

Disabled people – charity or business?

A Distance Learning Pack on Disability Issues for Warrington Taxi & Private Hire Drivers



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Introduction

Warrington Borough Council has given a high priority to promoting an inclusive society. Public transport is a very important means of ensuring that people are linked to all services available.

This distance learning pack has been developed to assist you in providing the best possible service to your disabled customers, and to give you the information you need to follow the requirements set out in the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act. It will also provide you with the answers to the five new questions that will be included in Warrington Borough Councils Taxi & Private Hire Drivers Knowledge Test.

Whilst working through this pack you may find it useful to identify a disabled person who can help you with your learning. This person may only need to be contacted if you have a question and/or difficulties with issues raised within the material. You may already know a disabled person who can help you, if you don't, please contact the local disability information service, they will be able to put you in-touch with one of their members who will be able and willing to help you.

Good luck.

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BACKGROUND

1) Warrington - Disabled People & Transport = an inclusive society

Warrington is a thriving, bustling, New Town that has a population of nearly 200,000. With a Town Centre that includes accessible shopping areas like the Golden Square Shopping Mall and Cockhedge Shopping Centre, and new fully accessible Centres at Birchwood and Westbrook, new leisure facilities at the UCI Cinema and LA Bowl, state of the art youth club at the Tim Parry Jonathan Ball Young Peoples Centre, accessible, leisure, libraries, museum, pubs, restaurants, health centres and clinics.

Most of this can be attributed to a great deal of collaborative work that over the past ten years has produced a town with community facilities that are some of the best in the country. But what is the point of having all of these wonderful accessible facilities if you cannot get from your home to where you want to be?

Available, affordable, accessible transport is the important missing link. At the time of writing this information (November 2001) the local Borough Transport service has twenty four Accessible Low Floor buses, that account for less than a third of their fleet of vehicles. This could create a situation whereby you could get onto an accessible bus for your outward journey, only to find that you have to sit and watch none accessible busses drive past you as you wait for an accessible bus for the return journey. Accessible busses are not the answer for everyone; it is worth noting that a person's mobility impairment may be so severe that the 150meters journey to the bus stop is just too far!

Dial a Ride (a local charity) operates a door-to-door service with large accessible mini busses, but many disabled people find it stigmatising to have to travel in a minibus that can reflect institutions such as Social Services and/or Health. Also due to limited funding they cannot provide a completely flexible service that would currently meet the demand.

Warrington has almost 7000 "Blue Badge" holders (Disabled Person's Parking Permit), it is worthwhile considering that today there are fewer designated parking spaces in the Town Centre than there were six years ago, this is due to modern day thinking about none vehicular access and pedestrian only areas. This has led to the development of Shop mobility Schemes whereby disabled people can borrow a powered scooter or wheelchair to assist them to get around. (Warrington has four major schemes, based in Units next to the Legh Street Multi-storey Car Park, Warrington Market, Bus Interchange and Birchwood

Shopping Centre) many of the larger shops and stores (B&Q, Ikea and M&S) are also providing equipment for their customers to use within the store.

Experiences of disabled people

Until early 2001 Warrington had less than a handful of accessible taxicabs. Due to this low number it was impossible to guarantee to always get an accessible vehicle, this meant that at certain times of the day, evening, night and especially weekends you couldn't get an accessible taxi cab anywhere in the town. There are some private hire and taxi companies that will carry a person's wheelchair or walking aid in the boot or backseat, but in co-author Dave Thompson's case this wasn't always as good as it sounds. As he was trying to explain to the supposedly experienced taxi driver how to take apart his brand new £2400 wheelchair, the driver dragged the upside-down wheelchair along the ground stripping the paint down to the metal and wondered why Dave was upset. The driver commented "I don't understand your problem, it's only a wheelchair, you should be thankful that I've agreed to carry it in my car in the first place".

Another genuine local horror story was hard to believe. Paul is a man in his late twenties who had been blind since birth and uses a guide dog. As a volunteer with the Warrington Disability Information Service Paul needed to travel to the Warrington Market based Disability Information Point. He was astonished to hear that the taxi company who had a £500 per month contract with WDIS had decided that they would no longer let Paul bring his guide dog into their vehicles? "How did they expect Paul to get around without his dog" we asked "not our problem" they replied. Needless to say WDIS didn't use the company after that incident. ***It is now a condition of licence to carry assistance dogs.*

Taxi services are the preferred choice of transport for many disabled people. With the "whole journey" approach, that includes door to door service and physical assistance wherever necessary. Please note that wheelchair accessible black cabs are not suitable for all disabled people as co-author Annette Clemo will explain, "due to difficulties with my hips, knees and ankle joints caused by my rheumatoid arthritis, I prefer to sit in the front seat of a standard car". "Swivel seats can be useful, but a driver who doesn't judge me, one who will help carry my bags is more important for me".

