

# Workplace Adjustments For Energy Limiting Conditions



## Introduction

Being in work with an energy limiting condition is tough. Sometimes it can feel as though it takes you twice as much effort to achieve half as much as anybody else, and sustaining a career often means making sacrifices in our broader lives too.

There are many ways the employment sector must change to become more inclusive. In the meantime, however, you may benefit from workplace adjustments – knowing what they are, what type of support you can ask for, and how these things might help you. They may not take away every challenge you face, but they can make it much easier to take care of yourself and better preserve your valuable energy as you navigate your working life.

In this guide, you'll find examples of workplace adjustments that are considered especially helpful for people living with energy limiting conditions (ELCs). We'll begin with a brief background about ELCs in case this phrase is new to you, and then go on to discuss some of the adjustments you may find helpful and ways to implement them.

Feel free to share this guide with employers, recruiters, or your line manager if it gives you the confidence to ask for what you need. After all, it's important to remember that workplace adjustments aren't a special privilege or something that gives you an unfair advantage – they exist to accommodate your access needs and put you on more of a level playing field with your non-disabled co-workers.



## What Are Energy Limiting Conditions (ELCs)?

- Energy limiting conditions (ELCs) are a type of disability. They're characterised by energy impairment (an unrelenting fatigue not resolved by sleep), chronic pain, reduced physical and mental stamina, and 'payback' after exertion.
- ELCs is an umbrella term, and there is no concrete list of what conditions are/are not a type of ELC. However, some common examples are Fibromyalgia, ME/CFS, Long Covid, Cancer, Parkinson's Disease, Inflammatory Bowel Disease and many more.
- Using the label 'ELC' provides an identity for millions of people who don't feel represented by existing categories of disability that are commonly used by government and charities e.g. physical impairments, sight or hearing loss, learning disabilities, neurodivergence, and so on. [At least one in three disabled people in the UK are thought to have an ELC.](#)
- ELCs help us to talk about debilitating health conditions and symptoms in a way that aligns with [the social model of disability](#). Awareness is increasing by the day, and employers are beginning to better understand the importance of accommodating these conditions in the workplace too - though there is much room for improvement.

If your organisation wants to learn more about ELCs, they're included in many of [Astriid's training sessions and workshops](#). They can also download [our free 'What Are Energy Limiting Conditions' guide for employers](#).

## How To Ask For Workplace Adjustments

It can be daunting to ask for adjustments, especially if you're new to disability or haven't requested them before. [This guide by Acas provides detailed information about the process](#), but to summarise:

- If you haven't been asked directly whether you require adjustments, contact your line manager or your department's HR. You don't have to disclose any specifics of your condition if you don't want to, but you will need to request a conversation about adjustments. Astriid uses the term 'workplace adjustments', but they may be known as 'reasonable adjustments' where you work.
- You can request a meeting about adjustments in whatever way feels most comfortable to you. This could be verbally during a conversation, in writing such as in an email, or by using any internal workplace processes already in place, such as an online portal.
- Once you have discussed your adjustments and they've been agreed upon, they should be confirmed by your employer in writing. Don't forget, you can revise your adjustments at any time if your needs change or you discover other elements that may be helpful – you're not tied to whatever you specify the first time!
- If the adjustments you require come with a cost, Access To Work may help with this. You can apply for a grant to pay for specialist equipment or physical changes to your workspace, support worker hours, travel costs to and from your workplace, and more.

If you're having difficulties accessing the adjustments you require, support is available:

-[WorkRights by Disability Law Service](#) provides a free online assessment tool that creates a letter for your employer requesting your adjustments

-[ACAS shares information about your rights](#) and how to appeal decisions or take matters to tribunal if your difficulties aren't resolved

-[Scope's helpline](#) is staffed by trained advisors who can signpost you to relevant support services, both locally and nationally

-Charities specific to your condition or the sector you work in may have resources tailored for your circumstances – [some examples of these are listed on Disability Rights UK](#).

