



# Lions Clubs International

## MD105 British Isles

### **DISABILITY POLICY STATEMENT**

This document has been put together referencing the Equality Act 2010 along with relevant case law around Disability Inclusion and what constitutes a reasonable adjustment. In particular, a very extensive section relating to Associations, Societies and Clubs.

Under the current legislation the elements that focus on the access to buildings is key to ensuring all our members are able to fully engage with Lionism. These are relevant in regards to our thought processes and planning of events and looking to make reasonable adjustments as and where we need to make them.

It must be noted that the Equality Act 2010 does not address disability access and engagement issues verbatim and issues around Diversity, Inclusion and Equality must be considered in any activity organised by Lions & Lions Clubs.

Legislation differs from country to country in terms of how they approach the issue of disability. This document follows the spirit of the United Kingdom legislation used to assemble this policy.

It should also be noted that because the venues used by Clubs, Districts and Multiple Districts are not owned by our organisation, we have no authority to tell those venues how they should approach disability issues. We should, therefore, be mindful of disability issues when selecting venues for club meetings, Conventions, Forums and Training Sessions.

### **DEFINITIONS**

To be clear, the definitions we shall be using to identify ourselves as Clubs and Associations in respect of this Policy will be as follows:-

#### **Associations**

An Association is a group of 25 or more members, which has rules to control how someone becomes a member involving a genuine selection process. Clearly, this speaks for how becoming a member of a Lions Club is by invitation only and has a form of selection process in terms of how many meetings they must attend prior to being formally badged. In terms of the document being used as a reference point for this Policy, organisations such as ours are included in this definition.

#### **Clubs with fewer than 25 members**

According to the Equality Act, Clubs with fewer than 25 members are not Associations in Equality Law. It is regarded as an 'Informal Club' and **not** covered by Equality Law at all. However, Lions Clubs have a duty to comply with Equality and Disability legislation because of the nature of the work we do.

## **DUTY OF CARE**

- When a new member(s) joins a Lions Club, the Club Secretary and Club Physical & Learning Disabilities Officer (if it has one) need to ascertain whether that member has a disability or impairment that may require any adjustments to be made for their future involvement.
- When a new District Officer or Multiple District Officer is appointed, the District Secretary and District Officer for Physical & Learning Disabilities need to ascertain whether that Officer has a disability or impairment that may require any adjustments to be made for their future involvement.

## **CLUB/ZONE MEETINGS, DISTRICT CONVENTIONS, MULTIPLE DISTRICT CONVENTIONS, TRAINING SESSIONS AND INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS**

Our Clubs, Districts and Multiple Districts must think in advance about disabled people before finding venues for Meetings, Training Sessions and Conventions. They must also think about how the Meeting Room being used. It is recognised that the venues used for Club/Zone Meetings and Conventions and will vary considerably. It should also be borne in mind that Listed buildings are exempt from Access to Buildings legislation, as are some buildings that are managed by an outside Building Management Company. Landlords of these buildings maintain that they have no obligation to make any changes to their building under the legislation. Therefore, if you have members of your Club who fall into the categories of Disabled or Vulnerable Persons, you must consider them before choosing the venues as your meeting place.

In addition, the term “reasonable adjustments’ is one that has yet to be tested in a Court of Law here in the UK. Therefore, there is no uniform definition of this phrase at present. The Equality Act advises that the word reasonable means:-

- How effective the change will be in assisting disabled people in general or a particular service user or member.
- Whether it can actually be done.
- The cost, and the organisation’s resources and size.

An organisation/venue can consider whether any proposed adjustment is practical. The easier an adjustment is, the more likely it is to be reasonable.

