

Workplace Toolkit

for employers



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TYPE 1
DIABETES.

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Introduction

This guide provides advice to employers and line managers on supporting employees living with type 1 diabetes or who care for a relative with type 1 diabetes.

What is type 1 diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes is a chronic, life-threatening autoimmune condition that has a life-long impact on those diagnosed. People with type 1 diabetes rely on multiple

insulin injections or pump infusions every day just to stay alive.

There are currently 400,000 people in the UK with type 1 diabetes, of whom 30,000 are children.



I do have difficulty with appointments though, as these can be difficult to fit into my work schedule. The one I struggle with is my annual eye check. I live quite a long way out and not being able to drive to the appointment is an issue.

Jake, Systems Engineer at Sellafield



How type 1 diabetes affects people in the workplace

Type 1 diabetes is classed as an 'unseen disability' under The Equality Act 2010. Not everybody will choose to tell their employer that they have, or someone they care for has, type 1 diabetes. Many people affected by type 1 diabetes can cope perfectly well in the workplace without adjustments being made by their employer.

JDRF encourages employees to be open and tell you that they or

someone they care for has type 1 diabetes so that you can support them, if necessary, with the condition. This might also include carrying out a risk assessment of their role and place of work to ensure adequate support is provided (for example a private place to inject insulin).

Some employees affected by type 1 diabetes may need other considerations at times for example:

- Time and place to inject insulin
- Flexibility around working patterns or start times – occasionally someone with type 1 diabetes may have irregular blood glucose levels during the night and this may continue to affect them the next day
- Time off for clinic, hospital and eye screening appointments
- Time off for specialist courses to support their type 1 diabetes, such as a Dose Adjustment For Normal Eating (DAFNE) course or equivalents
- Understanding of the effects of hypoglycaemia and hyperglycaemia and providing appropriate support (see reasonable adjustments on page five)

As an employer, by making sure you have the correct information, making reasonable adjustments and providing relevant support, you can ensure that any employees affected by the condition can be

supported in the workplace and fulfil their role. The information below shows the small changes you can make to support staff in your workplace with type 1 diabetes.

Medical appointments for employees living with type 1 diabetes:

Like all employees, people with type 1 diabetes will need time off for medical appointments. People with type 1 diabetes must have appointments with their diabetes specialist team in order for them to review their management of the condition and provide support and medical advice. In addition to consultation appointments with their healthcare team, there are also routine eye screening appointments which are usually yearly, but may be more frequent.

What are specialist courses for type 1 diabetes:

Specialist structured education courses such as DAFNE (or equivalents) are important to help people with the management of type 1 diabetes by providing them with the skills necessary to estimate the carbohydrate in each meal and to inject/infuse the right dose of insulin. These courses can be difficult to get a place on and can be held infrequently; therefore it is important to take this into account when giving permission for an employee to take time off work to attend one.



The one thing I struggle with is not wanting to be perceived as a burden on my employer. I want to be viewed the same as everybody else with no special treatment.

Sarah, Accountant



Workplace support strategies

What reasonable adjustments should be made for type 1 diabetes?

Simple adjustments at work can make a big difference in supporting the person with type 1 diabetes in the workplace. In many cases, such adjustments are

cost effective and easy to make and in some cases employers will already be doing things that they are unaware will make a massive difference to those with type 1 diabetes.

Reasonable adjustments could include offering:



Flexibility with working hours to incorporate clinical appointments and educational courses



Providing 'sharps' boxes to dispose of used medical supplies, safely – for example needles



Adapting the way your employee works to allow them to eat food and test when needed – for example allowing short breaks



Providing hypoglycaemia kits – in some cases this can be as simple as a box containing Lucozade and jelly babies although talk to your staff to see what treatments work best for them



Providing a private place to inject (this should not be a toilet)



Phased return to work after sickness absence

Can I refuse to employ someone who has type 1 diabetes?

No, only the Armed forces are exempt from The Equality Act 2010. Emergency services don't have a blanket ban and it's now up to the local service to decide.

If you already offer staff learning and development opportunities within your organisation you can view courses such as DAFNE (or other structured education courses) as part of your employee's learning, while making reasonable adjustments at the same time.

