



# A GUIDE TO WELCOMING OUR DISABLED CUSTOMERS



**INNOVATIVE &  
COLLABORATIVE**

People with disabilities  
represent a significant  
portion of our population.

## 02 INTRODUCTION

A letter from our disability champion

### **Gada Saeed Sunhat Al Mughairy**

Sumoud Al Amidah Co, Director and Chairman of the Employers' Forum on Disability.

### **Dear Colleague**

This guide will help you meet the needs of many of our disabled customers in an effective and professional manner. The aim is to offer practical advice and guidance on how to avoid attitudes and behavior's which can act as major barriers. It is easy to think of installing ramps and hearing loops as key to serving disabled customers (and indeed these types of adjustments are vital), but even more important is the attitude these customers will encounter when they bring their business to us.

While we may need to do things slightly differently to help some of our disabled customers, it must be remembered that like all our customers they expect a high quality of service and we all have a responsibility to ensure that this is provided. Wherever you work in the Sumoud Al Amidah Factory it is important that everyone you serve is treated with respect and in accordance with their individual needs.

Please keep this booklet handy, so that you can refer to it on an ongoing basis



**Gada Saeed Sunhat Al Mughairy**

## 03 CONTENTS

In this guide we'll talk about:

04 The expectations of disabled customers

05 Responsibilities under the Basic Law of Governance, article 27

06 Giving excellent service to disabled customers

07 Avoiding negative attitudes and behavior's



## 04 EXPECTATIONS

### Expectations of disabled customers

Everyone deserves good customer service and this guide is not about giving preferential treatment to disabled customers, but about ensuring that they can access our services in the same way as all our other customers. It is about the quality of customer service and how to deal with new responsibilities for all businesses under the Basic Law of Governance article 27 & 28.

Many people assume that access to our services is just about ramps and special lifts. In fact, it's more than that – access is about the attitudes of our staff and colleagues and it's also how we deliver services to our customers.

Some people have very specific needs, but the needs of the majority can be addressed quite easily if approached in the right spirit.

The principle, "if we get it right for disabled customers, then we'll get it right for most customers" is gathering evidence throughout a range of businesses. This principle of good practice can also work for you. Disabled customers will be expecting to get an excellent quality service from Sumoud Al Amidah, and the law backs up this expectation. If they do not get the level of service they expect, they may go elsewhere, and they may take others with them – they may also have grounds for taking us to court.

- Percentage of Saudi population with difficulties (mild, severe and extreme) in the Kingdom accounts for (7.1%) Of the total Saudi Population.

- Less than 4.1% of disabled people are wheelchair users



## 05 RESPONSIBILITIES

### Responsibilities under the Basic Law of Governance

The Disability Discrimination Act makes it illegal to:

- Refuse to serve someone who is disabled, without legal justification
- Offer a disabled person a service which is not as good as the service being offered to other people without legal justification
- Provide a service to a disabled person on terms which are worse than the terms given to other people, without legal justification
- Fail to make reasonable adjustments.

Good customer care means looking at how you can improve your response to the needs of your customers so that you can reap the benefits in terms of increased business. Ensuring that you offer a quality service to your disabled customers is no different.

Steps should be taken to understand disabled customers preferences and requirements.

Responsibilities under the APD are to make reasonable adjustments to anything

which gets in the way of disabled customers accessing our services.

Examples might include making adjustments to:

- Policies or procedures (e.g. disabled customer policy)
- Physical barriers (e.g. can you widen an aisle?) or
- Providing auxillary aids or services (e.g. induction loop)

Further examples might be as simple as a member of staff:

- Being patient and taking time to go through information with a customer with a mental health issue or learning disability
- Reading out information for a blind or visually impaired customer
- Writing something down for a hearing impaired customer



