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# WELCOME ...

to the *Learning Curve* training pack on *Understanding Disability*. Promoting equality for people with disabilities has taken on a new emphasis in recent years, and this is a development that we very much welcome. However, it would be naïve not to recognise that there is still a great deal of progress yet to be made.

This pack has been prepared to help take us in the right direction – in the direction of a better understanding of disability and its significance for individuals and families, for workplaces and for society in general. We hope you will find our ideas and suggestions helpful as a basis for training and development activities in this important aspect of the equality and diversity agenda.

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# CONTENTS

## **Part One: Introduction**

*Learning Curve Publishing*

The authors

Disclaimer

Who is the pack for?

Introduction

    Why have we produced this pack?

    Overview of the pack

## **Part Two: Setting the Context**

What's in a name?

The social and medical 'models'

Disability: facts and figures

The law

Who is disabled?

What is discrimination?

Reasonable adjustments

## **Part Three: Training and Development**

Introduction to Part Three

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---

Exercises overview

Exercises 1 to 21

Worksheets

Handouts

Overhead transparencies

### **Part Four: Conclusion**

Conclusion

Recommended reading

Organisations and Internet resources

References

### **Part Five: Resources**

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# LEARNING CURVE PUBLISHING

This pack is the fifth in a series of training and development resources to be developed by *Learning Curve Publishing*, a division of *Avenue Consulting Ltd*. It represents an important step in building up a library of materials to guide and support trainers, staff development officers and others involved in human resource development.

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

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As authors we would like to acknowledge the patient encouragement of Neil Thompson during the production of this training pack, and the many disabled students and social workers who have enriched our understanding and appreciation of these issues.

The Code of Practice on Employment and Occupation, drawn up by the Disability Rights Commission in 2004 has been an invaluable source on legal matters. We are indebted to the authors.

Whilst we have made every effort to trace all authorship, we apologise if anything has been overlooked. We will gladly make the necessary arrangements if such information is brought to the attention of the publishers.

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# DISCLAIMER

This pack has been researched, prepared and presented in good faith, with all due care and attention. However, no responsibility can be taken for any errors or oversights.

The pack and its contents are intended as a resource to facilitate training and staff development and should not be seen as a definitive statement of employment law. The pack is not a substitute for professional legal advice or guidance and should not be relied upon as such.

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# WHO IS THE PACK FOR?

Disability issues are now high on the political and management agendas for a wide variety of organisations in the UK. It can no longer be regarded as an 'add-on'; on the contrary, it is in the mainstream, as evidenced by recent legislation.

It is the impact of this legislation upon organisations which has led to the production of this training pack. The implications of the Disability Discrimination Act are beginning to be felt at all levels, and managers may often be asking 'What do I need to do in order to comply with the law?'

- This training pack has been produced to help you both to understand the issues, and to enable you to comply with the relevant legislation.

It is likely that organisations will have high expectations of their training officer(s) at this point. It may well fall upon their shoulders to organise disability awareness training events for their workforce, from within their own resources.

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- This training pack has been developed to meet this need, and to help you put on relevant and effective training events.

Our increasing awareness of disability over recent years has had a profound impact upon how we understand and respond to these issues. We no longer view disabled people as somehow being 'victims' upon whom we should take pity, or deal with charitably: we now recognise that disabled people have a tremendously creative contribution to make to society, and that without them our communities and organisations will be impoverished. Disabled people have rights: it is a matter of social justice that they play their full part in society.

- This training pack introduces you to the key themes and issues which are important for everyone in an organisation to grasp, because without understanding these issues you are unlikely to develop into an organisation which properly celebrates diversity in its workforce.

It is important to recognise that the terms 'disabled' and 'non-disabled' are not mutually exclusive terms – we all are good at some things and can't do other things – so disability equality should be something which everyone should 'own' as being relevant and important to *everyone* in an organisation. It should not be an activity or a project which one group undertakes for the benefit of those 'less fortunate'.

