

DARTMOUTH DENTAL PRACTICE

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Disability Discrimination Policy

This is our policy about discrimination on grounds of disability. We are committed to working towards equality of opportunity for every member of the team and this policy is one important way of achieving this objective.

The policy

We recognise that discrimination on the grounds of disability is harmful and in many cases illegal. Through this policy, through training and by example, we wish to demonstrate that we will not tolerate discrimination by anyone working at the practice.

Patients

The practice and its personnel will not treat a disabled person less favourably than another person because of a disability. Less favourable treatment includes: refusing to treat a disabled patient; giving a disabled patient a lower standard of service or treating him or her in a worse manner than an able-bodied patient; and offering a disabled patient less favourable terms.

Exceptions may be made when, in the dentist's opinion: either the patient or someone else would come to some harm if the dentist did not refuse treatment; a disabled patient is unable to understand that treatment must be paid for and the situation would mean negating or no longer providing the service.

The practice will do its best to change or remove policies, practices and procedures that make it very difficult or impossible for a disabled patient to use the practice.

Employees

The practice will not unjustifiably treat a disabled employee less favourably (for a reason that relates to a disability). The practice will not discriminate against a disabled person:

- in the arrangements made for determining who should be offered employment
- in the terms on which the disabled person is offered employment
- by refusing to offer or deliberately not offering the disabled person employment
- in the opportunities that are afforded to an employee for promotion, transfer, training or receiving any other benefits
- by refusing to afford, or deliberately not affording, any such opportunity
- by dismissal or any other detriment.

Dealing with disabled people

Most people want to treat disabled employees, job applicants and patients the same way as everyone else but are not always sure how to go about it. These suggestions are not part of the law, but they may be useful when meeting disabled people:

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- Disabled people are individuals just like everybody else. Don't make assumptions about their abilities or their needs. Don't forget that some disabilities are hidden, for example, epilepsy and mental illness.
- If you are not sure how something might affect a disabled person, ask him or her for advice.

Communication

- If a disabled person is with someone, talk to the disabled person directly, not to the person who is with him or her. This also applies to a deaf person accompanied by a sign language interpreter.
- When talking to a deaf person, find out - if necessary in writing - whether s/he lip-reads. If so, make sure your face is in the light, look directly at the person, speak clearly and naturally, remembering to keep your hands away from your face.
- When you first meet a blind person, introduce yourself. When you are going to move away, tell him/her. Do not leave him/her talking to an empty space.
- When you are talking to someone with a speech impediment, concentrate on what is being said, be patient, and do not try to guess what s/he wants to say. If you don't understand, do not pretend that you do.
- If someone has difficulty understanding you - perhaps because of a learning disability - be patient and be prepared to explain something more than once. Concentrate on using simple language. When talking to a wheelchair user, try to ensure that your eyes are at the same level as his/hers, perhaps by sitting down. Do not lean on the wheelchair - it is part of the user's personal space.
- Avoid asking personal questions about a person's disability, such as, 'Were you born like that?' But an employer could ask: 'Does your disability affect your ability to do this job?'
- If someone looks 'different', avoid staring. Concentrate on what s/he is saying, not on the way s/he looks.
- If you are talking to an adult, treat him/her like an adult.

Assistance

- If someone looks as if s/he needs assistance, offer it, but wait for him/her to accept before you help.
- When guiding a blind person, do not push or pull the person. Ask if s/he would like to take hold of your arm. If there are any steps, say whether the steps go up or down.

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- Remember that guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people and other assistance dogs, are working dogs, not pets. They should not be fed, patted or distracted when they are working.
- Above all, put yourself in the disabled person's place. Most of the above points are just good manners.

Language

Some of the words and phrases we use offend disabled people, because they suggest that the disabled person is dependent or helpless. Some words such as 'cripple' or 'retarded' have become terms of abuse or are used to make fun of disabled people. Below are some common words to avoid with suggested alternatives:

- Instead of "the disabled", say "disabled people" or "people with disabilities"
- Instead of "suffering from/crippled by/afflicted by/a victim of", say "a person who has/a person with"
- Instead of "deaf and dumb" say "deaf without speech"
- Instead of "an epileptic" say "a person with epilepsy"
- Instead of "spastic" say "a person with cerebral palsy"
- Instead of "mentally handicapped/subnormal" say "a person with a learning disability"
- Instead of "confined to a wheelchair/wheelchair bound" say "wheelchair user"

Facilities for people with disabilities

We commissioned a disability discrimination audit. Their findings can be found [here](#). Their findings fell into three time-frame categories. Short, medium and longer term.

- Short term - external
 - Provide pedestrian access through the timber gate
 - Provide signs to indicate the main entrance from the car park
 - Provide a sign and audible/visual call system at the entrance
 - Overcome the entrance threshold with a small timber fillet
 - Colour contrast external step edges
 - Provide external hazard warning paving to the top of the steps
 - replace existing external door furniture with lever handles set an appropriate height
- Short term - internal
 - Offer patients a clipboard to write on

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- Provide additional colour contrasted chairs with arms in the ground floor waiting room
- Provide additional task lighting in the ground floor waiting room and reception
- Provide a larger sign indicating WC
- Replace the emergency pull cord in the WC with one with greater colour contrast
- Identify key areas with signs
- relocate items that obstruct access routes
- Agree in Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)
- Add the Access Audit report to the health and safety file
- Provide staff training on disability equality and lifting and handling
- Consult local authority building control division regarding means of escape issue after providing access provision
- Medium term - external
 - Provide a sign at the front of the building to indicate the car park - visible from the road
 - Repair and re-surface the car park
 - Provide an additional lower handrail to the entrance
- Medium term - internal
 - Consider lowering a portion of the reception counter
 - Increase colour contrast within the WC
 - Either provide drop-down grab rails or raise the WC pan
 - Replace the wash hand basin taps with lever taps
 - Fit additional colour contrasted handrails where these are lacking
- Long term - external
 - Provide a new ramp to the rear entrance, complete with handrail etc. enlarge external door and available width between the lower stair by reducing the wall
- Long term - internal
 - Increase colour contrast within surgeries
 - replace existing door furniture with lever handles

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We have also made changes intended to improve access for patients with disabilities:

- Commonly used printed practice literature is available in a large-print format - eg the fee list and practice brochure
- All other printed material and correspondence can be produced in large print on request
- All practice information has been made available on our website to provide easy access for those with visual or hearing impairment
- We have the facility to communicate by email and SMS text message rather than by telephone - which can make life easier for people with hearing impairments