

Hidden disabilities

Reasonable Adjustments



Hidden disabilities are disabilities that are not immediately obvious to others.

Not every disability is visible - some are hidden

"It is estimated that 70% of people with a disability in the UK have a hidden disability."

Liz Lynne , Vice President of the European Parliament's Disability Intergroup.

The list of medical conditions that may be regarded as hidden disabilities is very long. It can include people with:

- epilepsy;
- diabetes;
- sickle cell condition;
- chronic fatigue syndrome or ME;
- cystic fibrosis;
- cancer;
- HIV and AIDS; and,
- heart, liver or kidney problems.

The conditions may be short term or long term; stable or progressive; constant or unpredictable and fluctuating; controlled by medication or another treatment; or, untreatable.

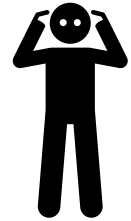
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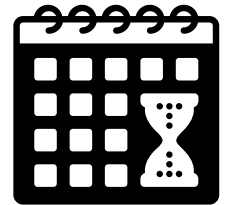
The impact of hidden disabilities on daily life and studying can be considerable.

They often interfere with concentration and stamina, as can the medications that are used to treat them.



Rather like long term disabled people, those with hidden disabilities may be well and coping one week and absent the next.

They can have difficulties meeting deadlines or participating in group work.



It may not be possible for them to arrange medical appointments or treatments that do not clash with day to day life.

Because of the variation in symptoms it is not possible to generalise about how hidden disabilities may affect work.

Some people may want colleagues to be aware of their condition in case they have difficulties or a medical emergency, such as fainting or a seizure.



Colleagues should be aware of what to do in case of medical emergencies.

Some people may wish their colleagues to know about their medical condition and may be willing to discuss it openly.



Others may want their privacy protected and may want discretion and confidentiality.

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Work Place Reasonable Adjustments: what you and your colleagues can do at your workplace



1. Always consult the individual.



2. Provide staff training and raise awareness.



2. Create an environment that encourages staff with a hidden disability to declare it.

4. Consider making a provision for Disability Leave. This is viewed under the legislation as a reasonable adjustment for a disabled employee.

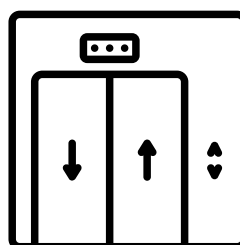
5. Change the recruitment process so a candidate with a hidden disability can be considered for a job.



6. Do things another way, such as allowing someone with social anxiety disorder to have their own desk instead of hot-desking.



7. Make physical changes to the workplace, like installing lifts for people who struggle with stairs or an audio-visual fire alarm for a deaf person.



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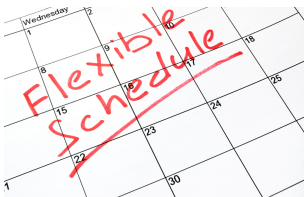
8. Enable a disabled person to work elsewhere, such as on the ground floor for someone who struggles with stairs.



9. Change equipment, for example provide a special keyboard for those with arthritis.



10. Allow employees who become disabled to make a phased return to work, including flexible hours or part-time working.



11. Offer employees training opportunities, recreation and refreshment facilities.



12. Inform those with hidden disabilities and disabling medical conditions that they can apply for home working support.



13. If they experience fatigue and pain, having access to their own computer so that they can work at home at their own pace



14. The key to providing support for people with medical conditions is flexibility and responsiveness.

