

Managing disability within a team

This is an overview of a manager's responsibilities and actions to take if someone declares a disability.

Managers have an important role in ensuring disabled colleagues (staff and volunteers) are enabled to perform their role and make a full contribution to the NSPCC.

Managers are an important decision maker in either recognising that someone may have a disability and require adjustments, or responding to requests from disabled colleagues for a reasonable adjustment to an aspect of their job. Managers also have the responsibility, where they appoint new people with a disability, to make sure that any reasonable adjustments are in place before or as soon as possible after they start work.

The aim of this guidance is to provide managers with an overview of disability and guidance to assist them in the various stages of discussion with their people and with anyone else who will be able to provide support and solutions.

Disabled people are entitled to the same sort of staff development, support and guidance in their work and involvement in what goes on in their area of the organisation as anyone else. Managers are responsible for making sure that this happens.

Step by step process for managers:

- Initial discussion with member of the team
- What sort of reasonable adjustments can be considered?
- Record the outcomes on the reasonable adjustments agreement
- Sources of funding
- Implement
- Review

Please note that this guidance will apply equally to paid members of staff and to volunteers.

Reasonable adjustments - what to consider

An employer failing to make 'reasonable adjustments' for a disabled job applicant or employee is one of the most common types of disability discrimination. If adjustments are 'reasonable', an employer must implement them to ensure its workplace or practices do not disadvantage a disabled job applicant or employee already with the organisation.

Employers should ensure they have rules in place to prevent disability discrimination in:

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- recruitment and selection
- determining pay, terms and conditions
- sickness absence
- training and development
- promotion
- dismissal
- redundancy.

If a workplace feature or practice puts an employee with a disability at a disadvantage, managers should look to see what 'reasonable adjustments' can be made and meet with the individual to discuss what can be done to help them. For example, this could be as simple as supplying a special chair or power-assisted piece of equipment. Reasonable adjustments might also include changing some of the employee's duties, (but it would not be reasonable to change responsibilities / duties that are essential to the role).

Sometimes managers might want some medical evidence about the disability and the effect it has on the person. Our occupational health provider can help with this (with the consent of the individual) or managers can ask for a letter from their employee's GP / specialist depending on the circumstances.

If adjustment is agreed:

Following the meeting, if after assessing the circumstances the manager decides that the adjustment being requested is reasonable and they can accommodate it, the manager should confirm this in writing using the reasonable adjustments agreement which both parties should sign and keep a copy of.

If new equipment is necessary, managers might need to speak to Procurement. Managers might also need to speak to a member of the facilities team or the health and safety manager. It is important for managers to make sure that the individual is kept informed about what is happening and who is involved, especially if there are any delays.

Once the adjustment is in place managers will need to have regular review meetings to ensure arrangements are working as they should and the individual is happy.

If adjustment cannot be agreed:

Sometimes managers might decide that a request for an adjustment is not reasonable and cannot be accommodated. For example, maybe the financial cost is too great, or the adjustment would be too disruptive to implement. In such circumstances, managers will need to make sure they let the individual know their decision and the reasons behind it. Wherever possible, managers should try and negotiate an alternative or come to a different arrangement. Managers should explore every avenue and option to try and put the adjustment in place, and will need to demonstrate very clear reasons if it cannot be done which should be communicated to the individual.

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Disability leave

We use trigger points to highlight high levels of absence that might prompt further action.

However, if sickness is related to a disability that we are aware of, managers should not include these absences when they calculate sickness triggers. Absence related to a disability should be recorded so that managers can monitor it but it should be dis-regarded for sickness trigger purposes.

Managers are expected to be flexible in relation to medical appointments and agree how time is to be recorded.

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