

Michael Collon
Committee Clerk
Select Committee on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability,
Committee Office,
House of Lords,
London SW1A 0PW

16 July 2015

Dear Michael

Written evidence submitted by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics is an independent body that examines and reports on ethical issues in biology and medicine. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Committee's Call for Evidence on the impact on people with disabilities of the Equality Act 2010.

In 2009, the Council published a report titled *Dementia: ethical issues* (available online: <http://nuffieldbioethics.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Dementia-report-Oct-09.pdf>). One of the conclusions of this report was that, as a society, we need to do more to enable people with dementia to live well. Indeed, since the publication of our report, we note the increased recognition of a need for a 'dementia friendly society' in the UK.

Our own research (para 4.30) suggests that some service providers may not be aware of the fact that the Equality Act (the Disability Discrimination Act at the time at which our report was published) extends to people with dementia, and even if they do, they are unlikely to have sufficient knowledge of dementia to make appropriate adjustments. We propose that service provision for people with dementia may be improved through a higher level of awareness and promotion of good practice.

We would therefore like to respond to the following question raised by the Committee's Call for Evidence:

Chair
Professor Jonathan Montgomery

Deputy Chair
Professor Julian Hughes

Members
Revd Dr Michael Banner
Professor Simon Caney
Dr Tara Clancy
Professor Jeanette Edwards
Professor Ann Gallagher
Dr Andy Greenfield
Professor Erica Haimes
Sir Roland Jackson
David Lawrence
Professor Shaun Pattinson
Dr Tom Shakespeare
Professor Mona Siddiqui
Professor Christine Watson
Dr Geoff Watts
Professor Robin Weiss
Professor Heather Widdows
Adam Wishart
Dr Paquita de Zulueta

Director
Hugh Whittall

Assistant Directors
Dr Peter Mills
Katharine Wright

“Should the law be more explicit on what constitutes a reasonable adjustment? If so, in what way?”

We suggest that service providers need to be given a more explicit steer on the kind of reasonable adjustments that can be made for people with dementia. Research on building ‘dementia friendly’ environments is available from organisations such as the University of Stirling’s Dementia Services Development Centre, and there is growing interest in the importance of environmental design in specialist dementia care environments.

However, practical guidance on what reasonable adjustments ordinary services such as shops, leisure services and restaurants could be expected to make for people with dementia is not readily available. Relatively minor adjustments, such as clearer signage, strong lighting and non-slip, non-reflective flooring, as well as an increase in staff awareness and understanding of dementia, could do much to make services more accessible to people with dementia.

We further suggest that a more explicit exploration of the reasonable adjustments that service providers might make for people with dementia might be added to the Act’s Code of Practice. As it currently stands, the Code lacks detail, stating: *“people with dementia, mental health conditions or mobility impairments may face different types of barriers.”* We suggest that this should include specific examples of good practice that service providers can access.

In addition, to reinforce the Code of Practice, the Committee may also consider adding clearer references in the Act itself.

We would like to thank the Committee for issuing the Call for Evidence, and look forward to reading its conclusions. If we may be of further assistance, please contact us at bioethics@nuffieldbioethics.org

Yours sincerely

Hugh Whittall
Director