



'Every customer counts' Promoting accessible services

Equality Commission Northern Ireland
Employers for Disability

Disabled Access Day 10 March 2016

Brenda Puech, NRAC, Access Consultant

The market you cannot ignore



- They are 360,000 of them in Northern Ireland and 20% of the population
- They spend £212 billion a year in the UK
- They are often responsible for household spending as well
- They are demanding and will quickly walk away if they don't get good service
- They have money to spend when they get the service and products they need
- They are loyal and will come back again and again
- They are influential in how their friends and relatives buy products and services.
- These people are all disabled



The Walk Away £

- They are informed customers who will reward good customer service and reject businesses who don't make any effort to meet their needs
- 75% of disabled people had 'walked away' from making a purchase due to inaccessible premises.
- 2/3rds say they go back to businesses where they have received a good disability customer service.
- Businesses need to tell disabled people about accessibility of their products and services



▶ Lynette McMillan leaves the Tasty Bites cafe in Weston-super-Mare. Two-thirds of top tourist attractions are not accessible to disabled people. Photograph: Sam Frost

Business Disability Forum and RADAR survey into opinions and shopping habits of disabled customers, 2012.

Where do disabled people find it the hardest to spend their money?

Where do disabled people find it the hardest to spend their money?

Most difficult	Finding shopping that is accessible
2 nd hardest	Going to cinemas and theatres
3 rd hardest	Eating out at pubs and restaurants

What did we find in businesses in
Northern Ireland in 2014?

Accessible Translink



Accessible facilities at stations

- Automatic entrance doors
- Accessible lifts and staircases
- Accessible counters, ticket machines, seating
- Accessible toilets
- Good visual contrast and use of tactile paving

Translink Access Guide

for Metro, Ulsterbus, Goldline
& NIRailways

www.translink.co.uk/accessguides

Valid from June 2013

www.translink.co.uk
or call 028 90 66 66 30



B & Q



- Actively welcomes older and disabled customers
- Provides manual wheelchairs
- Provides trolleys to clip onto wheelchairs
- Has a lowered counter for assistance and one at checkout, with an induction loop
- Has accessible toilet
- Good customer service



Ulster Bank, Belfast City



- Step free wide entrance
- Automatic doors
- Excellent signage
- Lowered writing tables
- Lowered counters and induction loops
- Good visual contrast

Cookiebox, Belfast



Word of Mouth – Great staff means great service

We asked locals who they would recommend:

‘A small business I think is excellent is The Cookie Box - they have a number of establishments There's one which has room to sit in - and although it is very small they're great at taking a chair away if it's needed to make space. Staff there are brilliantly trained and will talk directly to me, rather than the person with me.’

- Michaela

Eclipse Cinema

“We will most definitely be back”

‘The entrance and foyer are all level and the ramp into the theatre itself is almost level. There is a platform for wheelchairs in the centre of the theatre this is the perfect position to view the screen. To top it off the staff were friendly and helpful. It is an hour and a half drive but I think it’s worth it .

10/10’

Sean, Armagh -review on Tripadvisor



It is overwhelming to see so many regular customers returning to us, many of whom travel a great distance and often bypass other cinemas because of our high standard of inclusive service and facilities.

**Roisin McManus, Manager
Eclipse Cinema**

Lyric Theatre, Belfast



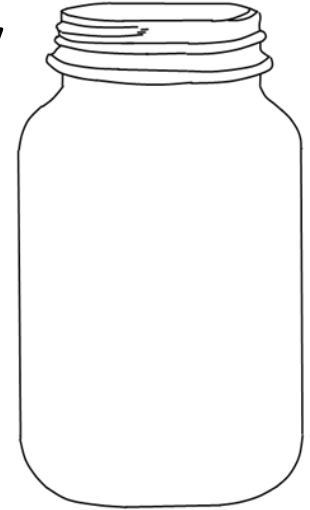
- Accessible parking
- Lower bar and dining counter
- Mainly good signage
- Mainly good visual contrast



