



# RIDI Spotlight

## Fluctuating conditions

**ridi**  
Recruitment Industry  
Disability Initiative

## WHAT IS A FLUCTUATING CONDITION?

A fluctuating condition is defined as ‘**a chronic condition - physical or mental - where a characteristic feature is significant variation in the overall pattern of ill health and/or disability**; they are wide-ranging and include, but are not limited to Parkinson’s, multiple sclerosis (MS), mental health conditions such as depression, inflammatory bowel disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, HIV and arthritis’.

A disability, according to the Equality Act 2010, is when someone has a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘**long-term**’ negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

Many people with a fluctuating condition will therefore be covered by the equality act but what is different making this an important area to highlight?

The difference is the fluctuation which means that not all days are the same in terms of symptoms, pain levels, and ability to work at full potential.

How do we ensure that for people who will have varying performance unless we accommodate the condition, support personal management and create a trust relationship to ensure that this does not become career limiting?

RIDI recognise fluctuating conditions as a potential 'grey area' for disability inclusion amongst employers, leaving people with fluctuating conditions anxious and unsure about when to share information about the impact of their fluctuating (and often hidden) condition and potentially what adjustments or support they may need. There is no doubt that these conditions are widespread with variable impact for people affected. For some there is some stability and predictability but for many, even with known triggers, there is a degree of unpredictability that employers need to accommodate. RIDI was keen to understand more and to work with employers going forward to ensure access to opportunity is not restricted to people who can commit 9-5.

As such, we recently commissioned research by 180DC into the barriers that students with fluctuating conditions face when securing employment.

## Key findings:



**57.4%** of the research respondents believe a lack of knowledge on the employers' side about fluctuating conditions is a barrier to their employment.



**36.2%** of students with fluctuating conditions do not feel comfortable disclosing their condition.



**93%** of students with fluctuating conditions find the job application process challenging.



**51%** of students with fluctuating conditions struggle with confidence.



# Key recommendations:

The research identified 4 key recommendations for employers to increase the employment prospects of students with hidden fluctuating conditions:

## 1. Raising Employer's Awareness of Fluctuating Conditions

The first recommendation is for employers to spend more time considering those with fluctuating conditions in the application process and to make it clear they are welcome and will have access to support, in addition to those with 'long-term' disabilities. This could simply be a case of educating hiring managers as to what a fluctuating condition might be and encouraging discussion and sharing of broader hidden or fluctuation conditions throughout the hiring process. Start by reviewing your careers site for reference to fluctuating conditions in order to encourage applications and if applicable, adjustment requests.

## 2. Inclusive Job Descriptions

Secondly employers are encouraged to de-emphasise prior work experience when seeking future talent and focus instead on skills-based hiring. This is because people with fluctuating conditions, already face difficulty securing any form of employment and having prior work experience as a criteria may further disadvantage them. Therefore, a switch to skills-focused hiring, will lead to more inclusivity and ability to leverage the talents of people with a fluctuating condition. Above all make sure that all roles are available to be worked flexibly and are designed around outputs so people can self-manage their time.

## 3. Accessible Applications

People with fluctuating conditions may need adjustments built into the hiring process. For example, consider;

- a. Flexible deadlines,
- b. Accommodating interview settings and,
- c. Provision of online applications,
- d. Having a dedicated point-of-contact for prospective employees with fluctuating conditions to liaise with,
- e. Having constructive feedback during the application stage,
- f. Understanding around a need to alter appointments if a candidate is experiencing a flare up for example. These adjustments will leave people with fluctuating conditions more confident in their recruitment journey and will support an inclusive company culture.

## 4. Constructive Feedback and Supportive Work Environment

The need for constructive feedback is evident in that 51% of respondents cited lack of confidence as an issue. Increasing the amount of constructive feedback throughout the recruitment process is likely to drive higher levels of confidence and future performance amongst those impacted.

For more advice on building a disability confident and inclusive workplace, please visit [www.RIDI.org.uk](http://www.RIDI.org.uk)