



Securing Employment – if you have a disability, mental health difficulties and/or specific learning difficulties

Finding a job can be challenging but, if you also have a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difference (such as dyslexia or ADHD) you will have additional considerations at all stages of the application process and into employment.

Around 16% percent of working age adults in the UK are disabled,¹ 10-15% of the population have specific learning difficulties² and one in four people experience some form of mental health problem in the course of a year.³ People who experience physical or mental difficulties have the right to the same opportunities and to be treated equally as anyone else, without fear of discrimination.

Many employers recognise the advantages to recruiting a diverse workforce and the benefits of seeing an individual for their ability.

Your rights: The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as:

‘A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.’

Under the Equality Act 2010 disabled people have legal protection within their workplace. The act aims to protect disabled individuals from being discriminated against, provides them with certain rights as disabled employees, and requires employers to address your needs as a disabled person.

The Equality Act 2010 covers a range of employment areas including:

- application forms
- interview arrangements
- aptitude or proficiency tests
- job offers
- terms of employment, including pay
- promotion, transfer and training opportunities
- dismissal or redundancy
- discipline and grievances

Responsibilities employers have under the Equality Act include:

- Employers may not ask applicants questions relating to their health prior to an offer being made.
- Employers must not discriminate against employees on the grounds of their disability or for a disability-related reason, or treat them less favourably due to their disability.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-facts-and-figures/disability-facts-and-figures#fn:1>
[Accessed: 02.07.15].

² Amanda Kirby, *How to Succeed in Employment with Specific Learning Difficulties* (London: Souvenir Press Ltd, 2014).

³ Jessica Agudelo and Chris Morgan, ‘Mental Health First Aid Lite: An Introductory Mental Health Awareness Course’ (2013), p. 5.

- Employers must not discriminate against people by association with a disabled person (i.e. a carer or support worker).
- Employers must consider requests for reasonable adjustments and must be able to justify not making a requested adjustment, demonstrating why they do not feel this is reasonable. Reasonable adjustments might include flexible working hours or provision of specialist equipment and making arrangements during the assessment and interview process. For example a dyslexic candidate may receive additional time to complete an assessment test in much the same way that they would for examinations.

Where to get support:

On campus, you can seek support from a Careers Consultant for advice relating to if, and how, to disclose and what reasonable adjustments you can ask for during the recruitment process. The [Counselling and Disability Service](#) offer advice, support and guidance to students with disabilities and mental health difficulties and can support you throughout your studies.

There are a range of difficulty and disability-specific resources available online to support you before, during and after securing employment. Here are just a few:

- [Disability Rights UK](#) advises on work support issues, welfare benefits and access to higher education.
- [EmployAbility](#) helps undergraduates and graduates with a range of disabilities into employment.
- [Leonard Cheshire Disability](#) provides an internship and professional development programme for talented students and recent graduates with disabilities.
- [Mind](#) provides information on how to be mentally healthy at work.
- [Shaw Trust](#) supports people with a disability or health condition through sourcing employment and the recruitment process.
- [My Plus Students' Club](#) provides a [list of resources](#) for students with disabilities.
- The [Access to Work](#) scheme is a government scheme that provides grants to people with disabilities so they can do their job effectively.
- JobCentre Plus have specialist support available in the form of [Disability Employment Advisers](#).
- [Equality Act 2010](#): Information and guidance on the Equality Act 2010, including disability discrimination.
- [Mental Health Act 1983](#) (updated 2007): An overview of your rights under the Mental Health Act. Includes FAQs, explanations of legal terms and links to further information and support.

We can also direct you to further information and resources, specific to your individual requirements.

Your strengths:

Every individual has unique experience which will bring about a unique skill set as a result. You are likely to have gained many skills as a result of your own personal experience of your disability/difficulties and it is important to reflect this if and when you talk to an employer about it, e.g. creative problem-solving, resilience and flexibility.

Careers Consultants and Employability Development Officers can help you to recognise and articulate these skills at all stages in the recruitment process.

Disability-positive employers:

Look out for job advertisements and application forms that show the JobCentre Plus 'two ticks' Disability Symbol. This shows that an employer has signed up to five key commitments on disability, including guaranteeing an interview to all applicants with disabilities/difficulties who fulfil the minimum job criteria.



See if the employer has a policy statement on equal opportunities in their recruitment information. You can also check whether they are a member of the [Business Disability Forum](#) or the [Mindful Employer](#) Charter for Employers who are Positive about Mental Health.

Bear in mind that a lack of publicity about a commitment to diversity does not mean that they're not inclusive employers. Rather than limit yourself to organisations who publicise a commitment to diversity, try to prioritise opportunities that match your own skills and interests.

How to disclose your disability/difficulty

In order to fulfil their duty to you as a disabled person, your employer must know about your disability/difficulty. Deciding whether or not to disclose to an employer is down to your own personal choice. You are under no legal obligation to do so, and you can decide if and when you choose to disclose.

Please see our '**Guide to Disclosing Mental Health Difficulties in the Recruitment Process**' or our '**Guide to Disclosing Dyslexia and other Learning Difficulties in the Recruitment Process**' for detailed information on how and when to disclose.