

General:

- Remember it is the right of the person with a disability to decide who to inform of their condition and to tell them.
- Do not talk about a person's disability in their presence as though they weren't there.
- Always address your comments to the disabled person rather than through their companion.
- Remember the needs of those people whose disability is not outwardly visible, e.g. a person with diabetes, epilepsy, or someone with limited manual dexterity.



Other sources of useful information

KNet: Equality and Diversity pages under 'A Great Place To Work', in KCC Staff Zone; Corporate Communication Guidelines, especially the section on 'Making Information Accessible';

RNIB See It Right Guidelines - available on loan from the Corporate Library (Tel: (7000) 4084, SH-B5/B6, Sessions House; email: clic@kent.gov.uk)

Deaf Services (Kent County Council): Tel: (7003) 5393, Kings Hill, West Malling
www.kent.gov.uk/deaf

Based on RoofBreaker Guidelines Edition 3 by Paul Dicken (c) 2001 Through the Roof

This leaflet is also available in alternative formats.
Please contact 01622 221163.

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KCC - Valuing diversity ...meeting the needs of disabled people



This leaflet has been written to enable staff to meet the requirements of disabled people in Kent. It gives quick, easy tips to staff on how to make our environment fully accessible - by addressing issues of both physical environment and behaviour.

Learning more about the needs of customers and work colleagues with disabilities will help staff to carry out their jobs effectively and give quality service to every customer.

There are many types of disability, and not all of them are obvious. Some disabilities such as epilepsy and dyslexia are hidden. The most important things to remember are:

- Give the necessary time to people
- Provide support aids
- Assume nothing - always ask

Photos from www.JohnBirdsall.co.uk
Design by KCC, Corporate Communication Unit

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People with vision impairments

- Always speak to a vision-impaired person when you approach them.
- Don't leave a person talking to an empty space - tell them before you move away.
- Explain where things and people are located.
- Keep your doors open or closed, but never half-open. Double doors should be both open or both closed.
- Don't push a vision-impaired person - always allow them to take your arm and guide them.
- If you offer a seat, put the person's hand on the back or arm of the chair and let them sit down by themselves.

- Remember that guide dogs are working dogs and should not be treated as pets.
- Ensure that people know that information is available in alternative formats.
- Circulate any written supporting material in alternative formats before a meeting or a training session to ensure the person has the opportunity to participate fully in the session.
- Produce your documents with good colour contrast, in a clear font, such as arial.
- Produce all documents in at least font size 12. Font size 14 may improve clarity.
- Large print can be anything from 16 point upwards, and depends on the requirements of the reader.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Indicate to a person with a hearing

impairment that you are about to speak to them, for example with a touch on the arm.

- Ensure your face and mouth can be seen clearly. Look directly at the person and speak at normal speed with clear (not exaggerated) lip patterns. There is no need to shout.
- Enquire whether the person prefers to use speech and lip reading to communicate or may need a Sign Language interpreter
- If someone is using a sign-language interpreter, speak directly to the person not the interpreter.
- Write things down as necessary.
- Ensure that the deaf or hard of hearing person has their back to the light and is not facing it
- Ensure discussions, interviews etc, take place in an area free from external noise.
- Remember that it is the Council's responsibility to arrange for an interpreter if a customer is a sign language user.



People with speech and language difficulties

- Don't assume the person has a learning disability.
- Give your whole, unhurried attention with good eye contact.
- Remember the person with speech or language difficulties may use another method of communication, such as writing.
- Don't finish a sentence or word for the person.
- If you don't understand completely, don't pretend. Repeat what you do not understand and let the person's reactions guide you.

People who use wheelchairs or who have difficulty moving around

- Always ask a wheelchair user or someone who has difficulty moving around if they would like assistance before you help.
- Try to sit or crouch down to talk to wheelchair users so that eye contact is easier.
- Wheelchair users have difficulty knowing what is happening behind them, so approach them from the front or side.
- When inviting people to your events, remember to check the venues for wheelchair accessibility.
- Tables or counters may be at the wrong height. If a wheelchair user needs to write, offer a clipboard or other firm surface to press on. Note that height adjustable workstations/ tables can be purchased
- Offer a seat to people who use walking aids other than a wheelchair.

People who look different

- Make contact as you would with any other person being careful not to stare.

- Remember that a person's looks may be different, but that doesn't mean they're different in any other way. Concentrate on what they are saying and respond.

People with learning difficulties

- Don't assume the person cannot understand you.
- Be patient. Give someone plenty of time, and always be prepared to explain more than once.
- Treat adults as adults, children as children.
- Signpost facilities using pictorial signs as well as words, which also benefits non-English speaking people.
- Offer help if people seem to be experiencing difficulties.
- Give the person plenty of time if there are decisions to be made. Make it clear that she or he can go away and think things over, then come back another time.

People with dyslexia

Dyslexia describes a range of difficulties with processing the written word. People who are severely affected may not be able to read or write, whilst some may have isolated problems with spelling, sequencing, numbers, punctuation, or short term memory.

- Ensure that all written material is clearly printed in a clear font - such as this font, Arial.
- People with dyslexia often prefer a layout of bullet points, rather than sentences and paragraphs.
- Never obscure print by the 'artistic' use of background graphics. Good colour contrast is important. Avoid bright colours.
- Repetition helps! It can be beneficial to check privately with the individual and go over key details such as dates, times etc.

People with epilepsy

- Remember that a person with epilepsy knows their needs best.

- If someone in your team/at your meeting has epilepsy, make sure that a few people know what to do in the event of a seizure, but handle the issue discreetly.
- Avoid the situation where people with epilepsy are told they cannot take part in certain activities because of their condition. Allow people with epilepsy to decide what to do and at what pace.
- When a person is recovering from a seizure, ask them what they would wish to do next. People recover at different rates.
- Avoid flashing or flickering light in your presentations, etc.

Inclusive language

- Many non-disabled people worry about using language that may be unacceptable to disabled people. However, as long as you use terms that are accurate, positive and in common use you shouldn't encounter problems.

As a rough guide:

- Don't talk about "the disabled" as though they are a group apart. Say "disabled PEOPLE" or "PEOPLE with disabilities".
- Don't use the word "handicap" because it can prompt negative images.
- Avoid attaching labels to people with disabilities. For example, don't describe people by the condition they have. Refer to a person with arthritis rather than an 'arthritic', a person with epilepsy rather than an epileptic, and so on.
- Avoid negative imagery. Say 'a person with a disability' rather than 'suffering from' or 'crippled by'.
- Terms which are said to be 'politically correct', for example 'physically challenged' or 'differently abled', can be unhelpful as they often confuse people.

