



Retail for everyone

**Adjusting to the needs
of disabled people in the
retail industry**

Adjusting for Better Business – Retail

Pilgrim's – real life story

Business: Small shop

**Number of staff employed: 3 part-time members of staff.
Cate Reid, the owner, is disabled. Cate has Multiple Sclerosis.**

Disabled customers: A few disabled people, including a visually-impaired man, visit the shop on a regular basis.

What adjustments has the business made?

- Step removed from entrance and replaced by a slope for wheelchair users, older people, and parents with pushchairs.
- Bell fitted at front door, with a sign inviting people to ring if they need assistance.
- Sloped access created inside to the rear of the shop and grip rails installed on both sides of the shop to aid those with a mobility disability.
- Guide dogs are welcome.
- Staff trained to be aware of disabled people's needs and are happy and confident helping disabled customers.

What benefits have the adjustments brought to the business?

Although it's a small business, Pilgrim's have managed to improve accessibility considerably. Staff are now more aware of customer needs, resulting in better customer service and there is increased custom from wheelchair users, elderly people and parents with pushchairs.

How did the business feel about making the adjustments?

As a retailer, Cate Reid knows that the customer always comes first. "As a disabled person myself, I am well aware of the importance of creating an accessible environment for disabled customers. We knew the October 2004 deadline to make reasonable adjustments as part of the DDA was approaching, so we started thinking about how we could make the shop more accessible.

Despite our shop being a listed building we have been able to make small adjustments, making it easier for disabled people to use the premises. This is a fantastic campaign and I am pleased to support it. There are good business reasons for making adjustments to ensure more disabled people use small shops and businesses, and little changes can make a big difference for people."

Business tips and benefits for the retail industry

Business tips: Useful ways to make your business more accessible to disabled people

- Does your accessibility policy start at the front door? You could think about fitting a bell or buzzer on your outside door so that customers with mobility impairments can attract your attention.
- Have you considered the layout of your premises? Arranging goods so that the same items are available at different heights and putting popular lines on easily accessible shelves can really help.
- How easy is your queuing system? Could you make alternative provision for customers who are unable to stand and wait? To prevent a disabled person becoming distressed or agitated, you might consider serving them ahead of the queue. However, you might like to make your arrangements publicly known to avoid your other customers getting upset if they think people are queue jumping.
- Are your fitting rooms comfortable? If possible, at least one fitting room should have somewhere to sit. Could you make one large enough for a wheelchair?
- Have you checked your lighting? Reflective surfaces can create glare and reflection, causing problems for people with partial sight. It's worth seeing whether you can adjust or relocate your lighting to reduce these effects.
- Is there anything else you can do to improve customer service? Personal shopping, home delivery, online or telephone ordering can all make a big difference. You may want to ensure a member of staff is available to help customers if they ask.
- Are your employees up to speed with the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act? It's worth remembering that adapting your company's policies and attitudes towards serving disabled customers is just as important as adjusting your premises. If necessary, you could consider providing staff with disability awareness training.

Business tips and benefits for the retail industry

Business benefits

There are a number of reasons why making reasonable adjustments makes good business sense:

- Treating a disabled person unfairly means you could have legal action taken against you.
- Carrying out a few easy and inexpensive adjustments could soon more than pay for itself.
- Making your services more accessible to disabled customers means they're far more likely to remain loyal, which could lead to increased profitability.
- Improving your overall level of customer service can really make a difference to disabled peoples' lives and it can help you stand out from your competitors.
- Looking after your disabled customers means they'll be more likely to recommend your business and services to others.
- Encouraging applications from disabled people widens your talent pool as well as increasing your chances of finding employees with the right skills and experience.

Contact details

For further advice and information on making adjustments please visit www.dwp.gov.uk/dda or email dda.feedback@dwp.gsi.gov.uk