

4a7

Address Negative Ideas

Do

Take members of the public seriously when they express concerns about the possible impact of accepting people who need support.

Story

'To combat the negative idea that people with mental health problems are often absent from work, South West London and St. George's Mental Health Service NHS Trust monitored sickness absence. People placed and supported by the employment programme were absent 3.9% of the time, compared to the overall Trust's direct care workforce rate of 5.8%.' (*Disability Rights Task Force 1999, p93*)

Hints & Hazards

Listen to, acknowledge and challenge stereotypes, fear and discrimination. A lack of welcome may be based on a real misunderstanding rather than simple prejudice. Some individuals hold what they see as good reasons why some people should not be admitted to their facilities. A person who breaks things may be unwelcome in a museum, or a ramp may be viewed as spoiling the architectural beauty of a doorway. Sometimes the negative ideas are to do with the way that disability services work with people. For example, when a worker encourages the person to do something for themselves, this may look like neglect to observers. It is hard for employers to take on a disabled employee if they believe that there is no legal way to dismiss an incompetent employee who happens to be disabled.

Capability policies need to show how a disabled worker can be offered reasonable adjustments in line with legislation, training and support and then finally dismissed if they cannot meet the job requirements, just the same as other employees.

Some of these things are not really excuses, but serious issues that need to be addressed if progress is to be made. Seek solutions that do not segregate or devalue people.

On the other hand, some people may simply not want a person who needs support in their class, their company or their group. After doing what you can do address misconceptions and negative ideas, it may be necessary to challenge discrimination formally (see 'Demand Compliance' 4a8)