



Hidden disabilities: raising awareness, our responsibilities and the support available for students and staff

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Objectives

- Introduction to hidden disabilities
- What are neurodiverse conditions and how they impact on students and staff in relation to study and work.
- Our responsibilities regarding equality, diversity and inclusivity
- Support available to students and staff at the university.
- Some of the wider work the university is doing to reduce stigma, heighten awareness and create an inclusive environment

What is disability?

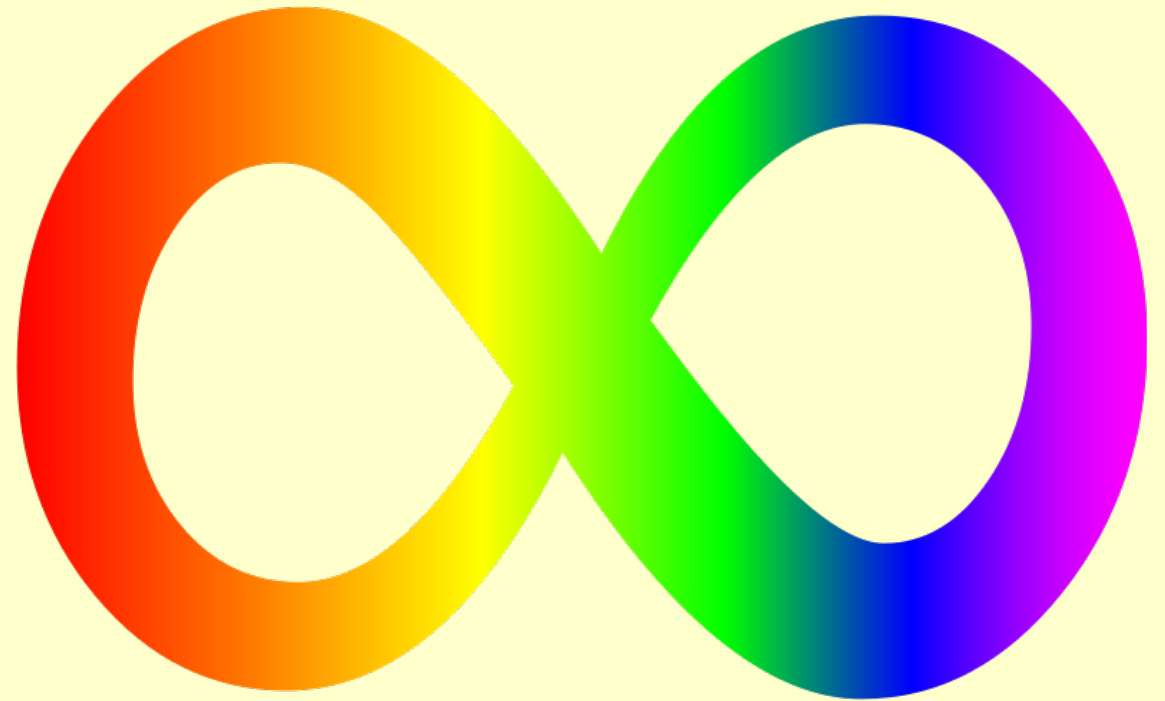
- An **impairment** is 'located' in the individual and relates to their physical, cognitive and sensory capacities.
- **Disability** is 'located' in the interaction between an individual and the environment in which they function.
- People are disabled by **barriers** they encounter in the physical, social and informational environment.
- By making **adjustments** in our practices we can remove or reduce those barriers.

What is a hidden disability?



What is neurodiversity ?

- The diversity of human minds and the variation in neurocognitive functioning
- Neurodiverse vs Neurotypical
- An umbrella term encompassing many different conditions
 - Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) – dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, AD(H)D
 - Autism
- 40% of disabled students at Cardiff are neurodivergent



How common is it?

- 14 million disabled people in the UK. Approximately 70% of them are living with a hidden disability
- 4,250 out of 33,260 students at Cardiff have disclosed a disability
 - 89% of these students are living with a hidden disability
- 5 % of staff at Cardiff University have disclosed a disability on CORE HR

Barriers for people with disabilities

- Attitudinal
 - Stigma, stereotyping, misconceptions
- Physical
 - Heavy, non-automatic doors, access to lifts, suitable seating
- General issues
 - Ambiguous communication
 - Lack of awareness

Impact

- Disengagement from their studies
- Lower grades
- Withdrawal
- Reduced graduate prospects
- Legal implications
- If supported appropriately, a disabled student can be as successful as their peers.

