

# ***DOES HE TAKE SUGAR?***

***A Short Course in Attitudes and Working Procedures to Improve the Service we Give to our Customers with Disabilities***

## **Does He Take Sugar?**

**Welcome and Introduction**

**Disability in the Work Place - "How Much do You Know"**

**The Disability Act and Discrimination**

**Sight and Hearing Impairments**

**Mobility**

**Moments of Crises**

**Practical Exercise**

**Improving the Store for our Disabled Customers - How Can We Help?**

**Course Re Cap and Evaluation**



***"Good Customer Service for people with disabilities means applying the same principles as you would for other customers but doing so in a way that meets their specific needs"***  
*English Tourist Board*

## *Assisting a Disabled Customer*

- *Always remember that a customer's wheelchair is part of their space. Leaning on a person's wheelchair may be considered annoying.*
- *When talking to a person in a wheelchair, get to their eye level.*
- *Talk directly to the person in the wheelchair (don't fall into the "Does he take Sugar" trap)*
- *Do not grab the back of someone's wheelchair to push them along.*
- *Don't be afraid to offer help but don't be offended if people refuse. Most people with disabilities do not require any extra help (the commonest reason for requiring help is a restrictive environment).*
- *Remember that it is your responsibility to look where you are going when pushing a wheelchair.*  
*As with pushing a pram, look out for bumps and uneven surfaces.*
- *Wheelchairs with small front wheels can stop suddenly if care is not taken when pushing over uneven surfaces.*
- *If the customer has a spinal injury, they may not be able to feel their feet and legs. Take care to ensure that the footrests are in the correct position. Additional care is needed when going over uneven surfaces.*
- *Bed/table blocks can be slipped under a bed/table to raise the height for wheelchair users.*
- *If you are unsure what to do - Ask*

# Communication Points

## **Communicating with blind and partially sighted people -**

- *Never assume total blindness, or that, because a blind person can see some things, they can see everything.*
- *Look out for visual signs - white canes, guide dog, lapel badge. A red band on a white cane denotes sight and hearing impairment.*
- *Say who you are and speak at a normal volume.*
- *Talk naturally, don't talk down to the customer*
- *When assisting give clear verbal commentary of what is happening and what obstacles are ahead (e.g. the approach of steps or stairs).*
- *Be careful to give clear verbal directions, be aware of your usual reliance on non-verbal communications - speak the information or directions, don't point at them!*
- *Make sure you say when you are leaving, otherwise the customer could find themselves talking to an empty space.*
- *Information/menus written in large print will assist a large number of customers.*
- *A cassette or information/menus etc. written in Braille can be an aid to more detailed communication.*
- *You should be willing to read the menu without embarrassment to a customer who is blind.*

## **Communicating with deaf and those that are hard of hearing -**

- *Make sure you have the customer's attention before speaking.*
- *Speak clearly, don't mumble and don't exaggerate your lip movements.*
- *Speak a little more slowly than usual, allowing the customer more time to take in what you are saying.*
- *Use common and quite short words where possible.*
- *Be aware that the listener needs to look at your face as you talk so that they can read your lips, if required. Keep your head up and don't turn away.*
- *Always try to position yourself so that your face is well lit.*
- *Always try to keep your hands away from your face. Eating, chewing gum and smoking hinder effective lip reading.*
- *Background noise can make it very difficult for people who use a hearing aid. It can block out and drown what you actually want to hear.*
- *Concentrate when listening. Try to minimise distractions.*
- *Speak up but don't shout (it will distort your speech) - don't forget clarity is more important than volume (this equally applies to all customers with disabilities).*
- *Ensure that the customer understands the subject at the beginning of the conversation. Don't change the subject without warning.*
- *Do not worry if you are not immediately understood. Try rephrasing your sentence, cut out any jargon, long or unusual words.*
- *Write things down if necessary.*
- *Always address the person not their friend or carer.*
- *Use technology where appropriate (e.g. computers, minicom, etc.).*

# ***How to Guide a Customer Who is Blind***

(Information from The Royal Institute for the Blind)

- *Tap the person lightly on the arm to gain the customer's attention.*
- *Say who you are and make sure the customer knows you are talking to them.*
- *Ask where you could provide assistance or where they want to go and how they would like to be guided. Some blind people will take your arm, others prefer you to take their arm.*
- *Do give the blind person time to hold your arm securely and then walk off.*
- *Do remember to give your customer adequate room round obstacles and watch out for hazards at head height.*
- *Do explain loud noises and changes in ground surface.*
- *Do keep your guiding arm still and relaxed and try to go at the blind person's pace. Do say when you are leaving*
- *If you need to walk in single file, tell the customer you are approaching a narrow or busy area. Move your guiding arm to the middle of your back, keeping it straight. Don't turn round to check, you will find that your customer follows you.*
- *When approaching a kerb or step say kerb/step up or down.*
- *When going up steps allow the customer to hold onto the handrail. when you reach the top take a slightly longer stride forward and stop.*
- *Always go through a doorway with the blind person on the hinge side change sides if necessary. Open the door with your guiding arm. If you are going through a swing door warn the customer so they do not try to close it*
- *Never back a blind customer into a seat. Guide them to the seat and describe it to them. Ask them to let go of your guiding arm and place their grip hand on the back, arm or seat of the chair Then leave the rest to them.*
- *Do remember that very elderly people or those with other disabilities will need extra consideration.*
- *Don't move furniture, Move away without telling them, move around the room, Start stroking and petting their dog.*
- *Do use dark colours against light, Do lead the way and open doors.*

