

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

# An 'Easy-to-read' Guide for Disabled People

Disability Discrimination Law



Employment



Education



Housing



Goods / Services

This publication is available in a range of alternative formats and languages on request. Please contact the Equality Commission, contact details for which can be found on the back page of this booklet.

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Originally produced by the Department for Education and Employment in consultation with People First and Mencap (GB).

The Disability Rights Commission allowed the booklet to be printed by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

This booklet gives general help only. It does not tell you everything about the law



# Disability Law

If you have a disability you need to know about an important law that gives you rights. This is called the **Disability Discrimination Act**.



## Who the law will help

The law will help people who are disabled. You may be disabled if you have problems:

- moving around;
- seeing or hearing;
- using your hands;
- learning things or understanding or remembering.



The law helps you if:

- your disability makes it very hard for you to do everyday things most other people can do;
- you have been disabled for a long time or you are likely to be disabled for a long time. 12 months counts as a long time.



If you used to be disabled but are not disabled now, the law may also help you

## How the law may help you

The law may help you if you are being treated worse than other people because of your disability.

It may help you when you:

- are at work;
- are trying to get a job;
- go to, or want something from, places like banks, shops, cinemas and pubs;
- are trying to find a place to live;
- are at school, college or university.



This leaflet will help you to understand your rights.



The law covers all employers. They may have to make changes in the way they get new people for jobs and in the way they deal with people who work for them.

### Getting a job

An employer must not treat a disabled person worse because of their disability.

This is the rule when:

- **looking for new workers;**
- **choosing new workers.**



The law says the employer may need to make changes to help you apply for the job.

### Changes an employer might have to make

The employer might have to:

- let you have help with filling in forms;
- let you have a longer time to do a test, or change the test to help you;
- let someone help you at an interview;
- arrange for the forms to be sent out in a language you can understand.



For example, if an employer asks you to come for a job interview, a friend or a member of your family might come along with you to help.



## At work

An employer must not treat a disabled person **worse because of their disability**.

This is the rule when:

- paying workers or doing other things for them;
- choosing who to train or promote or move;
- choosing who to make redundant.



The law says the employer **may need to make changes** to help you do your job.

## Changes an employer might have to make

The employer might:

- get someone to help you learn a new job;
- get computer equipment to help you in your job;
- give you more time to do something new;
- give you time off to go to the hospital or doctor;
- help you understand changes to your job;
- let you have more snack breaks.



For example, say you start a new job. Your employer asks you and some other new staff to go on a one-day training course. Your employer may need to look at how the course is run. Your employer may have to run a longer course for you or allow somebody to sit in on the course to help you.

An employer may be breaking the law if changes like this are not made.



# Shopping, going to places and using services



The disability law affects places like shops, banks, cinemas, pubs, hotels, travel agents, libraries, courts, churches and parks. **In most cases**, these places will not be able to treat you any worse than other people **just because of your disability**.

## How the law will affect you



The law means that:

- people have to serve you;
- people have to treat you the same as others;
- people have to charge you the same money as other people.

If they do not do this, they could be breaking the law.

### For example:

Let us say that a shop assistant will not let you buy something in his shop just because you are disabled. By doing this the shop assistant is breaking the law.



## Why people might treat you differently

People in places like shops, banks, cinemas, and pubs are breaking the law if they treat you worse than other people because you are disabled; unless they have a good reason.

These good reasons are:

- if there is a risk to health or safety;
- if you cannot understand a contract;
- if serving you means that they cannot serve other people;
- if they can only serve you or other people by treating you less well;
- if it costs more to provide a special service.



## Here are some examples to show how this might happen:

The manager of a TV rental shop says he will not rent a TV and video to you because he is sure you do not understand you have to pay rent every month. The manager may not be breaking the law if he has a good reason for believing that you do not understand and will therefore not pay your rent.

The effect of your friend's disability means that he shouts all the time. The manager of the local cinema tells your friend that he will not let him in to see a film. This is because the last time he went to see a film he made such a lot of noise that the other people complained they could not hear the film. The manager may not be breaking the law.



## Changes that shops, banks, cinemas and pubs may have to make.

The law also says that places like shops, banks, cinemas, solicitors and pubs **may need to make changes to help you use them**. They may have to:

- Change the rules about **how you can use them**.

