



## Being disability aware

*Achieving access for all*





## Being disability aware - an introduction.

This guidance provides a range of practical information for people working with disabled colleagues and residents, to ensure they are offered excellent customer care. It is specifically designed to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life;
- Take positive steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities.

The Equality Act says a disabled person is someone with 'a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Examples include cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and heart conditions; hearing or sight impairments, or a significant mobility difficulty; and mental health conditions or learning difficulties.

### Some facts.

- There are over 9 million disabled people in the UK, roughly 1 in 6 of the population.
- In Croydon approximately 15% of the population are disabled.
- More than 50% are of working age.
- 1 out of every 4 consumers in the UK is either disabled or has a disabled person in their immediate circle.

### Key points to remember.

- Treat everyone as an individual. Although it is important to be aware of the terminology found in this document some people may not view themselves as disabled, for example deaf people.
- Do not refer to someone in terms of their disability.
- Some disabled people are unlikely to need any more assistance than a non-disabled person.
- You can't always tell if a person is disabled just by looking at them. Some people may have disabilities that you can't see, such as deafness or a learning disability. Fewer than five percent use wheelchairs.



- The physical environment causes problems for many people with disabilities and impairments. We can meet the needs of disabled people by ensuring the environment is accessible and facilities are well designed.
- Equally important is the attitude, knowledge and consideration of others – treating others with respect goes a long way.
- When writing or communicating with a person with a disability, it is good practice to respond in the same format that they communicated to you in.
- Keep up to date with **preferred terms**:
  - ✓ Disabled people;
  - ✓ Wheelchair users;
  - ✓ Someone with learning difficulties, for example, dyslexia (learning difficulties are not the same as learning disabilities, though some people may prefer the term ‘difficulties’);
  - ✓ Someone with a learning disability;
  - ✓ Deaf or hearing impaired;
  - ✓ Blind or visually impaired;
- Terms that should **not be used** and may be viewed as offensive are:
  - ✗ Handicapped;
  - ✗ Victims;
  - ✗ Wheelchair bound;
  - ✗ Spastic;
  - ✗ Invalid;
  - ✗ Retarded;
  - ✗ Deaf and dumb;
  - ✗ The blind/The disabled.



## Make first impressions count!

- Respond in the manner in which you would like to be treated.
- If you think someone may need assistance, ask them before you do anything.
- Until you have asked the person, never assume what help, if any, is required.
- If someone needs assistance, always ask the best way to help and listen carefully to any instructions before acting. The most common reason for needing assistance will be the physical layout of the building. This could be for several reasons such as poorly lit signs, steps and heavy doors.
- Never talk down to a disabled person as though you were talking to a child.
- Avoid leaning on or grabbing a person's wheelchair without their permission. Remember that a disabled person's wheelchair is part of their 'body space', and may actually cause pain.
- Remember to always talk to a disabled person directly, not through their friends or supporters.
- In the case of guide, hearing and assistance dog users, never refer to the dog first or attempt to feed the dog treats without the permission of the owner.
- Don't be embarrassed about using common expressions when talking to disabled people. It is not unusual to hear a blind person say: 'I'll see you later, then'.
- Make sure you are aware of all facilities for disabled people, so you can respond to any enquiries honestly and efficiently.