



**every
customer
counts**

*promoting
accessible
services*

Accessible Business Checklist

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Accessible Business Checklist

This simple self-assessment checklist is designed to help traders quickly review how accessible their business premises / services are and also potentially identify practical ways of improving access for existing or new customers.

The checklist covers a range of different access themes and you may find that not every section is directly relevant to your business. If this is the case simply move on to the next relevant section.

Some sections refer to guidance and diagrams outlined in **Technical Booklet R** issued in respect to the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012. If you require copy of this booklet you can download it for free from: www.buildingcontrol-ni.com/regulations/technical-booklets

Although most sections focus on potential physical barriers for disabled customers, it will be helpful to also keep the concept of attitudinal barriers in mind when conducting your audit.

Attitudinal barriers is a term used to describe difficulties or challenges experienced by a person with disabilities that may result from someone misunderstanding, confusing or ignoring their needs and also focusing unhelpfully on their *disability* as opposed to their abilities.

Such misconceptions and attitudes can sometimes be the most significant barrier that a disabled person can face when seeking an equitable and positive customer experience. It would be unreasonable to expect staff in a restaurant to be experts in every type of disability but signs that a business has made proactive efforts to make their services accessible to disabled customers can go a long way.

Finally it may also be useful to keep in mind that **reasonable adjustments** required by the Disability Discrimination Act are considered to be improvements that are both practical and manageable relative to the size and context of your own business. If you want to carry out a more detailed and independent access audit, we recommend that you consider working with an accredited access consultant.

Once you have completed your assessment the **Accessible Business Action Plan** template included in your pack will help you to plan, prioritise, implement and evaluate any changes you may decide to make.

If you have any questions, would like to discuss your assessment / action plan or require signposting to additional support and relevant information you can **contact an Equality Commission Officer on 028 90500600.**

ACCESS CHECKLIST

Name of business:

Date of audit:

Audit carried out by:

Action plan agreed:

Part A: Pre Visit

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Commitment & policy

Do you have a company / business Statement of Commitment to disabled users?			Template Statement Available
Do you have an Inclusive Customer Service Policy?			Template Policy Available
Do you have a member of staff who could act as an access champion?			Appoint access champion, to lead on access issues

Training

Do all of your staff receive customer service training including disability awareness?			Consider available options
Do staff know how to provide practical support to customers and use any equipment you use, induction loops or portable ramps?			

Customer Feedback

Do you have feedback forms?			Provide feedback opportunities. This can be by direct discussions, a simple form, or online
Do you have alternative ways of obtaining feedback email, online, phone or in person?			

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Pre-visit information / your website

Does your website conform to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines? Are all functions including payment processes accessible to people with visual impairments?			<p>Check your website against access principles</p> <p>www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/glance/</p>
<p>Is the information on your website clear and easy to use?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear language which is easy to understand • easy to read, good sized text • use of images with text 			
Are there clear and simple directions, including a map to your business?			
<p>Is there useful and accurate information about the facilities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessible parking? • step-free features? • accessible toilets for customers? • hearing enhancement systems? • assistance available for customers? • access / restricted access • information about how services work, queuing systems, how to recognise staff 			<p>Descriptions, images and videos can help a range of customers understand the building layout, how your organisation works and prepare for their visit</p>

Part B: Getting To Your Premises

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Signage

Is there good signage to identify your business from the street? (Easy to read?)			Replace and maintain signage Large text,
Are there any A-boards blocking the footway? These can be a trip hazard.			Remove A boards- Projecting flag signs are easier to see.

Approaching on foot

Are there accessible routes and crossing points to get to your business?			For help and advice contact NIDirect on 0300 2007893
Are there clear footways to the entrance reasonably level, of adequate width (minimum of 2m) and in good repair?			Organise repairs and remove obstacles
Is the route well-lit?			Provide additional lighting

Getting there by car or cycle

Is there a safe setting down point with dropped kerbs close to your main entrance?			For help and advice contact NIDirect on 0300 2007893
Do you have wider cycle parking for adapted cycles, or those with delivery or cargo cycles? These should be 1.2m wide.			
Do you have any designated accessible parking bays for customers?			Provide/ maintain clear markings and signage
Are they clearly marked with both on-road symbols and vertical signs, and easy to find?			
Do you have any designated accessible parking bays for customers? Are they clearly marked?			Guidance on Designing Accessible Reserved Car Parking available from: www.planningni.gov.uk
Are they the right size (2.4m wide by 4.8m long) and do they have a clear side and rear transfer space (1.2m wide)? Is there a step-free and safe route to the entrance from the parking bays?			

