

## Latest News

Wednesday 9th June 2004

### **Joint Action for Disabled People**

Health Secretary John Reid and Chair of the Disability Rights Commission, Bert Massie today announced a joint Framework for Partnership Action on disability to help deliver improvements for disabled people in health and social care settings.

The Partnership Framework will help the NHS comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. The Act requires that service providers must not discriminate or provide a poorer quality of service to disabled people because of their disability. Action in the Framework includes:

- Working with the new health and social care inspectorates to develop approaches for evaluating the quality of services for disabled people;
- The design and delivery of a disability equality training strategy for the NHS workforce;
- Guidance and support for Primary Care Trusts on improving services for disabled people; and
- An easy-to-use leaflet for hospital staff - You Can Make a Difference - Improving Hospital Services for Disabled People.

The leaflet, which is being launched today, suggests practical measures NHS staff in Acute Trusts, Ambulance Trusts and Mental Health Trusts can take to improve disabled people's experience of hospital services.

For example:

- Check how the service user wishes to be examined e.g. remaining in their wheelchair.
- Avoid using complicated language or jargon when giving a diagnosis or explaining a treatment procedure and take time to explain it.
- Avoid further impairing disabled service users - a badly placed intravenous drip can prevent someone using sign language.
- Regularly seek to audit the way in which services are delivered. A feedback form can help to assess current service provision and to identify areas for improvement.

Commenting on this commitment, John Reid said:

"I am delighted to be able to announce this Partnership Framework. By working closely with the Disability Rights Commission we will be better able to deliver on our joint aim to improve the experiences of all disabled people, both service users and employees, in the health and social care system."

Mr. Massie added:

"Achieving high quality health care and patient choice means providing health services that meet individual needs and preferences. One third of all people using NHS services are disabled, ensuring that they are able to use health services in the same way as everyone else is vitally important.

"The framework we have developed with the Department of Health provides clear steps for front line NHS staff to

take to meet their obligations under the DDA and with it deliver high quality health care to all who need them."

### **Notes to Editors:**

1. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires that service providers must not discriminate or provide a poorer quality of service to disabled people because of their disability. The access provisions of the DDA are being extended with effect from 1 October 2004 to require service providers to take reasonable steps to remove, alter or avoid barriers in their premises which prevent disabled people from accessing services equally.

2. 'You Can Make a Difference - improving hospital services for disabled people' contains guidance and practical support for frontline hospital staff, and is being made available to Directors of Access in all NHS Acute Trusts for onward distribution to staff. The leaflet, and a longer document giving more detailed guidance, are also available on the DH website at:

[www.dh.gov.uk/publications](http://www.dh.gov.uk/publications) and  
[www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EqualityAndDiversity](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EqualityAndDiversity)

3. The Partnership Framework is on DH website at  
[www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EqualityAndDiversity](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EqualityAndDiversity)

4. The Disability Rights Commission is an independent statutory body responsible for advising Government on the effectiveness of disability discrimination legislation and in promoting good practice in the public and private sectors aimed at bringing about equality of opportunity and increased participation of Britain's 9.8 million disabled people. The DRC is empowered by law to conduct formal investigations which meet these aims.

The DRC is led by 15 Commissioners, ten of whom are disabled. The DRC has offices in Scotland, Wales, Manchester and London. For more information about the DRC, please contact:  
Patrick Edwards on 020 7543 7040.

5. For media enquiries, please contact: Shima Islam,  
tel: 020 7210 5375 in the Department of Health Media  
Centre.

6. For public enquiries, please contact the Department of  
Health Public Enquiries Section on  
tel: 020 7210 4850

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