

GOOD WORK

Norfolk

GUIDE 2

Supporting Employees with Long Term Physical Conditions



Creating an accessible, flexible and supportive workplace

Supporting an employee with a long-term physical condition starts with understanding the individual rather than making assumptions about what they can or cannot do.

The right support will vary from person to person, so open communication, flexibility and a willingness to make reasonable adjustments are key.



The following practical guidance can help employers and colleagues create an environment where employees can work comfortably, safely and effectively.

Understanding needs and removing barriers

- Discuss individual needs and workplace adjustments with the employee. Avoid making assumptions about their condition or requirements.
- Ensure any agreed adjustments, equipment or support arrangements become part of the employee's normal way of working.
- Communicate directly with the employee, even if they are accompanied by a support worker, colleague or personal assistant.
- Position yourself where the person can see and engage with you comfortably when having conversations.
- Consider workplace accessibility, including entrances, lifts, toilets, meeting rooms and other key areas.
- Make sure emergency evacuation procedures are accessible and consider whether a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is required.
- Review the working environment and provide appropriate adjustments where needed, such as height-adjustable desks, ergonomic seating or specialist equipment.
- If an employee needs support with physical tasks, ensure they remain in control of decisions and outcomes, with support provided according to their preferences and instructions.



Creating an accessible, flexible and supportive workplace

- Be patient and create an inclusive, relaxed environment where individuals feel comfortable discussing their needs.
- Some conditions, such as cerebral palsy, may involve involuntary movements. Be understanding and focus on the person's abilities and contributions.
- Allow flexibility for exercise, stretches, medical routines or movement breaks if these form part of the employee's health management.
- Plan work-related travel, meetings and events in advance to ensure equal access and participation opportunities.
- If an employee has a condition that affects their speech, politely ask them to repeat themselves if needed. Never pretend to understand.
- Some people may need additional time to respond during meetings or discussions.
- Be aware that some health conditions can cause fatigue. Flexible working patterns, breaks or adjustments may help employees perform at their best.
- Always approach conversations sensitively, respectfully and confidentially, allowing employees to share as much or as little information as they feel comfortable with.



Key principle

Ask, listen and collaborate. The most effective workplace adjustments are usually those identified with the employee themselves.