



THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY  
AN TÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

# Accessibility for Customers with Disabilities in Community Pharmacies

## Some Practical Advice

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## Foreword

*Accessibility for Customers with Disabilities in Community Pharmacies* is a joint publication of the IPU and the Equality Authority. It forms part of a programme of work to support and stimulate quality and accessible services in the pharmacy sector for customers with disabilities. The practical advice contained in this publication has been a focus in the *Pharmabilities* continuing professional development training module delivered by the Irish Centre for Continuing Pharmaceutical Education and builds on previous guidance published in the booklet *Community Pharmacies Serving People with Disabilities*.

This publication includes many accounts of good practice developed by community pharmacies around the country. These accounts reflect a shared commitment across the sector to equality, reasonable accommodation and now documentation for people with disabilities. The good practice is based on a shared understanding that equality is central to achieving quality customer service and that investment in accessibility is both good for customers with disabilities and good for business.

We hope that the practical advice offered in this publication will assist new endeavours in the pharmacy sector to sustain and enhance quality and accessible services to customers with disabilities. We hope that local community pharmacies can thus provide leadership to local business in creating a more accessible local community environment for all people with disabilities.

The Equality Authority and the IPU are grateful to Maureen Gilbert for her detailed and expert work on this publication and for her work in leading and implementing this joint project of the IPU and the Equality Authority with such significant success.



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# 1

## Introduction



The Equality Authority and the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) have been involved in a joint initiative to support community pharmacies in providing accessible services to customers with disabilities. This initiative started with the publication of the booklet *Community Pharmacies Serving People with Disabilities*, followed by the delivery nationwide of the *Pharmabilities* continuing professional development training module delivered by the Irish Centre for Continuing Pharmaceutical Education (ICCPE), with the support of the Equality Authority and the IPU. IPU also carried out a survey into what actions community pharmacists had taken to enhance accessibility for their customers with disabilities.

*Community Pharmacies Serving People with Disabilities* identified a shared understanding, held by the Equality Authority and the IPU, of the centrality of equality in achieving quality customer service. Equality focuses attention on ensuring that:

- customers do not experience discrimination, harassment or victimisation on any of the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation (gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community);
- adjustments are made to take account of the practical implications of customer diversity across the nine grounds with a particular focus on making reasonable accommodation for customers with disabilities;
- there is a proactive approach to promoting equality for customers from across the nine grounds.

*Community Pharmacies Serving People with Disabilities* sought to support community pharmacies to develop planned and systematic approaches to achieving a service that is accessible and relevant to people with disabilities. It emphasised the need for action in five different areas:

- consulting current and potential customers with disabilities;
- the physical premises;
- customer service;
- marketing services to people with disabilities;
- ensuring standards are maintained.

*Accessibility for Customers with Disabilities in Community Pharmacies* brings together in one document broad-ranging practical guidance on easily implemented but significant changes which can make a real difference to the quality and accessibility of services on offer to people with disabilities. It seeks to build on the guidance provided in the previous publication *Community Pharmacies Serving People with Disabilities*.

It is important to note that a commitment to quality and accessible services for people with disabilities must also take account of the diversity of people with disabilities. People with disabilities can also be Black and from ethnic minorities (including Travellers), gay and lesbian people, carers, men and women, lone parents, older and younger people and people of different religions and none. This diversity will shape the needs of different people with disabilities. Women with disabilities, for example, will have specific health needs; migrants with disabilities could face particular language barriers while Travellers with disabilities might have specific needs due to their nomadic tradition.

There is also diversity among people with disabilities in terms of the wide range of impairments. Action taken to secure accessibility for one group of people with disabilities can also enhance access for other groups. However, care is also required to ensure that action taken in response to people with disabilities with one type of impairment does not hinder another group with a different impairment.

People with disabilities form an important part of the customer base for community pharmacies. Investing in accessibility for customers with disabilities is also an investment in quality customer services that will enhance the service for all customers. This underpins a strong business case for this focus on quality and accessible services for people with disabilities.

# 2

## About the Equal Status Acts



The Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004 prohibit discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the provision of goods and services, education and accommodation on the following grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. There is a broad definition of disability in the Acts that includes people with mobility, sensory, mental health and intellectual impairments. The Acts contain a number of exemptions.

With regard to people with disabilities, providers of goods and services must:

- not discriminate (including indirect discrimination, discrimination by association and discrimination by imputation) against people with disabilities;
- accommodate the needs of people with disabilities through making reasonable changes in what they do and how they do it where, without these changes, it would be very difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to obtain those goods or services - unless this special treatment or special facilities cost more than a nominal cost.

Service providers are not obliged to provide special treatment or facilities where the cost involved is greater than a nominal cost. The meaning of nominal cost will depend on the circumstances of each case such as the resources of the service provider. Nominal cost for a large enterprise with a high level of resources will not be the same as for small enterprises with limited resources. Studies in the US show that more than half of accommodations made for people with disabilities cost nothing.

Reasonable accommodation involves providing special treatment or special facilities. It is not discretionary. It is the law. It is also a simple, easily achievable aspect of quality customer service and ordinary common courtesy.

Reasonable accommodation requires a focus on the individual customer with a disability and their specific needs. It must be achieved through a dialogue with individual customers with disabilities about their needs and how best to meet those needs.

The Equal Status Acts allow service providers to take positive action to promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities and to cater for special needs. Community pharmacies can take steps to ensure that people with disabilities can access the full range of their goods and services.

Further information on the Equal Status Acts is available from the Equality Authority - [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie) or LoCall: 1890 245 545.

Community pharmacies' obligations under the Equal Status Acts are complemented by their duty of care to their customers, as expressed in Clause 9 of the 1996 Community Pharmacy Contractor Agreement. Sections 5 of clause 9 states:

Following completion of the review provided for in sub-clause (1), the pharmacist shall offer to discuss with the individual for whom the prescription is issued, or with the carer of such person, all such matters as the pharmacist, in the exercise of his/her professional judgement, deems significant including the following -

- (a) the name and description of the medicine;
- (b) the dosage form, the method and route of administration and the duration of therapy;
- (c) any special directions and precautions for the correct preparation, administration and use of the medicine(s);
- (d) the importance of compliance with the directions for use;
- (e) any common severe side-effects and adverse reactions or interactions and therapeutic contra-indications that may be encountered, including their avoidance and the action required should they occur;
- (f) techniques for self-monitoring during therapy and the need for patient compliance;
- (g) proper storage of the medicine;
- (h) prescription repeat information (as necessary);
- (i) action to be taken in the event of a missed dose;
- (j) methods for the safe disposal of the medicine in the event of the course of treatment not being completed; and
- (k) any other matters which may be included or referred to in the patient information leaflet supplied with the medicine.

