

# Meeting the needs of customers with disabilities

There are around 11.9 million people living with a disability in the UK – that's around 19 per cent of the population. It's important to consider how your pharmacy caters for these customers to ensure their needs are adequately met. Here are some tips for you to consider.

## 01 COMMUNICATION

The communication skills that you have learnt so far all apply, but when helping a customer with a disability, you should also think about the following:

- Don't make any assumptions about the type of disability the person has
- Don't assume that the customer needs your help. Treat them like any other customer and politely ask if they need any assistance
- Listen carefully and adapt your communication style if necessary. For example, write down your replies or advice
- Be patient as some people with certain disabilities may take a little longer to understand and/or respond
- If you can't understand the customer then politely ask them to repeat
- If a customer has difficulty speaking don't assume they have an intellectual or developmental disability
- Speak directly to the customer and not to a carer or the person accompanying them
- If a conversation with a person in a wheelchair lasts more than a few minutes, consider sitting down so you're at the same eye-level.

## 02 STORE LAYOUT

It goes without saying that your pharmacy should be welcoming to all customers. But how accessible is it?

With at least 56 per cent of disabled people having an impairment relating to mobility, think about how someone in a wheelchair or using a walking aid enters and moves around your pharmacy.

Ensure the aisles are clear of boxes and stock to ensure a clear passage around the shop floor, and that customers can get to the pharmacy counter easily.

## 03 MEDICATION & DISPENSING SERVICES

Consider the pharmacy services that can be a real help to people with a disability.

For instance, some customers may benefit from using the repeat prescription service where they can order their next supply of repeat medication in the pharmacy and save them an unnecessary trip to the GP surgery.

Or perhaps the pharmacy's delivery service for people who are housebound would be beneficial.

Medicines could also be dispensed in monitored dosage systems for people who struggle to remember to take their medicines or have dexterity problems.

