

# **Access in Southampton**

## **Final Report for Go! Southampton**

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Centre for  
Independent  
Living CIC

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## **Introduction and overview**

Go! Southampton have commissioned SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living to carry out research on access for Older and Disabled People in the City of Southampton (focusing primarily on the City centre), and to make recommendations on actions to improve accessibility, for the benefit of both residents and visitors and the local business community.

This work has been carried out in three parts.

First, we produced a Scoping Report outlining the key issues that need to be considered in any plans on improving accessibility in city environments - e.g. transport links; physical access; infrastructure and environmental factors; business awareness of disability issues etc - and summarising some of the specific issues and opportunities in the local context of the areas of Southampton covered by the Go! Southampton BID. The Scoping Report also detailed findings from our background desk research on accessibility initiatives undertaken in other Cities around the world (e.g. Cities that have won the European Commission Access City Award).

Second, we carried out two focus groups, where participants were asked to discuss 7 topics covering: travel in and around the city by public transport and by car; parking; getting around the city either on foot or in a wheelchair; access when using shops, cafes and bars, restaurants, leisure facilities, libraries etc in the city; customer experience; and, attitudes and behaviour. The findings from the focus groups are summarised below.

Third, after further local research and consultation, we have produced this final report which summarises the key findings of our research and the lessons that can be applied in the local context, together with a set of recommendations for Go! Southampton and other local partners.

## **Summary of findings from local focus groups**

A total of 35 people took part in two focus group sessions. The findings from the focus groups are summarised below.

- **Travel to and from the city centre**

## Buses and coaches

Participants mostly felt that using public transport in and around Southampton is very difficult for wheelchair users (especially buses). This is typically because of over-crowding and not being able to use wheelchair spaces on buses due to prams, standing passengers or luggage blocking the spaces.

Several participants suggested that these problems could be mitigated by more creative and flexible design of bus interiors - such as wider aisles and greater use of flip up seats to make more space when needed.

Some participants raised various issues about the lack of assistance from bus drivers. For example, it was noted that bus drivers do not tend to be pro-active in helping to clear space for Disabled passengers, so people felt that all of onus was on them to either do this themselves, or wait for another bus.

Availability of public transport in some parts of the city was also an issue for some, who felt that reduced services on some bus routes greatly reduced their ability to travel in and around the city.

## Taxis

A few participants mentioned problems with taxis - particularly a shortage of accessible taxis and taxi drivers often refusing to pick up wheelchair users.

## Trains

Experiences of using trains to get into the city centre were a little better. Although some participants had experienced problems with prams, buggies or luggage blocking wheelchair spaces, rail staff tended to be more likely to help, compared with bus drivers.

Access for people with sensory impairments was less good however. For example, signage and timetabling displays are inaccessible for people with multiple sensory ipairments.

## Car travel

Many participants reported problems with in getting around the city by car - mainly due to difficulty finding Disabled Parking spaces, even outside of busy times.

The siting and layout of some Disabled Parking spaces was also felt to be problematic as a result, for example, of bollards being placed adjacent to parking bays, the absence of dropped kerbs nearby, or parking bays being too narrow.

Lack of consideration of the needs of Disabled drivers was a recurring theme throughout the discussions.

Off-street parking was also felt to be problematic, mainly due to space restrictions which made parking for people who need to exit at the rear of their vehicles difficult and also caused problems for people with wheelchair accessible vans, which are typically longer than available parking spaces, while some are unable to use ticket machines.

Some people with Mental Health conditions or Learning Difficulties also mentioned difficulties with getting 'Blue Badge' Parking Permits for people with non-mobility impairments.

- **Getting around the city**

Numerous access problems were reported when participants were asked about getting around the city on foot or in a wheelchair.

The most common issue was hazards posed by a wide variety of street furniture, such as billboards and other displays outside shops, inconveniently placed bollards or rubbish bins, and cafe/restaurant pavement tables. While such hazards cause difficulties for most Disabled People, they can be particularly dangerous for people with visual impairments.

