

Dear Sir

I am currently employed by the Inland Revenue and was diagnosed with MS in April 2003 but was informed by my GP I have probably had the illness for a minimum of 13 years. I should add I have worked for Local or Central Government since leaving school – I am now aged 51. When my diagnosis was made I had a very supportive management team and although advice was sought from the Occupational Therapists my employer was informed my sick leave would increase. I suffered two fairly major attacks in 2003. I had no problems over my sick leave only concern and support.

In 2004 my managers changed and so did the attitude to my disability. I had several minor relapses but my sick leave remained at the same level as the previous year, however, on returning to work after a summer holiday I had scrimped for, in October, I was advised I was going to be disciplined for unsatisfactory attendance. I was sent to the Occupational Therapist in November last year who was very supportive and advised me things would probably carry on in a similar pattern. The report was lost and eventually I received my copy of the report the week before last – so, all this has been hanging over me since last October – 22 weeks in fact. I have been grateful for some physical reasonable adjustments and alteration to my working hours to allow my husband to give me a lift to work but MS has no cure, is progressive and comes in the form of relapsing and remitting attacks as well as fluctuating symptoms on a daily basis.

I have asked the question why can the sick absences relating to my disability be ignored for disciplinary procedures but have been advised this is not possible.

I have also asked why the recommendations from the Occupational Therapists have been scaled down by 50% and have been told this is because of a business need.

You probably wonder why I am telling you all this but I have read all the proposals from the Government stating they want disabled people retained in work – if this is my experience what hope for other people. Realistically many people who have a disability face periods when they are not fit for work and until employers are willing to accept this then things will never change and experienced people in Public Sector such as myself will be forced out of the workplace.

I have excellent reports and have gained succeeds and exceeds during my employment – I find all this treatment soul destroying.

I would ask if there is anything you can do to help me but I realise that is probably unrealistic – I do ask though, that provision is made, in whatever steps you take with regard to Public Sector workers, for an acceptance, especially in cases of progressive illnesses, that periods of sickness be allowed and discounted for disciplinary procedures.

I have now been left to feel very undervalued.

I do wish there was something you could do to allow me to attend work when I am able and to take time off when necessary to endure my painful, distressing symptoms.

Thank you for reading this

Pauline Broad