Support for students

- Anticipatory reasonable adjustments
 - Exam adjustments (extra time, rest breaks, scripts flagged, use of computer, specific venue requirements etc)
 - Lecture support (Panopto, materials and resources prior, permission to leave at short notice, awareness medical appointments etc)
 - Library support (extended loans, alternative formatting)
 - Lab support (lab assistance, ergonomic equipment, instructions in advance etc)
- Funded support
 - Specialist 1-1 support (study skills, mental health mentoring etc)
 - Support worker (practical support, note-taker, study assistant etc)
 - Assistive software and equipment (mind mapping, speech-to-text, text-to-speech, ergonomic equipment etc)

Equality Act 2010 Definition of Disability

Under the Act, a person is disabled if they have a

- **physical or mental impairment,**
- which has a **substantial, long term, adverse effect**
- on their **ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.**

There does not need to be a diagnosed condition – the focus is on the impact.

Disabled people are still protected even if they take medication which controls or limits the effect of their condition.

Conditions covered by the Equality Act

People with the following types of conditions are likely to be 'disabled' under the Equality Act 2010:

- Vision and hearing impairments;
- Mental health difficulties;
- Severe disfigurements;
- Specific learning difficulties, e.g. dyslexia;
- Physical conditions, e.g. paraplegia, cerebral palsy, arthritis;
- Long-term medical conditions, e.g. epilepsy, diabetes.

A person with a diagnosis of HIV infection, cancer or multiple sclerosis will automatically meet the disability definition.

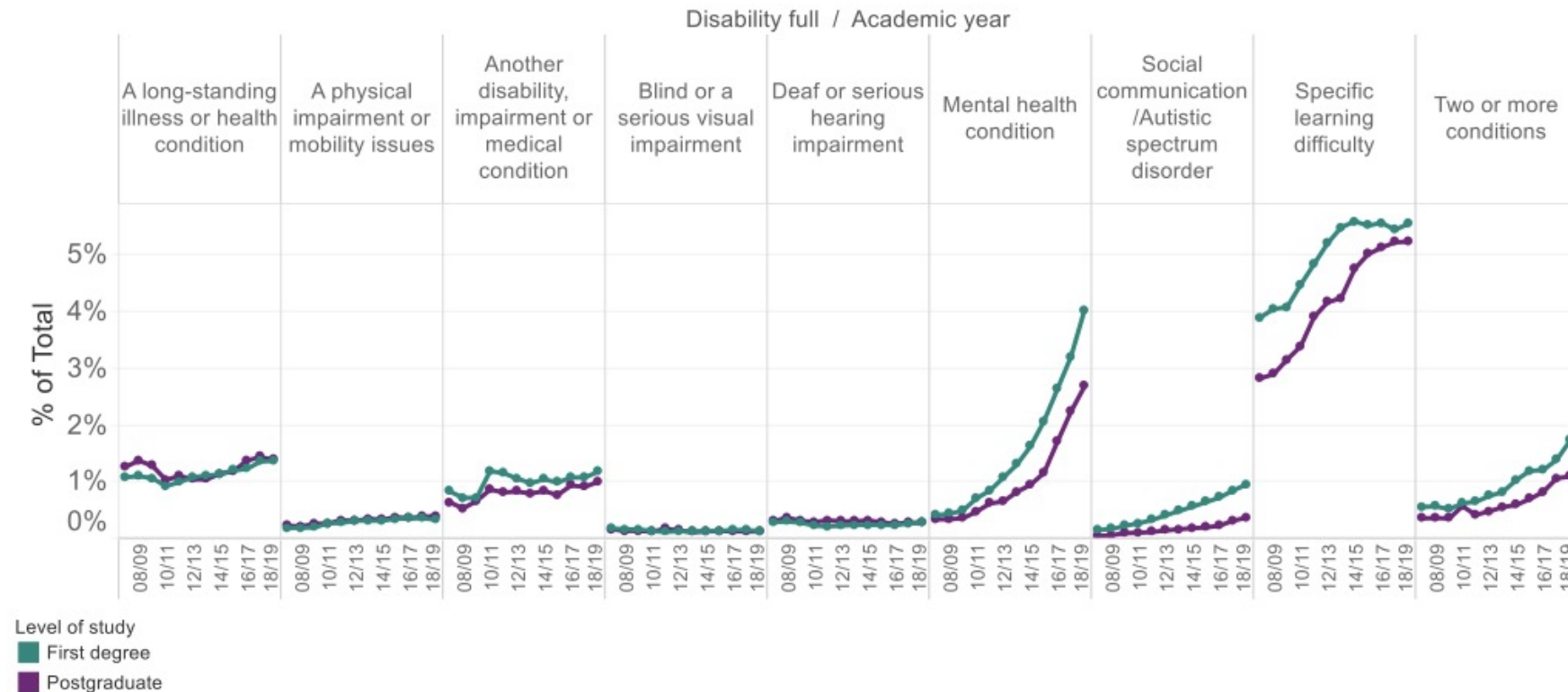
Disability in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics): data from 2007-8 to 2018/2019

Disability in STEM – research commissioned by the Royal Society



There has been an increase in percentage of students declaring a disability over the years— especially noticeable for mental health conditions and specific learning conditions.