Part C: Entering Your Premises

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Entrance steps

<p>If you have steps, do they have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a good surface / are they in good condition? • contrasting step edges (nosing)? • handrails on both sides that can be easily gripped? • good lighting? • level landing at the top and bottom? • corrugated tactile warning paving at the top and bottom? 			<p>Check your steps against standards in Section 3 of Technical Booklet R</p>
<p>If you have steps, do you also have step-free access?</p>			<p>Step-free access should be provided</p>

Entrance ramp

<p>If you have a permanent ramp, is it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wide enough (not less than the entrance door width)? • not too steep • in good condition and strong enough to take a mobility scooter? • safe to use, with kerb upstands on both sides and a non-slip surface? • with handrails to both sides at a suitable height that are easy to grip? • with a level landing at the threshold / entrance? 			<p>Check your ramp against standards in Section 3 of Technical Booklet R</p>
--	--	--	---

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Main entrance

Is your entrance easy to identify with good signage, lighting and visual contrast?			
If the entrance is made up of glazed panels or a glazed door, are there contrasting markings (manifestation) in place to prevent customers colliding with them?			
Is the entrance step free?			
If the entrance is not step free - Is there opportunity to remove the step(s) and barrier?			
Is the door furniture (handles and locks) easy to operate and reach at a height of 750-1000mm from the floor?			
Is the door light to open?			
Does the door have a glazed vision panel at a lower height to allow wheelchair users and people of shorter stature to see through?			
Are the entrance(s) doors wide enough?			1000mm for new buildings recommended
Do you have automatic doors? (These are easiest to get through)			
Are weather mats of a firm durable material (not coir) and preferably inset, not presenting a trip hazard?			
If your premises are difficult to get in for customers with limited mobility, what assistance do you provide? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance bell or entry phone? • Portable ramp? 			

Alternative entrance

If your main entrance is not step free or ramped do you have an alternative accessible entrance for customers?			
If yes, is this entrance clearly signed and easy to identify?			

Part D: Getting Around Your Premises

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Internal signage

Are the different services or departments in your business clearly identified with signage? (For example Pay here, Customer Service)			Provide signs to all the main areas of your organisations
Large premises: Is there a map or directory of other businesses or services within your building? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at the entrance? by the lifts or stairs to upper floors if present? 			
Is your signage clear and simple with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> easy to read font mixed case letters – do not use all capitals large font size (at least 14 point)? good colour contrast of letters against the sign and sign against the background? symbols or pictures included along with text? 			Improving signage is a quick way to improve the customer experience

Routes and layout

Can a customer in a wheelchair, or with a pushchair, move easily along aisles or between displays or tables? Recommended aisle widths are 1.2m (90cm minimum) Are changes in level, for example steps and ramps clearly marked?			Remove obstacles and provide wide access routes
Do you have step-free access to the different level with a ramp or platform lift?			Aim for step-free access in your building

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
<p>If there are internal slopes / ramps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are these gentle and not a trip hazard? • do they have easy-grip handrails both sides for support 			<p>Installing handrails to ramps is a quick way to improve access and safety</p>
<p>If you have a platform lift to get to a different level,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is it clearly signed and easy to locate? • can this be independently and easily operated by customers? • is it comfortable and of good quality finish? 			<p>Add signs to make sure that lifts can be found and used. Make sure these are maintained and managed</p>
<p>If there is no step-free access to different levels, can customers access the same services elsewhere within your business?</p>			<p>Provide services at the same quality and experience level</p>
<p>Are there any single steps?</p>			<p>Make sure you investigate removal, and in the short term ensure they are clearly marked</p>
<p>Are there internal doors?</p> <p>Do they need to be there?</p> <p>Are internal doors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy and light to open with suitable handles? • wide enough? 750- 775 minimum for existing doors • with vision panels extending to a lower level? • If glass doors, do these have clear markings at two height levels? 			<p>Check against Table 4.1 in Technical Booklet R (page 29) door width minimum dimensions depend on whether the approach is head on or at an angle and width of the corridor.</p> <p>Recommended minimum ranges from 800-825mm for new buildings and 750-775mm for existing buildings.</p>