## **ACCESS TO BUILDINGS**

### **Entrance to the Building**

**Below is a simple checklist that needs to be undertaken prior to holding any Meetings, Conventions or other events where disabled people, either Club Members or members of the general public will be present. In the case of individual Clubs, this should be undertaken by the Club Physical & Learning Difficulties and/or Club Secretary. In the case of District Meetings, this should be undertaken by the District**

## Physical & Learning Difficulties Officer and the corresponding Multiple District Officers for Multiple District meetings or Conventions:-

- Are there disabled parking spaces outside and do they conform to the advice given in the legislation. It should be noted that because Lions Meetings will be held on properties belonging to individuals and organisations outside of Lions, we will **not** have any jurisdiction in this regard. Under the legislation, where the parking provision at any venue exceeds 50 spaces, 4 spaces should be given over to disabled parking. In smaller car parks, one space should be given over to disabled parking.
- Is the pavement outside the premises free of potholes, uneven surfaces, etc.?
- Is the route to the building free of leaves, snow and ice?
- Is all vegetation cut back from paths leading up to the entrance?
- If the route is not level, is there a slip-resistant ramp with handrails available?
- Are all paths free of obstacles, such as litter bins?
- Is the external lighting good enough to help people find their way to the premises?
- Do you have alternative access, or a ramp, for people in Wheelchairs?
- If the main entrance is not level, or is inaccessible and hard to change in some other way, is there a rear or side entrance where level access is possible?
- Do the steps have a clearly visible handrail? The handrail should be in a contrasting colour so that it is clearly distinguishable.
- Are the steps themselves clearly visible? In other words, are the nosings of each step highlighted in a contrasting colour from the rest of the step? Painting steps a different colour to the surrounding surfaces makes them easier for visually impaired people to see.
- Is the door opening wide enough for all users?
- Is the door handle low enough for a Wheelchair user to reach easily? The current guidance is that it should be at a maximum height of 1000mm.
- Do the entrance mats cause any obstruction? The floor surface must be even.
- If a door-closer is fitted, does it have a delayed, or slow-action closure mechanism?

## INSIDE THE BUILDING

- For those who are confined to a Wheelchair, is there a Lift or Stairlift in the building? If lifts are installed, do they have enough room for Powered Wheelchairs, which are larger than Manual Wheelchairs? If neither of these are available, the next question

you should be addressing is whether members with disabilities can join in the meeting via Skype or Zoom and, if so, does the building have Wifi so that this can be achieved? There is a section in this document regarding Communication in Meetings and Conventions with New Technology where this subject is addressed.

- What level of signage is there?
- Is the signage clear? In other words, is the signage clear and easy to read and in colours that contrast with the wall or pillar upon which it is placed.
- Are aisles, corridors and areas near doors free of obstacles and wide enough for Wheelchairs to manoeuvre?
- Are all floor surfaces as level as possible without the need for major adjustments. In other words, are mats and joins between different floors, etc., flush with the floor and each other.
- Also, does the colour of the floor contrast with the colour of the skirting board and wall?
- Does the colour of the doors contrast with the door surround and wall? Is the handle clear to see for those with sight impairment?
- Is there sufficient provision for those with hearing impairments, i.e. hearing loops.

## **Toilets**

**The following simple checks should be undertaken:-**

- Are the Toilets accessible, both in terms of getting to and using them?
- If there is sufficient space available, the Toilet may need to be modified to be fully Wheelchair accessible. Each individual situation will need technical advice on this!
- Is there a Disabled Accessible Toilet on site?
- If not, is the door wide enough to be accessed for a Wheelchair user and outward-opening?
- Are there grab-rails fitted? If not, they need to be! The colour of those rails should contrast with the surroundings for those with sight impairments.
- Ensure floor surfaces are non-slip.
- The floor surfaces should be of contrasting colour to the walls and other surroundings.
- The sink should be low enough to be accessed by a Wheelchair user.

## PROVISION OF WHEELCHAIRS OR MOBILITY SCOOTERS AT CONVENTIONS

**There will be many disabled people who, for logistical reasons or due to the sheer size of their own Wheelchairs, may not be able to bring these with them to a District, Multiple District or International Conventions.**

The attendance of disabled people at our Conventions should never be compromised by the lack of provision of Wheelchairs or Mobility Scooters. Neither should the disabled person themselves be charged a daily rate for use of these mobility aids. Although it is acknowledged that the provision of these mobility aids will invariably be via a private company, it should be the responsibility of the Convention Organisers/hosts to bear the cost of providing them.