Chart 2 Percentage of UK domiciled STEM entrants reporting specified disability by level of study 2007/08 to 2018/19⁷



Likely reflects a contribution of factors:

Increased presentation/prevalence of some disabilities – e.g. mental health conditions.

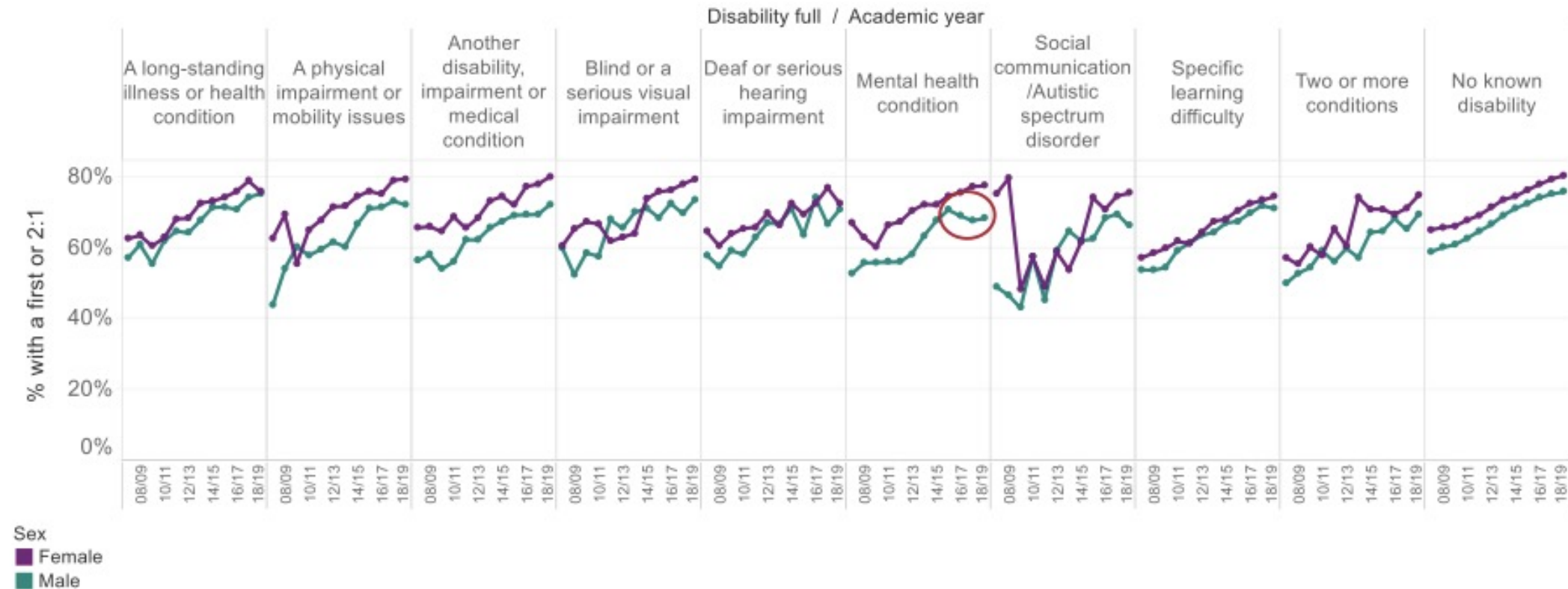
Increased/better diagnoses.

Better support through the education system enabling people with disabilities to progress to University

