



The impact of Covid-19 on disabled customers – some recommendations for the hospitality sector

1. Accessible Website

Ensure that your website has a clear and accessible layout and that it is compatible with text to speech converters. Provide text captions and alternative text for images. This is particularly important, as additional information may have been added due to Covid-19.

It is important to ensure that the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) are followed in relation to your website - <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

2. Pre-visit Information

Make it easy for your customers to plan their trip by providing information on: opening hours; nearby transport links; accessible facilities such as induction loops, accessible toilets, large print resources; sign language interpreters and any other staff assistance available.

Provide the name, telephone number and/or email of the staff member to contact if people have specific queries about their visit.

Give information about extra services/arrangements currently in place to ensure customer safety, such as the use of additional cleaning measures, hand sanitisers, social distancing measures and one-way systems.

Use social media to share the latest information about access facilities which are available, closed for maintenance and/or temporarily out of order.

Consider using photos of trained staff, who are disability aware, as this can be reassuring to customers.

3. Signage

Ensure your signage is in a visible location and that it is easy to read. This may include signs relating to social distancing measures, one-way systems, portable handwashing facilities/ hand sanitiser stations etc. All signs should be in simple and clear font with text and symbols for easy reading.

4. Entrance and Exit

Ensure any changes to entrances and exits are clearly marked, particularly where a one-way system is in operation and that a staff member is on hand to assist where necessary. Pay attention to the location of outdoor displays to ensure they do not obstruct entrances or exits, particularly as queueing systems may mean less space outside premises.

5. Outside Seating Areas

Ensure that a clear route is maintained outside your seating area to allow pedestrians, wheelchair users, people with mobility aids or pushchairs to pass by easily. This should be at least 2 metres between the edge of the seating area and the edge of the pavement, where practicable.

Tables should be of a design to allow ease of use for wheelchair users and those accompanied by assistance dogs and adequate space should be provided between tables for wheelchair access.

The seating area should be enclosed and edges should be defined with screens, not ropes, so that customers with visual impairments can identify the boundary of your premises.

Remove A-boards, pavement sited menu boards and other street clutter to allow pavement access for people with restricted mobility and visual impairments.

6. Staff Training

Hospitality businesses have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people have equal access to your goods and services. You should ensure that all customer-facing staff are aware of this duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled customers, particularly with regard to any changes made to the way you provide

your services due to Covid-19. You may also decide to train a member of staff specifically on customer accessibility.

Staff should be patient and courteous – ensure that they are ready to repeat or clarify information when required - your customers may present you with their JAM card <https://jamcard.org>

7. Masks

Where staff are using face masks to protect themselves and others, consider supplying them with clear or transparent masks, so that customers who have difficulty hearing will be able to lip read and see facial expressions - **Face masks - overcoming the barriers they pose to communications**

Where this is not possible, you should ensure that signage advises that any customer with hearing difficulty may advise staff so that alternative arrangements may be put in place, eg writing a note.

8. Menus

Consider the font size, background colour etc to ensure accessibility for those with visual impairments.

9. Screens

Where perspex screens are used, for example at pay points, ensure they are edged with tape to offer a contrast so that they are more easily identifiable by people with visual impairments.

10. Attitudes

Ensure that all customers, including disabled customers, are treated with dignity and respect whilst enjoying the services you provide, for example some disabled and elderly customers may require more time to complete their purchases.

11. Payment

If you are encouraging customers to use credit cards instead of cash for payment, ensure that all portable terminals are located so they can be easily used by all customers, including those who may find it difficult to reach up from a wheelchair, for example. You may also wish to suggest that any tips given to reward good service are included in the card payment to avoid the handling of cash.

12. Review

Ask disabled customers what you can do better; perhaps use social media channels as well as in-store methods to survey your customers to ensure that you are aware of customer needs.

Monitor and assess any queries and reasonable adjustment requests from disabled customers to see if they have been acted on appropriately.

Further help

More detailed advice about how to improve the accessibility of your services for disabled people can be found in Every Customer Counts – improving accessible services – [Accessible restaurants, cafes & hospitality - good practice guide](#)