

# Disability awareness

## Visible differences/disfigurements

We are delighted to introduce this factsheet as part of our work with Changing Faces.

### What is disfigurement?

A disfigurement is a mark, scar or condition that might affect someone's appearance.

#### Examples include:

- ⦿ Congenital or craniofacial conditions eg. neurofibromatosis
- ⦿ Skin conditions eg. psoriasis, eczema or vitiligo
- ⦿ Acquired visible differences eg. scars from trauma or burns
- ⦿ Hair loss or alopecia
- ⦿ Cleft lip and palate
- ⦿ Paralysis, birthmarks or cancer.

Such conditions can affect all areas of the body, and whether they are visible or not, they can have a profound impact on an individual's confidence and ambition, especially in terms of their career.

### How does it impact people at work?

Despite severe disfigurement being included in the Equality Act of 2010, evidence suggests that people are experiencing prejudice and harassment which is impacting them in employment. Changing Faces' 'Disfigurement in the UK' survey (see their website\*) of over 800 people found that:

- ⦿ Nearly 80 per cent of people with a disfigurement have avoided applying for a job due to of potential reactions at interview/from colleagues
- ⦿ 55 per cent thought their condition had affected their lifetime ambitions for their career
- ⦿ One in six had their condition or appearance mentioned at an interview.

With this in mind, we have to be aware that employers and colleagues could have an implicit bias around disfigurement. Changing Faces' recent 'Implicit Associations Test' (see their website\*) identified that 66 per cent of people associate negative attributes to someone who has a disfigurement. Other research shows that being passed over for promotion, or assumptions being made about ability and intellectual capacity, are commonplace for someone who has a disfigurement.

### How to be disfigurement confident

#### Personally:

- ⦿ Get used to looking at someone who has a disfigurement
- ⦿ Learn about difference
- ⦿ Don't avoid people who look different in some way.

#### As an organisation:

- ⦿ Increase use of inclusive images
- ⦿ Display poster campaigns about difference
- ⦿ Encourage staff diversity
- ⦿ Recruit and promote on merit
- ⦿ Welcome everyone.

### Stand Out

Spread the word about face equality at school, work and with family and friends

Think positively about disfigurement and don't let negative assumptions get in the way

Approachable – display a warm manner when meeting someone with a disfigurement

Normal, natural eye contact – look, but don't stare

Deal with discrimination – if you see it, report it

Own up to not knowing about disfigurement but commit to finding out more

Understanding – show understanding for the challenges people face

Try again – don't give up if people doubt your belief in face equality.

### Recruitment and employment support

Remploy believes employers can have a significant impact in how they recruit new employees and support existing ones.

#### You can attract more people to apply by:

- ⦿ Emphasising that you have strong equality and diversity policies and welcome applications from disabled people
- ⦿ Using external marketing with pictures and case studies of disabled employees, including those with a disfigurement

- ⦿ Not asking for photographs or videos unless this is vital to the position you are advertising
- ⦿ Offering a guaranteed interview for disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for the job.

### Interview tips include:

- ⦿ If an applicant has disclosed a disfigurement, it might help if you are aware of what this might look like by viewing pictures of visibly different faces
- ⦿ Make every effort to avoid showing a negative reaction. Try to be natural and make eye contact
- ⦿ Do not ask about the person's disfigurement – anything you need to know can be asked after the job offer/commencement of employment
- ⦿ Decide on an 'ice breaker' question to get every interview started – to help avoid awkwardness
- ⦿ If you feel uncomfortable or distracted, try focusing more on your notes
- ⦿ Make sure you can supply unsuccessful applicants with constructive feedback.

### Questions to explore (sensitively) with new employees include:

- ⦿ What is their condition? If necessary, do some additional research.
- ⦿ How long have they been affected by a visible difference and how it was caused? This may tell you if they have had time to adjust and if they experience other physical or mental issues.
- ⦿ Are they undergoing treatment? If so, what adjustments at work might be needed?
- ⦿ What adjustments and accommodations have they needed in the past? eg. later start times to get ready before work
- ⦿ What support do they already receive?
- ⦿ How do they want the subject of their condition to be managed and what to do if people stare or make comments?

### Contact us:

If you would like further information on how we can help you, please get in touch with us:

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w: [www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)\*

## Workplace adjustments

Many people with visible differences/disfigurements won't actually need any adjustments. You will need to have a discussion with the individual to find out exactly what they need ie. what coping strategies they have already used and how this can be supported in the workplace.

### Adjustments that might be needed include:

- ⦿ Time off for medical appointments and treatment
- ⦿ Additional breaks eg. to reapply camouflage make up
- ⦿ Adjusted work hours depending on treatment needs
- ⦿ Later start times if it takes longer to get ready
- ⦿ Medication side-effects might affect hours/duties
- ⦿ Phased return following an absence from work.

If someone has some physical or mobility issue as part of their disfigurement, they may need a reallocation of certain duties or additional equipment, ie.

- ⦿ If their hand disfigurement affects fine motor skills some duties may be difficult
- ⦿ If their vision is affected they may need magnification technology/specific software.

## Managing workplace relationships

- ⦿ Find out how the individual would like the subject of their condition to be managed in the workplace. Some people suggest a group awareness session for immediate colleagues but others may prefer not to mention it directly
- ⦿ Individuals with disfigurement could be more subject to bullying and harassment from work colleagues and also customers. Make sure you have suitable policies for bullying and harassment in the workplace and that they know what to do should they experience such behaviours.



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