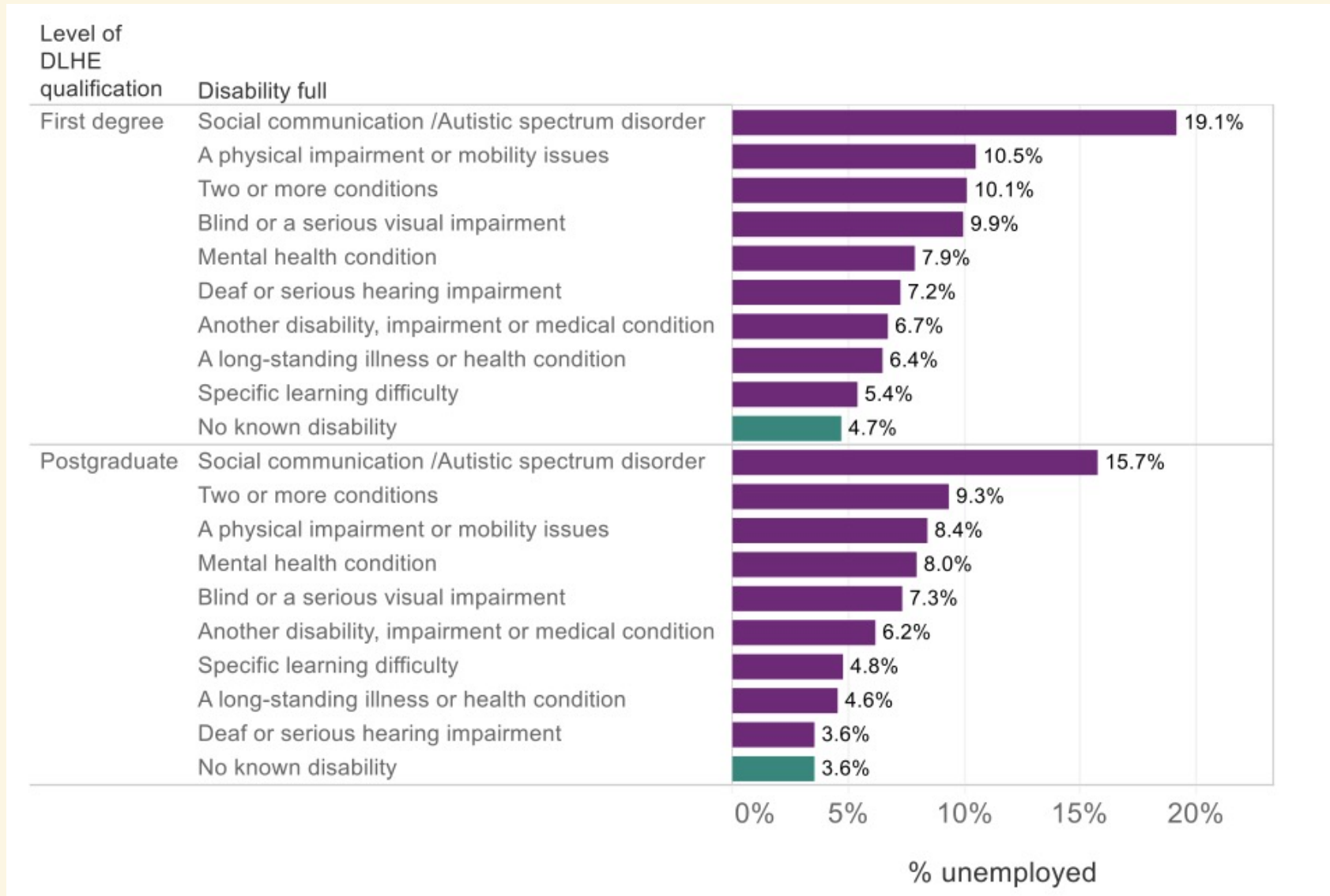
More disclosure: either due to increased knowledge of support or reduction in perceived stigma.

Students getting first/ upper second degrees is generally increasing across all groups but some variation across gender and disability

Chart 12 Percentage of UK domiciled STEM first degree qualifiers that achieved first or upper second class honours by type of disability and sex 2007/08 to 2018/19¹⁴



Increased unemployment at 6 months graduations – and males with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed than females.



Summary/Considerations:

More work needs doing at the exit stage of the degree and to help with transitions. Specifically in supporting students find employment – and targeted support could be provided that differentially helps those with different disabilities and needs.

These data are for students who have disclosed and likely to be receiving more support. There will be students who are undiagnosed and not being sufficiently supported; the data could look very different if those students were included.

These data are pre-Covid. We know under-represented groups have been more negatively impacted and data from the last few years may look quite different.

There is a large drop in progression through STEM careers. Lower disclosure in Staff will contribute to this but there is also lower progression. We need to better support students progress through the different stages of STEM careers.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Progressing Disability Equality (a staff focus)

Linking with staff survey

- + Feeling valued
- + Having the physical working environment needed to do the job effectively
- + Line managers providing help and support when needed
- + University demonstrating its commitment to supporting wellbeing by providing effective support services and events
- + Not being subjected to personal bullying or harassment whilst working at the University
- + Not being discriminated against at work

Why is it important to disabled staff?