Some participants suggested that there could be guidance given to businesses about how much space should be left for pedestrians when placing tables or other street furniture outside their premises, and/or having the boundary for such items clearly marked on the pavement to make it clear what space should be left.

Almost as many participants mentioned problems with pavements causing obstruction or danger. For example, sudden changes in width or height of the pavement, shortage of dropped kerbs - resulting in people

having to go onto the road - or cracked/broken paving, creating a tripping hazard.

Participants also highlighted specific challenges faced by particular groups of Disabled People - those with Mental Health Conditions or Autism, as well as people who use Assistance Dogs. A busy and crowded city centre can be a very disorientating, or even hostile, environment for many people in these groups - to the extent that they will often be reluctant to go to the city centre at all.

Some participants also talked about the specific access barriers faced by people with hearing impairments in places like the West Quay shopping centre, where the ambient noise of thousands of people can make life very difficult.

Other issues raised included:

- cyclists and skateboarders creating hazards for Disabled pedestrians;
- overcrowding and severe congestion in the city centre during summer months when cruise ships arrive;
- Lack of accessible signposting around the city for people with visual impairments;
- poorly phased traffic and pedestrian crossing.

- **Using buildings and spaces**

#### Cafes, bars and restaurants

Various access issues were noted in relation to cafes, bars and restaurants in the city centre. For example, internal steps put in for purely aesthetic reasons - thereby creating an unnecessary access barrier - and the current fashion for high tables and stools in many pubs, which are also inaccessible.  
stable height tables.

Participants also expressed surprise and disappointment that access barriers - such as lack of accessible toilets or hearing loop systems - remained in some leisure and retail premises even after recent refurbishments. They queried why the planning process does not

prevent this happening and suggested that there needs to be much greater awareness of the Equality Act and Building Regulation Access Standards.

Some participants pointed out that even some council owned leisure facilities do not have full access for Disabled People.

### Shops

The most common problems with shops highlighted by participants in the Focus Groups included:

- stepped access at shop entrances;
- narrow and cluttered aisles making moving around shops very difficult for wheelchair users and other people with sensory and mobility impairments;
- poorly sited or designed displays;
- shortage of accessible lifts in buildings with stairs;
- poor lighting for people with visual impairments;
- lack of accessible changing cubicles in clothes shops and department stores;
- lack of working hearing loop systems;
- narrow queuing lanes in department stores;
- lack of, or poorly sited, accessible toilets.

### Public toilets

Many of the participants raised problems with finding accessible public toilets when out and about in the city centre.

It was felt that, since the City Council have closed many of the public toilets in the city centre, Disabled People have to try to find toilets in shops - but these are often inaccessible and/or poorly maintained.

- **Dealing with people**

One of the most common issues raised was staff in leisure and retail businesses being intolerant and/or impatient with Disabled customers who might need a bit more time than others to complete their transactions.

Participants felt that staff behaviour and attitudes are highly variable. Marks and Spencer staff and staff in some Banks, for example, were felt to be providing a good service to Disabled customers, but staff in many other businesses appear to have had no training in dealing with Disabled customers at all - with several being positively hostile towards them.

Some participants reported that businesses they have spoken to about access problems often respond by saying that they have no need to make any changes as they do not have any Disabled customers - apparently completely failing to understand why.

## **Lessons from accessible cities around the world**

As part of this work we have produced a Scoping Report, which includes details of a number of best practice examples of accessible cities around the world. These cities provide examples of particularly innovative access solutions ranging from the use of digital technology, to repurposing existing infrastructure to improve access while, at the same time, maintaining the integrity of historical heritage sites.

None could, or would, claim to be completely accessible. But, they all share a number of common features that can help to inform and guide plans for improving accessibility in Southampton.

