

# Improve **Access** Increase **Income**



## Introduction

Making your business work, getting your goods and services out to the widest possible market with the least amount of cost, is a basic objective in any good business strategy.

**Did you know that approximately 13%\* of a potential customer base might not be able to purchase your goods or services?**

13% of County Wexford's population of approximately 145,000 equates to 18,000 people who may not be able to avail of your services or purchase your goods because of access issues.

**In monetary terms, People (18,000 in this instance) = Spending Power.**

Improvements in medical innovations mean people are living longer, through illness and accidents. Forecasts indicate by 2046 approximately 21% of the Irish population will be aged 65 years or older\*\*.

Businesses, which are not accessible, are losing potential income from a substantial and growing client base and as a result, the sustainability of their business going forward could suffer.

This guidance booklet aims to assist you to improve access to your business to make it more accessible to a broader customer base without incurring excessive, if any, costs.

It is in the spirit of continuing to develop Wexford as a Model County for Accessibility, that Wexford County Council has published this guidance booklet for the retail and business community.

\*Census 2011 showed about 600,000 people reported having a disability, or about 13% of the population

\*\*TILDA report The Over 50s in a Changing Ireland 2014



## Approach Route

€ Keep walkways and accessible parking zones clear and free from clutter (bins, A-boards), or overgrown bushes which obstruct the path of travel especially for those using wheelchairs or other mobility aids.



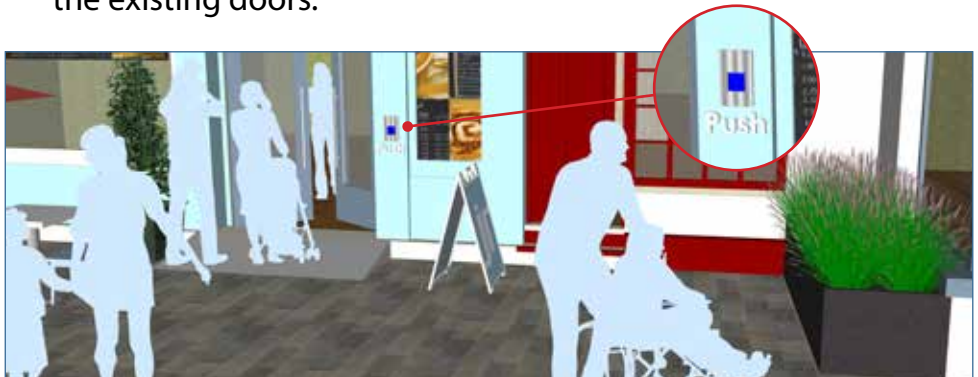
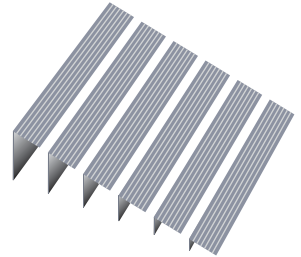
€ Keep any bushes, trees, or flower arrangements near your business clipped so there are no low hanging hazards for persons who are blind or have low vision.

€ Make sure your premises are well lit. The main entrance should stand out against its background; this can be achieved by decorating (painting) in a contrasting complementing decor.



## Entrance

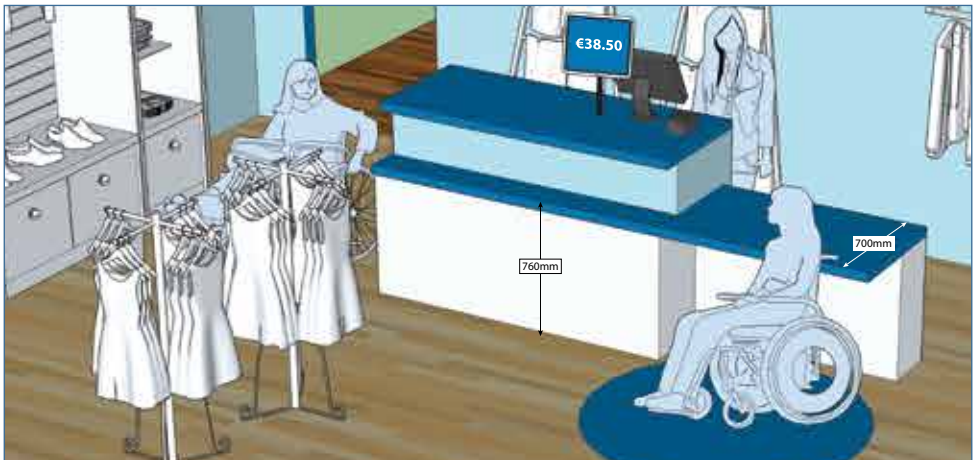
- € If the main entrance of your business is not wheelchair accessible but there is an alternate accessible entrance, post clear signage by the main entrance giving directions.
- € If the main entrance has a threshold of more than 15mm but less than 150mm, consider installing a half threshold saddle, aluminum cover/ ramp or modular ramp kit for temporary or permanent use; these are relatively inexpensive.
- € If a number of steps exist at the main entrance, it may be possible to install a ramp subject to the available space outside the main entrance (Wexford County Council can advise in this instance).
- € The main entrance as the key point of access for all customers should have a width of 800mm (min). If double doors are present, consider installing a push-automated mechanism to the existing doors.



