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Disability Access Day – Every Customer Counts

One day in 2015, Edinburgh wheelchair user Paul Ralph went along to an ‘open depot’ day organised by his local bus company to see if the local buses could accommodate his wheelchair. They did and from that day on, Paul became a bus lover and a frequent bus user.

This planted the seed of his idea that there should be more opportunities for people with disabilities to try out new things that they have not experienced before.

There’s an opportunity to open up your business to new customers on Disability Access Day, Saturday 16 March. It need not cost very much, but will call for a bit of creative thinking and a can-do attitude. It’s done in conjunction with Euan’s Guide, a TripAdvisor style site for people with a whole range of disabilities. At present, there are 71 listings in Northern Ireland.

On Disabled Access Day people are encouraged to try something new, to share their story on social media, upload photographs to Facebook or Instagram, tweet or post a blog to encourage or make it easy for others to consider a similar visit or experience.

Service providers, businesses and venues can make the most of what they’ve got by promoting their accessible services and features. You should use the day to focus on reasons why people with disabilities should be making the most of what you offer, by offering something new for disabled people to try, for example, running a touch tour, a behind the scenes experience, or even just a free cup of coffee.

Disabled Access Day complements the Commission’s [Every Customer Counts](#) campaign which encourages service providers throughout Northern Ireland to carry out a check or audit of their services to assess their accessibility and make any change as a result of this audit to improve the accessibility of their business.

There are five steps you’re asked to take to be included as a participating venue on Disabled Access Day:

1. Organise an event or experience that would not normally be within your day-to-day work.

2. Your venue location must be listed on Euan's Guide with the relevant access information. This is free, simple and quick to do online.
3. The event or experience you plan to offer must be listed on Euan's Guide so that people can know about it and so that you can benefit from the publicity. This is also free.
4. Your venue must have a Changing Places toilet or be close to one or you must actively support the Changing Places movement. This could mean placing a statement supporting Changing Places on your event website. You could say what toilet provision you do have. If funds and space permit, you could consider hiring in a portable unit such as Mobiloo.
5. On the day you should encourage and help people leave a legacy so that others can visit you. This could be by leaving reviews on Euan's Guide or by using social media.

For more information about Disabled Access Day visit www.disabledaccessday.com

Further blogs are available online at www.equalityni.org/blog