

# Discussing disabilities or health conditions with employers

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# What this recording covers

Terminology;

Whether to 'disclose';

If so, when;

If then, how;

Further support.

# Why this topic?

- 77% of students and recent graduates with disabilities fear they will be discriminated against if they disclose their disability to employers.
- 48% of disabled people have worried about sharing information about their impairment/condition with their employer.
- 1 in 5 individuals of working age in the UK have a disability or long-term health condition.

- In the UK there is protection under the Equality Act (2010).
- This aligns with EU laws.
- Differences elsewhere in the world.
  
- Equality Act (2010) definition: “A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities”.

People often use the term  
'disclose'.

For some that feels negative.

But it is recognized (therefore  
useful as search term).

Other terms:

Visible/invisible/non-visible;

Reasonable adjustments.



# Whether to disclose

Sometimes an easy decision:

- You know you will need adjustments made.

Sometimes a responsibility:

- Health and safety of yourself and others.

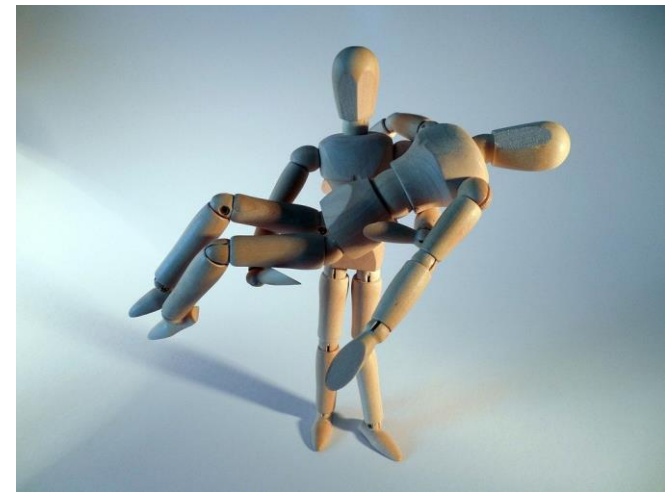
Sometimes necessary:

- Affects capability to do core tasks.

Sometimes preferable:

- Best for you.

Sometimes unnecessary.



- Protection under Equality Act (2010) (in the UK, implements EU equal treatment rules);
- Reasonable adjustments – you are entitled to them;
- Show the positives;
- Be in control of the information;
- Be yourself.

# Cons or concerns

Photo by [Rémi Jacquaint](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Discrimination?

Colleagues suspecting  
'unfair' advantage?

Imposter syndrome (is my  
condition serious enough)?





Health related questions can be asked only to:

- help decide whether there is a need to make reasonable adjustments to the application/selection process;
- help decide whether an applicant can carry out an essential part of the job;
- monitor diversity amongst applicants;
- take positive action to help disabled people;
- ensure an individual has a disability where there is a genuine requirement to have a disability;

Employers are expected to do all they 'reasonably' can to find out if an employee is disabled.

# If so, when?

- Before applying?
- In application?
- Once offered assessment centre/interview?
- At assessment centre/interview?
- Once offered job?
- After accepting job?
- When you start work?

Key principle: always think what's best for you...but considering employer's perspective is also relevant

# Application stage?

## Why:

- Gaps in CV because of disability/health;
- Lacking work experience because of disability/health;
- Lower attainment because of disability/health;
- Guaranteed interviews (Disability Confident scheme).

## How:

- Emphasise positive attributes – perseverance, determination, empathy...
- Reflect on what you have done (even if not traditional work experience).

## Why:

- To give you the best chance of doing well;
- Level the playing field;
- Avoid surprise factor.

## What:

- Establish format of assessment centre/interview;
- Identify potential issues;
- Name potential solutions.

# What might you say?

## For in-person situations:

My condition	How it affects me	Solutions
Fibromyalgia	On bad pain days mobility is limited, also writing by hand	Allow extra time between activities; schedule activities in adjacent rooms; ensure all activities can be undertaken on laptop
Dyslexia	Processing takes longer	Extra time on task
Visual impairment	Use screen reader	Ensure all documents are compatible with screen reader
Hearing impairment/deaf	Rely on lip-reading and/or BSL interpretation	Position to be able to see faces clearly for lip-reading/secure BSL interpretation

# How is this different now?

<b>My condition</b>	<b>How it affects me</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
Fibromyalgia	On bad pain days mobility is limited, also writing by hand	Allow rest breaks
Dyslexia	Processing takes longer	Extra time on task
Visual impairment	Use screen reader	Ensure all documents are compatible with screen reader
Hearing impairment/deaf	Rely on lip-reading, BSL interpretation or closed captioning	Position to be able to see faces clearly for lip-reading/secure BSL interpretation/put in place closed captioning

# Before/after accepting job?

## Why:

- So that reasonable adjustments can be put in place;
- To ensure protection under Equality Act;
- So you can be yourself.

## What:

- Your condition (basic information);
- How it affects you;
- What adjustments would help (and is Access to Work funding available);
- Also, who should be told.