- € The design and location of door handles/hardware can restrict many people with a disability, including people with arthritic conditions. A push pull system with a vertical pull bar or a lever handle mechanism is the preferred design, and usually relatively easy to replace with minimal cost.
- € If your business is not accessible for wheelchair or mobility aid users because of a stepped entrance, consider how you can provide the goods and services to such customers in an alternative fashion (e.g. phone and collect, personal shopper, online shopping, home delivery, or home visit service).

## Internal Circulation

- € Keep your lowered accessible counter clear at all times. Do not store or display items on this counter. If a lowered counter does not already exist, consider adding a lower section in the form of a shelf or ledge to either the front or side of the existing counter, with a height of 760mm and depth of 700mm (min).



- € Internal corners, steps, and edges on circulation routes can present as hazards. Marking these with high visibility contrasting coloured material will assist ease of movement and access. Alternatively, consider incorporating them as internal décor design features so they are easily visible.
- € If your business requires tables or seating, make sure to provide accessible tables and seating arrangements for wheelchair and mobility aid users. These should be located and positioned to allow ease of movement and use. Fixed seating and table arrangements restrict access and limit usage.









- € Self-service counters serving food or drinks should be at a height of not more than 850mm above the floor, with the serving counter at least 1500mm long (min). If this is not achievable, consider offering to assist the customer by moving items directly to their table.



- € Where self-service condiments, utensils, or tableware is provided, they should be positioned no higher than 850mm above the floor. Alternatively, staff assistance or installing a lower shelf to an existing counter could be considered.
- € At counters that have a cash register, the opportunity to ensure the deaf and hard of hearing community are accommodated presents by simply ensuring that the price zone on the register can be seen from the customer side.



- € Internal doors that are heavy and hard to open can be very difficult to use for the elderly, or people who use wheelchairs or mobility aids. Adjusting the closer mechanism so that the doors require less force to open is a simple but effective method of providing for improved access.
- € Signage for permanent rooms, such as toilets, meeting rooms etc. should have Braille and raised lettering, with the background and foreground contrasting. These are often readily available and inexpensive to purchase.



€ In toilets, make sure bins or other moveable objects do not obstruct clear spaces next to the doors. Similarly, in accessible wheelchair toilets, keep the area to the side of the toilet and under the sink clear of items such as bins. Doing so ensures that a person using a wheelchair can safely navigate within the space.



If WC facilities are not available within your own premises, make a point of finding out the location of the nearest Public WC facilities, especially accessible WC facilities, to inform your customers should they be required.

## General Customer Care

- € When choosing signage, language matters. Instead of signs that use words, opt for signs that are pictorial where possible making the sign more universally accessible.
- € Welcome guide dogs and assistive dogs into your establishment.
- € Use People First language when referring to someone with a disability. Refer to:
  - A person with a disability rather than a “disabled” or a “handicapped person”.
  - A person who uses a wheelchair, rather than a person “confined” to a wheelchair or wheelchair “bound”.
  - A person who is blind, rather than one who “suffers” from blindness.
- € When speaking to a person with a disability who has a companion, direct your comments to the person with a disability, not the companion (unless specifically instructed otherwise).
- € With all written information use plain English and avoid long sentences. Written information such as menus should be in a text font (sans serif) and size that is easy to read by all.
- € Be prepared to read menus to customers especially those who are blind or have low vision. Posting menus online provides another way of assisting thereby enabling people to review the menu before they visit the restaurant.

- € Make sure your employees are prepared to interact with customers especially customers who have a disability.
  - For customers who are blind, staff should be ready to read written documents.
  - Staff should be ready to exchange notes with customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have difficulty speaking. Simply having a pad of paper and pen at the ready can make a huge difference.
  
- € People with hearing, speech, or sight disabilities may require extra time or a quiet area to engage with staff. Be patient with the extra attention that might be necessary to understand how to assist.
  
- € Always ask first if a person with a disability needs assistance, **never assume.**
  
- € If a customer who is blind needs to be led to a location in your business, offer the person your arm. Wait for them to accept the assistance.
  
- € Once improvements to access or alternative methods of providing your services have been made include these and key accessibility information about access, parking, or other services on your website and/or in promotional material (e.g. the rooftop bar is only accessible via stairs, the courtyard bar is fully accessible at ground level).

Often with some minor adjustments businesses can make it easier for people with disabilities to access and purchase the services or products they have to offer. In short, accessibility pays dividends and makes good business sense.





*Improve **Access***  
*Increase **Income***



The Access Section  
**Wexford County Council**  
Carricklawn  
Wexford  
Y35 WY93

T 053 919 6000