

Goods and Services

Bringing the DDA to life for small shops

Improving access to goods and services for disabled customers

Hairdressing Salon case study



The Disability Rights Commission

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is an independent body, set up by an Act of Parliament, which has the goal of creating a society where disabled people and those with long-term health conditions can participate fully as equal citizens.

We work with the voluntary sector, the business community, Government and public sector agencies to achieve practical solutions which benefit disabled people and society as a whole.

There are around 10 million people with rights under the Disability Discrimination Act in Great Britain. The legal definition of disability covers people with physical, sensory, communication and intellectual impairments, and people with mental health and other long-term health conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy, cancer, multiple sclerosis, HIV and schizophrenia.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, disabled people have the legal right to fair treatment in employment, in education and as customers of services. Most duties of the Act are now in force. A new Disability Discrimination Act received royal assent in 2005. This will create a duty on public bodies to actively promote disability equality from December 2006 as well as closing some of the loopholes in the previous act.

The DRC has offices in England, Scotland and Wales and can support both those with rights and those with responsibilities under disability legislation. For further details of how we can help you please contact our Helpline – contact details can be found on the back cover.

In 2007, a new Commission for Equality and Human Rights will begin its work. This body will have responsibility for the activity currently undertaken by the DRC.

The Confederation of British Industry
The Federation of Small Businesses
The British Retail Consortium

are pleased to endorse this series of booklets.

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Other booklets in this series:

Café

Clothes Shop

Newsagent

These booklets are also available in a range of formats from the Disability Rights Commission Helpline (see back cover for contact details).

This booklet gives general guidance only and should not be treated as a complete or authoritative statement of the law.

Introduction

This booklet aims to help people who run small businesses understand the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and show ways in which you can respond positively to the requirements of disabled customers.

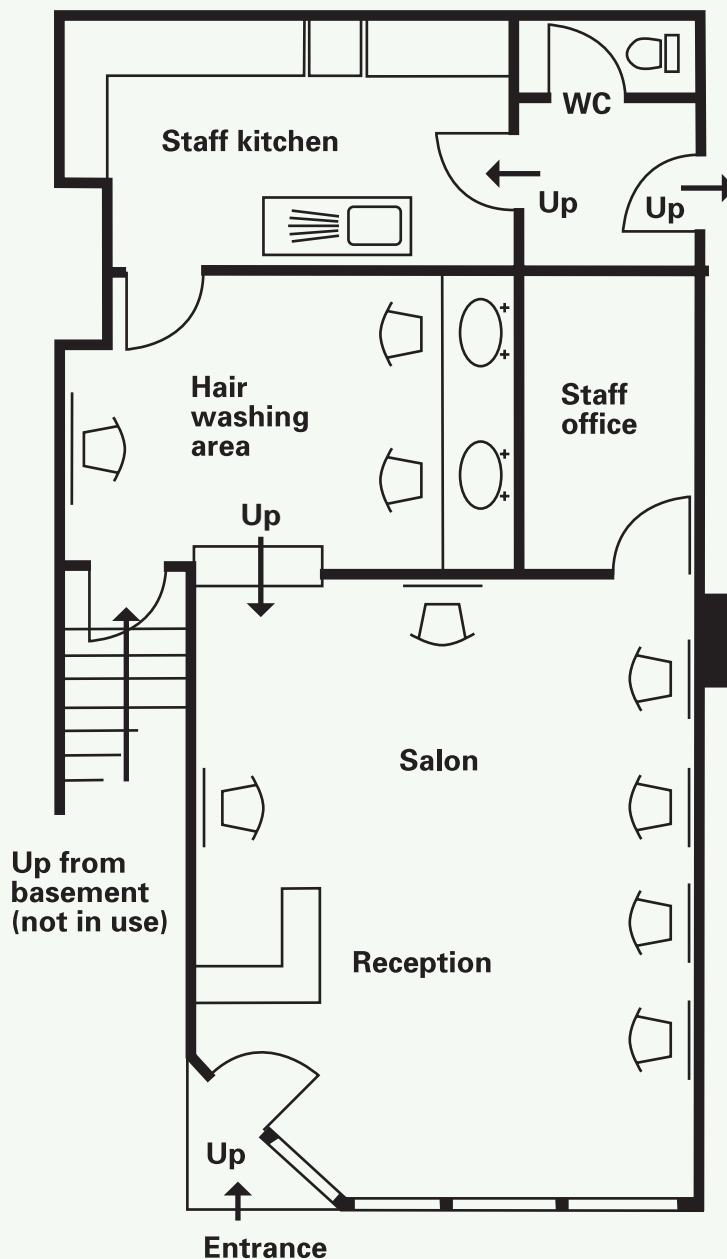
As a small business, you need to be thinking about what you can do to make sure that – as far as possible – disabled customers are treated in the same way as non-disabled customers. The Case Study of a Hairdressing Salon (page 3) and Hints and tips (page 13) give plenty of ideas about how to improve access to the goods and services you offer, many of which could be carried out at little or no cost.

