



Accessibility and environment

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People who have experienced trauma and homelessness often face significant barriers when accessing financial and customer services. Customer service environments can feel both intimidating and overwhelming. Creating a calm, accessible and supportive environment which is open to all can make a significant difference to the experience. It creates a safe and trusting space, promotes inclusion, encourages engagement and helps people to rebuild stability.

Physical accessibility and creating a trauma informed environment

To ensure an environment is initially welcoming to all, physical accessibility should be considered to make spaces easy to navigate. Awareness of both visible and invisible disabilities, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), visual impairments, neurodivergence, and language barriers should be a priority, and staff must receive training to effectively support and accommodate a diverse range of needs.

The design of spaces is important; calm colours, the ability to offer private rooms and quiet areas with soft lighting can help reduce stress for people who may be sensitive to noise, bright lights and crowded spaces.

The efforts that staff make to act and communicate in a transparent way, can help someone feel able to sit in a waiting area, or stay through their appointment, instead of experiencing anxiety and having to leave early, without addressing their needs.

Person centred approach

Taking a person-centred approach means that you proactively ask about whether someone has any additional needs that should be considered. Avoid making assumptions about customer needs and instead ask how you can make things more accessible. This ensures that each person's individual needs, preferences, and experiences are heard and respected. It requires actively listening to customers, validating their feelings, and adjusting services to meet their specific circumstances. Creating a welcoming environment can help put people at ease, encouraging open discussions about their support needs, particularly when they appear nervous or anxious.

Reducing barriers to services

Support inclusivity by offering diverse communication methods like phone, email, text speak, and in-person support to meet varying needs. Make digital platforms easy to navigate with user-friendly interfaces and support for people with visible and invisible disabilities. Promote digital inclusion through accessible online resources, free Wi-Fi access points, and support with navigating digital tools.

Train call centre staff to approach sensitive situations with patience and empathy, and to provide clear guidance and supportive follow up actions. This will help to maintain engagement and build trust.

Specialist staff or teams

Having dedicated staff or teams who are able to support people in a person-centred way and respond to individual needs with understanding can make a difference to someone's overall experience, wellbeing and promotes inclusivity.

This may look different depending on the size of your organisation and the resources available. If a full team of specialists is not feasible, appointing one or two passionate individuals as accessibility and inclusivity champions can be useful. They can receive ongoing training, and act as key points of contact for the rest of the team.

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