



Reducing HIV Stigma within the Workplace

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The current situation

Studies report persistent high unemployment rates - from 45-65% - among PLWH in Europe despite increased availability of treatment.

Recent London study showed:

- 🚫 47% of respondents were employed

- 🚫 Black African heterosexual men and women less likely to be employed

- 🚫 Length of diagnosis effected employment rates. Of those diagnosed pre ART only a third were employed.

[Elford et al, Social and economic hardship among people living with HIV in London, 2007]



Why is employment important?

- Linked to improved self esteem and better mental health
- Major factor in maintaining income and living conditions
- Unemployment linked to higher rates of mortality in people living with HIV
- Financial worries linked to poor adherence to ART.



The legal framework

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 prohibits disability discrimination in employment, trade union membership and access to goods, services, education and housing.

DDA 2005 extended the definition of disability to cover HIV positive people from the point of diagnosis.



What does this means in practical terms?

- ⦿ People living with HIV are protected against unfair dismissal and/or discrimination in recruitment, promotion, training and benefits.
- ⦿ Employers should take steps to prevent harassment or discrimination by colleagues or others in the workplace.
- ⦿ People living with HIV are entitled to reasonable adjustments.



Reasonable adjustments

Examples include:

- Offering flexible working hours
- Time off for treatment
- Ensuring employees have the facilities and privacy to take medication at work

Discrimination

- ⚡ Can be part of multiple discrimination, racism, homophobic bullying etc
- ⚡ The fear of discrimination can be a barrier to entering employment
- ⚡ Discrimination case examples:

General Social Care Council

Armani

Residential home

Legal limitations / Disclosure

- DDA only comes into effect if an employee discloses their condition to their employer.
- Current levels of disclosure – recent study showed that 70% of those employed taking part in the study had not disclosed their status.

Supporting plwh in the workplace



What employers can do to assist:

- ⦿ Intranet policy with clear statement of support
- ⦿ Ensure any bullying / discrimination is tackled
- ⦿ Raise awareness and provide education and information for staff e.g. marking World AIDS Day 1st Dec
- ⦿ Ensure confidentiality (particularly when making reasonable adjustments)
- ⦿ Use good recruitment practices including a positive statement / commitment to employing disabled people and people with HIV.

Case studies

- Hairdresser whose customer complains to manager after learning of hairdresser's status
 - Manager responds by informing customer that there is no risk and providing information.
- Waitress in a restaurant
 - Concerned to raise status but needs some adjustments; manager responds sensitively and provides flexible shifts.

Further sources of information



- EHRC helpline www.equalityhumanrights.com
08457 622 633
- NAT website www.nat.org.uk
- THT Direct www.tht.org.uk
020 7564 2180
- ILO www.ilo.org
- TUC www.tuc.org.uk
0870 600 4882



Thank you for listening

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