# Workplace Adjustments For Energy Limiting Conditions (ELCs)

The following adjustments have been divided into four categories: environment and equipment, useful technology, working patterns, and communication preferences. Each list is non-exhaustive, but designed to help you think about your own access needs and show examples of the adjustments that could benefit you.

## Environment and Equipment

### Working from home:

- **Ergonomic chair.** If you're working at a desk, it's important to be mindful of your posture. An assessment for an ergonomic chair designed to fit your measurements can help with this.
- **Laptop stand.** Propping up your laptop at an angle can help to relieve pressure on sore hands and wrists as you type and position your screen closer to eye-level.
- **Writing slope.** Similarly to above, this can provide a more comfortable angle for writing by hand when you're sat at a desk or table.
- **Soft lap tray.** If you're seated in bed with your legs raised, these trays provide a flat and even surface for working on while you're managing any postural symptoms.
- **SAD lamp.** These lamps provide light therapy to mimic sunlight, which can help with low mood on darker days and in some cases reduce strain on your eyes.
- **Microphone or dictator.** If you find it easier to talk rather than type, speaking into a microphone or dictation device can help you to communicate or complete projects in a more accessible way.



## Environment and Equipment

### Working in person:

- **Reserved parking space.** If you drive to work, you can request a parking space close to the entrance to remove the exertion of having to find a different spot each day and reduce some of your walking distances.
- **Subsidised taxis.** If driving and public transport aren't accessible for you, you may be able to get a contribution towards the costs of travelling by taxi from your employer or via Access To Work.
- **Allergen-free zones.** If you live with severe and/or airborne allergies, you can request to keep certain zones of your workplace allergen-safe and ask your employer to facilitate a ban on anybody bringing the allergen into that environment.
- **Reserved desk.** If your organisation champions hotdesking, you can request an exemption to this and reserve a dedicated desk in a suitable location. This location may be close to meeting rooms or areas you regularly attend, in closer proximity to a toilet, or in a quieter or less-populated area to reduce sensory overload.
- **Quiet space.** If you require breaks for resting or to aid pacing during your working day, you can request access to a quiet space dedicated to this purpose.
- **Noise-cancelling headphones.** If a quiet space isn't viable or you're frequently around other people, headphones with noise-cancelling technology can be very effective in reducing background noise while you work.
- **Lenience with dress code.** This can be a difficult conversation to initiate, but flexibility with your organisation's dress code policies enables you to wear more comfortable, adaptive clothing and utilise any necessary disability aids or pain management devices e.g. a hot water bottle or TENS machine.

## Working Patterns

- **Reduced hours.** If you have a health condition that means you cannot work full-time, part-time or reduced hours may be more sustainable for you and your condition management.
- **Flexible start and finish times/flexible hours over the week.** If you have a fluctuating condition, you may not be able to predict how you will feel on a given day. Having flexibility over when you start and finish your day or which days you work per week can help you to better accommodate your symptoms.
- **Annualised hours, or hours per month instead of per week.** This can allow you to work 'blocks' of hours per month or season rather than the same number of hours each week, every week. This flexibility can be especially helpful if you experience flare-ups or require hospital treatment that leave you unable to work for longer periods of time.
- **Task-based vs. hours-based employment.** Working arrangements that focus on completing set tasks rather than fulfilling a set number of hours can benefit people with long-term health conditions who are speedy and efficient workers, while also taking the pressure off those who need to take their time and rest/pace themselves more carefully as they complete each task.
- **Working remotely or hybrid.** If you struggle to leave the house or be around colleagues due to your symptoms, working from home some or all of the time can be more beneficial for your wellbeing and help to reduce 'payback' from overexertion.
- **Job-sharing.** If you need to work reduced hours, job-sharing roles where you split the position between two or more people can be a good option - especially if you're aiming to attain more senior roles.
- **Time off for medical appointments.** This may already be included in your contract but if not, you can request permission to take necessary medical and health-related appointments during work hours without having to use your annual leave allowance.
- **Disability leave.** This refers to an extended period of time away from work due to needs relating to your disability. Examples could include having a medical procedure or trying a new treatment option, receiving support to help you manage the mental toll of living with your condition, or requiring a period of rest and recovery after a relapse or flare-up.

