



Challenges in paid employment

And how to overcome them



Equality Act 2010

- Your employer might have to make adjustments to help you do your job and to avoid you being put at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled people. These are called ‘reasonable adjustments’. They should be reasonable for both parties, and are not **legally** binding- but Employers do have a **legal duty** to make reasonable adjustments to allow people to remain in work.
- Long-term health condition = “if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities, including work”.
- [Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



Common difficulties

- Poor ergonomics re: desk furniture, leading to poor posture etc.
- Fatigue
- Long commute to work/parking challenges
- Insufficient time to rest during working day/shift (Lack of breaks).
- Long periods standing/walking/lifting/sitting/typing etc.
- Unequal work/life balance
- Poor communication between employee and employer
- Unsupportive/understanding employer



“Reasonable adjustments”

- A desk/office/workplace assessment to identify difficulties
- Provision of equipment- chairs, desks, quiet rest room, monitor screens etc.
- Change of base? Parking near to building? Ability to change method of commute?
- Additional breaks/ Regular short breaks throughout working shift. Flexible core hours- start and finish.
- Hybrid working/ working from home?
- Changing activities to avoid long periods of any one activity
- Adaptations to working practices, re-negotiating tasks
- Clear work boundaries, no unexpected ‘overtime’

Desk adaptations

- Assessment of workspace- request from Occupational Health (OH). (e.g.Desk/screen/chair height, foot and wrist supports, document holders etc.)
- Consider any extra equipment- chair, sit/stand desk, anti-glare screen protector
- Understand the importance of good posture whilst sitting- chair and desk height, eye-level screen, lumbar and elbow support
- Keep a record and **Review!**



Access to work

- Request assistance to remain in work- **Access to Work** can help you get or stay in work if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability.
 - Access to Work could give you a grant to help pay for things like:
 - specialist equipment and assistive software (e.g.Dragon, workstation equipment)
 - support workers, like a BSL interpreter, a job coach or a travel buddy
 - costs of travelling to work, if you cannot use public transport
 - adaptations to your vehicle so you can get to work
 - physical changes to your workplace
- <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>



Sources of support

- Communicate with employer- keep channels of communication open
- Request OH assessment if difficulties continue.
- Seek support from Trade Union Rep. Consider joining if not a member of Trade Union – Legal support & advice and advocacy available.
- ACAS: <https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments>
- TUC- Worksmart: <https://worksmart.org.uk/>
- UNISON: <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/disabled-members/>
- Unite : Trade Union, Unions UK, Workers Union - Unite the union



Sources of Support

- Allied Health Professionals Health and Work Report to support reasonable adjustments (e.g. OT, Physio).
[http://www.ahpf.org.uk/AHP Health and Work Report.htm](http://www.ahpf.org.uk/AHP_Health_and_Work_Report.htm)
- Support for working with a disability in Dorset:
<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/-/equality-and-diversity-disability>
- North Dorset Disability Information Service:
<https://www.helpandkindness.co.uk/service/2264/North-Dorset-Disability-Information-Service>



Citizens Advice

- Can provide advice by email, phone or in person
- BCP [Home - Citizens Advice Bournemouth
Christchurch & Poole \(citizensadvicebcp.org.uk\)](http://citizensadvicebcp.org.uk)
- East Dorset/Purbecks [Citizens Advice in East
Dorset and Purbeck \(edpcitizensadvice.org.uk\)](http://edpcitizensadvice.org.uk)
- Central Dorset [Citizens Advice Central Dorset –
Citizens Advice Central Dorset covering
Dorchester, North Dorset, Sherborne, Weymouth
& Portland \(centraldorsetca.org.uk\)](http://centraldorsetca.org.uk)



Returning to work after sick leave

- It can be challenging returning to work after time off sick, generally it is accepted that a phased return is the best approach
- Reduced hours/ days or both
- Gradually increase the amount you are working
- GP or an AHP can provide support with requesting this
- Employer should offer a referral to occupational health, who can help guide the process
- Regular support from manager – 1:1/ supervision

Further Support

- Discuss with your pain clinician
- Vocational services [Dorset HealthCare :: Vocational Services](#) GP or pain clinician referral
- Steps2 wellbeing employment advice practitioner
- Social prescribers in GP surgeries, help and care



Summary

- You are protected under the Equality Act
- Employers have a legal obligation to provide reasonable adjustments
- If you are struggling to advocate for yourself there are lots of organisations who can help
- If you've been on sick leave, discuss a phased return to work with your employer
- AHP report can offer recommendations