- **A shared commitment to full inclusion**

First, all of the cities highlighted share a commitment to full inclusion and a long-term approach to making their cities accessible to all, with timeframes for implementing plans and strategies ranging from 5 to 15 years (with an average of 8.5 years).

- **Universal benefits**



Second, plans are based on the belief that improving accessibility has benefits for all residents and visitors (not just older and Disabled People), as well as for businesses and public bodies.

- **A broad view of Disability and accessibility**

Third, they all take a broad view of Disability and consider the access needs of people with a wide range of impairments and health conditions. This includes things like: physical adaptations to city centres to improve ease of navigation and safety for people with sensory impairments; design features to avoid or reduce sensory overload for people on the autistic spectrum; and, flexible seating in cafes, restaurants and public spaces to accommodate people with different needs.

- **Fully accessible transport systems**

Fourth, all of the highlighted cities have - or plan to have - fully accessible public transport systems in their local areas. This covers physical access as well as travel information and disability awareness training for staff. Some also require all licensed taxis to be accessible.

- **An emphasis on communications**

Fifth, nearly all placed considerable emphasis on communications and the role of accessible information to help residents and visitors navigate around the cities. For some this was via websites with information provided in a range of formats (including Sign Language and Easy Read), while others had worked with other partners to produce innovative apps for use on smart devices.

- **Innovation**

Sixth, older cities have all found innovative and creative ways to overcome historical and topographical challenges and the need to maintain the integrity of heritage sites, such as repurposing traditional building materials or installing lifts to allow access to places with steep inclines.

- **A commitment to co-production**

Finally, all of the cities that are noted as exemplars of accessibility take a co-production approach to access, with Disabled People and their organisations fully involved in design, planning, awareness raising and evaluation and monitoring. This is seen as essential both for providing

expert advice and guidance, but also ensuring accountability and constructive challenge to architects, planners and business.

## **Evaluating accessibility in cities**

When analyzing the accessibility level of cities there are several factors to consider. For example, the annual European Commission Access City Award takes into account the following areas of action:

- The built environment and public spaces
- Transport and related infrastructure
- Information and communication, including new technologies
- Public facilities and services

Social inclusion is another key factor. It is important to note that a city does not become accessible only by adapting its structures to all kinds of people. Social inclusion is also key in providing equal conditions for its inhabitants (e.g. the ease with which Disabled People can access jobs or health services).

Accessibility is the key to inclusive cities. An inclusive city is a place where everyone can access everything and feel empowered to do so.

If cities are built with accessibility in mind Disabled People will feel included socially. Having more Disabled People involved helps planners think about the different types of exclusions and barriers that people face in their everyday lives. Disabled People are excluded further if cities are planned and designed poorly. This exclusion means fewer opportunities for education, employment and involvement in community life.

## **Principles for designing accessible cities**

Based on the best practice from the most accessible cities around the world, the key design principles can be summarised as follows:

- Design cities with all users in mind – all ages and abilities
- Allow people to move around how they want e.g. walking, biking, and wheelchairs

- Reduce the use of cars and promote public transport wherever possible (while planning for car use for people unable to use public transport)
- Provide houses close to every day destinations e.g. shops, schools, and work places
- Provide a range of housing including accessible housing
- Provide public spaces and facilities that are safe and accessible to users of all ages and abilities e.g. libraries and sports centres

Further resources on innovations in Inclusive Design can be found in Appendix 1.

## **Local context**

There are a number of local initiatives and developments offering scope to improve accessibility in Southampton. These are outlined below and have also been taken into account when framing the recommendations in this report.

### **City Centre Action Plan**

The City Centre Action Plan, adopted in 2015, has updated the statutory planning framework for the city centre and outlined a vision for how Southampton could change over the 15 years and beyond.