Specific and/or innovative methods of communication may be needed to ensure that issues such as medication, dosage, potential drug therapy problems, or side effects are explained in a manner that makes reasonable accommodation for customers with disabilities.

It is important to remember that the Equal Status Acts contain a very broad definition of disability that includes people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions (see also page 6).

Much of *Accessibility for Customers with Disabilities in Community Pharmacies* focuses on particular groups of people with a disability. The obligations under the Equal Status Acts apply to a wider range of people with disabilities, so it is important to remember that the ideas put forward here may not be sufficient to meet the individual entitlements of a customer with a disability under the Equal Status Acts.

Finally, to underpin the work of enhancing quality and accessibility of service provision to people with disabilities, community pharmacies should put in place a simple equality infrastructure, including:

- an equality policy setting out the commitment to non discrimination, equality and making adjustments for diversity, including reasonable accommodation;
- equality and diversity training for all staff, including disability awareness training;
- an equality action plan setting out the steps that the pharmacy will take to enhance equality for the diversity of its customers, including enhanced quality and accessibility of service provision to people with disabilities.

# 3

## Accessibility for Customers with Impaired Hand Function



Lots of people have temporary or permanently impaired hand function. The design of many everyday items and objects - from pill bottles to door handles, from the buttons on photocopiers to the packaging on drinks cartons - often makes them impossible to use without a high level of manual dexterity or fine motor movement. So what can pharmacists do to ensure that people with impaired hand function can access and use all their products and services?

Here are some ideas relating to common aspects of community pharmacy products and services.

### Containers

- Several suppliers of aids for daily living offer inexpensive, [easy-to-use devices](#) which assist in opening childproof containers. You could offer these for sale or give them free-of-charge to customers who need them.
- Some people may be able to use ordinary [screw caps](#) as an alternative to childproof closures. Others may require [wing caps](#).
- [Blister packs](#) are difficult to use. You could remove or repackage the tablets or other items. You could stock or provide a device, such as a "pill punchout", to aid removal.

### Dexterity

- [Self-medication](#), such as putting in eye drops, can be very tricky to do. Supplying a suitable aid (e.g. eye drop dispensers, eye guides) could make all the difference.
- [Pill cutters and crushers](#) are useful for people with impaired hand function.

- Many people find it hard to handle **small objects**, such as small bottles. You could put the medicines into larger containers.
- **Squeezing ointment** from a small tube can be hard to do. Long-handled applicators are available and could be provided.
- Devices are also available to enable people to **open bottles with one hand**.
- **Pouring liquid from a bottle into a spoon** can be very difficult. You could provide a small graduated measuring cup to the customer.
- **Assistive devices** which help with such tasks as depressing inhalers are also available.
- Make sure that any **multi-dosage systems** that you offer are user-friendly for people with impaired hand function.
- When requiring signatures, provide **thicker pens** - they are easier to grip.
- When offering water to someone who needs to take medication on the spot, use a **cup with a handle that is easy to hold**.

#### Premises

- **Replace any round doorknobs** with lever handles.
- Don't pack **shelves** or **leaflet displays** too tight, as people with impaired hand function will be unable to remove goods independently.
- Ensure that **refrigerated cabinets**, **photo machines**, etc, for public use have big, easy-to-use controls
- **Offer assistance** to people who might need it - but don't feel rejected if they say no!

**In summary:** consider your services, premises and products from the viewpoint of someone who has impaired hand function. How can you improve those which present problems? Ask customers with disabilities about how best to meet their needs.

#### To find out more...

##### Assist Ireland

LoCall: 1890 277 478  
Text: (086) 383 7644

Web: [www.assistireland.ie](http://www.assistireland.ie)  
Email: [support@assistireland.ie](mailto:support@assistireland.ie)

This service is run by the Citizens' Information Board, a statutory organisation, and offers impartial information on assistive devices for people with disabilities and older people.

# 4

## Accessibility for Customers with Impaired Hearing



Impaired hearing is the most common disability in Ireland. There are two distinct groups of people with hearing impairments:

- **People who are pre-lingually deaf**, who regard themselves as a distinct cultural and linguistic group and use sign language to communicate. Because sign language has a very different structure from English, many (but by no means all) deaf people find it hard to understand written English. There are about 5,000 profoundly deaf people in Ireland.
- **People who acquire hearing loss**, who tend to be older and often conceal their impairment because of negative stereotyping. Many use hearing aids. There are hundreds of thousands of hard-of-hearing people in Ireland. Over half of people over 60 experience some degree of hearing loss, so the percentage of hard-of-hearing people in the population is set to grow as the country's demographics change.

Amplification of sound and reduction of background noise benefits hard-of-hearing people, while knowledge of sign language enables fluent communication with deaf people. Since neither of these approaches is currently readily available in most community pharmacies, both groups of people with impaired hearing rely heavily on text and visual information, including lip reading. These methods are not ideal for optimum communication in pharmacies, and there is a lot that community pharmacists can do simply and cheaply to improve the current situation.

#### When speaking...

- **Speak clearly at normal volume.** Shouting distorts your voice and makes lip-reading very difficult, as well as being embarrassing for the customer.
- **Face the customer when you are speaking to them.** No-one can read your lips if they can't see your face.

- **Check your lighting.** If you are in silhouette the details of your face can't be seen. Move to a better-lit part of the shop if necessary.
- **Talk to deaf people in a quiet place** so that neither you nor they are distracted.
- **Think about what you are saying:**
  - The name of a drug may be familiar to you but it isn't to your customers. Supplement what you are saying by writing down - clearly! - names, numbers and unfamiliar words, as they can be confusing and hard to grasp.
  - Remember when speaking to sign language users that English has very different structures. Use straightforward constructions and avoid jargon and idioms.

