

How to manage mental illness at work

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Fflur Jones, Partner and Head of Employment and HR, [Darwin Gray Solicitors](#), shares best practice advice for managing an employee with a mental illness.



Mental health issues are becoming an increasingly talked-about topic, but it can be difficult for employers to identify, support and manage employees suffering from mental health problems.

Some conditions, including those which start as work-related stress, can develop into long-term illnesses and become disabilities for the purposes of the Equality Act, meaning that employees suffering from these illnesses are legally protected from discrimination by their employers.

One of the most important aspects of an employer's relationship with a disabled employee is the duty to make reasonable adjustments. This is a positive duty imposed on all UK employers, in addition to the more general duties not to directly or indirectly discriminate against employees on the ground of disability.

Many employers struggle with what is required of them when it comes to the duty to make reasonable adjustments, so here are 6 tips to help:

1. Seek medical evidence as to whether an employee is disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act and what adjustments could help them in their role.

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2. Consider whether any of your policies or practices could put an employee suffering from mental health issues at a particular disadvantage compared to other employees.
3. Offer to make reasonable adjustments in order to alleviate those specific disadvantages.
4. Work and communicate with the employee to ensure that they are happy with any adjustments being made for them and feel able to talk to you about their needs.
5. Keep the situation under review: do not assume that a mental health issue has disappeared just because an employee outwardly appears better.
6. Remember that the key is acting “reasonably”. Employers do **not have to go to impossible lengths** to accommodate disabled employees, but they do have to make adjustments that are reasonable in the circumstances.

*Thanks to Fflur Jones,
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