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Staircases

<p>If there are internal steps or staircases, are these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well lit and signed or clearly marked out? • Installed with handrails to both sides? • visually contrasting with slip resistant edge to each step? • with no open risers? (these are difficult for visually impaired people) 			<p>Prioritise lighting, handrails and highlighting step edges (nosing) as short term improvements. In your mid- long term plan consider refurbishing steps to current standards in Section 4 of Technical Booklet R</p>
--	--	--	--

Passenger lifts

<p>If your business is not located on the ground floor or has multiple floors, is there passenger lift access?</p>			<p>Consider installation / refurbishment of passenger lift to Technical Booklet R specification (page 33)</p>
<p>Are there signs? Is the lift clearly signed and easy to locate? Are facilities at each level clearly marked within the lift?</p>			
<p>Are the lift call points / buttons easy to use, clearly visible, tactile and within reach of a customer in a wheelchair or of short stature?</p>			
<p>Are there visual and audible indicators in the lift for arrival, door closing and floor level?</p>			

Part E: Providing a Comfortable Environment

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
General Facilities			
Are floors and wall surfaces – well maintained not slippery or reflective?			Check maintenance plan
Is the lighting suitable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can signs, routes and entrances / exits be easily seen? • minimal glare? • no strong contrasts or pools of light and dark? 			Walk your routes and check for signage and consistent lighting
Is there good visual contrast between walls, floors, ceilings, doors and fittings?			
If there are floor to ceiling mirrors or glazing, does this have contrasting markings at two levels – sitting and standing height?			
Are acoustics good with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • background noise levels low? • soft surfaces provided to absorb sound? • quiet and noisy areas separated by a buffer zone? 			
Queuing facilities			
Are queues for service counters, payment or assistance clearly signed?			Provide signs
Is there seating for those unable to stand?			If space provide priority seating
Do queuing barriers have rigid rails top and bottom? (not rope which is a hazard for visually impaired people). The bottom tapping rail for white canes should be 150mm above floor level			
Is there a counter to write on while queuing? Is this at two heights for seated and standing users?			See counter height diagram in Section 5, Technical Booklet R

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Seating

Is seating flexible to allow different layouts?			
Is there a mix of comfortable seating with back rests, with and without arms to allow transfer?			
Is there space for a wheelchair user to sit alongside a companion?			Space required is 900 x 1400mm
Is there space for an assistance dog to sit alongside a chair, or for a mobility aid?			
Is there a range of seating heights provided?			Provide seating at heights between 380-580mm. 480mm high allows wheelchair users to transfer

Tables for dining

If you have seating areas for diners and drinkers in your business is the furniture movable to allow flexibility?			Provide flexible (unfixed seating and tables)
Can a customer in a wheelchair or with a pushchair sit at all the available tables / counters?			
Does the seating for wheelchair users provide the same quality of experience and location choice as the other seating?			Provide choice in seating location

Service counters

If you have serving counters is there a lower level section that is suitable for a wheelchair user or person of short stature?			
Does the counter have a knee recess beneath to allow wheelchair users to get close and make the transaction or selection?			

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Service counters (continued)

Card payment terminal portable / accessible from seated position?			Provide accessible payment terminal
Can you provide table service for all customers?			
Do you have any hearing enhancement services to assist hearing impaired customers at counters and in meeting rooms?			
If yes, do you have signage to identify this service at the counter and around the site?			Make sure you have signs for inductions loops. Action on Hearing loss has more information on hearing loops www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk
Are staff trained on how to operated hearing enhancement equipment? Do you routinely test this equipment?			
Do you have good lighting to the face of counter staff to help lip readers?			