A recent NHS survey found that negative staff attitudes created the largest barrier facing disabled people whilst accessing services.

The incidents mentioned above will provide you with an insight as to why this pack is required. If you can provide an available, affordable, accessible service

that is delivered in an appropriate manner, disabled people will use your service and they will probably tell their friends and family, just like you do when you receive a good service.

1. Disabled person, how would I know?

The confusion surrounding who is a disabled person is probably the singular, most important reason that people show negative attitudes towards disabled people. Lack of experience of being around disabled people leads to a lack of knowledge surrounding disability. With many people having little or no contact with disabled people, there is a fear of the unknown, we therefore fill in the gaps in our limited knowledge with what we believe is right. It is for this reason that the Disability Discrimination Act has included a new definition of disability.

The Act defines a disabled person as:

"A person who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities."

The Act covers people who have a disability that is expected to last for over twelve months or have had a disability in the past, such as a person who has had epilepsy, diabetic, cancer or a mental health problem that is now stable due to medication, etc.

There are four main categories of impairment including, Physical impairment
Sensory impairment, Learning difficulty or Mental Health issues.

Even within a given area of impairment or condition, a persons disability may affect them in different ways, for example a person who has arthritis may not consider themselves as being "disabled" because their mild arthritis doesn't adversely affect them as much as the person who has very severe rheumatoid arthritis who relies on an electric wheelchair to get around. Some conditions in each of the categories are listed below. You may find it useful to think about your attitudes to and perceptions of these and other impairments. You will find it useful to discuss this with other people.

Physical Impairment

Arthritis, Cystic Fibrosis, Epilepsy, Lupus, Motor Neurone Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Osteoporosis, Parkinson's Disease, Stroke, Spina Bifida, Spinal Cord Injury.

Sensory Impairment

Glaucoma, Tinnitus, Diabetic Retinopathy.

Learning Disabilities

Downs Syndrome, Autism.

Mental Health

Clinical Depression, Schizophrenia.

The above list is not intended as being complete, but contains a number of examples. As you can see not every disabled person will use a wheelchair or the other aids mentioned earlier, in fact the majority of disabled people look just like you.

Facts –

- Approximately 50% of all people who are registered blind have got a limited amount of vision.
- ◆ People who have a dual sensory impairment (deaf or reduced hearing and blind or partially sighted) will often use a “Red and White” cane.
- ◆ Approximately 50% of Warrington’s 3500 wheelchair users use a wheelchair as a temporary or part time mobility aid.
- ◆ One in four of the UK’s population will have mental health problems at some time during their life.

2. How do we perceive disabled people?

Read the following scene. When you have done so list (in the writing area at the bottom of the page) what you see to be the barriers which occur and the attitudes which are shown between people with and without disabilities.

John went to the youth centre every week. It wasn't far from the flat, so he wheeled himself along in his wheelchair. The main problem was on arrival; the old building had four steps to the front door. Why they couldn't put a ramp in, he

couldn't imagine! Still, there were normally one or two people about and he usually got a lift up the steps.

Once inside, he was okay providing Bill was on duty. As Bill had a disabled child himself, he didn't seem to worry about John's wheelchair and he normally knew the programme for the evening and where things were going to happen. It was not so easy when Zoe was on duty - she would insist on shouting, or reading the notices out loud as though he couldn't hear, or as if he was a five year old child?

And then there was Fred, the warden - if John heard him mutter once more "What's he doing here? Why doesn't he use the Disabled Club down the road or stay at home where he belongs?" Fred always looked scared to death, probably due to the fact that he might have to talk to John or push the wheelchair?

3. Myths, misconceptions and stereotypes

Myth 1 Disability is a devastating personal tragedy

- The truth - the lives of disabled people are not tragic. We can improve things by changing our attitude and improving the environment. These are the real causes of problems for disabled people.

Myth 2 Most deaf people can lip-read

- The truth - this skill is never wholly reliable, requires intense concentration and can be very tiring. Deaf people communicate most easily in sign language.

