



MOORE THAN ARTHRITIS | FREE RESOURCE

Supporting a Colleague With an Invisible Condition

Believe, include and respond without taking over.



WORKPLACE INCLUSION Practical, respectful and evidence-informed guidance for sustainable work.

Supporting People | Raising Awareness | Building Community | Living Beyond the Diagnosis

Stronger together. Beyond limits.

General workplace information - not individual medical or legal advice | Version 1.0 | August 2026



Supporting a Colleague With an Invisible Condition

Believe, include and respond without taking over.

KEY MESSAGE You cannot judge pain, fatigue or ability from appearance. Ask what helps and respect privacy.

Listen Let the person describe their own experience.	Believe Do not demand visible proof or comparisons.	Ask Use open questions rather than assumptions.
Include Keep invitations and choices open.	Respect privacy Do not share health information or rumours.	Support practically Offer specific help while preserving agency.

Scope This resource offers general workplace information. It cannot determine whether a person is legally disabled or what is reasonable in a specific case.



What can make workplace inclusion harder

Look beyond diagnosis labels to the interaction between the person, the role, the environment and workplace systems.

“You look well” Appearance is used to dismiss symptoms.	Unasked questions Curiosity becomes intrusive.	Taking over Help removes choice rather than a barrier.
Resentment Adjustments are mislabelled as special treatment.	Exclusion The person stops being invited because they may decline.	Banter Ableist jokes damage safety and trust.

AVOID ASSUMPTIONS Individual experience, role demands and effective support vary.



Actions that may reduce disadvantage

Use a person-centred discussion and competent advice where needed. Adjustments should be effective, proportionate and reviewable.

Use respectful language Follow the person's preferred terms.	Offer choices Ask whether and how you can help.	Protect access Keep routes, seating and meeting options usable.
Challenge assumptions Address unfair comments calmly.	Keep boundaries Managers handle formal adjustments, not colleagues.	Stay connected Flexible participation reduces isolation.

Confidentiality Agree what information may be shared, with whom and for what practical purpose. Health information requires particular protection.



From first conversation to review

A consistent process improves trust, accountability and the chance that support works in practice.

1. Notice the barrier, not the appearance
2. Ask privately if support would help
3. Listen to the requested action
4. Respect the answer and confidentiality
5. Address inappropriate behaviour
6. Use formal routes for workplace changes

Questions for the conversation

- What work outcome matters most?
- Which task, practice or environment creates the barrier?
- What has helped or made things harder before?
- Which options should be tried or assessed?
- Who will act, by when, and when will we review?

Keep it practical Record the decision, reason, action owner, target date, confidentiality agreement and review point.



Use this page to prepare or record action

Complete only the fields that are relevant. Keep personal health information secure and share it only through appropriate routes.

1. A respectful question I can use is:

2. A practical offer I can make is:

3. Information I must keep private is:

4. A barrier in our team is:

5. A behaviour I should challenge is:

6. The formal support route is:

Action record Decision: _____ Owner: _____ Target date:

Review date: _____ Measure of success:



Use the right route for the issue

Workplace inclusion can involve equality law, employment rights, health and safety, data protection, HR policy and medical care. One conversation may not resolve every part.

Important A colleague should not become a medical adviser, informal case manager or source of workplace gossip. Use appropriate manager, HR or safeguarding routes when necessary.

Appropriate next steps may include

- Review the adjustment or work plan with the employee and manager
- Use HR, occupational health, health and safety or Access to Work where appropriate
- Seek medical advice for new, severe or worsening health symptoms
- Use a union, Acas, Citizens Advice or independent legal advice for employment concerns
- Call 999 for a life-threatening emergency or use NHS 111 for urgent medical help that is not an emergency

Jurisdiction Equality Act 2010 information in this resource applies to England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland has separate disability-discrimination legislation and support routes.



Trusted workplace information

Use current primary guidance and obtain professional advice for the facts of an individual case.

[1] **Acas - Supporting disabled people at work.** Inclusive conversations, language and confidentiality. [Open source](#)

[2] **GOV.UK - Disability rights: employment.** Protection across recruitment and employment. [Open source](#)

[3] **ICO - Workers health information.** Protecting special-category health data. [Open source](#)

[4] **Acas - Reasonable adjustments.** Making, discussing, recording and reviewing adjustments. [Open source](#)

[5] **GOV.UK - Definition of disability.** The Equality Act 2010 definition and long-term effects. [Open source](#)

Evidence checked: 21 August 2026. Review sooner if UK employment, equality, health or data-protection guidance changes.

Related Moore Than Arthritis workplace resources

- Talking to Your Employer About Arthritis
- Reasonable Adjustments in Practice
- Managing Pain, Fatigue and Flare-Ups at Work
- Line Manager Support Toolkit
- Workplace Accessibility Self-Assessment Toolkit

CONNECT WITH MOORE THAN ARTHRITIS

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Disclaimer This resource provides general educational information and is not medical, occupational-health, employment or legal advice. Moore Than Arthritis does not determine disability status, employment rights or the reasonableness of an adjustment. Obtain advice from an appropriately qualified professional about individual circumstances.

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