
**Improving the provision of Disability Equality
and disability awareness training – Good
practice guidelines for transport providers**

Imtac is committed to making information about our work accessible. Details of how we can do this and how to contact us are included on the next page.



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Making our information accessible

As an organisation of and for disabled people and older people Imtac recognises that the way information is provided can be a barrier to accessing services and participation in public life. We are committed to providing information about our work in formats that best suit the needs of individuals.

All our documents are available in hard copy in 14pt type size as standard. We also provide word and pdf versions of our documents on our website – www.imtac.org.uk. In addition we will provide information in a range of other formats. These formats include:

- Large print
- Audio cassette or CD
- Daisy disc
- Braille
- Electronic copies on disc or via email in PDF or word
- Easy read

We will also provide information about our work in other languages if you require this.

If you would like this publication in any of the formats listed above or if you have any other information requirements please contact:

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About Imtac

Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

Our aim is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Regional Development.

About these guidelines

This paper sets out the views of Imtac on good practice in the development of effective training policies in meeting the needs of disabled people. The paper is intended to give guidance to Government, transport operators and others involved in the planning, promotion and delivery of transport services in Northern Ireland.

Our guidelines have been developed using the latest best practice advice. In particular we have used guidance developed by the Disability Rights Commission¹ (now part of the Equality and Human Rights Commission) to assist transport providers understand the thinking behind the Disability Discrimination Act and help them meet their duties in connection with the Act. We have also used the Training Framework for Transport Staff published by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)².

¹ “Avoiding discrimination in transport” a series of practical guides for transport providers produced by the Disability Rights Commission (now the Equality and Human Rights Commission). Available online at www.equalityhumanrights.com.

² “Disability Equality & Awareness Training Framework for Transport Staff” published by DPTAC and available online at www.dptac.independent.gov.uk

Although the guidelines focus on training around disabled people specifically given the strong correlation between disability and age we believe that effective training for transport staff will also benefit the growing number of older people in our community. Imtac also recommend that transport providers consult with our Committee and organisations of and for older people to ensure that Customer Care Training takes into account the needs of older people.

Why training is important?

Disabled people and older people experience barriers to accessing everyday services such as transport. These barriers are not just about physical access to buildings and vehicles. For many people poor service and the attitudes of staff providing transport services can be a major deterrent to using some services. The feedback Imtac has had from disabled people indicates that whilst physical access to transport is getting better in the attitudes of some service providers and their staff remains a key barrier.

The benefits of effective training

The business case³

Disabled people comprise a significant proportion of the population of Northern Ireland. Statistics indicate that over 20% of people in Northern Ireland are disabled. Statistics also indicate that the population of Northern Ireland is getting older and that over 42% of disabled people are over 65. With this trend likely to continue and given the link between age and disability the demand for more accessible services will grow. Many other people here live with, care for or are close to a disabled person.

The Department of Work and Pensions has estimated that the spending power of disabled people in the UK at around £80bn. By providing effective training for staff, transport providers can attract more passengers to use their services.

³ For further information on the business case visit the website of the Employers Forum on Disability at www.efd.org.uk

Training will also deliver other benefits to your organisation. By providing an enhanced service to all customers through for example more effective communication there will be an improved public perception of transport organisations. Training should also make businesses more attractive to potential and existing employees with a disability.

Government Policy

Government in Northern Ireland has made high-level commitments to build in accessibility to transport for disabled people as a condition of public money being spent. The Department for Regional Development (DRD) has also developed an Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS)⁴ which seeks to remove all the barriers that prevent disabled people and older people accessing transport including the attitudes of transport providers. Policy 6 of the ATS requires organisations involved in the provision of transport services to provide appropriate training for staff based around meeting the needs of disabled people.

The Department of the Environment has also indicated that as part of changes to taxi regulation here, training for drivers in meeting the needs of disabled passengers will become mandatory.

The legal situation

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)⁵ means that disabled people have rights in relation to accessing goods and services. The DDA makes it illegal for any service provider to discriminate against disabled people. It places a duty on all service providers to make reasonable adjustments to their services to make them accessible to disabled people.

Travelling on transport was originally exempted from the provisions of the DDA. Since 2010 direct discrimination against disabled people when travelling on transport is covered by legislation. Separate European

⁴ The Accessible Transport Strategy (2005) is available online at www.drdsn.gov.uk

⁵ More information on the DDA and DDO is available from the Equality Commission NI website- visit www.equalityni.org

Regulation now requires airlines and airports to provide training to staff in meeting the needs of disabled passengers⁶. Similar European Regulation was introduced in December 2012 to cover travel on passenger ferries.

