

Getting into Work

Information resources

Introduction

This information sheet is designed to give people with hemiplegia more information about working and finding a job.

An important part of transition to adult life has always been leaving education and entering the workplace. A HemiHelp survey of our adult members in 2008 showed that people with hemiplegia do a wide variety of jobs. Those mentioned include: shop assistant, civil servant, barrister, occupational therapist, IT systems engineer, commis chef, bank cashier, teacher, public relations officer, petrol station attendant, theatre technician and receptionist.

Does hemiplegia make it more difficult to get a job?

Some HemiHelp members have found work without much difficulty and are happy in their jobs; others, especially those with more complex 'hidden' difficulties, have had a less easy time. The number of people not in education or employment (20% of the sample) is much higher than the national average. While we don't know how typical the people who took part in the survey were, other studies have shown that unemployment is higher amongst disabled people than in the general population.

The problem may begin earlier – young people with hemiplegia might be less likely to have had experience of work through Saturday and holiday jobs. Perhaps they get too tired or need more time for homework, but also employers may just be unwilling to take them on. There can also be a lack of understanding of what support is available to help disabled people into work and sometimes low self-esteem and confidence can affect what work people think they can do.

"People are reluctant to give me a Saturday job when they know I am disabled."

"I can't do many of the jobs my friends do, e.g. waitressing."



Does it help to be registered disabled, and how do I do it?

Many people, including employers, still think a national register of disabled people exists, alongside a quota system where companies must employ a certain number of disabled people. But these disappeared in 1995 with the passing of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which has now been superseded by the Equality Act 2010. This is the law that bans unfair treatment and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. It mainly says that employers may not discriminate against people on grounds of disability or impairment.

There are a number of schemes run by both government agencies and voluntary organisations to support adults with specific impairments (especially learning difficulties) into work (see useful contacts at the end).

Don't forget that you can have access to a Disability Employment Adviser at your nearest Jobcentre. Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) can give you help and support regardless of your situation. They can help you find work, or they can help you gain new skills even if you have been out of work for a long time or have no work experience.

Access to Work – practical help at work

Access to Work is a government-funded scheme that can help you if your health or impairment affects the way you do your job. It gives you and your employer advice and support, with extra costs which may arise because of your needs. Access to Work might pay towards a support worker or the equipment you need at work. It can also pay towards the cost of getting to work if you cannot use public transport. If you need a communicator at job interviews, then Access to Work may be able to pay some or all of the communicator's costs. More information can be found at www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Should I tell potential employers about my hemiplegia?

"In application forms, I have found it is better to explain how the condition has affected me personally and what help or consideration I would require from my employer. I feel this allows people to see not only how I cope and deal with the condition but also provides people with a more helpful explanation of hemiplegia than a medical dictionary could give."

You do not have to declare that you have hemiplegia when applying for a job, although if an application form asks whether you have a disability you need to be honest about it.

HemiHelp members reported a mixed response to their hemiplegia among employers, but their experience suggests that the more you can discuss possible issues in advance, the less likely they are to arise on the job.



"I've found a positive attitude and honesty is the best way to go. I'm confident in myself and in my abilities. I am willing to iron out misconceptions and prejudices of people who think otherwise."

"Before I started my present job my managers met with me to chat about any alterations to my work pattern, desk, computer or access to the building. We agreed a plan to assist me where needed, with the proviso that I would let them know if I had any other problems. I now have my phone and computer set on the left side of my desk."

At the same time many employers don't seem to know about their responsibilities – the Equality Act 2010 states that they must make 'reasonable adjustments' to working practices and the workplace itself so that disabled people are not at a disadvantage. This means everything from application forms to training as well as being able to use the canteen. This doesn't have to cost them anything – grants are available for adaptations to the workplace, specialised equipment and so on. In practice, however, many employers simply do not understand what is required, even in the obvious area of access, which is where Access to Work may be able to assist.

"When I got my new job I was told they were moving into a new building that would be more accessible for the public dropping in. However, when I went to see it, one of the two ways down to the basement, where the kitchen and meeting rooms were, was by a spiral staircase, and the other stairs would be unavailable if a meeting was taking place as they led into the meeting room. I needed to hold onto the rail, so I couldn't use the spiral staircase if I was carrying papers or a cup."

Fortunately they were very supportive and just didn't know all my requirements yet; they saw my point and hadn't signed the contract, so they didn't take it."

What other issues can arise?

Another frequent comment was that because hemiplegia is usually considered a relatively mild disability in physical terms, employers and colleagues may not accept that someone has difficulties.

"Although I was accepted onto a couple of schemes I was rapidly rejected as they didn't realise my level of disability initially. Occasionally I was asked to perform physically impossible tasks, and then belittled when I tried to explain it was a problem."

But for some people with hemiplegia it is their 'hidden' difficulties that make getting and keeping work more difficult.

"I had difficulties with finding and keeping a job due to inadequate social skills. I needed job coaching for several months but then I was able to manage a job without help."

"I was asked to leave the first couple of office jobs because of slowness/disorganisation."

"I didn't realise how abrupt and rude I can come across when talking to others, having a short temper and taking things literally."

Being out of work for some time can affect people's self-esteem, which can make it more difficult to get a job. It is important to remember that finding a job can take time and it requires dedication and perseverance. You can have 100 no thanks, but you only need one yes!'

The Disability Confident symbol



When you are applying for jobs, look out for employers using the Disability Confident symbol (previously known as the Two Ticks scheme). It shows they have a positive attitude towards job applications from disabled people.

If an employer uses this symbol, it means they are positive about employing disabled people and will be keen to know about your abilities. You can find a list of employers who are signed up to this scheme at: <http://goo.gl/2pcz0J>

How can I get a job if I don't have experience?

