

# **Deafblind Equality Training**

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# Introduction

Training ground rules.

Outline and aims of the training:

- Definitions
- Types of deafblindness, communication and access
- Language
- Models of understanding Disability
- Barriers for deafblind people
- Empowering and supporting deafblind people

# Defining Disability

The definition of Disability under the Equality Act 2010 is:

“a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”

The key words in this definition:

- Substantial
- Long-term
- Normal

in the UK:

- 1 in 20 children are Disabled.
- 1 in 7 working age adults are Disabled.
- 1 in 2 over retirement age are Disabled.

# Defining Deafblind

“Deafblindness is a combination of sight and hearing loss that affects a person's ability to communicate, access information and get around.”

The key words in this definition:

- Communication
- Access to information
- Get around

Deafblindness is not completely about the level of hearing and vision loss, it is more about the impact of combined sensory impairments for each individual's life.

## **Question:**

How many deafblind people are there in the UK?

# How many deafblind people are there in the UK?

In 2022 it is estimated that:

- Total approximate number of deafblind people is: 451,211
- 0-19 age group: 23,379
- 20-69 age group: 125,452
- 70+ age group: 302,380
- Expected to increase to over 600,000 by 2035.

# Types of Deafblindness

- Congenital / genetic deafblindness.
- Acquired or age related deafblindness.
- Multiple complex needs / conditions: for example, cerebral palsy, physical and mobility impairments, learning difficulties and complex health conditions.

# Language

## Question:

What language / words would you use to define or describe a deafblind person?



# Language

- Deafblind
  - Dual sensory loss
  - Dual sensory impairments
  - Multi-sensory impairment
  
  - Blind
  - Visually impaired
  - Partially sighted
  - Sight loss
  - Vision loss
- Deaf (culturally deaf)
  - deaf (is used to refer to anyone with a hearing loss for whatever reason at whatever level)
  - Hearing Impaired
  - Hard of Hearing
  - Deafened
  - Deaf with speech
  - Partially deaf
  - Hearing loss

# Types of Communication & Access

- British Sign Language.
- Clear speech.
- Adapted and specialist equipment.
- Lip-reading.
- Hearing aids and cochlear implants.
- Social haptic communication.
- Communicator guides.
- Large print, electronic, audio and Braille formats.
- Electronic magnifiers and Braille devices.
- Moon.
- Red and white symbol cane, long cane and guide cane.
- Non-verbal communication.
- Deafblind manual sign language and hands on sign language.
- Block.
- Sign Supported English.
- Speech-to-text software and captions / subtitles.
- Text-to-speech software, such as screen readers.
- Magnification software.
- Symbol systems.
- Makaton.
- Tadoma.
- Sign language interpreters.
- Total communication.

**Break**

# Models of understanding Disability

## Question:

Can you tell the difference between these two statements?

A person is disabled by their deafblind condition or hearing and visual impairment, which causes disadvantages for them.

A deafblind person is disabled by barriers placed by society, which can be physical, communicative and/or attitudinal.

# Medical Model of Disability

- The medical model of Disability purports that a person is disabled by their body.
- It is an outdated model of understanding Disability.
- This model places the cause of disability and disadvantage in the person's body.
- Medically a person is diagnosed with a hearing and vision loss condition.

# Social Model of Disability

This model is a theory, a practical approach to understanding disability and working with Disabled people.

The social model distinguishes between impairment and Disability:

- Impairment: is a physiological and biological condition.
- Disability: is a social and cultural construct.

It is society that causes disadvantage and disability for people with impairments.

The social model focuses on removing social barriers in society.

Disabled people are disabled because of barriers put in their way by society.

# Social Model of Disability

Social model of Disability and language is crucial.

- Try not to say “people with disabilities.”
- Say “Disabled person.”
- For example, say “Molly is a Disabled person, she has both hearing and visual impairments.”
- Not “Molly has disabilities.”

# **Social Model of Disability**

Critics of the social model argue that it neglects the impact of impairment.

Need to understand the relationship between impairment and disability.

In any situation impairment effects and disablism are interconnected.

The experience of deafblindness is an interplay between the individual's hearing and visual impairment and the disabling social barriers and impact upon their life.



# **Disabling Social Barriers for Deafblind People**

## **Questions:**

What barriers do you think deafblind people experience?

Any barriers related to your role?

# Disabling Social Barriers for Deafblind People

Barriers, disadvantages and inequalities experienced by deafblind people are caused by the way society is run and organised.

- Physical access
- Situation / environmental context
- Communication
- Practical arrangements
- Attitudinal, awareness and prejudicial
- Financial
- Access to information in alternative formats
- Technology
- Full access to employment and education

# **Empowering and Supporting Deafblind People**

## **Questions:**

What can you do in your role to empower and support deafblind people?

How can you remove disabling barriers for deafblind people?

# Empowering and Supporting Deafblind People

Reasonable adjustments:

The Equality Act 2010 ensures changes or adjustments are made for disabled people to have equal access.

- Adjustments to enable a deafblind person to have equal access.
- Equal access to, for example education, employment, services, housing, goods, associations.
- A deafblind person does not have to pay for reasonable adjustments.
- 'Reasonable' depends upon many factors.
- Can you think of any examples of reasonable adjustments?

# Empowering and Supporting Deafblind People

- The crucial question is: “What is support?”
- Ask the deafblind person about their communication and access needs.
- Ask the deafblind person what they need support with.
- Deafblind people can ‘appear’ ‘independent’.
- Do not assume that deafblind people have access to full support.
- Ask and understand about the person’s sight loss and implications for communication.
- Understand an individual deafblind person’s needs.

# Empowering and Supporting Deafblind People

- Provide access to the most important information and communication in each situation.
- Learning to manage other people's reactions and expectations.
- Support takes time.
- Have a positive "can do" attitude.
- Be proactive and flexible.
- A deafblind person, is a person.
- In supporting and empowering a deafblind person you are facilitating inclusion, access and communication and it is knowing how to do so appropriately in different situations.

**Thank You**

**Any feedback on this training will  
be appreciated.**