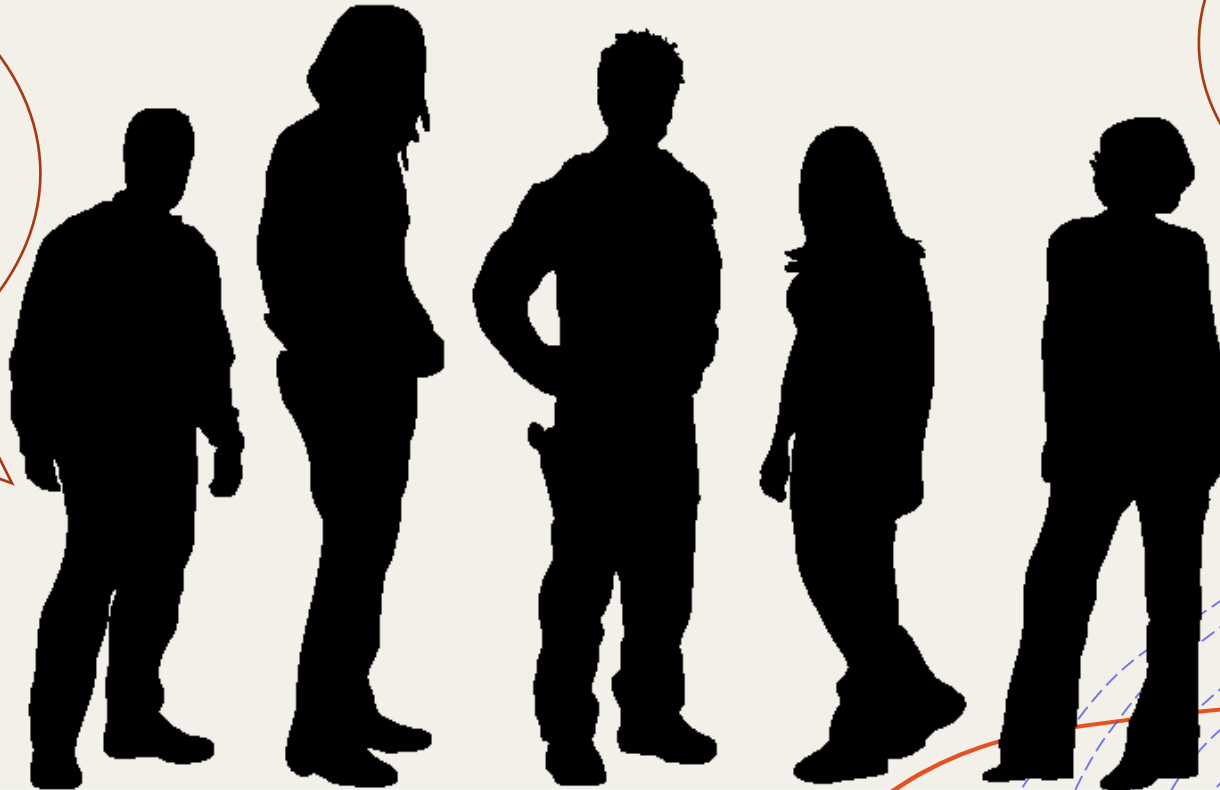
It took so long to get anything in place and I really needed practical things

I thought my manager knew because I reported it on CORE

My manager doesn't understand that my condition is covered by the Equality Act

I feel like I'm having to research and inform my manager what we can do. It's a long and tiring process.

I'm not confident that my manager has a positive attitude to disability and am afraid to tell her, that she'll think I'm just making excuses, and I don't trust that it will stay confidential



Why is it important to managers?

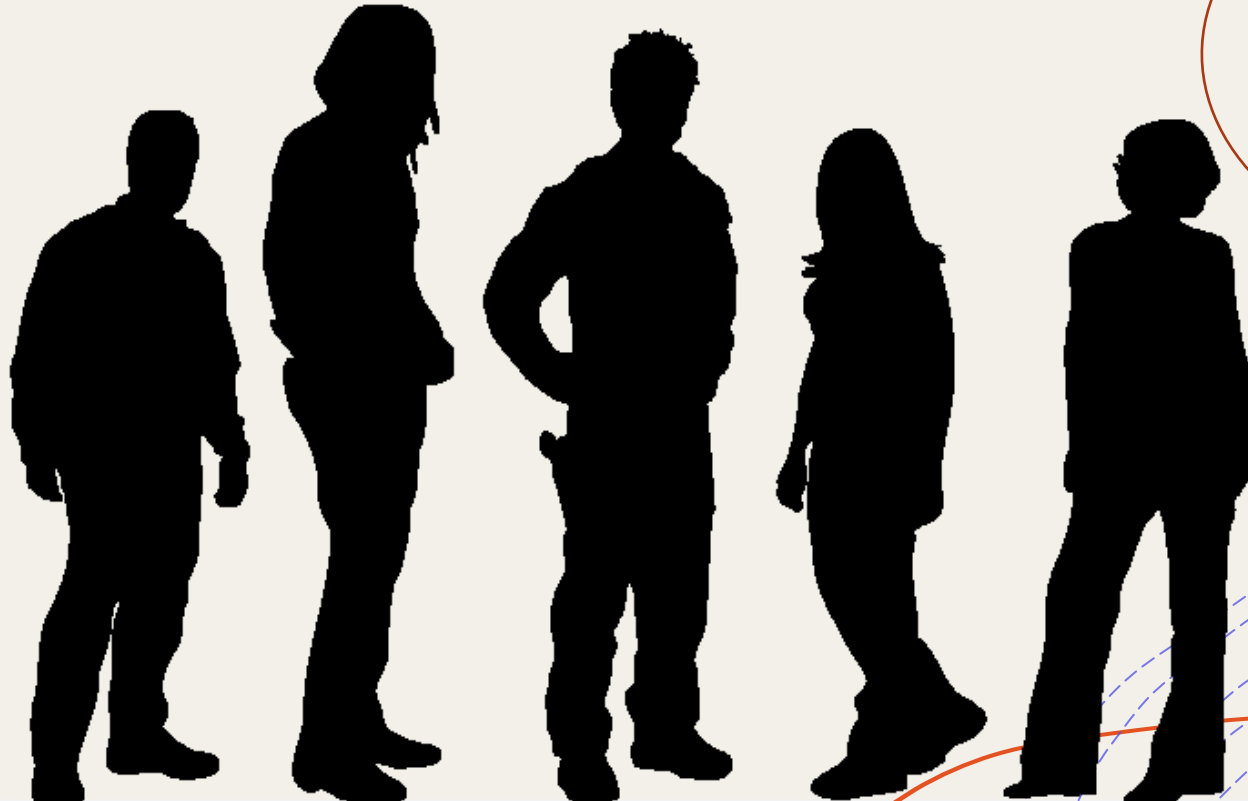
I feel ill equipped to even have a conversation. It feels so personal and intrusive