#### When dispensing medicines...

- **Always include written information.** Printed leaflets can be hard to understand and are often produced in very small writing. Writing out the salient points can be very useful.
- **Remember that some people can't hear you** if you call their name to tell them that their prescription is ready. Approach a deaf or hard-of-hearing person and touch them gently on the shoulder to get their attention. Larger premises could consider installing a **ticket system with a visual display** for people waiting for prescriptions.

#### Consider your telephone communication...

- **Automatic answering systems and background music** cause problems for hard-of-hearing people.
- Use a **fax machine or text on a mobile phone** to communicate with deaf and hard-of-hearing customers. Let them know that the service is there.

#### Think about safety...

- Install a **fire alarm** that flashes as well as sounding in the case of an emergency.

#### Enhance staff confidence...

- **Offer deaf awareness training to your staff.** Deaf clubs and organisations of deaf and/or hard-of-hearing people in your area may be able to help.

#### The best way to improve services for hard-of-hearing people is to...

- **Install a hearing loop.** A loop is just that - a loop of insulated wire, hidden from sight, fixed around a designated listening area and connected to a power source, an amplifier and a microphone. When someone talks into the microphone the sound goes into the amplifier, which then sends the sound round the loop. Hearing aid users in the area of the loop who switch their hearing aids to the "T" position can then receive the amplified voice without interference from background noise being amplified too.

Loops come in all sizes. You can put a loop into your entire premises or just around key points, such as the pharmacy counter. You can also buy a portable loop that you wear round your neck, thus enabling you and your customer to move around the shop together.

Make sure that you display the hearing loop symbol prominently and let people know that you have installed a loop. Not all hearing aid users are aware of the benefits, so let them know what it is for. Maintain your loop in good working order as you would any piece of technical equipment.

#### Success Story

Town Centre Pharmacy in Drogheda installed a loop system at the dispensary counter two years ago. "We were investigating ways of facilitating people who are disadvantaged", explains pharmacist Miriam Meagher. "I'd seen the sign for hearing loops in railway stations and Government agencies. Then I went on an ICCPE course given by the National Association for Deaf People. We got in touch with them afterwards. A deaf person installed the loop and explained everything to us." A control box, placed out of sight behind the counter, indicates if the loop is working correctly and flashing lights come on if there is a problem.

Since the loop was installed the pharmacy has received compliments from many of its customers. "We don't know how many people use the loop", comments Miriam Meagher, "because no-one has to identify themselves in order to benefit. As far as we are concerned, it's working perfectly."

#### The best way to improve services for deaf people is to...

- **learn sign language.** Even the basics, such as finger-spelling the name of a medication or learning the signs for common conditions, such as "cold" or "headache", can improve communication substantially. Sign language classes are available in the evenings in most parts of the country.

#### Success Story

A staff member of Mary Early's Pharmacy in Carrick-on-Suir recently completed an exam in sign language at the end of a year-long evening course in Waterford Institute of Technology. "Her ability has proved very popular with those of our customers who use sign language", says Mary. "Deaf people have the same health issues as the rest of the community but can have a problem accessing services and information. It's easy for them to pick up information wrongly or get misinformation too. Having a staff member available to speak to deaf people has increased their health awareness generally."

#### The best way to improve information for deaf people - and many other customers is to...

- **provide information in plain English.** Simple, easy-to-understand information on medicines and on health issues generally will be appreciated by deaf people, as well as by customers who have lower than average literacy skills.

**In summary:** consider your services, premises and products from the viewpoint of someone who has impaired hearing. How can you improve those which present problems? As a general rule, remember that hearing-impaired people need to see what other people may hear. Again, it is important to have a dialogue with individual customers with hearing impairments about their needs and how best to meet them.

### To find out more...

Contact local Deaf Clubs to get in touch with deaf people in your community. Useful national organisations include:

**Irish Deaf Society (IDS)**  
(represents deaf people)

Tel: (01) 860 1878      Web: [www.irishdeafsociety.ie](http://www.irishdeafsociety.ie)  
Email: [info@irishdeafsociety.ie](mailto:info@irishdeafsociety.ie)

**Irish Hard of Hearing Association (IHHA)**  
(represents people with acquired hearing loss)

Tel: (01) 817 5700      Web: [www.ihha.ie](http://www.ihha.ie)  
Email: [ihha@nadp.ie](mailto:ihha@nadp.ie)

**Deaf Hear (formerly the National Association for Deaf People)**  
(membership includes both deaf and hard-of-hearing people. Operates Deaftech, a service which can give advice about loop systems)

Tel: (01) 817 5700      Web: [www.deafhear.ie](http://www.deafhear.ie)  
Email: [info@deafhear.ie](mailto:info@deafhear.ie)

**National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)**  
(provides information about how to give information in plain English)

Tel: (01) 855 4332      Web: [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)  
Email: [literacy@nala.ie](mailto:literacy@nala.ie)

# 5

## Accessibility for Customers with Impaired Vision



More and more people are developing vision impairment. This is often associated with ageing, but it can also result from diabetes and is a symptom of many other conditions, such as multiple sclerosis.

### A few facts

- Being blind does not always mean that a person is living in total darkness. Almost half of those people considered “blind” and around 80% of partially sighted people can recognise a friend at arm’s length. Seeing in detail, such as distinguishing between medicine bottles, however, is more difficult.
- People are affected by eye conditions in different ways. Some have no central vision or no vision to the sides; others see a patchwork of blank and defined areas, or a vague blur.
- Glaucoma can result in tunnel vision, where all side vision is lost and only central vision remains. Diabetic retinopathy can cause blurred and patchy vision. Macular degeneration can lead to a loss of central vision whilst side vision remains. However, different people are affected by eye conditions in different ways. You should not assume that you know what someone can see just because you know what eye condition they have. Asking about people’s level of vision will help you to provide an appropriate service.

Here are some simple inexpensive ways in which community pharmacists can ensure that customers with vision impairments receive a quality service.

