

Discussing disabilities or health conditions with employers

Penny Longman

Careers Consultant

Mar 2021

What we plan to cover

- 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.

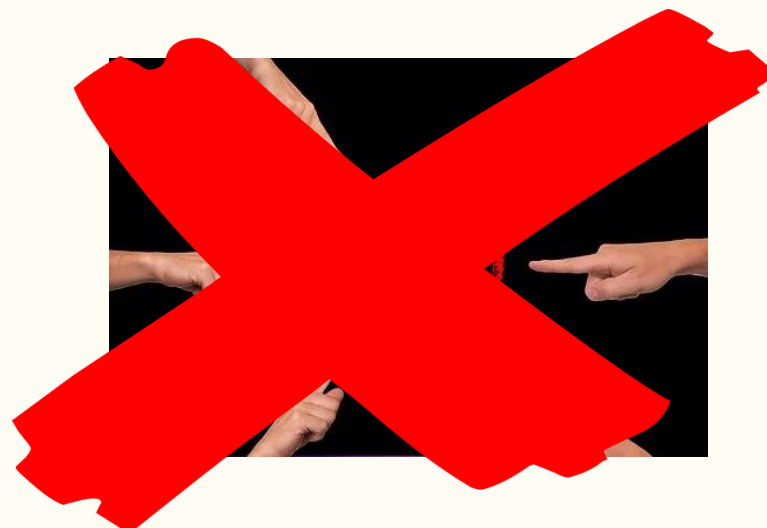
You are not alone

- 1 in 5 individuals of working age in the UK have a disability or long-term health condition.
- 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”.

Terminology

- Disclose
- Discuss
- Share

- Visible
- Invisible/non-visible
- The Equality Act (2010)
- 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.



Pros

- 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

- Discrimination?
- Colleagues suspecting 'unfair' advantage?

- Imposter syndrome (is my condition serious enough)?



The law (UK/EU):

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).

Before assessment centre/interview

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?

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		

How is this different now?

My condition	How it affects me	Solutions
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		

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 now?