Working environments: office, retail, hospitality, factory, construction etc

Employers should make reasonable adjustments to stop employees being disadvantaged in comparison with those without type 1 diabetes, regardless of the environment they work in. The list of reasonable adjustments suggested above should be applicable to any workplace.

If your workplace is a factory or a shop floor consider whether your member of staff can bring food and equipment into that area. If not, why is the refusal not reasonable? Could certain small adjustments make a big difference to your employee?

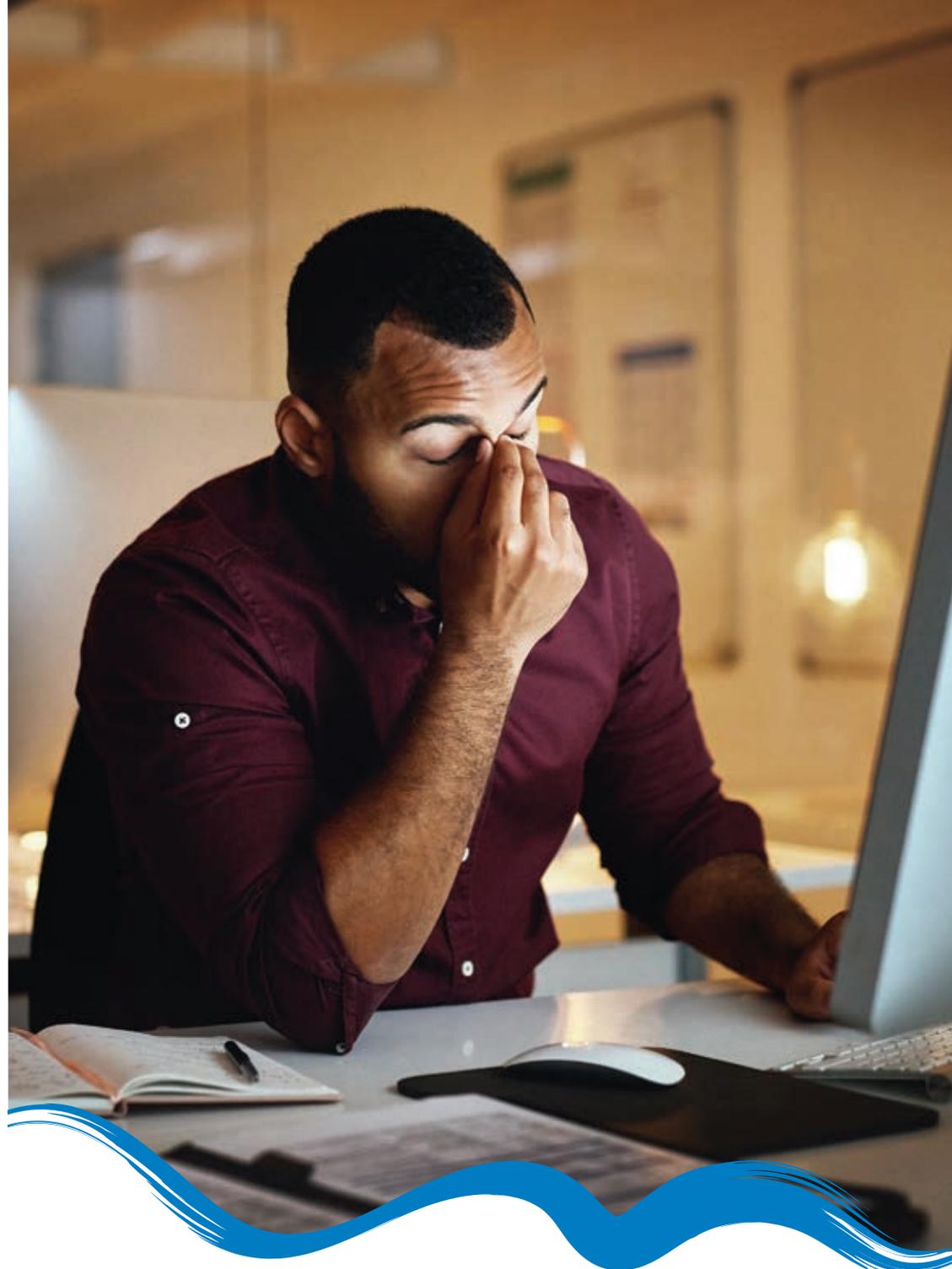
Policies and procedures

Do your policies and procedures inadvertently discriminate against employees with type 1 diabetes? For example if you use the Bradford factor to calculate sickness absence does this disproportionately affect people with type 1 diabetes who may be more likely to have short, one-off periods of sickness?



