



Responding to Disclosures Related to Disability and Wellbeing

Guidance name	Responding to disclosures related to disability and wellbeing
Responsible Team	Organisational Development Team
First approved	
Last updated	05/12/2024
Version number	1

1) Purpose

The aim of this document is to offer additional guidance on how to respond to colleagues disclosing a need, or potential need for support, in relation to disability or wellbeing. This guidance is an associated document of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and is applicable to the University of Nottingham UK.

2) Introduction

The university has legal responsibilities for the safety, equality, and wellbeing of its staff, both under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to disability (in particular to make reasonable adjustments for disability) and under health and safety legislation. The university's fulfilment of these legal responsibilities relies on staff disclosing information regarding a potential disability or wellbeing issue which is relevant to, or could adversely impact, their work duties and as a result may require additional support.

For present purposes, a 'disclosure' means the provision by a member of staff of such information, whether verbally or in any written form (e.g., text, instant message or email). Most disclosures of potential additional support needs by staff will be made directly to their line manager, who will be responsible for responding to such disclosures in line with the appropriate processes.

However, any such disclosure, even if made informally to a colleague and not to that staff member's line manager, might still trigger legal responsibilities for the university: this document therefore provides guidance on how somebody who does not have supervisory responsibilities for the person making the disclosure should respond and whether the information should be kept confidential, even if it contains personal or sensitive information.

While this guidance could, in principle, apply to any member of staff, it is intended to be particularly beneficial to staff who take on voluntary or informal roles which make such disclosures more likely due to the nature of their working relationships (e.g. mentors, coaches, Dignity Advisers, Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) etc.).

3) Signposting to support

Although the staff member who receives the disclosure is responsible for ensuring that their colleague is supported and signposted to the relevant people and processes that can help them, they are not responsible for ensuring that the individual receives this help. The aim should be to signpost colleagues to a suitable form of support, typically either a line manager or, if not appropriate, a member of Human Resources, in particular, an Employment Relations (ER) team member, by e-mailing: hrrer@nottingham.ac.uk.

It may be appropriate and helpful for staff members to signpost colleagues in need of support to university wellbeing and mental health support services (links to which can be found on our university [wellbeing hub](#)), such as the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP) which provides

staff with access to qualified counsellors for free 24-hour confidential support. Indeed, assisting staff members may wish to make use of the EAP, and other support services, themselves, particularly if the disclosure has been serious and feels difficult to process.

4) Dealing with and reporting a disclosure

Furthermore, where a colleague reports to a staff member that they are considering harming themselves or others, the staff member should in turn report this as soon as possible to the ER team on the e-mail address above. Hopefully, it will be a rare occurrence when a colleague reports actual or potential self-harm, or harm to others, to a staff member. If the situation is an emergency, the staff member should contact emergency services first, followed by university security if the individual concerned is on campus.

Staff members who do receive a report of self-harm, or harm to others, should be aware that given the potential risks to the colleague and others such a disclosure would present, the staff member's responsibility to then further report such a disclosure outweighs any confidentiality of the report from the colleague to the staff member. Even if the initial conversation takes place under the expectation of confidentiality, it should be made clear to the disclosing member of staff that whilst the matter will be dealt with sensitively, confidentiality is not absolute and details of the conversation might need to be shared with others where there is a legal obligation or a duty of care.

In most cases, the staff member who receives a disclosure should:

1. thank their colleague for sharing the relevant information and encourage them to share it with their line manager to request the necessary support through the usual process.
2. follow up this encouragement in writing (if they do not have regular computer access, they should instead contact the ER team for advice): this is likely to be the end point for this person's responsibility in the process.
3. if the disclosure involves reported actual or potential self-harm, or harm to others, report without delay to the ER team at: hrer@nottingham.ac.uk.

If the individual who made the disclosure explicitly indicates that they are uncomfortable, for any reason, to share this information with their line manager, the staff member who receives the disclosure should contact the ER team for advice.

If the staff member who receives the disclosure is concerned that either they, or the individual who made the disclosure, might need additional support following the conversation which they are not otherwise receiving, or that there is a safeguarding risk according to the university's [Safeguarding Procedures](#), they should report this via the [Report + Support](#) function, which will be picked up by colleagues in Human Resources and, if safeguarding is relevant, to the appropriate [Safeguarding Lead](#).

If the Employment Relations team becomes aware of a need to implement reasonable adjustments, it will be necessary to make the employee's line manager aware of this, but additional information beyond that required to implement the reasonable adjustments will not be shared without the employee's consent.

5) Associated Documents, Appendices and Resources

Associated Documents

- [EDI Policy](#)
- [Dignity at Nottingham Policy](#)

- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- Reasonable Adjustments (staff) Code of Practice (*forthcoming – under development*)

Resources

- [Report + Support](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [Wellbeing Hub](#)