

Birmingham Disability Resource Centre Asks Shops to Consider Disabled Shoppers as they Reopen for Business

As shops begin to reopen their doors over the coming weeks, DRC is concerned that disabled shoppers are being forgotten in the rush to come up with systems that meet government guidelines and social distancing requirements. Having looked at how businesses are meeting these guidelines over the last week, we believe disabled people, and those with accessibility issues, are being disadvantaged and 'locked out' of local shops.

We are therefore, asking companies to look at their new shopping procedures and ask themselves if they meet accessibility requirements and are suitable for disabled people. Examples of how they can do this include:

- Making sure hand sanitiser dispensers or handwashing stations are at an accessible height for wheelchair users
- Providing sufficient signage inside and outside a store for people with hearing impairments and placing signage at the correct height to be seen by wheelchair users.
- Ensuring aisles are wide enough to allow people in wheelchairs or using mobility devices to move around and pass other shoppers safely.
- Allowing carers or companions to enter stores with disabled people, even if there is a 'one in – one out' policy in place.
- Providing places for disabled people to sit if there are long queues outside the store – can staff provide chairs, for example, or a seating area for people who cannot stand for long periods and a number system so they don't lose their place in the queue?

Finally, it's important to remember not every disability is visible. Not everyone with a mobility issue, for example, will be in a wheelchair and it is not always obvious that someone has a hearing impairment and so can't understand what staff members are saying behind their mask. Staff should be trained to understand invisible disabilities and treat people with dignity and respect at all times as well as giving them the additional time they need to take on board information and shop safely. This way we can help ensure that no disabled person is locked out of our reopened shops or our communities.

DRC's CEO Louise Mckiernan said "We know many businesses are looking at how they can adjust their premises to make them safe for people to visit and that can be difficult. It will no doubt take some trial and error to get things right. However, we're asking each one to think about the routes people can take through their offices, shops and venues. It's vital that there is space for disabled people and those with mobility issues to have a safe and enjoyable visit. Hopefully, our list of suggested changes will help. However, if any company out there needs more support, they're welcome to contact us, and we'll do what we can to help."

About Birmingham Disability Resource Centre

The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) is a charity run by disabled people, for disabled people. Working across the West Midlands and South Staffordshire, we offer a variety of services to help improve the lives of disabled people, including those with physical disability, learning disability, sensory impairment, long-term health conditions and mental ill-health. Since our inception in 1992, we have empowered over 80,000 disabled people, their carers, and families. **For more information on Birmingham Disability Resource Centre, visit www.disability.co.uk.**