For example:

A video shop may have to look at who can rent out video tapes. A rule like asking for a driving license might need to change because some people with disabilities will not drive a car because of their disability.

- Give you some **help to use the service**

For example:

A hospital may have to get a person who can use sign language to help speak with someone who is deaf and uses sign language.

- Look at ways in which you can use the **service if you cannot get into the building** or any part of the building

For example:

A solicitor working in a building with a narrow door may have to call with you at home if you cannot get into the building because you are a wheelchair user.

Places like shops, cafes, pubs and banks may be breaking the law if changes like this are not made.



# Renting or buying a home



The law also affects renting or buying a home.

In most cases, it means that just because you are disabled, you should not be:

- stopped from renting or buying a home;
- asked to pay more rent or a higher price than other people;
- kept at the bottom of a waiting list;
- stopped from using a shared area, like a kitchen or garden in the same way as other people;
- evicted from your home.



For example:

A landlord of a block of flats who says he will not let you rent a flat from him just because he does not want a disabled tenant. This is breaking the law.

## Why people might treat you differently



People who rent or sell homes will be breaking the law if they treat disabled people worse than other people because they are disabled, unless there is a good reason. The good reasons are:

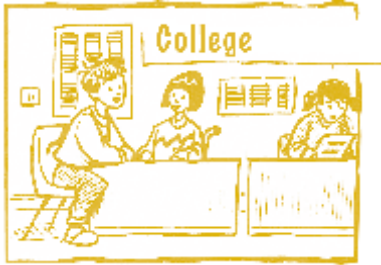
- if there is a risk to health or safety;
- if you cannot understand a contract;
- if allowing a disabled person the use of a shared area, like a kitchen or garden, stops others from using it;
- if they can only let you or others use the shared areas by treating you less well.



The law also may not apply if the person renting the accommodation lives in the same building and rents to no more than two families or six people.



# Education



A new disability law called the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO) started on 1st September 2005. This new law will help disabled people when at:

- school;
- college;
- or university.

In most cases, the law means that disabled people should not be treated worse than other people without good reason, for example:

- in the classroom;
- during exams;
- at lunch or break times;
- when on work experience;
- when using sporting facilities;
- when on trips.

## Changes you might need in education



When at school, college or university, you might need changes to be made to help you, for example:

- let you have longer in exams;
- make information easier for you to understand;
- let you have a support worker in class with you.

For example:

Staff at the library of a college help a student with a visual impairment to find the books they need to borrow when they visit the library.



## Where to find out more



You can ask someone for help if you think someone has broken the law.

- It could be a member of your family or a friend;
- It could be from your local disability group;
- It could be from your local advice centre like Citizens Advice Bureau;
- It could be from **The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland** (who can be contacted by looking at the back page of this booklet);
- It could be from your Trade Union if you are in a job.

Telephone numbers for the groups listed above can be found in the telephone book.

The person helping you may suggest that you go to an Industrial Tribunal or court and advise you what to do. The court or Industrial Tribunal (which is like a court) will listen and decide if the other person has broken the law. The court may say that the other person has to pay you money if you have been treated worse than other people without good reason.

If you think **someone has treated you worse** than other people because you are disabled **get help quickly**. If you do not act quickly a tribunal or court might not be able to listen to you.

# Word List

- **Contract**  
Agreement to do certain things.
- **Contractor**  
Your employer may ask you to work for someone else. This person is called the contractor.
- **Court**  
Place where people decide if a law has been broken.
- **Discrimination**  
Discrimination is when people treat you unfairly because of your disability.
- **Employer**  
The boss is also called the employer.
- **Evicted**  
To be told to move out of where you live.
- **Interview**  
An interview is a meeting where another person or a group of people ask you questions to find out about you and your skills. To get a job you will have an interview.
- **Industrial Tribunal**  
Like a court.
- **Promote**  
To move to a better job.
- **Redundant**  
Where a person loses their job.





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# How can we help?

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland can give advice and information on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 through training, telephone and textphone advice, booklets and leaflets or we can meet with you.

For further information, please contact us at:

Promotion and Education Division  
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland  
Equality House  
7-9 Shaftesbury Square  
Belfast BT2 7DP



Telephone: 028 90 500 600



Textphone: 028 90 500 589



Fax: 028 90 248 687



Email: [information@equalityni.org](mailto:information@equalityni.org)



Website: [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

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