### Dealing with visually-impaired customers

- Make sure the person you are talking to knows you are speaking to them. **Touching** the person gently on the arm or shoulder is a good way to get their attention.

- **Speak directly** to the customer, and not via a third party.
- **Identify any other person** who becomes involved in the transaction (e.g. “My manager is here now, on your right-hand side”).
- If you want to **guide** a vision impaired person to another part of the shop, let them take your arm - don't grab theirs. Mention any potential hazards ahead and say where they are.
- If you are guiding someone into a **seat**, place their hand on the back of the seat before they sit down, so that they can orientate themselves.
- When handing more than one item to a vision impaired person, **explain** which is which (e.g. “Your medicine is in the paper bag and the shampoo is in the plastic bag”).
- **Let the customer know** if you need to end the conversation, as they may be unable to see visual clues.
- **Don't walk away** without saying that you are leaving.
- **Don't pet guide dogs**. When they are in your shop they are working.

### Dispensing medicines

- Put different medicines into **different sized** or **shaped containers** so that people can distinguish between them easily. Many vision impaired people will be able to see **brightly coloured** or **luminous tape** which you could stick to containers to distinguish between them.
- Choose **weekly pillbox systems** which use good colour contrast and/or raised lettering on the compartments.
- Consider using **talking labels** for dispensed medicines.
- **Write out the names of products**, medicines and important instructions in large clear letters in black felt-tip pen.
- Keep a large **sheet magnifier** in the shop, so that people can use it to read instructions or identify items.

### Information

Much information is available only in standard print. This is inaccessible to many people. Simple ways to provide information to vision impaired people include:

- typing out important information using a **16 or 18 point san serif typeface** with good leading and spacing;
- using a photocopier to **enlarge existing information leaflets**. Make sure that print density and clarity are not compromised in the process;
- sending information to people by **email**. Many vision impaired computer users employ software that turns text into speech;
- **taping information**;
- advertising on local **radio** as well as in the local paper.

Although aimed at public bodies, the National Disability Authority's *First Steps in Producing Accessible Publications* offers useful advice on how to provide information in alternative formats. Get a free copy by phoning (01) 608 0400 or visiting [www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie).

Websites and information kiosks need to be developed in a manner that is accessible. These should meet international criteria for accessibility. The National Disability Authority have published IT Accessibility Guidelines (available by visiting [www.accessit.nda.ie](http://www.accessit.nda.ie)).

### Premises

- Keep the area outside the shop - and the shopfloor itself - **clear of obstructions**, such as bins, boxes of stock etc.
- Contact your local authority to make sure that the **pavement** outside your shop is maintained in good condition and does not present trip hazards. If there is a road crossing nearby, lobby the local authority to install audible signals.
- Indicate the presence of **glass doors** by putting permanent markings on them at about 1200-1500mm above floor level.
- Improve your **internal and external lighting**. Make sure there is no glare.
- **Wide aisles** (ideally 1500mm) are easier to negotiate and lessen the risk of bumping into the gondolas. Keep the aisles free of obstructions and of free-standing displays.
- Make sure that **gondolas** have rounded edges so that people don't hurt themselves if they do bump into them. Simplify the layout of the shop if you can.
- **Consistency in design** makes a space easier to navigate.
- Make sure that door handles and other important objects **contrast in colour** with their backgrounds. Pale objects or words on a white background are difficult to see, but good colour contrast assists partially-sighted people to locate things and to orientate themselves in a space.
- **Eliminate steps and changes** of level if at all possible. Put a colour-contrasted strip on the top and bottom step of any stairs you can't remove. Mark single isolated steps in the same way.
- Use **texturised rubber matting** to indicate the position of the entrance. Textured flooring could also be used to mark a route through a premises - to the dispensing counter, for example.
- Use **non-slip floor coverings**. Keep them dry and replace them when they get worn.
- Improve your **external and internal signage**. On shelves use clear labels with large colour-contrasted print and consider using raised lettering. Use both upper and lower case letters as this is easier to read than capitals alone.

### Success Story

The lighting design introduced into O'Donnell's Pharmacy, Swinford, Co Mayo in a recent refit has resulted in a brighter environment for all. “People tell us that they can see things very easily”, reports Ian Johnson. “We didn't realise what a difference it would make. The space in the shop means that people can get about unhindered too, and there's room for a customer who has a guide dog to get around.”

**In summary:** consider your services, premises and products from the viewpoint of someone who has impaired vision. How can you improve those which present problems? As a general rule, remember that vision impaired people need to hear what other people may see. Ask the individual customer with a vision impairment about their needs and how best to meet them.

## 6

## Helping Customers to Understand



All community pharmacists are concerned to ensure that customers understand what medicines they are taking and how and when to take them, along with when to seek advice if they have an adverse reaction. Community pharmacists must be satisfied that their customers understand their medications and their implications. This can be challenging, especially when people find it hard to understand the implications, to open the containers or read the leaflets. People whose comprehension or memory is impaired due to distress, fatigue, disordered thinking, a learning disability (intellectual impairment) or as a result of the ageing process experience particular challenges in this regard.

#### Good communications skills are essential...

- Make sure that you and your staff use **simple, direct sentence structure and straightforward language**. Terms like “placebo” and “regular application” may seem obvious to you but are not to everyone else. A term like “at mealtimes” is ambiguous: do you mean before the meal, with the meal, after the meal? The same is true of “three times a day”: does a day mean 24 hours, or daytime...?
- **Demonstrate** where possible. How much is “sparingly”, for example?
- **Explain possible side-effects** in simple terms and **reassure** customers that they can come back if they have a problem. **Advise people to return** to talk to you about it, rather than to stop taking the medication.
- **Be specific**. If you are vague, your words can be interpreted in more than one way.
- **Listen carefully** to what customers say and **have patience** with them. Getting flustered increases everyone’s anxiety and impairs comprehension.
- **Observe carefully**. Some customers will give you what they hope is the right answer, as opposed to the truth.
- Ask about people’s **preferences and concerns**. For example, liquid medicines may be

more acceptable than tablets. **Direct questions** are easier to understand and respond to than discursive enquiries.

