

Doing Careers Differently

How to make a success of your career while living with a disability or health condition

How to use this guide

This guide is aimed at people with lived experience of disability or health conditions and at those advising or working with them. It is useful if you are:

- ▶ at the beginning of your career
- ▶ re-thinking your career because you have acquired a health condition or impairment – or if it's changed
- ▶ simply wondering what's next?

It uses a question and answer approach to enable different people with different impairments at different stages in their careers to dip into it in different ways.

Section one is for those beginning to think about a career.

Section two looks at external sources of help with this including education and training – a good starting point if you're rethinking.

Section three looks at the practical issues around career development and disability – a good starting point if you're newly disabled.

Section four is about the specific question of how to discuss disability at work.

Section six contains further sources of help and information.

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Introduction

Living with disability, injury or impairment need not be a barrier to success at work. People with lived experience of disability or health conditions have risen to the very top. The former prime minister Gordon Brown was partially sighted, Theresa May lives with diabetes, while Alastair Campbell, who as press secretary to Brown's predecessor Tony Blair was arguably the second most powerful man in the country has been very open about his history of mental health problems. True, prime minister may not be the best paid job in the country but it is probably the hardest – no other job requires such big decisions to be made in such a publicly scrutinised way. If people living with disability or health conditions can do this, we can do anything.

One of our legacy organisation's (Radar) had a Doing Life Differently series of publications. *Doing Work Differently* looked at how to find and keep a job. This publication on the other hand looks at how to turn that job into something more.

As with all Disability Rights UK guides, in this publication people from a range of backgrounds speak about their experiences and what they have learned. This guide is for people with lived experience of disability or health conditions but since everyone talks of their experiences in different ways and in different language, we do use other terms on occasion.

This guide is for you wherever you are in your career. If you are just starting out career-wise, or if you are not working right now, remember this: there are as many ways of getting started as there are disabled people. We can learn from them. You might want to start with a paid internship, or work experience, or an apprenticeship; or go for a first job with a view to moving to something else later. Whatever

your aspirations, this guide will help you both take the first step and plan longer term. Of course, you may not know your long-term plan until you get started – that is fine. Or you may already have particular career aspirations. Either way, this guide will help you move forward.

Start young and don't give up.'

Eleanor Simmonds, British paralympic swimming gold-medallist

A career? In this economy with my disability?

Disabled or non-disabled, a lot of our sense of ourselves, who we are and what our role is in society is related to the job we do. And, since we spend a lot of our time working, it makes sense to take it seriously, to try to enjoy it and to get as much out of it as we can.

It's understandable when you're disabled, especially if you're newly disabled, to think that it might be difficult enough to get a job let alone develop it into a career. But this need not be the case. A career can start anywhere. Careers are not just for educated people in professions. Lack of qualifications need not be an impediment. One of the people we interviewed for this publication began his Royal Mail career as a telegram boy and ended up a senior executive. Another who left school without qualifications now has a master's degree. With support, people with learning difficulties can do all sorts of jobs from assembling medical equipment to post-room work.

In fact, you could argue that in difficult economic times, it makes more sense for all of us to think more carefully about our future working lives. This is particularly important for

disabled people as, at some point in the future, our impairment or health condition may make it more difficult for us to carry on working (and earning) or require that we make changes to the way we do it. If we have a fluctuating or degenerating condition, it is particularly important to think about this.

Don't be mistaken. It is perfectly possible to have a disability and a very successful career. In research carried out for the Radar publication *Doing Seniority Differently*, over 100 of the disabled people interviewed earned £80,000 or above, over 100 were board level executive directors and over 100 were senior managers.

However, for all that, non-disabled people are three times as likely as disabled people to earn £80,000 or above and even among the high-flyers interviewed for the research, only 39% – fewer than 2 in 5 – were confident that they would have equal career opportunities to non-disabled people. This guide may help you go some way towards levelling up the playing field.

'I know my cancer could come back so while I don't work so hard as to make this more likely, I try to make sure that when I am working I opt for reasonably well- paid work that fits in with my values and beliefs rather than necessarily the most interesting work.'

Communications professional

Nobody is saying it is easy. This is a difficult time for all workers and would-be workers. Most people with disabilities and health conditions will have experienced challenges around working. But rather than simply rehearse these once again, this guide focuses on how to overcome them and even turn them

to your advantage. There are jobs out there – particularly in expanding sectors such as the food and drink industry, farming and the care sector - and in some parts of the country – but you may need to search for them. That's why planning is more important than ever.

The UKCES Careers of the Future website has detailed data on this, including broken down by region. Their data also shows how much you could expect to earn in a given sector.

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388684/20267_UKCES_infographics_141210_v2.pdf

But I'm not interested in climbing the greasy pole

Careers today are not merely linear journeys up a promotion ladder. All that talk about salaries was just to show what's possible. Most people aren't looking for money alone. This publication is for the majority – those of us who are hoping to do something we enjoy that pays well enough for us to enjoy everything else in life too. Sometimes that's harder than just chasing the pay packet but it is increasingly possible for people living with disabilities and health conditions.

This guide aims to answer the questions you need to consider as part of your own personal ABC: Any job, Better job, Career.

Employer's view

'In difficult economic times, it's even more important to have the edge which means the smartest employers are even more interested in having a diverse workforce.'

Head of Disability Policy, BT Group

MY STORY: Shannon Murray – ‘Learn to juggle’

High

Winning the modelling competition, “Model in a Million” in 1994 gave me a media platform I had never expected and since then I have tried to use that to challenge outdated attitudes towards disability. The ‘How to Look Good Naked’ programmes and the Debenhams campaign in 2010 marked a high that took nearly 16 years. However, I have most enjoyed interacting with people wanting to learn more about disability, lecturing incorporates or chatting with children in schools; that’s when I feel like I’m making a positive difference to perceptions of people with disabilities.

Low

When things haven’t gone the way I had hoped. This has happened in both careers, in media when I may not have got roles I auditioned for or when I couldn’t meet with casting directors for roles I really wanted to play.

Turning Point

Learning to juggle. I have juggled two very different careers for 16 years. I’m probably known for modelling and acting but I have also always worked or studied full-time while doing this. Whilst at law school at weekends, I was working full-time for a production company as well as finding time to model, present and write. I find that I thrive on being busy and chasing opportunities, you never know where they might lead. I’ve a long way to go before I’ll be satisfied with either career.

Greatest challenge

Choosing what I ultimately want to do. I really enjoy both ‘careers’ but juggling so much can be quite a challenge. The week we did the shoot for Debenhams I had three major law exams!

Best lesson learned

To never give up on your dreams, but to be flexible when aiming for them. If you want to pursue a career in acting or modelling, have a second career. It’s not a reliable source of income and you need something to supplement the quiet spells. Also, be prepared for very long hours in all kinds of conditions, if you tire easily it might not be the right path for you. Try to be confident and don’t be overly modest about any achievements or success, especially women.

Mentoring?

I have mentored young people and I hope I’ve helped reignite enthusiasm. I’ve never had official mentors but there are a few very successful people I admire and turn to for advice. Never be shy to ask someone for career guidance, in most circumstances they’ll be flattered and happy to help.

How my disability helps

The challenges posed by my disability mean I’m adaptable and resourceful. I think my colleagues have learnt from working with me, and have positive attitudes to disability as a result.

1: What do you want to do?

People living with disabilities and health conditions have as much right to work as anyone else. We also have as much right to a career as anyone else.

There is some evidence that disabled people stay in jobs longer. This may be because disabled workers are more loyal to the employers who have been prepared to give them an opportunity. But it may also be because disabled workers believe it is more difficult to move on. It can be – but it is far from impossible. If you want to move, in whatever direction, you owe it to yourself to think about it.

After all, you're going to spend a lot of time working so it makes sense to try to do what you want to do rather than what others want you to do or think you're suitable for. There may well be some jobs that are more difficult because of your condition but there will be others that you may be more suited for and many for which it makes no difference at all.

'My deafness means I have to engage with people face to face. That is a strong part of my style'

Senior civil servant

Companies have strong business reasons for employing disabled people. In the information economy, ideas and innovation count. Diversity helps encourage innovation. A person living with disability or health conditions often already has the resilience, adaptability, multi-tasking and complex problem-solving skills that many jobs require.

Customers expect diversity. Companies that appear to discriminate appear un-modern and

their bottom-line suffers. Often the most difficult part is believing this.

Convince me my disability or health condition can help my career

Of course, you'll need the right skills, attitudes and knowledge for the job. But your experience of living with disabilities and health conditions will certainly help.

Radar's *Doing Seniority Differently* research found that many workers with one or more disabilities or health conditions had strong empathy and people skills. They were able to gain trust, see someone else's point of view, and to share a vision and be inspiring or transformational. They often had an insight into customers and markets. They were gifted in creative problem solving. They were resilient, flexible and adaptable. There are few modern employers who wouldn't see these skills as 'desirable'. For many jobs they would be seen as 'necessary'.

Particular disabilities or conditions may bring particular advantages for particular jobs as you'll see from the stories throughout this guide.

Disability can also help you stand out. If you choose to be open about it or if it's visible, it can help you to be recognised and remembered. Sometimes you may actually get more 'air time' from courteous colleagues than if you were not disabled.

You certainly shouldn't assume that minimising your disability or health condition is best. Embracing it means embracing yourself as you are. Being accepting of ourselves and liking ourselves makes us better colleagues,

managers, employees and employers. One respondent in the survey for this publication said that ‘moving from being a stumbling, falling ambulant to being a wheelchair user’ was the turning point in his career.

If you’re still not convinced, meeting other disabled workers and personal development may help. So will reading the rest of this guide.

‘I have to overcome dozens of obstacles on a daily basis just to get myself to and from work, so I’m also determined and obstinate about getting the job done even when it gets tough. The strangest one is that I’m the best proof reader for reports in my area.

You’d think with a severe visual impairment that I’d be the worst but because my issue with my sight forces me to read things more slowly with others, conversely I notice errors or poor grammar more than anyone else does. I also only have to read a report once (no matter how complicated) to get its full meaning whilst my peers tend to charge through them (as I used to when my sight was better) and then have to read them again as they fail to get the full message.’

Banking professional

Can you really plan a career? Isn’t life mostly luck.

Modern career development is a combination of planning, opportunism and chance. Some people know exactly where they want to be and by when but fewer and fewer of us are like this. Very fixed thinking can be a recipe for disappointment anyway. The world is changing so quickly that the position you covet at 20 might no longer exist when you’re 40.

However, it still makes sense to set goals, certainly in the short and medium term so you can identify the experience, qualifications and skills you’re going to need. In the process you’ll be able answer the following questions and so plan your next step:

- Which of these goals can you achieve in your current post and for which will you need a new post?
- Which can be achieved outside of paid work as a volunteer, for example?
- Will you need to undertake new training or education?
- Can you get all the training you need through work or will you need to look outside work? If so, do you need to study full-time or could it be part-time?

Skills and aptitude tests can also help.

‘Bi-polar disorder often goes with creativity. That’s a gift. But you have to learn how to manage that gift too.’

Research director, private sector

Employer’s view

‘Creating an inclusive environment where everybody is welcomed and developed to fulfil their potential is part of National Grid’s inclusion and diversity policy. The employees that join us do exactly the same jobs as anybody else and have totally fitted in. It’s fantastic to see the confidence of people grow once they’re back at work and we’ve implemented quite a few operational ideas put forward by our disabled candidates.’

Manager, National Grid

'In a weird way having a mental health problem actually helped me. It made me focused and dynamic. If I could cope with the voices in my head I could cope with anything.'

Media professional

Employer's view

'Recruiting people from socially excluded groups provides opportunities to those who may otherwise not have the chance to enter mainstream employment. It also makes good business sense for Royal Mail to become more representative of the diverse communities in which we work.'

David Vaughan, Head of Employee Relations and Inclusion for Royal Mail Letters

You don't have to wait for a potential employer to propose one. The National Careers Service has some Skills Health Check Tools on its website nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk. The service also provides advice online, over the phone and face-to-face.

Careers advisers will also suggest making 'action plans' – a step-by-step plan showing how you'll get from where you are to where you want to be, identifying the skills and experience required. It can be a useful process for identifying holes in your CV.

The story goes that as a young man Conservative politician Michael Heseltine supposedly scribbled down his career path on the back of an envelope. It culminated in 'prime minister', a goal he never quite achieved although he became deputy PM. Perhaps more careful planning would have

helped him take that final step. Networking and building support is key to success and politics is far from the only career to which this applies.

At the same time as thinking ahead, take advantage of the present. Be opportunistic. If your boss is going to Australia, ask to go too. (Or if you can't travel, ask if you can move into his or her role.)

Always be open to new ideas. If you start getting interested in something new, why not? You only get one life. It might be more enjoyable to dip your finger in a number of pies than to become obsessed with one particular pie, however tasty it might appear to be.

