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# MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS WEEK

## *CLAIRE'S STORY*



# What is your MS story?

It was back in 2009, my role at the time involved a lot of deskwork with minimal movement, and I noticed that **my left leg had gone completely numb.**

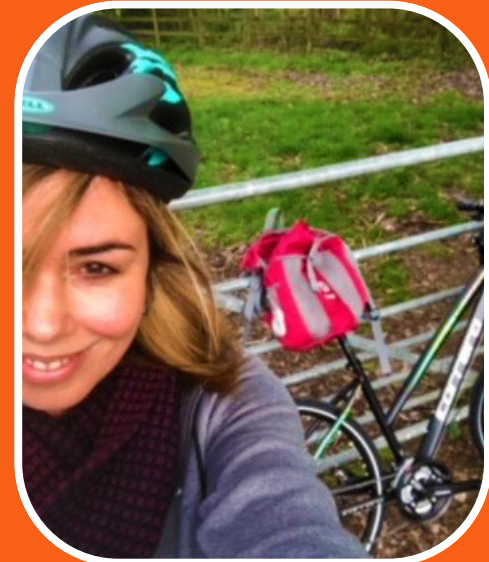
I didn't think too much about it at the time, but my leg was still numb when I got home. As I was driving home, **I experienced an electric shock sensation in my right leg and also went numb.**

Chalking it up as a trapped nerve, it was only the next morning I woke feeling completely numb, as if under anaesthetic, my senses were dulled. Which was when I decided to call my GP.

Before I knew it, I was in the hospital for a variety of scans and tests, before eventually having an appointment with a neurologist with further tests diagnosing me with multiple sclerosis. **After having two months of recovery and treatments, the sensation in my body came back and I returned to work.** I've had a few occasions of 'worsened symptoms' but I've not had a full-blown relapse.



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# Has MS ever impacted your work life?

When I first started at Colas Rail UK, I started in our control centre, where I would work different shift patterns.

Another part of the change was due to the side effects I would get from the medication I was taking which affected my sleeping pattern.

After consultation with my MS nurses **I was advised to change my working pattern and manage my work life balance.**

I changed roles within Colas Rail UK to Monday to Friday which really helped.

I enjoyed my role in control but it was more important for me to look after myself.



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## What inspired you to announce your disability?

I think around 2014, where conversations about disabilities really came to the forefront.

My first conversation about disclosing that I had MS resulted from someone from HR getting in touch with me while I was off work. **Since then, I've had regular catch ups with HR to check in on me.**

I've always received support from my line managers, who are aware of some of my symptoms. I've been in good health throughout my time at Colas Rail UK, I know that might not be the same others but I've always felt supported.

**Now disabilities are more openly discussed I think it's really helped to spread awareness.**

Regarding workplace adjustments, my line manager is very accommodating when I need to attend MS nurse and consultant appointments.



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# What advice would you give about hidden disabilities?

Don't be worried about declaring it to your employer.

Especially over the last couple of years we talk about disabilities a lot more and it's not just MS, it could be any condition.

You know, even if it's dyslexia or something else, I think Colas Rail UK have got a great support network for anybody that has a disability.

I've actively encouraged my team to register any disabilities they have and they've immediately got support through the HR channels, **no one will judge you differently for declaring a condition.**

I know a lot of people are worried because you don't want to come across as having a weakness, **but it's not a weakness. If anything it's a strength,** that you can you can fulfil a full time role and still manage any sort of condition. Just because it's not visible on the outside, you know it's all about managing yourself with support from your company.



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