

# ITC Policy

## Mentoring Disabled Entrepreneurs

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### Background

The Information Technologists Company (“ITC” or “the Company”) has successfully launched several schemes for mentoring individuals and more are being added. Examples include:

- The *ITC Mentoring Scheme* run by the Entrepreneurship Panel
- The *Hammersmith Academy mentoring support for 6<sup>th</sup> formers*, which is in the process of being established

The Company’s Entrepreneurship and IT Accessibility Panels together organised a debate to discuss the key issues facing disabled entrepreneurs in particular and to consider ways to address them. As input to the debate, the two Panels put out a survey asking disabled entrepreneurs to rank their key issues.

Two of the primary issues faced by disabled entrepreneurs so indicated were:

- Lack of access to good mentoring
- Lack of access to funding

The two Panels agreed explicitly to extend the existing ITC Mentoring Scheme to address the mentoring need of disabled entrepreneurs. As part of this, the Panels agreed to consider what training would be appropriate for those mentoring entrepreneurs who were disabled and to propose a policy.

This document has been created therefore specifically in the context of the ITC Mentoring Scheme, but is offered as a general policy for any ITC member mentoring a disabled person.

#### About Disability Dynamics

Disability Dynamics was formed in 2000 by Penny Melville-Brown, one of the main speakers at our recent debate. It embraces all aspects of equality and diversity, specialising in disability. Penny provides us with advice and guidance on disability matters.

## The Purpose of this Policy

This policy has been written to provide guidance to ITC members who are communicating or engaging with disabled people.

## Proposed Levels of Training

Two levels of training are proposed here:

1. 'Essential Disability Etiquette' – this is a short document which covers basic disability etiquette when engaging or liaising with a disabled person. It includes a summary of best practice as well as relevant aspects of the law, eg the Equality Act 2010
2. 'Disability Awareness Training' – this is a half day training session given by Disability Dynamics with the following objectives:
  - Increasing understanding of whom is protected by the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010 and prohibited conduct;
  - Introduction to the Disability Dynamics model covering:
    - attitudes;
    - communications;
    - environment;
    - policies, practices and
    - procedures;
  - Guidance on practical issues.

## Policy

*It is proposed that:*

- *Any ITC member involved in mentoring who may contact disabled people is advised to read the 'Essential Disability Etiquette'*
- *Any ITC member intending to become involved in mentoring a disabled person:
  - *Is expected to read the 'Essential Disability Etiquette' and*
  - *Is recommended to attend the half day 'Disability Awareness Training'.**

# Essential Disability Etiquette

## Disability Etiquette

(reproduced here with the kind permission of Disability Dynamics Ltd. Ref:

<http://www.disabilitydynamics.co.uk/library.htm> )

### 1. Key Principles

- Be polite and courteous as you would be to anyone.
- Treat others as you would like to be treated.
- See the person, rather than the disability.
- Relinquish control: accept that the disabled person will know more about what they need than you so be prepared to watch, listen and learn.
- Be willing to offer help and not be put out if it is refused.
- Hidden disabilities: very few disabilities are immediately obvious, so be prepared to help everyone

The vast majority of disabled people have "hidden" disabilities: including mental health conditions, chronic pain, muscular/skeletal conditions and more. A very small proportion have obvious disabilities, such as wheelchair users or blind people who use a white cane.

Some other key factors about disabled people can include: taking longer to complete actions, having to take breaks in their progress, lapses of concentration etc. So it will be important that mentors consider giving bite-size packets of help and don't demand of the individual too many actions at a time, unless they are able to manage such. Also, some people may have been unemployed for a long time - they may have low self-confidence and self-esteem – and this can mean that they may seem to be apathetic, have limited aspiration or may not be easily able to identify or demonstrate their own skills. But this may not be a true picture of the individual's latent abilities. Again, if they are distant from work, they may have lost work disciplines such as running a diary, doing things on time, returning phone calls/e-mails. Like other people remote from work, they may need coaching to re-develop these skills.

The legal requirements are covered in more detail in the Disability Awareness Training sessions. However, be aware that:

- From 1 October 2010, the Equality Act replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). However, the Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply. You can find out more about the protection and legal rights the Equality Act provides for disabled people as well as the definition of 'disability' at this web page: [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG\\_4001068](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_4001068)
- This includes guidance about not discriminating, harassing or victimising people because of their disabilities. It is the duty of mentors as service providers to make reasonable adjustments in relation to policies, practices and procedures (e.g. how mentors deliver the mentoring), in relation to any venues used (i.e. physical features, equipment, furniture etc) and in relation to auxiliary aids (special help for disabled people whether equipment or support workers etc). A key theme is providing accessible information. The Company's IT Accessibility Panel is ready to help with making information fully accessible. All these duties are anticipatory - so our organisation and our mentors need to be thinking what disabled people might need in advance, not just responding to specific individuals. Again, this is covered in detail in the half day training session.