What's in it for you?

Apart from the fact that you have a legal duty under the Act to do what you reasonably can to make your services easier to use by disabled customers, there is also a strong business case. There are some 10 million people in the UK with some form of disability – a recent estimate put their collective spending power at more than £50 billion a year. Taken together with their friends and families, the number of customers affected by a disability is bigger still. Many of the improvements suggested in this guide will also benefit other customers, such as parents with pushchairs, people carrying heavy shopping and some older people who may not consider themselves disabled but for whom easier access will be a great benefit. So by meeting your requirements as a service provider under the DDA you are also likely to get more customers.

Case Study: Hairdressing Salon

The Cutting Room is a busy hairdressers situated just off a main High Street with the capacity to provide hairdressing services for up to seven clients at a time. Although in spring 1999 the proprietor had not heard of the DDA and was not sure what its effect on his business would be, he was already making alterations to the way he and his staff provide services to meet the requirements of disabled customers.



Key features

- front door wide enough for wheelchairs and baby buggies
- generally good circulation and access to hairdressing stations
- plenty of natural light and good artificial lighting
- well-designed waiting area with variety of movable chairs and magazine rack at convenient height for all users
- staff trained in communication skills with people who lip-read and with people with impaired speech
- staff are careful to explain use of aftercare products to people with learning difficulties
- staff give particular care and attention to customer satisfaction when cutting the hair of blind people.

Approaching the shop

- no dropped kerbs and some uneven surfaces which could cause difficulty for wheelchair users attempting access
- 150mm step up to the front door.

Options

Customers requiring assistance (for example from a car or taxi) could let salon know in advance and a member of staff could assist a wheelchair user to negotiate kerbs, uneven surfaces and step up to front door.

Cost implication: none



Although this is not the responsibility of the salon, a request could be made to the local authority to provide dropped kerbs and even out the surface of the pavement – this would make it much easier for wheelchair users and would benefit all users.

Cost implication: to be discussed with local authority

There is adequate room for a ramp (with alternative step) to be installed, providing easier access to wheelchair users and people pushing buggies, while retaining alternative stepped access.

Cost implication: significant structural work required

The front door

- 800mm wide door (meets recommended width)
- handle is a good size and grip but rather high for wheelchair users
- good visibility through the door
- coir matting inside, quite extensive and not flush with the floor. It is difficult for wheelchair users to manoeuvre over this surface and there are potential tripping hazards for mobility-impaired users
- slight (20–30mm) threshold.



Options

Change to a mixture of rubber and metal matting.

Cost implication: no additional cost if carried out when existing matting needs to be replaced

Move the door handle to a lower position.

Cost implication: minimal

Approach the local authority with a request to create flush surface and level threshold by building up paving outside.

Cost implication: to be discussed with local authority

Reception desk

- solid structure, 1050mm high and no leg room underneath, makes it difficult for a wheelchair user to write cheques etc.

Options

Make the reception desk split-level, the lower section having adequate leg space to allow wheelchair users easy access.

Cost implication: significant change to fittings, but no structural alterations required



Waiting area

- seats are all movable, so space can easily be provided for a wheelchair user
- variety of seats – some with arms, some without – catering for people with different requirements
- magazine rack at a convenient height for wheelchair users and others.



Circulation space

- good circulation and good access to all seating.

Access to rear part of salon

The hair-washing facilities and staff WC (also used by customers) are in a smaller space down two quite deep steps to the rear of the salon. The difference in level between the two areas is too great for an internal ramp to be installed. The main difficulty is in providing access to wheelchair users, since this requires carrying the client down the stairs in their wheelchair. Once downstairs, however, there is a hairdressing station where the client can receive the service.