- Find out what is important to customers and link their medicines to **customers’ beliefs and circumstances** (“if you take this medicine you will be well enough to enjoy the club outing next week”).
- **Encourage and motivate people** (“this is a really good medicine, so if you take it every day your cough will go before the weekend”) rather than frightening them or increasing their anxiety (“if you forget to take this you might have to go into hospital”). Compliance improves when customers can see a definite benefit. **Be realistic** about this (“you may feel a bit sick at first because your body will take time to get used to the medicine but after a week the pain will go”).
- **Check** to ensure that **people understand** what you have said to them by asking them to summarise what you have said or to tell you in their own words. Research shows that the more customers understand, the more compliant they are likely to be. Encourage people to **ask questions**.

Many people may understand at the time you talk to them, but get confused or forget afterwards. Here are some ways to deal with that:

- Give customers **simple notes to take home**, in addition to whatever is printed on the label.
- Use **dosing systems** like Venalink and Nomad if you have any suspicion that customers might be confused or not understand fully. Make sure that they understand how the system works, and that they can access the medications easily.
- **Colour code** medications. **Colour-coded Post-Its** can be used for simple instructions, perhaps using symbols (e.g. sun for day, moon for night) and drawings, if that seems to be appropriate and acceptable to the customer. Be careful about off-the-shelf pictograms, as they can sometimes be misread.
- Ask customers about their **routines**. Can they add their medicine regimen to something they do regularly?
- Ask customers if there is **another person** who can help them with their medicines. If so, tell this person **as well as the customer**, not instead of them.
- Customers want to know **why** they are taking medicines, how to take them and whether they will have any side effects. **Use more than one form of instruction**. People respond best when they have **both oral and personalised written instructions**.

#### For best results...

**Friendliness** and **patience** are the two qualities mentioned by all the people with disabilities interviewed for the ICCPE *Pharmabilities* programme. They cost nothing and anyone can learn to excel at them. Again, remember to talk to the individual customer with disabilities about their needs and how best to meet them.

## To find out more...

### ...about plain English:

contact NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency) at (01) 855 4332 or visit [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie). The website of Plain English Campaign ([www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)) is also very useful. Both organisations offer information related specifically to medicine and healthcare.

### ...about communicating with customers with intellectual impairments:

contact local groups or Inclusion Ireland at (01) 855 9891 or visit [www.inclusionireland.ie](http://www.inclusionireland.ie). Local groups of older people, people with intellectual impairments and people with mental health difficulties will be very willing to help you to provide a better service.

### ...about compliance aids:

for impartial information, visit [www.assistireland.ie](http://www.assistireland.ie). This service is run by the Citizens' Information Board, a statutory organisation. You can also contact Assist Ireland at [support@assistireland.ie](mailto:support@assistireland.ie), on LoCall 1890 277 478 or by texting 086 383 7644.

# 7

## Outside Your Premises



A building that is easy to approach and get into is safer, healthier and more comfortable for everyone, especially people with disabilities. Making sure that everyone who wants to can find and get into your premises is essential if you want to maximise your business. So what do you need to do to make sure that happens?

### Out in the street

Much of what is outside your premises - the street, the pavement, lighting, on-street parking - is also outside your control. It is important in this regard to develop a good working relationship with your local council about these issues. So go outside your premises and ask yourself:

- How **accessible** is the **route** from the nearest bus stop or other public transport?
- Are the **pavements** level and in good order, with little risk of people tripping?
- Is the **street lighting** adequate and working well?
- Is there a **dished road crossing** nearby? (A dished road crossing has a gentle slope instead of a kerb, and is marked with tactile paving which alerts vision-impaired people to the presence of the crossing.)
- Where there are traffic lights, is there an **audible crossing signal** to assist people with vision impairments?
- If there is on-street parking, is there a suitably designed **disabled person's parking** place nearby?

If the features you want are not there or if they need upgrading, talk to the **Access Officer** or **Roads Department** of your local authority.

### Success Story

The local authority put two disabled persons' parking spaces outside Marron's Pharmacy in Clane, Co Kildare, on the main street. They are the only two accessible parking spaces in the village. "It's been quite significant in terms of more people with disabilities coming into the pharmacy", says Des Marron. "I notice that the police and traffic wardens check regularly to make sure that the spaces are being used by people with disabilities."

If you have your **own off-street parking**, make sure that the spaces that you designate for people with disabilities are correctly designed and configured. *Building for Everyone*, published by and available from the National Disability Authority, provides guidance on this and many other access issues. It is currently being updated. The Roads Department of your local authority may also be able to help. Monitor the spaces too, to make sure that non-disabled people don't use them.

### Success Story

After a customer who has MS raised the issue of disabled persons' parking spaces, Mary Langan the owner of O'Donnell's Pharmacy in Westport, contacted Westport Urban Council to see what could be done. Getting the space wasn't difficult, "it was only a matter of contacting the Urban Council and keeping at them", says Mary Langan. However, the lack of monitoring of the space means that "half the time when disabled customers come there's someone else in it". All of the town's five pharmacies now have accessible parking spaces outside.

### On the way in

The approach to your premises should be easy to find and navigate:

- The **surfaces** of paths and yards should be firm, level and well-maintained. They should be clean, free of gravel, grit, mud, ice, snow, moss and anything else that might present a trip or slip hazard.
- There should be no parked bicycles or other **obstructions** in front of the premises - or blocking the emergency escape routes.
- **Lighting** over the entrance should be in good working order.
- **Signage** should be clear and easy to read.
- **Tactile paving** can indicate the position of the entrance doors to vision-impaired people.

### Up the steps

Steps and ramps are often the first thing that people consider when they begin to think about providing access for customers with disabilities. All pharmacies should have **level entrances and flush thresholds**. This can sometimes be complex to achieve, however, and it may be necessary to use the services of a suitably qualified architect or designer to ensure that any

works you undertake comply with best practice. The advice contained in *Building for Everyone* takes universal design as its starting-point and thus provides guidance which should ensure that everyone's needs are met.

If your premises are accessed by more than one step, **retain a stepped approach when putting in a ramp**. Some people who are unsteady on their feet find it easier to use steps than ramps.

