

Guide to...

# Disability & Work

[bathspa.ac.uk/careers](http://bathspa.ac.uk/careers)

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# Introduction

As a student or recent graduate with a disability, you may have concerns about how your disability may impact on your career planning. For example, you may;

- be worried about whether an employer will consider you for a future job
- have concerns about how you might disclose your disability
- not be sure about your rights in the workplace

This guide aims to give you an overview of:

- what you need to know about your rights
- considerations about deciding whether to disclose your disability to a potential employer
- how to disclose (should you choose to do so)
- and considerations for job searching

There is also an extensive resources section at the end of the guide.

This guide specifically covers disability and work. For information on wider equality and diversity issues you may also like to see our **'Guide to Equality & Diversity and Work'**.

## Equality Act 2010: What you need to know

In the UK, the Equality Act (2010) makes it unlawful for employers to treat a job applicant or employee with a disability, or disabilities, less favourably than other job applicants or employees for any reasons connected to their disability (unless there is justification for such action, for example, not allowing a person with visual disabilities to drive for work).

The Equality Act (2010) considers someone to be disabled if they:

*"have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".*

Further information: <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>.

### 'Hidden disabilities'

The Equality Act's definition includes those with 'hidden disabilities' (disabilities that are not immediately obvious to others). Examples of hidden disabilities include: chronic fatigue, anxiety, digestive disorders, narcolepsy, cancer and dyscalculia.

Many famous people have had successful careers regardless of their hidden disabilities. For example, Daniel Radcliffe has dyspraxia; Halle Berry is deaf in one ear; Catherine Zeta Jones has bipolar disorder; Kylie Minogue has depression; and Emily Blunt has a stutter.

### Is my mental health condition considered a disability?

It is important to be aware that a mental health condition is also considered a disability if it has a long-term effect on your typical day-to-day activities. Long-term, in this instance, is defined as a condition that lasts,

or is likely to last, 12 months. Where an individual has a mental health condition that can be defined as a disability, they are also protected under the Equality Act (2010). The MIND website has further information on disability discrimination: <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/legal-rights/>.

## Disclosure: deciding whether to disclose

**Under the Equality Act (2010) you can decide whether or not to disclose your disability when applying for a job.** The exception to this will be if the job you are applying for will put you in situations where your disability could present a risk to your own health and safety or that of your colleagues, in which case you will need to disclose it. The decision whether or not to disclose will be a personal one but is likely to require careful consideration.

### Reasons you may not want to disclose:

- You may have concerns the employer will reject your application
- You may feel your disability does not affect your ability to do the job, so don't feel the need to draw attention to it
- You may feel disclosing your disability will overshadow the skills and experience you have to offer and, therefore, you may be concerned your application will not be considered on its merits
- You may feel uncomfortable discussing your disability and personal circumstances to a stranger

### Reasons you may want to disclose:

- You are protected by the Equality Act (2010) as it is unlawful for employers to discriminate against disabled people in their recruitment and selection procedures
- An employer has a duty to make "reasonable adjustments" for you, both in the recruitment process (e.g. extra time in recruitment assessments) and as a future employee (e.g. assistive technology)
- Employers can gain financial support via the 'Access to Work' scheme to provide specialist equipment for you, so there is no extra cost to them in hiring someone with a disability
- If you do not declare a disability, an employment tribunal might decide that your employer was justified in failing to make adjustments for you that could have otherwise assisted you in your role
- Many employers will be positive about employing people with disabilities (many employers will use the 'Two Tick' symbol to demonstrate their commitment in considering disabled applicants)
- By stressing the positive aspects of your disability you can confront any potential negative perceptions at an early stage
- For some roles you may need to complete a medical questionnaire and giving false information may result in dismissal by your future employer

### What other factors might I need to consider when deciding whether or not to disclose a disability?

- The nature of your disability and the work you are applying for
- The terms and conditions of the job
- If there are any health and safety issues or considerations
- The nature and culture of the organisation, for example if the employer readily promotes themselves to be an equal opportunities employer
- The consequences of not disclosing your disability, so is there a possibility your disability could come to light in the future and, if so, how would you deal with it if this happened?

## When should I disclose?

If you decide to disclose, think about what stage you may want to do this. This may differ for each application you make. You may have the option to do this within a job application form or you may feel strongly that it is important for you to disclose within a cover letter that is accompanying your CV. It may be the case, for example, that by disclosing as part of the recruitment process 'reasonable adjustments' can be made to assist you in participating in recruitment processes. Do make sure you familiarise yourself with the Equality Act (2010) and be prepared to inform employers about their legal obligations.

