



**DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICE**

# Disability Awareness



**DfC**

Department  
for Communities

[www.communities-nl.gov.uk](http://www.communities-nl.gov.uk)



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Part 1

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

**Under the Act it is unlawful for employers to discriminate against people with disabilities, in the field of employment, for a reason relating to their disability.**

**Disability Discrimination Act defines 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.”

**Guidance relating to the definition of disability in the DDA.**

What does “Substantial” mean?

“Substantial” effect is one which is more than “minor” or “trivial”.

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What does “Long-term” mean?

For the purpose of deciding whether a person has had a disability in the past, a long-term effect of an impairment is one which lasted at least 12 months.

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What does “Normal Day to Day activities” mean?

Does not include work but does include mobility, dexterity, physical co-ordination, continence, ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects, speech, hearing, sight, memory or ability to concentrate, learning, understanding or perception of the risk of physical danger.

## Part 2

# Disability Etiquette

**Here is some advice to bear in mind when dealing with people with disabilities:**

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- Make appropriate contact with people with disabilities according to the situation.
- Don't make assumptions about the existence or absence of disabilities.
- Talk directly to the disabled person.
- Do not be embarrassed by using common expressions.
- Avoid attaching labels to people with or without disabilities.
- Treat adults in a manner befitting adults.
- Offer assistance to a disabled person - but wait until your offer is accepted.

## Part 3

# Common courtesies when dealing with people with disabilities

- Offer assistance to a disabled person, but wait until your offer is accepted before you help. Do not assume you know the best way of helping.
- Listen to any instructions given.
- Be aware that a person may have poor literacy skills or even physical difficulties with writing.
- Do not make assumptions about the existence or absence of disabilities - some people have hidden disabilities e.g. epilepsy, diabetes, asthma.
- Talk directly to a disabled person rather than through a companion or relative. Relax and make eye contact.
- Don't refer to people by their condition e.g. epileptic, diabetic - avoid "ic" words, rather use "a person with a disability" or "a person with epilepsy".

## Part 4

# Advice on dealing with people with specific disabilities

### People with mobility difficulties:

- Remove any physical obstructions or barriers e.g. display stands, plants, tables, boards.
- If a reception desk is high and a disabled person has difficulty in seeing you over it, come round to the front of the desk to speak with the person.





- Where there are hard to open doors to negotiate, open them for a disabled person.
- Do not lean on a person's wheelchair.
- Do not push anyone's wheelchair unless requested.
- When talking to someone in a wheelchair put yourself at his or her level but avoid crouching down, as this can be patronising.
- A receptionist should escort a disabled person to their destination and not just call their name and walk away.
- Where it is difficult or impossible for a person to negotiate stairs, arrange to meet them on the ground floor.
- On occasions a person with a disability may be accompanied by a parent/guardian/social worker.
- Remember: parents/guardians/social workers may have a disability too.

## People with a hearing disability:

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- Do not make assumptions about a person's ability to communicate or the way in which they do it.
- Always ascertain which communication method the deaf or hearing-impaired person wishes to use, preferably before meeting with them, as they may require an interpreter. If difficulties occur use written notes.
- Always talk directly to the person, not the interpreter.
- To attract a deaf person's attention tap them on the shoulder.
- Remember that shouting does not help.
- Speak clearly and not too quickly.
- Don't cover your mouth with your hand or look away or keep your head down during a conversation; Some people lip-read and need to see your mouth clearly.
- Don't speak with a pen/pencil in your mouth.



- If the telephone rings, tell the person that you are answering the phone - they may not have heard it ringing.
- Hearing aids amplify all sound, so excess noise should be kept to a minimum e.g. close open windows near to a main road or noisy environment.
- Think about the impact of general background noise e.g. printers, tannoy, water dispenser etc.
- Don't sit with your back to a window making your face in shadow, try to have the light on your face to facilitate lip reading.
- Do not be embarrassed to repeat or rephrase questions if the person has misunderstood.

## People with a visual impairment:

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- Identify yourself clearly and introduce anyone else who is present.
- Ask the person whether they need your assistance.
- When offering assistance to a blind person ask them what you need to do.
- When guiding a person give clear instructions such as “there is a step down or a step up” - not simply “there is a step”.
- Have the room well lit and face the person when speaking.
- When offering a seat, place the person’s hand on the back or arm of the chair after telling them what you are going to do.
- Do not leave the person talking to an empty space – tell them when you wish to end the conversation or intend to move away.



- Remember that a guide dog is a working dog not a pet, so treat it accordingly - do not pet or feed a guide dog as this could be a dangerous distraction.

## People with learning disabilities

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- Use plain English. Ask clear and uncomplicated questions.
- Be calm and try to dispel anxiety. Write down important information / instructions for the person to take with them.
- Always speak directly to the person even if accompanied by a parent or another adult.
- Allow the individual time to be understood.
- Give the person time to respond.
- Don't use jargon - repeat your questions and rephrase if necessary.
- Be prepared to repeat or rephrase questions or instructions. Use simple maps or diagrams.
- Be patient and non-judgmental.



- Give the person plenty of time if there are decisions to be made.
- Be relaxed and informal, putting the person at their ease.
- Summarise clearly the information you have given.
- Be prepared to make arrangements for an advocate or a friend to accompany the person as this may help the conversation to be less stressful.



## People with mental ill-health difficulties

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- Be prepared to make arrangements for an advocate or friend to accompany the person as this may help the conversation to be less stressful. Remember that even visiting an office may be a traumatic experience for someone with mental health difficulties, and may cause them a lot of anxiety.
- Be relaxed and informal, putting the person at their ease.
- Ask clear and uncomplicated questions.
- Be prepared to repeat or rephrase questions or instructions.
- Be patient and non-judgemental.
- Summarise clearly the information you have given; in writing if appropriate.



## People with speech difficulties

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- Do not finish sentences for people with speech difficulties; be patient and wait for them to finish for themselves.
- Do not ask questions which require lengthy answers; ask those which require short or closed answers.
- Do not pretend that you have understood if you haven't. Repeat what you do understand and the person's reaction will guide you.



## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

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- ASD is a disability which affects how an individual relates to people, situations and their environment. The impact of autism varies from person to person.
- The word “spectrum” is used because, while all people with autism can experience difficulty with social communication, social interaction and can have strict and repetitive ways of thinking and behaving, ASD can affect them in different ways.
- People with autism can be very focused and display good attention to detail, have good long term memory, be methodical, and have excellent record keeping skills.
- Always remember to:
  - Use direct and precise speech and explanations.
  - Avoid figurative speech.
  - Be clear about expectations.
  - Use written and oral instructions.
  - Check that you have been understood.

## Part 5

# The power of language

The following table gives advice and information on appropriate terms you should use in relation to disabilities.

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Don't Say	Do Say
Crippled	A person with a disability
The disabled	People with disabilities
Wheelchair-bound	Wheelchair-user
Epileptic	A person with epilepsy
Mental	A person with a mental health disability
Spastic	A person with a physical disability
Mentally handicapped	A person with a learning disability
Dumb	Deaf without speech
Invalid	A person with a disability
Retarded	A person with a learning disability
Handicapped	A person with a disability
Able-bodied	Non-disabled
Confined to a wheelchair	Wheelchair-user
Suffers from (e.g. asthma)	Has (e.g. asthma)

