

ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

Beckenham

ACCESSIBLE BECKENHAM



PORTABLE RAMP
AVAILABLE



Sponsored by
Beckenham Together BID

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Beckenham Business Association is a voluntary organisation dedicated to supporting Beckenham businesses



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ABOUT BECKENHAM

Beckenham was once a small village and historically part of Kent. Until the coming of the railway in 1857 most of its land was rural and private parkland. Between 1850 and 1900 John Cator and his family began the building of villas which led to a rapid increase in population, from 2,000 to 26,000.

Now Beckenham town in the London Borough of Bromley, the area flourishes with a transport hub including trains, buses and trams providing ease of access into London and the rest of the country. Beckenham is reknown for its green spaces, strong architecture of modern, Victorian and Edwardian properties, leisure facilities, excellent shops, and with high standards of education both State and private.

- This **Accessibility Audit** evidences the issues in Beckenham High Street relating to the accessibility of goods and services for wheelchair users and the less mobile in the community, including pram access.

Site visits were made to 190 premises – 9 and 14 November 2018 – to every street level premises in Beckenham High Street, to research and gather evidence presented later in this document.

Miss Gillian Morphy is a 5th generation Beckenham resident; a full-time wheelchair user living with a degenerative neurological condition and passionate about access for the disabled and those less mobile.

The legal foundation – Equalities Act 2010

Following is a simplified guide to the Equalities Act 2010 in relation to the provision of goods and services.

Discrimination in the provision of goods and services - duty to make reasonable adjustments

Traders and service providers must remove the barriers faced because of disability. In order for access to be gained to use their goods and services in the same way, as far as is possible, as someone who's not disabled. The Equality Act 2010 calls this “the duty to make reasonable adjustments”.

When must a trader or service provider make reasonable adjustments?

Traders and service providers must make adjustments if:

- Someone is disadvantaged by something because of their disability, and
- it's reasonable to make the changes to remove the disadvantage.
 - The duty to make reasonable adjustments in goods and services is **anticipatory**. This means the trader or service provider mustn't wait to be asked to do something. They should consider in advance what they need to do to make their services accessible to **all** their disabled customers.

When is something reasonable?

What's a reasonable step to ask for can vary and will depend on things like:

- the individual's disability
- the size and resources of the business
- the type of service wanting to be used
- how practicable the changes are
- if the change asked for would overcome the disadvantages a disabled person may experience
- if the change is what's needed or is more than necessary.

What must a trader or service provider do?

Change the way things are done

A trader or service provider may have a certain way of doing things, eg a policy, rule or practice which makes it more difficult to access or use their services. The Equality Act calls these things **provisions**, **criteria**s and **practices**. The trader or service provider can be asked to change these things, if it's reasonable to do so.

Examples of rules or policies which they can be asked to change include:

- appointment booking systems
- how a business communicates - in writing, on the phone or online
- application processes - for example, when wanting to apply for a bank loan or switch to a new energy provider
- a blanket policy - for example, one that disadvantages someone with a learning difficulty.

EXAMPLE

If visually impaired, asking a phone shop assistant to provide a copy of an instruction manual for a new smartphone in large print. Should the assistant refuse saying that it's accessible online, a reasonable adjustment would be to print the manual in the shop in a larger font.

Change a physical feature

Sometimes the physical features of a building - for example, steps, doors or passageways, may make access more difficult or impossible to use.

A trader or service provider must remove, change or provide a reasonable way of avoiding the barrier, if it's reasonable to do so.

This could be - for example:

- installing a ramp or lift
- having a temporary ramp available when needed
- installing a doorbell for customers to ring for assistance
- widening doorways or removing display units
- installing toilets for the disabled
- reserving parking spaces for the disabled near the entrance to the shop.

EXAMPLE

If disabled and it proves impossible to access your local bank branch because of steps leading up to the entrance. The bank has offered for staff to come out and serve you on the street as they don't want to adapt the building.

This may not be enough to comply with their duty under the Equality Act. They should install a ramp or stairlift to enable disabled customers to use their branch in the same way as their non-disabled customers.