Keep an open mind to the sort of work you might like. Check out job profiles online – the National Careers Service has a massive databank of them.

The explosion in internet-related work – website development, social media, web-based commerce – is fuelled by people who trained for something completely different but who saw which way the wind was blowing and had the adaptability and imagination to take advantage of it.

Can I really do what I want?

If you think about careers in terms of jobs, perhaps not. There is only one chief executive of Widgets plc. Rigid ideas are not a recipe for happiness in the modern workplace or, indeed, in life in general, anyway.

If you think about work in terms of what interests and excites you then far more is possible.

So don't fixate on jobs and job titles, focus on what interests you and on developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes related to this

that might help in the workplace – skills that you enjoy using, knowledge that you feel enriches you, work that suits your attitudes and temperament.

Of course we can't all do what we want but understanding ourselves better can help us find work we enjoy more.

Building a career is often a balancing act between what we'd like to do if we didn't need to earn a living and could do anything we wanted and the realities of the modern jobs

market. There are fewer jobs in the UK today for which simply being present is enough. In some ways this is a good thing. It can make for more interesting jobs but it also means that we need to invest more of ourselves in our work. Part of us – if our interests lie outside of our work – understandably resents this. But we need to try to turn it to our own advantage. If you're going to have to put more of yourself into your work all the more reason to find something that you want to put more of yourself into.

MY STORY: Colin 'When I could no longer work as a milkman, I refused to accept defeat'

Low

The inability of being able to continue as a milkman, coupled with the fear of 'what does my life hold for me now?' This was quite a frightening period of my life.

Turning Point

My disability stopped me being a milkman, aged 38 I decided to start again and went to university to study. Rather than accepting defeat and either going on benefits or taking a very menial job, my studies and qualifications took me into a new world, working with disabled people mainly on rights issues.

Greatest challenge

Actually embracing change and trying to do almost anything, with a very simple proviso, it has to be work I will enjoy.

Best lesson learned

Try something new regularly.

Interview tip

Think about what you want from the position, make notes on this and ask good questions at an interview. Do not be afraid or intimidated, the worst that can happen is you are in exactly the same place as you started.

Discrimination?

Discrimination in the built-environment is all around us as is attitudinal discrimination, challenge it, live with it and seek to offer advice (sitting on voluntary groups) that will hasten change.

How my disability/health condition helps

I care about what I do. I take pride in doing it as well as I can. I never ever forget that I am more important than the job. These have I believe made me a reliable and committed worker and I hope a good person to work with. This I believe is important, in work we spend a lot of time together, we will work better if we like and understand each other.

What are the alternatives to a traditional career path?

Some people join a company when they leave school or college and stay there until they retire. But this is becoming less and less common.

Industries are far more volatile today. Most workers can expect to be made redundant at least once in their working lives. Having to find a new job can be frightening but the fact that more and more of us experience it means losing your job no longer feels like the worst thing in the world. When promotion is increasingly based on merit rather than seniority there's no point hanging around. Businesses want the best people for the job not timeservers. Finally, perhaps the most popular reason for working for the same employer your whole life – the guarantee of a decent pension – no longer exists.

For all these reasons and more, changing jobs is commonplace. This means that building your own career at your own pace in your own way rather than following established career paths is far more possible today. (Warning: don't misinterpret this to mean that you should leave a job you're not happy in. It's much, much easier to get a job when you already have one.) Taking charge can be scary but the challenge is good for your well-being – after all, there's nothing worse for your health than feeling stuck without a job or in a job you hate.

How we work is changing. As well as working for someone else you can work for yourself. You can be self-employed in your own business or work as a freelance in someone else's. Franchising can combine the best (and worst) of employment and self-employment.

All sorts of combinations are possible. You can have several jobs – some as an employee, some self-employed and so on. This is sometimes called a portfolio career.

Where we work is changing too. Thanks to modern technology and the changing nature of the jobs we're doing, it is less and less necessary to work in a conventional setting like an office or factory. Home working is increasingly practical.

The way we see work is also changing. It's not always about more or bigger or working harder. Downsizing is a career choice that is attractive to many people, disabled or not. It involves living in a different way, trying to get off that treadmill of working, playing and spending hard to reduce outgoings and carbon footprint and increase quality of life.

Employer's view

'Better-informed employers know that disabled people are an asset rather than a liability but not all. Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will naturally be concerned at being burdened with the additional and potentially huge cost involved but I know from my experience that this simply isn't true and that Access to Work is there to support them fully. It is there to enable employers to keep disabled people at work, and take more disabled people on. But many SMEs are still not aware of it. Make sure you tell them about the scheme when applying for work – not just in general terms but specifically as it applies to you.'

Dr Nasser Siabi, Chief Executive, Microlink

You're never too old to start thinking about a career as some of the stories in this guide prove. The change from a workplace built on seniority to one built on merit led to an apparent obsession with youth but the pendulum is now swinging the other way. There are more older people. There are more

older people working, more older people who need to work and more older people who want to work. Age discrimination legislation and the abolition of the default retirement age is there to remind employers who aren't smart enough to see the advantages in this for themselves. The Employers' Forum on Age and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) can help. Under the banner Working Better, the EHRC is specifically looking at innovative and more flexible ways of working. Your local Job Centre Plus is available to anyone of working age at any time whether or

not they're working. Their network of Disability Employment Advisers can advise you on their programmes and assess you for Access To Work, a scheme that can fund the additional costs of employment resulting from your disabilities and health conditions. There's more on this in the Disability Rights UK publication *Get Back to where you do belong - An employment skills guide for people with newly acquired disabilities or health conditions*.

MY STORY: Chris – 'I started making progress age 39

High

One defining moment quite a few years ago was when I negotiated the Department for Work & Pensions 'permitted work' rules unaided. That wasn't easy but I was determined to work, no matter what. In many ways the turning points have been the low points. Another example being when I had to start 'temping' again in my mid-forties, feeling like I'd left behind all my years of experience and skills development for nothing, but then slowly building on the past, consolidating and moving on to new skills and new areas of awareness that I wouldn't otherwise have had.

Low

My career started out on a low point as I struggled in my early years, then after a few years working intensively in the publishing industry I had a break-down and felt that there was no future for me, at all anywhere in the world, in any capacity whatsoever.

After then pushing myself through a number of part-time and temporary jobs over several years, I found the organisational culture in the civil service, which I joined in 2006, aged 50, quite a shock and this had a detrimental effect on my mental health initially.

Turning Point

I started making progress after I'd had a very severe breakdown aged 39, and realised that I had to re-assess just about everything in my life, and that I had to be in it for the 'long haul'. I had to take time out from paid work and did voluntary work in different communities including spiritual centres and places focused on mental health.

I began to get a picture of a lot of grass roots work going on in the mental health voluntary sector and felt that I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted to put my experience to good use and find ways of gaining control over my own state of mind. I used all sorts of coping strategies including meditation and medication and resolved not to give up.

Greatest challenge

The greatest challenge has been knowing relatively late in life that I had to cut right back to basics, retrain my brain and start again.

I learnt as I went along but I've also felt increasingly that experience doesn't count for as much as I would have hoped in the workplace, so I've had to continue to take on board a lot of new information about systems and ways of working while at the same time needing to find ways of putting my hard-earned previous experience to good use.

<p>Best lesson learned</p> <p>The most important lesson I have learnt is to believe in myself; to trust myself. However, I have tried to become more open-minded and to learn how to learn in different ways. So, maybe overall the most important lesson is about not giving up.</p> <p>My 'career path' has been very much from a recovery-related perspective. If anyone wants to have a strong work focus to reach a recovery position from a mental health perspective, I would say take your time, do it at your own pace, take solid support where it is available, and don't give up.</p> <p>Training?</p> <p>Some training has been more important than others. The worst thing about a lot of organisations is that there is no training needs analysis carried out – training is imposed as mandatory when it isn't always relevant.</p>	<p>Reasonable adjustments?</p> <p>With great difficulty, only two years after I had initially asked and only after I had gone to the extreme of submitting an employment tribunal claim. Then, with support from my employer's disability support network, a planning meeting was set up.</p> <p>Discrimination?</p> <p>When I initially declared my disability my line manager was totally oblivious to his responsibility and there is a strongly weighted emphasis on line manager authority which is hard to challenge. In the end I dealt with it by following through on my own account and reaching out for support from the disability support network which I got.</p> <p>I have also had to work really hard to put aside the frustrations I have felt about the way that I was treated for two years prior to reasonable adjustments being properly attended to.</p> <p>How my disability/health condition helps</p> <p>I think my experience of mental health disability gives me a sense of compassion towards others and a perspective on longer term sustainability that is not usually valued by employers but can be seen as a benefit by colleagues.</p> <p>Talking about disabilities and health conditions</p> <p>When and only when it feels right for you. No one should feel under pressure, but if you feel there is a need for an adjustment of some kind, that will help you from a health management perspective, the law supports you in that respect so don't delay if doing so is going to have a detrimental impact on you.</p>

MY STORY: Tomato – ‘Always follow your passion’

High

Lots. Having my first play premiere on stage. Being in every newspaper and TV channel at the same time over a disability campaign. Taking on responsibility for supporting 30 staff over 5 offices in my day IT job. Finally leaving IT and becoming a national campaigns officer for a national charity.

Low

Feeling that I was incapable of properly fitting into the level that I belonged at in my job.

Turning Point

After I finally began to accept that I was a deaf person and that I needed to learn British sign language (BSL).

Greatest challenge

Keeping up my self-motivation, dealing with jobs where my line manager has suddenly resigned, or where everyone in the office has left their job and I’m the last one still employed there.

Best lesson learned

Accept my identity, accept my weak points, and always follow my passion.

Interview tip

Preparation, preparation. Bring your own support, whether that’s BSL interpreters or whatever, and pay them to come to your mock interview, and give them your background papers. Get CV and interview advice from a professional recommended from Disability Rights UK.

How to get promotion

Throughout my working career, I’ve always been promoted every 6-12 months. Always look for opportunities to take on more responsibilities, do more than you are asked to, but be careful that the extra things you do lead towards the correct greater responsibilities that you want. Network, learn about people and the company, try to build a reputation for being sensible but not boring. Follow through on your proposal and tasks, and try to only send well-written emails that are short and to the point.

I totally recommend mentoring. I was recommended a wonderful mentor who challenged me and helped me turn around my life. My colleague had a mentor who did not challenge him, so he requested a different mentor, who was much better. Mentors won’t do everything for you. You must be ready to review and challenge yourself, change your habits, put work into implementing your mentor’s suggestions.

<p>Training? Essential. I've had to learn as much as possible while on the job. Bought books, attended courses, talked to people.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments? BSL interpreters. Through Access to Work (ATW). But I have coped most of my career with no ATW whatsoever. I use the word 'coped' because it was indeed a struggle. I still managed, and it has made me tougher. I do look forwards to having more use of interpreters in my new job to help me lift my career to new levels.</p> <p>Discrimination? Never directly. I've always been quite successful in getting jobs. However, my deafness has created indirect barriers – networking, going down the pub with work colleagues, lunchtimes at the company etc, have always been a struggle for me. I also felt very cut off from other staff when I worked at hearing companies.</p>	<p>How my disability/health condition helps I'm glad you asked this question. Due to my life-travel through different modes of being, I've been able to empathise with staff and managers from diverse backgrounds and take on board their viewpoints to create mutually beneficial solutions. Sorry, that was a very corporate-speak thing to say!</p> <p>Talking about disability or health condition Be upfront. At interview. But my disability is communicative, I use BSL, so it's very obvious face to face. Come with answers, not with issues, prepare your solutions, but be flexible. Be concise, open, clear, and give solutions when discussing your disability.</p> <p>Previously, when I was a non-signing deaf person, I never mentioned it in my application letter, but now as a BSL signer, I notify them that I will be bringing a BSL interpreter. I have reached the stage in my career where all my possible employers are already very aware of me, so it is a moot point for me now.</p>

INTERVIEW: Ben Furner, CEO, communications company

'I have cerebral palsy. I was given an equal opportunities training contract (although they didn't call it that then) on BBC radio after I went for a job interview for a researcher post which I didn't get.

I got the interview after being pushed hard, and certainly beyond the call of duty, by my disablement resettlement officer (as she was then called) at the Job Centre. After I said I wouldn't bother to apply for the BBC researcher post, she turned up at my house, with a typewriter and forced me to do the application. She and I are still friends – in fact, she works for me!

My career highlights since include founding my own company, landing the contract to launch the now defunct Disability Rights Commission, and developing my work in the mental health field, including working on a project with Alastair Campbell. I've also made a point of working on non- disability related projects to show I have transferable skills which can be used in wider fields.

Having said that, you have to realise your limitations and that can be a challenge. I've also learned now that self-employment is the best career path for me.

