You’re not usually obliged to include details of your disability in job applications. But if you need to mention it during the recruitment process, organisations will accommodate your needs.

**Finding disability-positive employers**

A recent AGCAS report shows that the majority of disabled graduates were in employment six months after graduation. However, outcomes vary quite widely according to the type of disability.

More organisations are employing applicants with disabilities and mental health conditions as the advantages of recruiting a diverse workforce are clear. Diversity makes the workplace more productive and also:

- Reflects the nature of the organisation's clients and consumers more accurately.
- Offers more choice in recruitment.
- Brings different life experiences, expertise and skills to the organisation.
- Makes employers identify positive changes, which benefit other staff as well as employees with disabilities.

**How to tell if an employer is disability friendly**

- What does the employer say (or not say) in their recruitment information? Check if the website or company literature includes a policy statement on equal opportunities and profiles of employees with a disability.
- Look for job adverts and application forms carrying the Jobcentre Plus Disability Symbol, made up of two ticks with the words 'positive about disabled people'. This shows that an employer has signed up to five key commitments on disability, including guaranteeing an interview to all applicants with disabilities who fulfil the minimum job criteria.
- Members of the Business Disability Forum and supporters of the Mindful Employer Charter for Employers who are Positive about Mental Health recognise the benefits of a diverse workforce. Both websites have a full list of supporting employers, including those from IT and telecoms, media, manufacturing, education, financial services and local government.
- Speak to someone who works in the organisation to get a sense firsthand of how the organisation operates.
- Look out for employers with application forms that avoid small print, are available in alternative formats, and encourage applicants to say what adjustments can be made to help them during the recruitment process.
- Visit your university careers service to find out about disability-positive employers. Some careers services offer guidance to recent graduates, so check even if you’ve already left.
- Don't limit yourself to applying only to organisations that publicise their commitments to diversity. A lack of publicity doesn't mean they're not inclusive employers. Make your application based on the opportunities available and how those opportunities match your own skills and interests.
Sources of support
These include:

- **Disability Rights UK** advises on work support issues, welfare benefits and access to higher education.
- **EmployAbility** helps undergraduates and graduates with all kinds of disabilities into employment.
- **Leonard Cheshire Disability** provides an internship and professional development programme for talented students and recent graduates with disabilities, through Change 100.
- **Mind** provides information on how to be mentally healthy at work.
- **Shaw Trust** supports people with a disability or health condition through sourcing employment and the recruitment process.

**Disclosing your disability to employers**
Deciding to disclose your disability to an employer is a matter of personal choice. You are under no legal obligation to do so, and it's for you to choose if and when you disclose.

**Do you want to disclose?**
Think about whether your disability raises a health and safety issue for yourself or your future colleagues. If it does, you may have to disclose so that employers can help ensure you have a safe working environment. You may also wish to disclose if you need any adjustments to help accommodate your disability, either at the application stage or during your day-to-day work.

Once you've told an employer about your disability, you're protected by the Equality Act 2010. This means your employer must take all reasonable steps to provide the necessary adjustments and mustn't discriminate against you because of your disability.

Bear in mind that if you choose not to tell your employer and later underperform, you won't be covered by the Equality Act. An employer who was unaware of your condition can't be judged to have discriminated against you.

**When to disclose your disability**

**Application stage:** there may be a section on the application form asking about any serious health conditions or disabilities. Although you don't generally have to disclose your disability here, you mustn't lie. If you don't want to disclose, simply don't answer the question. You can also use the personal statement section of the form to tell an employer about your disability.

**Application stage:** there may be a section on the application form asking about any serious health conditions or disabilities. Although you don't generally have to disclose your disability here, you mustn't lie. If you don't want to disclose, simply don't answer the question. You can also use the personal statement section of the form to tell an employer about your disability.

**CV:** there may be a gap in your educational history due to a period of prolonged illness. You can use your covering letter to explain this, but always present it in a way that will show you in a positive light. You can also refer to your disability in your CV if you attended a specialist school or college for disabled people.
• **Covering letter:** if you mention your disability here, emphasise how it has further developed the skills and experience mentioned in your CV. However, only raise this when it's relevant to your application. For example, point to how well you've achieved your goals despite any difficulties.

• **Pre-interview stage:** this is when you may want to identify practical needs so you can compete equally with other applicants. If you haven't been asked about your needs, take the initiative and contact the employer in advance - they may need time to make arrangements.

• **Interview:** you may feel more comfortable disclosing when you can discuss the implications face-to-face and more clearly demonstrate your skills. If you've previously mentioned your disability, the interview can be an opportunity to expand on any positive effects it's had on your life and how it's enhanced your employability.

