



## The impact of Covid-19 on disabled customers – some recommendations for the retail sector

### 1. Accessible Website

Ensure that your website has a clear and accessible layout and that it is compatible with text to speech converters. Provide text captions and alternative text for images. This is particularly important, as additional information may have been added due to Covid-19.

It is important to ensure that the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) are followed in relation to your website - <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

### 2. Pre-visit Information

Make it easy for your customers to plan their trip by providing information on: opening hours; nearby transport links; accessible facilities such as induction loops, accessible toilets, large print resources, wheelchairs for loan; sign language interpreters and any other staff assistance available.

Provide the name, telephone number and/or email of the member of staff to contact if people have specific queries about their visit.

Give information about extra services/arrangements currently in place to ensure customer safety, such as use of additional cleaning measures, hand sanitisers, social distancing measures and one-way systems.

Use social media to share the latest information about access facilities which are available, closed for maintenance and/or temporarily out of order.

Consider using photos of trained staff, who are disability aware, as this can be reassuring to customers.

### 3. Signage

Ensure your signage is in a visible location and that it is easy to read. This should include signs relating to social distancing measures, one-way systems and queue management information and should be in

simple and clear font with text and symbols for easy reading. For internal signs, use symbols with clear tonal contrast. Including images and text can help visitors identify the facilities available.

#### **4. Entrance and Exit**

Ensure any changes to entrances and exits are clearly marked, particularly where a one-way system is in operation and that a staff member is on hand to assist where necessary. Ensure any outside product displays do not cause an obstruction and that there is sufficient space to gain entry.

#### **5. Staff Training**

Ensure that any staff involved in queue management receive disability awareness training and that all other staff are made aware of the reasonable adjustments which may be necessary for some disabled customers. You may also decide to have a staff member specifically trained on disability access issues.

#### **6. Staff Assistance**

Ensure that staff are available to help with lifting, reaching high shelves, carrying shopping for wheelchair users, or others with mobility impairments, who need assistance.

Staff should be patient and courteous - Ensure that they are ready to repeat or clarify information when required - your customers may present you with their JAM card - <https://jamcard.org>

#### **7. Priority Access**

Offer priority access for elderly or disabled people who may find it difficult to wait in a queue in order to access your premises. This may mean allowing some customers to go to the top of the queue or to wait in their vehicle until they may go in.

#### **8. Screens**

Where perspex screens are used, ensure they are edged with tape to offer a contrast so that they are more easily identifiable by people with visual impairments.

#### **9. Masks**

Where staff are using face masks to protect themselves and others, consider supplying them with clear or transparent masks, so that customers who have difficulty hearing will be able to lip read and see

facial expressions - [Face masks - overcoming the barriers they pose to communications.](#)

Where this is not possible, you should ensure that signage advises that any customer with hearing difficulty may advise staff so that alternative arrangements may be put in place, eg writing a note.

#### **10. Attitudes**

Ensure that all customers, including disabled customers, are treated with dignity and respect whilst shopping. For example, some disabled and elderly customers may require more time to complete their purchases at checkout.

#### **11. Toilets**

If you have decided to close your customer toilets due to the coronavirus, you may want to consider opening them to disabled people on request.

#### **12. Payment**

If you are encouraging customers to use cards instead of cash for payment, ensure that all portable terminals are located so they can be easily used by all customers, including those who may find it difficult to reach up from a wheelchair, for example.

#### **13. Review**

Ask disabled customers what you can do better – perhaps use social media channels as well as in-store methods to survey your customers to ensure you are aware of customers' needs.

Monitor and assess customer queries and reasonable adjustment requests from disabled customers to review if these have been managed appropriately.

#### **14. Further help**

More detailed advice about how to improve the accessibility of your services for disabled people can be found in Every Customer Counts – improving accessible services [Accessible retail - good practice guide](#)