

Working with Colleagues with a Disability

– the basics for line managers

1. WHO ARE DISABLED PEOPLE?

The term 'disabled people' covers a wide range different people with different impairments or learning difficulties, which may or may not affect the way they do their job.

You have a responsibility to make sure your disabled staff are treated fairly and have the same opportunities as their non-disabled colleagues. People with disabilities are protected against discrimination at work under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA).

The term 'disability' is so wide that you may not realise that someone has a disability, and some people who have a disability may not even think of themselves as disabled.

For more detailed information, please take a look at the LLUK fact sheet: "What is disability? A definition..."

2. RECRUITING

You must ensure that all the processes are barrier-free for disabled candidates. Recruitment dos and don'ts: **Replace** 'must be able to touch type at 80 wpm' *with* 'must be able to produce accurate reports using a word processing package.' **Replace** 'must be able to drive and have a clean driving licence' *with* 'extensive travel throughout the UK to meet clients essential.'

3. INTERVIEWING

Make sure that you make **reasonable adjustments** for all candidates. Ask every candidate if they have any particular requirements for the interview, e.g. an interview time which means they do not have to travel during rush hour.

Interview dos and don'ts: *Don't ask* "how will the pressure of tight deadlines affect your disability?" *Do ask* "this job involves working under pressure to tight deadlines. Tell us about situations where you've been under pressure and how you ensured you met deadlines."

Be prepared to: hold interviews in an accessible location, e.g. on the ground floor or in a room accessible by a lift; organise a sign language interpreter, or allow the candidate to be accompanied by a support worker.

4. INDUCTION PERIOD

Before your disabled colleague starts work check that all induction processes are accessible:

- Are all meetings with colleagues booked in accessible rooms?
- Is the IT Department aware of any specialist software and hardware their new colleague will be using?
- Do training videos used have subtitles for employees who are deaf or hard of hearing or audio description for employees with visual impairments?
- Are colleagues aware of reasonable adjustments they may need to make?

It is your responsibility to ensure that your team member has the equipment and adjustments needed to do their job and you will need to keep this under review. You may need to keep checking on progress with colleagues in other departments.

For more information, please take a look at the LLUK fact sheet: "What is a Reasonable Adjustment?"

4. MANAGING PERFORMANCE

You should ask everyone you manage what they need to make their job easier, not just employees who have declared a disability.

You should make reasonable adjustments if:

- the employee tells you that they have a disability, illness or injury;
- you think your employee may have a disability; and / or
- making reasonable adjustment would help the employee to do their job better, regardless of disability.

This approach will help you to:

- meet your organisation's obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to make reasonable adjustments;
- encourage members of your team to tell you about their disability, illness, injury or learning difficulty that they have; and
- get the best from your team as it will help to remove any barriers that prevent them from working to the best of their ability.

5. MANAGING DISABILITY RELATED SICKNESS ABSENCE

Make sure you know what your organisation's policy is on recording disability-related sickness absence. It is good practice to record it separately. If an employee is absent from work for a long time, try to keep in touch with them.

When you contact or see them:

- Ask them how they are and what their doctors have said about their recovery.
- Ask if you can make any changes to the way they work. This may aid a quicker return to the workplace.
- Tell them about what has been happening at work and about their colleagues.
- Ask if they would like to receive any documents from work, so they can stay up to date.

6. DISCIPLINARY & GRIEVANCE PROCESS

You can improve an employee's performance by making adjustments. Disciplinary and grievance procedures should be in alternative formats. Hearings should be conducted in an accessible venue. Sign language interpreters, support workers or a family member may need to be present. Questions may need to be asked one at a time of the employee or provided in writing as well as asked verbally.

7. PROMOTION & ENDING EMPLOYMENT

Every employee who resigns should be offered an exit interview. All employees, not just those who have disclosed a disability, should be asked if their decision to leave was influenced by a disability and if they think the organisation had failed to make reasonable adjustments or allow them to progress because of their disability.

Disabled employees who are made redundant should be offered the same redeployment opportunities as everyone else. Selecting a candidate for redundancy because of their disability is unlawful. Likewise, disabled employees who retire should be treated as everyone else.

Dismissing a disabled employee for a reason relating to their disability is a last resort and should only be done after advice has been sought from occupational health, doctors and other experts, human resources and legal advisers.

It is lawful, however, to dismiss a disabled employee for reasons that are not related to their disability.

When a disabled person is promoted, the new manager will need to know what reasonable adjustments their new employee needs.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

This fact sheet has been compiled using a guide from the Employer's Forum on Disability, details can be found at: www.employers-forum.co.uk.