## 2. Body Language

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Smile.                  | Be friendly, welcoming and helpful.   |
| Respect personal space. | Avoid touching someone's wheelchair, walking stick, white cane or guide dog without asking first - they are part of the user's personal space.  |
| Don't grab.             | Offer an arm rather than taking hold of someone to give them the choice of whether and how they would like help.  |
| Shaking Hands.          | Follow your normal behaviour and tell a visually impaired person what you are doing.  |
| Be a star guide.        | If a visually impaired person is using your arm, it helps if you move slightly ahead and give warnings about changes in the surface, doors and obstacles above ground level. Place their hand on the back of their chair. |
| Face front.             | Ensure that people can see your face and mouth when talking - your expression and lip movements can help them understand.   |
| Don't look down.        | Find somewhere to sit when talking to someone who uses a wheelchair or is of small stature.   |
| Be Alert.               | Many people may need some extra help even though they do not appear to have a disability.   |

## 3. Spoken Language

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Ask.            | Disabled people themselves know best if help is needed and how you can assist.                                 |
| Ask again.      | If you cannot follow what someone is saying, ask them to say it again, and be prepared to repeat yourself too. |
| Be comfortable. | Locations that are well lit and quiet will work best.  |
| Be flexible.    | Writing, facial expressions, gestures are just some of the different ways to communicate.                      |
| Speak normally. | Avoid shouting, speaking slowly or in an exaggerated way - you may end up as the one looking foolish.          |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Identify yourself. | Remind people of your name - some may not be able to see you well and others may have forgotten.                                 |
| Farewell.          | Don't leave a visually impaired person talking to an empty space so tell them when you are moving away.                          |
| Hold your tongue.  | If someone is taking time to speak, avoid the temptation to finish their sentence or interrupt.                                  |
| Try again.         | Lapses in concentration or memory can happen to anyone, you may need to go over something again and find ways of reminding them. |
| Ask again.         | Check if you are getting it right.   |

#### 4. Terminology

| Terms to Avoid   | Acceptable Terms   |
|--|--|
| Avoid asking people about their disability, its cause, duration, effects etc.  | Focus on the reason for your meeting/conversation and the individual's needs and how you can help if appropriate.  |
| Avoid categorising people in terms of their disability or medical condition.   | If you must refer to a person's disability , the following expressions may be used:  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The disabled, the handicapped, invalids, patients, crippled, deformed defective.</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled people.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal, healthy, able-bodied.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-disabled people.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheelchair user.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim of ..... suffers from ..... afflicted by ..... (condition).</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has ..... (condition).</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentally retarded, mad, schizo, psycho, mental case, nutter, crazy.</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a mental health condition.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow, stupid, backward.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a learning difficulty.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The blind.</li> <li>• Deaf mute.</li> <li>• Deaf and dumb.</li> <li>• Tongue-tied, mute.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visually impaired.</li> <li>• Blind</li> <li>• Deaf-blind.</li> <li>• Hearing impaired or Deaf.</li> <li>• Deaf describes the culture of some people, particularly those using British Sign Language.</li> <li>• Speech or communication impairment.</li> </ul> |

For further information contact:

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## *Disability Awareness Training*

The objectives of this half day training session are:

1. To increase understanding of whom is protected by the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010 and from conduct which is prohibited;
2. Introduction to the Disability Dynamics model covering: attitudes; communications; environment; policies, practices and procedures;
3. Guidance on practical issues.

In broad terms, this will be an interactive session with some group exercises.

Elements include:

- The definition of disability;
- Other factors about disabled people;
- Prohibited conduct: discrimination, harassment, victimisation;
- Duty to make reasonable adjustments;
- Disabled people and self-employment.

Each attendee will receive:

- A workbook with the training materials,
- A copy of the slides,
- Additional information and further notes on the legislation,
- An attendance certificate for their CPD,
- An accessible communications booklet

Each session can be attended by a maximum of 30 people and it is envisaged that there will be a number of tables, 5 or 6 people to each table.

Disability Dynamics have offered to carry out the training and if carried out at the WCIT Hall then their charge for a session would be approximately £750 plus VAT (covering up to 30 attendees).