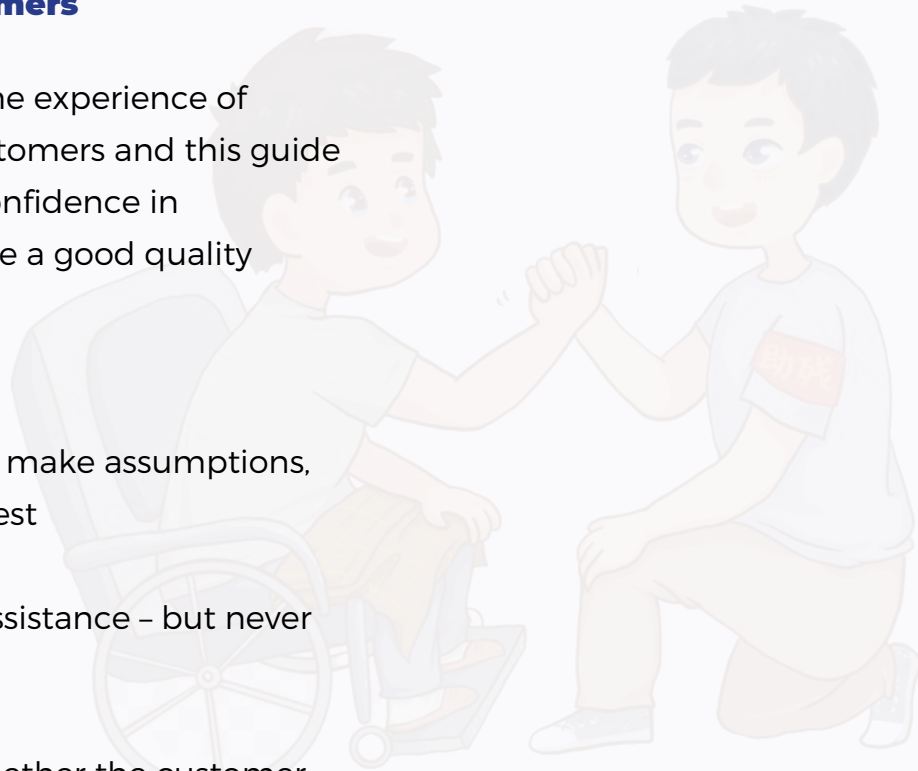
## 06 SERVICE

### **Giving excellent service to disabled customers**

You will all have some experience of serving disabled customers and this guide will enhance your confidence in continuing to provide a good quality service.

You should:

- Never patronise, or make assumptions, or think you know best
  - Be ready to offer assistance – but never impose it
  - Confidently ask whether the customer has specific requirements and be able to respond sensibly
  - Offer the use of equipment e.g. a clip board, as an alternative writing surface
  - Use appropriate ways of communicating, e.g. writing things down if someone finds speech difficult to understand
  - Be courteous, patient and always talk to a disabled customer directly, never through their companion
  - Never shout or call attention to someone
- Check to make sure they have been understood.
- Whenever possible:
- Ask disabled customers about their requirements. For example, “Please let me know if you need any assistance”



## 07 ATTITUDES

### **Avoiding negative attitudes and behaviour**

The golden rule is to ask yourself how you would like to be treated. You should always be willing to adapt to a person's individual preferences.

It is useful to bear in mind that:

Disability' is not a 'sickness'. The general health of disabled people may be as good as that of anyone else

. Improving access means removing all barriers (attitude and physical) to providing good service. It is not just about spending money on structural alterations

. The word 'access' should be applied in its broadest sense i.e. in every way that you communicate with our disabled customers and in attempting to make our business as welcoming as possible.



Communication skills are vital in developing relationships with both disabled and non-disabled customers. Certain words and phrases may give offence. Although there are no concrete rules, it is helpful to understand why some terms are preferred to others.

People are increasingly sensitive to the way the 'language of disability' can inadvertently reinforce negative stereotypes.

## General Guidance

Many disabled people may not see themselves as disabled at all – even though the APD may define them as such.

A disabled person is not defined by their impairment. Labels say nothing about the person, they simply reinforce the stereotype that disabled people are 'sick' and dependent upon the medical profession.

- If you do not understand what someone has said, ask him or her to repeat the sentence. Do not pretend you have understood if you have not
- Ask the person to tell you how they prefer to communicate
- Consider writing down any information that could be helpful

- Make sure a deaf person is looking at you before you begin speaking as he or she may need to lip read. Keep background noise as low as possible
  - Check regularly that you have been understood.
  - If a sign language interpreter is present, speak to the individual, not the interpreter
    - Do not raise your voice
      - speak normally and clearly
- Many people reinforce what they hear with lip-reading. A few deaf people with no hearing at all rely on lip reading alone. This is a demanding and tiring skill:
- Look directly at the person you are speaking to
  - Speak clearly and at an even pace, do not distort or exaggerate your lip movements
  - Stop talking if you must turn away
  - Do not use exaggerated gestures
  - Do not cover your mouth

## Serving customers who are deafblind

Many people born with learning disabilities, those in the early stages of dementia or people who acquire a brain injury, live full and independent lives in the community. Most can make their own choices, with varying levels of support.





The following may apply to any of these individuals:

- Begin by assuming the person will understand you
- Speak to the person as you would anyone else. Do not presume that you can predict from your initial impression that the person will or will not understand you
- Keep all communication simple. Avoid jargon
- Consider putting information in writing

### **Serving customers with a facial disfigurement**

Some people are born with a disfigurement and others acquire it through accident or illness. Disfigurement is usually only skin deep, but it can be associated with facial paralysis and other impairments such as speech difficulties. Just because a person has a facial disfigurement it does not mean they are different, and is no reflection of intelligence.

Most of the difficulties, indeed discriminations, people with facial disfigurement experience, stem from others people's behaviour.

- Make eye contact as you would with anyone else
  - Don't ask personal questions such as "What happened to you?", as it is likely to be inappropriate
  - Listen carefully and do not let the person's appearance distract you
- Finally

I hope this guide has given you confidence to provide an excellent service to disabled customers, but whatever the situation, if you are not sure what to do:

- Listen to the customer
- Deal with unfamiliar situations with calmness and courtesy
- Offer assistance but don't impose it
- Ask the customer to tell you the best way to help

Welcoming all our customers and being able to provide a quality service to everyone makes good business sense



## REFERENCE POINT

Sumoud Al Amidah Factory  
Disability Action Centre (DAC)  
Practical expertise in disability issues  
for employees and access to goods  
and service issues.

Authority of People with Disability  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh,  
Olaya Street,  
6690 Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli,  
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[info@apd.gov.sa](mailto:info@apd.gov.sa)

Disability related information can  
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