Managing people well is the most underrated skill in the modern workplace. My advice on getting a promotion is to be sure you can do the job and to be sure that the promotion fits into a career path – your boss will want to know you think about such things.

Try and think through any scenarios where your impairment may create obstacles to your career/job and come up with solutions – it shows that you are a problem solver rather than a problem creator.

Get familiar with the access to work scheme and research what the options are for you – it can be a great scheme.

I've experienced 'positive discrimination' as a result of my impairment, without which I doubt I would be doing the work I do. Doing equality training has been a useful 'extra' to my portfolio and always seems to work well as participants are confronted by a 'real' disabled person.

I've had a mentor for seven to eight years and I'd definitely recommend it to anyone. If you have specific paths or goals you want support with then all well and good. But it isn't a pre-requisite: just having someone in your corner, especially when times are tough, is really helpful – particularly if you're self-employed.'

2: What do you need to do it?

What would the ideal CV for your ideal job look like? What skills, attitudes and knowledge do you need to get where you want to be and where do you acquire these?

There are many answers to these questions. Some will be found in the workplace, others outside. Some can be acquired formally, other 'softer' skills may be better picked up in the wider world. Some of the skills and knowledge will be general but others will be more specific to specific jobs.

'Having non-executive positions is a good way of stepping over the parapet. Broadening out your CV and experience, making sure you're not only sucked in to one thing. Often because of mobility issues, disabled people have narrower experiences, so the non-executive positions and appointments are a way of combating that.'

Voluntary sector leader who is deaf

On the job learning

There is more and more evidence that often the skills and learning that help your career most are those you gain on the job. Of course, it's important to get good basic skills (like literacy and numeracy) and technical and educational qualifications (see below) but employers look for workplace skills, the skills to do the actual job, and 'softer' skills like teamwork, problem solving, customer service. That is one reason why work experience and internships are growth areas. There is no set pattern.

Apprenticeships

There are a lot of opportunities for apprenticeships given a Government commitment to the creation of 3 million new apprenticeship opportunities by 2020. And apprenticeships are not only in technical skills: they can be in hospitality, or retail, or care or many other business areas. They can be a great, direct route to getting a skilled career. They allow those aged 16 and over to receive practical training by working in a real paid job at the same time as studying.

As an apprentice you will:

- work alongside experienced staff
- gain skills needed for work
- study for a particular qualification
- earn a wage

An apprenticeship may be a good option if, as a result of acquiring a health condition or disability, you're moving into a different role. For example you may be changing from a manual job that's difficult to continue due to ill health, into a new job that requires new skills and abilities.

As an employee, you'll be working most of the time and so most of your training takes place 'on the job'. The rest takes place at a local college or training provider. You usually complete this 'off-the-job' training one day per week. It could also be done over a number of days in a block. The funding for training costs sometimes depends on your age.

There are three main levels of apprenticeship:

- Intermediate Level: equivalent to five GCSEs.
- Advanced Level: this is equivalent to two A Levels.
- Higher Apprenticeships: leading to NVQ Level 4 or above or a Foundation Degree

Apprentices can also get support under Access to Work (see page 17). There is more information at www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

Internships and work experience

Internships or work experience can be positive ways of learning new skills, building experience on your CV or trying new types of work if you have become disabled and are looking to switch career. DR UK knows many people who have done internships, at different ages, after an accident or diagnosis to try out new types of work and explore career opportunities.

Internships can be paid or unpaid. Unpaid internships are not considered good practice as they advantage people who can afford to work for no pay. Nonetheless you may want to consider a short-term volunteering opportunity to gain experience. It should be time limited and offer a structured opportunity to work and develop skills. Ask beforehand what experience you will gain, what skills you will develop and what support or mentoring you will receive. It needs to feel fair and to work for you and your career.

If an internship is unpaid, think hard. For many people, unpaid work is not viable at all. And if it is viable, your attitude may be different depending on how long the internship lasts and who it is with. Think about what you want and your own values. Some charities offer internships. Some professions rely on them – journalism, television and politics are good examples.

'By taking part in the internship I have realised I can cope in a fast paced environment and have found areas which I would like to explore in terms of pursuing a full time career.'

Graduate who found internship via EmployAbility

In general, if you are using your skills and doing a job that benefits the company, you should be paid for it.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the professional body for human resources, recommends a training wage of at least £2.50 for interns. But whether you're entitled to payment will depend on what you actually do for the organisation not what you are called. If you're actually a worker, even if you're called an intern, you're entitled to at least the minimum wage. There is more information on www.gov.uk – search for 'internships'. For recent graduates, there is also a government-backed intern site, the Graduate Talent Pool (graduatetalentpool.direct.gov.uk).

EmployAbility (www.employ-ability.org.uk) can also help graduates find internships as well as providing other advice.

Volunteering

Volunteering (see above) is another way of gaining unpaid work experience. The same drawbacks to unpaid work apply. Some voluntary work can be long-term, so you need to guard against getting stuck in unpaid work if that is not what you want. If you are thinking about voluntary work, ask about the development opportunities, the skills you will gain, the guidance and career development input you will receive. It needs to work for your career development.

Having said that, the UK is one of the most enthusiastic countries in the world when it comes to volunteering and opportunities abound. About three-quarters of us volunteer in some way or another so, as you can imagine, there is quite a variety of options.

Volunteering can help you fill gaps in your personal skill-sets, build confidence and meet people. As a volunteer you're in control of what you do and when. Of course, you'll have

to stick to the commitments you make but you should find you have a flexibility in negotiating them that you don't have in paid work. Again this means you can move at your pace and tempo.

As for how volunteering will benefit your career, it will be up to you to show an employer that your volunteering experience is relevant to the job for which you're applying. Some employers may be impressed by experience that is not strictly relevant to the job – so much the better – but some may view experience gained as a volunteer as less relevant than that gained in paid work. Have the facts ready to show them that they're mistaken. Focus on the job description and person specification and show how your voluntary experience is relevant to them.

Volunteering doesn't just benefit you. Volunteering England – www.volunteering.org.uk – works to promote volunteering as a powerful force for change, both for those who volunteer and for the wider community. There are similar organisations in Scotland (volunteerscotland.org.uk), Wales (www.volunteering-wales.net) and Northern Ireland (www.volunteernow.co.uk). Between them they have hundreds of thousands of volunteering opportunities. Information can be also be found on the national volunteering database www.do-it.org.uk and through www.gov.uk

Britain's largest volunteer organisation Volunteering Matters www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk – provides opportunities for people with disabilities and learning difficulties to take part in a number of its projects.

Voluntary work should not affect benefits so long as it genuinely is voluntary work (rather than, for example, helping out the family business) and the only money you receive is to cover your actual volunteering expenses.

However, if you have any doubts, check before making any regular commitment.

Training and development at work

Training once you are in a job can be a great way of developing your career. Talk to your training department, human resources department or line manager to find out what training and development is available through your employers and what, if any, training they might be prepared to fund or part-fund externally. As ever, some employers are more enlightened than others but the old maxim 'don't ask, don't get' definitely applies here.

You've nothing to lose. Asking about training shows enthusiasm and initiative and no employer can sniff at that even if they can't actually help. There may be mentoring, shadowing or coaching that could support your development (see below). Consider peer support from other disabled people.

Disability Rights UK for runs a Leadership Academy Programme specifically for talented disabled people who want to progress further in their careers www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/leadership.

'I volunteered to be the chair for 3 years for the Bank's staff disability network. This enabled me to be in a position to help individuals and try and change/improve company policy.'

Banking professional

Talk to your trade union. If you're not already a member, find out who is active in your workplace. Most unions have learning reps who can help with training and development including helping you to find suitable courses, arranging courses at work and running a workplace learning centre.

There's more about union learning reps on the TUC's dedicated website:

www.unionlearn.org.uk, a useful site full of information about what you can do and your rights to do it.

Whatever you do, take responsibility for your own education and training. One banker we interviewed told us: 'The vast majority of my learning which has been vital for not only professional and technical knowledge but also development of management and leadership skills, has been actively managed by myself. You have to take ownership and responsibility for your learning and development and not passively wait for your company to "train" you. I did benefit from being part of a management development programme for a few years, but I would not have been given this opportunity, if I had not already proven myself, and had the professional qualifications and MBA.'

'I've been very lucky with training from my employers. When I arrived at my first job they said, "oh and you can choose a course to go on – one morning a week" so I did. After that I've asked for training at every job I've had. One employer even part-funded my Master's degree.'

Media professional

Education and training

There is strong evidence that higher or work-related qualifications open up more career opportunities – and particularly for people living with long term health conditions or disability. The great things about higher and further education, including apprenticeships, include their variety, flexibility and a strong commitment by providers to supporting all students and trainees to fulfil their potential. Almost any kind of course can be made accessible and having a health condition or

disability should not restrict your choices.

Being clear about why you want to study or train can help overcome any barriers. You can get free, impartial advice about learning, careers and courses from the National Careers Service (nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk). As well as information on options and funding, the National Careers Service provides careers advice through its website, an email service and a telephone helpline. Adults aged 19 or over (or 18+ if on out-of-work benefits) can also get face-to-face advice.

All universities and colleges, and most large training providers, have staff members responsible for supporting disabled students. They are usually called the Learning Support Adviser or Disability Coordinator. You should be able to have a confidential discussion with them about your individual needs.

Further Education

Further education (FE) is any kind of education after leaving school (sometimes many years or even decades later!) and below degree level. There are many different qualifications including:

- **Entry Level and Level 1 Courses**
Foundation Learning, Entry Level qualifications and taster courses.
- **Basic Skills**
Skills for life, Functional Skills in English, Maths and ICT, Essential Skills, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).
- **Vocational/work-related courses**
National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), BTEC Awards, Diplomas and Certificates, tech levels and apprenticeships.
- **Academic Courses**
GCSEs, AS and A levels, International Baccalaureate

- **Access courses**

Access to Higher Education Diplomas provide a good grounding in the knowledge and study skills needed to succeed in higher education. These are equivalent to A levels, but for people who haven't studied for a while.

As well as qualifications, study programmes for young people can also include work experience such as Supported Internships and traineeships.

Traineeships

Traineeships are designed to prepare you for paid employment by helping you to become 'work ready'. They include work preparation training, maths and English and work experience to help you move into a job or apprenticeship. You won't usually get paid on a traineeship but employers are encouraged to cover expenses such as transport (subject to benefit rules). Traineeships are available for 16 to 24 year olds in England, and for those up to 25 with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. They run for up to six months

Non-accredited/community learning

There are thousands of local courses for adults. They cover all kinds of subjects, such as photography, introductory IT and cooking on a budget. Think broadly. You will never regret learning a new language or a new computer programme even if it has nothing to do with your current job. Even taking up a new sport or musical instrument will broaden your horizons and boost your confidence. Few new skills are wasted and many skills are transferable from job to job. Especially so called softer skills such as communicating, influencing and negotiating.

Colleges and training providers recognise that people who return to education later in life are usually highly motivated and bring valuable life experience.

According to the Learning and Work Institute, one in five adults are currently learning and 38% have taken part in learning in the last three years.

Colleges, training centres, adult and community education centres and local voluntary organisations all run programmes and courses.

Funding in FE

It's important to think about how you will pay for the course. There are many sources of financial support, depending on your age, previous qualifications, type of course and personal circumstances. Certain groups of people may not have to pay fees.

From August 2016 tuition fee loans are available to all learners aged 19 and above for qualifications at levels 3 and 4. Loans are also available for courses at levels 5 and 6 which provide a clear route to develop high-level technical and professional skills. We recommend referring to our Into Further Education guide for detailed information www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2016/april/our-new-further-education-guide-published.

Higher Education

Research from the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) shows you have radically improved job prospects if you progress with your education. At graduate level, disabled people achieve more similar levels of job success to non-disabled people; whereas for people with lower levels of qualifications, disabled people fare far worse.

If you're a mature applicant without the usual formal qualifications, most higher education institutions will consider other experience or qualifications gained through work or an Access to Higher Education Diploma.

Flexible study options in HE

If it's not practical for you to take a three-year full-time course, there are a range of flexible options. Many courses, including foundation degrees, can be taken part-time. Modular courses allow you to work at your own pace, stopping for a while if necessary or switching to part-time. Distance learning is another option.

The Open University (OU) is the largest distance learning institution in the UK. It has over 13,000 disabled students and offers more than 250 undergraduate and postgraduate courses and professional qualifications. A number of other colleges and universities also offer distance learning options.

Part-time courses don't usually make a difference to the receipt of benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), whereas full-time study usually affects eligibility.

Funding in HE

It's important to think about funding before enrolling on a course. Most people are aware that universities and colleges can charge up to £9,000 per year for full-time courses. However there is plenty of support available to lessen the cost and students don't need to pay for the course up front. Even more importantly, you only start paying back your loan when your salary reaches a certain level.

