



Improving Access For Your Business Locations

There are around ten million disabled people in the UK. Many impairments are hidden - epilepsy, diabetes and mental ill health to name but a few. This means we have to plan for meeting the needs of a very broad community. The following is merely a starting point for working out how accessible your premises are - not only to disabled people but also for pregnant women, parents with buggies or younger children and also for older people. All businesses are different, so it will not cover everything that is relevant to your particular situation however it will inform and guide you to manage your property and your service delivery.

A positive attitude about access can make all the difference. The way in which you and your colleagues respond and make “reasonable adjustments” is critical.

This is not an exhaustive list, it’s a good starting point, please do not hesitate to contact Proudlock Associates to find out more about removing barriers and making adjustments in your organisation.

Checkpoint	Some practical suggestions
A. Approaching and entering	
1. Can disabled people park near your premises?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Be prepared to either reserve parking spaces or have designated “disabled bays” wherever possible. ⦿ Monitor any abuse of the parking you provide and take appropriate action. ⦿ Consider making staff spaces available to clients by prior arrangement. ⦿ Ensure you can inform people where the nearest car parking for blue badge holders is. This may be on the street outside but try and be specific about distance. “Five minutes walk” is not a useful guide.
2. Is the entrance easy to find from the street or car park?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Create a well-defined entrance for example with an outstanding design or company logo so that it can be easily recognised. ⦿ Make the name and number of the premises clearly visible – good clear signage is important.
3. Is the entrance accessible enough for all users?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Consider access for wheelchair users. ⦿ If there are double doors do they both need to be opened? ⦿ Have visual contact with callers if possible. As well as enhancing security, this will help to identify those who require support. Vision panels in the front door will facilitate this. ⦿ Is the bell push/intercom accessible, at a suitable height, clearly distinguishable with audible and visual indication?



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<p>4 Is the front door at street level?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Is there an accessible threshold? ⊙ If you need to, provide an alternative entrance accessible for all users. ⊙ Speak to the local access officer at the Council about creating level access from street level.
<p>5 Is the door easy to open?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ An automatic door is usually best practice. ⊙ Manual doors should have kick plates and distinguishable and easy to grip handles at an accessible height for wheelchair users.
<p>B. Moving Around</p>	
<p>1 Is it easy to get around the premises?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Ensure doormats are flush with the floor and avoid bristle matting. ⊙ Remove clutter to create wide aisles and ensure floors are not slippery (too smooth) or long pile carpets (which can restrict mobility). ⊙ Ensure stairs are compliant with Part K and Part M of the building regulations. This means having rails on both sides. ⊙ Internal single steps can sometimes be fitted with a ramp.
<p>2. Is signage clear?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Keep simple and short. ⊙ Provide good contrast lettering eg black on white, yellow on black. ⊙ Consider using simple visual or pictorial symbols in addition to words.
<p>3. Is the lighting as good as it could be?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Try to provide adjustable lighting levels for example by turning off individual overheads when required or by supplementing where necessary with extra task lights. ⊙ Keep windows, lamps and blinds clean and serviced. ⊙ Avoid glare, especially from direct views of lamps or from indirect sources such as highly reflective finishes on walls, floors, tabletops and uncovered windows. ⊙ Use even lighting and make sure faces are well lit (but not flooded) for lip readers. ⊙ Internal steps and other possible safety hazards may need enhanced lighting.
<p>4. Are floors, walls, ceilings and doors easily distinguishable?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Use matt paint in contrasting colours or different tones in larger areas that people regularly use. This will enhance independent way finding.



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C. Using Facilities	
<p>1. Do your staff know how to serve disabled clients effectively?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Boost disability confidence in your organisation - consider disability awareness training for all staff. ⊙ Always talk directly to the disabled person, not a companion. ⊙ You may need to allow more time for discussions when communicating with someone with a learning disability or through a sign language interpreter. ⊙ If you do not use sign language have paper and pens available for exchanging notes. ⊙ Offer an escorted tour or guide around your property/ business for someone who is visually impaired so they can familiarise themselves with the building.
<p>2. Can all customers access goods and services?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Try to provide all key facilities on the ground floor. ⊙ Can your organisation receive calls from deaf people – either via Typetalk or a text phone? ⊙ Ensure your reception desk is accessible to wheelchair users as well as people standing. Offer seats to those having to wait. ⊙ Place popular literature/information on a waist-height shelf. Remember to use clear print that is well contrasting and at least 12 point sans serif font. ⊙ Provide clipboards or lap trays for people to sign documents more easily. ⊙ In the offices, consider providing adjustable height desks with adequate knee space for wheelchair users and provide a variety of chair sizes some with arms. Allow enough space for someone with an assistance dog.
<p>3 If you have public WC facilities are they accessible to all?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Consider modifying the space to wheelchair accessible standards, including the route getting to and from the toilet. ⊙ If this is not possible, ensure you can show people where the nearest accessible toilet is.

For a more detailed assessment, you can speak to an access auditor. You can begin the process by getting a copy of Access Audits: a guide and checklists for appraising the accessibility of public buildings from the Centre for Accessible Environments (www.cae.org.uk). Remember to consult with disabled staff and users before you make any changes to your environment.