

Should I Say?

A short guide for learners about disclosing mental health difficulties



Are you taking up learning?

Do you have a mental health difficulty – and have you thought about telling your learning provider?

This leaflet has been written **with** learners, **for** learners.

Taking up learning is an exciting step! Learning can help you meet new people, develop new skills and get qualifications.

If you are taking up learning and you have a mental health difficulty, you should think about whether to tell your learning provider. This is called 'disclosing'.

How could I disclose?

You could disclose in lots of different ways, like:

- On your enrolment or application form. (These forms should ask if you have a disability. Most mental health difficulties would be considered disabilities.)
- At an interview.
- By telephoning, emailing or writing to the learning centre. (They should then contact you to find out more.)
- By talking to someone at the learning centre face to face.

You don't have to disclose straight away. You could disclose later on when you feel more comfortable with the learning centre.

What are my rights?

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) protects the rights of disabled people (including people with mental health difficulties).

The DDA says that all learning centres have to offer support and make changes (reasonable adjustments) to meet the needs of disabled learners. Learning centres cannot discriminate against disabled people. This means they cannot treat a person unfairly just because they are disabled.

But...

If you do not disclose your mental health difficulty, and the learning provider gives you lots of opportunities to do so, you may not be able to make a complaint against them if they do not meet your needs. This is because it might not be their fault if they did not know about your needs.

Should I disclose?

If you are thinking about disclosing, you might want to weigh up the reasons to disclose and the reasons not to disclose:

Reasons to disclose

- You could get extra help and support.
- People will understand you and your needs better.
- It can be confidence building and you could raise awareness about mental health difficulties.
- You could find out more about other support or activities at the learning centre for people with mental health difficulties.

Reasons not to disclose

- You might think it is nobody's business.
- You might not think your mental health difficulty will affect your learning.

Some people don't disclose because they worry they will be treated badly. But remember – the law is there to protect you from this. So don't let your worries stop you if you think you could benefit from disclosing!

In most cases, it is up to you whether or not to disclose. However, there are certain courses, like some courses in care work, where you have to tell the learning provider. This doesn't necessarily mean you won't be able to do the course, but it is something the learning provider needs to know.

I do want to disclose – what can I do to prepare?

You might want to:

- Think about how your mental health difficulty might affect your learning. (Remember, you don't need to tell them about your diagnosis or any medication you are taking. Instead, tell them about YOU - your symptoms and how they might affect your learning.)
- Think about what support you'd like.
- Talk it through with a friend or support worker first.
- Make a list of any things that worry you.
- Make some notes on what you want to say.
- Think about which people you want to know – is it just your tutor? All of your tutors? Other learners?

What should I expect if I do disclose?

Whoever you disclose to should:

- Talk to you in a private place.
- Talk though what support you might want or need.
- Talk about what's involved in the learning so you can think about how your mental health difficulty might affect you.
- Ask if you agree for them to tell other people (if you say 'no', they are not allowed to unless there is a safety risk).

What kind of support could I get?

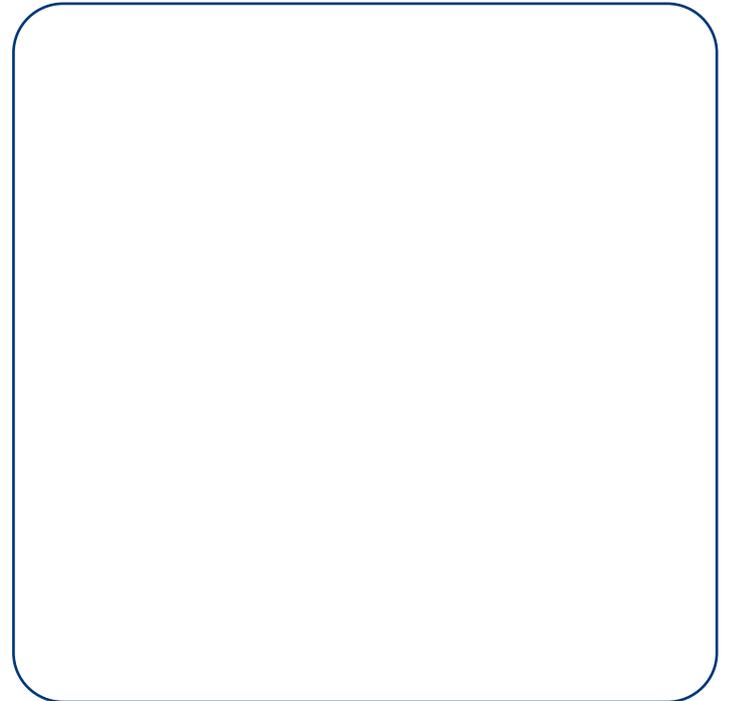
The sort of support a learning centre could offer might include:

- Help with planning your learning, such as planning to meet you regularly to help you to manage your workload.
- Help with planning assessments, such as making sure you can take breaks in the assessment or have extra time.
- Providing practical learning aids to support you, such as a Dictaphone, note taker or support worker in the classroom.
- Challenging and dealing with any negative or discriminatory actions of other staff or learners.
- Emotional support and encouragement, such as offering you an induction session or putting you in contact with a support worker.
- Making sure they keep in contact with you if you are ill or have a hospital admission and miss sessions.

Where can I find out more?

If you're still not sure whether you want to disclose, or if you want to find out more about it, you might find it useful to read 'Should I say? A **detailed** guide for learners about disclosing mental health difficulties'. This is a longer guide which gives more information about disclosure. You can find this on the internet at: **www.niace.org.uk**. If you don't have access to the internet, go to your local library – most will let you use the internet for free.

Contact your local learning provider:



Thanks to service users at MIND IT, Eastleigh for their help with this leaflet.