Myth 3 Blind people acquire a sixth sense

- The truth - other senses may be used to gain accurate information but there is no such thing as a sixth sense.

Myth 4 Children should not ask people about their disabilities

- The truth - some adults find the natural, uninhibited curiosity of children embarrassing. Telling children off for asking questions may cause them to think there is something 'bad' about disability. Most disabled people will not mind answering a child's question.

Myth 5 Disability and illness are connected

- The truth - disabled people are not necessarily sick but do get the same illnesses as any other person.

Myth 6 The expectations of disabled people differ from others

- The truth - disabled people go to school, work, form relationships, do their washing, eat, get angry, pay taxes, laugh, cry, have prejudices, vote, plan and dream like anyone else.

These myth's, misconceptions and stereotypes are still promoted within our culture – through popular fiction and in the media, just think about popular TV soaps, such as Emmerdale Farm, Coronation Street, etc.

"The disabled person is pitiable and pathetic"

"The disabled person as an object of violence"

"The disabled person as sinister or evil"

"The disabled child as the reward for the evils of the parents"

"The disabled person as atmosphere"

"The disabled person as `Super Cripple'"

"The disabled person is laughable"

"The disabled person as her/his own worst enemy - blaming the victim"

"The disabled person as a burden"

"The disabled person as non-sexual"

"The disabled person as incapable of fully participating in everyday life"

This last stereotype is mainly perpetrated by disabled people not being seen and not being shown as integral and productive members of society.

4. How does language reflect our attitudes and behaviour.

Many non-disabled people have surprising apprehensions and fears whilst interacting with disabled people. The purpose of this information is to give you a few guidelines about this interaction, but most of it comes down to basic common sense. In all communication with disabled people, it is important to understand that there are some widely used words and phrases that give offence because they reinforce the very prejudices and preconceptions that lead to the previously mentioned misconceptions.

Having read through the following information, it is important that you do not get 'hung up' over language and terminology. You should behave as naturally as possible; try to avoid language that may offend and remember if you don't know, "ask" and if you do say something that a person finds offensive, apologise.

Words that may cause offence, include;

Cripple	Spacka
Spastic	Deaf & dumb
Idiot	Wheelchair bound
Mong	Thicko
Stupid	Dumbo
Sufferer	The disabled
Victim	Nutter
Moron	Peg Leg
Specky 4 eyes	Flid
Thick	Cretin
Retarded	Subnormal

(See the list of alternative language listed on the next page)

Many of the words listed on the previous page are commonly used by children whilst playing in the playground, the words are usually used to put somebody

down, they are meant to hurt and segregate individuals who don't fit in with a larger group.

Alternative language

Victim - use person who has/with/person who experienced

The Disabled – use disabled person or person with a disability

Deaf & Dumb – use deaf without speech.....

Crippled by - use person who has/person with

Suffering from - use person who has/person with

Afflicted by - use person who has/person with

Wheelchair bound - use wheelchair user.....

Mental handicap - use person with learning disability.....

Mental illness - use person with mental health problem

Invalid - (literally means not valid) - use disabled person

As previously mentioned if you do accidentally use language that a disabled person finds offensive, apologise and start again, but remember disabled people are just like everyone else, most will be ok with an apology, but with some people you will never gain back their confidence.

5. Statistics – The business case

How many:

National - 6,202,000 disabled adults live in Great Britain (1991 Census)

14.2% of the adult population.

Locally:

20,000 disabled adults live in Warrington.

3,500 people living in Warrington use a wheelchair.

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6,800 Blue disabled persons parking badges (Warrington residents).

Where do disabled people live'?

93.2% (5,780,000) live in the community.

6.8% (422,000) live in

institutions. Facts

52% of disabled men under 30 years are unemployed.

Sources indicate that between 600,000 and 1,500,000 disabled people are seeking or are capable of full time employment. 41.8% (2,595,000) are 16-65 years of age.

83% of disabled people acquire their impairment during their working

life. 1 in 4 families have a member who has a disability.

85% of the population will experience a disability (permanent or temporary) at some time in their lives.

*Figures from the 2001 National Census are expected to show that over 10,000,000 adults consider themselves to have a disability.

Local support

Warrington Disability Information Services
Centre for Independent Living
Beaufort Street
Warrington
WA5 1BA.

Tel: 01925 240064