In higher education you can apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) towards extra disability-related course costs such as:

- v Specialist equipment, assistive software, furniture or training
- v Non-medical helpers, support workers, sign language interpreters and other help you may need (except where the university should cover under the Equality Act)

- v Extra travel costs you have to pay because of your disability.
- v General extra disability-related costs not covered by the other allowances

Students starting full-time courses from August 2016, who are eligible for means-tested benefits, may also qualify for additional loan support towards their living costs.

We recommend referring to our Into Higher Education guide for detailed information: www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/IntoHE2016.pdf

For more information

Disability Rights UK has a series of careers guides with detailed information on applying for courses, funding and support. Into Higher Education, Into Further Education and Into Apprenticeships are available as free pdfs from our online shop.

<https://crm.disabilityrightsuk.org>

Our student helpline can answer individual questions about:

- how to apply for courses
- the pros and cons of being open about your impairment
- what financial support is available for students
- how to apply for DSAs
- the interaction between studying and welfare benefits

Tel: 0800 328 5050

Email: students@disabilityrightsuk.org

MY STORY: Nadeem – ‘I left school with nothing. Training and study have been a great leveller for me’

Career high

My MBA, being able to be open about my disability, obtaining my first job after a significant period of absence.

Low

Losing my job due to ill health, lack of support to maintain employment. Stigma, stigma, stigma.

Turning Point

I started from a level much lower than my capability as my disability affected my ability to progress at school. Work gave me the opportunity to develop outside of the constraints of academia.

Best lesson learned

Ability will out! People can and will be convinced and, once you have proven your ability, they’ll respect you more for managing your disability.

Promotion

Treat every day as if you’re demonstrating your ability for the next level. Plan your next steps. Anticipate the barriers and develop solutions to them. Take responsibility for personal and professional development. Shadow people. Develop networks. Get a mentor and/or a coach.

Training

Training and study has been a great leveller for me. I left school with no qualifications and I have used study and training to evidence equal capability. It also exposes you to outside observers who would not know about my disabilities and feedback from them has been invaluable.

Reasonable adjustments

I discussed the need for flexible/home working with my line manager following discussions with occupational health. I developed a proposal based around existing policies and ‘googled’ for other employers’ policies. We agreed a time limited review period and the agreement was then made permanent.

How my disability/health condition helps

It hasn’t particularly helped my career. However, colleagues are much more open in discussing issues around disability and ill health and I am seen as somewhat of an expert, even though I am not employed in this capacity.

Talking about disabilities and health conditions

Difficult this one. It really depends on what your starting point is. Now I’ve been employed consistently for 11 years, it’s an ongoing discussion when and where appropriate. When first rejoining employment, it was a major topic of conversation. Just because you have a disability, doesn’t mean that your employer wants to talk to you about your health any more than any other employee.

Personal Development

Personal development programmes (PDPs) and courses can help in all sorts of ways – not just with your career – especially if you're lacking confidence and doubting your abilities. Good PDPs help you to understand yourself better, to like yourself better and to feel more confident. As a result, they'll improve your communication, assertiveness and team-working skills.

Maybe you feel all this personal development stuff is a bit touchy-feely and has nothing to do with the harsh, cut and thrust world of work. If so, you're mistaken. Confidence is the single biggest asset in the job market. Often the only thing between getting the job you want and not getting it is believing that you are good enough to do it. Don't underestimate the value of PDPs.

Ask your local organisation for disabled people or a national organisation for people with impairments or health conditions similar to yours about PDPs. Disability Rights UK offers a Leadership Academy Programmes for disabled people that includes mentoring and support with everything from presentation skills to leadership styles.

The Civil Service for example runs a range of programmes to promote diversity, the development of disabled staff and innovative work experience programmes for young people with autism.

Suggest to your employer that they run one or send you on the Disability Rights UK programme.

Life coaches can perform a similar role. However, ensure that you go to a quality provider who understands disabilities and health conditions. There are many PDPs out there and as with any unregulated industry there are inevitably some cowboys.

'I found a new way of looking at my skills ... and new ways of working with and supporting teams, as well as leaving with a clearer picture of my career path. The course was hugely beneficial to myself and I believe that my employer will benefit greatly from my new found skills and drive.'

Allan Russell, RNIB Connect Radio and participant in DR UK Leadership Academy Programme

"The programme gave me an opportunity to meet successful disabled people who themselves overcame barriers to reach their potential. Meeting them and networking with other programme participants actually made me unlock talents which I thought I never had."

A.G. 2014-15 Leadership Academy Programme delegate

MY STORY: Val – ‘The turning point was personal development training’

High

The highlight has definitely been coming to work for a disability confident company that has a “business as usual” reasonable adjustment policy. This allows me to work with passion again and not feel afraid.

Low

Working in an industry that doesn’t value the individual effort and has no concept of how acquired disability can affect you before you get it under control.

Turning Point

When I took time out to do personal development training. It made me aware of what I had to offer and how to present those skills rather than expecting an employer to see it for themselves.

Greatest challenge

I have always worked in a very male orientated environment and the challenges have been around being female. I had the effects of diabetes long before it was diagnosed but this was treated by my employers as “woman’s troubles” and caused me to be even more sidelined than before.

Best lesson learned

To be open and talk to my employers about how I can do my best for them and what help I may need to do that.

Interview tip

Research the company thoroughly and map your skill set into what the client wants. Make sure you prepare questions. Check you know where you are going and who you are seeing. Look up your interviewer on websites like Linked In so that you know more about them.

Discrimination?

Prior to my current role I was sidelined for promotion and was actually made redundant in the main because of my disability.

Reasonable adjustments?

Because of the above, prior to starting in my current role I spoke to Access To Work to get my travel started. When I was in post in my current role I spoke to HR about things that would help me do the best job for them and they have all been accommodated.

How my disability/condition helps

I think outside the box and am a more empathetic person which leads to me being more successful in my role.

Talking about disabilities and health conditions

Up front if you need adjustments and probably never if you don’t.

Mentoring

A mentor is a trusted friend who can help you get where you want to go. Not so much through their contacts – although these might help – but because they've travelled a similar road themselves. Mentoring can make a major difference to your career. In Radar's Doing Seniority Differently research, two types of support were significantly associated with career progression: mentoring and senior staff support.

As well as the help it provides, this support sends a clear message to colleagues about you, your competence and the organisation's attitude to disabilities and health conditions, making it easier for them to accept you.

'The people I met were inspirational. I took something from each; from how to overcome barriers ... to defeating my own self-limiting beliefs and being the driving force behind my own dreams. This programme unlocked talents I never thought I had..'

Becki Ryan, Department for Work and Pensions and participant in DR UK Leadership Academy Programme

In research carried out on the Coverdale Leadership Development Programme, a pioneering scheme for disabled people built around mentoring, 75% of mentees said that it had been a useful career development tool.

Mentoring can open doors, give you insights you may not otherwise have access to, develop transferable skills and build confidence. But it shouldn't be entered into lightly. Find out more about how it can work and think through carefully what you're after before asking someone. You'll want someone who understands where you're coming from as well as where you want to go. This is why if you're disabled, you might prefer a disabled mentor. On the other hand, you may decide you want a mentor who has succeeded in your chosen career whether they're disabled or not.

Look out for potential mentors through your networks both at work and through disability organisations like Disability Rights UK. Disabled Employee Networks can offer the best of both worlds. Who you'll ask will depend on exactly what you're after.

The great success of good mentoring means that there is now a lot more bad mentoring out there. One respondent to our survey for this publication said: 'The idea of mentoring can, I believe, be used far too loosely. There needs to be clarity about how exactly a person is going to benefit, also about the feedback methods used to ensure the mentoring has a confidence-building rather than undermining effect.' Another said: 'For some so-called mentors it's just one of their "good works" – this attitude can be damaging to the mentee.'

For mentoring to work, you need a good personal relationship as well as mutual interests. Choose carefully. Another respondent to our survey told us: 'On one occasion I found the mentor overbearing. He had no wish to understand the effects of my disability. His comments were irrelevant and spiteful almost to the point of bullying.' This is abusive. There shouldn't be a power relationship in a good mentoring relationship.

An additional risk is the perpetuation of traditional power relations between disabled and non-disabled people. 'I prefer the idea of peer-to-peer support,' said one interviewee. 'I'm also not convinced a non-disabled person can be a mentor to a disabled person. If you're not coming from a similar place, haven't experienced disability, I'm not sure you can provide the support and understanding needed.' It's your call.

'Most job descriptions ask for certain skills and I had thought I didn't have any from being at home for so long. But surprisingly I found I had loads.'

Participant in an Arthritis Care course

INTERVIEW: Andrew Hooper, apprentice

'I'm autistic and have challenges when meeting new people and learning something new. At Remploy in Coventry, I'm working in the office and learning new skills. It's really increased my confidence.

I'm also doing an information technology level two apprenticeship at Hereward College. Remploy told me about it and helped me to apply for it. I'm about to graduate from it and when I do, I'd like to do a level three. I'd like to work in business administration – working on databases, filing, organising meetings and events, reception duties. I've experience in all of these now.

At school, my autism affected my maths and writing skills and I couldn't multi-task at all. This damaged my confidence. But I've come on in leaps and bounds now. College has helped with my English skills. Maths too. And my interaction skills are much, much better. I can organise my life myself now. I go out with a group, bowling and to the cinema. One of my biggest challenges is still making friends but I have a good social life now.

It's not easy finding a job when you are autistic. I have autistic friends who are still looking. Confidence is very important. People with disabilities can do anything – we need to believe that. So do other people especially employers. My advice to autistic people is to work on your confidence with your family or an organisation for autistic people.'

3: How do you make it happen?

Monitor your own performance

When you're doing a job, it is very easy to get swallowed up by the day to day events. Try to find time to step back and reflect.

Monitor your own performance. Be honest with yourself about your successes and failures, about what you enjoy and what you don't. When things don't go so well, don't try to pretend it never happened. Not to yourself anyway. Try to analyse them accurately however upset or angry you might feel.

Listen to Albert Einstein. He said: 'Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new'. Woody Allen sees things much the same way: 'If you're not failing every now and again, it's a sure sign that you're not trying anything very innovative'. For Winston Churchill, success was 'going from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm'. Kenneth Boudling, the economist who gave the world general system theory even went as far as to say: 'Nothing fails like success because we don't learn from it. We learn only from failure'. In other words, there's general agreement you can learn from your setbacks – but only if you're big enough to be honest with yourself about them.

Equally, when things go well try to identify why. What were the turning points and defining moments? Can you reproduce those? The first time something happens may be good luck. Recognising it as such may help you to create the circumstances to ensure it happens again. In sports the best players are often the luckiest players. Why? Because they're thinking about what they're doing and trying to replicate what works. By taking this approach you can turn setbacks into learning opportunities and thus into steps forward.

Be equally honest with yourself about your skills and talents. Do you have skills on paper that you don't really have in practice?

Be realistic. An accountant told us: 'I suppose the defining moment (of my career) was turning down an opportunity because I knew that the assessment process would (be) impossible for someone with severe hearing loss.' He now wears a digital hearing aid which 'has made a huge difference because I can, albeit with difficulty, use a mobile phone. The internet has been an immense help too as it means that you can communicate in writing rather than by speech.'

What do I need to know about the law?

The law takes as its starting point that disabled people have as much right to work as anyone else. Disabled workers share the same general employment rights as other workers. You can find out about these from your trade union or other source such as direct.gov.uk

Employer's view

'It is important to us to retain and manage talent. It's a business issue. The cost of making reasonable adjustments stacks up well against the cost of people going off sick or leaving. We want to retain experience.'

Tim Taylor, Lloyds Banking Group

However, under the Equality Act 2010 which largely brings together previous disability discrimination legislation, there are also some special rights for disabled people. You do not necessarily have to consider yourself disabled to be protected by the law. You don't need to

be on any benefits or have any particular passes, cards or badges, for example.

The law protects anyone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities. This includes people with a wide range of mental, sensory and physical impairments or health conditions including HIV, cancer, depression, dementia and learning disabilities among many, many others.

An employer cannot treat a disabled person less favourably than a non-disabled one either directly or indirectly. Nor can they discriminate against, or harass a person because they are associated with a disabled person or are wrongly thought to be disabled. All victimisation is illegal.

Not only are a wide range of people covered but, when it comes to the workplace, a wide range of situations are covered too.

It is unlawful for employers to discriminate in their application forms, interview arrangements, aptitude or proficiency tests, job offers, terms of employment including pay, promotion, transfer and training opportunities, work-related benefits such as access to recreation or refreshment facilities, dismissal or redundancy and discipline and grievances.

It is also almost certainly illegal under the Equality Act 2010 for your employer to put pressure on you to resign if you are off sick. They should make every effort to enable you to return and put in place 'reasonable adjustments' if you need them. Disability Rights UK has a guide called *Get back to where we do belong*. This is an employment skills guide for people with newly acquired disabilities or health conditions. It can be used to help employers and employees to plan a successful return.