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- This training pack will help everyone in an organisation to understand the issues, and to contribute to the organisation's ability to work within the law and to celebrate the contribution which everyone can make to its success.

In many ways the language which we use today has changed dramatically over the past few decades, especially in the ways in which we refer to disabled people. Our language seeks now to celebrate the diversity of people, and not to cause offence (however unintentionally) by putting all kinds of labels onto disabled people.

- This training pack will introduce you to the ways in which language can be used to help value people, rather than suggesting that some are second-class citizens.

People using this pack – especially trainers – will bring their own experience and insights to the training events, including their own 'disabled perspectives'. This pack seeks therefore to help you play to your existing strengths, and does not seek to suggest that there is only one way of doing things. We will have done our job if we help you and those who attend your training courses, to get it right for you.

- This training pack therefore offers suggestions for exercises covering a wide range of related issues. But
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we offer them as 'starters'. We know they can work, and that you can use them "off the peg" if you wish. But if they prompt you into improving them, and making them far more effective for your organisation, then that will be cause for greater celebration!

Many people feel hesitant about putting on such events, even if they are experienced trainers. Non-disabled trainers may worry that they may come across as patronising, or (horror of horrors!) as being politically incorrect. Disabled trainers may worry that they may not be taken seriously, or be seen as a 'token' disabled person brought in to give authenticity to the event, or be expected to be the spokesperson for almost every disabled person in the world.

- This training pack seeks to recognise some of the anxieties people may have when organising such events. Many of the exercise are structured in such a way as to give you flexibility, to help you feel confident in enabling your group members to achieve a positive training experience.

**To sum up:**

**IF ...**

- your organisation needs help with putting on training events on Disability Equality

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- you want to know how your organisation needs to conform the law on disability issues
  - you want your organisation to celebrate diversity and to recognise everyone's rights to make a positive contribution to their workplace
  - you want your organisation to exercise a proper duty of care towards all its employees
  - you are on the look out for a training pack which you can use easily and effectively without having to start 'from scratch'

**THEN THIS PACK COULD BE JUST WHAT YOU NEED.**

**However ...**

It is *not* a legal training pack to turn you or your group members into qualified legal experts. You will always need to take appropriate legal advice in specific situations.

Nor is it a pack which you open and begin using without any preparation in advance. The exercises can certainly be used as they stand, but we know that all trainers appreciate the important of thorough preparation – without it, the event is not likely to achieve the best results.

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**Organisations that will find this pack useful:**

Every organisation we can think of, large or small, would find this pack useful.

How would YOU and YOUR ORGANISATION benefit from using this pack?

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# INTRODUCTION

## Overview of the pack

The pack is divided into five parts, as follows:

**Part One: Introduction** to the pack, why it has been produced, and how it might best be used.

### **Part Two: Setting the Context**

This is a substantial section which seeks to provide you, as a trainer, with an accessible introduction to disability issues. There is now a vast literature on disability, and we cannot hope to do justice to all of it. What we have done, however, is to select some major themes which will give you a flavour of what is being said and done in this field, especially by disabled people and the ways in which they are rightly leading the debate and challenging unjust practices. This is not to suggest, however, that this strong lead lets others off the hook – far from it – this section will focus on how to celebrate diversity where everyone has a role to play.

### **Part Three: Training and Development**

This consists of a set of training materials or exercises from

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which you can pick and choose to suit the occasion. Each one has a clear purpose, with some suggested things to do to help people to get the most out of the event.

There are some acetates provided for you, so that, if you wish to use them you can focus your preparation time more effectively, knowing that resources are to hand.

This section is prefaced with some notes about accessibility which you will need to consider for all the sessions you lead, so that no one is excluded. You will need to know in advance who is attending, and what their specific needs will be, and this will help you to tailor our materials to the needs of your group.

#### **Part Four: Conclusion**

In addition to our concluding comments, this section includes a bibliography of useful books on a range of topics and themes. There is also a list of useful web addresses and relevant organisations. We are certain that you will be able to add to these yourselves: we have, in effect, just started you off!