• **In the job:** you may decide to disclose your disability once you've been offered the job or when you start work. You can decide who to tell - your manager or HR - and you can also request that colleagues aren't told. If your condition affects the way you work, it may be helpful to be open with colleagues so they understand and can help you with anything you may need.

**How to disclose your disability**

• Only discuss your disability in terms of its relevance to your performance in the job. Don't go into personal detail. Always be positive about your disability and use it to provide evidence of the skills employers look for.

• Emphasise positive achievements and give examples. You may have gained skills such as flexibility, determination, the ability to perform under pressure and creative problem-solving as a result of your disability, and you shouldn't be afraid to use these as selling points.

• Make a positive statement about your disability to remove any doubts an employer may have. Don't assume they'll have a negative attitude - your experiences and skills may give you the edge over other candidates.

• Avoid focusing the whole of your application or interview on the issue of your disability. Your main focus should be on showing the employer your suitability for the job. Speak to a careers adviser about whether, when and how to tell an employer about your disability.

• Some interviewers have little experience of disability and may feel unsure of workplace implications. Be prepared to make suggestions about what adjustments you would need in order to do the job effectively.

**Your rights around disability and mental health**

The Equality Act 2010 brought together all of the existing regulations that gave protection against any kind of discrimination. The aim was to make the law simpler and remove inconsistencies. It also strengthened protection in some situations.

This is now the main law relating to disability. It provides the right to not be disadvantaged or treated badly at work or in education because of your disability.

**Who the Equality Act covers**

The act covers you if you have a physical or mental health disability that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.
This covers people with physical, mobility and sensory impairments, such as wheelchair users, people with cerebral palsy, visually impaired and hearing impaired people. It also covers people with dyslexia, mental health conditions, asthma and diabetes.

People with multiple sclerosis, cancer (including those in remission) and HIV are covered by the act from the point of diagnosis.

**What the Equality Act does**

The Equality Act makes it unlawful to:

- Discriminate against a disabled person applying for a job or in employment. This covers full and part-time work, apprenticeships, work placements and contract positions.
- Treat a disabled person less favourably than a non-disabled person for any reason relating to their disability.

The act applies to employing organisations of all sizes, as well as professional bodies that regulate entry into work. The only exception is the armed forces.

You can also complain to your employer if you have been discriminated against. Talk to them about your needs as many employers will take positive steps to support you once they realise your concerns.

If this approach is unsatisfactory, organisations such as the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), the Citizens Advice service and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) can provide advice.

**Support in the workplace**

Employers have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' in the workplace. This includes physical changes or changes in procedure to reduce or remove disadvantages to applicants or employees. These adjustments don't imply you're receiving preferential treatment; they allow you to overcome difficulties others don't have to deal with.

Although the Equality Act doesn't define what is 'reasonable', all employing organisations, regardless of their size, can, and should, make adjustments.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- Providing more time in the application process or for day-to-day work.
- Allowing flexible working hours.
- Using modified equipment, such as a screen reader or a textphone.
- Making physical adjustments to premises.
- Providing instructions and manuals in accessible formats.
- Providing a clear job description and task assignments.
- A gradual induction process.
- A transfer to another place of work or post of equal standing.

The responsibility is on the employer to provide adjustments. They may ask about your disability to help them make reasonable adjustments, but they mustn't use that information to discriminate.

Certain disabilities can exclude individuals from some areas of employment. For example, it's unlikely that a visually impaired person would become an airline pilot, but all reasonable alternatives should be explored.
Access to Work
Access to Work is a government scheme that provides grants to people with disabilities so they can do their job effectively. The grant helps pay for practical support such as:

- specialist equipment
- disability awareness training for work colleagues
- a communicator at a job interview

You may be the most knowledgeable person when it comes to your particular disability. Working with your employer, you may be able to find a very simple solution with little or no disruption or expense.

Mental health legislation
The legislation governing the compulsory treatment of certain people who have a mental disorder is the Mental Health Act 1983. The Mental Health Act 2007 was brought in to amend the 1983 Act. For example, it provides a single definition of mental disorder as 'any disorder or disability of the mind'.

Information on current mental health issues and recent parliamentary briefings are available from Mind and the Mental Health Alliance.

Further information

Equality Act 2010
https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance

Equality Act Codes of Practice and Technical Guidance

Access to Work
https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Mental Health Act 2007

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas)

Citizens Advice service
http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/

Disability Rights UK
http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/

EmployAbility
http://www.employ-ability.org.uk/

Leonard Cheshire Disability
http://www.employ-ability.org.uk/

Mind
http://www.mind.org.uk/

Shaw Trust
http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/
Business Disability Forum
http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/

Mindful Employer Charter for Employers who are Positive about Mental Health
http://www.mindfulemployer.net/charter/