In order to avoid discrimination, an employer is expected to make what are known as 'reasonable adjustments' in the workplace. These are changes to their standard procedures and practices so that you are not disadvantaged.

What are workplace adjustments?

Workplace adjustments can apply to any aspect of your job including where, how and when it is carried out. Disability Rights UK's *Get back* guide includes lots of examples of 'reasonable adjustments'. These include more flexible working hours (for example, to avoid rush-hours or enable medication to be taken at the right times), more breaks, using new, different or adapted equipment (a different sort of desk, telephone or computer, for example), varied types of feedback or support, time-off (for appointments, for example – anything from dialysis to counselling), additional training, changes or adaptations to your workplace (anything from ramps to colour-schemes to the speed of automated processes), providing assistance (including, for example, a reader or interpreter) or even providing alternative duties.

Employer's view

'We benefit from a diverse and able workforce and can provide employment opportunities for people who might otherwise experience barriers. It's easy to get hung up on adjustments you think will need to be made before taking on disabled workers. But it often takes something very simple and can cost nothing to accommodate individual needs.'

Janet, Holiday Inn, Edinburgh

This does not mean an employer can be expected to do anything at all. It must be 'reasonable' – for example if an adjustment is

too expensive, a court may not consider it 'reasonable'. Decisions need to be 'fair and balanced'.

You may want to find out what adjustments others have found useful. Talk to your disabled staff network if there is one, your trade union, local disability organisation or an organisation of people with similar disabilities and health conditions to yours. You can then discuss workplace adjustments with your line manager from a position of knowledge. It's much easier for your line manager if you present something positive – a solution – than something that they might consider a problem.

What if I think I've been discriminated against?

If you think you are being discriminated against, you might, as a first step, want to have an informal discussion with your employer about your needs and why you feel you are being discriminated against. If your line manager is part of the problem, talk to the human resources department or your boss's boss. You can take along a friend, advocate, assistant or someone from your trade union to the meeting. The problem may simply be that your employers are unaware of your rights and their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Or they may be nervous and not know how to make adjustments or what disabled staff are capable of doing.

If you cannot get a clear or satisfactory answer, there is, under the Equality Act 2010, a process for people who think they may have been discriminated against to obtain information. The process uses 'discrimination and other prohibited conduct' forms – one form for your questions and another for your employer's answers. Your trade union or local welfare advice or disability organisation can help you with this. Seek advice and also seek support – the experience of taking a case to a tribunal can be stressful.

If you're not satisfied, you could make a complaint about your treatment through your employer's internal grievance procedure.

If you are still not satisfied, you might want to contact Acas (Advisory, Arbitration and Conciliation Service) or make a complaint to the Employment Tribunal (ET). To make a complaint to an ET, you must do so within three months of the alleged discrimination. An ET can make a judgment on your discrimination claim, make recommendations to your employer and/or award you with compensation for past or future loss of earnings and/or hurt feelings. The Equality and Human Rights Commission also has useful information on making a discrimination case.

Of course, the objective is to overcome difficulties amicably and avoid taking action. Knowing your rights – and letting your employer's know you know your rights – can help make this easier.

How do I survive difficult situations (and difficult people) without resorting to law?

While you may meet disabled workers who say they've never experienced discrimination, they're few in number and either very lucky or too thick-skinned to have noticed.

Make sure you know your rights under the law but yes, often the appropriate response is not a legal one. Have some responses ready for ignorant, patronising or tactless comments – generally people mean well and just need a bit of gentle direction about what is and isn't OK.

Much discrimination arises from lack of knowledge or fear so being clear about yourself, your disability and what you expect will help your boss and your colleagues understand. True, it shouldn't be your

responsibility but if nobody else is willing or able to take it, you'll probably find it's worth it in the long run.

Often discrimination is subtle and takes the form of low expectations: passing disabled people over for promotion or making assumptions that we cannot 'take the strain' of more senior jobs, for instance. Showing that you can take responsibility and proposing solutions can help. Challenging thoughtless behaviour sooner may prevent a more serious problem later.

Keep records of what happens. One broadcasting professional told us: 'In my entire BBC career, I experienced one serious episode of bullying/intimidation based on my disability. I dealt with this extremely robustly, kept detailed records and told BBC management that it was their problem and that they needed to deal with it. The instigator was subsequently advised to send me a formal written apology. There are minor episodes of insensitive behaviour which you have to be prepared to take on and deal with by yourself.'

Help your employer to be disability- friendly. If they'd like to be but don't know how, introduce them to Disability Rights UK, which can provide disabled trainers or consultants, or offer leadership and development support to disabled employees; or to the Business Disability Forum, a membership organisation of over 400 companies promoting good practice in the employment of disabled people and service to disabled customers.

Finally, remember that just because you have disabilities and health conditions does not mean you will not also encounter prejudice based on something else such as your gender, ethnic background, age, sexual orientation or class. One of our interviewees said: 'As

disabled people we need talk about the effect class has on our lives. Sometimes people from a working-class background don't think we deserve the opportunities we create or own the ideas we have. You couple this with disablism and it really is a barrier to progress. I have to keep telling myself I do deserve to be here.

'Class is the last equality elephant in the room. We don't talk about it presumably because to do so would be too challenging to the system – those with power are very keen to keep hold of it!'

MY STORY: Sheena – 'I took employer to Tribunal and won'

High

Taking my previous employers to Tribunal and obtaining an out of court payment – yes really – a highlight!

Low

Being made redundant twice and losing the best job I had ever had, surrounded by colleagues who became my adopted family.

Greatest challenge

Trying to find people who are sympathetic and understanding to my needs.

Talking about my disability/ health conditions

If they don't ask then I don't say. They can't see it and having been discriminated against and suffering a nervous breakdown last year, I am loathe to say anything to anybody.

They cannot understand my disability because they cannot see it.

MY STORY: Ali – ‘Secondment showed me I had transferable skills’

High

Two staff members telling me that I was the best manager they had ever had.

Low

Reluctance from colleagues to help out when I could not do something because of my disability and a manager assuming I could not do something.

Turning Point

Progress started when I went on a secondment, it was only then I realised the transferable skills I had.

Greatest challenge

When I moved to a new job, my new manager kept putting me on a rota for a task that I could not do, I had to ask her not to do this.

Best lesson learned

Don't just say what you can't do, say what you can do. In the example above, I said I can't do that task but I can do a double shift on another task.

Reasonable adjustments?

Identify your own reasonable adjustments. Let the organisation take the credit for giving them. This shows communication and problem solving.

How my disability/health condition helps

As a person with a disability you have to be imaginative in tackling everyday life, thinking of doing something differently comes more naturally.

Secondment

Going on secondment to another department or acting up in somebody's absence can be a great way to learn more. It shows enthusiasm, gives you real experience of what doing the job permanently might be like and you will almost certainly learn something. However, make sure you are not exploited. If you're acting up for more than a very brief period, you should be paid for it. Clarify also that you will be able to return to your own job afterwards and that the secondment is not a disguised restructuring.

Flexible working

Think about how you work. If you're working flat out all week and spending the week-ends in bed, you're setting yourself up for a burn-out or break-down not a career.

Building a career is about understanding what energises you, pacing yourself and knowing your physical and mental limits. This is a real challenge for talented people who have a lot of ideas and want to carry them all out immediately. Your body may well not like this approach. Listen to it.

The good news is that working patterns today are more flexible. You may find a full-time job with fixed, regular hours does not meet your needs. Part-time work may be one option. Job sharing is also becoming more popular and some organisations maintain a list of people who are willing to become job sharers.

Other common types of flexible working include flexi-time (choosing when to work, usually around a core period), annualised hours (where your hours are calculated over the year rather than week or month), compressed hours (working hours over fewer days) or staggered hours (differential starting, break and finishing times).

Thanks to new technology it is increasingly easy to work at home and/or at hours to suit you.

Employees who have been working for their employer for at least 26 weeks' continuously generally have a statutory right to ask for flexible working if they have parental or caring responsibilities. Under the law, your employer must consider your application seriously and only reject it for certain business reasons specified by law. (There's more on the law on flexible working on direct.gov.uk)

Even if you don't have the legal right to request flexible working, you're still free to ask. Smart employers are more interested in getting the job done well than in presenteeism for its own sake. Show them how your preferred way of working will benefit both you and the company and they'd be daft not to listen.

Be good to yourself and you'll be better to the people around you, especially those who work for you. Never forget the challenges you've overcome. Half killing yourself and expecting everyone else in your team to do the same won't make you be a better manager or a better colleague. Quite the opposite.

You need to be well to do a good job and enjoy a good career. Disability Rights UK's *Get back to where we do belong* guide can help you plan and get support.

Managing your condition means exactly that – it doesn't mean pretending it doesn't exist.

Don't put so much of yourself into your work that there's nothing left of you to enjoy the benefits of it. Work can be very satisfying but there are many other things in life that are just as satisfying as work.

If you are off sick for any reason (related to disability/condition or not), keep in touch.

Make sure your line manager and human resources department know what's going on with you. If they don't really understand your disability or health condition, they may well jump to the wrong conclusions.

'The ethos and culture within special schools is inherently based on the medical model of disability – the focus is on what is wrong with us and what can be done to "normalise" us. Those of us who have the experience of segregated education often have entrenched in us the need to work harder than others – many of us are on the edge of workaholism and at risk of burn out.'

Chief executive

Self-employment

One man with dyslexia whom we spoke to for this publication said that the turning point in his career was: 'When I set up my own thing'. In other words, if there's no job doing what you want to do, can you create your own?

If you've always wanted to set up your own business or you are struggling to find employers or colleagues who understand your disability or health condition, self-employment really can be a breath of fresh air. Many disabled people as well as people from other groups who struggle in very conventional workplaces such as parents or people with caring responsibilities have already proved that this can work.

Advice on starting your own business is beyond the scope of this publication. The main point to make is that it can be done. There are websites in the UK www.disabledentrepreneurs.co.uk and www.disabled-entrepreneurs.net and the USA such as www.ednns.ca that are full of stories

of successful disabled entrepreneurs. It need not be expensive. Companies can be formed very cheaply. Many freelancers operate as sole traders which is even easier. And you do not have to do it all alone. You can work with a partner(s) or as part of a co-operative.

For instance, a group of people with fluctuating health conditions could choose to work together and 'cover' each other if they have periods of ill- health. Franchising is another option.

There are many sources of help available including the Disability Employment adviser at your local Job Centre Plus, the New Enterprise Allowance and the Prince's Trust's Enterprise Programme (www.princes-trust.org.uk). The Citizen's Advice website (www.adviceguide.org.uk) also has useful information including a self-employment checklist.

Networking

Join networks. If there is a disabled employees' network at your workplace, join it. If there is a trade union at your workplace, join it. Get involved with informal networks too. Play for the staff football team. If you can't play, offer to be fixtures secretary or kit washer.

Disability Rights UK runs its own careers network, Radiate (www.radiate-net.org.uk) – a network of high-fliers with disabilities or health conditions.

Employer's view

'For many of the candidates, working at home gives them the degree of flexibility they need to help manage their disabilities and health conditions. They have a level of motivation, competence and maturity to the work which we rarely find with other employees. I would strongly advise other employers to reap the benefits. People with disabilities and health conditions have many valuable skills and without taking them on we wouldn't have benefited from that.'

Wayne Hodgkiss, Dealernet

Increasingly, there are also work-related (social) networks online such as LinkedIn. These are very useful for researching people before you meet them or checking facts but they don't reduce the importance of face to face contact.

MY STORY: Stephen – ‘My disability has made me a better employer’

High

Recognising that working with a diverse group of people with varying talents and backgrounds, rather than relying purely on your own abilities and skills gave you a better result whether it be the launch of a cosmetic range, perfume, chocolates or hand-made fireplaces all of which I have launched.

Low

Dealing with a long term back problem in an organisation that was unsympathetic to my condition.

Turning Point

Working for a company where talent was recognised regardless of who you were.

Best lesson learned

Be honest about yourself, both in your own skills and abilities (and strengths and weaknesses) and be honest about others. Do not undersell yourself or believe you can do it all. Learn to trust others and to complement your own skills and talents. Realise you achieve more through working with others.

Training?

Crucial, it should be available to all. It did not affect or help my condition but gave me confidence.
meetings and walk around and told people I was going to do it and why and to ignore me.)

Reasonable adjustments?

I suffer from a long term back problem from an accident at 16. However, it did not affect me badly until my late 20’s and is not a visible disability. I did not undertake roles that made the problem worse and was honest with my manager to find adjustments. I developed a coping strategy that I openly discussed with colleagues. (I would need to stand up at I did not expect my employer to give me excess time off to deal with the issue but asked for and got flexibility in my work schedule/work conditions. Time off to see a physio/medical practitioner could be made up at other times and I was always up to speed on what I could do for myself. I researched what adjustments were available and what was best for my condition.