## Useful Programmes and Tech

- **Grammarly.** This free plug-in catches any spelling and grammar mistakes you make while you're writing, which can be especially helpful if you're working alongside brain-fog or cognitive fatigue.
- **f.lux.** Another free plug-in, you can use this to reduce the amount of blue light in your computer screen at various points in the day and set a programme that's harmonious with your work/rest routines. This can help to improve your quality of sleep at night, and also relieve pressure on sore or strained eyes.
- **Calendly.** This programme enables to you share your schedule with others via a link so you can more easily book in meetings at a time that's convenient for both parties. This takes away the need for back-and-forth communication over availability when trying to schedule catch-ups.
- **Otter AI.** Use this programme to import audio content e.g. recorded meetings or videos, and it will generate written transcripts for them. It can also be used to automatically create summaries, action plans, or to-do lists based on the content you feed into it.



## Communication Preferences

These questions are designed to help you think about the ways you prefer to communicate at work, in line with your access needs. Each one is followed by an example phrase to show how you might implement your preferences in everyday workplace interactions.

### **1) Which method of communication is most energy-efficient for you? Do you prefer meetings, calls, or emails?**

Example phrase: “I have to keep meetings to a minimum for my condition management, can we discuss this over email instead?”

### **2) What is your ‘best time’ of day for communicating with others? Is there a time you feel most physically or cognitively alert to speak with colleagues?**

Example phrase: “I’m available to speak with between 10am and 2pm on weekdays for 30 minutes at a time. Shall we book a meeting in for [x] time?”

### **3) Are you eligible for a Job Aide/Support Worker to help with communication or with your collaborative tasks?**

If you would benefit from somebody supporting you with organising meetings, advocating for yourself, or communicating with colleagues, you may be able to request a Job Aide or Support Worker through Access To Work. You may be eligible even if you’re self-employed or work remotely.

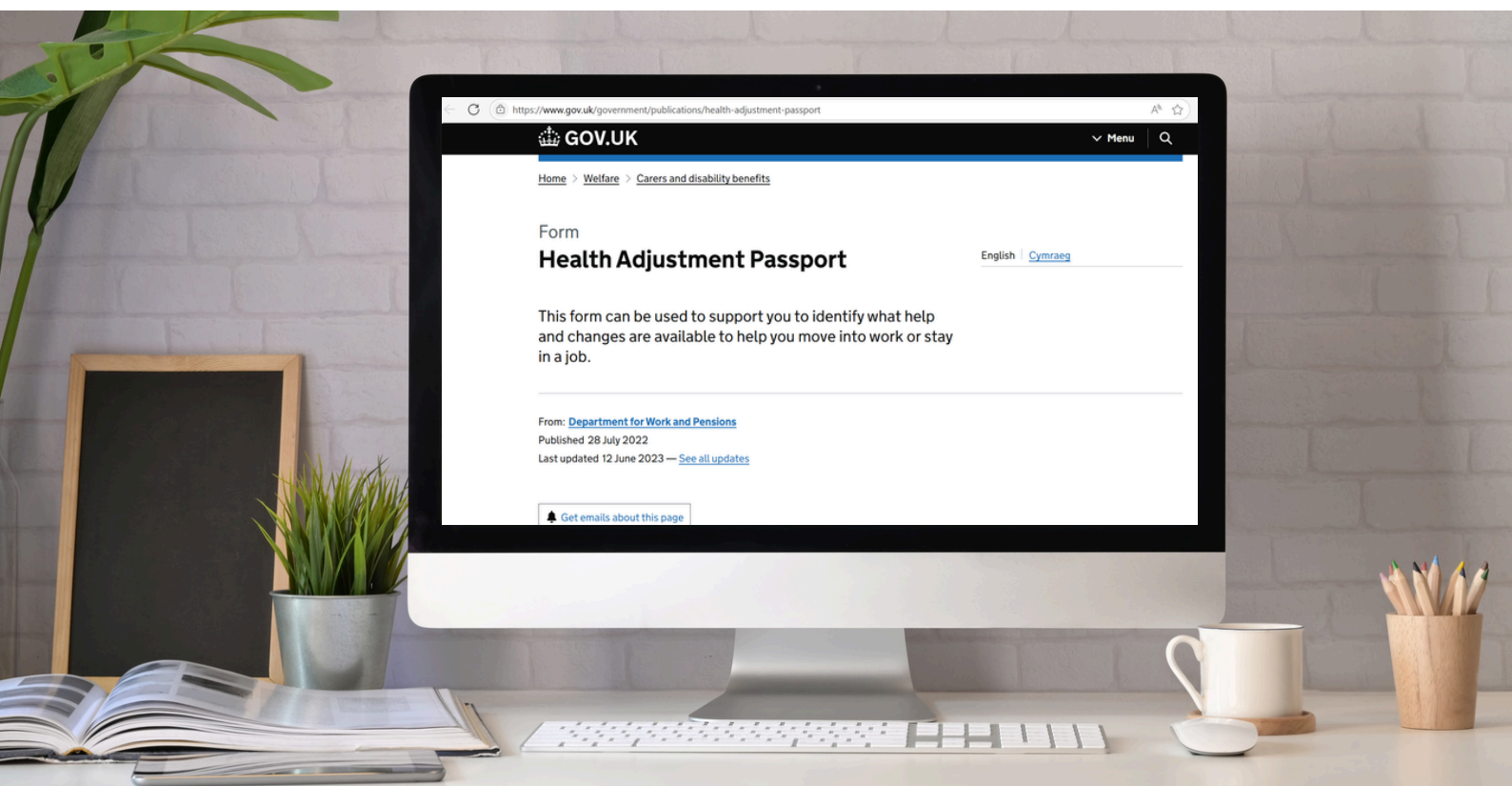
Example phrase: “It would be good to discuss this further. My Job Aide will be in touch with you to arrange a meeting”.

