



Disability Awareness

Aim:

To give participants a general understanding of disability and the main barriers that concern people with a disability.

Objectives:

By the end of this training session staff will have an understanding of.

- Have some knowledge and scope of the Disability Discrimination Act
- What is disability?
- The need to involve users in their care
- How to work with an interpreter

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a disability as **'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities'**. This includes physical and sensory impairments, but also other impairments including learning disabilities and mental health problems. People with a progressive condition are also included if their condition affects normal day-to-day activities.

'Long term' in this regard means lasting, or likely to last for at least 12 months or the remainder of the life of the person concerned. 'Adverse effects' refer to effects in one of a number of areas listed in the Act:

- Mobility
- Manual dexterity
- Physical co-ordination 9 Contenance
- Ability to lift
- Carry or move ordinary objects
- Speech, hearing or visual impairments
- Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- Being able to recognise physical danger

Examples of circumstances that would be likely to be considered 'substantial' include

- Inability to see moving traffic clearly enough to cross a road safely
- Inability to turn taps or knobs
- Inability to remember and relay a simple message correctly

Some types of disability clearly fit into such a definition, but this may be less obvious in other cases. Severe disfigurement, for example are treated as a disability by the Act, although they may not have any effect on physical capacity to carry out normal day to day activities. Duties under the DDA also apply to someone who may have had a disability in the past (e.g. someone who has had a mental health problem).

The DDA gives disabled people new rights in the areas of:

- Access to goods, facilities and services
- Buying or renting land or property
- Employment

Since 2nd December 1996, the DDA has made it unlawful for disabled people to be treated less favourably than other people, without justification, in areas such as buying goods, using services, finding somewhere to live and getting a job. The DDA only recognises very limited circumstances in which there may be 'justification' for treating a disabled person less favourably than other people. However justification must not be used as an excuse for inaction.

Less favourable treatment may be possible if a service provider reasonably believes that one of the following circumstances applies:

Health or Safety

No one is required to do anything that would endanger the health or safety of any person, including people with a disability.

Providing a service to others

A person with a disability could be refused a service if it would mean that the service could not be provided to others

Charging more

People with a disability cannot be charged more for the same goods or services than anyone else. However, if a special service is provided or goods which cost more to produce, the disabled person can be charged more.

What does the DDA mean for service providers

The DDA makes it unlawful for people who provide goods, facilities or services to the public to discriminate against disabled people. Service providers must not treat disabled people less favourably than they would treat other people when they are providing a service or facility. At present, a service provider cannot for reasons of their disability:

- Refuse to serve a person with a disability
- Offer a person with a disability a lower standard of service
- Offer a person with a disability less favourable terms

The Government announced the timetable for implementing those rights of the DDA affecting disabled people's access to goods and services. These 'provisions are to be implemented in 2 stages:

From October 1999 service providers will have to take reasonable steps to change practices, policies or procedures which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use their service; provide auxiliary aids or services which would enable or facilitate disabled people to use a service; and overcome physical barriers by providing services by an alternative method.

From 2004 service providers will have to take reasonable steps to remove, alter or provide reasonable means of avoiding physical features that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use a service.

Blind or partially sighted people

Because some one is blind or partially sighted does not mean that a person will see nothing at all or that they will need help, it is always best to ask do not presume.

When you speak to a blind or partially sighted person always introduce yourself and any other person/s with you. Always say when you are leaving, do not leave someone speaking to an empty space.

- Always state when you have re-entered the room if you have been called away.
- To guide someone, offer your arm for the person to grip just above the elbow. Keep your guiding arm straight with your fingers pointing towards the ground.

Or

- You may find that the person has his or her own preferred way of being guided (if at all).
- Mention steps and any other obstacles in advance. As you approach steps state whether the steps are going up or down. If there is a handrail or banister in situ please state same.
- If appropriate try to arrange for information to be adapted into a format to meet the clients needs.

