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## Module 2 Learning Unit 6

# The main access requirements of people with different disabilities and other groups of tourists

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**Games Without Barriers**

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Abilities of people change from childhood to old age and can vary considerably whatever their age. People can experience restrictions to their activities because of a mix of possible impairments, health conditions and personal and environmental factors. Combination of impairments can impose significant limitations, as is often the case in ageing. Children can also have specific access requirements or impairments. Accessibility to places, spaces and equipment therefore represents the means by which to allow and guarantee everyone participation in life activities in an active and autonomous way. People with disabilities may have one or more of the impairments that follow in the next paragraphs.

### Motor impairments

Motor impairment is the partial or total loss of physical abilities including balance, walking, holding and manipulating objects, pushing, pulling, lifting and reaching. Many activities involve more than one of these abilities.

Access needs of visitors with motor impairments are related mostly to the **built environment** which should be designed free of barriers and according to Universal Design principles in order to enable all users to move in safety and comfort, to use the facilities and participate in activities.

**People with difficulties/limitations in walking, balance and limited strength.** This group is quite differentiated by the type of their impairment. For some people, walking on the level or up or down gradients/stairs is difficult. Some people may have a limited range of motion, other may not be able to move on foot independently. People with poor balance, with reduced stamina and/or coordination are typically older people but also children may be in the same condition. People with walking difficulties may not be able to walk a long way or even stand up for long time, becoming tired quickly, moving slowly etc. They may be more likely to slip or fall down. They may need handrails on both sides of a ramp or staircase for support. They may have difficulties in walking on uneven or loose surfaces. They may need non-slip floor surfaces. They may need to rent or borrow walking aids, wheelchairs or scooters available in specific venues. They may need another person to support them to walk.

**People with difficulties in handling objects.** Motor difficulties/impairments are not only related to legs but also to arms, hands and fingers movements. These impairments can prevent people from manipulating or grasping objects and from doing combined movements or turn the wrist, lift objects etc. These people may also have difficulty in holding objects, carrying bags and other items or turning handles to open doors, using taps etc.

**People with a limited reach range.** The reach range depends on the height of the person, their ability to use their arms and balance, their strength and/or mobility of their upper body while seated. It is particularly important to have things within easy reach for those with more severe mobility limitations.

For people using a wheelchair, the reach range is limited depending on the seated position.

### Sensory impairments

This refers to impairments in one or more senses – vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell. They reduce a person’s ability to perceive, understand and act in various situations. People who lose one of the senses later in life may find their activities severely restricted, whilst those who have been blind or deaf since birth may have learned skills that help them to communicate, orientate themselves and carry out their daily activities in an independent manner and find their way.

People with sensory impairments often cannot travel independently and many have another person - a companion, helper or assistant to help them, especially when travelling and when coming to unfamiliar surroundings for the first time.

People with sensory impairments may use specialised assistive technologies to help them communicate with other people, read or interpret visual or auditory messages, orientate themselves and move around.

**Vision impairments.** People with vision impairments may be blind or partially sighted. They can be **exposed to dangers**, including injuring themselves by walking off paths, tripping on steps, bumping into unmarked objects or hurting themselves on hot surfaces or sharp objects and edges. If the problem of vision is combined with balance problems the individual is exposed to higher risks, including colliding with objects, slipping and falling. Visitors with vision impairment (not only blind persons) may use a cane to detect obstacles on a route. Some may use a guide dog (service animal) to assist them in way-finding, negotiating road crossings and warning them of dangers. Their access needs will vary according to the person's level of sight and will be related mainly to the access to information, safety of movement and orientation in an unknown environment.

**Hearing impairments.** They are invisible at a first glance. They include partial hearing loss or complete deafness. The strength, pitch and intensity of sound that can be perceived vary from person to person. Access needs of people with hearing impairments are related particularly to the communication and access to information. People who are born with a hearing impairment or deafness communicate mostly using sign language. Sign languages vary from country to country, so this is important to know for interpretation purposes. People born with a hearing impairment may have difficulty in writing and speaking because of the difficulty they have experienced in acquiring language.

**Speech impairments.** Those impairments are related to the lack of ability to speak or dysarthria. This may imply difficulties when holding a conversation with others. People may be misunderstood, and this may lead to the danger of not being able to alert service personnel or another individual when needing help or when there is a danger. Some people use sign language to speak or assistive devices to enhance or supplement their speech, either with a keyboard or another communication device. Pictograms may also serve as a medium of communication for those who lack speech. Having paper and pencil handy can help to overcome communication problems, in many situations.

**Reduced sense of touch.** Those people may have nerve damage, paralysis or missing limbs. They have problems in sensing any kind of objects that they have to interact with. Some may not be able to feel anything with the **lower part of their body and legs**, others may also have a loss of feeling in the **hands and arms** and upper body. Lack of feeling can affect the ability to use a touch screen or other devices that need to be perceived partly by touch. Guests who lack the sense of touch or feeling may be at **risk of injury** from objects that are very sharp, very hot or very cold, as they do not react to them on contact.

**Reduced smell and taste.** Those people experience similar problems linked to their lack of sensory perception. The main dangers they can face are in failing to react to toxic chemicals, other dangerous airborne pollutants or smoke from a fire.

### **Cognitive impairments, learning difficulties and Mental ill-health conditions**

Under this very wide category we have people with problems in understanding, processing or using information, people on the autism spectrum, people with Asperger Syndrome, people with dementia, people with short-term memory loss, people with dyslexia, people who are first time users of a very complex, busy environment. Generally speaking, people with these impairments have difficulty to learn and understand as most people do, to access information at the same speed or in the same way as others, difficulty to follow instructions, to understand where someone is, to identify people or to behave in an appropriate manner in a given setting. They face dangers of disorientation, of getting lost, and they may feel isolated. Memory loss is a form of cognitive impairment. It can cause problems of acting inappropriately in a given situation. People with cognitive problems may need assistance and simplified, well-structured information to enable them to be safe and to enjoy a visit. It is better to use signs, symbols and pictograms than rely on printed word. 'Easy-to-Read' is a form of writing that has been developed to inform people with learning difficulties in a simpler way. People who do not understand the local language may benefit from the above.

### **Other people with specific access requirements**

It is also important to pay attention to other groups of people who may have specific access requirements but are not included entirely under the above categories.

- Older people
- Small children
- People of very large or small stature
- People who don't understand the local language
- People with long term health conditions: (epilepsy, cardio-vascular conditions, allergies and hypersensitivities, food intolerance and special diets, asthma , etc.)