### Success Story

"Although we have a car park at the back and public car parking nearby we realised that we were missing out on clientele because of our steps", says Tara Dockery of Madden's Pharmacy. "It just wasn't working. Even business for things like passport photographs could have been better" for the pharmacy, which is situated on the main street of Roscrea, Co Tipperary.

So, when extending the back of the shop and doing a refit, the pharmacy put in ramped access front and back. "It's made a huge difference", says Tara. "Everyone thinks it is great. It is very handy for people with buggies, for example. There is no effort involved in getting in - you'd notice it yourself, coming up the hill - you can get in and out without any bother". The steps at the back were retained and share a common handrail with the ramp.

At the same time the pharmacy widened all the doors so that they can now admit a person using a motorised wheelchair, and made the layout open plan "so people don't risk knocking off anything" as they come through the shop. Seating was placed just inside both the front and back doors. "That means that customers can sit there if they can't get any further, and we can go and serve them there. Lots of people, especially older customers, do that. It's the little things that people appreciate and that make a difference", says Tara.

### Getting in the door

**Automatic entrance doors** will make your premises easier for everyone to access. **Sliding doors** are better than the swing type, as they are less likely to block users passing through. They should be capable of being operated manually in a power failure. For details of design and commissioning, see *Building for Everyone*.

To ensure that people using motorised wheelchairs, accompanied by guide dogs, pushing double buggies etc can get in with ease, the **clear opening width** of entrance (and all other) doors, whether automatic or not, should be at least 800mm. Where there are double doors, at least the leading door leaf (but preferably both) should have a clear opening width of 800mm. Make sure that when the door is open it doesn't protrude into the circulation space, where people, especially those with impaired vision, might walk into it. Put **permanent markings on glazed doors** at 1200-1500mm above floor level, so that vision-impaired people are made aware that the doors are there.

Revolving doors are difficult for everyone to manage and should be avoided.

### Getting planning permission

You will have to apply for planning permission before undertaking certain changes outside your premises. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government publishes a very useful series of leaflets which provide comprehensive guidance to the process of gaining planning permission. PL7 covers *Planning for the Business Person* while PL10 deals with *Making a Planning Appeal*. You can get the leaflets free from your local authority planning department. You can also download them from the Department's website - [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie) - by following the links through "planning" to "leaflets".

### To find out more.....

#### Building for Everyone (2002 edition)

A key resource, from which much of the content of this section is derived, is *Building for Everyone* (2002 edition), available to download (11.4Mb) from the National Disability Authority's website ([www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie)).

*Building for Everyone* is being updated. It is out of print but can be found in many public libraries - check first to make sure that they have the 2002 edition. Although aimed primarily at designers and architects, *Building for Everyone* is well-illustrated and easy for non-specialists to understand. It is important also to ask the individual customer with disabilities about their needs and how best to meet these needs.

# 8

## Inside Your Premises



The design of a premises communicates to all customers that this particular store is the one for them - or not, as the case may be. Many people with disabilities, facing into dimly lit, poorly signed, cluttered premises with narrow aisles blocked by boxes of stock, make the decision that it would require too much effort to proceed any further. The message they receive is that their custom is not valued or desired.

On the other side of the counter there can be a perception that making premises accessible to people with disabilities is difficult and expensive and may discommode the rest of the clientele. In fact, providing access for people with disabilities simplifies and improves everyone's experience of your premises.

As with the exterior of your premises, the basic guidance to making the interior of your premises accessible to people with disabilities is contained in *Building for Everyone*.

Minimum accessibility criteria for all new buildings and changes of use are contained in *Technical Guidance Document- Access for People with Disabilities* (2000) (this is generally known as Part M) of the Building Regulations. Part M is currently under review. The guidance offered in *Building for Everyone* is more comprehensive. The points below derive from *Building for Everyone*, which is itself currently being updated.

#### Some basic dimensions...

- **Aisles should be 1500-1800mm wide.** Any less than this and a wheelchair user (or someone pushing a double buggy) wanting to turn round will need a clear space 1800mm in diameter in which to turn. Without this space they will have to back out of the aisle, causing a hazard to themselves and others. People using crutches and other

walking aids, and people accompanied by guide dogs, also have greater than “average” spatial needs. More clear space means that less people who are partially sighted or unsteady on their feet will walk into gondolas, displays or into other people.

- **Doorways should be at least 800mm wide.** Doors should open in such a way as to guide people in the right direction and should not obstruct circulation space.
- **Place permanent markings at 1200-1500mm** above finished floor level on glazed doors and panels and other glass features to lessen the possibility of people walking into them.
- **Counters, customer service points and cash desks should be visible,** easy to approach and at the right height - at least one section of each should be only 750mm high and not too deep (so that wheelchair users and children can reach across it to hand over and receive money and goods).
- As much public access **stock** as possible should be available at heights that everyone can reach: the zone **450-1300mm** above finished floor level is the most accessible for everyone, including wheelchair users and people who find it hard to bend.

### Success Story

Olivia and Damien Lavelle’s award-winning new premises in Belmullet, Co Mayo provides “far more comfort” for disabled customers than the previous shop. Room to manoeuvre, simple logical layout and natural light, supplemented by good artificial lighting, are important characteristics of the pharmacy. “Originally the shop was to be on two levels linked by a ramp”, says Damien, “but we decided to keep it all on one level to make it simpler and to save space.”

The premises, which was a regional winner in the 2005 RIAI (Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland) Awards, features wheelchair accessible toilets, low-level gondolas and a big couch for people who are waiting for a prescription or who just need a rest. “Being a rural pharmacy we do a bit of everything”, says Damien, “but it’s all easy to find. You don’t pick up a bottle of shampoo and then have to walk 100 yards for a bar of soap. And we kept clutter away from the tills, so they are easy to find, too.” The digital photo kiosk is accessible, though Damien notes that the touch-screen technology doesn’t have a voice option.

### Some practical advice

- Simplify the **layout** of the shop so that people can find their way easily to what they need. Make sure that people with disabilities can access every part of the premises that is available to non-disabled customers.
- **Eliminate internal steps and changes of level.** If they can’t be eliminated, consult an occupational therapist before installing a platform lift or other device to enable people to move between levels.
- Place tactile strips before **doorways** to warn visually impaired people of their presence.
- Keep **circulation space** free of obstructions: boxes of goods, free-standing displays etc. Ensure that shelving and other materials do not protrude into aisles or other circulation space.

