

Victoria Place Shopping Centre Customer Services Awareness of Hidden Disability

SUNFLOWER LANYARD SCHEME



The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard scheme is an initiative designed to act as a discreet sign that a customer has a hidden disability and may require additional assistance while out in a public space.

It is an initiative supported by charities, and first introduced at airports. A bright green strap with yellow sunflowers has been introduced allowing easy and discrete identification of customers who may need extra assistance while in the shopping centre. It is worn around the neck (called a lanyard) to let others know you have a hidden disability.

Wearing the Sunflower Lanyard indicates to those who are aware of the initiative you may need additional assistance. Airports, train stations, supermarkets and shopping centres are beginning to embrace this initiative. It is recognised, help will be different for each individual customer. A customer can use the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard to visually show to others you may need additional assistance – it may be as simple as understanding a little more time or space is required.

Which hidden disabilities eligible for a sunflower lanyard?

The types of hidden disabilities that are eligible for a sunflower lanyard include:

- Anxiety and Nervousness of crowded places
- Crohn's disease, coeliac disease, sickle cell anaemia, and lupus
- Autism and Asperger's
- Learning disabilities
- Dementia
- Mobility issues (ie arthritis, MS, ME, chronic illness)
- Visual or hearing impairments

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Being in a busy shopping centre environment adjacent to a major London travel hub with hundreds of other customers may leave some feeling overwhelmed and anxious. Victoria Place also has awareness and recognises the 'Can't Wait Card' initiative.

Hidden Disability – 'Can't Wait Card'

The 'Can't Wait Card' is also a form of notification a Victoria Place customer can use to show they have a hidden disability. This is more often used when the use of Victoria Place public toilet facilities are required urgently, without having to give a detailed or sensitive explanation on their condition.

A major anxiety for people living with a Hidden Disabilities condition is being refused access to toilets or being confronted about using a 'disabled' toilet. Whilst someone may appear to look 'okay' on the outside, they may be in a daily battle with the condition and urgently need to use a toilet whilst out in public.

This is more associated with

- IBS and other Bladder and Bowel conditions
- Crohns
- Colitis

Hidden Disability – Anxiety and Nervousness

Anxiety it is when an individual feels nervous, frightened or uneasy about something. It is okay to feel this way from time to time, as it is the body's natural response to a situation we are not comfortable with. However, some people can and will feel it more often than others and it can have a difficult impact on their lives.

How does the Sunflower Lanyard work for people with hidden disabilities?

If you're wearing a lanyard, our team can offer you help without knowing about your individual disability. Please let our team know what they can do to reasonably assist you.

The support that can be provided with a lanyard includes:

Victoria Place will try to understand your needs by:-

- Providing a supportive approach and manner at 1st Engagement
- Explain in detail what the customer can expect when shopping or travelling through Victoria Place
- Speaking face-to-face to allow lip reading
- Using clear and easy-to-understand language
- Assistance in using lift or escalator
- Recognise that a customer maybe with family members or travel companions
- Raising awareness to team members or others a person may be struggling or have behavioural issues.
- If required provide for a short period a 'safe haven' in which a customer can have time away from the hustle and bustle of the shopping centre if required

Note: Most importantly Victoria Place Shopping Centre team totally understands if following initial engagement with an offer of assistance the customer politely decline's or states it is not required on this occasion.

Awareness Action Plan

Introduction

Victoria Place Centre Management and ABM management team will undertake awareness discussions with team members on a regular basis.

What are Hidden Disabilities?

A hidden disability (Invisible condition) is a medical condition that cannot be seen. Invisible conditions can affect people in different ways. These are not usually considered life-threatening illnesses but they can affect the daily life of the person living with them.

For example, someone with chronic pain or showing signs of distress might need to sit down on public transport, but you'd never be able to tell they weren't well just by looking at them.

Someone with an invisible condition might experience pain all or some of the time, they might not be able to eat certain things, or they might get tired more easily than others.

The symptoms of some types of invisible conditions can come and go, and the person may not be affected by it all the time.

So one day they could look and feel fine, the next they may not.

How can we assist or help

At VPSC we recognise the importance of identifying our customers who may be wearing a Sunflower Lanyard. If we do notice this, our staff are trained to do the following:

- Understand and approach the customer sensitively and ask if they need any additional assistance
- Be patient with the customer and understand they may need time and space to respond to questions
- Offer the customer support and guide to where they need to go to within VPSC, ie calling a lift.
- Offer contacting their next of kin or travelling companion should they be confused, distressed or lost
- In certain conditions offer a temporary 'safe refuge' (Centre Management meeting room), where they can rest for a bit away from noise
- Our team need to assess each situation individually as and when it occurs
- If, requested escort customer to the Public Toilets facilities and wait for them outside

Please note, customers may not approach you to ask for assistance. VPSC requires a proactive approach to our customer service as that allows us to get in touch with vulnerable customers and those who may need assistance but don't have the confidence to ask for it. The Sunflower Lanyard is the easy and discreet method of identifying those who have a Hidden Disability

Please refer to your customer services Bronze and Silver level training ensuring all our customers are treated equally and with respect without any bias or prejudice.

Not all of our customers are the same therefore we need to ensure we provide optimum customer service to enhance their visit and experience while at Victoria Place Shopping Centre.

Note: Most importantly the Victoria Place team should understand if following an introduction of offering assistance, if the offer of assistance is declined or not required by the customer please do not take this personally.