



SUNFLOWER SCHEME

A CASE STUDY OF A USEFUL DEVICE FOR D/DEAF CUSTOMERS

INTRODUCTION

The Sunflower is a globally recognised symbol for non-visible disabilities, also known as hidden disabilities or invisible disabilities. It is a British scheme and the company that created have used it to help people with hidden disabilities navigate and find help in public places. It is now used in major airports all around the world, becoming the universally recognised symbol for hidden disabilities.

AWARENESS OF A HIDDEN DISABILITY.

Deafness is considered by the scheme as a 'hidden disability', although the term disability is contentious among the Deaf community. From the Sunflower Scheme website, there is a comprehensive definition and understanding of what they mean by hidden disabilities

“While some of us experience a disability that is visible, many of us have a non-visible impairment or condition. These non-visible disabilities, also known as invisible or hidden disabilities, are not immediately obvious. They can be physical, mental or neurological and include, but are not limited to, autism and Asperger syndrome, cognitive impairments such as learning difficulties and dementia, as well as mental health conditions and speech, visual impairments or hearing loss. They also include respiratory and chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, chronic pain and sleep disorders when these significantly impact day-to-day life. Although you may not be able to see these invisible impairments and conditions, they’re still there.”

According to the Sunflower Scheme website, one in seven of us live with a disability around the globe. Of those, 80% are invisible, which equates to one billion people who are living with a non-visible disability. Often, many people experience a combination of both visible and non-visible impairments and conditions. The scheme truly believes that awareness is vital when it comes to hidden disabilities so they can help to improve the lives of people experiencing them.

People living with these often face barriers in their daily lives including a lack of understanding and negative attitudes. Many people choose to wear a Sunflower lanyard as a symbol which discreetly identifies that they may need support, help, or just a little more time in shops, on transport or in public spaces.



sunflower
lanyard scheme®

Assisting people with hidden disabilities



SERVICE PROVISION FOR D/DEAF CUSTOMERS

The scheme began in 2016 when the accessibility team at Gatwick Airport recognised that some passengers had an invisible disability and may need some extra support. As a result, the Sunflower was designed to allow passengers to choose to indicate that they have an invisible disability in order to have the confidence to travel independently, knowing that they will get assistance without having to pre-disclose their situation. Since then, the Sunflower has continued to be adopted by airports around the world and most recently, Heathrow Airport lit up their control tower with the Sunflower lanyard. Now the scheme has been adopted by many other organisations and is rapidly growing.

The Sunflower lanyards are intended to let staff members know that the wearer has a hidden disability and as a result may take longer or need extra assistance. Staff members are trained to spot the lanyards and help the wearer. The scheme achieved further recognition during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic as a way of identifying those who were exempt from wearing face coverings due to a hidden disability. Event workers at the 2021 Wimbledon Tennis Championships were told to look out for those with Sunflower lanyards during the tournament in order to excuse them for not wearing face masks. The Sunflower Scheme is continuing to look for ways in which it can raise awareness for invisible disabilities. They state that:

“So as to raise awareness of the wide range of non-visible disabilities that our Sunflower wearers experience, we are building an index of disabilities that have few or no outwards visible signs. Alongside the Sunflower training we provide, you can now explore how you can support Sunflower wearers and consider workplace accommodations for your colleagues and customers based on their specific invisible disability.”

HIDDEN disabilities

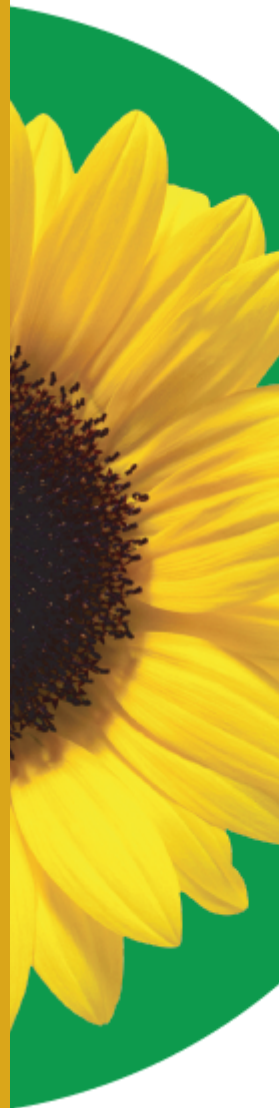


SIGNING BANKS

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN BANKING

The scheme has a strong partnership with Lloyds Bank. In August 2020 Lloyds became the first bank to launch the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard scheme across all their branches as part of their commitment to provide an inclusive workplace for colleagues with disabilities and/or long-term health conditions and provide accessible and inclusive products and services to better support their customers with disabilities. Now HSBC has also adopted the Sunflower Scheme in UK and Hong Kong

The Sunflower is used to discreetly indicate that the wearer may need a little more support and to prompt a conversation. This allows banks to better understand their customers, and the challenges they may face, and adapt their behaviour to meet their needs. Lloyds are committed to the scheme and pledge that, "If you have a non-visible disability and choose to wear the Sunflower when you deal with Lloyds Bank, you will be supported to do so in your own way."



Co-funded by the
European Union

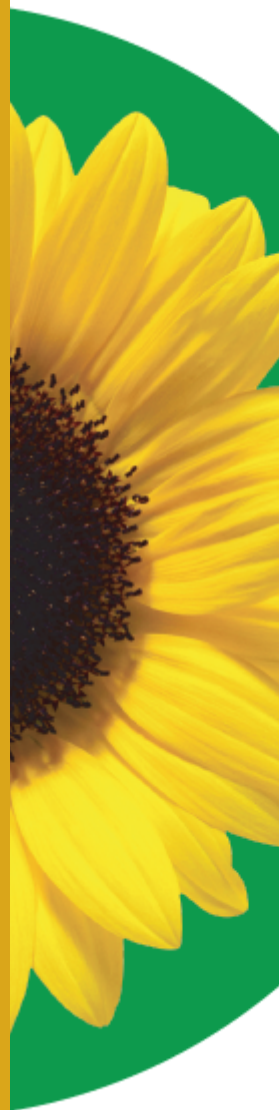
HIDDEN disabilities



SIGNING BANKS

CONCLUSION

The Sunflower Scheme has without doubt been a success, becoming the universally recognisable symbol for hidden disabilities. The symbol of the Sunflower is seen at airports and train stations, and is worn by many people with invisible disabilities so as to make their life easier as they navigate through public spaces. Today the Sunflower symbol has moved beyond its original intention and can even be seen on dating apps with people choosing to put a Sunflower emoji in their bio as an indication that they have a disability. This shows just how synonymous the Sunflower has become with hidden disabilities. Its adoption by banks such as Lloyds could be useful for the d/Deaf community who face many barriers when it comes to accessing financial institutions. The work of the scheme to raise awareness for hidden disabilities is vital and continues to this day.



Co-funded by the
European Union