

Every Customer Counts – *Promoting Accessible Services*

Frank Fleming
**Equality Commission for
Northern Ireland**



Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Gives rights to disabled people in:

- Employment
- Access to goods, facilities and services including transport
- Management, buying or renting of property
- Education

Provision of Goods, Facilities and Services

Those who provide goods, facilities and services to the public, cannot discriminate against a disabled person.

Discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services occurs when:

- A disabled person is treated *less favourable* than someone else and the treatment is for a reason relating to the person's disability and this treatment *cannot be justified*;
- There is a failure to make a *reasonable adjustment* for a disabled person.

When Does Discrimination Occur?

Services providers must not:

- Refuse to serve a disabled customer
- Offer a disabled customer a lower standard or worse manner of service
- Offer a disabled customer less favourable terms

Disability Discrimination Enquiries

1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016

Discrimination Enquiries

39% Disability

26% Sex

11% Religion

10% Race

Disability Enquiries by Sector

70% Employment

23% Goods & Services

3% Housing



Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Complaints

James Cosgrove



Claire Taggart



Mrs Boyce



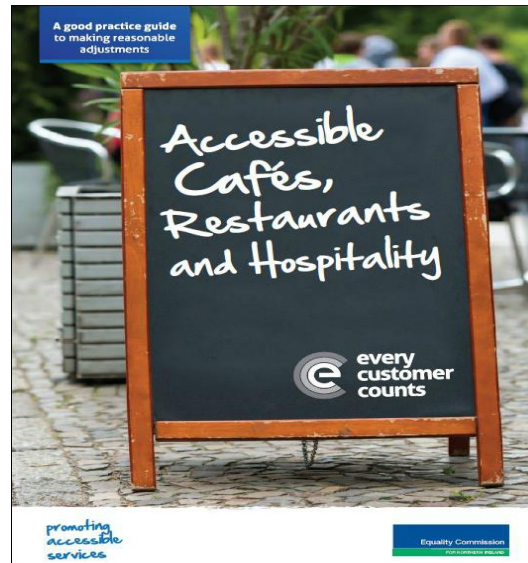
Audit, Benchmark, Change (ABC) Report State of Disability Access 2014

“Access to services in Northern Ireland is not yet good or satisfactory for disabled people”.

30 recommendations for Equality Commission for NI.

Guidance Materials (1)

- Developed by Centre for Accessible Environments - London
- 3 Good Practice Guides



Guidance Materials (1)

1. Inclusive Customer Service Statement Policy



2. Accessible Business Checklist



The infographic is titled 'Why Access Means Business' and is set against a dark blue background with a white and light blue curved graphic on the right. It features the Equality Commission logo and the 'every customer counts' logo in the top right corner. The content is organized into four white-bordered boxes with blue headers:

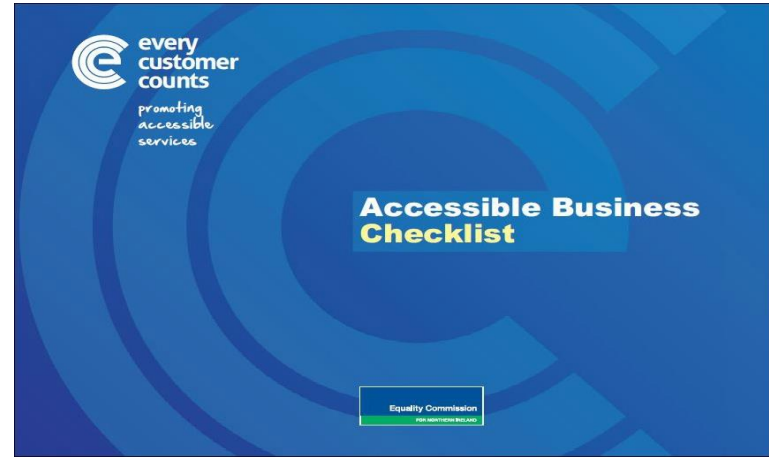
- Spending power**: £80 billion a year is spent by disabled customers in the UK. 20% of the population of Northern Ireland have a disability. This includes people with hearing, visual and cognitive impairments as well as people with physical disabilities. (Accompanied by icons of people with various disabilities).
- Open to everyone**: There are 360,000 disabled people in Northern Ireland who are your potential customers. Providing better access means that your business is more welcoming to everyone. Enabling customers of all ages and abilities to access your services will widen your customer base. (Accompanied by icons of people of different ages and abilities).
- Become a household name**: 40% of all households in Northern Ireland include a disabled resident. Disabled customers are more likely to be loyal customers, who may also bring their friends and family, meaning repeat business for you. (Accompanied by an icon of a house with a person and a wheelchair icon inside). A callout box states: 'Accessible restaurants and pubs which provide excellent customer service will attract disabled people, their friends and families. 18% of disabled customers visit restaurants at least once a week and 52% visit at least two or three times a month' - Pizza Express.
- Growing, loyal market**: Accessible business often creates loyal, lifelong customers. People stick with businesses that they trust and know will work for them every time. This is particularly true for disabled customers. We're all getting older and so the market and need for accessible services and products will only grow in the future. (Accompanied by an icon of a 'Loyalty Card' with several Euro symbols).

