

Meet Carys

from the Health, Safety and Environment Team

I have worked at Yorkshire Water for 11 years, starting as an apprentice when I was 16.

I have a handful of autoimmune conditions (interstitial cystitis, fibromyalgia and hypermobility to name a few) which result in daily pain, discomfort or just general inconvenience really.

Occupational health has been amazing at helping me navigate the working world alongside some of the limitations caused by my health since I joined the company.



What's a myth about disability or neurodiversity that you'd like to bust?

Age and appearance don't determine health. I have heard "but you're too young to experience..." a number of times but health doesn't discriminate!

Anyone can look young, healthy or fit and be struggling in ways you wouldn't know!



How can we be better allies to people with disabilities, health conditions or are neurodiverse?

Don't jump to conclusions or assumptions, or put people in a box when it comes to their health.

Be willing to talk, ask questions and learn! I really appreciate when people take the time to learn about my condition(s).

How does having a disability help you day to day?

Learning how to pace myself both in and out of work. If you don't take a break, your body will take one for you.

Has the introduction of the Disability and Neurodiversity Network had a positive impact on your work life, and if so why?

Having complex and/or poorly known about conditions can be really lonely and isolating.

Having the network has meant I have been able to talk to people who can relate to my situation, story and work struggles in a way someone else may not be able to.

It's been great to be able to share experiences, tips, tricks and support one another in and out of the workplace.

Would you recommend other people who may have disabilities and/or long term health conditions to join their work's Disability Network if they have one?

Absolutely – not only is the network great for supporting each other on a personal level, but voices are louder together. As a group we focus on improving/changing policies and introducing ways of working that will support and improve the working environment for colleagues with disability related issues.



Meet Fran

from the Programme Delivery Team

I have been at Yorkshire Water for nearly eight years. I've had various roles but I'm currently in Programme Delivery.

I have two disabilities, type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis. I have four children, three of whom have a neurodiverse condition, autism, dyslexia and ADHD.



What's a myth about disability or neurodiversity that you'd like to bust?

That just because the worst case scenario of a disability or neurodiversity states that they can be bad or debilitating doesn't mean that we all accept that as an end of our existence.

I was told I would never have children, I have four. I have been told that I will pick up every illness going when I have my six monthly disease modifying treatment so I need to avoid people. I love socialising and I'm hardly ever off work ill.



How can we be better allies to people with disabilities, health conditions or are neurodiverse?

Rather than making judgements, talk to us like everyone else and if you want to know something about our disability/neurodiversity then just ask without stating outdated 'advice'.

How does having a disability help you day to day?

It has made me stronger and more resilient, and has taught me to fight for what I want.

Has the introduction of the Disability and Neurodiversity Network had a positive impact on your work life, and if so why?

Yes, as the current chair of the network I have received a lot of positive reviews for the DaNDY Times, our own newsletter at Yorkshire Water, and it has allowed others to realise the daily struggle that comes from having a disability or neurodiversity.



Would you recommend other people who may have disabilities and/or long term health conditions to join their work's Disability Network if they have one?

I would definitely recommend it. The Yorkshire Water network is a safe place for colleagues to meet with likeminded people who also have daily struggles but also a great place to receive support, advice and the ability to network with colleagues.