

Disability

A guide for branches



Making the Branch Accessible

Some members will have specific needs in relation to how they can communicate, or how they need to receive communication. Braille, audio and sign language are probably the accessible formats that most people are aware of. But in the workplace specific computer programmes, large font written communications and written communications on specific coloured paper to enable better visuals are much more likely to be required.

You should always ask the member if they have special access needs so that they can be assured that their needs will be communicated to you fully – avoid making an assumption.

Considerations made when organising venues for large meetings will make participation much easier for disabled members. Meeting rooms should be accessible, not just for wheelchair access but also for sensory impairment such as visual loss (including blindness and partial sight) and hearing loss.

Ensuring information or a visual aid is available in the correct document format, or made available in advance, for your members' needs will enable greater participation.

The branch should consider adopting a personal assistance expense claim form so that members who require assistants, or interpreters, can claim back the cost associated with their attendance.



Key questions to ask the member

Each individual will experience their disability very differently, therefore it is important not to make generalisations. Union reps need to listen carefully to what the member is saying about their disability and what effect it has on them. It can be difficult for members to talk to their Union about their disability, for some this may be the first occasion that they have told anyone outside of their close family about their disability. In order to provide appropriate advice or signposting a rep needs to find out the full impact of the disability and therefore it is crucial that this is done in a sensitive way.

Do they consider themselves disabled

– identify whether the member's impairment meets the criteria of 'disabled' under the EqA (page 12 *Proving disability and reasonable adjustments*).

What impact is their disability having on their day to day activities

– even if the impairment is managed by medication, its impact should be measured as it would without such medication (page 14 *Proving disability and reasonable adjustments*).

What does the member want

– it's important not to make assumptions about potential outcomes, for example they may want practical adjustments.

Have they disclosed to the employer

– there may be barriers preventing them from doing so, but this could make it harder to resolve the issue (page 28 *Proving disability and reasonable adjustments*).