



Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing

Guidance on supporting staff with Long Term Health Conditions

V1 August 2019



1 Introduction

The Council, as part of its duty of care, wishes to support staff with long term health conditions and will accommodate adjustments to the working environment and working patterns where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

A long-term condition is an illness that cannot be cured but can usually be controlled with medicines or other treatments. Examples of long-term conditions include arthritis, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, angina, heart failure, and high blood pressure (hypertension). Around two million people, 40% of the Scottish population, have at least one long term condition, and one in four adults over 16 report some form of long-term illness, health problem or disability.

The majority of Council staff with a long term health condition do not identify themselves as disabled, but if the condition results in an impairment which has lasted at least 12 months, then the Equality Act 2010 may apply.

This guidance is not condition-specific and can be applied to the majority of long term health conditions.

2 Sources of support/information

2.1 Access to work

[Access to work](#) is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. The scheme provides grants to help pay for the extra employment cost of working with a disability or long term physical or mental health condition. This can include funding for special aids or equipment to use in the workplace.

Employees must apply to Access to Work themselves, and only after a discussion with their line manager about reasonable adjustments.

2.2 Remploy

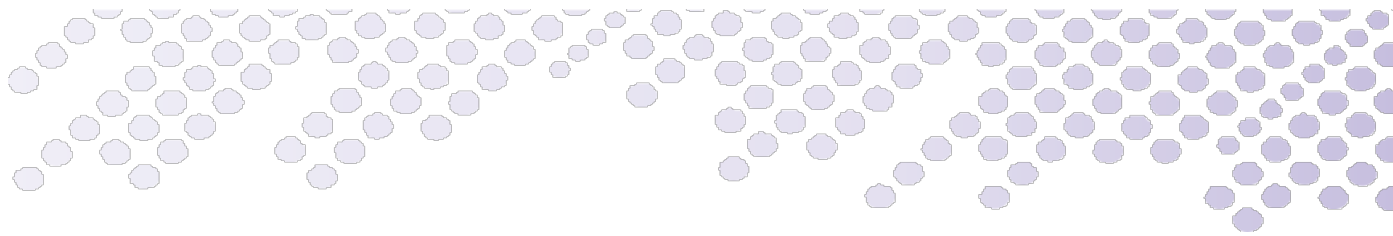
[Remploy](#), in partnership with Access to Work and fully funded by the Department of Work and Pensions, provides free support to employees who are absent from work, or finding work difficult due to challenges with their mental health.

2.3 Health charities

Many health charities provide information and support on continuing to work with the specific long term health condition. A number of these are referenced on the Council's [Intranet](#) for ease of use. (Appendix 1)

2.4 Mental Health Representatives

The Council's [mental health representatives](#) are available to all staff and provide confidential listening and signposting services.



2.4 Trade Union

If you are a member of a trade union, they may be able to provide further information and advice.

2.4 The employee

Whilst medical information relating to a health condition and/or side effects of medication is available from health professionals; the employee is the best source of information as to how the condition/medication impacts upon their daily life.

2.5 LGOWIT

[LGOWIT](#) is a Highland Partnership committed to promoting and supporting the concept of self-management of health for those with long term conditions. They provide support groups and training across the Highlands.

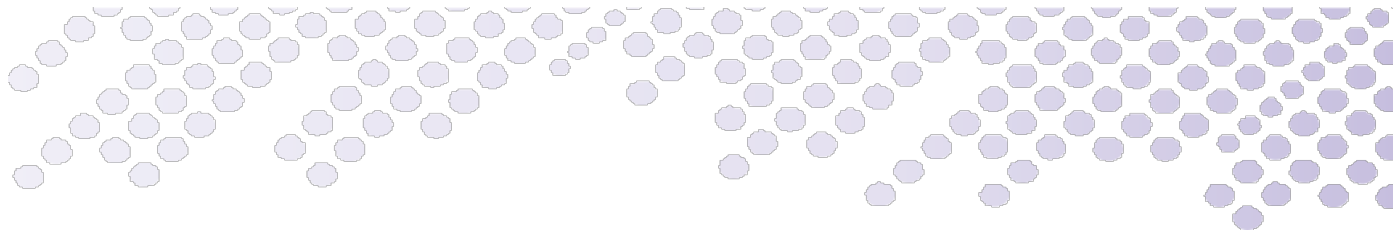
3 Responsibilities

All **staff** are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health;
- Being proactive in identifying/introducing reasonable adjustments;
- Talking to their GP if/when symptoms become difficult;
- Being open and honest in conversations with managers and OH;
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment;
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues;
- Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving

All **line managers** should:

- Familiarise themselves with this guidance;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about health conditions, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Respect that not all employees wish to disclose their health condition but may be happy to discuss the impact any symptoms may have on their work
- Record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.
- Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may:
 - Discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice; and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical;
 - Update the action plan, and continue to review



The role of **Occupational Health** is to:

- Carry out an holistic assessment of individuals provide advice and guidance in line with up-to-date research;
- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice;
- Provide support and advice Managers in determining and agreeing reasonable adjustments, if required;

4 Time off for hospital appointments/clinics

Current terms and conditions allows for staff to have paid time off to attend hospital appointments and clinics.

