

# Accessible Shopping

Welcoming Disabled and  
Elderly Customers



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£249bn

This is the annual spending power of households with a disabled person in them

# Welcoming Disabled Customers



There are over 11 million disabled people in the UK today with an estimated **annual spending power of £249 billion**. Providing better access will mean that your business is more welcoming to everyone.

Small changes in the layout of premises or how information is presented can have a significant impact on customers and can be carried out at little or no cost.

Every shop has a legal duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that Disabled people can access your services. However, there are many other reasons why you should stop and consider how accessible

your business currently is. These include:

- Improved physical access will make your business more appealing to many others, including the 3.3 million families with children under five who use prams or pushchairs
- A Disabled customer can often quickly become a loyal customer who may also bring their friends and family, meaning repeat business for you
- We're all getting older, the market and need for accessible services and products will continue to grow in the future

# Who are Disabled People?

Disabled people are all different and have a wide range of sensory and physical impairments:

- Vision impairments (blindness, significant sight loss or low vision)
- Physical impairments (e.g. difficulty using arms, arthritis, or mobility issues which mean using a wheelchair or crutches)
- Learning or intellectual difficulties (e.g. down syndrome, autistic spectrum disorder)
- Long-term illnesses (e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes or epilepsy)
- Deaf and hearing impairments
- Mental health conditions

Impairments  
are not always  
visible

Epilepsy  
Dementia  
Mental Health

Autism  
Arthritis  
Cancer



## What Does the Law Say?

The Equality Act 2010 requires service providers, including shops, to make **reasonable adjustments**.

In other words, to remove barriers to ensure that Disabled people can access goods and services in the same way, as far as this is possible, as someone who is not disabled.

This can include:

- Installing an induction loop
- Having a temporary ramp available when needed
- Making information available in alternative formats, such as braille or easy-read
- Widening doorways

- Providing more lighting and clearer signs
- Extra staff assistance

What is considered reasonable for a small business with limited resources will be different from what might be expected of larger organisations. Many adjustments are common sense and can be put in place by making simple and cost-effective changes.

Other modifications might need more consideration but could, for example, be put in place as part of a general refurbishment or redecoration programme.



**“One small step can stop me and my friends going into an establishment. A portable ramp doesn’t cost much but can make a huge difference to my day out.”**

## **Go Step Free**

Even if you have just one step into your building, this can be a barrier to a customer accessing your goods and services.

Step-free entrances are so much more inviting. Families with buggies, wheelchair users, people with walking aids and people with luggage will all find it much easier to come in and do business with you.

Your store should be fully accessible for people who use a wheelchair or scooter. Try to make your premises step free or accessible by using permanent or portable ramps. Deep-pile carpets or rugs can also be barriers to access.

**“If there is no access, I just go elsewhere. Some shops are great, if they have a portable ramp, there is a bell you can call for attention.”**





# Assistance Dogs

The customer may have an assistance dog. Remember these are working dogs and should not be treated as a pet. Speak to the customer rather than making a fuss of the dog.



**By law assistance dogs** must be allowed to accompany their owners in taxis, shops, restaurants and other places open to the public.

## Add More Seats

Extra seating around shops and chairs in changing rooms can help. People who use walking aids may find it hard to use their hands when standing up, for example, to count out money. Offer a seat if you can and offer to open doors. If a customer has difficulty walking be prepared to provide a more personalised service. Find a place for the customer to sit down and bring goods directly to them.

Customer feedback is the best opportunity to learn more about your customers and their thoughts on how accessible your business really is. They may pass on some useful tips.

**Top  
Tip**

# Remove Obstructions and Hazards

- Keep corridors and aisles clear of clutter so wheelchair users and people with poor mobility can get through
- Rugs or loose carpet fittings can be a trip hazard. So, if you use them make sure they are recessed or fixed securely onto the floor
- Fit easy-grip handles or move existing handles to a more accessible height for wheelchair users
- Doors can often be heavy so make sure their opening and closing mechanisms work properly and fit simple to use handles

# Adjust Noise and Lighting

Fluorescent lighting, loud music and crowds can be tough for people who have a condition called autism. Cinemas offer quiet screenings; shops could similarly create quiet zones and changing areas. Softening lights would also help people with epilepsy and migraines.





**"I am visually impaired.  
Navigating the roads is  
challenging especially when  
there are things in the middle  
of pavements like signs  
which can cause me to trip  
because I can't see them."**



## **Remove Street Clutter**

Street obstructions like Advertising boards (A-boards), cafe furniture, wheelie bins, cars parked on pavements and many more are a massive challenge to Disabled people in getting out and about.

A-boards can be a trip hazard to pedestrians especially people with visual impairments. They can clutter the pavement, making it difficult for people in wheelchairs, older people or people with pushchairs to use the space.