# Creating a Health Adjustment Passport

Whether you're new to the world of work, adapting to life with a long-term health condition, or building up your confidence to advocate for your access requirements, you may find it helpful to create a [Health Adjustment Passport](#). This is a free resource produced by the UK Government to help you identify any support you require while working and (if you choose to) communicate this information with others, such as employers or colleagues.

They can be especially helpful for people with energy limiting conditions, because you only need to fill in the information once. After this, you have the knowledge that it's safely recorded and ready to be utilised as needed, even if you change job roles, teams, or organisation. The information you provide is self-reported and can be edited by you at any time, meaning it doesn't have to be assessed or certified by anybody else before you can use it.

You can find out more and complete your Health Adjustment Passport [here](#).



## Some Helpful Reminders

Many people with energy limiting conditions have experienced stigma, disbelief and gaslighting from others. As such, sometimes we feel the need to 'play down' the impact of our conditions on our lives and our work, and struggle to ask for the things we need. Therefore, here are some helpful reminders to carry with you:

- You are legally entitled to workplace adjustments. They don't give you an unfair advantage over anybody else – they simply help to remove some of the barriers you face and put you on more of a level playing field with non-disabled people.
- You shouldn't have to make yourself more unwell in order to work. Our valuable energy is already limited, so don't be afraid to ask for the things you need in order to lessen the load you're carrying.
- There is no definitive set of access needs. If there is something you think might benefit you as you carry out your role but you haven't seen or heard of anybody else asking for it, this doesn't mean you should rule it out. There's no harm in, and plenty to be gained from, asking for the things that can help you!
- Your access needs can change over time, and so can the adjustments you require. You're not tied only to the things you asked for when you first requested adjustments, and you are able to discuss and revise them with the relevant parties whenever you need to.
- Working with an energy limiting condition can be tough, but never forget your worth and that you have so many valuable skills and assets to offer. You've got this!

At Astriid, we are experts by experience in long-term health conditions at work. We create bespoke support sessions and resources for individuals seeking work, and deliver training and workshops to employers and businesses who want to diversify their workforce.

Visit our [website](#) to find out more about Astriid and [access our other support and resources for candidates!](#)