Discrimination?

Not that I am consciously aware but I know that head-hunters and recruiters have been reluctant to put me forward for some companies. My attitude is that if that is the culture of a company I would not want to work there.

How my disability/condition helps

It has made me not judge others by face value and to assess how people deal with difficult issues and stress. These occur to everybody in business and learning to deal with your own problems can give you insights. My employers have used me as a mentor and sounding board for other employees and I can relate to a wider group of colleagues through dealing with a long term health condition/disability.

At networking events, think about how best to 'work the room'. Listen, repeat back people's names (they like it and it will help you remember), don't just walk away (say 'I need to talk to X'), get business cards etc. This sort of advice is available elsewhere but how does your impairment affect your networking? Thinking about it in advance might help to make something that is a daunting prospect for nearly everybody – disabled and non-disabled alike – a little easier.

'Disabled senior professionals tend to be thinly spread. It is rare to have a disabled colleague in the same organisation at your level with whom you can share ideas. Disability Rights UK's Radiate network fills this gap, offering regular access to a talented and inspiring group of individuals. The meetings are thought-provoking, challenging and very enjoyable. I have developed a valuable network of new contacts via Radiate.'

Jane Cordell, Coach, Trainer and Equality Consultant

For example, if you're a wheelchair-user, it can be difficult to network with other people's knees. Would a so-called standing wheelchair that enables to make level eye contact be more effective? Would mentioning your impairment first help those who may be embarrassed by it and thus help you to get what you want out of meeting them? If you have a visual impairment, could you network with a colleague who can identify where key people are placed in the room?

How do I apply for promotion?

Tell your employers you're interested. But also show your interest by volunteering to take on more responsibility.

Understand how promotions are made in your organisation. Are there selection boards? Is there a proper equal opportunities process or is it more informal? Will they try to fill posts internally first? If so, how does that work? Play by the rules that you find. If you really want to stay at Widgets plc and all promotions are given at the personal whim of the golf-loving chief executive, make sure he notices the set of clubs in the corner of your office.

Keep your CV and any personal website up to date. Monitor your online presence and get rid of anything, especially photos, which may not give quite the impression you want. Potential employers will Google you.

Persistence pays. One civil servant we spoke to during the preparation of this publication went before the promotion board 12 times before finally being accepted.

What about recruitment consultants?

Don't be put off by the fact that a job is being advertised by a recruitment agency or assume that they're gatekeepers trying to keep you out. Instead be proactive. Just as with potential employers, some consultants will be disability-confident, others not.

Don't assume that a consultant won't pass you on to their client because you're not the stereotypical profile. Make contact with the consultancy and make sure they know why you're better than a stereotype. Think about it: assuming you're suitably qualified, any decent recruitment consultant will want to pass you on to their client since most clients want a diverse selection of candidates to choose from and your candidature will be helping provide this.

Shelagh Szulc, director at Veredus says check your consultants out. 'Find out whether they have Investors in Diversity accreditation and who the key champions for diversity are within the organisation. Alternatively, ask who their

expert on disability is. Make contact and use them as a source of advice. Be up front with them about your disability and identify any reasonable adjustments you are likely to need in the workplace. Use the consultants to help you manage the message to their client. In your discussions, demonstrate how your disability is a selling point. A good recruitment consultant should be able to help you think these issues through in a way that will play to your strengths and give your application the best possible chance of success.'

Kai Adams, consultant at Saxton Bampfylde says: 'More and more clients are pushing hard for the most representative kind of lists from which to recruit and if they don't, we'll ask them about it.'

'Remember, our job is to offer our clients the best people – based on merit – even if they're harder to find,' he points out. 'Far from being anything to be concerned about, the fact that a post is being recruited for by a consultant may be a sign that the employer wants us to find the candidates that may be harder to reach. Often that's the very reason they come to us.'

Remember, you're not the only disabled person in the job market. Just as there may be other disabled people in your workplace, there are people with lived experience of disability working in recruitment consultancies.

'The reason they gave me the job was that I said up-front at interview, 'you may think I can't cope, but I've thought it through. If you're worried about me using the blackboard, I can use an overhead projector instead – I'll buy my own if necessary. I very much think, if you're disabled, it's your job to put other people at ease with you because they don't

know how to cope. You have to have confidence, put in the effort, and be candid. I think I've developed that confidence by necessity. It's not a natural thing. I just felt I wouldn't get anywhere if I sat back and let things happen.'

College principal with physical impairment

How should I approach interviews?

There is plenty of advice elsewhere on preparing for interviews. Here are some of the main points.

It all boils down to planning. The preparation process itself – if methodical – will help reduce stress.

Make sure you know exactly what will happen. What is the process going to be? How long will the interview be? Who will be on the interview panel? Will there be an examination or aptitude test? Will there be second or third interviews? Do you need to bring anything? If you have any access or other special requirements, inform them clearly in good time without making a big deal out of it.

‘Having the right attitude. I’ve had comments from senior managers saying that I make it easy for them by saying clearly what I need. It’s like I go 90% of the way and then ask very clearly for the 10% I need from them.’

Senior manager, private sector, with hearing impairment

Employer’s view

‘Ladbroke’s policy is to give people with disabilities and health conditions an equal opportunity when it comes to recruiting staff, but then to forget about disability. Once a candidate has settled in and is fully trained they are viewed as equal contributors to our business. We wouldn’t employ somebody who couldn’t do the job – that would be unfair to them and a poor decision on our part. As long as someone has the ability to succeed, we will invest in them and help them achieve their potential. It’s what we expect of all colleagues – and disabled ones are no different.’

Tim Savidge, Ladbroke’s

Work out what they’re likely to ask you. This will involve looking at the job description, person specification and the company itself. Don’t just look at the company’s own website but what others say too (especially about their finances). Clarify in your own mind, the points you want to get across to them about what you have achieved and what you could achieve including examples from outside work if relevant. Do some honest self-assessment. Make sure you plug your strengths and if there are any gaps, fill them with a little suitable

reading or research in good time before the interview. On the day, know the route you’ll take, leave in plenty of time (enter the building 10 minutes ahead of the appointed time) and dress appropriately both for the interview and the weather. If you can, show don’t tell. Interviews can involve a lot of telling but an interview is also an opportunity to show.

‘You need to determine the nature of your relationship with your interviewer. Being disabled, people often don’t know how to respond to you, how to treat you. It’s your job more than theirs to put things at ease, to be open about things and to determine how things are going to go.’

Teacher, actor

Decide whether or not to talk about your impairment or health condition. It may put them at ease if you have an evident impairment. But there is no obligation to discuss it: you decide (see chapter four). Being upfront and solution-oriented about it may show your potential employer that you can bring these skills to your work generally.

‘A delegate on our leadership programme had a severe facial disfigurement and said something like ‘I want communication to go smoothly at interview, and not let my disfigurement get in the way’ – and then specified how she hoped the panel would work with her. It had the effect of making the panel more comfortable and confident, because everything was out in the open and she was demonstrating that she was comfortable ... but you can only do that if you have a lot of confidence.’

Business school leader

If you do discuss your disability or health condition, make sure the employer knows how easy and cheap most 'reasonable adjustments' are. Explain, if relevant, that you could get Access to Work support. This is very important with interviewers who do not understand disabilities and health conditions particularly well and may assume that everything is expensive. Make it easy for them

Make a relationship both physically – with the interviewer – and metaphorically – with the company you're applying to work for. It's amazing how few people truly research their potential employers. This is far easier to do today thanks to the internet. Google them; they will probably be Googling you. This will ensure you have some good questions to ask the interviewer(s) that aren't just about your salary.

How do I get feedback?

Ask for it. If you don't get a job or a promotion or if a piece of work is not well-received ask why. This shows a willingness to learn.

Try to take it on the chin. Even if the managers concerned clearly don't understand you, your work or your disability/condition, you can still learn from it. (Even if the best conclusion you can draw is that you need to look for a new job.)

It's not easy. Receiving feedback – good and bad – requires you to feel comfortable in your own skin. You don't want to misunderstand what is being said by taking it the wrong way. You need to be able disentangle your impairment from your work performance from yourself as a person – even if others don't

always appear to be able to – and to challenge feedback that seems to confuse these. If receiving praise or criticism are challenging for you, have a look at the section on personal development on page 32.

How do I make job-changes go more smoothly?

One of the deterrents to changing jobs is needing to go through all the hoops again – what reasonable adjustments do you need, how do you best discuss your disability or health condition with colleagues and so on.

The practical side – a ramp, a different computer, for example – is sometimes easier to handle than the intangible stuff that comes from working with people who understand your needs and your particular working arrangements.

The Business Disability Forum has come up with a way of minimising the hassle around changing jobs. It's called a 'tailored adjustment agreement'. This is 'a living record of reasonable adjustments agreed between a disabled employee and their line manager'. One of its purposes is to 'minimise the need to re-negotiate' every time you change jobs by identifying the impact your disability has on your work, what good days and bad days are like for you and what happens in terms of leave etc. You can take the agreement with you. Even if you go to a completely new workplace, it will be a good starting point and provide evidence of what works which should reassure any new employer.

INTERVIEW: Cleveland Barnes, fast food worker

'As a child I moved around a lot. I was in a Barnado's home. And I was never in one school for very long. As a result my dyslexia was never diagnosed. Nobody knew what it was then anyway and you were pretty much left alone. I left school without any qualifications and with serious literacy problems.

At first I could get jobs easily enough in factories. Friends would fix you up. But once people started wanting me to fill in application forms, the problems started. The paperwork finished me. My confidence spiralled downwards and I was unemployed for 23 years.

The Job Centre and Remploy helped a little but what really made a difference was finding someone to listen to me. That took time and I was in my late forties before my dyslexia was diagnosed. I got one to one support through Remploy and an action plan.

I didn't want to go to Remploy at first. I didn't think I could do it. I didn't think I could read. I was like a mouse. I frequently wanted to walk out but I stuck at it and one day, I decided: there's nothing wrong with me, I'm going to stop hiding my dyslexia. Just making that decision gave me a little more confidence.

Even then I could tell employers weren't interested. You can tell from the body language. Employers said they'd help with the forms and get back to me but they never did.

When they suggested that I go to work at McDonalds, I didn't think I could do it. It involved keeping the place tidy. But my adviser at Remploy reminded me how I'd helped clear up after a Remploy party. It was simple thing but it made me think.

When I got there, they showed me what to do. There were no papers to read or forms to fill in. I clean, tidy and help out the customers. I've won an employee of the year award and the office get a lot of emails from customers. They say I attract customers but I'm just being myself.

The job has made an enormous difference to my life. It gets you out and makes you more independent. Before I was diagnosed, before I got the job, I used to get really depressed but not now. I'm very happy where I am. I like the variety of the job.'

4: How do I discuss my disability or health condition at work?

People with a health condition or disability often wonder whether they should declare it to their employer, especially if it is not obvious.

You should be as loud and proud about who you are as you wish to be. It's your choice. Think about the advantages of being open (like getting the support you need, feeling 'yourself', freedom from the energy sapping experience of keeping secrets). Think about the potential downsides – might people see you differently, under-estimate you, kill you with kindness? If you decide to be open, think about who to talk to, when and how: just saying 'by the way I have manic depression or cancer' is very different from saying 'I have manic depression and I've managed it successfully at work for some years now – and this is what would be helpful to me in my work, so I continue to work to my best'. Presenting solutions and strategies helps others feel the issue is quite manageable.

What can my employer ask me?

Under the Equality Act 2010, the employer cannot normally ask you anything about your health or disability history until after they have made a job offer. This means that they cannot turn you down on health grounds without your knowledge. However, employers can ask you before a job offer in limited circumstances, that is, if it is directly relevant to one of the following:

- whether you can take part in an assessment
- whether reasonable adjustments need to be made to a selection process
- whether you can carry out a task that is an essential part of the work
- as part of diversity monitoring among their job applicants

- to increase the number of disabled people they employ
- if disability is a requirement of the job national security checks

If you think a question you are asked is not allowed before you have been offered a job, tell the employer and/or the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Once you have been offered a job, the employer may ask for more information. However, the Equality Act still applies and this information cannot be used to discriminate in anyway.

What do I have to tell my employer?

Under health and safety rules, you do have a legal obligation to tell your employer about any health condition that might cause an accident or other health and safety problem.

But apart from that, it's very much a personal choice and will depend on what your job is, your relationship with your employers and colleagues and their attitudes. One point to bear in mind is that your employer cannot make 'reasonable adjustments' if they do not know that any are required. Some actions which might be considered unfair if your employer knows about your disability or health condition, may not be if they are unaware of it.

This debate may sound like something that only concerns people with invisible impairments but even those with obvious physical impairments need to think about how and when they might talk about them. This is important in the context of going to interviews or for promotion but is also relevant to your everyday working life.