**Instead of A-boards which clutter the footpath  
consider providing:**

- Signs fixed to building walls rather than A-boards on footpaths
- Flag signs attached to exterior walls can be a good way of getting noticed from a distance
- Signs should not be too high or too low – make sure they can be seen clearly from afar or when nearby

**“Shopping is so much more enjoyable when staff know how to communicate with Deaf people. I lip-read, so if they know to look at me when speaking to me, rather than turning away to focus on their till, it really helps!”**



## Communication

- Always talk to a disabled customer directly, never to his or her companion
- Use appropriate ways of communicating with a customer, for example, by writing notes if they find speech difficult to understand
- Check to make sure a customer has been understood correctly
- In a noisy shop, when you approach a customer ask them if they want to step to a quieter place to start the conversation. For a person with a mental health condition or autism it may well be the difference between staying, or simply walking out
- Let a blind person reach out for your arm to guide them around the store rather than you giving them your arm
- When giving change, count it out
- Always be patient and never rush the customer, even if other people are waiting

**A recent study has found that 75% of Disabled customers have left a shop because of poor service or access**

If a hearing loop system is working well, it gives hearing aid wearers amazingly clear hearing as well as getting rid of background noise.

**Top  
Tip**

## Hearing Loops and Large Print

Only 15% of retailers have hearing loops for customers with hearing loss. Providing more loops and training staff to speak clearly will help. Visually impaired shoppers could also benefit from braille signs and clothing sizes and prices in large print.

**When there's a person like me who is blind a staff member should come up to them and say 'Would you like to be helped?', 'Is there anything I can do?', 'Can I show you anything or can I point anything out to you?' or 'Would you mind being helped?'**



## Parking



- If you can't provide parking for disabled visitors on your premises, make sure staff know where the nearest parking is located
- If you have staff parking, make a staff space available for disabled visitors by prior arrangement

## Toilets

- Consider fitting a horizontal and vertical grab rail to help with sitting down or standing up
- Make sure the toilet paper holder and spare rolls are within easy reach
- Consider having an easy to use lever tap fitted to the sink
- Consider installing an emergency cord

If you have a designated disabled parking bay, make sure it is well lit, clearly signposted and that it is not used by staff or delivery drivers.

**Top  
Tip**

# Changing Places Toilet Exchange Ilford



High Road

Ilford

IG1 1RS

[www.exchangeilford.com](http://www.exchangeilford.com)



[lounge@exchangeilford.co.uk](mailto:lounge@exchangeilford.co.uk)



020 8553 3000

**Exchange Ilford** has a Changing Places toilet on the ground floor near the centre car park entrance.

People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well people with other physical impairments such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. These needs are met by Changing Places toilets.

The Exchange Ilford facility has a height adjustable sink and toilet and also features a privacy screen and hoist.

# Shopmobility Ilford

Shopmobility is a scheme that lends manual wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and powered scooters to members of the public with limited mobility to shop and to visit leisure and commercial facilities.



## Am I eligible?

Shopmobility is for anyone, young or old, whether their impairment is temporary or permanent. You do not need to be registered disabled to use it. However, there is a small fee for this service in the Ilford area.

## How do I access?

You will need to contact Shopmobility in advance to discuss your requirements and find out what information they will need from you (usually ID is required on your first visit) and discuss any short training you might need for any powered wheelchair or scooters.

[www.disabilityredbridge.org.uk](http://www.disabilityredbridge.org.uk)



020 8478 6864



[ilfordshopmobility@gmail.com](mailto:ilfordshopmobility@gmail.com)



## About One Place East

**One Place East** is a Disabled People's Organisation based in the London Borough of Redbridge. Our job is to:

- Promote equality and inclusion for Disabled people and people with lived experience of mental health problems
- Develop high-quality, culturally appropriate, accessible services for Disabled people and people with lived experience of mental health problems
- Work in partnership to influence policy and to promote best practice
- Challenge the stigma and discrimination that Disabled people and people experiencing and recovering from mental health problems encountered in their everyday life
- Develop a strong, active and influential collective voice

98–100 Ilford Lane, Ilford IG1 2LD  
[www.oneplaceeast.org](http://www.oneplaceeast.org)



020 8925 2435



[info@oneplaceeast.org](mailto:info@oneplaceeast.org)

Registered Charity No: 1065770  
Company Limited by Guarantee No: 3115971

# Useful Contacts

## The Ramp People

The Ramp People has a comprehensive range of wheelchair ramps for improving access to raised-level buildings.

[www.theramppeople.co.uk](http://www.theramppeople.co.uk)



01372 478960



[hello@theramppeople.co.uk](mailto:hello@theramppeople.co.uk)

## Action on Hearing Loss

Find out more about hearing loop installation and maintenance.

[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)



03332 405 658



[access.solutions@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:access.solutions@hearingloss.org.uk)

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[www.disabilityredbridge.org.uk](http://www.disabilityredbridge.org.uk)



020 8478 6864



[ilfordshopmobility@gmail.com](mailto:ilfordshopmobility@gmail.com)

**Please note** that the information and advice given is to the best of our knowledge, but we accept no responsibility if acted upon.