



WARRINGTON

Borough Council

People with Disabilities

A Learning Pack on Disability Issues for Warrington Hackney and Private Hire Drivers

Introduction

Warrington Borough Council is committed to ensuring that Warrington is an inclusive society and in 2019 became a member of the Hidden Disability Sunflower Scheme.

A disability can be both visible and hidden. A hidden disability is an umbrella term which captures a whole spectrum of disabilities and or challenges, which may be neurological, physical or emotional.

Public transport is a very important means of ensuring that people and our residents are linked to all services available.

This distance learning pack has been developed to assist you in providing the best possible service to your customers with disabilities, and to give you the information you need to follow the requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010. It will also provide you with the answers to the five new questions that will be included in Warrington Borough Councils Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers Knowledge Test.

Whilst working through this pack you may find it useful to identify a person with a disability 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 with in the material. You may already know a person with a disability 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.

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BACKGROUND

Warrington – People with disabilities & Transport - an inclusive society

Warrington is a thriving, bustling, new town that has a population of nearly 209,700. Based on the current number of Personal Independence Payment claimants, there are 17,080 people with disabilities in Warrington, which is 8.2% of the population of the town (April 2020).

Dial a Ride (a local charity) operates a door-to-door service with large accessible mini busses, but many people with disabilities 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. There is a lengthy waiting list for assistance through the Dial-a-Ride charity at this current time.

How is Dial-A-Ride service impacted by covid-19?

Warrington has 9842 “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 people with disabilities can borrow a powered scooter or wheelchair to assist them to get around. (wheelchairs are available from the Warrington Disability Partnership offices located at Golden Square Shopping Centre, Legh Street Multi-storey Car

Park, Legh Street) Many of the larger shops and stores (Ikea and M&S) are also providing equipment for their customers to use within the store.

Blue Badge Scheme

Not everyone with a disability will be a blue badge holder as they may choose not to apply for one or may not meet the blue badge criteria.

The Blue Badge Scheme was extended in 2020 to apply to people with hidden disabilities, increasing the number of people eligible for a Blue Badge dramatically. A passenger can use their Blue Badge to assist with parking when in a taxi.

Hidden disabilities – Sunflower Scheme

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme is a national initiative which has been designed to act as a discreet sign that the wearer has a hidden disability and may require additional assistance. It was launched in 2016 and has been adopted by many airports, rail services, supermarkets, retail chains, NHS Trusts, Banks, cinemas, shopping centres, sports venues and visitor attractions etc.

Users of the scheme can wear a variety of different sunflower products which include lanyards and pin badges to discreetly inform people that they may need assistance or a little more time to complete something.

To date over 1 million sunflower lanyards have been distributed in the UK.

Hidden Disabilities – COVID Face Mask Exempt

Wearing face-coverings is mandatory in shops and public transport in England (from 24 July)

There are some exceptions, which the government have outlined as 'reasonable' reasons for not wearing a mask. These include:

- If you have a physical or mental illness or impairment, or a disability that means you cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering
- If putting on, wearing or removing a face covering would cause you severe distress
- If you are travelling with or providing assistance to, someone who relies on lip-reading to communicate

Hidden Disability Face Masks Exemption Cards are available from:

<https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/hidden-disabilities-face-covering.html>

In a 2017 national survey of the experiences of people with disabilities when using all forms of public transport, the following findings were identified:

- As of March 2017, 58% of taxis in the UK were accessible,
- Two thirds of wheelchair users say they have been overcharged for using a taxi or private hire vehicle because of their wheelchair.

One of the key barriers to accessibility identified by people with disabilities is a lack of consistency in the way that transport services and facilities are delivered.

Disability Legislation

Disability legislation is now covered under The Equality Act 2010, which brought together legislation relating to numerous aspects of Equality and Diversity.

The Act has identified protected characteristics which it is unlawful to discriminate against, one of these being disability.

Experiences of people with disabilities

- a) Until 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 were some private hire and taxi companies that would carry a person's wheelchair or walking aid in the boot or backseat, but in Dave Thompson's case this wasn't always as good as it sounds. As he was trying to explain to the 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"
- b) 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.

