

Equality *for all*

Promoting equality, fairness and justice

Issue One, January 2012



**Supporting public services to
meet their equality duties**

An easy guide to the Equality Act
**Everybody included: involving
people with learning disabilities**
Our services and support

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An easy guide to the Equality Act (2010)

The first in a series of articles sets out some of the new duties placed on providers of public services to promote equality between people with disabilities and others.

The Equality Act has replaced a range of equalities legislation; strengthening rights in most cases as well as introducing new rights to groups not previously protected in law.

The public sector equality duty

The Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination & harassment and to advance equality of opportunities for all groups.

The services they provide or commission must be accessible to all and meet different people's needs.

Specific duties

These require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty.

In addition, public bodies must set themselves specific and measurable equality objectives.

The legal duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities has been retained, however, the definition of a disability has been extended to include long term health conditions; as well as those who have had a disability in the past.

‘Providers of public services should be aware of the significant changes introduced by the Equality Act’

The law seeks to address unfair treatment and disadvantage that people with disabilities (or other protected characteristic) often face when compared with their non-disabled peers.

In addition, the new law places much greater emphasis on the role that public bodies should play in promoting equality of opportunity for all as well as tackling discrimination or disadvantage.

How can public bodies ensure that they meet the new duties?

The Equality Act emphasises the need to have 'due regard' to equality between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not. This requires a mindset that consciously considers the impact of your activities on individuals and groups with different needs and those from equality groups.

The new duty has removed an obligation to complete equality impact assessments; instead the new law focuses more on the performance of organisations with regards to equality outcomes.

Here are some practical steps that organisations can undertake

1. Involve disabled people and carers in the design and evaluation of services.
Be sure to ask individuals how you can best involve them in decision making.
2. Be sure to capture the experiences of disabled people; for example in patient experience questionnaires or comments and complaints.

3. Ensure that individuals are given opportunities to disclose disabilities and to discuss what reasonable adjustments they might require.
Be sure to record what adjustments you agree.
 4. Provide staff training that is relevant to individuals roles and level of responsibility.
All staff must be confident to identify vulnerable people, provide personalised support and to make reasonable adjustments.
 5. Health professionals should be competent to apply the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and Adult Safeguarding Procedures.
 6. Ensure that data capture and analysis includes people with disabilities or other protected characteristics.
- Professionals should be competent to apply the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and adult safeguarding procedures •

Consulting with seldom heard and equality groups

Effective consultation, patient and public involvement is one of the cornerstones of service improvement work; however, how can we be sure that all patient groups are represented and their needs included in improvement action plans.

This article outlines some strategies to ensure that consultation activities include people from seldom heard or equality groups.

Overcoming barriers to consultation

A starting point of a journey towards excellence in patient engagement must be an exploration of the barriers faced by individuals from equality groups.

- **Barriers range from access to or the cost of transport, availability of support or inaccessible meetings •**

It is likely that the most effective means of involving people with disabilities (including learning disabilities) will be use existing community forums or meetings.

Consider approaching tenants forums or carers support organisations; such as the Prince's Royal Trust for Carers.

Organisational engagement strategies should outline how you will consult with different community or equality groups.

Organisations (both voluntary and statutory) working with communities or vulnerable people may be able to provide support; in particular to assist with planning or preparation work as well as facilitating groups or meetings.

Furthermore, local LINKs or health watch groups are charged with representing the needs of local communities and along with patient interest groups are a vital to ensuring that services are designed with the needs of its users in mind.

- **It is important to recognise that a ‘one fits all’ approach is unlikely to meet the needs of all groups •**

Best practice for consulting with people with learning disabilities or intellectual impairments

Get ready

Get in touch with community groups supporting people with disabilities or learning disabilities.

Jointly plan how you will consult with individuals and groups.

Ask about peoples accessibility needs, e.g. information in easy read format, signers or interpreters, any other support needed.

Get set

Decide on the broad areas for discussion; think about the language you will use. Use simple and short sentences.

Choose photographs or pictures to support discussion.

If time and resources allow encourage people to use video and multimedia to communicate their ideas or needs.

Consider using an easy read questionnaire. Choose good quality photographs to support the text.

Go do it well

Allow family members or support workers to facilitate communication with people with high support needs or profound disabilities.

Keep sessions short; typically 30-45 minutes.

Ensure that you provide feedback to participants; in the form of an easy read report or action plan.

Our services and support

We can provide a range of services and support to enable organisations to provide personalised services which meet the needs of people with disabilities and reflect current best practice.

User engagement and consultation

We have considerable experience of consulting with disabled people, families and carers. We can additionally work with stakeholders to develop strategies and solutions that overcome barriers for disabled people.

Equality reviews and audits

We can provide both brief overview and comprehensive equality audits; using a range of data collection including benchmarking against best practice or legal frameworks, qualitative and quantitative data sources.

Equality objectives and action plans

We can assist you to agree a range of equality objectives and action plans; enabling you to meet your equality duties and responsibilities.

Producing information resources

We can design and create a range of easy read or other information resources.

Training and awareness

We can design and/or deliver engaging training or awareness solutions to meet your organisation and workforce needs.

We can deliver the following training:

- Equality & Human Rights
- Disability Awareness
- Personal Budgets
- Support Planning
- Mental Capacity
- Adult Safeguarding
- Supporting family carers

We can also assist in the development of e-learning resources; which utilise multimedia, case studies and include learner assessment.

How to contact us:

We welcome informal discussions and enquiries regarding our services and support.

Email: darrylchapman3@gmail.com

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The Power of Positive Images

Charlotte Morse is a self taught photographer and single mother to Ben, a young man with a learning disability.

Attending many conferences on disabilities she noticed that many of the images displayed of people with disabilities were rather negative. Charlotte decided that she would put together and make available a new and more positive collection of images.

She now has a collection of nearly 600 images of people with learning disabilities and many others showing people with physical impairments, older people, children and people from ethnic minority groups.

www.thepowerofpositiveimages.com



Photographs

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