Many young adults today, not just those who are disabled, have difficulty finding a job that suits them. Volunteering/work placements can be a good way of getting some useful experience and improving your chances of employment. It also gives you the opportunity to try out a particular job or sector and see if it is for you.

What are the benefits of work experience?

- Practical experience in the types of industry and organisations you wish to work for.
- Increased job opportunities. A potential employer will be more likely to offer you an interview/position if you have more experience.
- Adds to and improves your CV.
- A recent reference.
- Team work, discipline and personal achievement.

At HemiHelp we can help you find suitable work experience opportunities. Contact: support@hemihelp.org.uk for more details.

Interviews

When you are applying for a job, employers may ask for details of your health or whether you have a disability. The Equality Act 2010 places some limits on questions an employer can ask about these topics. Learn more about this at www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled/applying-for-a-job

Before an interview, think about the questions they might ask you, including questions about hemiplegia, and prepare your answers.

Allow yourself plenty of time to get there: arriving late will make a bad impression, and being flustered because you're late might make you mess up your answers.

Ask about anything that might be an issue, such as access or flexible working hours.

Don't be afraid to talk about adaptations you need – for example a one-handed keyboard, voice recognition software or a specific chair.



It's not easy for anyone to find work at the moment, but there are lots of people with hemiplegia in jobs they enjoy. Have confidence in yourself and don't give up.

There are some more useful hints and tips about interviews at the HemiHelp Employment Workshops - www.hemihelp.org.uk/young_adults/employment_workshops

Useful contacts

HemiHelp Transition Service

We can help with all aspects of employability and information, advice and guidance on getting and retaining a job. Our Transition Service is run by an experienced Employment Adviser/Employability Tutor who will be happy to try to help get you the job you want. We can help with CVs, cover letters/letters of introduction, interview technique training, job brokerage and much more. Contact: support@hemihelp.org.uk or telephone the office on: **0345 120 3713**.

General

Transition Information Network (TIN)

www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk

Tel: **020 7843 6006**

Email: tin@ncb.org.uk

An alliance of organisations dedicated to improving the transition into adulthood. TIN provides information about transition through its website, magazine My Future Choices, policy and practice e-bulletin Getting a Life and seminars.

Find your local Information, Advice and Support Services Network: cyp.iasnetwork.org.uk/getting-help/

Useful resources can be found here: councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources-and-help/im-young-person

www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled/applying-for-a-job The government site on everything to do with employment.

Careers Advice

The National Careers Service might be a good starting point if you are unsure what you want to do: nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

Their helpline is 0800 100 900. They are open from 8am until 10pm and also have a web chat service

There is a job profile section on the website- which details different careers and the qualifications that you would need: <http://goo.gl/pg6LRQ>

In addition, the skills health check section may be useful to and help find career paths that suit you: <http://goo.gl/GJKGnL>

Support for employment related issues

Disclosing a disability to employers
www.goo.gl/DuSlXX

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) provides free and impartial information and advice on all aspects of workplace relations. They run a helpline (0300 123 1100) and a section on advice and guidance on their website www.goo.gl/kTfprR

Advice Now – advice on different employment related issues:
www.advicenow.org.uk/

Equality Advisory Support Service
discrimination helpline: www.goo.gl/UC9Dsl

Disability Law Service

www.dls.org.uk

Advice line: **020 7791 9800**

E-mail: **advice@dls.org.uk**

This is a charity run by and for disabled people to provide advice and information on the law disability, benefits, employment etc. Their site has range of factsheets and they also provide a casework service, and support at any level of the legal system.

Access to Work

www.gov.uk/access-to-work

This government scheme might pay towards a support worker or the equipment you need at work. It can also pay towards the cost of getting to work if you cannot use public transport.

The Equality Advisory Service provide template letters on how to make requests for reasonable adjustments.
www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

Finding a job

DisabledGo

www.disabledgo.com

A website packed full of useful access information. It also includes a job search facility where you can browse vacancies from organisations that are positive about employing disabled people.

Diversity Milkround

www.milkround.com/diversity

A website listing the latest graduate jobs from diversity-friendly employers

Jobcentre Plus

www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus

This has a number of programmes for helping people with disabilities into work and at work. Your local jobcentre can put you in touch with a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA). You may have to be receiving a benefit such as DLA or ESA to access these programmes.

Scope

www.scope.org.uk/support/disabled-people/work

Scope has a service to help disabled people into work.

Volunteering

Community Service Volunteers

www.csv.org.uk

Charity dedicated to giving everyone the chance to play an active part in their community through volunteering, training, education and the media.

Team London

www.639centre.com/volunteer.html

Team London is the Mayor's new volunteer programme for London, where you can find volunteer opportunities and do something great for your local area.

Vinspired

www.vinspired.com

Connects disabled and non-disabled 16-25-year-olds with volunteering opportunities.

Youthnet

www.youthnet.org

This is an online charity offering guidance and support to young people aged 16-24. Has a volunteering section www.do-it.org

Volunteering England

www.volunteering.org.uk

Volunteer Scotland

www.volunteerscotland.net

Volunteering Wales

www.volunteering-wales.net

Development Agency (Northern Ireland)

www.volunteering-ni.org

HemiHelp is the national charity providing information, support and guidance to people with hemiplegia and their families.

Helpline: **0345 123 2372**

(Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am-12 and 7pm-9pm)

Office: **0345 120 3713**

Email: support@hemihelp.org.uk

Website: www.hemihelp.org.uk

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This information product has been produced following the Information Standard requirements

www.theinformationstandard.org



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