The planning system has an important role in shaping the city centre and how it is accessed and used. Two of the cross-cutting themes contained in the Plan are particularly relevant to Disabled People. Namely, that the city centre will be:

- A great place to visit
- Easy to get about

The Plan envisaged a network of well-signed, attractive routes which are accessible for all people including those with reduced mobility, which will encourage people to spend more time in the city centre.

This should help to improve access for Disabled People, as will the proposed new parking standards, which state that there is a need to:

- Link new city centre car parking standards with the overall approach to car parking (park and ride, disabled on-street, new developments, public off street parking)

The Local Plan has considerable potential for improving accessibility, although it is of some concern that - other than the points noted above - there is little mention of the specific needs of Disabled People. It will be essential therefore to make sure that more detailed consideration is given to this issue as the plan is rolled out so that Disabled People are able to share the benefits of the planned improvements on an equal basis. It is also vitally important that Older and Disabled People are fully included in the process.

### **Southampton Local Plan Vision**

A group of 12 local community organisations who support people who experience barriers to access in multiple forms, led by Southampton Voluntary Services, have been working to influence inclusion of the principle of accessibility in the development of the Local Plan, with the aim of making Southampton becoming the UKs most accessible city by 2050.

As noted above, the Local Plan presents a real opportunity for the city to enshrine within its development principles an overarching commitment to make accessibility and inclusion central to future development. The group believes that it also provides an opportunity for the city to adopt the simple but strong statement that Southampton aims to be the UKs most accessible city by 2050.

This should include a commitment to all forms of accessibility from physical access including integrated accessible transport and Shopmobility services, visual and auditory access as well as built environment and spatial planning, which is aware of and friendly to people with mental health conditions, dementia, people on the autism spectrum, and people with Learning Difficulties.

There are both sound economic as well as social grounds for adopting this aim. We have an aging population in a city which we need to future proof to sustain independent living and reduce loneliness and social

isolation as much as possible but also it is a positive offer to the huge number of visitors and inward investors to the city too.

Southampton as the most accessible UK city would send a powerful message that everyone is welcome and included in all our city has to offer – in its culture and heritage, retail and leisure offers, educational establishments, transport and connectivity, homes, housing and workplaces.

Southampton CCG have indicated they are supportive of this long term aim for the city and are keen to include this within in the estates programme that they are developing to support the city's new 5-year health and care strategy. The initiative is also supported by the Chair of Southampton Connect. Discussions with SCC are ongoing.

### **Hearing Loop grants**

The partnership between GO! Southampton, Southampton City Council, NHS Southampton City Clinical Commissioning Group (SCCCG), Southampton Healthwatch and Lets Loop Southampton to provide free hearing loop systems for small businesses and GP surgeries across the city is a very welcome development. The ambition to make Southampton the first city in the UK to have a hearing loop system in every public building is an extremely positive statement of intent.

It is estimated that around 33,500 Southampton residents are affected by hearing loss, yet an audit in 2017 revealed that just 13 percent of businesses had hearing loops installed. The hearing loop grants have the potential for an additional 200 premises to have the systems installed, which would obviously be a significant improvement.

### **Shopmobility**

The City Shopmobility scheme enables people with mobility impairments to access Southampton city centre shops and services through the hire of mobility scooters and wheelchairs. Almost 3,000 hires were made last year and it is estimated that over a third of customers using the scheme spend over £50 per city centre visit.

The future of the scheme is currently being considered as part of a strategic review of community transport in Southampton and has the potential to form part of a sustainable response to address issues of reduced mobility and access for Disabled People in Southampton.

## **Commercial development**

The major developments currently underway at WestQuay Watermark and the Cultural Quarter, as well as the planned developments such as Bargate, East Street and the Mayflower Quarter provide scope to design access for Disabled People in from the start, with the potential to make them exemplars of universal accessibility. These are positive opportunities, but only if access is given sufficient priority in the planning process.

## **Go! Southampton**

Some of Go! Southampton's own Business Plan priorities are also relevant to the issue of accessibility and have the potential to focus on the specific needs of Disabled People.