Equality Commission

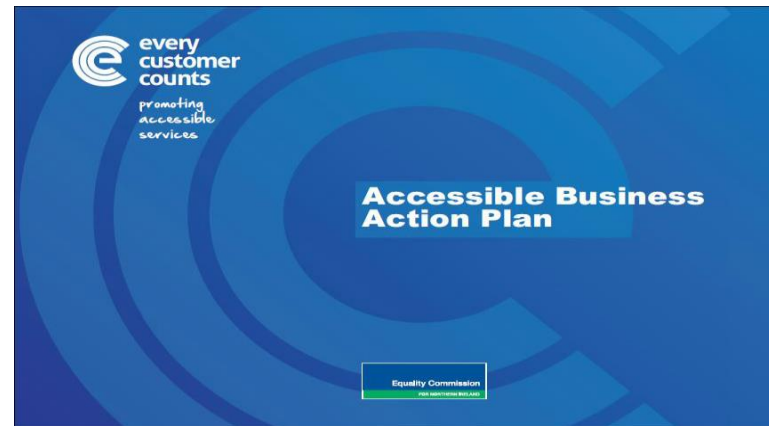
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Guidance Materials (2)

3. Accessible Business Checklist



4. Accessible Business Action Plan



Whole Town Approach to Improve Services (1)

- Newtownards – pilot exercise 2015
- Stakeholder engagement
- Launch event with Mayor of Newtownards and council offices



- Training sessions for hospitality/tourism providers
- Information sessions

Whole Town Approach to Improve Services (2)

- Local newspapers, radio, articles in specialised magazines, web page developed and promoted via Twitter and ezines
- Links for: www.equalityni.org/everycustomercounts to other websites
- Leaflet drop to all businesses in Newtownards
- Telephone contact with all businesses signed up to the Every Customer Counts commitment

Expected Outcomes

- Good sign up to commitment
- Audit of services and implementation of action points by service providers/businesses
- Significant improvement of services

Evaluation of Pilot Exercise

- Low sign-up to the commitment
- Low turn-out for training services
- Low brand recognition
- Little improvement in services



Barriers to Success

- Key target audience – small businesses
- Small business – difficult audience to engage
- Voluntary
- Economic climate
- Time commitment

Way Forward

- Equality Commission Corporate Plan 2016-2019
Objective 3.3 to encourage improvements in practices to improve “disabled peoples access to goods and services”
- Every Customer Counts Conference 10 March 2016 Conference
 - Services providers
 - Service users
 - Target audience service providers and groups representing service providers
 - Media coverage – local radio
 - Social media

Action Pathways (1)

1. Stakeholder Engagement:

- Councils
- Economic development managers
- Town/city centre managers
- Building Control Managers
- Trade organisations
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Chambers of Trade
 - Federation of Small Business
- Institute of Directors
- Shopping mall managers

Action Pathways (2)

- Organisations representing retail/service sectors:
 - Pubs of Ulster
 - Hospitality Northern Ireland
 - ABTA
 - British Medical Association
 - British Dental Association
 - Royal Society of Ulster Architects
 - Banks
 - Building Societies
 - Northern Ireland Tourist Board
 - National Trust
- Major Retails
 - Tescos, Sainsburys, Lidl, IKEA, Marks & Spencer

Action Pathways (3)

- Disability Organisations
 - RNIB
 - RNID
 - Autism Society
- Local Disability Groups

2. Communication

www.equalityni.org/everycustomercounts

- videos
- podcasts
- links to all stakeholder websites
- ezines
- Events
 - International Day for People with Disabilities
 - National Autism Day
 - Disabled Access Day

Action Pathways (4)

- Social media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter/Periscope
- Newspaper, Magazines
 - placed articles
 - radio/tv interviews
 - photographs
- Good practice guide to be produced
- Every Customer Counts on all communications regarding disability

3. Training/Information

- workshops
- training sessions
- information sessions
- formal/informal talks

Challenges

- Small business engagement
- Building the ECC brand
- Limited resources
- Businesses priorities
- Understanding of the problems facing disabled people