If you have a fluctuating condition(s) with good days and bad days you'll perhaps choose to inform your colleagues and line manager in greater detail than those with a more fixed condition. If you have a degenerating condition, the question of what it is appropriate to say and when may well recur and you might find yourself returning to the questions in this section.

What language do you want used?

By discussing your disability or health condition you can help give colleagues a vocabulary they might not otherwise have and in doing so set out the terrain and terms for any discussion of them.

Regrettably, society understands some impairments even less well than others – mental health problems, for example. Some people are completely open at work and have met with respect and (when wanted) support. It can be liberating. But for others, it can mean being treated differently – for instance, passed over for promotion.

Of course, you're unlikely to have a long, successful career in an environment where you don't feel able to be honest about who you are but at the same time telling all on day one may not be the best strategy either. Building trust takes a little time.

Think about the pros and cons in your particular situation. You need to make your own decisions based on your job, your relationships at work and your career plans.

What do other people with impairments or health conditions do?

In Radar's research for Doing Seniority Differently, about two thirds of people questioned had the option not to reveal their impairment and three quarters of these had chosen to hide their impairment sometimes or

always. Most commonly, people were more open with colleagues than those with power in the organisation.

People with mental health conditions were nearly four times more likely than other disabled people to be open to 'no one' about their impairment; and less than half as likely to be open to everyone. Other groups who disclosed 'potentially hidden impairments' – people with long-term health conditions or learning difficulties – were more likely than other disabled people to be open to everyone. In the Doing Seniority Differently research, there were several reasons for keeping a condition private including the fear of discrimination.

The other side of the coin from discrimination is excess concern. One media professional with a mental health condition told us: 'I knew it was the one thing I could never mention in a junior position. Not because I would get the sack but because I'd be killed off by kindness. Other people would decide what I was and wasn't capable of. The thing I never wanted was pity and at the time I didn't feel I needed support so I made a very definite choice not to disclose.' This individual's approach changed with increased seniority. 'Once I was in a more senior position I was slightly more open, because at that level I could dictate and manage my own working life, knowing I would be judged by my results. It was a relief finally to be able to work with the disability rather than against it.'

How do I know when it's the right time to tell?

Consider these questions. If you don't tell soon, will you be able to tell later? Will you turn it into a bigger deal than it is by delaying telling? If you never tell will you truly be able to build meaningful relationships with your colleagues? Not telling always includes living a lie to a certain extent. Some of us are better at

this than others – and it can be a strain.

One public sector leader told us: ‘I wonder now whether things might have been different if I’d told my employer (about my impairment) and

whether I might have staved off my subsequent heart attack through lifestyle change. I think things would be different if this situation happened today, because there is more openness to adjustments.’

MY STORY: Nikki – ‘Diagnosis was my turning point’

High

Every day that I work is a day I am beating my Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). I was told that people who suffer from OCD generally do not work so my being in work proves that it can be done.

Low

Before I was diagnosed I was constantly checking information and this was increasing my working day. Staff began to notice and ask me to stop but I couldn’t and I wasn’t aware of the condition except I was experiencing it and people around me didn’t seem to be.

Turning Point

Diagnosis. Once I was diagnosed with my OCD, once this was explained to me I felt that I wasn’t the only one going through it and with help by cognitive behavioural therapy I found coping mechanisms and over time I was getting better. I was then ready to start working again.

Greatest challenge

Every Monday is my greatest career challenge. As over the weekend my OCD is greatly reduced and sometimes not there at all. I face my OCD everyday I’m in work and at this very moment in time whilst writing. So getting up and going to work and just writing a simple email are my biggest challenges.

Discrimination?

I have with some people saying to pull myself together but I explain my health condition and confirm it is a widely recognised condition with debilitating effects.

Training?

Very important as it helps me to grow in confidence which helps with my OCD. If I know a job well it reduces some of the anxiety.

How my disability/condition helps

My OCD means I check over my work a couple of times more than most people. I have turned this negative into a positive by confirming that with this extra proof reading I can be more assured that my work does not contain mistakes.

Talking about disabilities and health conditions

From the word go. In the past I have kept silent and I know that bad days do happen and it’s harder to explain to an employer who is not aware of the situation beforehand when these days do occur. I have since explained my disability to my employer and we discussed reasonable adjustments to help with my day to day job and also when I notice the warning signs of a bad day I can openly talk to my employer who is aware and will help support me through that tough time.

You don't need to make a big deal out of talking about your disability or health condition. Bring it up at a regular meeting with your boss just as you would any other item. You can't know exactly how your boss will react. He or she may overreact anyway. But certainly if you make a big deal out of it, you increase the risk that he or she will do the same.

A final thought, role models matter. If you have a high-profile job, you can help others in your field enormously by being open about your disability or health conditions.

Employer's view

'Being recognised consistently as an organisation that values its staff, we pride ourselves on having a culture of equality and diversity. What matters most to us as an employer

is how someone deals with our customers. We want hard working people with enthusiasm and most importantly, personality. A disability or mental health problem does not affect that.'

Richard Thorne, Admiral Car Insurance

INTERVIEW: Tara Flood, CEO, disability campaigning organisation

'I have a limb impairment. I went to a special school from 16 months and left at 16 years with few qualifications. I went into banking because the careers adviser told me to. It never crossed my mind to do anything other than what I was told. My careers adviser even chose the subjects I studied at college.

My first job was in the bank's post room but they realised within a week that it wasn't for me as it involved carrying trays of post around a large office all day. Not that I said anything – the 'hangover' from special school.

By my late 20s I began to realise something wasn't right. Everybody else was being promoted. I wasn't. I assumed I wasn't working hard enough and worked harder. But every time I tried to move to a different area, I was told it wasn't for me. I never saw a client in the whole ten years I worked in banking. They kept me away from them and sadly I never challenged it.

By the time I hit 30 in a City of London job, I was beginning to feel the effects of age discrimination too. I knew I needed to get out. I'd been doing a degree at night school in social policy and kidded myself I knew about disability so I got a job with the Disabled Living Foundation. It wasn't the job that was the turning point but someone I met: a great disabled woman who introduced me to the social model of disability.

Since then I've worked in large and small disability organisations and have learned that I'm more comfortable in smaller ones. Often in larger ones, the practical stuff hasn't caught up with the vision. When I was Head of External Affairs at a larger disability charity, the chief executive genuinely wanted to change things but it was clear from the start he wasn't taking the 4,500 staff with him. It was an insight into how big charities work that has been really helpful in my current job. Because of the resources involved, these organisations need to balance their message with their own survival.

In my present job at ALLFIE (the Alliance for Inclusive Education), there are six of us, all part-time. I love being part of a small, flexible, responsive grass-roots campaigning organisation. Of course, I'd like a less fragile funding environment but equally because we're not dependent on public money we have the power to be challenging and remain true to our vision and principles.

In difficult circumstances, you need to be much smarter. We're trying to work with teachers, parents and politicians, building new and alliances. There are lessons here. Look for allies. Making progress in tough times requires patience and tolerance but as disabled people we have this in bucket loads.'

5: What's going to happen next at work? – Liz Sayce

Given the choice most disabled people want to work and want 'good work' – the chance of a career. Recent UK governments have felt the same way about 'work' and are beginning to focus on 'careers'. Careers are – or ought to be – the future for more and more disabled people.

Just under half (48%) of disabled people of working age are working: over three million disabled people, out of a working age population of 7.7 million. And our employment rate has risen: in 1998 barely 40% of disabled people were in work.

But far fewer disabled people work than non-disabled people. The gap shrank during the 2000s, then stalled, then started to go down very slightly. It is still 32% (with 48% of disabled people in work compared to 80% of non-disabled people). Employment rates also vary greatly according to your type of impairment, from under 20% for people with severe/specific learning disabilities or mental health problems to over 60% for some common long-term physical health conditions. Disabled people from some minority ethnic groups also have very low employment rates.

What's more disabled workers earn less than non-disabled people: on average nearly £1 an hour less, according to the Equality and Human Rights Commission. This gap needs to close.

There are policy developments that could – in theory – help. The 2016 Green Paper Improving Lives proposes an increase in peer support for employment: investing in Disabled People's Organisations who are in a good position to support people into careers, at the same time addressing other issues people

may face (from housing and debt to social care). There is also a planned innovation fund to test new ways to enable disabled people to work successfully. There is an emphasis on sustainable work, which should mean people don't just get a job but are supported to keep it too. However, welfare to work programmes generally have a poor record, and there are major barriers in the workplace – so it will be vital for government to use all the levers at its disposal (like its own huge purchasing power, and the enormous number of jobs in government and the public sector) to ramp up opportunities for disabled people. In the USA, the federal government set itself a goal of employing 100,000 more disabled people in 4 years – and achieved 109,000. With leadership and concerted work government could act as an exemplar.

There is a big risk that the employment programmes may not help people with the most complex needs; and a risk that some people simply move from one benefit to another (usually lower) benefit, rather than being helped into work. New benefits frameworks – Universal Credit – are designed to ensure people are better off in work, but the devil is in the detail.

In 2016, the All-party Parliamentary Group on Disability produced a report – Ahead of the Arc – which made important recommendations for closing the disability employment gap. It particularly focused on strategic work in growth areas of the economy – like care, and food and drink – to open up career opportunities for disabled people; and on better support for disabled entrepreneurs, including targeting resources for business loans and research.

Some businesses are showing how leadership and concerted action can lead to greater employment participation of disabled people at different levels: as apprentices (for instance, Barclays made entry criteria more flexible, which enabled more disabled people to join); and in different roles (for instance, Channel 4 increased the number of disabled people in front of the camera and behind it, and in their supply chain).

We'll all need more skills in the future. The UK economy is an information economy. It offers fewer low or no skills jobs than it did – although those jobs still can be a good starting point in a career. Sometimes employers ask for qualifications that are not really essential to the job or apprenticeship and this can be unfair.

We need to encourage employers to focus on what they really need, so they don't put unnecessary barriers in the way of people who may have missed out on qualifications for all kinds of reasons (from growing up in care to an interrupted education due to disability).

Importantly, employers also really rate soft skills, like teamwork, inter-personal ability and customer service. These come not from qualifications but from work and life experience, internships, apprenticeships – all of which are growing, offering potential opportunities for disabled people to progress if the programmes operate on the basis of real equality.

The 2011 review of vocational education by Professor Alison Wolf said work experience was more important than training, for many jobs. Work experience and paid internships can be very useful both for young disabled people and if you acquire an impairment later, and want to try new work opportunities as a newly disabled person. (For further information and to download a copy of the review, visit <http://tinyurl.com/6hzhzwq>)

Increased job insecurity in general is another developing feature. An economy in which it is easier to hire and fire people and in which more and more work is farmed out to freelancers and contractors may be better able to respond to globalisation and rapid change but it's the workers who have to roll with the punches. You may want to think about self-employment and become one of those freelancers or contractors – many disabled people do; but the insecurities and sometimes lack of employment rights can be challenging. In any event, job changes are likely.

We no longer expect one job for life – so it's likely you will need to re-skill and move from one role to another as your career develops. So you may want to find a mentor, or senior champion, to help guide you through the challenges and opportunities of today's career market. Networks of disabled people can also be very valuable, like the Alumni network of people who have completed Disability Rights UK's Leadership Academy Programme.

It's not just jobs which are coming and going but whole industries. New technologies are changing the way everything is done including business. From music to manufacturing, banking to retail, all have changed fundamentally in the last ten years and will continue to do so and at ever increasing speeds.

You may want to think about jobs and careers in sectors that are set to grow – areas like hospitality, retail, health and social work, knowledge economy. You can find out more about which sectors are growing from www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/391911/15.01.05._UKCES_Career_Brochure_V13_reduced.pdf. Find out which sectors are growing in your own locality from Job Centre Plus or through local employment partnerships.

What is certain is that we all need more and varied skills to keep up including the ability to deal with job insecurity and an economic climate in which being made redundant or losing your job or your clients can be relatively common-place. With support and mentoring you will be better placed to ride the waves and move into a different opportunity.

A diverse workforce builds a diverse economy. Disabled people bring a vast range of talents to our workforces – as individuals and also as a result of managing life with disability, which can bring with it resilience, problem solving, empathy and many other skills that employers desperately need.

Disabled people want to contribute to economic strength in Britain – and can do so if given the opportunity. Investing in the support to make that happen is a far better use of resources than picking up the pieces once large numbers are out of work with the ripple effect on health and family well-being, as well as on income and status.

Liz Sayce is Disability Rights UK's chief executive. In 2011, she was commissioned by the government to review employment services for disabled people. The data is from the UK's quarterly Labour Force survey.

MY STORY: Claire – ‘I have been able to give clients an honest account of my own experiences’

High

Being able to motivate and develop people from all walks of life, encouraging them to progress into sustainable paid employment. I have over the years had many people come back to me and tell me I changed their lives. I didn't – they did!