For example, under the priority for 'Stronger Business', the planned work with the Marketing Group to create a interactive online business directory could include information of accessibility. This would not only provide useful information for Disabled People but also encourage businesses themselves to give more thought to accessibility.

Similarly, under 'Developing and Retaining Skills', plans to provide training to customer-facing staff and volunteers in the city centre could encompass advice and support on meeting the needs of Disabled customers - which would make a significant contribution to improving accessibility.

Finally, under the 'Experience' priority there are two strands of particular relevance to the issue of accessibility, namely:

- Reviewing key access points to the city centre and implementing action plans to improve the user experience.
- Beginning a streetscape audit programme aimed at spotting sub-standard paving/planting/street furniture.

The second of these is especially important as poorly designed pavements and inconsiderately placed street furniture often create significant access barriers for Disabled People.

## **Future High Street Fund**

Southampton City Council and Go! Southampton are preparing a bid to the Future High Street Fund, which has been set up to help local areas to prepare long-term strategies for their high streets and town centres. Funding will be available for a range of activities including investment in physical infrastructure (improving public and other transport access; improving flow and circulation; and, other investment in physical infrastructure needed to support new housing and workspace development and the regeneration of heritage high streets) as well as investment in land assembly.

Obviously, accessibility can be built in to all of these kinds of activities so should be reflected in the bid which, if successful, would provide a significant boost to improving accessibility in the City.

## **Recommendations**

Based on our background research on best practice accessible cities around the world as well as discussions with Go! Southampton and other stakeholders we have drawn up a set of recommendations on actions that could be taken to help improve accessibility in the City. These recommendations also take account of suggestions made in the Focus Groups.

### **Recommendations for Go! Southampton**

- Extending the Hearing Loop grants scheme

While there is still work to do in order to increase take-up, the Southampton Hearing Loop grants scheme is a very positive initiative. Go! Southampton could consider a similar scheme for portable ramps, which could make a significant contribution to improving access in smaller premises in the retail and leisure sectors. Like The Hearing Loop scheme, this would be relatively low cost.

In the meantime Go! Southampton should continue to promote the availability of grants for hearing loop systems and emphasise how quick and easy the process is. It would also be helpful to make businesses aware of the advice and assistance available from Let's Loop Southampton. (For example, some local shops have loop systems

installed but not working as staff did not know how to use them. Let's Loop Southampton would be able to rectify this quite easily.

- Developing digital resources

We suggest that Go! Southampton seeks partners in the Technology and University sectors to work on production of navigation apps and other digital information resources to aid access across the city.

- Awareness raising

Go! Southampton should consider instigating an annual Access Awareness week coupled with annual awards for best accessibility initiatives.

Both the City Council and Go! Southampton have an important role to play in education and awareness raising for local businesses. There is no shortage of advice and good practice material on how to improve accessibility, but this needs to be effectively disseminated. Go! Southampton should also encourage take up of Disability Equality or Awareness Training for staff in leisure and retail businesses and consider recruiting 'Disability Champions' from the local business community to help influence their peers and spread awareness of good practice.

- Access auditing

Go! Southampton should work with local Disability organisations to carry out access surveys or audits of the city centre and/or develop toolkits to enable local businesses to self-audit. This could also be used to develop a local directory of accessible leisure and retail premises, with an endorsement scheme backed by Go! Southampton (e.g. with stickers to display on shop fronts).

- Action planning and monitoring

Go! Southampton should draw up an action plan based on the recommendations above and undertake follow-up work to check that these have been/are being implemented.



## **Recommendations for Southampton City Council**

- Set up an access co-production group

Work with Go! Southampton, transport partners and local Disability organisations to set-up and facilitate a cross-sector Access Forum or Accessibility Working Group to help share experiences and ideas with planners, designers and architects locally to help improve access across the city and involve this group on a co-production basis to advise on and evaluate all planning and building work to ensure full accessibility. The Forum could also have an important role to play in designing and planning future developments as well as monitoring access across the city through spot checks and access audits.

