



'Spotlight on...' equality, diversity and inclusion

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Safety, and Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are two areas we pride ourselves on at Highways England. Luckily for me as an On-Road Traffic Officer and EDI Champion I can help combine the two topics.

As a company we're looking at adapted vehicles on our road network. By helping to roll out training on these adapted vehicles it firstly improves the customers safety at the road side but increases the speed us as an organisation can deal with an incident thus improving safety and raising disability awareness at the same time.



Communication is key to my job. When I first started I was told the acronym ABCD. On a big incident the whole thing moves a lot smoother and support resources can be called faster if this acronym is adhered to always. This acronym stands for Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity and Discipline. Keeping calm and maintaining the communication discipline with every incident helps control the scene and in turn keeps the customer calm.

After struggling to communicate with a deaf lady on an incident one day I felt embarrassed I couldn't give this customer the same level of service I could give to a hearing person. I personally thought this was unacceptable. When I found I had a little down time myself I started by learning the alphabet and numbers with my colleagues at work via YouTube. Between us we had a little fun as this was a practical experience, so we corrected each other when wrong and progressed quickly through a few videos. At home I got my kids involved in the learning process - basic words such as 'hungry' and 'juice' were soon being asked for in the family household in sign language!

I continue to learn British Sign Language as and when I can. Being involved in an accident or breakdown on the motorway is frightening enough but then not being able to communicate with anyone whilst being scared already must be terrifying. I want to reduce this communication barrier as much as I can so I've done a short British Sign Language video for Highways England Traffic Officers to watch and pick up a few very simple words or phrases. This short video has had a lot of interest and requests have been made for further videos to help improve the vocabulary of our Traffic Officers, including words such as 'recovery', 'time' and simple safety advice which I hope to run out monthly.

I would advise anyone that wants to learn British Sign Language to give it a go, there's nothing to lose. Whether that's just learning basic numbers, the alphabet and greetings on free internet search videos or by doing an affiliated course on the internet at a small cost. Due to Covid most of these courses are run via a Zoom or Teams based programme so the qualification can be gained without leaving your living room.



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The subject of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion has a misconception that it can be a boring topic and it's not needed. This cannot be further from the truth. Since becoming an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion I have seen such a variety in topics from language, to disability and pride events each offering a different perspective to the last but also very different training techniques. The personal growth in all areas of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion helps us become a more understanding person and assists us in challenging appropriately. Stay Safe and remember 'Its nice to be nice'.