Top tips for line managers – supporting colleagues with disabilities
At work guidance

A Royal Holloway Equality and Diversity Guide
As a manager, it is your responsibility to prevent discrimination against a disabled staff member or job candidate. Discrimination might occur in any of the following ways:

- In the recruitment and selection process
- In their terms and conditions of employment
- In opportunities for promotion, personal/professional development, training
- In terms of dismissal or termination of contract
- In the day-to-day treatment of a colleague with a disability, either as part of your team, part of a wider department, or as a member of the College
- In the seriousness and execution given to reports of bullying and harassment made by a colleague with a disability
- In the failure of the College to make reasonable adjustments for colleagues with a disability

Here is some guidance you may find helpful:

- **Many disabilities are not immediately apparent.** If someone makes you aware that they have a disability you cannot see, it is important not to seem shocked by this, or treat them any differently (than they ask you to) once you are aware.
- **Don’t dismiss non-visible disabilities** (including mental health aspects of disability); they can have an equally difficult or complex impact on someone’s life as visible ones.
- **Meeting with new staff:** If a new member of staff with a disability has been recruited, it is good practice to meet them (before their start date if possible) to create an action plan. You can contact your HR Business Partner for help with executing this meeting, or developing an action plan. You should discuss the following during this meeting:
  - Would they like other members of the team to be made aware of their disability? If so, would they like to be present for this/take the lead?
  - Would they like access to a disability buddy (provided by the Disability Forum)? If yes, then this can be set up by emailing equality@royalholloway.ac.uk.
  - Would they like access to a Coach who has a disability? To set this up, you or your line manager can contact the Organisation Development and Diversity Office.
  - Do they have access requirements which mean that they may need reasonable adjustments? (For further information on reasonable adjustments see below.)
  - Will they require specific assistive technologies (available from the
Disability and Dyslexia Services, disability-dyslexia@royalholloway.ac.uk) to carry out their work? Does the College already have access to these, or will they need to be sourced for this colleague?

- Are they likely to require significant periods of time away from work? If so, will this be spontaneous or scheduled, such as for a series of medical treatments?
- Will they require a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)? (For colleagues with disabilities linked to mobility, visual, auditory, cognitive impairment.) This can be produced in liaison with Health and Safety (you can discuss this with your HR Business Partner).

- You can get a sense of the varying support the member of staff might need on a regular basis, and how this might fluctuate, by discussing how their disability impacts them on a good day, and what symptoms/issues/reactions suggest that they are not doing so well and might need some time away from work.

If an existing colleague becomes disabled, you should have the same meeting as you would when recruiting a new member of staff with a disability.

- Information on a person’s disability should be treated as completely confidential.
- A reasonable adjustment can be anything, from a recruitment and selection policy being made more inclusive by removing barriers to the interview process, to an interview being held in an accessible room, to allowing the staff member more time to complete a task, or an accessible office away from the rest of the team. The staff member may have a good understanding of their own specific requirements.

- The College Disability & Dyslexia Services have a dedicated Disability & Dyslexia Adviser (Accessibility) whose role is to procure and update a suite of accessible technologies for use by students and colleagues at the College.
- Colleagues from the Disability Forum have produced a short video where they reflect on experiences of working at the College. This may help you gain insight into the types of accommodations the College can make.
- Contact your HR Business Partner if you have had sufficient consultation with your staff member, and are unsure about the processes or steps you need to take to support them relating to making reasonable adjustments. They can assist you in contacting the Health & Safety Officer to trial adaptive equipment for a member of staff etc.

- Schedule annual/biannual meetings (more if the colleague appears unwell). Make sure these meetings are separate from performance review meetings.
- The Organisation Development team (orgdev@royalholloway.ac.uk) offer a Disability Awareness workshop, which might be a great team-building exercise.

- Recruitment: The language used in a job descriptions/ person specifications should not deter someone with a disability from applying. Tasks not crucial to the role, or which could be adjusted or redistributed, should not be highlighted as such. For example, for someone with a hearing impairment, a focus on answering telephone calls may deter them from applying. This task could be redistributed amongst the team, and may not be crucial for an applicant. For support on this, please contact HR Recruitment or your
HR Business Partner. If there are access needs requiring adjustment in order for the applicant to be able to fully participate in the interview to the best of their ability, then the Recruitment team will notify you and other members of the interview panel. If the Recruitment team has notified you of an applicant specifying a disability, it is best practice not to incorporate discussion of this into the interview itself. This should either be asked at the end of the interview, after all discussions of the experience, skills and appropriateness of the applicant have come to a close, or this should be a conversation between you and the applicant at a later point, should they be offered the position.

**Mental health:** You are not a mental health professional. Always direct colleagues to professionals. For short-term support you can refer staff to:
- Occupational Health (includes referral guidance)
- The Employee Assistance Programme
- Talking Therapies, an NHS Service, facilitated by the Health Centre on campus
- Staff Disability Forum, coordinated by the E&D Officer (susan.lee@royalholloway.ac.uk)

The College has a ‘Dignity at Work – Bullying and Harassment’ policy for colleagues, which includes guidance on making and responding to complaints.

The Government-funded Access to Work scheme provides grants to help pay for the extra employment cost of working with a disability. This can include funding for:
- Special aids or equipment e.g. specialist software, speech recognition software.
- Support worker to provide one-to-one support in the workplace e.g. British Sign Language Interpreter or personal reader for dyslexic, blind or visually impaired individuals.
- Travel to work if public transport cannot be used; and help with adaptations to vehicles
- Travel in work to pay for the extra cost of travel while at work
- Communication support at job interviews
- Adaptations to existing (but not new) buildings

The responsibility to apply for the fund lies with the member of staff. However, you should support them in making this application. The grant can pay up to 100% of the approved costs if they are starting a new job; or have been working for you less than six weeks; and a proportion of the costs if staff have been in the job for six weeks or more.

For more detailed information on supporting colleagues with disabilities, including information on the duty placed upon the College by the Equality Act 2010, what it means to be disabled and how this can impact on staff, best practice and guidance on recruiting, supporting, developing and retaining talent, please refer to the Supporting Disabled Staff (long) guide that can be found on the staff intranet.
Useful language tips:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(the) handicapped, (the) disabled</td>
<td>disabled (people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afflicted by, suffers from, victim of</td>
<td>has [name of condition or impairment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound</td>
<td>wheelchair user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentally handicapped, mentally defective,</td>
<td>with a learning disability (singular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retarded, subnormal</td>
<td>with learning disabilities (plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cripple, invalid</td>
<td>disabled person</td>
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<tr>
<td>special needs</td>
<td>specific needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>spastic</td>
<td>person with cerebral palsy</td>
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<tr>
<td>able-bodied</td>
<td>non-disabled</td>
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<tr>
<td>disabled toilet, disabled access</td>
<td>accessible toilet, accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>mental patient, insane, mad</td>
<td>person with a mental health condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deaf and dumb; deaf mute</td>
<td>deaf, user of British Sign Language (BSL), person with a hearing impairment</td>
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<tr>
<td>the blind</td>
<td>people with visual impairments; blind people; blind and partially sighted people</td>
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<tr>
<td>an epileptic, diabetic, depressive, and so</td>
<td>person with epilepsy, diabetes, depression or someone who has epilepsy, diabetes, depression</td>
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<tr>
<td>on</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>dwarf; midget</td>
<td>someone with restricted growth or short stature</td>
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<tr>
<td>fits, spells, attacks</td>
<td>seizures</td>
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