## Disclosure: how to disclose

If you do decide to disclose, always be positive in doing so and focus on what you *can do* rather than what you can't or would find difficult. For example, you could focus on:

- What you have learnt from managing your disability
- Your strengths and transferable skills (e.g. problem solving, adaptability)
- Your personal qualities and what you have learnt from your disability in terms of your approach to work and life, such as how you may have had to overcome difficulties (e.g. determination, maturity)

Examples:

*"Because I am dyslexic I have developed a range of strategies in the collection and processing of information and in structuring my work. In addition I make full use of a variety of computer software to assist my written work."*

*"I have strong lip reading skills and have learnt to alert people promptly to the fact I need to see their face in order to hear them in meetings. Others have commented that this has led to greater thoughtfulness in meetings, as each participant is ensuring that their points are clearly made and understood".*

### Disclosing at initial application

Some employers may use an Equality Monitoring Form as part of their recruitment processes, particularly if the method of application is via an application form. The form may ask whether or not you identify yourself to have a disability, and could be an opportunity to disclose should you wish to do so. Often employers will provide an option to tick 'prefer not to say' if you do not want to disclose.

It is important to be aware that such Equality Monitoring Forms would typically be detached from the main application form by the employer's human resources department and not passed onto those shortlisting applicants. The information you provide in the form must not be used by the employer to discriminate against you. Instead, the use of Equality Monitoring Forms can help employers understand if their recruitment processes are fair and attract a diverse range of applicants.

If you are applying for a role using a CV and cover letter, you can use the cover letter to disclose. Any disclosure should focus on the positives in terms of your strengths of coping with your disability. You could also use the opportunity to make the employer aware of any support they can access when employing people with disabilities. Your cover letter should not be completely dominated by disclosure, as it is important to still use your cover letter to explain why your qualifications, skills and experience make you the right candidate for the role. For an example, please refer to the '**Guide to Covering Letters and Emails**'.

## Disclosing prior to interview/assessment centre

If you are invited to a job interview or assessment centre you are likely to be asked if there are any special arrangements the employer might need to make in order to ensure you can fully participate. Think about the recruitment methods being used and your own personal circumstances. You might consider issues around:

- Getting to the interview venue (e.g. do you need a parking permit to park close by?)
- Accessibility of the interview venue and offices (as you may be given a tour of the place of work)
- Completion of any selection tasks as part of the interview day (for example, additional time allowed to complete a work based task or psychometric test)
- Ability to fully engage in an interview (e.g. access to a hearing loop)

Whilst it is **your decision** whether or not to inform the employer of any adjustments you may need, by not doing so there is the potential for difficulties to arise both for you and the employer at interview/assessment centre.

## Disclosing at an interview

If you decide to disclose during the interview, again do so positively. You may decide to disclose at a later stage of the interview so that you have already focused on the qualifications, skills and experience you possess that are required of the successful candidate.

Make sure you are ready to answer any additional questions the employer may ask and familiarise yourself with the Equality Act (2010) and the 'Access to Work' process (see below).

## Disclosing at job offer

You may decide to disclose at job offer stage and as part of negotiating a start date. If you need reasonable adjustments, disclosing at job offer stage would give an employer time to put any reasonable adjustments in place. Be mindful that the employer may make a job offer that is conditional to ensure that you meet the health requirements of the job, if applicable.

At this stage, the employer is permitted to ask questions about your disability and health but cannot reject someone simply because they have a disability. If you are required to complete a health questionnaire at job offer stage, it is important to answer questions honestly. Not doing so may jeopardise your career prospects at a later stage.

## Disclosing once you have started a new role

If you decide to disclose once you are in the role, consider how soon after starting you feel you would want to broach the subject. **If making use of the 'Access to Work' scheme (see below) you will need to apply for support within 6 weeks of starting a new post to ensure the scheme can cover 100% of the costs to support you.**

Ideally, your initial point of contact would be with your Line Manager, but you may also want support from your HR department and/or from an external organisation. Also bear in mind that if you do not disclose but your disability becomes known to the employer at a later stage, for example through ill-health, how you might deal with this?

Disability Rights UK have a factsheet called 'Telling people you are disabled: an easy and clear guide for students': <http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/telling-people-you%E2%80%99re-disabled-clear-and-easy-guide-students>

## Reasonable adjustments

'Reasonable adjustments' are a key part of the Equality Act (2010) and can be essential to enabling a disabled person to overcome any disadvantages they may otherwise face in recruitment processes or as an employee. Reasonable adjustments are *not* about receiving preferential treatment but about allowing an individual to overcome difficulties that non-disabled candidates and employees don't themselves face.