Options

Assist wheelchair user down the two steps (as at present) for hair-washing. This may be acceptable for some customers but not to others, and would need to be negotiated individually. Clearly not an ideal situation – the disadvantages include disabled customers feeling less favourably treated and possible risk of injury to the customer and to staff who do the lifting. This would not be an option for users of powered wheelchairs.

Cost implication: none

Provide a handrail to one or both sides of steps for use by ambulant disabled customers.

Cost implication: minor

Provide hair-washing facilities and WC within main salon area (see below).

Hair-washing facilities

Two sink areas each with movable chairs. Both swivel on a horizontal axis, allowing some variation in basin height (although neither is fully height-adjustable). The hair-washing basins are normally used with the client leaning backwards, but are also perfectly usable with the client leaning forwards.

Options

Provide alternative, fully height-adjustable hair-washing facility in main part of salon, at one of the hair-cutting stations. This means that wheelchair users would not need to be manually handled down the steps to have their hair washed.

Cost implications: significant – some structural alteration to provide plumbing and fitting new washbasin

Hairdressing

- staff change their practice when dealing with deaf clients or those with hearing impairments. It is usual for the interaction between staff and clients to take place through the reflection in the mirror – however, with hearing-impaired clients staff position themselves so that the client can lip-read when instructions are being exchanged. Where there is also a speech impairment staff give the client additional time to formulate their requests
- dressing the hair of blind people requires a different method of showing the client what is possible and what is being done. Paramount is the extra degree of trust which a blind client needs to have in the opinion of the stylist and Cutting Room staff are trained to be responsive to this increased duty of care. The client is encouraged to feel the ‘lightness’ of the cut, its shape and texture
- the correct use of home aftercare hair products sold at the salon is explained carefully during the treatment so that clients with concentration or learning difficulties are not reliant solely on the written instructions on the packaging
- all chairs are movable, allowing wheelchair access under the equipment shelf, but fixed footrests could prevent full access
- mirrors (900mm to 2360mm) provide for use by both seated and standing clients
- all the seats have arms, which is good
- very good lighting in the hairdressing area.

Options

One of the footrests could be hinged so that it could fold flush with the wall to allow full access to wheelchair users.

Cost implication: low

WC facilities

- there are staff WC facilities, down two steps to the rear of the salon, which are also used by customers. Doorway width is 620mm (below the 750mm internal required width for wheelchair access), with a step down into the small WC compartment. No room for internal ramp, no grab rails.



Options

Consider whether it is reasonable in this setting to provide WC facilities for customers, and, if so, whether it is practicable to provide such facilities to people with disabilities. Raise floor level of WC compartment to that of staff area, eliminating step down to WC compartment and fit grab rails to make WC compartment easier to use by ambulant disabled people (this will still not make the WC accessible to wheelchair users).

Cost implications: significant cost of raising floor level; minor cost of fitting grab rails

Create new accessible WC compartment in existing manager's office off main salon area. There is just about enough space available, with level access. This would also involve relocating manager's office to rear of salon. Although technically feasible, it may not be reasonable to expect a small business such as this to incur the expense of such major structural alterations.

Cost implications: major structural work required

Action checklist

- make sure that you know what the law says and when the various different parts of the law come into effect
- consider changing the way you provide your services to make it easier for disabled customers
- make access into and around your premises easier for disabled customers
- find alternative ways of providing goods and services to disabled customers if necessary
- provide extra help or special equipment if necessary
- make any changes that you can straight away
- come up with an action plan for the future
- when you are making changes in your premises, take the opportunity to improve access to your services by disabled customers.

Hints and tips

Consulting your disabled customers

It helps to ask customers with disabilities how they would like goods and services to be provided, particularly where, for whatever reason, there are barriers to equal access.

Can disabled people find your shop or premises?

Clear external signs help people with visual impairments or learning difficulties identify the shop.

Can disabled people get into the shop or premises?

Ideally, disabled customers will be able to enter the shop independently, through the main front door, just like non-disabled customers – for example where there is level access through a wide door. But in many premises – for instance smaller ones, older buildings or buildings on awkward sites – equality of access may not be possible at reasonable cost.

In new buildings, the required minimum clear opening width for external doors is 800mm and for internal doors is 750mm. This allows easy wheelchair access and access for people pushing baby buggies. For existing premises, 750mm clear opening width for external doors is acceptable for wheelchair access.

Where full independent wheelchair access is not possible, consider other changes such as:

- providing a temporary portable ramp
- positioning door handles at an easier height
- making the door less heavy to open
- providing a call bell to alert staff when a disabled customer needs assistance to enter the premises.

