

Education and Employment

If, at the time of your injury you are employed or still in education, your occupational therapist will discuss the possibility of returning to either one of these. For many people they see returning to school, university or employment as 'getting back to normal'. Whilst daunting, it is always a positive step.

Education

Depending on the level of education, we will encourage all students to continue studying whilst they are in-patients and when they feel up to it. The unit will facilitate this by providing time and space for study. This may be delivered by teachers or tutors from your own school or university or from the Education Liaison Service at the Royal Hospital for Children. This may be either one-to-one or on-line.

Should you plan on returning to your original educational establishment on discharge, the occupational therapist will propose a visit to the school or college, if this is geographically feasible.

The visit can serve a number of purposes –

- To meet with staff and provide advice, education and guidance about supporting you back into education. We can provide Information booklets about your level of spinal cord injury as well as contact details for the Spinal Unit.
- An opportunity to review access in and around the building and make recommendations for adaptations, specialist equipment and additional learning support needs.
- To discuss issues such as fire alarms, leisure times, meal times, rest periods and how and where these may be managed.

- To involve the local education authority and make them aware of your needs and allow them to make any necessary changes.
- If possible, you can go on this visit with the occupational therapist. This will give you an opportunity to meet classmates and help build your confidence in a familiar environment.

After the visit, a comprehensive report and action plan will be written and forwarded to all relevant individuals and agencies.

Employment

For those individuals who are currently in employment your occupational therapist will initially discuss the duties and responsibilities of your post, the environment you work in, e.g. indoors or outdoors, office based etc, your working hours and any other relevant information.

You may have the opportunity to meet with a local Disability Employment Advisor who will tell you what support is available through the Department of Work and Pensions. You could also view the Access to Work information via www.direct.gov.uk

If it is possible to return to your previous job, you should discuss your plans to return with your employer. Your occupational therapist will be happy to meet with your employer to discuss your abilities and any specific needs you may have to allow you to undertake your duties. An application can be made to Access to Work (part of DWP). They will be able to let you and your employer know what support is available in terms of equipment, adaptations and personnel to allow you to return to your job. If needed, the occupational therapists can arrange a site visit to assess the environment for access and equipment. You may be able to attend this initial visit.

Sometimes, if you cannot return to the exact same job – your employer may be able to alter your duties or working pattern to allow you to continue to work.

If you cannot return to your previous job and are unsure of what you would now like to do or be able to do, your occupational therapist will be able to guide you to relevant support agencies. These agencies will be able to help you consider your options regarding employment, re-training or courses that you may be interested in.