## *Helping Customers Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*

*Information From - Royal National Institute for the Deaf*

- *If you are with a deaf or hard of hearing customer and an audible warning is given e.g. fire alarm, change of platform at a station, make sure they understand what is happening.*
- *Induction loop - a loop system consists of a wire forming a loop placed around a listening area, which may be a whole room, a reception counter or a ticket office window. It enables an audio frequency - such as speech- to be transmitted to the user's hearing aid by means of the magnetic field created by the loop wire.*

*(The customer can switch the hearing aid to the T position which means they only hear what is coming out of the sound system. This means that the hearing aid user hears speech more easily, particularly since any background noise, which is a real problem for hearing aid users, is eliminated)*

- *Sign language - the tactics to help deaf and hard of hearing customers are aimed at facilitating lip-reading, or as a last resort, written communication.*
- *Spoken or written English is the second language of profoundly deaf people whose first language is British Sign Language.*

*Trying to lip-read and speak (or, perhaps read) a language you have never heard is extremely difficult and it is a very poor substitute for communication with deaf people in their own language. This can be achieved either through a qualified interpreter, or possibly, by learning some sign language yourself.*

- *The Sympathetic Hearing Scheme exists to help deaf and hard of hearing people lead easier lives. It also aims to help anyone who works with the public by providing a basic training in communicating with customers who are deaf or hard of hearing. The scheme utilises the international 'ear' symbol. More information is available from The Sympathetic Hearing Scheme, 7-11 Armstrong Road, London W3 7JL. Telephone: 0181 740 4447 Fax: 0181 742 9043.*

*Eventually it is hoped that a sticker showing the symbol will be displayed wherever someone is available to assist a deaf or hard of hearing customer when asked.*

*Aids and devices to help customers also include: teletext, alarm clock with a vibrating pad, light only warnings and alarms, minicomms, phone flashing light, portable telephone amplifier.*

# Learning Difficulties

*Learning disabilities can show themselves through the customer's, speech, memory, ability to use money, read and write, understand, reason.*

*Customers with learning disabilities may be:*

- ❖ *Passive.*
- ❖ *Frustrated.*
- ❖ *Lack confidence.*
- ❖ *Have difficulty coping with changes.*
- ❖ *Have difficulty coping with the unexpected.*

*So:*

- ❖ *Be aware of potential problems.*
- ❖ *Take the time needed and look for solutions.*
- ❖ *Be confident when providing service to customers with learning disabilities, treat them as equal and important customers.*

*Remember a person with learning difficulties may not constantly display unusual behavior.*

*"Able-bodied people seem to see my refusals for help as snubs and find it difficult to understand that it is only my need to do as much for myself as possible which prompts me to do it in the first place."*

*Don't be put off if a blind or disabled person declines your offer for help*

## **MOMENTS OF CRISES**

*How would you react to the following "real life" situations?*

*Discuss one or more of the following situations within your group*

**1) A person in a wheelchair has been apparently abandoned at least temporarily and is shouting out for his helper, customers are looking whispering, staring. What are you going to do?**

2) A lady would like to try on a top but her wheelchair will not fit into the changing rooms. She is upset and annoyed - What can you do to help her?

Would you deal with her complaint differently than an able bodied person?

**3) The lift is out of order and a wheelchair bound customer wants to get to the top floor. What will you do causing as little offence and embarrassment as possible?**

4) A blind lady has tried on an outfit which looks terrible on her and asks your opinion. How will you describe the Colours and feel of the outfit?(fleece effect leopard skin spots) What do you say and do?

**5) A small wheelchair user cannot reach the correct level of the table to eat in the restaurant. What can you do to help? Remember this may be a safety issue as they may for example, spill hot tea.**

*(Consider also the difficulties they might have choosing food in the buffet queue)*

6) A wheelchair user has sited themselves in the middle of a restaurant "walk way" and is causing an obstruction and possible danger to those walking by with trays of hot food etc.

What will you say to the lady in the wheelchair? (who has a difficult personality)

**7) The restaurant is so busy that there are no seats available.**

**A blind person, with a guide dog, is standing at the end of the queue, having paid for their food. What do you do?**

8) A wheelchair bound customer has got stuck in the changing rooms - How will you deal with the situation?

**9) A customer with severe sight impairment requires help in choosing an audio book. The store is very busy and you will not have time to help them for at least an hour. What will you say to the customer?**

10) You suspect a customer of shop lifting. When challenged you discover they have a severe hearing impairment. What will you do?

# *How Disability Aware Are You?*

*Read the following questions and find out how much you know about our disabled customers.*

<b><i>Questions</i></b>	
<i>1. What is the correct terminology for a disabled toilet?</i>	
<i>2. If someone is suffering from stress for four weeks, would this qualify as a disability?</i>	
<i>3. Give an example of how able bodied people discriminate against disabled people.</i>	
<i>4. Can a deaf person use a telephone?</i>	
<i>5. If so, What piece of equipment might they use?</i>	
<i>6. List five types of disability</i> - - - - -	
<i>7. Name three well known blind or otherwise disabled public figures</i> - - -	
<i>8. If you wanted to advertise to the blind market what publications would you consider?</i>	
<i>9. Give an example of how we must be careful not to discriminate against people with disabilities with regard to legislation?</i>	
<i>10. What can a disabled person do if you treat them unfairly?</i>	
<i>11. If a person with a facial disfigurement and eating difficulties wishes to eat in the restaurant, can you legally refuse to serve them?</i>	

# NOTES

[www.macwilliam.co.uk](http://www.macwilliam.co.uk)