FAQs: What is a disability?

Why would an employer ask me about my disability?

If an employer asks whether you have a disability on the Equal Opportunities form, they want to know in order to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of their Equal Opportunities policies.
If they ask on the application form, they want to know if you need any support or adjustments during the recruitment process to allow you to demonstrate your ability.

How do I know if my condition is considered a disability?

The legal definition states that a person has a disability if 'they have a physical or mental impairment that adversely effects their ability to carry out normal day to day activities'. This is a very ambiguous term and it is more helpful in the workplace to instead ask yourself – do I need any support during the recruitment process to demonstrate my suitability for the job or in the workplace to enable me to carry out my job.

Is there a confirmed list of disabilities?

The term 'disability' is too broad to be able to produce a definitive list of all disabilities. However, 'disability' or 'long term health conditions' include, but are not limited to, visual and hearing impairments, mobility impairments, Asperger's Syndrome, diabetes, epilepsy, dyslexia, dyspraxia, mental health conditions, speech impairments and major illnesses such as cancer and MS.

How is the information I provided about my disability on an application form used by the employer?

The information you provide on the application form is only used to implement the support you need during the recruitment process. It is treated in confidence and is not shared outside of the recruitment team with, for example, the hiring managers, without your permission.

My condition is under control most of the time, occasionally it will flare up and this does impact my ability to carry out day to day activities, is this classed as a disability? How do I explain this to an employer?

Rather than focusing on whether your condition is a disability or not, instead focus on what support you will require.

Is Asperger's Syndrome still considered to be a disability?

Yes, it is.

Some people don't recognise ADHD as a disability and instead label it as a certain personality trait, how would I address this with employers?

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If I am asked by an employer for proof or evidence of my disability, what kind of evidence are they looking for?

Different employers may ask for different forms of evidence so it is worth asking what evidence they will accept. As a whole they will not be interested in medical records as they are not medical experts and they won't be helpful to them!

How should you discuss your disability it if varies from day to day; some days I am able to walk unaided, other days I need crutches and sometimes I require the use of a wheelchair? What adjustments should I ask for?

Tell the employer that your condition can vary day to day and ask for all the support you would need if you were having a 'bad' day; if you then don't require it you can tell the employer that. It is easier to say you don't need something than suddenly request something at short notice.

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