People with a hearing impairment

1 in 7 of the population has a hearing impairment (Royal National Institute for the Deaf)

Many use hearing aids or able to lip-read but some are totally deaf.

- Establish if the person can lip read. Look directly at the person and speak clearly and slowly
- Keep your hands away from your face
- Rephrase any difficult words rather than repeating them
- DO NOT shout or use exaggerated lip or facial movements
- Use a room fitted with a loop system if required or a portable communicator to assist people to hear who use hearing aids.
- If there are difficulties in communicating use written notes or consider the services of a BSI, Interpreter, Lip speaker or Deaf Blind Communicator. E.g. Lip speakers are specifically trained to communicate in a way which is clear and effective to lip-readers.
- People have an ability to contact any service by text-telephone, fax or RNID Text Direct.

People who are wheelchair users

- Use the term 'wheelchair user' and not 'wheelchair bound.'
- Offer assistance, and wait until the assistance is accepted before pushing someone in a wheelchair.
- Beware of obstacles below tables i.e. table legs.
- Do not lean on someone's wheelchair. This is a major personal intrusion for most wheelchair users.
- When talking to someone in a wheelchair get down to the same level to avoid a stiff neck for the person in the wheelchair. However, kneeling down can be seen as intrusive and patronising. It may be more appropriate in some circumstances to stand back so that eye contact can be made or pull up a chair.
- Offer help with doors steps and kerbs.
- Try to arrange for meetings to be held within rooms that are accessible.

People with speech impairments

Many different impairments can cause speech difficulties don't assume.

- If you don't understand what has been said ask the person to repeat it. People with speech impairments are accustomed to this.
- Listen to what is being said rather than how it is said.
- Don't correct a persons speech or try to finish their sentence.
- Be patient if the person has to use any aids to assist them with communication.

People with learning disabilities

- Listen carefully.
- Don't assume that the person will not understand you.
- Be patient.
- Do not patronise.
- Speak clearly and give clear messages.
- Make sure what has been said has been understood.

- Don't give any complex instructions.
- Don't do anything without telling the person what is happening and what will happen next.

Guidelines for Using an Interpreter

Chairperson to set ground rules as described below before conducting the meeting, interview etc.

Ensure that if there are more than 3 people in the room that it is made clear at the start of the session that only one person speaks at any one time.

- Confusion takes place if more than one person talks simultaneously or if people interrupt one another
- Introduce the interpreter when doing the rounds of introductions
- Do not say anything that you don't want interpreted - an interpreter is ethically bound to interpret everything that is seen or heard.
- Remember that the interpreter is a few words behind the speaker. Allow the interpreter time to finish the message before asking questions or starting a discussion.
- At times the interpreter may need to interrupt the speaker or signer to ask for clarification. Avoid jargon, but explain any specialist words, which cannot be avoided.

Speak directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person

- The interpreter is a professional who is there to facilitate communication between the two parties. There is no reason to ask the interpreter to tell something to the deaf person.
- Speak as you normally would, in a moderate rhythm
- Use normal facial expressions and voice tones.

Locate the interpreter in front of the deaf person so that they can both see each other clearly

- **Do not** have the interpreters back to a window as this would mean that the deaf person is looking into the light. This would not allow him to see the facial expressions or the hands of the interpreter clearly.
- If possible have the interpreter's back to a blank wall; patterned curtains or wallpaper can cause visual noise.
- Ensure that there is good lighting in the room as this can aid communication.

Interpreter requirements

- If this were a specialist assignment i.e. Court or Legal work, it would be appropriate to book an interpreter with the right experience, qualifications and of the appropriate sex for the assignment.
- Negotiate rest breaks with the interpreter - this should be approx. every 20 - 30 min. If a session is to last more than 2 hours then 2 interpreters may be required.

- If possible, give the interpreter some information about what they are going to interpret before the assignment. This will allow the interpreter to prepare for the assignment. If due to patient confidentiality this is not possible then discuss the proceedings before the interpreter enters the room.
- Have water available for the interpreter.