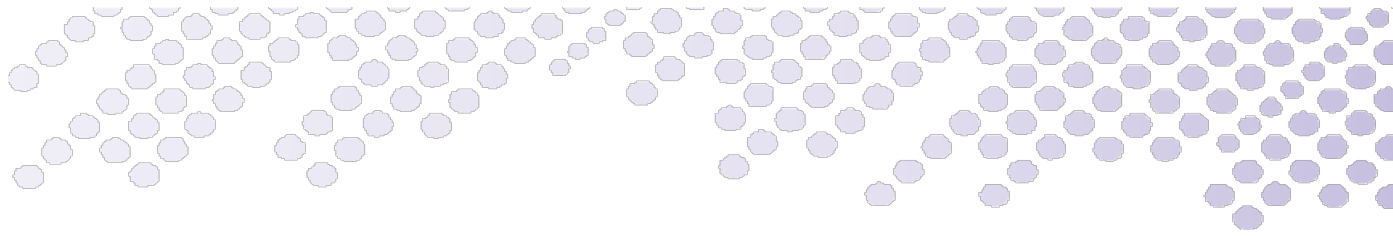
5 Reasonable adjustments

The identification and implementation of reasonable adjustments are legal requirements. The Line Manager (with the knowledge of the job) and the employee (with knowledge of the job and the limitations of the long term health condition) are best placed to identify reasonable adjustments for the particular job. It is not always necessary to make a referral to occupational health to identify reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable adjustments are not about making the job/environment equitable for everyone: a greater duty of care is required for those with long term health conditions. Concern that other employees will want equity is not a valid response to a request for reasonable adjustments.

The definition of “reasonable” depends on the size and nature of the organisation; however, many adjustments are simple and inexpensive. It is not possible to list all probable reasonable adjustments as these will depend on the needs of the individual employee, but examples include:

- Changing work patterns/hours
- Designated car parking space
- Modifying performance targets
- Modifying sickness absence triggers
- Special chair or other ergonomic equipment/furniture
- Working from home



6 Confidential conversations

6.1 Employee

Preparing for a talk with your Line Manager

Keep a diary of your symptoms and how they're affecting you. Think about the practical, reasonable adjustments that would help you, being flexible and ideally with different options. It may be that these are only for a short period of time while you work with your medical professional to alleviate your symptoms. Include a timeframe, too.

Prepare what to say. Mentally rehearse what you're going to say so when you talk to your Line Manager the words feel and sound natural. You could even do a mini role play with a trusted friend.

Explain your situation clearly. Talk to your Line Manager about your current situation, what's happening and most importantly how's it affecting your work.

Offer a solution. Think about how your circumstances could be improved and offer a reasonable solution. Could you work from home or come into work later on some days if poor sleep is an issue for you?

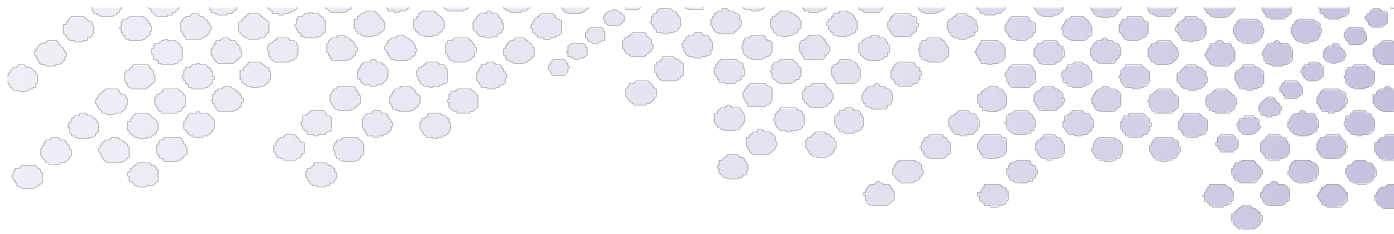
Self-Management- Look to see what you could do yourself to improve your symptoms or health- e.g. taking regular analgesia, increasing exercise, Mindfulness etc

Talk these through with your manager and request that some or all of these are put in place as reasonable adjustments, perhaps on a flexible basis so they can be reviewed as appropriate.

