

Disabled Students

Many employers recognise the advantages of recruiting a diverse workforce. But it's not always easy to identify these employers and know how to discuss your disability with them.

Disclosing disability

Whether or not to disclose a disability is a personal choice and one that disabled people should consider carefully.

Many worry about how a disability might be perceived by potential employers. However, there are potential issues of not disclosing, such as not having access to reasonable adjustments in the recruitment process or at work. This might mean you are unable to perform to your full potential. Anti-discrimination legislation protects you from the moment you disclose.

If you do disclose a disability, try to plan when you will talk about it. If a disability has affected exam performance, you may wish to mention this on your CV. Otherwise, you may want to disclose to the employer prior to interview or assessment centre. It is best to do this as early as possible so the recruiter has time to prepare and make any necessary adjustments.

If you plan to disclose, focus on being factual and positive. It can be helpful to name the disability, implications it might have for the recruitment process or for work, and then adjustments you need. This will keep the conversation focussed on what you require from the employer.

You can also use a disability to demonstrate skills you have developed, such as resilience or organisation. Any employer will be interested in how you have overcome barriers in the past and the strategies you have adopted to do so.

You can talk this through with a careers consultant or your university's disability service.

Reasonable adjustments

During the recruitment process and employment, employers are legally obligated to make reasonable adjustments so that people with disabilities are not at a disadvantage. A reasonable adjustment is a change that removes or reduces obstacles that you face because of your disability. This can include things like extra time for tests, or specialist equipment.

It is a good idea to tell the employer about any reasonable adjustments or equipment you've had during your studies or past employment, so they have an idea of what has helped in the past.

When asking for reasonable adjustments, be clear on what you need and why. Remember, the employer might not know much about your disability – you are the expert.

You will only be entitled to reasonable adjustments from the moment you declare your disability.

The Law

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal daily activities”. This doesn't have to mean that it has an adverse effect every single day.

This covers any physical, mental or learning disability, including dyslexia.

It automatically includes chronic conditions, such as diabetes, HIV/ AIDS, multiple sclerosis (MS) and cancer from the point of diagnosis (even if asymptomatic), as well as facial disfigurement.

It is unlawful to discriminate against any disabled person who is applying for a job or is in employment.

While certain disabilities may make it impossible for a person to enter some areas of employment, all reasonable alternatives should be explored before that decision is made.

If you feel you have been discriminated against, seek advice from the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) www.equalityadvisoryservice.com.

How can I identify potential employers?

Many employers in different sectors recruit a diverse workforce and promote their commitment by involvement in the government's Disability Confident scheme. They also have a [list of who has signed up to the scheme](#).

If your preferred employer does not appear on the list there are other ways to find out if they provide a supportive environment for disabled employees.

Websites, recruitment publications and annual reports can also tell you a lot about employer attitudes.

- Do they have specific information on diversity or disabilities in their recruitment information online?
- Do they include any disabled staff in their employee profiles?
- What do they say about diversity and inclusion?
- Do they have a named contact in their HR department for queries around disabilities or disclosure?
- Are there networking groups for disabled staff?
- What kind of language do they use when writing about disability?

Sometimes the messages can be subtle, but it all adds up to creating an image of the employer. Being able to speak to individuals you find through employee profiles or named HR contacts will give you an even clearer picture.

Organisations providing specialised advice

[Disability Rights UK](#)

Charity that campaigns for the rights of people with disabilities. Their site includes a careers section.

[Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

The EHRC have a legal remit to promote and monitor human rights and equality. Their site has advice on your rights as an individual and as an employee.

[EmployAbility](#)

Career resources for disabled students and graduates. Includes a vacancies section with opportunities and employer events specifically for disabled students and graduates.

[My Plus Students' Club](#)

Advice and resources about university and working life for disabled students and graduates. Includes employer profiles.

[TARGETjobs Equality and Diversity](#)

Advice on disability and mental health covering how to identify diversity positive employers, decide how and whether to disclose your circumstances, and get an understanding of your rights.

[Remploy](#)

Remploy provides employment services and employment to people with disabilities and complex barriers to work.

[VERCIDA](#)

Connects jobseekers to organisations placing a high importance on a mixed population and staff wellbeing. Employers use the site to showcase who they are, the jobs they have and the working environment they wish to create in order to attract a rich variety of people, including those with a disability.

[Leonard Cheshire Disability](#)

Supports thousands of disabled people in the UK. They campaign for change as well as providing training, and support for disabled students and jobseekers including an internship programme Change 100.

[Stack Recruitment](#)

Specialist recruitment agency connecting autistic candidates with inclusive employers.

This resource is available in alternative formats.

Please contact your careers service or email careersgroup@careers.lon.ac.uk