### Examples of reasonable adjustments as a candidate in recruitment processes:

- Availability of job descriptions and application forms in different formats (e.g. large print)
- Allowing extra time for psychometric tests / recruitment tasks
- Ensuring an accessible interview room is available, for example for those who may use a wheelchair or require a hearing loop

### Examples of reasonable adjustments as an employee in the workplace:

- Allowing for flexible work hours
- Availability of modified equipment, such as a screen reader, textphone or specialised keyboard
- Providing instructions in accessible formats
- Providing appropriate office furniture
- Ensuring accessible workspace, including physical changes to the office environment such as installing an audio-visual fire alarm for a deaf person

## 'Access to Work' scheme

'Access to Work' is a government scheme that provides grants to employers to give them the opportunity to help people with disabilities do their job. It enables people with disabilities to start work and stay in work.

The grant pays for practical support, such as:

- Specialist equipment
- Disability awareness training for work colleagues
- A communicator at a job interview

Your disability must affect your ability to do your job in order for you to be eligible for 'Access to Work'. To read about all the eligibility criteria go to: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview>. [The website also contains details about how to claim for 'Access to Work'](#).

## Job searching

The majority of employers seek to ensure they have a diverse workforce and that there is equality of opportunity for all candidates applying for jobs. In preparing for and undertaking job searching, you may find it useful to:

- Understand as clearly as you can the areas in which your disability or disabilities affect you before you start your job searching. Think about the strategies you might have developed in order to deal

with any difficulties as well as consider what reasonable adjustments you feel might need to be made in order to assist you in your work. Thinking about this carefully will help you feel more positive about job searching.

- Spend time researching employers by checking their websites, social media presence, and recruitment pages.
  - Does the employer make reference to an Equality and Diversity policy, for example, in its recruitment documents? If so, does the employer highlight specific information about how it ensures fairness at work for people with disabilities?
  - Do the Human Resource pages of the employer's website mention a dedicated Equality and Diversity Officer?
  - Does the employer provide information about the range of staff it employs from diverse backgrounds?
- Check to see if employers are members of relevant business networks. For example, Business in the Community (BITC) is a business network which, amongst other key areas, looks to tackle issues around ensuring fairness and equality of opportunity among employees in the workplace. On the website you can search a directory of business members (<http://www.bitc.org.uk/>).
- You can also search to see which business members are part of the Business Disability Forum (<http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/>) which aims to build disability-smart organisations.
- Employers can also sign up to Mindful Employer (<http://www.mindfulemployer.net/>), an organisation for employers who are supportive of employees with mental health issues.
- Look out for the 'Disability Confident' symbol or the 'Two Ticks' symbol. Employers displaying either symbol on a job advertisement means they guarantee an interview to applicants who meet the criteria for the post and declare themselves to have a disability.

For further information go to: <https://www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled/looking-for-a-job>. For further information on the Disability Confident scheme: <https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk/> (this includes a list of organisations that currently sign up to the scheme).



- Attend careers fairs as this will give you the opportunity to find out more about the culture of the organisation and the diversity of its workforce.
- Use the resource links at the end of this guide to seek advice from support organisations who may be able to signpost you to employers who take equality and diversity seriously.



## Job websites

As mentioned, the majority of employers will be positive about disability, therefore, it is important to ensure you use a broad range of job websites, as well as employer websites as part of your job search. There are also a number of websites that exist to advertise opportunities specifically to encourage individuals with disabilities to apply.

- <http://www.employ-ability.org.uk/> - Employ Ability (Graduate website with opportunities for students and graduates with disabilities, including internships and work experience opportunities)
- <http://www.disabilityjobsite.co.uk/> - The companies in Disability Jobsite all share one common trait: their dedication to removing barriers to hiring and promoting people with disabilities.
- <http://www.evenbreak.co.uk/> - Evenbreak (matching employers with talented disabled candidates)
- <http://www.disabledworkers.org.uk/> - Disabled Workers (registered charity which includes job opportunities)
- <http://www.museumsassociation.org/careers/diversify> - Museum's Association Diversity page (for those interested in working in museums)
- <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/what-we-can-do-you/working/employment-support-and-internships/internships-students-and-graduates> - Change 100 paid internship opportunities for students and graduates with disabilities (includes downloadable brochure).

## Change 100 Scheme

Change 100 is a national UK scheme that aims to remove the barriers experienced by disabled students and graduates in the workplace. The scheme provides paid summer work placements, development and mentoring opportunities with a range of employers. To apply for Change 100 you must meet the following criteria;

- Have a disability or long-term health condition
- Be in your penultimate or final year of an undergraduate or postgraduate university degree (or have graduated within the last two years)
- Have achieved or be predicted to achieve or 2:1 or first in your undergraduate degree (any subject)
- Be eligible to work in the UK for the duration of the full summer placement

For further information go to: <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/what-we-can-do-you/working/employment-support-and-internships/internships-students-and-graduates>. You can also download the Change 100 brochure: [file:///C:/Users/YORV1/Downloads/change\\_100\\_student\\_brochure.pdf](file:///C:/Users/YORV1/Downloads/change_100_student_brochure.pdf).

