

Demand Compliance

Do

Find out what the law and other directives expect from the community organisation and negotiate compliance.

Story

Darren went to the bank in his wheelchair and queued at the low counter. Tellers were unwilling to move from their standard height counters to serve him. A discussion with the manager about the bank's obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act solved the problem.

Dane, aged 8, has cerebral palsy and his mum's dream is that he should walk. He was measured for a walking frame. It took a year to arrive. *(Sheehan, 2004)*

As part of their modernisation programme, one day service identified a manager who would learn the detail of disability discrimination legislation and how to support good access. He now acts as an information point for others in day services, signposting people to best practice, participating in building planning and informing people about their rights.

Hints & Hazards

Staff are sometimes fearful that demanding compliance will generate accusation, blame and guilt, which in turn will make people feel bad and perhaps lead to a person who needs support being victimised for causing trouble.

However, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Human Rights Act 1998 provide a framework which the Equalities and Human Rights Commission uses to give examples and promote what can be done to comply with the law. Criteria for funding can be a useful lever, along with government guidance and best practice examples. Performance indicators might offer some opportunities for encouraging the host community to support people and the opportunity for kudos or status can help agencies seeking positive publicity or future funding. Sometimes

the most persuasive case comes from the person themselves, but staff, managers, politicians and friends can help too. Sometimes the problem is the rules themselves and they need changing. Until 2006, the British welfare benefits system cut income down to pocket money levels after 52 weeks in hospital. This meant that people lost their homes. This was changed after a long campaign that (1) harnessed the power of people who used the services; (2) re-framed an old issue into contemporary language; (3) found allies in several government departments to identify how each agency could be helped by new arrangements; (4) focused on how to save administrative time.

Sometimes we don't need new rules – we just need some impatience!