I don't understand where I need to go when there are costs involved

I've tried all sorts and nothing really seems to work so what next?

I don't know where to go to support the member of staff. It's such a complex area and confusing.

I just want a guide to help me through the process and to know I'm doing what I need to do.



Supporting line managers – Top Ten Tips



<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/supporting-your-work/manage-people-and-projects/for-line-managers/supporting-staff/disability-support-for-managers>

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing-and-support/disability-support/reasonable-adjustments>

Understanding the definition of disability



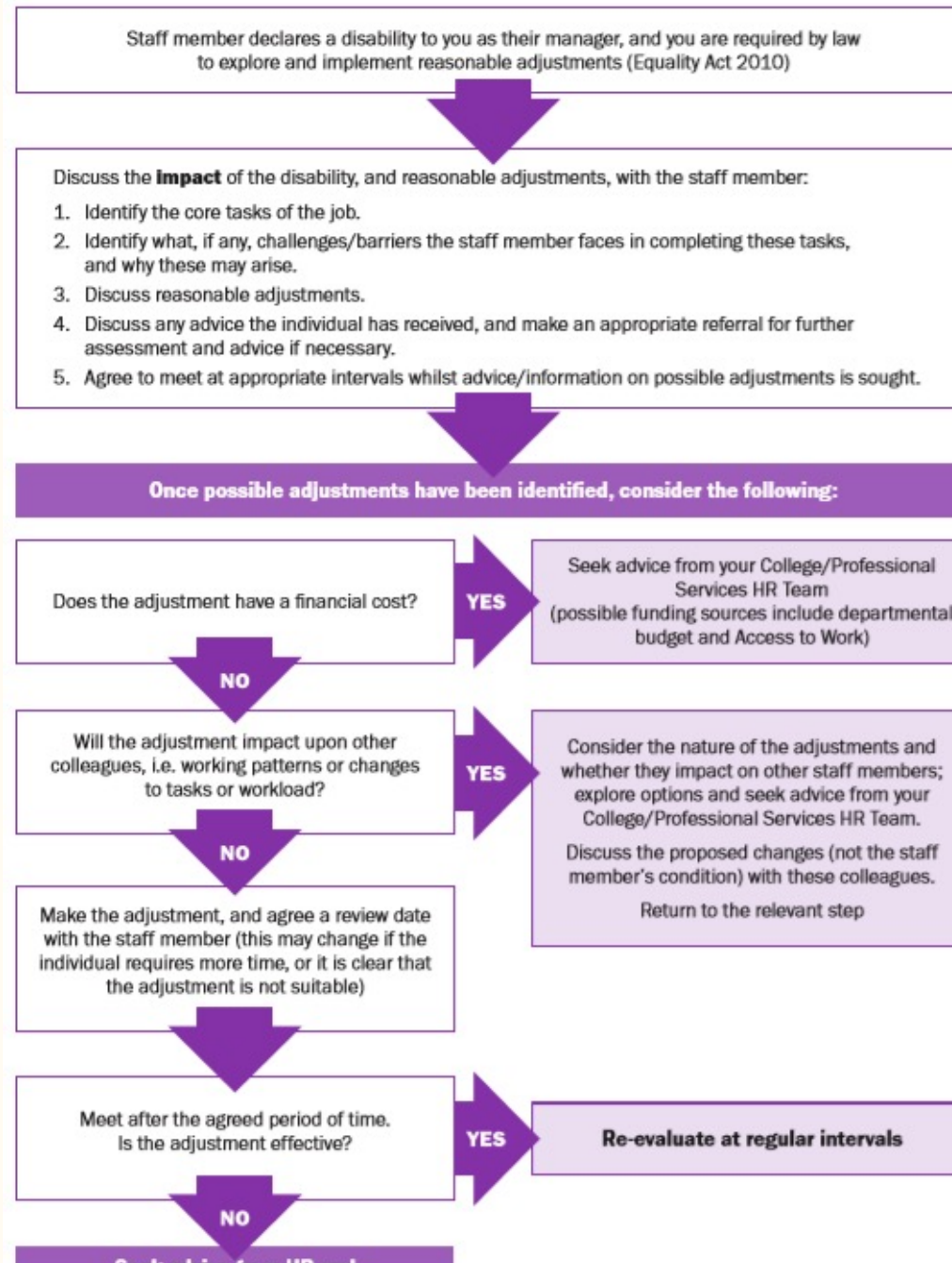
Under the Equality Act 2010, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a long term and substantial adverse impact on a person's ability to do normal daily activities. Long term means that the condition has lasted, or is likely to last a year or more, or is a recurring condition. Certain conditions (such as cancer, HIV and MS) are automatically covered by the Equality Act.