Legislation means that transport providers should already be taking steps to ensure staff have been trained to provide the same high standard of service to disabled customers as provided for other customers.

Who should receive training?

Government policy, legislation and economics all recognise the importance of training. For organisations understanding the importance of training will benefit both management and employees alike, helping to eradicate myths and misconceptions about disabled people.

It is important that all staff involved in the operation of transport services receive training in how to make services more accessible to disabled people. This includes frontline staff such as drivers, ticket office staff, call centre staff, station staff, train conductors and managers. It also should include other staff such as people who design and maintain the layout of buildings or marketing materials.

It is paramount that senior management responsible for corporate and strategic planning as well as the overall design and delivery of services take responsibility for ensuring all staff are provided with appropriate training. In order to do this Imtac recommends that senior management of any organisation should undertake rights based disability equality training delivered by an experienced disabled trainer. Training should concentrate on assisting organisations understand how making appropriate changes to policies, procedures and practices can remove barriers to using services.

In the event of an organisation contracting out services to other providers training for staff and management providing this service should be a condition of the contract.

⁶ See “Access for air travel for disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility – a code of practice” published by the Department for Transport and available online at www.dft.gov.uk

Training currently available to transport providers

In general there are two types of training available – disability awareness training and disability equality training. Imtac recommends disability equality training delivered by experienced disabled trainers as the most effective model of delivery.

Disability awareness training is a traditional product of non-disabled organisations. Typically, it has been and is delivered by non-disabled trainers. Medical model in approach, it considers disability as a personal matter, focuses on individual impairments and medical details and emphasises what organisations and individuals must do to help. It is inclined to stereotype and label disabled people rather than focus on individual need.

Disability Equality Training (DET) is a genuine grass roots product developed by disabled people. During more than two decades, it has been designed, developed and delivered by disabled trainers, in an equal opportunities context. Social model (see page 10 for a definition) in approach, it considers disability as an equal opportunities issue, examines how people have been and are disabled not by any impairments but by our society's historical, attitudinal, institutional and environmental barriers. It explores how organisations and individuals can help remove such barriers and become inclusive by influencing and changing their policies, procedures and practices which will benefit not only disabled people but other sectors of our community.


A chart has been included on the page 9 which provides more information on the differences between disability awareness training and Disability Equality Training. This chart was developed by GB Disability Training and Consultancy⁷.

In addition to disability awareness and Disability Equality training there are also some impairment specific training courses available. Deaf awareness training, learning disability awareness training and visual impairment awareness training would be examples of impairment specific training.

⁷ For more information around the difference between disability equality training and disability awareness training visit the website of the Centre for Disability Studies, University of Leeds (www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies)

Given the variety of training available finding the most effective course can be a confusing process for transport providers. Before commissioning any training transport providers should be satisfied that the training addresses key issues. We have recommended key components of any course in Section 7. Imtac recommends asking training providers for testimonials and advise liaising with organisations who have already received training for feedback, We also consider it is important to ensure that disabled people are involved in the design and delivery of any training.

Understanding the different types of disability training

Disability Awareness Training		Disability Equality Training
Delivered by non-disabled people	dp or non-dp	Delivered by disabled people only
Individuals views		Linked to disabled people's organisations
Linked with traditional charity organisations		Linked to organisations of disabled people
Uses simulations	Could use simulations	Doesn't use simulations
Traditional model of disability	confuses models eg Social Care Model	Social Model of Disability
Charity, help & support		Rights and entitlements
Impairment specific focus		Uses examples from all impairment groups but focuses on discrimination
Deals with dp as different impairment groups		Equality approach recognises diversity between dp
Free of charge (historically)	Costs less than other equivalent training	Priced equivalent to similar training
Based around individual's personal experiences of impairment		Uses examples of discrimination
Learn about different impairments and their effects		Learn about access requirements and how to meet them
Deals with behaviour and information		Covers both attitude & behaviour (explores prejudice & stereotyping)
Focuses on participant's role		Focuses on participant's role within organisation & organisational change
Deals with individuals		Deals with organisation's policies, procedures and practices

