



BRaille / TACTILE SIGNAGE & THE DDA

(Disability Discrimination Act)

INFORMATION SHEET

At the end of 2004 the scope of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA - 1995) was extended such that all businesses which are frequented by the Public (i.e. pubs, shops, restaurants, hotels etc), or who employ disabled Staff, should now consider how their services are accessed. There has been a revolving program of revisions to the act all of which are designed to enhance disabled rights. The Act makes it unlawful for a Service Provider to discriminate against a person with disabilities. Part II of the act sets out the requirements of the employee whilst Part III sets out how Service Providers must cater for those with disabilities.

This guide does not set out to explain the detail behind the regulations and how they affect individual businesses (the detail can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/fs/en in the Rights and Obligations section). At nominal cost we can arrange for you to have an Access Audit which identifies areas in need of attention in order to comply with the legislation.

The thrust of Part III of the act is to ensure that businesses make reasonable adjustments to ensure that their services can be accessed. Signage is very much a part of the legislation and for a nominal investment business owners can make some simple changes which will make a significant improvement for their Service users.

With over ten million disabled people in the UK with an annual spending power of £80 billion a year this community has a significant largely untapped disposable income. With their friends, partners, colleagues and relations around a quarter of the UK population have links with the disabled community. There is an unquantified and mostly unseen marketing opportunity for companies who embrace this legislation. Compliance with the Act could well generate incremental income over and above their competitors.

At Austin Luce we can provide you with a full range of signage that will satisfy the legislation and enhance the profile of your business at the same time. Our signs have also been checked by and approved by the RNIB. Braille and tactile signs are regarded as a 'reasonable adjustment' and they also fulfil a function as an auxiliary aid. These should be installed in shared resource areas such as toilets, lifts, public telephones, and both exit and entrance portals. Additionally directional boards and directional signs will benefit with the use DDA approved signage.

The colour of the signs also has an impact on it's readability, particularly to the visually impaired. High contrast colours should be used where possible. For example white text against a blue background gives a strong contrast. The addition of a white border plus illumination further enhances readability. Avoid gloss finishes which in certain lighting conditions can create a glare. Illuminating signs are very distinctive and stylish and we are able to access LED illuminating signs which are highly visible and cutting edge design.

The font you use also should be considered. The use of italics or capital letters throughout should be avoided where possible. The size of the font and the positioning of the sign should also be carefully considered. Furthermore consider the use of pictograms or symbols. It is widely acknowledged that these can enhance your message to all Service users as they can often be more easily discernable than text alone.

The final thought to leave you is to highlight the possible ramifications of non-compliance. The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) have recently stated that they will 'vigourously pursue offenders through the courts'. They have received over 1,500 complaints since October 2004 and the number of complaints continues to rise. In some recent cases where the legislation has been enforced heavy financial penalties, which can average £9,500, have been imposed. Damages relating to 'injury to feelings' can also be awarded. These are significant and can average £3,400.

The extract opposite from Property Direct serves to illustrate this point:

Property Direct 09.05
The occupier magazine of Property Week www.propertydirectonline.co.uk

Small firms face fines for disability act non-compliance

■ Heavy penalties await those who do not adapt to needs of employees and visitors with disabilities

BY SEAN MCALLISTER

SMALL EMPLOYERS ARE AT RISK OF RECEIVING heavy fines because of non-compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act, according to research published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The report, published at the end of August, found that more than one-third of small employers continue to be ignorant of the act, eight months after the disability access law came into force. Furthermore, nearly half of all small business workplaces do not allow for the employment of a disabled person.

Total awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act – both spontaneous and prompted – was just 63% in May, up from 58% in 2003. Spontaneous awareness of the act by name rose from 4% to 17% over the same time period. But worryingly, 44% of small businesses admitted it would be 'difficult' to keep an employee who became disabled – although this is an improvement from 55% in 2003 – and 29% said they did not have flexible procedures to allow them to employ disabled people.

Fines of up to £50,000 can be imposed by the courts on businesses that do not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. The act was passed in 1995, and there was a nine-year grace period for business to plan and prepare for the changes. The law, which came into force on 1 October 2004, improves rights for the UK's 10 million disabled people with respect to access, facilities and services, employment, and buying or renting property.

A spokesman for the Federation of Small Businesses warned that small businesses must quickly become compliant with the act or risk being taken to court.

He pointed to the example of department store Debenhams, which became the first retailer to be sued under law last month, as evidence that there was an appetite to take non-compliant companies to court.

Debenhams is being sued by a 43-year-old wheelchair user for 'failing to improve physical access to goods and services' within its Derby store. The claimant said he was denied access to a section of the menswear department and he is being supported by the Disability Rights Commission in his case.

Agnes Fletcher, assistant director for communications and policy at the Disability Rights Commission, said it was important that small employers made adjustments to their working environments.

'Research conducted for the DRC this year shows that more than half a million people with an impairment or long-term health condition are already working in small businesses and that number will increase,' she said.

'More than a third of working people aged 50-65 in the UK are disabled or have a long-term health condition, so it is important that employers are willing to make adjustments.'

Small businesses can apply for an 'access to work' grant, available through Jobcentre Plus, to help cover additional employment costs that result from a person's disability.

If you employ or wish to employ someone with a disability, contact your local disability employment adviser through the Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre.

Taking steps: small firms need to adapt their premises for those with disabilities

Attitudes by the DRC are hardening towards companies who fail to comply. With the introduction of this legislation 10 years ago the DRC state "to be doing very little for disabled people is no longer an option. Businesses have had 10 years to comply".

Visit our website for further information at www.austinluce.co.uk

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