Key messages



Having a process

Flow diagram for line managers to complement current policy



Top tips

1.

Be kind, supportive and a good listener

Good communication is key. Be proactive, sensitive, and a good listener. Try to fully understand the situation before acting, and remember that the best approach is a collaborative one. Be prepared to invest time to get reasonable adjustments right. Be prepared to be flexible as the same condition can affect different individuals in different ways, and the same adjustments do not work for everyone.

2.

Build trust and maintain confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial. Remember that disability is a personal issue and it is also regarded as sensitive personal information under data protection law. Be clear on University policy and your role in supporting the individual and your obligations around confidentiality. Ensure that you have your colleague's permission before disclosing the nature of their disability to someone else. In most cases it will not be necessary to disclose the condition but only what adjustments and support someone needs. Where communication with others is necessary, discuss and agree with the individual what will be communicated.

3.

Recognise individual experience

Focus on the needs of the individual. Don't make assumptions. Different people need different adjustments, even if they appear to have similar conditions. Focus on an individual's needs, not the disability or diagnosis. Some people may not identify as disabled; ask what term they'd

4.

Ask about the impact of the condition

Always discuss the impact of the condition with the staff member, and discuss how different adjustments and support might alleviate those effects. Ask what might be helpful for them. Be aware that many workers play down the effects of their condition, or find coping strategies, so ensure that you listen carefully to what they say and check your understanding with them.

5.

Work together to find effective solutions

Focus on enabling success. Discuss any tasks that they can do but which might be challenging. Discuss the working environment. Find out what support they have in place and/or current coping strategies. Ask whether they have medical professionals involved that they can ask advice from or have had previous assessments which may be helpful in informing and identifying possible assistive strategies. Discuss the ideas they have about what would help.

6.

Signpost to the intranet for information and support

There is information available to line managers and staff members on the intranet. Managers can ask HR for advice (without disclosing the individual's name) or can contact the College/Professional Services HR Team or the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

7.

Explore adjustments together and seek additional advice/resources

The duty to make reasonable adjustments requires employers to be positive and proactive about:

- Changing the way in which work is structured (such as using flexible working hours)
- Removing physical barriers (such as ensuring accessible entrance to and exit from buildings and their facilities, and accessible working environments, including the placement of furniture and fittings)
- Providing specific equipment (called "auxiliary aids" in equality law) or extra support (called "auxiliary services" in equality law) for a worker.

Advice on potential adjustments can be obtained from HR or Occupational Health via a referral. Some adjustments can be made as standard (such as hearing loops for the hard of hearing, or an adjustment so that meetings are held within a core set of hours to allow for flexible working). Consider your working practices and whether simple changes can be made.

Don't assume that adjustments will be costly: many cost nothing and there may be financial assistance available to cover the costs, through the departmental budget, and/or Access to Work

Individuals may already have guidance from medical or other professionals that can help provide information on how to support them in the workplace.

The Occupational Health Service can provide further advice about the most appropriate adjustments for an individual. Once a referral has been submitted, it may also be possible to identify adjustments that can be made whilst the occupational health process is being followed. It is worth noting that by working together to come up with adjustments, line managers and individuals, are able to develop / trial adjustments in the workplace. Not all adjustments have to be recommended by Occupational Health, especially where the changes are simple.

Individuals can refer themselves to Access to Work which may help with additional costs around equipment or other

8.

Discuss how things are going

Once an adjustment has been made, it is essential to evaluate whether it is effective. A staff member should be given time to get used to an adjustment. Ensure an ongoing dialogue and arrange regular meetings to help review impact of the adjustment. If the adjustment does not remove or reduce the impact, other solutions should be explored which are effective for both the individual and the work area.

9.

Keep a shared record

Use the Reasonable Adjustment form to record actions and adjustments.

10.