- Replace prongs on **gondolas** with shelving. You need good dexterity to remove goods from prongs, and it is hard to distinguish empty prongs from their background, making them an injury hazard. Choose gondolas which have rounded edges, to minimise the risk of injury if people bump into them.
- It is easier to retrieve goods from **angled shelving** than from the conventional type.
- **Eliminate trip hazards** by using non-slip floor coverings, keeping them dry and replacing them when they get worn. Recess mats so that they are flush with the floor, and make sure that all thresholds are flush, too.
- Improve **lighting** and eliminate shadows and glare. This will enhance everyone’s experience in the shop, not just that of vision impaired people or lip-readers. Accentuate lighting at important points, such as cash registers.
- **Improve signage** - both on shelves and generally - so that people don’t have to go all round the shop looking for something. Where possible, use pictures and/or symbols as well as words.
- **Price labels** should be well-placed, in large bold print and easy to see and read. Use **tactile indicators** where possible.
- **Colour contrast** enables people to distinguish between elements - a door and its frame, or a handle on a door, for example. **Matt paint** is preferable to gloss as it does not cause glare. Colour coding can help people to orientate themselves in a complex environment.
- Install a **loop system** to assist hearing impaired customers.
- Ensure that **equipment for public** use is available at accessible locations and heights and is as easy as possible to use. The same goes for **leaflet stands** and other information displays.
- Strategically placed **seating** will be welcomed by people who find it hard to stand for long. Stable seating with arms is easier for older people to get into and out of.
- Make sure that **everything in the shop** is maintained **in good working order**. For example, replace light bulbs when they start to falter.
- Ensure that **all staff** - including locums, part-time and temporary colleagues - are **conversant with the disability-friendly features of the premises**.

### Success Story

Paul Fahey renovated his pharmacy in Tullamore, Co Offaly, recently. The space between gondolas was increased, lighting levels improved and a whole host of other innovative features were incorporated. “We wanted to gain new clientele as well as improving things for our existing customers, many of whom are older people”, explains Paul. “Our new consultation area is wheelchair-accessible and there are no counter displays above hip height so that everyone can see over the counter. We put large signs on the gondolas and in each bay. People say they now know where everything is”. Paul is in the process of replacing the prongs on the gondolas with shelving. “The reaction so far from the public has been very positive”, he adds.

### Dealing with emergencies

Everybody needs to be able to leave the premises quickly in an emergency.

To address this need:

- Install an **alarm system** that incorporates flashing lights as well as sound.
- Mark **emergency exits** with tactile materials and sign them clearly. Make sure that they are accessible to everyone and that the routes to them are kept clear of obstructions.
- Include people with disabilities in **fire drills**.
- Include a section on assistance to people with disabilities in the pharmacy's **health and safety statement**.

### To find out more...

Consult *Building for Everyone* (see page 24 for detail). This publication is available from the National Disability Authority and is currently being updated. Talk to the individual customer with a disability about their needs and how best to meet them. To find out more about Part M of the Building Regulations log on to [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie) and follow the links, starting with "Building Standards".

# 9

## Disability Proofing Your Community Pharmacy

While taking the actions detailed elsewhere in this booklet, how do you know that you are doing the right thing? How do you make sure that what you do is coherent, consistent and relevant to the people it is meant to benefit?

**Disability proofing** is the term given to the process of making sure that you are getting it right. Essentially it's a way of looking at your premises and services - present and planned - to make sure that they don't exclude people with disabilities or put them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis non-disabled people. Disability proofing is really a simple quality control mechanism by which community pharmacies can evaluate their activities to ensure that they meet current and future customer needs.

To be effective, disability proofing has to be systematic, but it doesn't have to be complicated. Over the next few pages you will find three simple forms adapted from those developed for use in the ICCPE's *Pharmabilities* programme. Each refers to a key aspect of community pharmacy: premises, services and staff. Adapt them to suit your particular circumstances. You may identify other areas to include.

### How to get support for disability proofing

As a community pharmacist, you know your business well. But you may feel that it would be helpful to get assistance for disability proofing your services. One way of making sure that you get it right is to contact a local disability group which has experience of checking premises and services to test their accessibility to people with a range of impairments. The group should also be able to suggest improvements and solutions to issues that might arise. Don't leave the job to them alone, though - there is a great deal to be gained from working together co-operatively.

## Pharmabilities: assessing where you're at (and making an instant plan)

### 1. Premises

How confident are you that your premises present no barriers to people with:

**mobility impairment**

very confident    fairly confident    unsure    I know there are barriers

**impaired hand function/poor grip**

very confident    fairly confident    unsure    I know there are barriers

**visual impairments**

very confident    fairly confident    unsure    I know there are barriers

**hearing impairments**

very confident    fairly confident    unsure    I know there are barriers

**intellectual/learning impairments**

very confident    fairly confident    unsure    I know there are barriers

**mental health difficulties**

very confident    fairly confident    unsure    I know there are barriers

**other impairments**

very confident    fairly confident    unsure    I know there are barriers

List barriers/issues to be explored.

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.....

Identify cost:    nothing    under €500    more than €500

Identify at least two barriers/issues that you can address straightaway

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What can you do about the others?

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What extra information do you need?

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Who can help you?

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When will you do it?

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NB: You might want to fill in a separate sheet dealing with the area outside your premises.

## 2. Services

How confident are you that your services present no barriers to people with:

<p><b>mobility impairment</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> I know there are barriers</p>
<p><b>impaired hand function/poor grip</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> I know there are barriers</p>
<p><b>visual impairments</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> I know there are barriers</p>
<p><b>hearing impairments</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> I know there are barriers</p>
<p><b>intellectual/learning impairments</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> I know there are barriers</p>
<p><b>mental health difficulties</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> I know there are barriers</p>
<p><b>other impairments</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> I know there are barriers</p>

List barriers/issues to be explored.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Identify cost:    nothing    under €500    more than €500

Identify at least two barriers/issues that you can address straightaway

.....

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.....

