

Top tips for businesses and community venues

Making your business or community venue more accessible for disabled people



1. Staff and volunteer attitude, awareness and training

This is the top priority for many disabled people. You might think that disability access is all about expensive changes to buildings, but actually a positive and helpful attitude from staff or volunteers and some basic understanding about how to make your service more accessible for disabled people will make a huge difference to your customers.

For example:

- Patience with disabled people who may need more time, for example people with a learning disability, a communication impairment or dementia
- Knowing where a ramp for the entrance is stored and how to use it safely
- Communicating with other members of staff or volunteers that a disabled person has booked and that they may need assistance
- Checking to make sure that there is safe and unobstructed movement for the disabled person around the premises
- Encouraging staff or volunteers to offer help however it may be needed (but ask, don't assume!)
- Looking at and talking to the disabled person rather than to their carer, if they have one
- Responding quickly to a front doorbell or other request for help
- Reading information out for someone with a visual impairment, for example a menu

2. Small changes can make a big difference

Simple improvements can really help, for example a front doorbell and sign to summon assistance from staff or volunteers, clear and easily read signage, grab handles on steps or in toilets, seats in a shop, large print menus, keeping background music at a low volume for people with a hearing impairment, portable ramps.... the list is endless.

3. Ask your customers or service users

Your customers are the best people to tell you about ways to make your business or community venue more disabled-friendly – ask them for feedback and suggestions. You could also ask your local disability access group, if there's one in your area, to carry out an access check:

www.nypartnerships.org.uk/access

4. Make good use of your space

Think about how your customers or service users, including those who are disabled, will get around your premises. Keep doorways and pathways around the premises clear from obstructions. Is there flat access inside, or do you need to think about how people get from one level to another? Think about overhead obstructions for people with a visual impairment. Are any steps clearly marked with a contrasting edging? If you have an accessible toilet, don't use it as a storage area as this could stop a person in a wheelchair from being able to use it. Make sure that the lighting is bright and consistent, and signs are clear and high-contrast.

5. Information, information, information!

Tell people about your business or community venue and any accessibility adjustments that you've made, for example does it have flat access, ramps or steps? Is there blue badge parking available, are there any accessible toilets and so on. It's really important for disabled people to know whether or not they will be able to access your service or business. This information can make the difference between a disabled person using your service or business, or deciding to go to a competitor.

You could put this information on your website or on sites such as Euan's Guide:

www.euansguide.com

Make sure that access at your premises is clearly signed, for example to show where an alternative flat entrance is, or a bell to ask for assistance at the door, or where the toilet is. And don't put signs too high up or people won't be able to see them, or reach them if they are tactile signs for visually impaired people.

More tips and checklists to help you make your service accessible:

www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/media-centre/news/infographic-is-your-premises-accessible-disabled-access-day-2015

www.inclusion.me.uk/news/access_hints_and_tips_for_the_smaller_business

www.euansguide.com/venues/top-tips