- Encourage access reporting

SCC should set up a reporting 'Hotline' for members of the public to report any access issues they come across when out and about in Southampton, either by telephone or online. Where reported problems are the responsibility of private sector organisations the Council could play a vital role in informing the local businesses concerned about their responsibilities and, where necessary, advising them on steps to take to address the issues. Where they are in public environments (e.g. problems with pavements), ideally this would be coupled with a 'rapid response' service to ensure reported problems are addressed as quickly as possible.

- Awareness raising

SCC should work with local partners - including local Disability Organisations - to raise awareness of access issues by producing accessibility checklists for local businesses and more detailed guidance on access standards and accessible design requirements for architects and construction organisations, covering both new buildings and refurbishments. Similar measures could be taken for entertainment and leisure providers and event organisers.

We also suggest that SCC should use Business Forum meetings to help with raising awareness of Disability and access issues. It has previously been suggested that local Disability Groups could be invited along to give short talks, but, apparently, there has not been space on the agendas to take up this opportunity.

- Access monitoring

SCC should proactively monitor access problems and enforce remedial action where this is a legal requirement, particularly through the local planning process to ensure compliance with the Equality Act and Building Regulation Access Standards.

We also recommend that the Council produce an annual accessibility report on actions to improve accessibility, including a breakdown of the numbers of planned and completed projects, and evaluating the extent to which Disabled People have been involved in delivery.

- Improve Disabled Parking Spaces

SCC should take steps to improve access to Disabled Parking spaces in the city centre - both in terms of increasing numbers and also improvements to siting and layout.

- Building and licensing regulations

We recommend that SCC should use the considerable leverage provided by regulations and licensing to promote greater accessibility in the City. For example, the Council could require shops and restaurants to display a notice at their premises indicating a Council defined access rating (with possible mitigations, for example, if a ramp is available to get up steps from the pavement) and whether help is available). Similarly, the Council could require new developments to include a disability access action plan.

- Access Officers

We recommend that SCC consider reinstating Access Officer posts in the Council when finances allow. Access Officers have, in the past, been a valuable source of practical and expert knowledge on a wide range of access issues and, with such a resource in place, some of the access problems Disabled People experience in the city could be reduced, or even eliminated.

## Recommendations for Southampton Clinical Commissioning Group

- Awareness raising

We recommend that SCCG should do more to promote the issue of hearing loop systems as many GP surgeries in the city do not have them.

## Recommendations for local public transport providers

- Staff training

Some of the problems with public transport reported by Disabled People could be mitigated through staff training to raise awareness of access issues and to equip them to provide assistance in a common sense and practical way - which was often felt to be lacking currently. We therefore recommend that local transport providers ensure that all customer-facing staff receive suitable training in disability and access awareness.

- Signage

We recommend that transport providers work with local Disability groups to audit signage, both at transport hubs and on vehicles, and make improvements to ensure that signage is fully accessible to all Disabled passengers.

- Improvements to design of bus fleets

We recommend that, when commissioning new vehicle fleets, transport providers should take the opportunity to consider some changes to bus design. Some of the problems reported by Disabled passengers could be mitigated by more creative and flexible design of bus interiors - such as wider aisles and greater use of flip up seats to make more space when needed.

- Future planning

All of the above will greatly improve accessibility of public transport in the local area. In terms of future planning, we recommend that the aim should be to provide a public transport system comprising the following elements:

- **Holistic** - door to door travel with interchanging supported

- **Consistency** - across all modes of travel and in different parts of the city
- **Confidence** - in the support being there for both planned and spontaneous travel
- **Prioritising demand** - allowing speedy resolution of competing demands for time, space, journeys etc
- **Monitoring** - customer feedback used to inform future provision
- **Continuous improvement** - accessibility solutions offered based best practice available and an ethos of continuous improvement that draws upon ongoing user involvement

### **Recommendations for local businesses**

A variety of access problems can often make city centres can feel like no-go areas for Disabled People. Research from the Department for Work and Pensions has shown Disabled People find shopping the most difficult experience for accessibility, followed by going to the cinema, theatre and concerts. Drinking and eating out at pubs and restaurants was third on the list.