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What can you do about the others?

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What extra information do you need?

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Who can help you?

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When will you do it?

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NB: Fill in one sheet for each service (e.g. medicines, retail, information, photography etc).

### 3. Customer Focus

How comfortable and confident do you feel when you (or your staff) are dealing with people with:

<p><b>mobility impairment</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> uncomfortable/not confident</p>
<p><b>impaired hand function/poor grip</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> uncomfortable/not confident</p>
<p><b>visual impairments</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> uncomfortable/not confident</p>
<p><b>hearing impairments</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> uncomfortable/not confident</p>
<p><b>intellectual/learning impairments</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> uncomfortable/not confident</p>
<p><b>mental health difficulties</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> uncomfortable/not confident</p>
<p><b>other impairments</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> very confident   <input type="checkbox"/> fairly confident   <input type="checkbox"/> unsure   <input type="checkbox"/> uncomfortable/not confident</p>

List issues to be explored.

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Identify cost:    nothing    under €500    more than €500

What can you do about this?

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What extra information do you need?

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.....

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List barriers/issues to be explored

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Who can help you?

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When will you do it?

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NB: Staff awareness constantly emerges as the main concern of disabled users of community pharmacies. Many disability groups provide disability awareness training at local level.

Your local library or local authority may already be working with disability groups with experience of disability proofing, and will be a good source of information about how to contact them. Charges, if any, are low, and the process also represents a good opportunity to enhance your profile in the community.

Don't forget to talk to your existing disabled customers and their families. They know and appreciate your services and have a genuine interest in your work. Also remember:

- Not all people who have impairments identify themselves as "disabled". Not all impairments stay the same over time. You and your staff need to be alert to the changing and emerging needs of your customers.
- Many people who need special treatment or facilities feel embarrassed or unable to ask for them, feeling that by doing so they are making a fuss. Ensure that your staff are proactive in finding out what can be done to ensure that your services are suitable for everyone.



Having made changes to your premises and services, are you maximising the number of people with disabilities who use your services? How aware are your existing and potential customers of what you are doing?

### Marketing

Are you using every opportunity to let people with disabilities know what you are doing? Here are some effective ways of doing just that:

- **Tell your existing disabled customers** (or those who collect prescriptions for them) about improvements and new additional services (e.g. hearing loop, home delivery). Most people with disabilities will assume that a new service, particularly a "mainstream" service such as screening, is closed to them, unless they are specifically informed otherwise. Display the *Community Pharmacies Serving People with Disabilities* sticker (available from IPU) and put a notice in a visible place in the pharmacy highlighting your commitment to accessibility for customers with disabilities.
- **Tell your existing non-disabled customers** about what you are doing too. They may well know people with disabilities and can help to spread the word.
- **Encourage people with disabilities to make suggestions** for improvements and to tell staff what they need. Many people who need special treatment or facilities may feel embarrassed or unable to ask for them, feeling that by doing so they are making a fuss. Ensure that your staff are proactive in finding out what can be done to ensure that your services are suitable for everyone. Remember, not all people who have impairments identify themselves as "disabled". Not all impairments stay the same over time. You and your staff need to be alert to the changing and emerging accessibility needs of your customers.

- Advertise on local **radio** as well as in the local paper. Not everyone can read print.
- **Talk directly to local disability groups** and individual customers with disabilities. This can also help you to get information about what's needed, and what's appreciated.
- Think outside the box about **how to reach people with disabilities**. Parish organisations, local clubs, public health nurses...there are a lot of people and organisations out there who will be supportive of what you are doing and can help you to spread the word.
- If you do a major shop refit, or add significantly to your services, you could hold a short information session for groups of people with disabilities.

If you decide to print a flyer about your services, make sure that it is written as simply as possible and produced in a simple sans serif font with 12 point type. That way it will be easier for people to read and understand. The National Disability Authority's *First Steps in Producing Accessible Publications* offers useful advice on how to provide information in alternative formats. Get a free copy by phoning (01) 608 0400 or visiting [www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie).

### Keeping up to scratch

Making community pharmacy services accessible to people with disabilities is not a once-off event. It's an ongoing process which needs to be sustained. Encouraging regular feedback from disabled customers and local disability groups will be a major help in ensuring that your services stay up to the mark. In addition you will find it useful to:

- keep disability on the agenda at staff meetings and regional IPU events;
- share information and ideas with other interested people;
- make sure that the accessibility features of your premises and services are maintained and kept in good shape;
- keep staff training on disability issues up-to-date;
- monitor the level of use of your services by people with disabilities;
- conduct customer satisfaction surveys;
- pay regular visits to the websites of the IPU ([www.ipu.ie](http://www.ipu.ie)), the Equality Authority ([www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)) and the National Disability Authority ([www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie)) to keep abreast of what's happening in the field of disability.



11

## Conclusion

### Two basic things to do:

- **Consult with people with disabilities.** *Community Pharmacies Serving People with Disabilities* suggests several simple ways of doing this. People with disabilities will be able to identify issues and solutions that you may miss.
- **Provide disability awareness training** for your staff. Staff awareness constantly emerges as the main concern of disabled users of community pharmacies. Many disability groups provide disability awareness training at local level.

### Remember:

- Not all people who have impairments identify themselves as "disabled".
- Not all impairments stay the same over time. You and your staff need to be alert to the changing and emerging accessibility needs of your customers.
- Many people who need special treatment or facilities feel embarrassed or unable to ask for help, feeling that by doing so they are making a fuss. Ensure that your staff are proactive in finding out what can be done to ensure that your services are suitable for everyone.
- No advice or ideas you might read here are a substitute for consulting your customers with disabilities about what you can do to improve their access to and experience of your products and services.

The booklet *Community Pharmacies Serving People with Disabilities*, produced by the IPU and the Equality Authority and distributed to all IPU members in January 2005, contains information about pharmacists' obligations under the Equal Status Acts, as well as many practical suggestions about how to enhance accessibility for customers with disabilities. You can get a copy from the IPU office or download from the Equality Authority website.

You can download a detailed guide to the Equal Status Acts from [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie). Free copies in booklet form are available by calling the Equality Authority's LoCall helpline on 1890 245 545.





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