

## **THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT**

The aim of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) is to stop discrimination against disabled people including the hearing impaired. The act was recently extended to cover education in schools and colleges and will be strengthened further in October 2004 as the Disability Rights

Commission's (DRC) new code of practice comes into effect.

Service providers, i.e. companies or organisations offering goods, facilities and services to the general public, must make 'reasonable' adjustments' to ensure that they do not unlawfully discriminate against disabled people. Employers must also take measures to ensure that existing and potential employees are not disadvantaged in the workplace.

Under the Act, 'reasonable adjustments' including provision of various auxiliary aids, including temporary induction loop systems, to enable deaf or hard of hearing person to access goods, facilities or services available to the general public. At present, service providers do not have to make any permanent adjustment to their buildings. This, however, is about to change. From October 2004, service providers will be required to install permanent induction loops and infra-red systems where it is impossible or unreasonable for the deaf or hard of hearing person to make use of a service.

Service providers who fail to make adequate provision for people with hearing disabilities face prosecution. Furthermore it is not enough to simply install an hard of hearing system - it must be properly maintained and staff must know how to use it. (DDA, Auxiliary aids and services 5.13).

Some examples of service providers covered under the Act are:

- Telecommunication and broadcasting organisations
- Public utility companies, such as gas, electricity and water suppliers
- Leisure centres, football stadia, national parks and health clubs
- Bus and railway stations, airports and travel agents
- Shops, hairdressers, post offices, banks and building societies
- Hotels, restaurants, cinemas, theatres and pubs
- Hospitals, waiting rooms, clinics
- Solicitors' offices, courts and mosques

The DRC advises service providers to take steps now to prepare for their extended obligations.

CALL CPS ON 01202 57 2000 for Friendly Helpful advice on the Technology available.