

Factsheet for People Leaders – Disability or Long-Term Conditions

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1. What is the purpose of this document?

This document supports People Leaders to have discussions with team members about their disability and/or health condition.

As People Leaders, it is important that we champion the Westminster Way pillars that:

- Everyone is valued
- Everyone has talent
- Everyone is a leader

Valuing the differences in our employees enriches the organisation. It is important to acknowledge that colleagues with disabilities (visible and not immediately visible), possess a wide array of talents that we are keen to attract and retain as we work to become an employer of choice.

To encourage and empower our employees with disabilities to be a leader in their role, our aim is to create an atmosphere where those with a disability or long-term health condition feel comfortable sharing so we are able to work together to provide an environment within which everyone can be themselves and perform to the best of their ability. This could include various reasonable adjustments.

Please refer to [WCC Disability Policy](#) and [Reasonable Adjustments Guidance](#) alongside this factsheet.

2. What is a disability?

For the purposes of [the Equality Act \(2010\)](#), the term 'disability' covers both physical and mental conditions that have a substantial and long-term effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. A long-term effect is one which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months.

People with conditions such as insulin-dependent diabetes, epilepsy, depression, or chronic pain may be covered under the definition of disability as per the Equality Act, regardless of whether medication helps manage symptoms to the point they may not be evident. Some conditions such as HIV, multiple sclerosis (MS), and cancer are classed as disabilities from the date of diagnosis.

It is also important to note that long term conditions can include neurodiverse conditions including but not limited to Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia.

People who have had a disability in the past, which had a substantial adverse effect on their normal day-to-day activities for a period of at least 12 months (such as depression from which they may be in recovery) may be also protected by the Equality Act.

[Further information about the definition of a disability can be found on the UK Government website here.](#)

3. What are my responsibilities as a People Leader?

As a People Leader you need to create an inclusive environment where staff feel valued and unhindered by barriers. Therefore you need to be aware of the following:

- [Disability Policy](#)
- [Reasonable adjustment](#) policies
- Wider HR policies that support inclusion, diversity, health, and wellbeing.

Why have a conversation about disability or a long-term condition?

As a People Leader it is important to encourage your team to share with you that they have a disability. With this knowledge you can enable them to work at their most effective by understanding their condition and implementing any reasonable adjustments.

Ideally, WCC and you have created an environment where employees are happy to have this conversation. We have a duty of care to look after our staff, supporting the Westminster Way pillar that Everyone is Valued.

4. Things to consider before starting the conversation

- Familiarise yourself with HR policies including the [Disability Policy](#) and [reasonable adjustments policy](#).
- Language and behaviour. Using the incorrect terminology can sometimes leave people feeling uncomfortable out of fear of offense. Disabled people will have different preferences and views

on what language they find appropriate or inappropriate. Where you are unsure about language, ask the person what they would prefer. For further information, consult the forthcoming Inclusive Language guide.

- Talk to the team members as you would with anyone else, taking care to consciously listen, and focus on the person's ability rather than their disability or long-term condition.
- How much someone wishes to talk about their disability or long-term condition depends on their individual preferences and you need to be receptive to those who may not wish to discuss their experience.
- Don't make assumptions. Remember that everyone is different and some people with a disability or long-term condition may not require any reasonable adjustments.
- Treat people as individuals. Two people with the same disability or long-term condition may not require the exact same adjustments.
- Be aware that you may have unconscious bias. So, give your employee the freedom to give you information in their own way.
- Confidentiality: any information shared should be treated as confidential and stored as 'special data'. So, consent should be sought from the individual where their information is being shared.
- Support: if there is a request for support, follow up with the [Employee Relations](#) team and/or the individual's People Leader with permission from individual.

5. How do I start a conversation & what to include?

- Ensure the discussion is uninterrupted and sufficient time is allocated. Tips include booking a private room for the conversation or making sure the team member is comfortable with the content being discussed virtually if you are working remotely.
- If you have a new starter, as part of the induction, ask the employee if they require any support in carrying out their work. If they do, you will need to discuss what support they need and whether they are comfortable receiving this from you. What does this support look like? It may be different to what you expect. You will also need to discuss any obstacles and how these can be removed, using a Tailored Adjustment Plan (see below).
- It is best practice to have these discussions this from time to time in case a new condition develops, an existing one has changed or their role or working environment have changed.
- You are encouraged to have regular 'check-ins' and use these meetings to ask about your staff member's health and wellbeing.
- As a People Leader you have a responsibility to carry out some research to educate yourself using various means including contacts

at specialist organisations. So, ask your team member if they have any suggestions of where to go for additional information rather than asking them to teach you.

- You must complete a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEPs) where an employee has self-identified as requiring reasonable adjustments. The [Corporate Health and Safety team](#) can advise People Leaders who have any questions.

6. Reasonable Adjustments

We have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce the effect of any barriers caused by a disability. This also applies when you could reasonably be expected to know that a person is disabled.

Therefore, be curious about signs that could indicate a disability or health condition like a change in performance, a change of behaviour or routine, coming late etc, increase in sickness absences.

WCC [Reasonable Adjustments Guidance](#) provides much information, it is for all staff to ensure they feel included, supported, and treated with dignity and respect; in line with the key pillar of our Westminster Way of Working: Everyone is Valued. The guide covers the following areas, please click to direct you to the relevant section on the guide:

- [What is a reasonable adjustment?](#) A reasonable adjustment is an adjustment that will enable an employee to thrive within the organisation and fulfil their potential.
- [Keeping a record of reasonable adjustments](#) – the individual may have a 'reasonable adjustments passport' which documents what has worked. Be aware that adjustments can change over time, due to nature of condition and/ or to adapt to role, so do review regularly. If there is no 'reasonable adjustments passport', then use the [Tailored Adjustment Plan](#) provided by the Business Disability Forum.
- [When you don't need to make reasonable adjustments](#)
- [Cost of reasonable adjustments](#) – cost is only one factor to be considered
- [Adapting policies and procedures](#) – no one size fits all, so this may be required in some instances but be sure to consult the HR Business Partner for your service where adaptations are being made, to ensure the legality of your actions.

7. Advice & Support

For advice and assistance, these should be your first points of contact:

- [Diversity and Inclusion Hub](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [Your Trade Union](#)
- [The ABLE Network](#)

For additional support, see below:

- Information on Assistive Technology can be found within the [IT Accessibility Hub](#)
- There are a variety of learning courses available via WCC's Learning and Development team, including general disability and equality training, neurodiversity and mental health.
- [The Business Disability Forum](#) offers excellent online resources free, register [here](#).
 - Email them using these links:
advice@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk,
enquiries@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk
 - Telephone: 020 7403 3020
 - Workplace adjustments webinar ([video](#)) by Business Disability Forum
- Employee Assistance Programme
 - Freephone: **0800 030 5182**
 - Website: <https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/>,
Username: **Westminster**, Password: **Council**
- [Access to Work](#) a government scheme that can provide funding. The employee must self-refer, as a People Leader you are unable to do so.