

Out and about

# Shops

Shop not accessible



**RIGHT TO  
PARTICIPATE**

## Useful knowledge

The Equality Act 2010 requires service providers, including shops, pubs, restaurants, art galleries, museums and theatres to make reasonable adjustments, if asked, to ensure that disabled people can use those services.

This can include providing additional support or assistance, providing a ramp to ensure wheelchair access, or making information available in alternative formats, such as braille or easy-read.

If you need reasonable adjustments that do not appear to be available, you will have to ask for them yourself. However, the Equality Act also requires service providers to think ahead and develop adjustments they think disabled people using their services are likely to ask for. Failure to make reasonable adjustments, particularly when you ask for them, is a form of discrimination.

Speaking to or writing to the owner or manager of a service is often the best way to ensure your access needs will be met. If you know what kind of adjustments you need, it is usually easier to get them implemented.

## Shops

If all or part of a shop is not accessible to you, there are several things you can do to improve it for you, both immediately and long term. For example, if there are items in a part of the shop you can't access, you can ask a member of staff to retrieve them for you. If you're in a clothing store and there are clothes in a section of the shop that is inaccessible, you can ask a member of staff to bring you a selection of sizes and colours from that section for you to try on, even if you aren't sure what size or colour you want.

## Useful skills

- Effective communication
- Negotiation skills
- Writing clearly
- Record-keeping
- Problem solving

## Ways to assert your legal rights

- 1.** If you're unable to access all or part of a shop, or are denied other reasonable adjustments, you should contact the owner of the shop. Tell them their premises are not accessible and/or their staff are not making reasonable adjustments. When speaking to the manager or owner, be polite and firm and make concrete suggestions of possible about what they should do. This makes it more likely they'll make the adjustments you need. For example, if the step into a shop is too high, suggest what kind of ramp they should install.
- 2.** If a shop is too bright or noisy for you during regular opening hours, you can ask if they can make changes to the lights or music. Many shops have started providing set times during the week where there the lights are dimmer, there is no background music and loud equipment is turned off. These times are often calling 'quiet hours'. You should ask the shop if they can start providing quiet hours or if you can come to the shop before it officially opens when staff are setting up for the day.
- 3.** If a shop refuses to let you in because of your disability, that is likely to amount to a breach of your rights under the Equality Act. If this is the case, you should inform the owner or manager of the shop.
- 4.** In the above cases, if the shop is part of a chain, you can escalate your request or complaint to their head office. This is because the head office can make decisions and change policies affecting all of their stores. If the reasonable adjustments you need are introduced across all of a chain's outlets, disabled people all over the country will benefit.

Download [shop complaint letter](#)

You may also want to consider seeking [injunctive relief](#)

- 5.** If you're not happy with the shop's response, you can take them to court. You should seek legal advice before following this route. There are strict time limits for taking legal action under the Equality Act. You will have six

months minus one day from the date of discrimination to make your claim in the County Court. A court can allow an out-of-time claim in limited circumstances. You can claim for compensation and a legal order for the service provider to make the reasonable adjustments you originally asked for.

## You can get more help from

The [Equality Advisory & Support Service \(EASS\)](#) runs a free helpline assisting individuals with equality and human rights issues across England, Scotland and Wales.

- Telephone** • 0808 800 0082
- Text phone** • 0808 800 0084
- Email** • [through websites form](#)