Understanding disability

Disability in the UK

- 93% of disabled people don’t use a wheelchair
- 52.3% of working age disabled people are in employment, compared to 81.7% of working age non-disabled people
- 83% of disabled people acquire their health condition during working age
- Disabled people from BAME backgrounds report greater social inequalities compared to disabled people from white backgrounds

What is a disability?

- A condition that effects an individual’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- A mental health or physical condition.
- Disabilities can be visible or hidden.
- Can last 12 months or longer and be recurring.

Long-term conditions which are classed as a disability

- Heart disease
- Musculoskeletal conditions (including spinal-cord, arms, legs and joints)
- Lung or respiratory conditions
- Stroke
- Mental health conditions (depression, anxiety and bipolar)
- Diabetes
- Learning difficulties and neuro-diverse conditions (eg autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia)
- Visual, auditory and speech impairments
- Cancer (including those with and who have survived cancer)
- HIV
- Multiple sclerosis

Taking action on barriers that disabled staff may experience

**Organisations**

**Decision-making**
Establish a disabled staff network and engage with disabled staff and trade unions. Involve them in decision-making and the development of your WDES action plan.

**Employment and recruitment**
Explore with disabled staff what actions your organisation can take to tackle any equalities in employment and recruitment.

**Career development**
Introduce a developmental/talent management programme for disabled staff.

**Policies and practice**
Review policies such as absence management and reasonable adjustments to identify any gaps and make improvements. Consider introducing a Health Passport.

**Attitudes**
Develop actions the organisation can take to address disablism and promote an inclusive culture that has zero tolerance of discrimination.

**Transport**
Use and promote the Access to Work scheme, which provides funding for disabled staff, including transport costs for getting to and from work.

**Buildings and facilities**
Agree steps your organisation can take to improve access into and within its built environment. Consider inclusion from the outset of any new building developments.

**Information**
Run an internal campaign to raise awareness of what a disability is and encourage staff to record their disability on ESR. Review the NHS Accessible Information Standard.

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**Line managers**

**Decision-making**
Engage with staff. Encourage open conversations to understand their challenges. Involve them in decisions that will have an impact on their working lives.

**Employment and recruitment**
Understand the benefits of employing disabled staff, your responsibilities as a manager and how to recruit and support staff.

**Career development**
Explore what opportunities are available for staff to progress in their career and support them on their journey.

**Policies and practice**
Improve understanding of organisational policies around absence management, reasonable adjustments and health passports so you can support staff.

**Attitudes**
Proactively address any behaviour that might adversely impact or affect someone who identifies as disabled, or differently abled.

**Transport**
Discuss any needs with staff and explore opportunities with HR to resolve issues - ask about the Access to Work scheme.

**Buildings and facilities**
Initiate a regular item at team meetings to discuss any reasonable adjustments or adaptations that people might need to help them in their roles.

**Information**
Educate yourself on what it is like to have a disability and what you can do to support your staff, both existing and prospective. Encourage staff to record their disability on ESR.

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**Further Information**

- [NHS Workforce Disability Equality Standard](#)
- [NHS Employers Disability Resource Library](#)