- c) 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 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 person with a disability, how would I know?

The confusion surrounding who is a person with a disability is probably the singular, most important reason that people show negative attitudes towards people with disabilities. Lack of experience of being around people with disabilities leads to a lack of knowledge surrounding disability. With many people having little or no contact with people with disabilities, 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 Equality Act 2010 has included a new definition of disability.

The definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010 is as follows:

‘You’re disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.’

What does ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ mean?

‘Substantial’ is more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed.

'Long-term' means 12 months or more, e.g. a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection.

The disability component of the Equality Act 2010 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 person's 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 may include:

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

Sensory Impairment may include:

Glaucoma, Tinnitus, Diabetic Retinopathy.

Learning Disabilities may include:

Downs Syndrome, Autism, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyslexia.

Mental Health may include:

Clinical Depression, Schizophrenia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The above list is not intended as being complete, but contains a number of examples. As you can see not every person with a disability will use a wheelchair or the other aids mentioned earlier, in fact the majority of people with disabilities may not be detectable.

Facts

- Approximately 50% of all people who are registered blind have some form of vision. TRUE
- People who have a dual sensory impairment (deaf or reduced hearing and blind or partially sighted) will often use a “Red and White” cane. TRUE
- One in four of the UK’s population will have mental health problems at some time during their life. TRUE

Hidden disabilities – sunflower scheme

Myths, misconceptions and stereotypes

Myth 1 - Disability is a devastating personal tragedy

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

Myth 2 - Most deaf people can lip-read

- The truth - this skill is never wholly reliable, requires intense concentration and can be very tiring. Many deaf people use British Sign Language (BSL) as their primary language.

Myth 3 - Blind people acquire a sixth sense

- The truth – people with visual impairments rely more on other senses 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 people with disabilities will not mind answering a child's question.

Myth 5 - Disability and illness are connected

- The truth – people with disabilities are not necessarily sick they may be living with a condition but do get the same illnesses as any other person.

Myth 6 - The expectations of disabled people differ from others

- The truth – people with disabilities 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 no longer accepted within our culture – through popular fiction and in the media, just think about popular TV soaps, such as Emmerdale, Coronation Street, etc. and how they promote inclusivity.

How does language reflect our attitudes and behaviour?

Many people who do not have disabilities have surprising apprehensions and fears whilst interacting with people with disabilities. In all communication with people with disabilities, 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.

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.

Statistics – The business case

How many:

National – 13.3 million people with disabilities live in Great Britain (Papworth Trust 2018)

Locally:

25% of people living in the Northwest of England have a disability. Only Wales has a higher percentage (26%). – Papworth Trust 2018

There are 17,080 people with disabilities in Warrington, (April 2020) 9,842 Blue disabled persons parking badges (Warrington residents – August 2020).

Facts

- Full-time employees with a disability earn on average £75 per week less than full-time non-disabled people
- 4.2 million disabled people in the UK live in poverty
- There are more disabled women with a disability than men with a disability, (23% compared to 19%)
- The number of people living with sight loss will increase to more than 2.7 million in 2030
- 250 people in the UK start to lose their sight every day
- By 2030, 2 million more people are expected to have mental health problems than in 2013
- 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14, and 75% by age 24.
- The main modes of transport for people with disabilities are driving (38%), being a passenger in a car (30%), walking (16%), bus (9%), other (8%)
- Only 17% of people with disabilities were born with their impairment. The majority of people with disabilities acquire their disability later in life.

Local support

Warrington Disability Partnership

Centre for Independent Living
Beaufort Street, Warrington, WA5
1BA

Tel: 01925 240064

www.disabilitypartnership.org.uk

Tips on how you can help

Passengers / customers with disabilities should be treated with the **same respect as other passengers**, but sometimes there are particular practical points which need to be remembered:

People with disabilities are individuals, just like everyone else. **Don't make assumptions** about their abilities or their needs. **Remember** that some disabilities are hidden. If the person is wearing a sunflower it is a discreet

method to inform you that they may need assistance and that it is ok to offer help or ask if they need assistance.