Many face difficulties when trying to spend their disposable income due to factors such as lack of accessibility and poor customer service. Nearly two thirds (60 per cent) of disabled shoppers in the UK have struggled to make a purchase at some point, with most of these people coming up against obstacles on more than one occasion.

The disability charity Purple surveyed more than 500 people who identified as disabled about their experiences shopping. Four fifths (80 per cent) of respondents said businesses could do more to be accessible to encourage them to spend their money with them. And more than half (56 per cent) said that improving staff understanding about different disabilities would encourage them to spend their disposable income.

Similarly, a 2015 report by the Business Disability Forum (BDF) found that 3.6 million Disabled People are leaving restaurants, pubs and clubs because of a lack of understanding of their needs. The BDFs survey asked 2,500 Disabled People about their experiences of customer facing businesses in the hospitality sector. Half of those surveyed said that they had left a restaurant, pub or club because of poor understanding or, or attitudes to, disability. Over 40% also reported that their friends and

families hadn't returned to a business as a result of the negative experience they had witnessed.

This is bad news for Disabled People but equally detrimental to businesses as Disabled People represent 20% of the potential customer base, and the “purple pound” is worth well over £2bn a year.

- Making Reasonable Adjustments to services and premises

There are many ways to make cities more accessible and welcoming for all. Most adjustments that a business may need to make are pretty straightforward and small changes can make a big difference to the customer experience. Businesses are required by law to make reasonable adjustments for Disabled People and there are many easy and low-cost ways to improve accessibility including:

- clearing clutter from corridors and aisles;
- printing menus, leaflets and brochures in at least 14 point font, and being prepared to provide larger print if requested;
- training staff so they are confident in offering assistance when requested, for example, reading a menu out loud or writing down a price;
- provide parking for Disabled customers or make sure staff know where the nearest parking is located.

- Disability Equality and Awareness Training

How businesses respond to, and interact with, Disabled People will have a huge impact on accessibility. Staff management and policies and attitudes towards serving Disabled customers are just as important as physical access. A positive approach will always pay dividends. One of the things that Disabled People rate most highly is businesses simply having friendly and helpful staff. Access is of course very important but many people are surprisingly forgiving about access being less than perfect as long as staff do their best to help by, for example, trying to find some other way to get around a problem.

We recommend that local businesses should ensure that all customer-facing staff receive appropriate Disability Equality and Awareness Training to ensure they are confident in dealing with Disabled customers in a positive and effective way.

- Become Disability Confident

We also recommend that local businesses consider signing up to the Government's Disability Confident scheme (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign>), which encourages employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop Disabled People. The scheme can also help to attract greater numbers of Disabled customers to a business. It is easily accessible, particularly for smaller businesses and help with achieving the required standard is available for local Disability Organisations.

- Marketing and promotion

We recommend that local businesses review their marketing and promotion content and strategies to ensure they are effectively targeting Disabled customers. There are a number of simple steps that can be taken to make retail and other businesses more attractive to Disabled People. For example:

- In all marketing, use inclusive language and positive imagery (using images of real Disabled People as opposed to actors or models pretending to be disabled)
- Be clear that your aim is to make your offer as accessible as possible to as many Disabled People as possible.
- Use positive statements “We do” or “We will”, rather than “We don’t” or “We won’t”.
- Avoid disablist language – e.g. accessible toilets, not disabled toilets

# APPENDIX 1: Resources on Inclusive Design

## [Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design](#)

A research institute at the Royal College of Art dedicated to projects that improve people's lives. The institute has a number of research and development strands on inclusive design, including:

- [Ability & Diversity](#)

This research strand involves people with a range of abilities, working across the physical, sensory and cognitive ranges. The projects aim to build on people's capabilities, addressing individual needs and aspirations. Understanding neuro-diversity is an emerging area that is increasingly important within this theme.

