‘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.

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

2nd hardest: Going to cinemas and theatres

3rd hardest: Eating out at pubs and restaurants

Source: Dept of Work & Pensions DWP 2012
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
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
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:

- Special offer £3.89
- Bakery
- 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.