Menus/ price lists

Are menus or price lists clear, with good contrast and using principles of good signage?			
--	--	--	--

Trolleys/ baskets

If you provide baskets and trolleys, do you provide any wheelchair accessible or adapted baskets or trolleys or alternatives?			
---	--	--	--

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Changing rooms

<p>If you provide changing rooms, have any been adapted for customers with mobility impairments with grabrails, seating, assistance call point and appropriate signage?</p> <p>If yes, is there:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • space to turn around inside (1.5 m square) • wall-mounted weight bearing grabrails • full length mirror • assistance call point 			
---	--	--	--

Customer toilets

<p>Is the route to the toilet (s) clear and easy to navigate, with clear signs?</p>			
<p>Does the standard toilet cubicle(s) have sufficient circulation space between the pan and door?</p>			<p>Check if doors can be converted to outward opening</p>
<p>Are all taps easy to use and require minimal dexterity?</p>			<p>Replace cross-head twist taps with lever mixer taps</p>

Accessible toilet

<p>Do you have any other toilets that are suitable for a customer with a mobility impairment?</p> <p>If yes, does it have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear signage? • outward-opening door with pull handle? • grabrails to the side walls of the cubicle? • a higher toilet seat? 			<p>If no, investigate conversion of standard cubicles</p>
---	--	--	---

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
<p>Do you have a wheelchair accessible toilet?</p> <p>Does your wheelchair accessible toilet have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good signage to where it is located? • a similar standard to other toilets? • a suitable size?(1.5m wide by 2.2m) • an outward-opening door? • a lock that is easy to use? • emergency alarm cord and response management • is the space next to the WC clear of bins (used for transfer) 			<p>If no, investigate combination and conversion of standard cubicles or other space. Check accessible toilet layout and fittings against Section 6, Technical Booklet R</p> <p>Keep the transfer space by WC pan clear of bins and other obstacles</p>

Baby Change

If you have a baby changing facility, is this located in a separate area to the wheelchair accessible WC?			Baby change facilities should be provided as a separate facility
Does it have adequate space for a wheelchair user to turn? Is the shelf height adjustable or accessible to a wheelchair user? (760-850 mm)			

Changing Places

Large premises: Is there scope for a Changing Places toilet with hoist and changing bench facility?			Changing Places: the practical guide available from www.changing-places.org
---	--	--	--

Emergency egress

Has a fire risk assessment been carried out assessing risks to disabled people?			You must have a fire risk assessment for your buildings.
Is there an emergency evacuation plan for any customers who require assistance and cannot exit independently?			Contact the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. www.nifrs.org
Do you have a fire alarm with a visual and audible indicator?			
Are your fire exits clearly signed to indicate stepped or step-free exits?			

Questions	Yes / No	Action Needed	Guidance & Suggestions
-----------	----------	---------------	------------------------

Procedures and maintenance

Are parking spaces checked to ensure there is space for Blue Badge holders?			
If you have any auxiliary access aids, such as a portable ramp or an induction loop, are all of your staff trained in the safe use and maintenance of this equipment?			Training should be checked and refreshed regularly
<p>Are staff aware of common management issues in accessible toilets including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep transfer space by pan clear (no bins • ensuring emergency alarm cords are not tied up • reporting any breakages or maintenance issues immediately 			Make specific points in cleaning instructions / regime
Is there a response process to the emergency alarms in accessible toilets and / or changing rooms?			
Are doors checked routinely for ease of use – door handles/ easy opening?			
<p>Does the cleaning and maintenance regime ensure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floors are not too slippery? • Lighting is adequate by cleaning fittings and replacement of blown fittings? 			

What next?

If you have identified any potential service gaps or areas for improvement we recommend that you:

Use the [Access Action Plan](#) template to prioritise, implement and evaluate any changes you decide to make.

Read the [Good Practice Guide](#) to get ideas and handy tips on how to improve your service.

[Contact the Equality Commission](#) to discuss your plans and get additional support and guidance.

Use the [Inclusive Customer Service Statement & Policy](#) to tell people about the steps you have taken to make every customer count.

Sign the [Every Customer Counts Charter](#) and join the growing list of business committed to promoting accessible services.

Contact the Every Customer Counts Team: If you would like to discuss your assessment or action plan, require advice on reasonable adjustments or signposting to additional support and information: **Tel: 028 90500600.**

every customer counts

promoting accessible services

Further information and advice

For further information and advice on any equality issues or if you would like to find out more about the Equality Commission and its work, contact us at:

Telephone: **028 90 500 600**

Fax: **028 90 238 039**

Textphone: **028 90 500 589**

E-mail: **information@equalityni.org**

Website: **www.equalityni.org**

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Equality House
7 - 9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Published October 2014