

Disabilities that get worse

Some disabled people have conditions or impairments that get worse over time. For some people, ill health might progress into a disability.

This might mean changes to:

- the support someone needs
- what they're able to do at work
- whether they want to continue working or change the work they do

Depending on the disability and how it affects someone, this might happen over a short period of time or over many years.

When someone's condition or impairment changes

When someone's condition or impairment changes and that has an impact on their work, they should talk with their employer.

For some people, this might be the first time they've told their employer about their disability. By law (Equality Act 2010), nobody has to tell their employer they're disabled. But talking about it can help people get the support they need.

Examples of when someone should talk to their employer include when:

- they're finding it more difficult to do some or all of their job
- they can no longer use a particular system or tool
- there's an issue with the workplace – for example it's harder to get around
- they feel there might be a health and safety risk if they continue doing something

What employers should do

By law, an employer must:

- continue to do all they reasonably can to support an employee
- make reasonable adjustments and continue to review and change them as an employee's needs change
- in all decisions, make sure they do not unlawfully discriminate

The employer should not assume what someone can or cannot do, or what someone wants to do. Talk with the person, listen and consider their specific situation.

Find out more about:

- [talking about disability at work](#)
- [reviewing reasonable adjustments](#)

Time off for medical appointments and treatment

When someone's condition gets worse, they might need more time off. This could be to manage their symptoms or for medical appointments, treatment and recovery.

[Find out about managing absence when someone is disabled](#)

If someone can no longer do their work

If someone can no longer do their work but they would like to continue working, they should:

- make sure they have explored all reasonable adjustments with their employer
- see if other support is available – [find more support for managing disability at work](#)

If there are no adjustments or support that would allow the person to continue in their job, the employer should consider whether there's a suitable alternative job. This might include retraining or considering other adjustments.

The employer should do everything they can to keep the person in work. But in some circumstances an employer might need to consider ending someone's employment or taking other action.

[Find out about capability or performance when someone is disabled](#)

When someone has a terminal illness

A terminal illness is likely to be considered a disability, even if the person appears well.

Someone with a terminal illness might want to carry on working, change the work they do, or stop working. Every situation is different.

Some employers support the [Dying to Work campaign](#) for more employment rights for terminally ill people.

[Read Marie Curie advice on what to do at work when you have a terminal illness](#)

Get more advice and support

These issues can be very difficult to deal with. An employer should be sensitive in how they talk with their employee, and offer support.

Some organisations offer support through work, for example counselling or mental health support through an employee assistance programme (EAP). Other support is available if your organisation does not offer this.

[Find more support for managing disability at work](#)

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