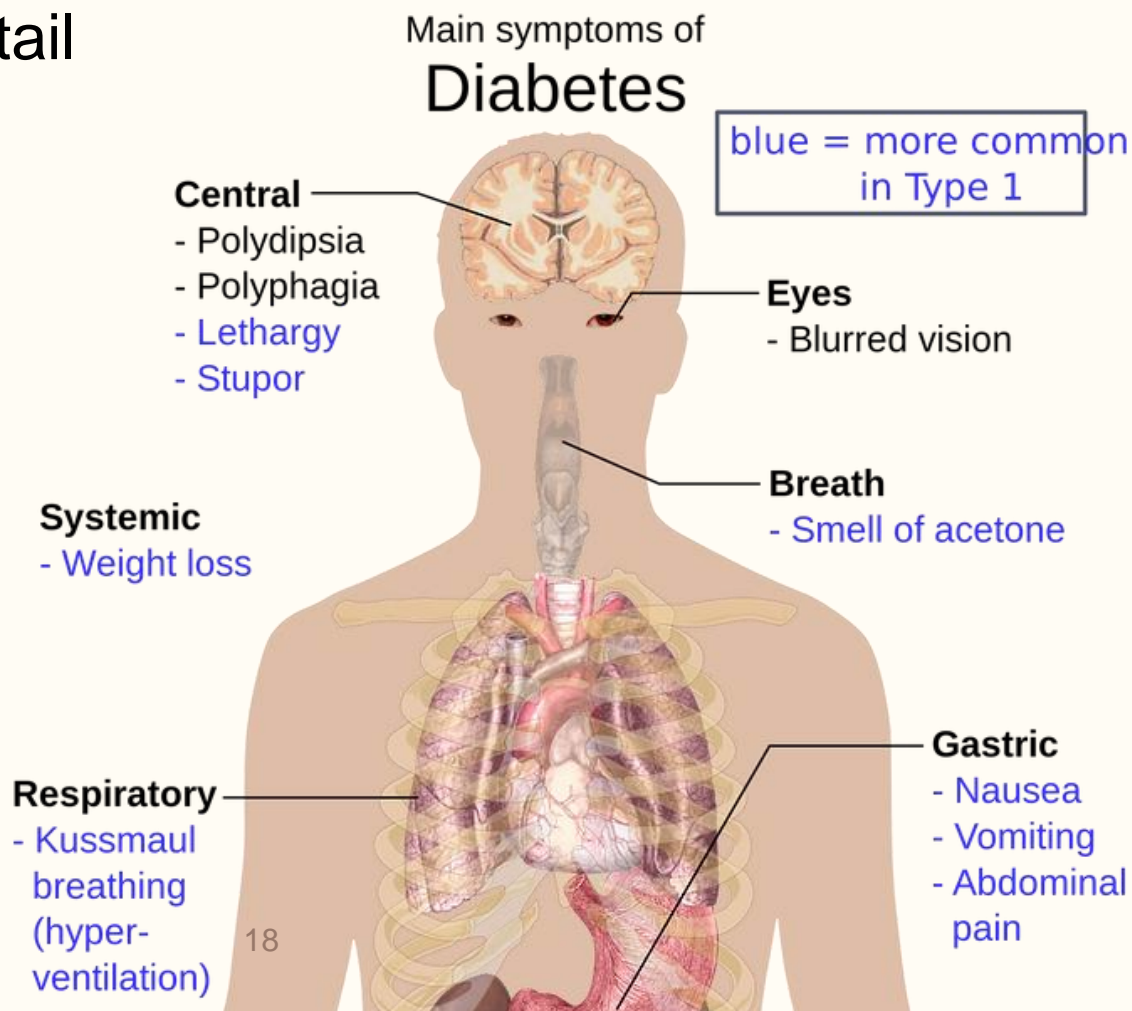
My condition	How it affects me	Solutions
Chronic fatigue	It is hard for me to commute and work a full week without a break	Work from home one day a week; adjust length of days to incorporate breaks
Visual distress syndrome	Lines of text jump around and reading extensively then gives me headaches	Orange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

How have things changed?

My condition	How it affects me	Solutions
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 then gives me 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



Working out what to ask for – components of the working day

Activity	Issue	Solution
Travel to and from work	Panic attacks in busy, crowded transport	
Travel to and from work	Mobility issues	
Break times	Uncertainty in social interactions	Buddy
Meetings away from the main workplace		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		

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!

Access to work

- Funding to cover costs of reasonable adjustments;
 - Anyone with DSA is eligible for Access to Work;
 - Can cover travel costs.
-
- [Diversity and Ability](#) supports students in applying;
 - Their toolkit – ‘[Access to work – find your way](#)’.

Disability friendly employers

- [Disability Confident Scheme](#) UK government scheme;
- But form your own judgements through recruitment process

What if I experience discrimination?

- [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.

Useful organisations plus further resources

Visit [UCL Careers – About Us – Diversity and Inclusion – Disability](#)

Topic headings:

- Organisations providing advice and support;
- Disability positive employers;
- Legal rights;
- Neurodiversity and Autism;
- Job listings;
- Internships, work experience and graduate schemes;
- Finding work opportunities through UCL;
- Funding.

How we can support you

You can email us on careers.disability@ucl.ac.uk to request:

- An extended one to one appointment with a careers consultant;
- Reasonable adjustments for an event or workshop you will be attending (please email at least 48 hours in advance);
- To receive careers information for students with disabilities or long-term health conditions (or visit your profile on MyUCLCareers to sign up);

You can view the accessibility of different teaching rooms and venues on the UCL campus on the [AccessAble website](#).

Have we covered?

- Terminology;
- Whether to 'disclose';
- If so, when;
- If then, how;
- Disability friendly employers;
- Useful organisations;
- Resources;
- How we can support you.