Are there alternative ways of providing the service?

Examples for goods might include:

- operating a telephone mail order or local delivery scheme
- staff who will put together an order and bring the goods to the front door or the nearest easy collection point.

Examples for services might include:

- home visits to disabled customers
- providing the service in an alternative, accessible location either by appointment or perhaps on a regular basis (for example once a week).

Can disabled people access your goods and services?

Ideally, disabled customers should be able to find their way to all sales areas, browse and inspect goods, bring them to the cash desk or receive services in the same way as non-disabled people do. For people with visual impairments who have some use of sight, consider:

- clear signs and clear product labelling and pricing
- making it easier to read menus in cafés or product information displays
- providing written menus or other product information in large print versions, or having staff read information out to visually impaired customers.

Avoiding the use of awkward or dangerously placed fittings and fixtures can make independent movement easier for blind customers. Some blind people might prefer to be guided round the shop by a member of staff or to have goods brought to them.

For wheelchair users or others who cannot access display areas or reach goods on shelves, staff could assist them.

Can disabled customers use checkouts, counters and service desks?

The ideal height for wheelchair users is 750–800mm from floor level. There should be unobstructed space under the counter for the person's legs and the wheelchair footrest. Think about lowering a section of counter or making the whole counter a convenient height for wheelchair users.

Should you be providing WCs for public use?

For many small shops, the issue of providing WCs does not arise – customers do not expect to have access to a WC. However, where WCs are provided for the public (for example in cafés or in other situations where customers may be on the premises for a period of time) consider their accessibility by disabled customers – both getting to and using the facilities. If there is space available and a WC compartment can be modified to full wheelchair-accessible standards, this could greatly benefit disabled customers.

Statutory consent for some building changes

When undertaking changes to premises, you may need to obtain consent, including planning permission, building regulations approval and listed building consent. The DDA does not override the need to obtain such consents.

Leased premises

If you do not own your premises and the terms of your lease do not allow you to make alterations, special provisions apply. The Act enables you to make the alteration if the landlord consents, and also says that the landlord must not withhold consent 'unreasonably', but may attach 'reasonable conditions' to the consent.

Guidance

For design guidance including ramps, doors, circulation space, signs and WCs, see *Designing for Accessibility*, published by the Centre for Accessible Environments (details on page 20).

About the DDA

Duties on service providers

The DDA places duties on all service providers, including owners and operators of shops, cafés and restaurants, and establishments where services are provided to the public. These duties have been introduced in three stages and apply to service providers of all sizes:

- since December 1996, it has been unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably than others for a reason related to their disability
- since 1 October 1999, service providers have had to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people in the way they provide their services
- since October 2004, service providers have also had to make reasonable adjustments to the physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access.

Several factors have a bearing on whether a change is a reasonable one to make for small businesses, particularly for physical adjustments to premises.

These include:

- type of shop or business
- size of the business and annual turnover
- cost of the adjustment
- disruption to the business while the work is being carried out
- practicality of carrying out the adjustment
- potential benefits to the customer.

Who is disabled?

The DDA protects the rights of a wide range of people with sensory, mental or physical disabilities. This can include:

- people who use wheelchairs
- blind and partially sighted people
- deaf and hearing-impaired people
- people with arthritis
- people with long-term illnesses
- people with learning disabilities
- people with hidden impairments.

People who have had disabilities in the past are also protected from discrimination. Only a court of law can make a decision about whether someone is disabled under the Act, so it is probably best in cases of doubt to assume that someone is protected by the Act.

Where the DDA applies

The DDA applies to the whole of the UK, but not the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, nor to goods or services provided outside the UK.

To find out more about the DDA

If you'd like to find out more about the DDA and how it affects you as a service provider, you can visit the DRC website at www.drc-gb.org or call the DRC Helpline (see outside back cover).

Where to get more information

Publications

DRC38 Disability Conciliation Service: A brief guide for service providers

This leaflet provides goods and services providers with an outline of the services of the Disability Conciliation Service (DCS) – what they do and in what capacity they can help.

DWP1 Act Now Video

Shows the adjustments needed to make businesses accessible and ideas on how to do this.

EMP5 Guide for small business top tips pack

This guide will give you information to help you meet your duties as an employer under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). It will also enable you to take advantage of the considerable knowledge, skills and experience that disabled people have to offer.

