

About us

Action for M.E. is the leading UK charity for people affected by M.E./CFS.

Our mission is empowering people with M.E./CFS to fulfil their potential and secure the care and support they need, while working towards a greater understanding of the illness and ultimately a cure.

Our support services include:

- information and support about living with M.E./CFS, including the newly diagnosed
- our Welfare Advice and Support Service
- a friendly forum where you can chat to other people with M.E./CFS at www.actionforme.org.uk/me-friends-online
- a directory where you can find services and support groups in your area.

Action for M.E. also raises awareness and understanding of M.E.; invests in research; and works collaboratively to improve services and care.

Useful contacts

Action for M.E.

General enquiries: 0117 927 9551

Welfare Advice and Support Service: 0800 138 6544

Email: admin@actionforme.org.uk

www.actionforme.org.uk

 www.facebook.com/actionforme

 www.twitter.com/actionforme

Access to Work

Government programme supporting employees and employers with advice and costs

Tel: 0345 268 8489

Email: atwosu.london@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Work Choice

Disability Employment Advisers at your local Jobcentre Plus can refer you to the Work Choice programme for specialist support for you and your employer

www.gov.uk/work-choice

Fit for Work

Free, expert and impartial work-related health advice from occupational health professionals

Tel: 0800 032 6235

www.fitforwork.org



Registered address

42 Temple Street Keynsham BS31 1EH

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M.E. in the workplace



An introduction to supporting employees and colleagues with myalgic encephalomyelitis (M.E.)

M.E. can also be diagnosed as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) or post viral fatigue syndrome (PVFS)



When a member of staff has a long term illness, or is a carer, employers need to understand the condition which affects their lives and the legal responsibilities they have towards them.

There is a strong possibility that someone you know or work with is affected by the chronic, fluctuating illness M.E. If you work in a large organisation, one in 250 members of staff is likely to have the illness. Action for M.E. is here to help.

What is M.E.?

M.E. (myalgic encephalomyelitis) is a long-term (chronic) fluctuating illness that causes symptoms affecting many body systems, more commonly the nervous and immune systems.

Defined by the World Health Organisation as neurological, M.E. affects an estimated 250,000 people in the UK, and around 17 million people worldwide.

People with M.E. experience severe, persistent fatigue associated with what's called post-exertional malaise, the body's inability to recover after expending even small amounts of energy; sometimes also called 'payback.'

Additional symptoms can include chronic pain, cognitive difficulties and digestive problems.

If you have M.E. yourself, help and support is available. Please contact Action for M.E. for information, signposting and support with accessing health and social care, welfare benefits and living with M.E.

M.E. at work

The fluctuating nature of M.E. can make it difficult for someone with the illness to maintain a consistent level of working. A task that is easily manageable one day may prove impossible the next.

An important way to support a colleague or employee with M.E. is to learn about the illness and understand that it can fluctuate, and that they may not always be able to do the same amount of work that they used to.

People with M.E. may not look it but often they could be too ill to write a simple email or make a phone call. Your understanding and patience will be invaluable.

M.E. and the law

Under the Equality Act 2010, disability is defined as "a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

'Impairment' covers long-term medical conditions and fluctuating or progressive conditions – including M.E.

It is unlawful to treat someone less favourably than you would others because that person has a long-term fluctuating illness.

"I am lucky that I am able to work at my own pace and allow rest periods."

Nicholas, who has M.E.

"I really value my employer and my boss in particular for thinking I'm worth the effort."

Lois, who has M.E.

Reasonable adjustments

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the workplace and to working practices, so that disabled employees or job applicants are not at a disadvantage.

These may include measures such as:

- changing locations of work
- working from home
- modifying work hours
- reducing workloads
- reducing physical tasks
- making provision for a wheelchair
- flexibility in working patterns.

The earlier such adjustments are made, the easier it could be for employees with M.E. to manage work alongside their symptoms – and the better their chances of staying in work.

Reasonable adjustments outlined in this leaflet are described in more detail on Action for M.E.'s website and in our booklets for employers and employees.

Disabled employees can apply to the Access to Work programme for funding towards additional equipment, support and assistive technology (beyond that which employers are expected to provide).

"When a member of our staff is affected by M.E. we want to make sure we give them all the help and support they need."

Dave Moore, Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Santander

