



## AAAconsult Newsletter – February '05

**Welcome** to the third edition of AAAconsult's monthly e-zine. Here we keep you up to date with legislative issues and important dates to be aware of, give you the low down on disability stories making the national news, plus we will be taking an in-depth look at a different discrimination issue every month and its impact on people in society and the workplace. This month's topic is internet access. There are many legal issues raised by the growth of e-commerce and internet usage. A failure to follow guidelines when designing Web sites has meant a large percentage of the Internet remains inaccessible to many parts of the disabled community.

I hope you find our newsletter interesting and informative, and would appreciate your feedback on the issues covered.

Best wishes

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### Issue of the month – Internet Access

Disabled access to the internet is an issue that has received much attention recently. Section 19 of the DDA makes it unlawful for a provider of services to discriminate against a disabled person – and that includes providers of services online.

Disability can lead to several problems when accessing the Internet. Aside from visual impairments, hearing, dyslexia and motor problems can also cause a person to encounter difficulties when using a computer.

The DRC launched a formal investigation into 1000 websites, of which over 80% were next to impossible for disabled people to use. They warned firms that they face legal action under the DDA and the threat of unlimited compensation payments if they fail to make websites accessible for people with disabilities.

Perhaps the biggest irony here is that the disabled community has potentially the most to reap from embracing the Internet. For instance, home shopping services



such as those offered by supermarkets could prove invaluable to a blind housebound person unable to visit the store.

With a collective spending power of over £120billion a year, there is a strong business case for not to excluding the disabled, plus doing so in such a way is bad citizenship and reflects badly on an organisation.

Simple steps which can be taken to improve website accessibility include: increasing the contrast between background and text, simplifying navigation and the use of speech enabled features. However the best way to ensure your website fulfils the obligations of the DDA is to complete an independent audit of the site, preferably before it goes live.

The compelling economic argument for ensuring accessibility couldn't be stronger for inviting more people to visit and use a service.

## **Legislative News**

*Factual information keeping you abreast of the latest issues.*

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is currently consulting on major new changes in relation to disability equality for the public sector.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 will be amended by the Disability Discrimination Bill 2005 to place a duty on all public sector authorities to promote disability equality. This duty will have a significant impact on the way in which all public services are run and on improving the lives of disabled people. It is part of a new breed of legislation that will serve to ensure that all public bodies build disability equality into the way in which they carry out their business.

This new legislation will mean that public sector bodies will have a duty to promote disability equality in all aspects of their work – similar to the Race Relations Amendment Act. From the police to health services, schools, local authorities, NHS trusts, central government, the entire public sector will have a duty to promote the equalisation of opportunities for disabled people.

## **Employment law timetable**

23 March 2005-01-10

### **Working time limits for transport workers come into force**

*These control the number of hours that drivers are allowed to work*



6 April 2005

### **Information and consultation laws come into force**

*These establish a general framework for informing and consulting employees*

6 April 2005

### **New tribunal claim and response forms become mandatory**

*The use of the new forms, introduced on 1 October, becomes mandatory*

### **Making the headlines**

#### **Outrage over pub's bogus disabled toilet**

Disabled campaigners hit out at a Dublin pub over a bogus disabled toilet which has deceived wheelchair users. The Mezz bar in Temple Bar features a red door with a gold wheelchair sign, indicating disabled facilities. But the locked door is simply built into the wall and there is no toilet behind it.

[Link](#)

#### **Gyms fail disability access test**

Most of the national gym chains do not provide full access for disabled people, a survey reveals. Disabled children's charity Whizz-Kidz found only two out of eight leisure groups had access in all their gyms.

[Link](#)

#### **Hearing aid**

The ambulance service should have both deaf and hearing crews or at least give training in sign language. Why emergency services should utilise the skills of deaf people.

[Link](#)

### **Links**

See the following websites for further information

[www.3aconsult.co.uk](http://www.3aconsult.co.uk)

[www.disability.gov.uk](http://www.disability.gov.uk)



[www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

[www.access2go.co.uk](http://www.access2go.co.uk)