Provide extra aids or services

Sometimes particular aids or equipment are required to access or use goods or services. The Equality Act calls these **auxiliary** aids and services.

Examples of auxiliary aids and services include:

- a portable induction loop for people with hearing aids
- BSL interpreters
- providing information in alternative formats, such as Braille, large text or audio CDs
- extra staff assistance - for example, taking extra time to explain something or provide face to face services if you can't use the internet or phone.

EXAMPLE

You're deaf and your first language is BSL. You want to talk to your bank about opening a savings account. The bank provides a BSL interpreter when you go in and talk to them. This is a reasonable adjustment for the bank to make.

What can you do if you face barriers when you want to access goods and services?

You can ask the trader or service provider to make the necessary changes to access or use their services. If a service provider refuses to make **reasonable** adjustments, it's unlawful discrimination and they can be challenged and action can be taken under the Equality Act.

Limits on the duty to make reasonable adjustments

The trader or service provider doesn't have to change things if this would **fundamentally** change the **nature** of the service they offer. For example, a restaurant which offers dining in the dark area could refuse to leave the lights on for a deaf customer who needs to be able to lip read to communicate.

Beckenham High Street contains a vibrant mix of new and not so new businesses. These are in properties ranging from pre-war to new builds. Many of the pre-war properties have undergone extensive refurbishments over the years with shop facias changing aesthetically with the times but not necessarily encompassing the Equalities Act 2010 and its predecessor the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Beckenham is home to a large aging community as well as an equally large child rearing community and many people with mobility difficulties. This has led to many access problems over the years, which have effectively prevented many people from gaining access to goods and services and thus supporting their local shops.

Imagine only being able to meet friends in large chain cafes because none of the independents have an accessible toilet. Only being able to eat in a handful of cafes/restaurants because all the others have steps. Having to travel to another town because nowhere on your local high street is accessible to get a pedicure/manicure. Finding a shop you can get in only to find the aisles are blocked with merchandise stands and delivery boxes. Getting into your bank to find they have no counter you can reach or see over. Being told you can only eat or drink between certain times because your wheelchair or mobility aid is in the way during popular times. Not being able to gain access to premises because of tiny threshold lips that cause great pain to bump up and down.

None of this goes towards building an inclusive and welcoming community and only serves to promote social exclusion and isolation for many people, which in turn causes problems of its own that put an added burden on already struggling public services. And leads to businesses losing substantial income from the excluded section of society.

So what is the answer?

Portable ramps are a low-cost budget-friendly answer, which require no planning permission or council approval. They are widely available online or from mobility stores.

These ramps come in many styles and can indeed prove costly if you go for an all-singing all-dancing fibreglass contraption but a standard 3ft “suitcase ramp” would be suitable for nearly all premises visited in Beckenham High Street, and some may even only need shorter ones. These ramps can be put in place when required, removed once the person has entered the premises, and then put back when the person needs to leave. For the properties with a ‘lip’ on the inside dropping down from the step, ‘threshold ramps’ are designed to overcome the problem.

Following are examples of costings for the various ramps and the company which provided Gill Morphy with hers. Neither Gill nor Beckenham Business Association are in any way affiliated to this company; there are many other companies available and details are accurate at the time of going to print.

It is suggested that channel ramps are not an easy option, as these have proved difficult and, in some cases dangerous for wheelchairs and mobility scooters to use. They are also considered expensive.

www.theramppeople.co.uk

Economy folding wheelchair ramp - £59

- 3ft (915mm)
- Weight 8.0kg
- Capacity 300kg
- Internal width 715mm
- Max. load height 150mm



2.36” Rubber threshold ramp - £50

Note: If buying a ramp for a business is not financially viable, consider the possibilities of a “rampshare” with a neighbouring business. This would work exceptionally well for businesses with the same opening hours.

How do people know a ramp is available?

A window sticker is available (please see image on front cover of this Audit) sponsored by Beckenham Together BID, specially for premises in Beckenham with portable ramps.