Keep in touch

Agree regular dates for review to ensure that adjustments are meeting the individual's needs. Remember that adjustments may need to be temporary, occasional or permanent, and that they may need to be changed or adapted at a future point even if they are effective initially.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Reasonable adjustments

- This form is to be used whenever a staff member shares with their line manager that they have a disability or long term health condition.
- Both the line manager and the member of staff should meet to agree adjustments and sign the form once reasonable adjustments have been finalised.
- This is a voluntary record, it is for the manager, and the member of staff to agree what information should be included. This information will be treated as 'sensitive data' and in accordance with confidentiality and data protection guidelines.
- This document should be reviewed regularly at agreed intervals by both the member of staff and the line manager and amended as appropriate.
- Where the reasonable adjustments can be readily identified, line managers should make arrangements for these to be put into place; where reasonable adjustments cannot be readily identified, advice may be needed from other sources such as HR, Occupational Health and/or Access to Work. Advice can also be obtained through the Business Disability Forum Advice Line.

<https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing-and-support/disability-support/reasonable-adjustments>

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion



- Became members in Summer 2020
- Already helped with reviewing policy and our reasonable adjustments documentation
- Access to an advice service for line managers and HR colleagues
- Access to guidance and briefings
- Will work with us on the Disability Confident Scheme

Disability Staff Network Rhwydwaith Staff Anabledd

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD

Reducing stigma competition: positive statements about disability

Cystadleuaeth lleihau stigma: datganiadau cadarnhaol am anabledd

The only disability in
life is a bad attitude

Agwedd wael yw'r unig
anabledd mewn bywyd

I am not defined by my
disability

Dyw fy anabledd ddim y
n fy niffinio



I am different but not
less

Rwy'n wahanol ond ddi
m yn llai pwysig

Diversity and
acceptance is the
future.

Amrywiaeth a chael e
ich derbyn yw'r dyfod
ol.

DFNProject SEARCH



Initiatives such as DFN Project SEARCH give valuable opportunities for young people with additional learning needs to show the ability rather than the disability

2018 – 2019: 80% of mentors now know more about the needs of people with disabilities



2018-2019 : 100% of Line managers would consider having another young person with similar disabilities as an intern

Manager 3: It has led to a better understanding of the individual strengths and weaknesses of the intern, highlighting areas where the intern is very capable, as well as those where further development is required. Intern acts as role model to others.



Manager 6: I think staff have become more aware of other people's personalities and abilities, and consequently more willing to help and understand interns and also their colleagues, which in turn has increased team productivity towards collaborative goals.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Steering the University Approach

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024



Our objectives and how we can achieve them

Objective 1: Establish the University as one that supports an inclusive student journey through recruitment, admissions, wellbeing and learning environment

- Make sure our admissions processes are fair and transparent for all
- Look at how we can develop an inclusive curriculum
- Make a change for the attainment and retention of students from some protected characteristic groups
- Establish an EDI strategy for Student Support and Wellbeing.

Objective 2: Create a staff environment where we improve the diversity of our recruitment and enable our staff to progress and develop in a supportive environment

- Show that our recruitment processes are fair and transparent for each job role across all pathways
- Continue the work led by the Equality in Reward Group on equal pay, treatment and opportunity
- Grow how we support staff career progression and development, with increased support for early career academics and researchers on fixed term contracts for staff with protected characteristics
- Add to our staff support and wellbeing provision by implementing the Staff Wellbeing and Mentally Healthy University Strategy.

Objective 3: Create an inclusive University culture based on building and maintaining relationships

- Establish an inclusive learning, teaching and research environment for staff and students based on a culture of trust
- Support students and staff in fostering good relations and building team dynamics
- Deal with issues, incidents and complaints in an effective way to enable an early resolution.

Objective 4: Create an accessible physical and digital environment that is responsive and supportive to individual needs

- Create a welcoming, accessible campus and take steps to remove barriers for people with diverse needs
- Provide a digital environment that gives all users a positive and accessible experience.

Objective 5: Enhance our governance structures and committee membership, in addition to establishing assurance processes to support adherence to the legal, ethical and professional standards, placing equality diversity and inclusion at the centre of the decisions that we make

- Look at how we can widen the diversity of membership across all University committees and groups
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion as a key consideration in University activities, decisions and reports.



Disability Equality Steering Group

- The University's Disability Equality Steering Group's goal is to promote and advance disability equality across the University. The group will have a key role in articulating the University's vision for disability equality that moves the agenda beyond compliance to a celebration of disability diversity.



Progressing disability equality at college/department level.

What can you do??

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Further information

[how-we-are-inclusive/disability](#)

[equality-and-diversity/strategic-equality-plan](#)

[Equality impact assessments - Intranet - Cardiff University](#)

External

[businessdisabilityforum.org.uk](#)

[ONS.gov.uk/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsondisabledpeople](#)

[Scope.org.ukattitudes-to-disability-at-work](#)

[disability-perception-gap](#)

[abilitynet.org.uk- information/webinars about on-line accessibility](#)

[Addressing barriers for STEM students and staff with disabilities | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](#)