The simple fact is that many disabled people feel they are unable to attend Conventions because they are in no position to pay for the hire of a Wheelchair or Mobility Scooter. This could be perceived by some disabled people as the organisers inadvertently discriminating against them.

## COMMUNICATION IN MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS USING BOTH TRADITIONAL MEANS AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

**Clubs, Zones, Districts and Multiple Districts should, where possible, consider utilising new technology such as Skype or Zoom for meetings and, if possible, Conventions. This has already been used successfully by one or two Clubs in our Multiple District.**

**There will also be members of our organisation who will have both sight and hearing impairments.**

- In respect of Hearing impairments, it should be borne in mind that Hearing Loops, which are fitted to many buildings, **do not always work with all hearing aids.**
- In respect of Hearing Impairments, signers using British Sign Language (BSL), should be considered for an event. Also the use of subtitles must also be considered as an alternative means of communication. Subtitles will often be helpful to many more people.
- Should a member need to have a document in a different format or language then it is the responsibility of the Club, Zone, District or Multiple District to make every reasonable adjustment to support that member's engagement.
- Therefore, before organising such events, you need to ascertain whether the attendees have any specific needs in respect of disability and plan for them **before** the event/meeting takes place.
- We must respect the fact that the recent pandemic necessitated the mandatory wearing of face coverings. However, where possible, those with a hearing impairment need to see the full face of a person or, if ever we return to a situation wear face coverings are mandatory, an alternative way must be found to communicate with those who have hearing impairment. **Not every person with a**

**hearing impairment can lip-read!** The speaker should not be in front of a window as this will mean their face is in-shadow.

- At Cabinet Meetings, we need to ask those who are speaking to go to the side of the room so that everyone can see them – especially if it is a classroom-style setting.
- If you are conducting a Zoom meeting where one or more of the participants has a hearing impairment, bear in mind that these are not easy to follow for those individuals – especially if the speech and slips are not synchronized. Please speak clearly and try not to mumble.

## **AUTISM**

**It should be borne in mind that the author of this Policy has taken advice on Autism from someone who is experienced in teaching those who register on the Autistic Spectrum. Because of its very specialist nature, it is important that a comprehensive section of this policy is afforded specifically to Autism and how to approach this disability – both in respect of Lions members who are Autistic and those people in our communities that we may come into contact with who are Autistic. It should also be noted that the general overview of Autism throughout this section is taken directly from the Autistic Society website.**

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others.

Autistic people see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. If you are Autistic, you are Autistic for life; Autism is **not** an illness or disease and **cannot** be 'cured'. Often people feel being Autistic is a fundamental aspect of their identity.

Autism is a spectrum condition. All Autistic people share certain difficulties, but being Autistic will affect them in different ways. Some Autistic people also have learning disabilities, mental health issues or other conditions, meaning people need different levels of support. All people on the Autism Spectrum learn and develop. With the right sort of support, all can be helped to live a more fulfilling life of their own choosing.

### **Autism and Lionism**

**Below are the guidelines we need to aware of when we either have members of our Lions Clubs who are Autistic or when we are interacting with those members of our communities who are Autistic:-**

### **Verbal and Non-Verbal Interaction with Autistic Club Members or Autistic Members in your Community**

All members must consider carefully how they communicate with Club members in meetings, when we are conducting our events or on an individual one-to-one basis and members of the community who they know to be Autistic. Autistic people have difficulties interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language, such as gestures or tone of voice. Many will have a very literal understanding of language and think people will always mean exactly what they say. They may find it difficult to understand facial expressions or tone of

voice. If you are giving praise to an Autistic person, either because they have achieved something of note or given good service within their Lions Club or a member of the community has done something noteworthy and of value to that community, make it clear that they are being praised for what they are doing.

When we attend Lions meetings or events, the social aspect may give rise to jokes or sarcasm. These may need explaining to Autistic members. **However, we do need to exercise extreme care when indulging in these!**

Autistic people often have difficulty “reading” other people – recognizing or understanding others’ feelings and intentions and expressing their own emotions. This can make it very hard for them to navigate the social world. They may:-

- appear to be insensitive.
- seek out time alone when overloaded by other people.
- not seek comfort from other people.
- appear to behave ‘strangely’ or in a way thought to be socially inappropriate.

