

Living with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis can present unique challenges in the workplace, from managing symptoms and flare-ups to facing stigma or discrimination. Fortunately, UK law protects people with these conditions, recognising them as disabilities under the Equality Act 2010 (amended 2024) when they substantially and long-term affect daily activities. Knowing your rights and how to access support at work is essential for maintaining your employment, health, and wellbeing.

Disability in the UK

The Equality Act 2010 is the key legislation that protects disabled people from discrimination at work and in wider society. Under this Act, a person is considered disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a "substantial" and "long-term" adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. "Long-term" usually means the impairment has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months.

Psoriatic arthritis often meets this definition due to its impact on mobility and daily function. Even psoriasis alone may qualify as a disability if it severely affects a person's skin and causes pain, discomfort, or emotional distress that substantially limits normal activities. However, the exact determination depends on individual circumstances, including symptom severity and overall impact.

Your rights at work

Once you are recognised as disabled under the Equality Act 2010, you have the right to:

Protection from discrimination: Employers cannot treat you less favourably because of your condition. This covers all stages, including hiring, promotion, work tasks, and dismissal.

Reasonable adjustments: Your employer has a legal duty to make reasonable changes to help you overcome workplace barriers caused by your disability. These adjustments should support you in doing your job effectively and comfortably.

Confidentiality: Your medical information and disability status must be kept confidential unless you consent to sharing.

Equal access: You have the right to be considered fairly in recruitment and career development with any necessary adjustments provided.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are practical changes that an employer makes to accommodate your needs related to psoriatic disease. These adjustments might be temporary or ongoing, depending on your symptoms and the nature of your work. They are intended to remove or reduce workplace disadvantages caused by your condition.

Common examples

Flexible working hours or remote work to manage fatigue or flare-ups, including time off for medical appointments. Modifying the workplace environment by providing ergonomic chairs, adjustable desks, or ensuring temperature control to avoid extreme conditions that worsen symptoms. A change in types of work to avoid physically demanding tasks, if you have joint pain or reduced mobility. Other simple changes could include additional breaks, extra protective clothing, and some exemptions from rigid uniform requirements.

Employers are required to discuss with you what adjustments would be helpful and explore reasonable options. They cannot refuse adjustments because they involve some cost or inconvenience unless these are disproportionate.

Potential employers have limited rights to ask about your health during recruitment. They may only ask questions aimed at identifying if any adjustments are needed in the recruitment process itself, for example, "Do you need any special arrangements for the interview?" After a conditional offer is made, they can ask more detailed questions about your ability to perform the job with reasonable adjustments.

It is your choice whether to disclose your psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis, but sharing can help ensure you receive appropriate support and protection.

Challenges at work

If you encounter workplace difficulties due to your psoriatic disease:

- **Talk to your employer or HR department:** Open communication often leads to solutions and adjustments.
- **Request a formal occupational health assessment:** Occupational health professionals can advise on suitable adjustments.
- **Seek advice from specialist organisations:** Groups like Citizens Advice provide guidance.
- **Use formal grievance or complaint procedures** if you face discrimination.
- **Know your legal rights:** Ultimately, employment tribunals can address unlawful discrimination or failure to make reasonable adjustments.



What support is available

In the UK, there are welfare benefits that can help if psoriatic disease affects your ability to work:

- **Personal Independence Payment (PIP):** A non-means-tested benefit to help with extra costs caused by disability or long-term health conditions. Note, though, that it is being reviewed, with the results expected in late 2026.
- **Employment and Support Allowance (ESA):** Provides financial support if you're unable to work due to illness and offers help to find work again. This is being phased out, to be replaced by Universal Credit.
- **Access to Work Scheme:** Provides grants to pay for practical support in work when necessitated by disability or health conditions, such as special equipment or travel to work. Eligibility includes those receiving Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support.

Practical tips

- **Plan for flare-ups**
 - Have a strategy for managing difficult days, including notifying your employer about emergency leave or flexible working.

■ Keep medical documentation

- This can help in discussions about adjustments or benefits.

■ Look after your mental health

- Psoriatic disease can affect emotional wellbeing.
- Ask about Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) or counselling support.

■ Educate your employer and colleagues

- Increasing awareness can reduce stigma.

■ Stay informed

- Employment laws and workplace support evolve, so keep updated on your rights.

Employment should be accessible and supportive for everyone, including those living with psoriatic disease. By understanding your rights under the Equality Act, knowing what reasonable adjustments you can ask for, and accessing available support services, you can better manage your condition while maintaining a fulfilling work life.

The government information 'Discrimination: your rights' can be found on the following page:
<https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/discrimination-at-work>

For more tailored advice and assistance in navigating employment challenges, Citizens Advice (www.citizensadvice.org.uk) offers invaluable resources.