I make sure everywhere I work I mention my type 1 diabetes upfront. Initially I found there was a bit of ignorance – you can still experience the same misperceptions in the healthcare profession as in other sectors.

Chloe, Nurse



Culture

The biggest difference any employer can make to supporting staff with type 1 diabetes is to have a culture that enables staff both new to your organisation and those long standing employees who have been recently diagnosed to be comfortable and confident in treating and communicating their condition. Allowing staff to test their blood glucose levels either in public or in private; allowing staff to carry their equipment with them at all times; allowing food breaks when

and if needed without having to seek permission; creating understanding within a team of the effects of hypoglycaemia or hyperglycaemia in the short term, will all make a substantial difference.

JDRF has generated a presentation showing some of the type of kit a person with type 1 diabetes may have with them. This includes newer types of technology including Flash glucose monitors, Continuous Glucose Monitors and insulin pumps.



Clear communication

It will help both the organisation and your employee to offer open and practical discussions about what adjustments can be made to ensure they are (and feel) supported at work. If the employee feels uncomfortable about doing this, you might suggest they bring a colleague or union representative with them. The discussion should focus on what practical changes are necessary to meet the individual's needs.

A lot of people living with type 1 diabetes fully understand their

condition and will usually know what they need to help them cope, so it is important that they are encouraged to tell you about any health needs they might have. Keeping in contact during periods of prolonged sickness is also important and in some situations it may also help to develop formal return-to-work or job-retention plans for those affected.

For further advice or guidance on how to support someone with type 1 diabetes it is best to seek advice from your HR team or occupational health advisors.



Supporting carers in the workplace

Being a parent of a child with type 1 diabetes can be demanding. Depending on how much support is received from family and other organisations such as the child's school or nursery, a diagnosis of type 1 diabetes can affect a carer's work life and they may need time off to take care of their child (for example to attend clinics, doctors, school issues, and being late due to irregular blood glucose levels during the night).

In addition to this, some parents report that the tiredness they experience can be chronic, because they often check blood glucose levels throughout the night. This can therefore have an effect the next day. Employers

are encouraged to discuss this with staff affected and talk about how this can be managed and supported.

Parents and other people, who combine work with caring for dependents, have some specific rights protected by law. These include various types of leave and the right to be considered for flexible working and other rights such as time off for dependents and parental leave. As well as the statutory right to take time off in an emergency, employers may also want to consider extra time off, either paid or unpaid.

It is advisable for employers to have policies in place for supporting carers of type 1 diabetes and other life-affecting conditions.

How JDRF can support your workplace



Straight to the Point is a free book for adults living with type 1 diabetes that employees and employers may find useful

- You can order this, plus our wide range of support and information resources at: jdrf.org.uk/infopacks



Discovery events are a series of nationwide events where your employees with type 1 diabetes or a connection to type 1 diabetes can come and hear about JDRF research and technologies, and network with other people with a connection. They are a mixture of family days (Discovery Days), adult evenings (Discovery Evenings) and Sports Days.

- See more here: jdrf.org.uk/discover



Our Community Engagement team or Community Ambassador volunteers could come and deliver a talk or presentation – many employers hold wellness months or initiatives and JDRF could come and provide all employees with an understanding of living and working with type 1 diabetes.

How you can support **JDRF**

If you have found this information useful you may want to find out a little more about the work that JDRF does and how you can get involved. Please visit jdrf.org.uk. For now though please:

- Tell your staff with type 1 diabetes about JDRF
- Request a copy of Straight to the Point

- Request a talk from one of our Community Engagement Team or Community Ambassador volunteers
- See how you can get involved as a corporate partner

You can find out more about JDRF at: jdrf.org.uk



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