### **Meetings and Events**

- Some Autistic people may not be able to speak or have fairly limited speech. They will often understand more of what other people say to them than they are able to express, yet may struggle with vagueness or abstract concepts. Some Autistic people benefit from using or prefer to use, alternative means of communication, such as sign language or visual symbols. Some are able to communicate effectively without speech.
- Other Autistic people will have good language skills, but they may still find it hard to understand the expectations of others within conversations, perhaps repeating what the other person has just said (this is called Echolalia) or talk at length about their own interests.
- Autistic people need to have routine. Last-minute changes to meetings or events should be avoided. The world can seem a very unpredictable and confusing place to Autistic people, who often prefer to have a daily routine so that they know what is going to happen every day.
- If a Club is undertaking a new activity, it is important that you give an Autistic member all the detail they need to understand that activity and enough time for them to sort it out in their own mind. The use of rules can also be important. It may be difficult for an Autistic person to take a different approach to something once they have been taught the “right” way to do it. People on the Autism Spectrum may not be comfortable with the idea of change, but may be able to cope better if they can prepare for changes in advance.
- Autistic people may also experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light, colours, temperatures or pain. For example, they may find certain background sounds, which other people ignore or block out, unbearably loud or distracting. This can cause anxiety or even physical pain. Or they may be fascinated by lights or spinning objects. Clubs should not use venues where there could, or will be, loud noise or flashing lights. If the Club is aware that there is a risk

of incidences where either one or both of these things could happen, they warn their Autistic member or Autistic community members who are attending in advance so that they know what to expect.

- A person with Autism may be highly-focused in one area, which could relate to anything from, for example, activities associated with Information Technology, the environment or organisational ideas and skills. You should take time to understand what those activities are so that if that person can focus on one particular Club activity that fits in with this focus, they are given the opportunity to do so.
- A person with Autism may need space to get away if things become overloaded. Be aware of this during all Club meetings and activities!
- Those with Autism are often 'high-functioning', intelligent, but their behaviour may contradict this.
- People with Autism often make use of visual signals and clues to support their attempts to understand the world they live in. Some will rely on.

## **FUNDRAISING AND OTHER EVENTS**

The Club Health & Safety Officer should include a section relating to the disabled within the Health & Safety Risk Assessment they carry out for each fundraising event. This should include the relevant aspects of the Checklists mentioned in the Access to Buildings section of this Policy.

## **DIGNITY OF THE DISABLED**

**You must, at all times, protect the dignity of a disabled person, as follows:-**

- **There will be confidential information that a disabled member may share with you about their condition throughout their membership. It is imperative that you do not share this information with anyone other than a person whom that disabled person has given you expressed permission to do so. All information that is medical in nature is totally confidential!**
- **If a disabled member is going through a particularly difficult time in regards to their health, they may wish to share that with other members and you must respect their wish to do so. Correspondingly, you may not mention to any other member about any health issue unless the disabled member has given you permission to do so.**
- **If a member has a non-visible disability that they wish to keep private from Club Officers, or District/Multiple District Officers other than yourself and/or another senior Officer, i.e. Club/District Secretary, you must respect their right to such privacy.**
- **Do not divulge details of any treatment a disabled member may be going through unless you have been given specific permission to do so.**



- **It is the responsibility of the disabled member to advise the President or other senior member of the Club of any drug treatment they may be going through that might result in a health emergency at a meeting or event, the existence and location of any emergency notes or information stored on a MedicAlert bracelet or Message in a Bottle.**
- **Do not make assumptions about a person's disability.** You should ask them whether they are able to undertake any task or not and what assistance they need to carry out any given task or activity or participate in meetings. Let them tell you what they are capable of!
- The Club President or Club Secretary should take the time to **confidentially** speak to a disabled member, both at the point of joining and periodically during their membership, to ensure that the disabled member is happy with how things are going and what other assistance may be needed to help them. The member will feel a much more valued part of the Club if you communicate effectively with them!