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Access to Shops, Cafés & Everyday Services

This fact sheet can help you find out exactly what you are entitled to when you go out and use a public service.

Here you can find out what establishments are legally required to offer you, and advice on how to take things further should your requests not be dealt with by the business you are having problems with.

ACCESS TO SHOPS, CAFÉS AND EVERYDAY SERVICES

The Equality Act gives disabled people the rights of access to everyday services.

Everyday Services

These include services provided by local councils, doctors' surgeries, hotels, banks, pubs, theatres, hairdressers, places of worship, courts, voluntary groups and non-educational services provided by schools are also included.

Access to services is more than just about installing ramps and widening doorways for wheelchair users. Those who are blind, deaf, or have a learning disability are also helped accordingly.

Reasonable Adjustments

It is against the law for those who provide a service to customers to treat disabled people less favourably than others because of a disability. Service providers now have to make 'reasonable adjustments' where necessary to the way they deliver their services so disabled people can benefit fully from them.

Some common examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- installing an induction loop for people who are hearing impaired
- giving the option to book tickets by email as well as by phone
- providing disability equality training for staff who have contact with the public
- providing larger, well-defined signage for people with impaired vision
- putting in a ramp at the entrance to a building instead of, or as well as, steps

The term 'reasonable adjustment' is used as different cases will come up depending on the line of business the organisation is in and its finances among other things. Changes will only be made if it is determined that it is practical to do so otherwise changes will not necessarily have to be made.

Any failure or refusal to provide a service that is offered to other people and not to disabled people is counted as discrimination unless otherwise proved.

Getting the most out of the local services you use the most often

It is often best to go and talk to your local services providers, whatever line of business they are in.

Tell them exactly what your requirements are and this will help them understand where they need to improve their service to you.

There is also a website: [**www.disabledgo.com**](http://www.disabledgo.com) which lists many local businesses and includes an assessment of their disability features.

It is also advisable to check directly with the venue as places may be subject to building works or alterations.

What to do if you feel you've been discriminated against

If you are finding it difficult to access a local service, you should contact the organisation and let them know as it is in their interest to make sure everyone can use their service.

It is also best to start this way and try and offer some constructive criticism and make some suggestions as to how the service provider can improve the way their services are provided.

Explain the difficulties you are having and if you have any knowledge of how other businesses have solved this problem let them know as well.

If the service provider agree to make changes, ask them to put this in writing for you as this will help you follow up your request if the provider does not go ahead with changes that were agreed to be made.

Information for businesses on their responsibilities under the Equality Act

It may be useful to refer service providers to the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) website for more information about making their services accessible to disabled customers.

Where to get more formal help

If talking to a service provider about your problems doesn't result in any changes, the organisation to contact is the CEHR. The CEHR supports disabled people in securing their rights under the Equality Act. The CEHR also offers a conciliation service, to help disabled people negotiate with service providers without resorting to legal action. You can call the CEHR helpline for advice weekdays from 8.00am to 8.00pm

Telephone: 0845 604 6610

Textphone: 0845 7622 644

Fax: 08457 778 878

This fact sheet is one of a series, providing information and advice on a number of topics.

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