

Employers must improve accessibility for stroke survivors as workforce ages

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Employers must learn how to adequately support staff who have suffered strokes in response to changing workforce demographics. That is the advice of HR and diversity consultancy, the Clear Company, during National Stroke Survival Month.

Research from Kings College London has found that number of strokes in UK is predicted to rise by 44% in the next 20 years as a result of the ageing population. Survival rates are subsequently expected to increase by a third thanks to medical advancements.

According to the Stroke Association, there are currently more than 100,000 strokes in the UK each year; that is around one stroke every five minutes. What's more, stroke is a leading cause of disability in the UK, with almost two thirds of stroke survivors leaving hospital disabled.

Kate Headley, Director at The Clear Company, comments;

"According to charity, Different Strokes, every single day around 108 people of working age or younger have a stroke. Thankfully, survival rates have increased significantly in recent years. However, returning to work during or after recovery can be challenging.

"Under the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful for an employer to treat a disabled employee or applicant less favourably because of their disability. However, when an existing employee becomes disabled some employers may struggle to help them with the transition.

"Success lies in opening up lines of communication. No two individuals are the same and no one knows better than the employee what support they need. The best course of action is simply to ask.

"Reasonable adjustments may include a phased return to work, rest time to cope with an increase in fatigue or allowing time for medical treatment. The Government's Access to Work fund can help with financial costs associated with reasonable adjustments.

"As the number of stroke survivors in the workplace increases, HR departments and business leaders will increasingly have to manage requests of this nature. By getting solid systems and processes in place now, businesses can be ahead of the curve when it comes to responding to changing working demographics."

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