

Employment

What is in this fact sheet

- Tips and hints for early stages
 - For people in employment
 - For people who are self employed
- Tips and hints for later stages
- Tips and hints for family and friends
- Sources of further information

Key points from this fact sheet

- Once you have a diagnosis of HD you have a disability for the purposes of employment rights
- There are sources of help and advice for employees that can help someone with HD, including access to equipment that helps you stay at work
- Later on, you might need or want to change how you work or leave work early

Tips and hints for early stages

For people in employment

It is your decision to tell your employer and your colleagues about having HD. It's also your decision on how to tell them.

There are a few jobs where you have to tell your employer if you know you will have HD, even before symptoms begin. Examples include the Police and the Armed Forces. This is the same for anyone with a serious health problem.

Before you get symptoms of HD, you have the same employment rights as everyone else.

- You can only be dismissed if there is a redundancy situation or there are significant problems with your work performance.
- Your work performance relates to what is in your job description and the requirements for that job or role.
- Opportunities for training, promotions etc. should also be linked to the requirements and the performance of the person in that role.
- Your employer has responsibilities to make sure you are not bullied or harassed at work for any reason. This would include getting hassled because of your HD if you have let people know about it.

If your performance changes, your boss should check out with you whether this is partly because of health problems.

Many employers, especially bigger ones, have policies on this. Check out what the policies and practices are for your employer in case you want to refer to them when you tell people about your HD, or when symptoms begin to affect your work.

You might also want to think about other aspects of employment.

- Make a list of what you want from work – type of skills you have, how flexible you want the working hours to be, where it is based, and so on. Use this to check against your current job and anything else that you consider or are offered.
- Start from the point that an ordinary job will be possible for longer if you have the right support.
- Don't be discouraged if the first changes you make around your job don't work out. Think what was good about it, what were the elements that could be better, and what you need. Then talk to your employer about the list and see what else you can try together.

More information when you want it

There is information about other sources of information and advice in Rights and People to help you. This is on the SHA website.

For people who are self employed

Things are different if you are self employed or running a firm as a partner or as the main boss.

- There isn't anyone with a responsibility to check things out with you in the same way as when you are employed.
- But you can have more flexibility around how you work, which can be useful.
- Think about how you will build in ways to keep an eye on how well you are doing your work in case things slip a bit when you are focused on other aspects of your life. Some people use a mentor to help them through a period of change in their business, and this model can work in these circumstances too.
- Also think ahead on the financial side of the business – decide if you want to get someone to help you with that.
- Remember that you are the boss and are the client for anyone giving you advice. If you tell your accountant that you have HD and want his/her help in planning for the future of the business, and he/she seems to think HD is something which has a stigma attached to it, get a different accountant.
- If you think someone has not treated you fairly in a business matter because of your HD, go to a solicitor and get advice on how to stop it happening again and check if there are ways to get compensated for any losses.

Tips and hints for later stages

Once you have symptoms, you are a disabled person for the purposes of the additional employment rights that people get under the Disability Discrimination laws.

- There is advice for staff and employers on how someone can work if they have a particular health problem – and this may help you with some specific symptoms. It includes getting equipment or special computers that make it easier for you to do your job.

- You have the right to ask your employer for a 'reasonable adjustment'. This could mean changes to your working conditions that are not available to other people, such as flexibility about start and finish times, or working at home, or moving from a job with lots of driving to one based in the office.
- You cannot be dismissed because you have a disability. And the way your employer handles redundancies has to be fair to any member of staff with a disability.
- You should not be discriminated against for promotions or transfers or other opportunities related to work, such as going on training courses. This could again mean the employer making a reasonable adjustment to let you do the new job or get on the course.
- Work trials is a scheme that lets people try out a job – to let the person and the employer work out if this is right for them. This can be useful if you change jobs.

This may also be the opportunity to change the sort of work you do.

- Think about what you really want to do or are interested in – your hobbies, what excites you. See this as a chance to do something you really love.
- Check the advice from Careers Scotland and from places like Business Gateway for options such as becoming self-employed.
- Check out the possible types of support around employment that are available from services for anyone who has a disability. You can find details on care.hdscotland.org/support-with-employability-when-you-need-it
- Think about unpaid work, if you want to make a change. People sometimes find that voluntary work or getting involved in a hobby leads to finding a job.
- Ask friends, your family, neighbours, if they know of work that might suit you better. Do they know anyone who could help by giving you an opportunity to try something?

Tips and hints for family and friends

When someone is getting good support from colleagues, or is enjoying being at work, think about how you can help them stay at work for as long as possible.

Are there practical things you can do or suggest to help when someone is at work – such as car-sharing, or cooking meals so there is something ready when they get in from work?

If the person with HD needs to explain about the HD or specific symptoms to their boss or colleagues, help them plan what they are going to say and how they explain things.

Remember that everyone has hassles at work from time to time. It may be easier for the person and for you to look at problems that you think might be linked to the in that wider context, at least to begin with.

Talk about problems you have at work, or that a friend is having. That may make it easier for the person with HD to start talking about difficulties they are having.

Check out sources of advice that the person can use if they need them and when they are ready.

Sources of further information

Contact the Occupational Health team at your employer, if it is a larger organisation. Smaller employers can also get access to this sort of advice.

There is a National Helpline for occupational health, workplace or employment problems through Healthy Working Lives: **08000 192211**

Each local authority will have a team that gives help to people who are disabled when they want to stay in work or get back to work. They often also give to people who are family carers of people who are disabled. You should be able to find this through the main website or phone contact for the local authority. There may be details in the phone book, and local libraries can also help you track down the people you need.

SHA's HD Specialists can also give advice about employability.