# What might you say? (Face to face work)

<b>My condition</b>	<b>How it affects me</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
Chronic fatigue	It is hard for me to commute and work a full week without a break	Work from home one day a week; adjust length of days to incorporate breaks
Visual distress syndrome	Lines of text jump around and reading extensively causes headaches	Orange filters on computer screen
Anxiety	Very crowded places can trigger panic attacks	Adjusted working hours to travel before (or after) main rush hour

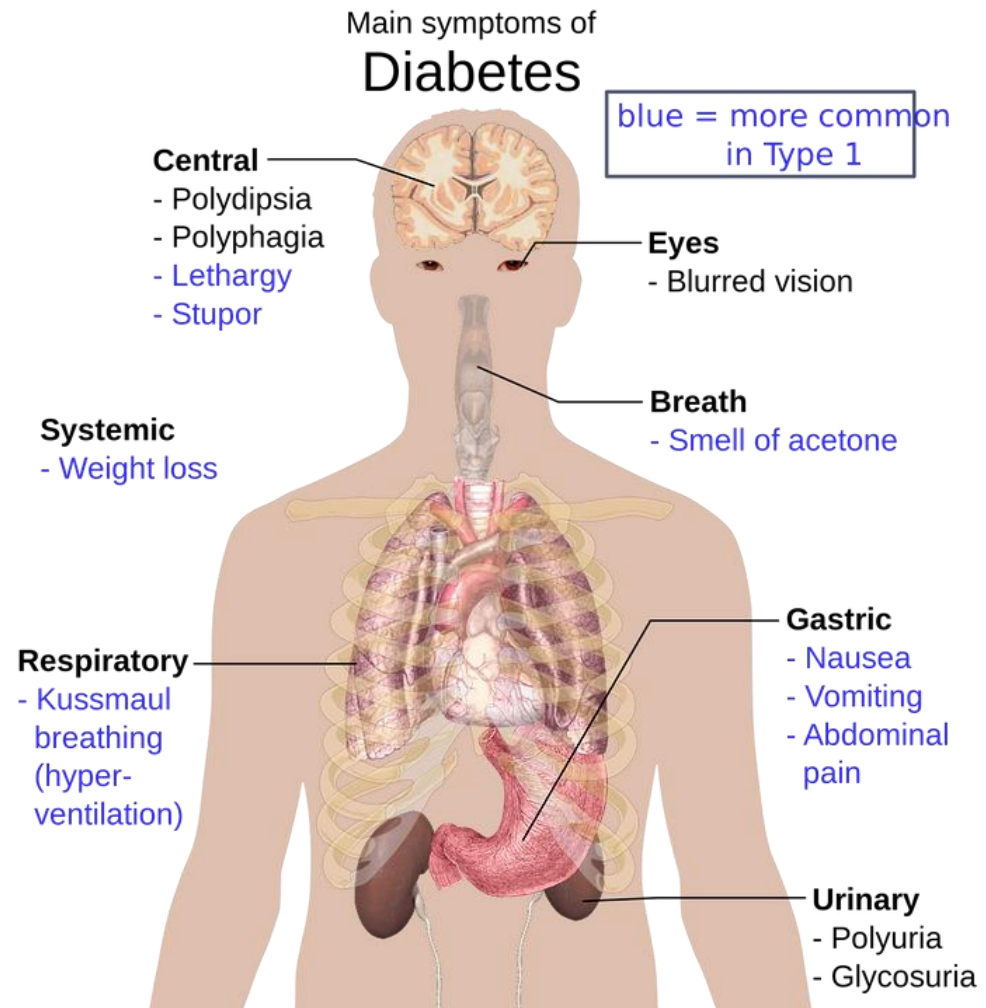


# How have things changed?

<b>My condition</b>	<b>How it affects me</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
Chronic fatigue	It is hard for me to commute and work a full week without a break	Work from home, work flexible hours
Visual distress syndrome	Lines of text jump around and reading extensively causes headaches	Orange filters on computer screen
Anxiety	Very crowded places can trigger panic attacks	Work from home...

# What do you not need to say?

Lots of medical detail about condition...



## Components of working day could include:

Activity	Issue	Solutions
Travel to and from work	Panic attacks in busy crowded transport	Work from home/work flexible hours
Travel to and from work	Mobility issues	Work from home/investigate Access to Work funding for taxis
Meetings away from the main workplace	Wheelchair user	Information in advance about ramps/stairs
Client meetings with presentations	Visual impairment may mean cannot interpret presentation fully	Presentation in alternative format provided in advance
Online meetings	Who might not be able to access fully?	What solutions could there be?

# After starting the job

## Why:

- Now know the job and realise adjustments would be helpful;
- Condition has changed;
- Circumstances have changed (eg remote/in office).

## What:

- Your condition (basic information);
- How it affects you;
- What adjustments would help.

# Adjustment needs may change

On-going conversation with employer:

- Your condition may change;
- Your job may change;
- As you learn more about the job you may think of new adjustments that would help;
- Circumstances may change!

[Disability Confident Scheme \(UK\)](#) (Government scheme).

[Access to work](#) funding – financial support to smaller employers to cover reasonable adjustments, may also cover your travel costs.  
[Toolkit](#) created by Diversity and Ability.

Many charities offer help and advice.

# What if I experience discrimination?

Differences between different countries, but in the UK:

[Equality Advisory service](#) provides advice and support;

[Equality and Human Rights Commission](#);

[Mind](#) provides advice and support in relation to mental health  
(including [discrimination at work](#))

The TUC (Trades Union Congress) has a [guide](#) on its website.

# Further support

Talk to us - book a one to one appointment.  
Student Support Services.

[Resources from MyPlus](#) (register to download).

