



## **Neurofibromatosis type 2 and employment...some useful information that an employer needs to know.**

Recruiting and retaining reliable staff can be a problem. Employers who actively seek applicants with a disability tap into a wider choice of potential employees. These employees bring a range of skills and a positive and enthusiastic attitude to the workplace. Research has demonstrated that people with disabilities have better attendance records and remain loyal to their employer for longer compared to non disabled people.

By targeting this group an employer enhances their public reputation and incidentally fosters good relations with existing staff.

Employers also have the advantage of accessible support from Job Centre Plus if needed and guidance from a Disability Employment Adviser.

### **Neurofibromatosis in brief**

Neurofibromatosis (NF) is a variable and unpredictable genetic condition.

There are 2 separate conditions: NF1 and NF2. They are different and can cause different health problems.

**NF1** is comparatively common. It causes lumps and bumps (tumours) to grow on nerves. The lumps are called neurofibromas and can be seen on the skin. These are not infectious; they cannot be passed on to anyone by touch (not contagious). However they are distressing for the person concerned and a source of embarrassment for some.

Some people with NF1 have more difficult health problems to manage.

**NF2** is a separate and different condition. It is rare. People will have lumps growing in their brain and spine. They will have hearing loss. They may have balance difficulties. They may have sight problems or be sensitive to bright light.

For more detailed information about NF1 and NF2 please look at the appropriate fact sheets on our website.

The likely needs of people with NF1 and NF2 are different. It is important to understand these so you can maximise your employees contribution to the workplace.

## **THIS INFORMATION IS ABOUT NF2**

### **Talk to your employee about what they find difficult.**

Identifying strengths and weaknesses is a starting point. Your employee has lived with NF all their life and will know what they can do... and what they find difficult.

Under the Equality Act reasonable adjustments must be made in the workplace to support employees with disability. These do not necessarily involve major costs. You can apply for financial help towards costs from Access to Work.

### **If your employee has NF2**

It is likely that your employee will have some problems with their hearing. They may have become deaf and have no hearing at all, relying on lip reading skills. It is important to take account of this especially when speaking.

Shouting will not help! Speak clearly and ensure your face can be seen by the person who is hearing impaired. Try not to turn your head away or cover your mouth. This will help the person to lip read and improve communication.

Some people with NF2 learn to sign. Others do not. People with NF2 mostly have lost their hearing at a later stage in their life. They are not “born deaf” and so still feel they belong to the hearing world.

Ensure seating is appropriate and ask for advice from your employee about what position helps them most. Remind attenders at meetings to face the person with hearing difficulty. A round table may be most helpful.

In meetings ask people to speak one at a time. Ask the Chair to repeat questions as they are asked to help focus the meeting and to clarify the subject under discussion.

Offer technology support where necessary and other equipment as needed. Organisations such as the Action on hearing Loss (previously called RNID) can advise you about what is available.

Consider offering part time work if your employee finds full time work too demanding.

Ask for deaf awareness training for all staff. There will be contacts locally.

Delegate some tasks to other hearing members of the team. Use a colleague to support the hearing impaired employee if needed.

If your employee has balance difficulties ensure lighting is good and minimise trip hazards.

Ensure safety at all times especially if tannoy announcements are used to alert staff.

Consider redeployment rather than lose a skilled member of staff.

### **Useful sources of support**

For more detailed information about NF2 please look at our website

[www.nervetumoursuk.org](http://www.nervetumoursuk.org)

For practical advice about hearing loss support in the workplace please look at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk) (formerly RNID). This gives details about the Access to Work scheme including grants for equipment and communication support systems currently available. The size of grant awarded depends on the number of employees in your company.

Information about NF2 hearing loss and work can also be found at [www.hearinglink.org](http://www.hearinglink.org)

Rosemary Ashton  
Neurofibromatosis Specialist Advisor

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**Helpline Team**  
Nerve Tumours UK Helpline

[helpline@nervetumours.org.uk](mailto:helpline@nervetumours.org.uk)  
07939 046 030

**Nerve Tumours UK**  
44 Coombe Lane, London SW20 0LA

[nervetumours.org.uk](http://nervetumours.org.uk)



**Please seek further information from [www.nervetumours.org.uk](http://www.nervetumours.org.uk), or contact our helpline on the details above.**

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