Don't expect an answer immediately. Remember, this may have been bothering you for a long time and you may have been mentally rehearsing, but it may be the first time your Line Manager has heard about it. Allow them time to digest the information and seek advice if necessary.

6.2 Line Manager

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly
- Take notes so that it can be shared between you both following the meeting and that you both agree this was a true reflection of what you spoke about.
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for any follow up meeting. Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or break room.
- At the end of the meeting put a time in the diary to meet again, whether that's to agree a way forward, to monitor progress or update.



- Remember, each situation is different and there is no standard approach to supporting staff.

7 Training

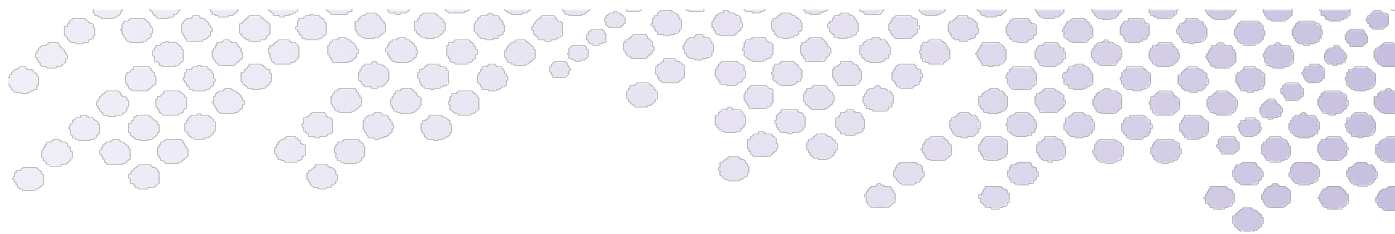
A course “Living and Working with Long Term Conditions” will be offered to staff. Managers are asked to commit to releasing staff for ½ day a week for 6 weeks.

A half day course will also be available for managers supporting staff.

These courses will be supported by LGOWIT volunteers trained in the delivery of Self-Management courses, some of whom will be Council staff.

7 Review

This guidance will be reviewed annually by the OHSW.Manager.

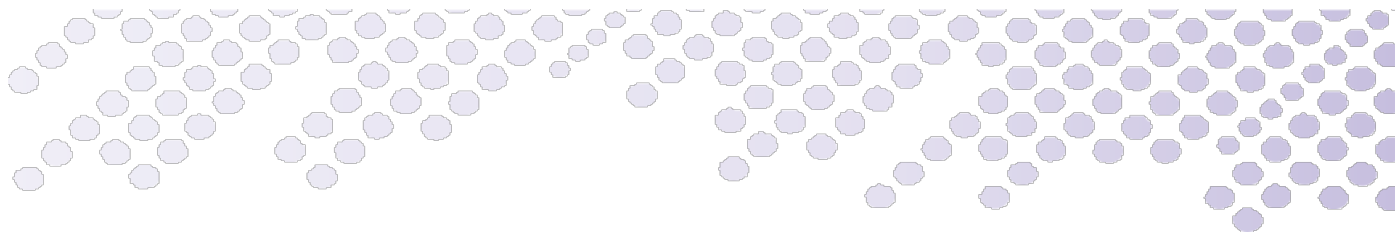


Appendix 1

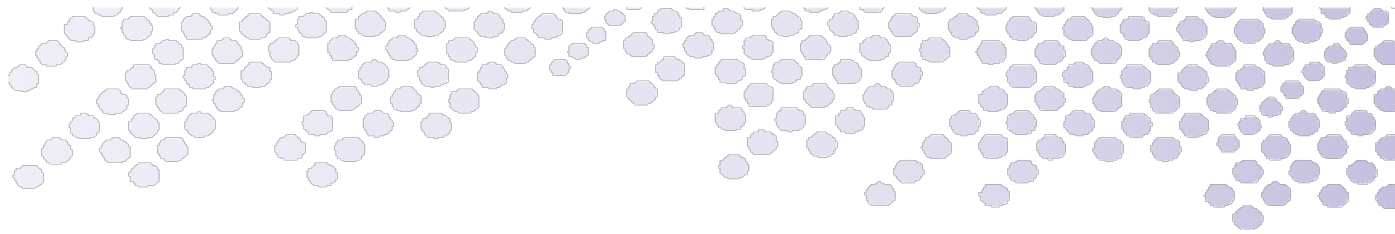
Living and working with...

