

Thinking differently at work



Reasonable adjustments in the workplace are required

I'm a GMB Rep with a chronic hidden disability. I have personal workplace experience and have witnessed the plight of fellow disabled workers, and I've learned to understand the ways in which employers deal with disabled members.

Reasonable adjustments in the workplace are invariably required. In most cases this affects how sickness absence periods are recorded and calculated, i.e. sickness absence related to a disability needs to be recorded separately from sickness absence due to colds, flu or stomach bugs for instance – it needs to be discounted when prolonged sickness absence becomes an issue.

Reasonable adjustments are also needed when capability issues arise and this needs to be stressed particularly in cases when members have hidden neurodivergent conditions like dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD or autism spectrum conditions.



Ideally Branch Equality Officers should be fully involved in all disability cases, or they should be asked for advice if other reps take such cases.

"Ignorance by employers of special requirements for staff with disabilities, in accordance with details set out in the Equality Act 2010, is common and reps need to stress these facts at any meetings."

Companies and organisations like Local Authorities or the NHS always stress the needs of the service which invariably over-rides the needs of the affected staff. This can lead to many problems for our members and sometimes to undesirable outcomes, e.g. dismissal, especially when it concerns hidden disabilities or mental health problems.

Training courses for management on how to deal with staff with disabilities would be a good idea. This may be one possible way forward and could also be a good recruitment tool.

It is important that employees with disabilities join a trade union – the GMB for preference.

Stephen Jones, GMB Equalities Officer, Organiser - Ability

All GMB Reps and especially Equality Officers need to be fully aware of the special needs of employees with disabilities and the fact that their rights are covered under the 2010 Equality Act.

Earlier this month, as part of #DyspraxiaAwarenessWeek, GMB launched its Thinking Differently at Work campaign. We've published two new documents:

A 'Dyspraxia in the workplace' guide - <http://www.gmb.org.uk/neurodiversity-dyspraxia-guide.pdf>

A 'Neurodiversity in the workplace' toolkit - https://www.gmb.org.uk/neurodiversity_workplace_toolkit.pdf

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