



How do I tell my employer about my impairment?

People often worry about whether they have to disclose an illness or disability to their employer. Although there is no legal obligation to do so, it is important to remember that there could be some benefits to telling your employer. For example, you may need some changes to working times so that you can fit in physiotherapy sessions in the morning, or any number of other reasons. We have been asked a lot of questions about this issue and thought we would give you our top 10 tips.

1. I'm not sure if I am going to be able to do this job. What do I need to think about?

At all times, focus on the job description and the person specification. How will you do the tasks in the job? Find out more about the company before you attend an interview. If the employer asks about any impairment, don't be shy. Remember to focus on what you will bring to the job. Focus on the skills and abilities you have. After all, these are the reasons you applied for the job. Remember that under the Equalities Act, employers have to make 'reasonable adjustments' to help you to do the job.

2. I have a gap in my CV, what do I do?

Employers are usually looking for people who have the experience and skills to do the job, not only the qualifications. You need to use the CV to 'sell' your skills to any potential employer, so it is wise to include all the skills that you have gained. For example, your CV could have details about any training, courses, volunteering, family life (such as bringing up children) or even hobbies on it to help you to find a job.

3. The application form asked if I was disabled. What do I do?

The employer is trying to find out more about you and is most probably aware of the Equalities Act and the need to be disability aware. If you do require adjustments to attend the interview or you know that you will need them to do the job, then this is an opportunity for you to tell the employer. Be specific about your impairments and what you bring to the company.

4. I have not disclosed my impairment and I have an interview what should I do?

If you require adjustments to attend the interview, then we suggest you make the employer aware of your requirements. If you know what you need (e.g. speech recognition software), it may be an idea to tell the employer or offer to take your own, if it is tailored to your requirements. However, it is a personal choice whether you disclose.

At the interview remain focussed on the job description and use examples of how you could do the job. For example, problem solving is very often a skill disabled people learn very quickly!

5. I have not disclosed but I have been offered a job verbally. What do I do?

In this case, it is your choice. You may want to disclose at this point or you may want to wait until you receive your written offer letter.

We have heard of people who have been offered a job verbally, but the job has been withdrawn, after an impairment has been disclosed. However, there are other cases where people have openly declared their additional skills resulting from impairments (in a positive way) and found that the employer has chosen them.

Sometimes, the employer is unaware of how they can support you and so does not know what to do. It is also useful to mention that Access to Work may pay for impairment related equipment and support (see tip 10).

6. I have a written offer, but I have not disclosed my impairment.

It is advisable to disclose your impairment. Again, you have shown the employer that you can do the job and that you have the skills that they need. You may also have difficulties in the future, as if you do not disclose and there is an issue with your performance, the employer may trigger disciplinary proceedings. They may also use health and safety rules as an excuse for dismissal.

If you do declare your impairment, your employer should make 'reasonable adjustments' under the Equalities Act. Additionally, as you know how your impairment affects you as an individual, you may want to support the employer with the process of making these adjustments.

7. I'm starting to have problems at work. What can I do?

Try and think about why the problems are happening. Has something changed? Are you effectively telling your line manager about difficulties and barriers you are facing?

It is a good idea to talk about things early on, rather than let problems build up. Also, if you don't do anything, it could be argued that you happily accepted the conditions.

It is also a good idea to write things down, so that you have a clear record of what has happened and why the problems started.

It may be wise to get some information, support and advice as quickly as possible. Perhaps you could speak to your union, if you have one. Alternatively, we are more than happy to assist with any impairment related work issues, so please feel free to contact our Work Advice Line for appropriate support and information.

8. It is getting more difficult to manage working. What can I do?

There are a number of things that may help you to continue working, if you want to do so. Perhaps a piece of equipment would make things easier for you, or maybe now is the time to consider a support worker?

You will need to think about the things that are making tasks at work difficult for you. Then, you could look at the ways in which changes could be made to make the job more manageable.

As this is such an individual issue and depends on you and the work you do, please feel free to contact our Work Advice Line for support and information about potential adjustments that may help you to stay in work.

9. Do I need to tell my colleagues about my impairment?

It is your choice about what to do. However, it is important that your line manager is aware of any impairments that may impact upon your ability to do your job. It is also important that you disclose any impairment that can cause Health and Safety issues. This is so that you do not place yourself or colleagues in danger.

10. Where can I get support to do the job / tasks I cannot do because of my impairment?

Employers often worry about the costs of reasonable adjustments. Many think this will cost £1000s where, in reality, the cost is between £30 and £400 on average. Many employers are also afraid and even unaware of what to do. This is where we can support you and, with your permission, work with the employer.

START Ability Services

Work Advice Line

You may also be able to get help from Access to Work (which is operated by Jobcentre Plus). This could be for things like:

- assistive equipment (such as an electronic riser desk, screen reader or adapted keyboard);
- travel to work costs, if you are unable to use public transport;
- and a support worker, to assist with work related activities. This can include a personal reader, communicator or interpreter, or an assistant to help with personal needs in the workplace.

More information about Access to Work is available on the Really Useful Website at <http://myreallyusefulstuff.com/a-really-useful-guide-to-access-to-work/>

And finally...

If you have any difficulties or queries concerning work, we can help you. Our contact details are available on our website at www.startability.org.uk or below.

Contact Us



Work Helpline: 01204 431638



Email: start.ability@ntlworld.com or info@adp.org.uk



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