If you are unsure about what assistance a person might need – **ask!**

If someone looks different, avoid staring. Concentrate on what they are saying, not on the way they look.

If a person with a disability is with someone, talk to the person with a disability directly, rather than to the person who is with them. This also applies to a deaf person with an interpreter.

Make sure that people can see your mouth clearly when you are talking to them.

When talking to a person with a speech impairment, listen carefully. Don't make guesses or assume you understand – if you don't understand what is being said, say so. Ask them to repeat it if necessary.

If someone has difficulty understanding what you are saying, be patient and be prepared to explain something more than once or in a different way.

Concentrate on using **simple language**.

If you are talking to an adult, treat them like an adult.

When guiding a blind person do not pull or push them, ask how they would like you to assist them. If there are steps tell them about steps (and whether they go up or down) and where the seat is. Always tell them what you are doing, especially if you move away. If a blind person has a guide dog, remember that while in harness the dog is on duty – don't pet it, feed it or distract it.

Give everyone time and remember treat everybody as you would want to be treated.

Other useful tips

Remember always to check with the individual person with a disability what assistance would be most useful – **don't make assumptions** – and don't rush in to assist if it isn't needed. When people refuse assistance they are not being ungracious, they may be clinging on to their independence for as long as possible.

Also, remember that many people's abilities may change – sometimes on a daily basis. This can refer to physical, mental and emotional health. So someone who uses your vehicle on a regular basis may often need more (or less) assistance on some occasions than others.

Finally before you finish this pack we have prepared five cases that should help you concentrate on providing solutions to assist disabled people to use your services.

1. Mr A, has arthritis that causes stiffness in his legs. He may not be able to get up off the back seat in a black cab, or a low seat in a minibus. He may not be able to get in and out of the back seat of a saloon car because of restricted room. He may appreciate the front seat of his car moving forward. His preference may be for a vehicle with a high front seat, or he may like a swivel seat. The process of sitting down, and again of standing up may be difficult, so be prepared to offer an arm for support, and until he has re-established stability.
2. Miss B, has poor balance and uses a wheelchair, she will need assistance into the vehicle. As her balance is not good, she will be unable to cope with sudden changes of direction or sudden braking. It is therefore even more important than with a strong wheelchair user to use the ramps to make the boarding process as smooth as possible. (Using the ramps also helps protect your back!) She may need the seatbelt to stop her being thrown off balance as you corner, in addition to the normal safety reasons. She may appreciate you driving as gently as possible.
3. Mr C, is deaf, he will need to see your face when you speak to him. The use of hearing aids can increase the amount of background noise that prevents him from hearing you clearly, he therefore relies on visual clues from you mouth and face. Speak clearly, but not overly slowly. Do not shout. Be prepared to repeat yourself, or maybe write things down.
4. Miss D has difficulty with all activities that involve the use of hands and/or arms. She therefore finds carrying her bags, opening her

purse and extracting change, opening and closing the car door, fastening the seat belt etc. difficult. She may approach these tasks in different ways from others-e.g. tipping the contents of the purse into her lap for sorting. She may or may not be grateful for help with various tasks.

5. Mrs E is totally blind and can not see anything, and therefore is reliant on sound and movement for information about her environment. She might be glad of information about where you are, the reason for unexpected stops, interesting activities / changes in the townscape. A positive tone of voice will be an encouragement to her. She is usually aware of the value of the currency she is using – but may need clarification about values of notes, and of coins if they have been changed recently. If she is using her guide dog, then it will sit quietly in the foot-well, it is trained not to climb on seats.

By now you will realise that not all people with disabilities will use a wheelchair, a walking aid, a guide dog, a hearing aid, or have communication difficulties, or have an impairment that is visible.

All of the information, tips and suggestions are meant to provide you with ideas about how you can improve your service, you may have others, but please remember, the individual disabled person is always the expert on their own situation and support needs, ASK them first.

If you want more information about accessible vehicles and/or specialised equipment (swivel seats and transfer boards) please do not hesitate in contacting Licensing at Warrington Borough Council on 01925 442517.

Remember it is in your interest to provide the right service to your disabled customers, it's not just good business but the right way to do business.