## Self-employment

Self-employment can be an alternative option for some people with disabilities as it can offer greater flexibility for individuals to choose how, when and where to work. Depending on your circumstances, you may also decide on a career that gives you the option of combining both work as a paid employee (perhaps part-time) with some self-employment (often referred to as a 'portfolio career' where your income is derived from a range of sources). For specific information on exploring self-employment:

- <http://www.adp.org.uk/business.php> - The Association of Disabled Entrepreneurs
- <http://www.disabledentrepreneurs.co.uk/> - Disabled Entrepreneurs UK
- <http://www.stelios.com/stelios-award-uk/blog.html> - Stelios Award for Disabled Entrepreneurs

## Disability and employment resources

- <http://usemyability.com/> - Use My Ability (helps students with disabilities develop their employability skills)
- <http://www.elevationnetworks.org/> - Elevation Networks (networking, events, mentoring, internships and volunteer opportunities for students and graduates with disabilities)
- <https://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/> - Shaw Trust
- <http://www.remploy.co.uk/> - Remploy
- <http://www.scope.org.uk/> - Scope
- <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/> - Leonard Cheshire (supports disabled people in finding work and starting their own businesses)
- <http://disabilityrightsuk.org/> - Disability Rights UK (includes Education, Employment and Skills section)
- <http://www.dyspraxicadults.org.uk/forums/> - Dyspraxic Adults (forums for advice on work)
- <http://deafunity.org/deaf-unity-projects/deaf-alumni/> - Deaf Unity (a meeting point for deaf graduates)
- <http://www.deafplus.org/> - Deaf Plus (offers an employment and training service)
- <http://www.bid.org.uk/> - B.I.D. (charity promoting choice and independence among people with physical disabilities, sensory disabilities and mental health)
- <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/organising/work-and-cancer/information-for-employees/your-rights.html> - Macmillan resources and information about your rights if you are affected by cancer (includes a guide 'Work and Cancer').

## Advice guides

- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/equality-and-diversity/668665-equality-and-diversity-issues-and-your-graduate-job-hunt> - TARGET Jobs (includes a section on disability and mental health)
- <http://www.greatwithdisability.com/index.php> - Careers advice for graduates with disabilities
- <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/work/#.V8mT4PkrKUK> – MIND tips for supporting mental health at work
- <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/your-organisation/support-workplace> - Time to Change (empowering people to feel confident about talking about mental health)

## National associations and organisations

- [www.adp.org.uk](http://www.adp.org.uk) – Association of Disabled Professionals (provides support to individuals in employment or running their own business)
- <http://www.autism.org.uk/> - National Autistic Society
- <http://www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk/> - Asperger Foundation
- <http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/> - Dyslexia Action
- <http://www.dyslexia-help.org/> - Dyslexia Foundation
- <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/> - British Dyslexia Association (including dyscalculia)
- <http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/> - Action on Hearing Loss
- <http://www.rethink.org/> - Rethink Mental Illness
- <http://www.rnib.org.uk/> - Royal National Institute for Blind People

- <http://www.blindinbusiness.org.uk/> - Blind in Business (helping blind and partially sighted people in work)
- <http://aadduk.org/> - AADD-UK
- <https://www.epilepsy.org.uk/> - Epilepsy Action
- <http://deafunity.org/> - Deaf Unity
- <http://www.stammering.org/> - British Stammering Association
- <http://www.actionforme.org.uk/> - Action for M.E. (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis)

## Further support from Bath Spa Careers

If you would like further support from Bath Spa Careers & Employability go to **[bathspa.ac.uk/careers](http://bathspa.ac.uk/careers)** to see the ways in which you can access our service, including workshops and events, appointments and to access our extensive range of resources.

As a student or recent graduate with disabilities you may have extra considerations about planning your career. If you would like to discuss this with someone please contact Bath Spa Careers on 01225 875525 or at [careers@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:careers@bathspa.ac.uk).

Whilst we endeavour to make sure that the information provided in this guide is current, we are unable to endorse particular organisations or opportunities. This guide was last updated in Summer 2019.

# GET A HEAD START

We're here to help you get a great start to your career. We're open all year round, so come and visit us in the Careers Space, book an appointment, or get in touch.

Careers Space, SL.G04  
Steward's Lodge

careers@bathspa.ac.uk  
01225 875525

[www.bathspa.ac.uk/careers](http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/careers)

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Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this leaflet is accurate but we recommend that you check all details carefully.

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