- [Everyday Living](#)

Projects in this strand focus on everyday activities, looking at how design can create better choice, increased independence and a more engaging experience with the products, systems and services that surround us. The work addresses people of all ages and abilities, involving them in the design process as active participants in creating new ideas to improve quality of life.

- [People & Technology](#)

Digital technologies are increasingly present in almost every area of our lives, yet many barriers still exist to selecting, learning and using software, hardware, devices and services. This research strand takes a people-centred approach to understanding user behaviour, digital interactions and communication needs for a range of individuals and community networks.

## [Responsive Street Furniture](#)

The Responsive Street Furniture project by designers Atkin and Scott uses digital technology to detect pedestrians with different impairments and help make their journeys easier and safer by making public infrastructure, such as street lights, crossings and bollards, automatically respond to the specific needs of pedestrians with different impairments.

Developed in partnership with commercial landscaping specialists [Marshalls](#), the project "shows how transformative technology could be for people with disabilities". The designers describe the technology as "basically an operating system for the city". The idea is that users with sensory impairments select the services they would benefit from via a website. Bluetooth sensors in their smartphones, tablets or a low-cost fob tell sensors in the street furniture to activate their selected functions when they pass by.

### [Sight Line](#)

Another project by the same designers comprises a series of changes to the design and use of roadworks – specifically the signing and guarding equipment set out for pedestrians – in order to make them easier to navigate for people with sight loss (which was also one of the issues raised in the Focus Groups carried out for Go! Southampton). This involves adding simple tactile and high-contrast visual information to roadworks equipment – changes that are designed to be as small as possible in order to minimise the cost of implementation.

In addition to these physical changes, the project also includes an app that provides digital information about any temporary changes to the street environment via audio descriptions.

Sight Line has been deployed in five UK towns and cities by seven utilities and construction companies.

### [The Wellcome Collection inclusive exhibition design toolkit](#)

Commissioned by the Wellcome Collection – a public museum and library that aims to challenge how we think and feel about health – this year-long project looked in detail at Wellcome Collection's process of planning and making exhibitions in order to develop a toolkit for inclusive exhibition design.

Researchers worked alongside the London institution to understand how the visitor journey can be made more accessible for all by removing barriers to accessing exhibition content, ultimately making the time spent at Wellcome Collection significantly more enjoyable.

### [Sensory Trust Guidance on Inclusive Design](#)



The Sensory Trust has set out a practical approach to Inclusive Design that avoids overemphasis on technology and aims to challenge designers to think more creatively, to incorporate ideas they would not otherwise have entertained, and to consider a richer mix of ways of engaging people, not just through the visual. Their guidance covers:

- Integration, not segregation
- Equality of experience
- Working with people
- Flexibility and right to choose
- Building on good practice

### [Design Council](#)

The Design Council has produced a guide explaining the five key principles of Inclusive Design, with examples in real life situations.

### [Inclusive Design Hub](#)

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in Scotland has published a guide on the principles of Inclusive Design as it relates to the built environment. The key principles outlined are:

- **Inclusive** – so everyone can use it safely, easily and with dignity
- **Responsive** – taking account of what people say they need and want
- **Flexible** – so different people can use it in different ways
- **Convenient** – so everyone can use it without too much effort or separation
- **Accommodating** for all people, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity or circumstances
- **Welcoming** – with no disabling barriers that might exclude some people
- **Realistic** – offering more than one solution to help balance everyone's needs and recognising that one solution may not work for all