

Visible & Non-Visible Disabilities

Many disabilities are not immediately apparent. Someone may look well, communicate confidently or perform strongly while using considerable energy to manage symptoms or barriers.

Non-visible does not mean minor

Pain, fatigue, sensory differences, neurological conditions, mental-health difficulties and cognitive or processing differences may have a substantial workplace impact without being obvious to colleagues.

Avoid appearance-based assumptions

Statements such as 'you look fine' can invalidate genuine difficulty. Support should be based on barriers and functional impact, not whether someone appears disabled.

Disclosure is personal

People may worry about stigma, career progression or being treated differently. Create routes for confidential conversations and do not pressure someone to disclose more than is needed.

Good days can be misleading

A person managing a task today may still require an adjustment to do it sustainably over time. Capacity can fluctuate.

Helpful manager response

Try: 'Thank you for telling me. What parts of work are creating the biggest barriers, and what would help?'

Helpful employee preparation

Write down examples: what task was difficult, what happened, how often it occurs and what would reduce the barrier.

Workplace culture matters

Inclusive teams avoid jokes, disbelief and comparisons. They normalise different ways of working and make support easier to request.