#### **Part Five: Resources**

This is a section where you can store your own resources and materials (magazine and journal articles, newspaper clippings,

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printouts from websites and so on) so that they are easily accessible for future reference. This should enable you to build up a resource bank of relevant materials over time.

### **What should I do next?**

It is important to spend some time becoming as clear in your mind as you possibly can exactly what you hope to achieve from the training events you are organising. This is such an obvious thing to say, but good preparation is absolutely essential for the success of a training event. And this applies not just to the event itself – it also involves some much wider issues too.

It is worth reflecting on the following questions to help you clarify what you are hoping to achieve. They are not in any particular order of priority or importance, but they all deserve as clear an answer as you can give.

1. *Who is asking for training?* Is it the manager(s) trying to take their responsibilities for disability issues seriously, or do you feel they are passing the buck to you to get something done? Is it members of the workforce asking for training? Is it the fear of acting unlawfully or the wish to develop best practice?

**NB** There are no right or wrong answers to this question – but it is important to be truthful about who is expecting what from

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the training event.

2. *Who will be attending? (1)* Is this going to be a series of events for people at all levels of the organisation? If so, you will clearly want to structure it differently for each area of the organisation so that the outcomes are relevant. Having said that, if it is focused on disability equality issues you may feel that it would be a creative idea to have a mixed group from each part of the organisation! It all depends on what you hope to achieve and, importantly, on what sort of organisation you work for. Some organisations are very hierarchical and you would need to work within those constraints, whereas others may positively welcome an opportunity to be in a group with people from a different part of the organisation.

3. *Who will be attending? (2)* You won't know at this stage, probably, but sometime before the event you should have some idea about the different needs of those participating in the training. Will there be people who have some hearing or visual impairment? Will everybody be comfortable with having to read or write in the exercises? Will there be people who have limited mobility? Is it easy to find out this information, or will you need to consider sensitive and appropriate ways of checking out with people what is going to work best for each of them, and then plan accordingly? Early consideration of these issues can make all the difference to achieving a successful event.

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4. *How many will be attending?* Do you have control over this? Obviously the number of people present affects what can be achieved. Most of our exercises assume that the total number of participants will not exceed 20 or 25. Anything more becomes less of a training event and more of a mini-conference or seminar, where not everyone is expected actively to participate all the time. If it is to be a proper training event, then you need to be prepared to maintain a strict rule about maximum numbers, depending upon whether you will be the sole trainer or whether you will have colleagues to assist you.

5. *Where will you meet?* Decisions about venue are complex, and are affected by issues like the length of the training event; whether meals are being provided; and whether accommodation is needed. Obviously, you tailor your event to meet your needs. It will be important, however, to ensure that the venue is accessible, in line with the Disability Discrimination Act, and that you have good flexible facilities which will allow people to move around, put posters on the walls, and to be able to read clearly flipcharts and so on. Obviously, if you have Powerpoint facilities you need to ensure that they will work effectively in your chosen venue.

6. *Will you need to 'sell' your training ideas?* Are you under a clear mandate to deliver training, or is this something which *you* see the need for but feel that you might have some persuading to do on management, colleagues or others in the

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organisation? You will need a clear strategy if you need to get people on your side.

7. *What is your budget for the training?* This is an easy question to ask, but may be a bit more complicated to answer! You may well need a formal business plan or its equivalent if you are to roll out a training programme. Do you need to work within an existing budget, or are you able to cost out a programme from scratch? If so, what steps do you need to take to get the budget approved?

8. *What are the likely 'put downs'?* It's easy to become enthusiastic when you see good training materials and when you can imagine the benefits for your organisation. But will everyone agree with you? What are the 'put downs' or negative comments you may receive? It is worth noting these down and having an answer ready, because very rarely do good ideas succeed without some opposition. Who can you rely on as supporters for your plans? Being a solo champion of an idea can be lonely and isolating at times.