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Haemochromatosis Awareness: The genetic condition affecting 1 in 10 in Northern Ireland

A new advertising campaign in Northern Ireland is drawing attention to haemochromatosis, a genetic condition which affects the levels of iron in the blood and can lead to serious complications if left untreated.

It's estimated that more than 380,000 people are at risk of haemochromatosis in the UK, but research carried out in 2019 revealed that fewer than 20,000 people were receiving NHS care for the condition.

Haemochromatosis is particularly prevalent in Ireland and Scotland, giving rise to the condition being known as the "Celtic Curse". As many as 1 in 10 people in Northern Ireland are believed to be at risk, with 1 in 113 in Scotland.

Early symptoms of the condition include joint pain, fatigue, brain fog, depression and anxiety. These symptoms usually develop between the ages of 30 and 60 and whilst they may initially appear as age related conditions, if left unchecked, haemochromatosis can eventually lead to diabetes, cirrhosis, liver cancer or heart failure.

As a life-long condition, the treatment for which can have a substantial affect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, haemochromatosis can be considered a disability. Workers are entitled to support and protection in the workplace to help them manage the condition.

We've produced [a guide to help members understand haemochromatosis](#) available on Knowledge, how it's treated, what to do if you think you may have the condition, and how your PCS Rep can assist you following a diagnosis.

If you're worried about haemochromatosis, you should contact your GP or check out [Haemochromatosis UK](#), a charity supporting people living with the condition.

Disability History Month

[From 16 November to 16 December](#) we'll be hearing from diverse voices across PCS, their stories of encountering problems in the workplace and wider society, how the union has helped and what support is available for PCS Members. Why not use this as an opportunity to get involved with the PCS [National Disabled Members Forum](#)?