

Diagnosis and Living with long term illness or disability

HELPLINE - 0300 1233088

Definitions

- “ A chronic illness is defined as any illness that leads to health problems and disabilities requiring ongoing management for a period of years” World Health Organisation
- Under the Equality Act 2010 you are deemed disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term negative impact on your ability to do normal daily activities.
- The Equality Act 2010 helps to enforce, protect and promote your rights

Dealing with the challenges

People who are learning to deal with a long term illness/disability face many challenges. There is often uncertainty about the illness itself and what the future may hold:

- What will be the impact on family and friends
- How will life change
- Issues about coping with medication/treatment and its side effects
- Feelings of anger, anxiety, depression
- Can I continue working

At the beginning

- Allow yourself time to come to terms with and adjust to your illness
- Accept that it is normal that you may experience negative emotions
- Nurture yourself: learn what makes you feel better...KEEP POSITIVE
- Concentrate on the present, don't dwell on the past and how things have changed or worry about the future
- Try to eliminate stress from your life
- Decide who needs to know e.g. family members, your employer, friends
- What do people you choose to tell need to know
- Who can help you cope; REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT ALONE

- ❖ Health professionals
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Employer
- ❖ Benefits agencies
- ❖ Voluntary agencies e.g. *THE GAMEKEEPERS WELFARE TRUST*

KEEP EXPECTATIONS REALISTIC AND GOALS ACHIEVABLE

Employment

It is against the law for employees to discriminate against you because of a disability or if you become chronically sick or disabled in some way.

An employer has to make “reasonable adjustments” to avoid you being put at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled in the workplace. These adjustments may mean altering your working hours or providing you with a special piece of equipment to help you do your job. Time off work should not be regarded as an absence from work if you are waiting for your employer to put reasonable adjustments in place.

Your employer cannot dismiss you just because you have become chronically sick or disabled. You can be dismissed however, if even with reasonable adjustments you cannot do your job. You cannot be selected for redundancy just because you are disabled.

Financial help

There is a wide range of disability-related financial support from the government including benefits, tax credits, grants and concessions. See www.gov.uk under “financial help if you are disabled”.

The Access to Work grant for example helps with special equipment at work. Working Tax Credits might top up your salary if you have to reduce your hours and income.

Sources of information

- ❖ The Equality Act 2010
- ❖ www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/overview
- ❖ www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators
- ❖ www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services to find out what help you can get (eg equipment, home care, day centres) from your local council
- ❖ www.citizensadvice.org.uk The Citizens Advice Bureau
- ❖ www.healthtalk.org a charity that lets you share in other people’s experiences of health and illness. Includes a section on chronic health issues. Based on research by oxford university
- ❖ www.nhs.uk The NHS website where hundreds of conditions and treatments are explained
- ❖ www.thegamekeeperswelfaretrust.com The charity which exists to support gamekeepers, stalkers and ghillies, past and present