

Disability-related absence

Some disabled people might need time off for reasons related to their disability. For example if they're:

- too ill to work
- going to medical and hospital appointments
- having treatment or therapy
- recovering from treatment

Check your absence policy

Employers should have an absence policy that includes what to do if someone needs time off for reasons related to their disability.

If there's no absence policy, the person should ask their employer what type of leave to use and how to record the absence.

Reasonable adjustments for absence

If someone's had a number of absences related to their disability – or they're likely to – they might need reasonable adjustments.

By law (Equality Act 2010), an employer must make adjustments for someone who's disabled if the adjustments are reasonable. What's considered 'reasonable' depends on the circumstances.

Reasonable adjustments are specific to an individual person.

Some adjustments might be around [trigger points](#) for absence, if the organisation uses a trigger point system. This is a system that triggers an absence review if an employee reaches a certain level of absences.

Examples of reasonable adjustments could be:

- not counting some or all sickness absence related to a disability towards any trigger points
- increasing the number of absences that will trigger a review

Another example of a reasonable adjustment could be recording disability absence separately to other sickness absence. This is sometimes known as disability leave or disability-related sickness absence.

Example of a reasonable adjustment for absence

Leslie needs time off for cancer treatment and recovery. Their employer agrees they can take a period of disability leave as a reasonable adjustment, then return to their job.

Later, Leslie's employer uses attendance as one of the criteria for selecting people for redundancy. The employer discounts Leslie's period of disability leave so Leslie is not put at a disadvantage during the redundancy process.

Deciding if absence adjustments are reasonable

The employer should talk with the person, listen and consider their specific situation. The employer could consider getting medical advice, for example an occupational health report, to help them decide what adjustments to make.

The employer's decision should take into account:

- why someone needs time off and how much time they might need
- the impact on the person of not making an adjustment
- the impact on the organisation or team

An employer does not have to make adjustments if they're not reasonable. But they must make sure they're not putting the person at a disadvantage because of their disability. Otherwise it could lead to a disability discrimination claim, for example 'discrimination arising from disability'.

Find out more about:

- [reasonable adjustments](#)
- [types of disability discrimination](#)

Pay while someone is off work

How much pay someone is entitled to while they're off work depends on whether their employer offers:

- statutory sick pay (SSP) – the minimum amount employers must pay if the person is eligible for it
- 'contractual' sick pay – more than the legal minimum

To find out, check the employment contract and the organisation's absence policy.

If someone's off work for a while, the employer should make sure the person knows their employment rights, including:

- sick pay and holiday pay
- benefits they might be entitled to if their sick pay runs out

[Find out more about sick pay entitlement](#)

Returning to work after absence

If someone is not ready for a full return to work, they might need different arrangements, for example working more flexibly or a phased return. This might apply to both short absences and long-term absence.

[Find out more about returning to work after absence](#)

Get more advice and support

[Contact the Acas helpline](#) for confidential, free advice for employees and employers.

Acas support for employers and managers includes:

- [tailored support for your organisation](#)
- [training on managing absence](#)
- [training on reasonable adjustments](#)

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

Related content

[/what-disability-means-by-law](#)

[/accessibility-at-work](#)