

# REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AT WORK



If you've had cancer, the workplace can be challenging even after treatment is finished. Without the right support from your employer, you could be disadvantaged or feel unable to fulfil your potential.

## Know your rights

People with cancer automatically meet the definition of 'disabled'. You don't have to define yourself this way – but it does give you legal protection. It means employers can't discriminate against you. They can't:

- Reject your job application for cancer-related reasons
- Use cancer as a reason to move you to an easier or lower-paid job
- Make you redundant because of your diagnosis
- Penalise you for time off sick, without taking your cancer into account
- Give unfairly negative appraisals for not meeting targets, for example due to fatigue.

Failing to make a reasonable adjustment is also a form of discrimination.

If you think you're being discriminated against at work, look up the Equality and Human Rights Commission's guide for employees – see [equalityhumanrights.com](http://equalityhumanrights.com) for details.

## What is a reasonable adjustment?

This simply means a change to your working environment to make sure you aren't disadvantaged because of your cancer. Good examples include:

- Time off for treatment and check-ups
- Changes to your job description, so you spend less time on tasks that cause extra discomfort
- Flexible hours, including working from home, and extra breaks if you have fatigue
- Organising the workplace to make it accessible if you use a wheelchair or crutches
- A designated parking space
- Better ventilation in the workplace if heat makes you feel especially tired or sick
- Clear, regular communication with your line manager and HR, especially at times when you're away
- A phased return to work after treatment, helping to rebuild your stamina and confidence.

## How are reasonable adjustments made?

Your work should offer you a meeting to discuss your needs and to work out how they can support you. You have the right to meet with someone other than your line manager, and you can bring someone to the meeting such as a colleague or union rep.

Ahead of the meeting, you might find it helpful to share our toolkit '[My employee has cancer](#)' with your employer. It guides workplaces through each step, from your diagnosis to returning to work. Scan the QR code at the end of this factsheet for links to this guide and more.

At the meeting, remember these key points (you could bring this factsheet with you):

- You have a right to be protected against discrimination because of having cancer
- Your work may already have a policy on flexible working or returning after sick leave
- You decide how much information about your cancer is shared with others or kept confidential.

## What is 'reasonable'?

A reasonable adjustment depends on individual circumstances. For example, if treatment reduces your resistance to infection then it might be reasonable to allow you to commute to work outside of rush hour if you use public transport. Your employer should take these factors into account:

- The effectiveness of making the adjustment and whether it's practical to do so
- Size, type and financial resources of the employer
- Availability of financial assistance such as the Access to Work scheme ([gov.uk/access-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)).

## How long should I expect support?

Just because you're recovering, it doesn't mean you won't still feel tired, anxious or be in pain. The physical and emotional impact of treatment can last long after it's finished.

Your employer should be aware of this and actively continue to make reasonable adjustments to allow you to do your job – like having time off for follow-up appointments.

## How can I get my work to make changes?

Understanding, awareness and clear communication are key to getting you the right support. Make sure you have regular meetings and that you're honest about what you need to do your job. Employers who invest in a caring culture will find that their teams are more motivated and happy, because people thrive in a supportive and flexible work environment.

But it's also your employer's legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments. If they don't, it's possible you're being discriminated against and you can take legal action. For help on what to do next in this situation, contact us on the details below or look up your local Citizens Advice ([citizensadvice.org.uk](https://citizensadvice.org.uk)) for support.

### Contact us for support, Monday to Friday:

Phone: 0300 303 5220 (9am–5pm)

Email: [getsupport@younglivesvs cancer.org.uk](mailto:getsupport@younglivesvs cancer.org.uk) (9am–5pm)

Live chat at [younglivesvs cancer.org.uk](https://younglivesvs cancer.org.uk) (10am–4pm)



**Scan the QR code for more info  
about your rights at work and a link  
to our guide for employers**

**Young Lives vs Cancer helps young people and their families find the strength to face everything cancer throws at them. We've been there before. We'll face it all, together.**