommodation Fund is only available to employees in full-time or part-time private sector employment and is not available to people who are engaging other forms of employment, such as traineeships, Community Employment Schemes or other Schemes such as the Ability Programme. The availability of many programmes is limited and often excludes people already on Government Schemes and Programmes, or people who do not fit the criteria but may find the support to be helpful. An example of this may be somebody with dyslexia who may wish to use a Personal Reader.
- Supports are often prescribed by meeting the conditions of the Grant, and the person applying for the support does not have control on how the support will be used in a way that best suits their needs.

Recommendations

AsIAM has several recommendations for reforms to the Reasonable Accommodation Fund to ensure that it is fully accessible and inclusive of Autistic people and meets the breadth and diversity of accessibility needs at work. These recommendations include the following:

AsIAM recommends that the four grants which comprise the Reasonable Accommodation Fund (the Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant, the Disability Awareness Support Scheme, the Personal Reader Grant and the Job Interview Interpreter Grant) should be amalgamated into one overall scheme, similar in structure to the UK's Access to Work Scheme. This Scheme should aim to provide more holistic support based on a person's accessibility preferences, rather than prescriptively offering supports for one specific disability or access need. Combining these Schemes into an Access to Work style scheme would

both broaden the range and flexibility of supports available to employees, such as in-person supports, as well as widen the scope for employees to access multiple supports that meet their access needs, if required.

Establish a cross-education and employment system which Autistic people and disabled people can register at any stage of their education or career if they have a proof of their disability, or if they are considering or in the process of pursuing a diagnosis or evidence of their difference or impairment. This can help applicants to have a greater continuity of supports, particularly when making the transition from education to employment. Applicants should also have the option to transfer over their supports across a range of positions throughout their working life, to change supports at the point of need, to have any changes processed and provided in a timely manner, and to have multiple ways of applying for reasonable accommodations at work.

Develop a portal for employers and employees to have accessible information around the workplace supports or accommodations available for their difference or disability. A good model for the Department, or other organisations which the Department enlists, would be to develop a resource like the [Job Accommodation Network](#) in the US, which offers employers and employees guidance on the different workplace supports available for each disability, how to request accommodations, and build disability-inclusive workplaces.

Adopt a more holistic and neuro-affirmative approach to disability assessment and providing support, in line with the Social Model of Disability and the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). This type of assessment should examine a combination of a person's difference or disability, capacity to perform work functions, support needs or requirements and wider societal and attitudinal barriers. It should also refrain from relying on medicalised or behaviourist approaches to assessing disability. Ensure Autistic people, and disabled people have opportunities to have direct involvement in the assessment and throughout the application process. The European Disability Forum in its recent Position Paper, *Social Protection and the Welfare State*, sets out how Ireland can adopt more progressive and rights-based approach to disability assessment. Ensure that Autistic people, disabled people, Disabled Persons Organisations and disability-centred organisations are consulted and involved in the co-producing any proposed reforms to disability assessments and the Social Protection system more generally.

Supports provided by the Department of Social Protection should reflect this diversity and the full range of living experience of Autistic people, as well as other disabled and neurodivergent people, and not solely hinge on 'functional capacity' for assessing a person's support needs. Given that autism can be particularly diverse in terms of presentation, and that no two Autistic people have the same profile of strengths and support needs, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to

supporting Autistic people, and because of this, supports around Reasonable Accommodations should be flexible to meet the breadth of support needs among Autistic people.

Provide personal supports, such as Access Officers or Liaison Officers, who can collaborate with Autistic employees and disabled employees to figure out what supports they want at the start, and through all stages of the application process. Access Officers can discuss with applicants around their experiences at work or looking for work, what supports they need or prefer and support applicants to make informed decisions around which supports best work for them and throughout the application process.

AsIAM believes that the application process should take a person-centred, rights-based approach and should prioritise the applicant's dignity, capacity and agency at all stages of the process. Application forms and the process used to procure supports should be developed according to the principles of Universal Design. Forms and information relating to Grants and Schemes should be available in the full diversity of accessible formats, including Plain English and Easy-to-Read, to be fully accessible to disabled applicants, and there should be multiple ways for applicants to apply for workplace supports.

The Department of Social Protection should accept a wider range of options related to evidence of disability for applications to the Fund, in recognising that not every disabled person has equal access to services or supports. They should also ensure that people at all stages of their disability or autism journey they can access accommodations at work. This should include but not limited to doctor's letters, psychologist's reports or summaries of reports, or any information which shows that a person is autistic or neurodivergent or is pursuing or considering pursuing a diagnosis in future.

Any requirement to produce information should not place either Autistic people or disabled people under pressure to prove how their difference or disability impacts them at work or living in society. It should also respect the person's right to legal capacity, their choice over if and how they might wish to disclose their difference or disability, and to choose which supports they want, without having to provide any sensitive or unnecessary information without their informed consent.

Reimburse applicants for out-of-pocket expenses related to securing accommodations within the Reasonable Accommodations, including medical and therapist appointments, doctor's letters, etc.

Review and reform the Disability Awareness Support Scheme to ensure that employers and organisations, regardless of size or industry, can access disability equality training and Autism Understanding and Acceptance training. Any training available to employers related to autism and other forms of neurodivergence should be neuro-affirmative, and

affirm an Autistic, neurodivergent or disabled person's identity, and refrain from behaviourist or medicalised perceptions of autism, neurodiversity, and disability.

The Department should provide greater and more flexible access funding for employers, particularly SMEs, for any training or Accreditation they wish to receive around Autism, disability equality and neurodiversity from Disability-led and disability-centred organisations, such as Disabled Persons Organisations. This can support organisations to best support the skills, personal qualities, and strengths that many autistic employees can bring to their role, as well as meet a diversity of support needs.

Extend periods in which disabled people can retain any supports they use within the Social Protection system, such as the Medical Card, Free Travel, when they are in employment and so that they do not suddenly lose entitlements when they take up a role or if their employment status changes. Many disabled people fear that they will lose their entitlements they start a new role, and this can be a significant barrier towards taking up employment. Extending the time periods in which disabled people can retain entitlements such as the Medical Card or Free Travel when in employment can give peace of mind and reassure people that will not lose any support if they take up employment.

Develop a co-ordinated support structure both within Local Enterprise Offices and within Intreo for disabled entrepreneurs to access timely, accessible financial support locally and increase funding allocated to support self-employment opportunities for disabled people and develop bespoke funding mechanisms in this area. Also ensure that all Grants are fully accessible to disabled entrepreneurs in keeping with Universally Design principles

Ensure that Autistic employees and disabled employees can avail of any proposed Cost of Disability payment. Many disabled employees and Autistic employees face additional financial, or opportunity costs related to their difference or disability which are not borne by non-disabled employees, which impact on their quality of life. Ensure that Autistic people and disabled are not excluded from accessing this payment just because they are in employment.

Provide a timely and transparent appeals process for people who are unhappy with the decision made with the application. This should include an panel of independent, impartial experts who ensures that any decisions made are fair and impartial and reflect the totality of an autistic employee's circumstances and their support needs at work.

