



Changing the image of disability

Ten principles of disability-smart imagery

- 1. Include disabled people.** Nearly 1 in 4 people in the UK has a disability. Despite this, disabled people continue to be underrepresented in images used in the media, advertising, and marketing. You can help change that.
- 2. Represent disabled people and disability in an accurate and equitable way.** Think about the context in which you are using the image and the message being conveyed, including in any accompanying copy and text descriptors.
- 3. Portray disability in the broadest sense including less-visible disabilities.** Use images of people with a range of disabilities including people with less-visible conditions. Someone with a less-visible disability may use physical adjustments to help manage their condition, so consider showing these.
- 4. Reflect the diversity of disabled people.** Use images which represent the diversity of disabled people, including diversity of beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, culture, background and appearance.

5. **Show real disabled people in real life situations.** Never ask someone to 'pretend' to have a disability or condition they do not have. Use disabled models or volunteers in the imagery you commission. Consider the authenticity of any stock images you use.
6. **Represent disabled people as more than just a disability or condition.** Avoid making a person's disability the main subject of an image unless appropriate to the story or communication. Provide a complete picture of the person by showing other aspects of their identity and experiences.
7. **Increase understanding of disability and help to dispel myths.** Disabled people do not want to be pitied or patronised or shown as 'heroes' or 'inspirational' just because they have a disability. Show disabled people in everyday, realistic situations.
8. **Review the images you use in consultation with disabled people.** Regularly review samples of the images you are using. If you are planning a communication campaign, ask for feedback on images at every stage.
9. **Make sure your message is clear and accessible to all.** Use captions and alternative text with images. Captions explain the context of the image. Alternative text describes a digital image to someone who cannot see it. Both help people understand and access your content.
10. **Only use with the permission of the people in the image.** Create clear usage agreements for any images you are commissioning. If editing an image, make sure you are not changing how the person asked to be portrayed.



These ten principles have been adapted from Business Disability Forum's Changing the image of disability guidance; How to select, commission and use disability-smart images.

All images used in this document come from our Disability Smart Image Bank.



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Business Disability Forum's 'Changing the image of disability' campaign aims to transform the way that disabled people and disability are represented in the media, advertising and marketing.

Find out more about the campaign, and the image bank and guidance we have created at www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/changing-the-image-of-disability

Business Disability Forum

Business Disability Forum is the leading business membership organisation in disability inclusion. We are trusted partners, working with business, Government and disabled people to improve the life experiences of disabled employees and consumers, by removing barriers to inclusion.

Find out more on our website: www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

Join us

Over 550 of the UK's largest businesses, global brands, public sector employers and SMEs are Members of Business Disability Forum.

Find about the benefits of joining us at www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/membership



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