Components of effective training

General components of training

The general components of training for transport providers should include: -

- Training centred on the social model of disability; this ensures that the starting point is the acceptance that disabled people are individuals with individual needs and are full members of society who are “disabled” by the poor design of the built environment, by a lack of clear, accessible information⁸ and the inappropriate attitudes of others
- An appreciation of the history of disabled people and the disability movement
- Examining disability discrimination legislation
- Challenging stereotypes and misconceptions about disabled people
- Comparing the definitions of disability
- Examining environmental, organisational and attitudinal barriers experienced by disabled people
- Looking at issues around appropriate language and communication
- Examining how disability rights is part of the wider equality/diversity context within society

Job specific components of training

Training should also be tailored to the specific roles and responsibilities of all staff. For example:

⁸ Many disabled people require information in a preferred format such as large print, Braille or audio. Imtac has published guidelines for making information accessible. The guide is available from www.imtac.org.uk

- Senior management should undertake DET that looks at how an organisation as a whole can remove the barriers experienced by disabled people through reviewing and updating policies and practices
- Bus drivers should be made aware of how they can make a service more accessible
- Personnel who are involved in marketing should be made aware of the importance of accessible information

Training, therefore, should be tailored to explain how individual roles play a part in removing barriers for disabled people and should include:

- Guidance on how to recognise disabled passengers - in particular staff need to be aware of passengers with impairments which are not immediately obvious for example someone with learning difficulties, autism, arthritis, asthma, diabetes or epilepsy
- Guidance on how to provide appropriate assistance to disabled passengers. This should include people with all kinds of impairment, not just people who have an obvious impairment such as a wheelchair user. Staff should be trained not to assume that a person needs assistance but to ask if help is required before giving it!
- Guidance on how to use any equipment and other resources designed to make services more accessible to older people and disabled people – for example how to use a textphone or deploy ramps/lifts on vehicles
- Guidance on the layout of buildings and premises assisting staff to anticipate and remove potential barriers and hazards such as clutter on walking routes or poor levels of lighting.
- Guidance on the importance of communicating effectively with disabled passengers particularly with people with a learning disability, people with speech impairments and people with hearing loss.
- An explanation of the importance of a travel chain and illustration of individual staff roles in such a chain – this should reinforce the importance of communication with colleagues and others to ensure that whole journeys are trouble free for disabled passengers

- Instructions on what to do in an emergency, for example if a bus or train breaks down in order to provide assistance and reassurance to all passengers

Impairment specific training

Imtac would encourage transport providers to provide additional training for staff on impairment specific issues – for example deaf awareness training, learning disability awareness training or visual impairment awareness training. However, such training is a supplement to and not a replacement for disability equality training delivered by an experienced disabled trainer.

Organisations should also encourage staff to undertake other training to aid their personal development and the organisation as a whole. Encouraging staff to learn sign language is an example of this.

Timing of training

All existing staff should undertake training as soon as is practical. Training should ideally be included as part of the induction of all new staff. However training should not be viewed as a one off activity. Refresher training should be given regularly. This will enable transport providers to take account of technological developments, legislative changes and changes around issues such as language and communication.

Monitoring and evaluation of training

We recommend that transport providers in Northern Ireland should consult with Imtac and others on a regular basis to ensure that training policies meet best practice.

Transport providers should also consult with Imtac and others about customer experiences and expectations. This information should inform future training needs and changes required.

Transport providers should also encourage customer feedback from disabled passengers. Suggestions, comments and complaints from passengers should be used to inform future training needs and any

changes required. Feedback from staff on whether training has helped provide a better service is an invaluable tool for organisations in identifying and monitoring the benefits of training, inform future training programmes and improve overall service provision.

Training, policy makers and legislators

People who develop transport policy and legislation in Northern Ireland have a key role to play in developing an accessible and inclusive transport system. As with transport providers it is essential that policy makers and legislators receive training and promote training to others. We believe that this will help to ensure that issues for disabled people are factored into policy as a matter of course. It will also assist Government here meet the policies contained in the Accessible Transport Strategy and fulfil the additional Disability Duties for all public bodies as a result of the Disability Discrimination Order 2006 - particularly if disabled people are involved in delivering the training.

Intac would like to work with the Northern Ireland Executive, the Northern Ireland Assembly and Government Departments here to encourage the following:

- Generally policy makers and legislators undertaking rights based disability equality training delivered by an experienced disabled trainer (DET)
- Specifically officials who work on programmes and policies that affect disabled people undertaking DET delivered by an experienced disabled trainer
- Government Departments promoting the provision of training (consistent with these guidelines) for all staff as requirement for the award of any future contract or grant to any organisation involved in the provision transport

Intac would welcome the opportunity to discuss training with officials.