SP5 Making access to goods and services easier for disabled customers

A practical guide for small businesses and other small service providers on how to make their premises accessible to disabled customers.

SP6 What it means to you: a guide for disabled people

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) gives disabled people rights in the way they receive goods, services or facilities. Service providers already have to change the way they deliver their services if they are difficult for disabled people to use. Since October 2004 these duties have become much more wide ranging – as this guide outlines.

SP10 Making your business accessible for all

A guide informing businesses what they have to do in order to become more accessible to disabled customers.

All available free of charge from the DRC website and Helpline.

Designing for Accessibility: an essential guide for public buildings

Centre for Accessible Environments, 2004

A guide to designing buildings which are accessible to people with a range of disabilities; also useful for adapting existing buildings.

£20.00

Access Audits: a guide and checklists for appraising the accessibility of public buildings

Centre for Accessible Environments, 2004

Comprising guidance notes, audit checklists and a copy of Designing for Accessibility (see above), the Access Audits pack is a useful tool for assessing the current accessibility and usability of buildings by disabled people.

£30.00

Both publications available from CAE, see contact details on page 21.

The Disability Discrimination Act – Part 3: a service provider's guide to best practice

Customer Action File 1

Employers' Forum on Disability, 1999

Available from EFD, Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY

Telephone/textphone: 020 7403 3020

Organisations

DRC Helpline

FREEPOST MID 02164
Stratford upon Avon CV37 9BR
Telephone: 08457 622 633
Textphone: 08457 622 644
Fax: 08457 778 878
Website: www.drc-gb.org

Provides information and advice concerning all aspects of the implementation of the DDA. All DDA-related publications, including the Code of Practice: Rights of Access, Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises can be downloaded from the website.

Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE)

70 South Lambeth Road
London SW8 1RL
Telephone/textphone: 020 7840 0125
Fax: 020 7840 5811
Email: info@cae.org.uk
Website: www.cae.org.uk

Provides technical information, training and consultancy in making buildings accessible to disabled and older people and advice on technical aspects of implementing the requirements of the DDA.

Disability Action (Head office)

Portside Business Park
189 Airport Road West
Belfast BT3 9ED
Telephone: 028 9029 7880
Textphone: 028 9029 7882
Fax: 028 9029 7881
Website: www.disabilityaction.org

Provides a range of services including information and advice on all aspects of the DDA and a technical advice service on access to the built environment.

Update

27 Beaverhall Road
Edinburgh EH7 4JE
Telephone: 0131 558 5200
Textphone: 0131 558 5202
Fax: 0131 558 5201
Email: info@update.org.uk
Website: www.update.org.uk

Provides details of local, regional and national sources of information on disability-related matters in Scotland.

Disability Wales

Wernddu Court
Caerphilly Business Park
Van Road
Caerphilly CF83 3ED
Telephone/textphone: 029 2088 7325
Fax: 029 2988 8702
Email: info@dwac.demon.co.uk
Website: www.disabilitywales.org

National umbrella organisation of disability groups working to promote the rights, equality, inclusion and support of disabled people in Wales.

Disabled Living Foundation

380-384 Harrow Road
London W9 2HU
Helpline: 0845 130 9177
Textphone: 020 7432 8009
Telephone: 020 7289 6111
Fax: 020 7266 2922
Email: info@dlf.org.uk
Website: www.dlf.org.uk

Provides information on aids and equipment that help disabled people with their daily lives. It administers a comprehensive database of products that can be used by disabled people in public buildings.

RADAR

12 City Forum
250 City Road
London EC1V 8AF
Telephone: 020 7250 3222
Textphone: 020 7250 4119
Fax: 020 7250 0212
Email: radar@radar.org.uk
Website: www.radar.org.uk

Provides information on the needs of disabled people and consultancy services.



Access officers and local access groups


Many local authorities employ access officers (usually within the planning or building control departments) who perform an advisory role often on an inter-departmental basis. Contact details should be listed in your local telephone directory. Local access groups represent the access needs of disabled people in their locality. RADAR (see above) maintains a list of access groups across the UK.

You can contact the DRC Helpline by voice, text, fax, post or by email via the website. You can speak to an operator at any time between 08:00 and 20:00, Monday to Friday.

If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or language please contact the Helpline to discuss your needs. All publications are available to download from the DRC website: www.drc-gb.org

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www.drc-gb.org



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