

Deaf Awareness training leads the way



WPD staff are pictured with Action on Hearing Loss Trainer Mark Cunliffe (front) at one of the training workshops held in Cardiff.

Cardiff -based customer contact center staff at Western Power Distribution (WPD) have received specialist deaf awareness training to further hone their communication skills.

The training – led by charity Action on Hearing Loss – has been specially tailored to meet the needs of WPD’s social media team who operate within its contact center. Its aim is to help staff better understand some of the frustrations that people with hearing loss can feel when communicating with them.

Of the 1.4 million customers who have signed up for WPD’s free Priority Service Register designed to help vulnerable people during a power cut, 95,000 are deaf or have hearing loss.

Mark Cunliffe of Action on Hearing Loss who himself is deaf, explained how the deaf awareness workshops can help to improve staff confidence and communication skills:

“Using scenarios and role play, we are able to encourage staff to start thinking about the different ways to communicate in a broader, more flexible manner, provide communication tips and promote good practice.

“So it’s about learning to ask questions in a different, perhaps more simplistic way, and by helping to break down barriers.”

WPD Team Leader, Rebecca Betty said the two half-day workshops were excellent and greatly enjoyed by the 32 staff who took part.

“WPD has been praised for its excellent levels of service and accessibility and is one of the first electricity distribution companies to sign up to use the free NGT (Next Generation Text) service,” she said.

“By using the NGT Lite App on a computer, tablet or smartphone, customers will now be able to contact us directly using the text messaging service. This eliminates the need to use a relay adviser.

“The timing of this training has proved invaluable, and will certainly help us to engage more confidently when dealing with customers in the future.”

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