Clear contrast (Lyric Theatre)

Symbols with clear tonal contrast indicate lift, accessible WC and baby change facilities. Including images as well as texts can help visitors identify the facilities available

Top tips 1 – Make it Easy



- **Make it easy for people to find you**
 - Get a good online presence
 - Install clear overhead signage (not A-boards!)
 - Put safety markings on glass
- **Make it easy for people to get in**
 - Get rid of steps or provide a ramp (even if portable)
 - Make doors wide and LIGHT TO OPEN with easy to use handles
 - If you cannot avoid steps – provide a handrail and sign
 - Remove obstacles that people could walk into
 - Welcome and make it easy for people with assistance dogs

Top tips 2

- **Make it easy for people to get around**
 - You should be able to see directly from the entrance to the pay counter
 - Provide a clear line of travel to move around (without boxes on the floor)
 - Put products within reach
- **Make it easy for people to use facilities**
 - Provide storage for mobility aids
 - Provide seating – with back and armrests
 - Provide accessible toilets
 - Make your fitting room large enough

Top tips 3

- **Make it easy to get hold of information**
 - Install an induction loop at the counter for hard of hearing customers
 - Have a pen and paper ready to help
 - Make menus, price lists and information easy to read for everyone. Use large, simple font and good contrast
 - Have captions on any television screens
 - Train staff to read information to customers who cannot see well. Also use aids with pictures of your goods for those who cannot hear well or speak or who may have learning difficulties

Mind your language!

Best not to say!



- We welcome wheelchairs
- Disabled entrance round the back
- Toilet for disabled customers
- Disabled Toilet
- Disabled Car Parking
- Disabled Lift
- No dogs
- Please ask for large print menus

Better to say



- We welcome wheelchair users
- The main entrance should be accessible! Otherwise call it a 'Step-free entrance'
- Accessible toilet (*for all customers and is kept unlocked*)
- Accessible parking
- Lift to all floors
- Assistance dogs welcome
- *Can say this, but all menus should be clear!*

Top tips 4 – Good manners

- Introduce yourself, let customers know you are available to help
- Talk to the customer directly, not who they are with
- Don't be afraid to ask 'Can I help?' or 'How can I help you?'
- Be patient and ready to repeat or clarify something
- Speak clearly and face-to-face to people who are lip-reading
- Offer choice and dignity – don't make assumptions - not everyone wants or needs help.

Top tips 5 – Provide up to date and accurate information

- Know your facilities and services - where is the nearest accessible toilet?
- Can you provide home visits, carry-to-car or delivery services? Are your menus, leaflets and information in a large and clear print?
- Toilet, changing room or lift out of action? Let customers know. Make sure that your service and facilities information is online and up-to-date so visitors can plan ahead. Save customers wasted journeys by forewarning them.

Top tips 6 – How to provide practical assistance

- Offer to find or reach for items
- Can you carry or put items aside?
- Offer to describe items or help to read labels
- Do you know how to use your induction loop, ramp and other access equipment?
- Offer a seat to waiting customers or to rearrange furniture for people who are wheelchair users, have an assistance dog or mobility aid users
- Turn any music down to improve communication

Marketing to disabled people

5 things to ensure when providing online information

- 1**
Easy to find
in a specific 'Access Information' section as well as throughout the website
- 2**
Accessible
with information in a number of accessible formats
- 3**
Reliable
with an indication of who or what organisation is providing the information
- 4**
Accurate
so there are no nasty surprises on arrival
- 5**
Up to date
with a clear indication which season/year the data refers to and when the information was last updated

Reminders

Simple reasonable adjustments

Good customer service

SOME THINGS THAT MAKE IT EASIER TO SERVE CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES:



Large print



Clear signage



Induction loops



Lower counters



Seating

47%

said staff attitude has discouraged them from revisiting certain establishments.

Almost half of disabled customers surveyed would not go back to businesses with poor customer service.

Source: Short-changed: The Trailblazers' High streets report.