



Karen, My Personal Story here at Walker Filtration

Employer: Walker Filtration

Area: Diversity and Inclusion

Theme: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



As part of Walker Wellness, we are proud to highlight a personal story. One of our dedicated health advocates, who lives with a disability, has kindly offered to share her journey and experiences at Walker Filtration.

My Story Karen, Design Engineer, Walker Filtration

I was born with a genetic mutation that led to a rare condition known as muscular dystrophy, which causes progressive muscle weakness. This impacts my ability to walk, lift objects, and carry out everyday tasks. I experience frequent muscle pain, joint tightness, chronic fatigue, and slurred speech, and I am more prone to falls. The condition also affects my hand dexterity and overall mobility. Currently, there is no cure, and symptoms tend to worsen with age.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I was classified as clinically vulnerable and had to isolate for nearly 18 months. I'm incredibly grateful for the support the company provided during this time. Unfortunately, the extended isolation contributed to a noticeable progression in my condition. Before the pandemic, I was able to run four times a week; afterward, I found myself unable to walk up a flight of stairs.

Workplace Considerations

Certain work-related factors can exacerbate my symptoms:

- o Prolonged walking and exposure to cold environments increase muscle stiffness.
- o Extended use of a mouse and keyboard can worsen hand symptoms.
- o Sustained periods of intense concentration can lead to fatigue.
- o Upon returning to the office, the company arranged for an independent occupational health assessment.

Based on the recommendations, several adjustments were made to support my wellbeing and enable me to continue working effectively.



At Walker Filtration, I have received numerous workplace adjustments that have enabled me to perform at my best and I feel fully supported in my role. These accommodations reflect the company's commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible environment where I can still thrive.

- o Hybrid Working: I currently work from home two days per week, with flexibility to review this arrangement as needed.
- o IT Equipment: My home workstation mirrors the setup I use in the office, ensuring consistency and comfort.
- o Accessibility: I have been granted access through the front entrance, which is closer to disabled parking and improves ease of mobility.
- o Assistive Technology: Text-to-speech software has been considered and will be implemented when required.
- o Emergency Planning: A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) has been put in place by the Health & Safety team.
- o Wellness Support: A wellness action plan (WAP) is being developed, with regular check-ins recommended between myself and my manager.
- o External Support: I've been encouraged to explore the government's Access to Work programme for additional assistance.

Managing My Condition at Work

To help manage specific symptoms, the following strategies are in place at work:

- o Minimising prolonged walking wherever possible.
- o Monitoring workspace temperature and using heaters, warm clothing, or blankets as needed.
- o Alternating tasks to avoid extended periods of intense focus.
- o Considering assistive technology to reduce physical strain.
- o Ongoing Support and Dialogue
- o Allowed time to attend speech therapy appointments



- o Allowed time to attend physio appointments

The company's support goes beyond physical adjustments. My mental and physical wellbeing is reviewed regularly through structured conversations using the Wellness Action Plan (WAP) framework. This practical tool helps identify potential challenges and ensures that any necessary adjustments are discussed proactively. The open dialogue between myself and my manager fosters mutual understanding and allows us to respond effectively to changes in my condition.

As a result of completing the WAP, we've been able to identify factors that may exacerbate symptoms and agree on reasonable adjustments that support both my health and my ability to contribute meaningfully at work.

""I'm incredibly thankful to be part of a company that values people as individuals. It's empowering to know that my voice, background, and experiences are not only acknowledged but embraced. What stands out most is Walker Filtration's commitment to diversity and inclusion. This holistic approach has created a culture where everyone feels seen, heard, and supported. Being part of a team that genuinely lives these values makes all the difference." "

