

Nominated Directors to:

Print this team brief and share with your team.

Demonstrate your commitment to assisting older and disabled customers by your own interactions with these customers.

Consider running a session with your team to discuss their ideas around assisting older and disabled customers having read the brief first.

Key points

Older people and those with disabilities travel, shop and do business in your community with their friends and families, just like everyone else. By providing service that welcomes older people and those with disabilities, you can offer better service to everyone. Treating all your customers with individual respect and courtesy is at the heart of excellent customer service.

Persons with disabilities include “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

It is unlawful to refuse to supply goods, services or facilities, or to provide them on less favourable terms or conditions, because of someone’s age or disability.

Strive to visibly and actively welcome and encourage aged people and those with disabilities from the moment of entry, which is a very important touchpoint in every business and often the first place someone with a disability encounters what seems to them like ignorance or even hostility.

Whilst we can’t always configure our physical facilities for older and disabled customers to the level we would like to we can mitigate this by the way we treat these customers face to face.

Some ways we can show we value our older and less able customers and avoid discriminating against them are:

- Just because a person has one disability doesn't mean they have another. For example, if a customer has difficulty speaking; don't assume they have an intellectual disability also or that they don't hear well.
- Don't refer to the disability, and never use phrases like "handicapped".
- Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Take some time. Be patient and polite, and give your customer whatever time he/she needs to get his/her point across. The customer will be more confused the faster you go and may feel intimidated. Better to explain something thoroughly the first time than having to repeat yourself.
- Beware of patronising, condescending or childish expressions and tone when talking with or about seniors. Their lifelong experience comes in handy when detecting insincerity.
- Avoid stereotyping or reinforcing incorrect perceptions about senior and disabled customers – treat them as you would like to be treated.
- Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences. Wait for them to finish.

Practical Considerations

- Many of our recent shop upgrades have a slide out table at a lower level to assist wheel chair users. Check your shop for these features.
- Where possible have an option for customers to sit at a desk where they can pack parcels or complete forms. Consider having a chair available for older customers who maybe having difficulty standing in a queue.
- Consider assisting customers by completing forms for them from information they provide when they have issues writing. Please ensure they understand what the form is about and that they must agree and sign the form as required. This is an option for assisting customers without needing to send them away from the counter which can cause frustration and embarrassment to them. In the end it can be quicker as the team member can often complete the form more effectively. Other customers in a queue are usually understanding and are prepared to wait a little longer in these situations.
- Don't assume older and disabled customers can't use technology. Take the time to show customers the tools available through the NZ Post Website and Kiwibank Website which might mean they can complete some tasks without having to leave home. Some examples are online banking, digital parcel sending which provides a pickup service or mail redirection.

What's next

Encourage your team to discuss experiences they have had in dealing with older or disabled customers from your area.

After reading the brief commit to putting a plan in place to find ways of showing how we value all of our customers including those with daily challenges.