Below is a list of trusted health information websites. If you want to add any other site to this list, please email: healthsafetyandwellbeing@highand.gov.uk

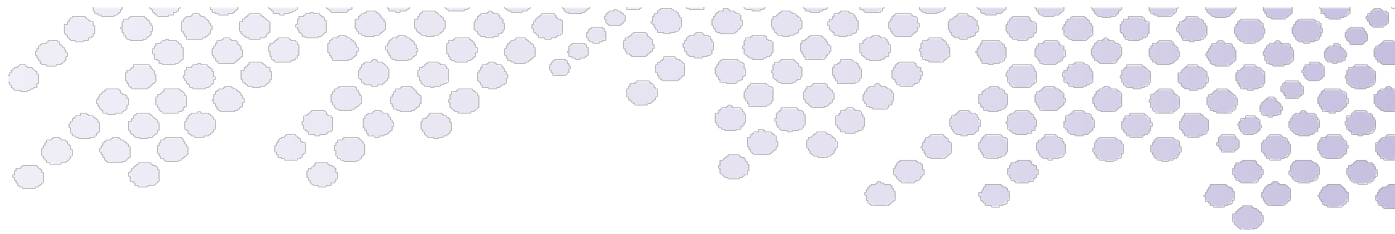
Condition	Organisation	Website	What they offer
Arthritis	Versus Arthritis (formerly Arthritis Care)	www.arthritiscare.org.uk	Advice. Includes the booklet "Adapting to work with arthritis" and "Information for employers"
Brittle bones	Brittle Bone Society	www.brittlebone.org	Information includes support available in the workplace.
Cancer	Macmillan support/ Cancer backup	www.macmillan.org.uk	Provides information for people of working age diagnosed with cancer to remain in or return to work. There is also for information for managers, safety reps and those working whilst caring for someone with cancer.
	Marie Curie Care and Support	www.mariecurie.org.uk	
	Cancer Research UK	www.cancerresearchuk.org	
Cardiovascular Disease	The British Heart Foundation	www.bhf.org.uk	
	Heart UK	www.heartuk.org.uk	
	British Association for Cardiac Rehabilitation	www.bsc.com	



	The Stroke Association	www.stroke.org.uk	
	Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland	www.chss.org.uk	
Cerebral palsy	Scope Employment Services	www.scope.org.uk	Offers help, advice and information for people with cerebral palsy.
Colitis/ Crohn's Disease	Colitis & Crohn's Disease	https://www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/	A range of leaflets including issues for people with inflammatory bowel disorder (IBD) and employment
Deafness and hard of hearing	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (previously Breakthrough)	www.deafPLUS.org	The aim of deafPLUS is to develop innovative work with deaf people, which enables them to improve their quality of life through contact, information and training.
Deafness	Royal Association of Deaf People	www.royaldeaf.org.uk	A range of information on working with deaf people, working from home, Equality Act and employment.
Deafness and hard of hearing	RNID	www.rnid.org.uk	Support, information and advice on employment issues and specialist equipment.
Deaf blind and Rubella	Sense	www.sense.org.uk	Offers advice, support and information for people who are deafblind.
Diabetes	Diabetes	www.diabetes.org.uk	Support, advice and information re living and working with diabetes.
Dyslexia	British Dyslexia Association	www.dyslexia.com	Range of useful information and links to other sites.
Endometriosis	Endometriosis UK	www.endometriosis-uk.org	Information and support for women with endometriosis. Includes leaflet for



			employers and leaflet for healthcare professionals.
Epilepsy	National Society for Epilepsy	www.epilepsynse.org.uk	Advice and resources.
Fibromyalgia	Fibromyalgia Action Group	www.fmauk.org	Advice and resources.
Kidney Disease	The Renal Association	www.renal.org	Advice and resources.
ME	ME Association	www.meassociation.org.uk	Support and advice. Can also give information on employment issues
Mental health	MIND (Mental Health Charity)	www.mind.org.uk	Information support and advice (including advocacy, employment and training schemes) for anyone experiencing mental distress.
	SANE (The Mental Health Charity)	www.sane.org.uk	Provides information on all forms of mental illness and offers support to people with mental health difficulties, their friends and families and professionals. Also provides advice on mental illness and employment.
	The Scottish Association for Mental health (SAMH)	www.samh.org.uk	Scotland's leading mental health charity and offers support, training and recovery for those experiencing mental health problems, addictions, homelessness and other forms of social exclusion
	The Mental Health Foundation	www.mentalhealth.org.uk	Support and research for good mental health



RSI	Repetitive Strain Injury Association	www.rsi.org.uk	Advice and information on RSI and strategies to cope, including strategies in the workplace.
	RSI-UK	www.rsi-uk.org.uk	Information and advice to encourage and support by and for people with RSI - issues concerning employment can be raised.
Stammering	British Stammering Association	www.stammering.org	Offers advice and support re employment. Free information pack.