Wouldn't it be amazing to have a fully mobility inclusive (in respect to access) High Street? Think of the financial benefits to businesses that allowing access to a whole section of the community could bring. Imagine that warm fuzzy feeling you may get, knowing that you have made someone's life a lot easier, made it possible for someone to shop, meet friends and gain/keep some independence. These ramps can be used by other people too - no doubt delivery people would be more than happy not to have to heave deliveries up steps!

As at 14 November 2018 only 94 of the 190 premises visited had level access, the remainder had steps, of which only 12 had portable access ramps and only 2 or 3 had a note in the window letting customers know that a portable ramp was available.

Additionally, there is a severe lack of **wheelchair accessible toilets** compared to standard facility toilets: with 19 accessible toilets (mainly in chain restaurants or chain cafes) compared to the 72 standard facility locations. Accessibility to these toilets is often inhibited when shared with nappy change facilities and used as storage for high chairs and other items.

The accessible toilets are mainly located in the central part of the High Street leaving a chronic lack of facilities between Beckenham Junction and the Slug & Lettuce. However, provision of accessible toilet facilities is a little more problematic for businesses to accommodate than providing portable ramps, as often there is simply not the space available for disabled facilities.

Look out for the "Portable Ramp Available on Request" stickers (as front cover and sponsored by Beckenham Together BID). Details of locations of accessible toilets are currently available on the Beckenham Business Association, Beckenham Together BID, and Beckenham residents' associations' websites, as well as on the town Noticeboards.

FINDINGS

PREMISES VISITED

Of the 190 premises visited, the following were found to be **Accessible** at the time of Audit or **Investigating providing Ramps**. Also listed are those premises with **Accessible Toilets**.

CURRENTLY ACCESSIBLE

AAA MiniCabs	Halifax	Proctors
Ask Italian Restaurant	HeadMasters	Queenbridge Homes
Bath Store	Herb Plus	RP for Men
Beckenham Books	Hizar	Sainsbury's
Beckenham Flower Studio	Holland & Barrett	Salvation Army shop
Beckenham Food & Wine	HomeFayre	Santander
Beckenham Pharmacy	HSBC	Sapore Vero
Beckenham Supermarket	ICE Clinic	Scope
BETFRED	Kelsey House	Sea Salt
Boots	KFH	Shutter Studio
Branded	Kiwi Sun	Slug & Lettuce
Bricklayers Arms	Ladbrokes	Snappy Snaps
Bridge Convenience Store	Lidl	South of the River
British Heart Foundation	Lloyds Bank	Superdrug
Caffé Nero	Londis	Tesco Express
Cancer Research UK	Mace	The Gasfire Place
Carpe Diem	Magiff	The White Horse
Carphone Warehouse	Mann & Co	VapePit
Clarks	Maria & Aldo	Vasconez
Clintons	Marks & Spencer	Villagers Sausages
Columns	Miso	Waitrose
Costa	Mr Simms Olde Sweet Shoppe	

Coughlans	Musical Images	
Creative	Nationwide	
Deen's Garage	O'Neill's	
Deli Nene	Odeon Cinema	
Domino	Oliver Stephens	
Eatwell	Paddy Power	
Edwards Accountants	Patrick's	
Elite & Co	Phone Masters	
Ellis & Edwards	Pierluigi's	
Em's	Pizza Express	
Fee & Brown	Prezzo	

INVESTIGATING RAMPS

ACCESSIBLE TOILETS

Francis Chappell		Ask Italian Restaurant
Sinclair Hammelton		Beckenham Dental Clinic
TUI		Big Catch
Wimpy		Bocca Social
		Caffé Nero
		Costa
		Grand Cru Co
		Langford Russell
		O'Neill's
		Odeon Cinema
		Pizza Express
		Prezzo
		Sainsbury's
		Slug & Lettuce

This Accessibility Audit, subsequent Report, design and distribution of the 'Ramp Available' stickers has been carried out by local resident Gillian Morphy who is an electric wheelchair user and Jackie Groundsell & Marsha Berg who both volunteer their time and efforts.

		Starbucks
		The George
		Waitrose
		White Horse
		Zizzi
		TOTAL - 19

Premises will be reviewed regularly – next review March 2019

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