Low

Being threatened with the sack when I was off sick due to an allergy to biological medication I had been given to help my condition. I was treated abysmally by management at the time and it was only with the support of my colleagues that I managed to pick myself up from that experience.

Turning Point

I started to make progress in my career when I moved from benefits to the Welfare to Work industry in 1999. I moved to a role as an Employment Adviser.

Greatest challenge

Forcing myself in to my workplace when I felt that unwell I should have been in bed and proving to my then manager that I was capable of doing the job (even though I had 15 years' experience).

Best lesson learned

If you persevere with your goal, nothing and no-one can take it from you. Employment is definitely beneficial to people that have disabilities, even

when they have to force themselves into work. I believe it has stopped me becoming worse than I am as I have supportive colleagues and am not stuck in the house dwelling on how ill I am.

How to get promotion

Let your line manager know that you would be interested in moving up the ranks. Offer to job shadow or take on additional duties if you are able to. Reasonable adjustments? I have been fortunate that when I have needed adjustments the employer has had an internal Occupational Health Dept.

Discrimination?

Yes, on two occasions. I am a union member and got support from the local Union Rep and full support from my colleagues in my team. How my disability/condition helps I have been able to give an honest and accurate account to clients of my own experiences in the work place and the hurdles I have encountered and what I have done to overcome them to remain in work.

Talking about my disability/condition

I have a line manager who operates an open door policy. She is approachable and listens to any concerns. She is non-judgemental and does everything in her power to help make my job easier when required.

MY STORY: Les –‘We have skills that set us apart from the herd’

High

Meeting my first mentor, the company equality champion. Mentoring is essential because I don't see work as most people do. Writing the disability and mental health awareness packages for the company. Meeting my manager who believes in challenging people to step outside their comfort zone.

Low

Five years of bullying by a manager.

Turning Point

The progress has been made from the beginning of my career but rocketed in the last 5 years. This happened because I finally managed to educate my company about my special needs.

Greatest challenge

Living with three mental health conditions, two physical disabilities and two cognitive disabilities. Getting people to take that package of apparently damaged goods seriously and see the positives of uniqueness.

Best lesson learned

Not everyone is born a saint. Just because someone is in a senior position does not make them any less afraid of their own mortality and mental health scares even the hardest of souls.

Interview tip

Never sell yourself short. Get out of the 'just glad I have a job' mindset into 'you're lucky to have a unique individual like me'.

How to get promotion

Look at yourself as a unique proposition. Most people with disabilities have extra coping skills and life strategies over our less fortunate 'normal' colleagues. Sell on those. It sets you apart from the herd.

Discrimination?

Frequently – most people with mental health issues do. I then remember this saying: 'Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can; And wisdom to know the difference.' It usually helps and saves a lot of wasted anger.

How my disability/health condition helps

Years ago I found myself part of a team of very clever, technical geniuses all very senior to myself. I was way out of my league. I asked the senior manager who had poached me for the job, why?

He told me that we were taking a new product to market and that everyone in that room was mirrored in the competitors' teams so ultimately they would all come up with the same basic solution. He needed a competitive edge and he saw me as that edge as he said he had never ever met anyone who thought as far outside the box as I did (part of my condition).

He was the first person who ever told me being different was a good thing.

6: Who can help?

Disability Rights UK resources

Disability Rights UK has a range of programmes and resources that may help in career development including its ground-breaking Leadership Academy. The aim of the Programme is to empower capable, confident disabled leaders in all sectors of employment and also address the need for greater equality in the workplace, providing employers with access to a wider pool of talent.
www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/leadership

We produce a range of other guides and information, much of which is free to download from our website. These include Into Higher Education, Into Further Education, Into Apprenticeships and Get back to where we do belong - an employment skills guide for people with newly acquired disabilities or health conditions.

We are authors of the Disability Rights Handbook, our annual guide to welfare benefits and services. We publish Taking Charge, a practical guide to living with a health condition or disability.

For more information, visit
www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Disability Rights UK also runs Radiate, an exciting network of high-flyers with lived experience of disability or health conditions.

Disabled Student Helpline

We provide free information and advice for disabled students, covering further and higher education, employment, apprenticeships and volunteering. Our helpline is open Tuesday and Thursday 11.30-13.30.
 Tel: 0800 328 5050
 Email: students@disabilityrightsuk.org

Careers

National Careers Service

Career planning, information and advice service for students in England. The website offers a range of information including a Skills health check, CV builder, over 800 job profiles, information on courses and sources of funding.
 Tel: 0800 100 900
 Web: nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

iCould

Not-for-profit careers resource run by CRAC, the career development organisation.
 Web: www.icould.com

Business Gateway Scotland

Tel: 0845 609 6611
 Web: www.bgateway.com

Invest Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9023 9090
 Web: www.investni.com

Business Wales

Tel: 03000 6 03000
 Web: business.wales.gov.uk

Employment Related Services Association (ERSA)

The ERSA is the trade body for the welfare to work industry through which you can find all the dozens of local member organisations.
 Web: www.ersa.org.uk
 (If you are having trouble getting in touch with a provider in your area, contact ERSA on 020 7960 6809)

The Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust assists unemployed or underemployed young people set up in business with financial help and on-going business advice.
 Address: Prince's Trust House, 9 Eldon Street, London EC2M 7LS
 Tel: 020 7543 1234
 Textphone: 020 7543 1374
 Web: www.princes-trust.org.uk

Address: Unit 8 Weavers Court, Belfast BT12 5GH
Tel: 028 9089 5000

Address: Cumbrae House
15 Carlton Court, Glasgow G5 9JP
Tel: 0141 204 4409

Address: The Prince's Trust Cymru, 16 Ocean
Way, Galdames Place, Cardiff CF24 5PE
Tel: 02920 431500

LMI for all

LMI for all is a database that provides 'Labour Market Intelligence' on the job opportunities that are likely in different parts of the country.
Web: www.lmiforall.org.uk

Summaries of LMI for each Local Enterprise Partnership in England can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-enterprise-summary-reports

Remploy

Remploy is a leading provider of jobs for disabled people, partnering some of the country's biggest companies.

Address: Remploy Ltd, 18c Meridian East,
Meridian Business Park, Leicester LE19 1WZ
Tel: 0845 146 0501
Textphone: 0845 146 0532
Email: info@remploy.co.uk
Web: www.remploy.co.uk

The Shaw Trust

The Shaw Trust supports disabled people to prepare for work, find jobs and live more independently.

Address: Fox Talbot House, Greenways Business
Park, Chippenham SN15 1BN
Tel: 01225 716300
Textphone: 0845 769 7288
Web: www.shaw-trust.org.uk

Legal

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

Address: EHRC Helpline England, Freepost RRL-
GHUXCTR, Arndale House, Arndale Centre,
Manchester M4 3EQ
Tel: 0845 604 6610
Address: 39-45 Cavell Street, London E1 2BP

Tel: 020 7791 9800
Textphone: 020 7791 9801
Email: advice@dls.org.uk
Web: www.dls.org.uk

Law Centres Network

Not-for-profit legal practices providing free legal advice and representation to disadvantaged people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
Web: www.lawcentres.org.uk

Education and training

Apprenticeships

Tel: 0800 015 0600
Web: www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Internships: Graduate Talent Pool

Web: <http://graduatetalentpool.direct.gov.uk>

EmployAbility

Free support, advice and internships for disabled university students and graduates.
Tel: 07852 764684
Web: www.employ-ability.org.uk

Learn Direct

Courses in basic skills, IT, business and languages.
Web: www.learndirect.co.uk

ContinYou

Range of programmes to encourage people of all ages to take up learning opportunities.
Web: www.continyou.org.uk

Association of National Specialist Colleges (NATSPEC)

Organisation of specialist further education establishments.
Web: www.natspec.org.uk

Government information on student finance

In England: www.gov.uk/student-finance
In Scotland: www.saas.gov.uk
In Wales: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk
In Northern Ireland: www.studentfinancenir.co.uk

National Extension College

For distance learning.
Web: www.nec.ac.uk

Open University

UK's best known provider of distance learning.

Web: www.open.ac.uk

Horse's Mouth

Online coaching and mentoring network.

Web: www.horsesmouth.co.uk

Employers' bodies

Business Disability Forum

Business Disability Forum promotes and develops good practice among employers in the employment of disabled people and service to disabled customers. The Forum has around 400 member companies representing over 20% of the UK workforce and provides advice and information to them.

Address: Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY

Tel: 020 7403 3020

Textphone: 020 7403 0040

Web: www.efd.org.uk

Employers' Forum on Ageing (EFA)

The EFA is an independent network of leading employers who recognise the value of an age diverse workforce. In addition to supporting employers, the EFA influences government, business and trade unions. The EFA is part of the broader Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion www.enei.org.uk.

Address: EFA, 32-36 Loman Street, London SE1 0EH

Tel: 020 7922 7790

Web: www.efa.org.uk

National Centre For Diversity

Independent organisation supporting organisations in the management of diversity and inclusion. They run the Investors In Diversity scheme.

Address: National Centre for Diversity, Shine, Harehills Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS8 5HS

Tel: 0113 388 0145

Web: www.nationalcentrefordiversity.com

Networking

TUC (Trades Union Congress)

The TUC can help you find a union relevant to your work.

Address: Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS

Tel: 020 7636 4030

Web: www.tuc.org.uk

Association of Disabled Professionals (ADP)

The ADP draws its members from disabled people working, or having worked, in the professions or in a managerial role. It has established the Disabled Entrepreneurs' Network to provide networking opportunities among self-employed disabled people and those setting up and running their own businesses, see www.disabledentrepreneurs.net

Address: BCM ADP, London WC1N 3XX

Tel: 01204 431638

Email: adp.admin@ntlworld.com

Web: www.adp.org.uk

Disabled Workers Co-operative

The Disabled Workers Co-operative has a database of skills and services offered by disabled workers enabling potential clients to get in touch with disabled service providers in their locality. Any disabled individual, sheltered workshop or organisation employing a significant number of disabled people can register free on the database, which is also free to use by visiting the website.

The website also has an e-jobs portal where disabled people looking for employment can browse for jobs and employers can post their vacancies free.

Web: www.disabledworkers.org.uk

Disabled Entrepreneurs

A specialist team of disabled entrepreneurs from a range of backgrounds supporting anyone wanting to become (or are already) a disabled entrepreneur.

Web: www.disabledentrepreneurs.co.uk

Doing Life Differently Guides

This series of publications was written by and for people with lived experience of disability or health conditions. Each guide is packed with practical advice about ways to do everyday things differently and include real-life stories to inspire people to take control of different aspects of their lives, with maximum choice and independence.

Doing IT Differently aims to provide information and assistance to allow everyone the opportunity to take advantage and overcome the barriers of Information Technology (IT) and computers regardless of disability.

Doing Work Differently explores practical solutions to real questions related to work and provides real life examples of how people have started a job, found a new career, or found a way to keep doing their current job if their circumstances change.

Doing Money Differently looks at new ways of making, saving and looking after your money. It is a toolkit to help people better understand money and lessen the amount of time you spend thinking and worrying about it.

Doing Transport Differently has information and travellers' tales to help and inspire people with lived experience of disability or health conditions to use public transport.

Doing Sport Differently aims to encourage and support people with lived experience of disability or health conditions to participate in fitness and sport.

If you are interested in downloading your free copy of one of these publications, please visit www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Disability Rights UK

Disability Rights UK is a charity. We work for a society in which everyone can participate equally.

We are disabled people leading change and we aim to be the largest national pan-disability organisation, led, run and controlled by disabled people.

Disability Rights UK has three main priorities:

- 1 Independent living – getting a life
- 2 Career opportunities – getting work, education and skills
- 3 Influencing public attitudes and behaviours – seeking a sea change in perceptions of disability and tackling hostility, bullying and hate crime.

Join Disability Rights UK and help us strengthen the voice of disabled people. We are a membership organisation with over 1,300 members, including universities, colleges and individual students. You can sign up for membership on our website:

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/membership/how-join

Doing Careers Differently – a guide written by and for disabled people on how to make a success of your career.

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Thanks to all the people with lived experience of disability or health conditions and former Radar members who helped write this guide and to all our sponsors, trustees and project team.

Doing Careers Differently – a guide written by and for disabled people on how to make a success of your career. Some positive messages within:

‘Never give up on your dreams, but be flexible when aiming for them.’

‘The challenges posed by my disability mean my colleagues see me as adaptable and resourceful.’

‘Ability will out! Prove this and your colleagues will respect you more.’

‘Most people with disabilities have extra coping skills... Sell those. It sets you apart from the herd.’

‘My employers have used me as a mentor... My disability helps me relate to my colleagues.’

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49-51 East Rd
London N1 6AH

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Email: students@disabilityrightsuk.org
www.disabilityrightsuk.org
Charity number 273150