

## **Deciding Whether to Disclose Your Non-Visible Health Condition to a Future Employer**

The thought of disclosing your health condition or disability to someone you don't know can seem quite daunting. 'Disclosure' – the very word denotes secrecy, something official.

The Equality Act 2010 states that in order to be covered by the Act, a health condition must be long-term and substantial, and impact your daily activities. Because of this, the Act covers everything from a reading and learning difficulty to chronic and terminal illness. Generally, there is no legal obligation to disclose your condition to an employer, although there are a few exceptions to this rule.

If you're unsure whether your condition is covered, or whether you're obliged to disclose, do some research (see the Resources section below): are you covered under the Act? Do you have to disclose for the role you're going for? When do you disclose?

Once you're more informed about where you stand legally, you're likely to still have some reservations as to what to do next, particularly if your condition may not be immediately obvious. In fact, you may be tempted not to say anything. The following may help you in your decision-making.

If you've read this far, you're probably concerned about the consequences of telling an employer about your condition. Essentially, you would be passing sensitive information to someone else. You won't know how they'll react, what they'll do with this information or how they'll perceive you. It's completely natural to feel this way. Appreciating that there are employers that don't deal with disability in the fairest of ways, we also know there are many that do. You'll have to have some leap of faith in this scenario, however you also have something else on your side: Equality Act.

Employers have a duty of care to take away barriers in the workplace that exist because of your condition. They do this by providing reasonable adjustments (more in another blog). The Act kicks in from the moment you come into contact with the employer in a recruitment process right through to leaving a job. However, you won't be covered unless you disclose.

We'll deal with reasonable adjustment in our final blog, however some reasonable adjustments don't cost much and make the world of difference in helping you manage your condition in the workplace.

You're probably concerned about who the employer will tell. If they are a medium or large organisation, and depending on who you are disclosing to, they're likely to have an HR Manager, who will likely be the first person they'll inform. The senior manager may also be told. They tend to be the only exceptions. You have the right to ask for confidentiality. This means you can control the flow of information and can tell colleagues if you want to.

Moreover, by telling the employer, you're taking control of the information they receive about your condition and about the way this impacts you. If your condition worsened or your performance were affected and then you chose to disclose, a later disclosure may damage some of the trust you have worked so hard to build. Transparency with your managers may build trust and creating this partnership can be very enabling.

It's also natural to worry about how an employer will perceive you when they learn about your condition, particularly if you strongly feel that it does not have a bearing on your capability to do the job. The reality is that if you've been offered an interview or receive a job offer, the organisation deems you to have potential to, or already be capable, of performing the role.

You may also have concerns about being treated differently because of your condition. Let's turn this around slightly by using an example. If you are dyslexic and would perform effectively in a psychometric test by being given more time, then this would be crucial to your succeeding to the next stage of the recruitment process. In this case, it would be about removing obstacles to ensure you are on a level playing field with other candidates. So, it's not about giving you an extra advantage; it's actually about giving you the same opportunity as everyone else.

If you're apprehensive about particular aspects of doing the job, we'll look at preparing the disclosure conversation in the next blog.

I'd like to leave you with these questions, which I hope will help you hone your decision:

- If you tell your employer about your condition, what is the worst that can happen? What will you gain/lose? How would this affect you?
- What would happen if you didn't tell them? How would this affect you?
- What is holding you back from telling them? What would make you feel more comfortable?

Whatever your decision is right now, build in some flexibility as you may want to disclose in the future. At UCL Careers, we'd be happy to talk this through with you, whether you're confused, have made up your mind or just want to do a simple role play! If you are already accessing UCL Careers Extra, then please book a 30-minute one-to-one appointment. If you have a health condition and not yet accessed this, please contact UCL Careers and we'll give you a steer.

This is the part one of series of three articles regarding disclosure. The next two deal with the disclosure conversation and requesting reasonable adjustments.

Resources

[Benefits of disclosing](#)

[Pros & Cons of disclosing](#)

[Equality Act & Human Rights Commission](#) / 0808 800 0082 and [ACAS](#) 0300 123 1100