



Wiltshire's Accessible Spaces



Our top tips for creating accessible communities

Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living



This guide has been written and produced by disabled people in Wiltshire, with support from Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living.

Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living is a user led organisation. Our vision is for all disabled people to be able to live independently through individual choice, control and equal rights. Our mission is to provide the support required to do this.

Find out more about Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living by visiting our social media or getting in touch.



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@listenupwilts



0300 1233 442



userengagement@wiltshirecil.org.uk



So you want to be more accessible? Awesome!

Learning how to make your organisation, building, group or club more accessible can feel a bit daunting. It can be difficult to know where to start, especially if you have limited funds or resources.

Which is where this guide comes in! **Wiltshire's Accessible Spaces** offers simple suggestions and ideas on how you can make your space more accessible. It has been written by disabled people living in Wiltshire and is based on our own lived experience. It does not offer every way you can be accessible, but offers you some top tips to get you started.

Whether you're part of a social group, retail shop, organisation or community building, this guide is here to support you.

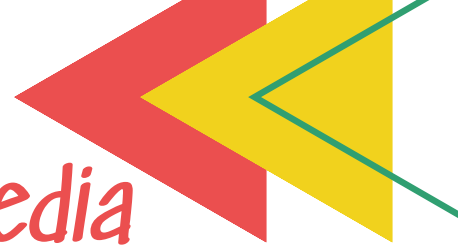
There is no 'one size fits all' approach to accessibility. You are encouraged to read, adapt and tailor this guide to work for your group, building or organisation.

All of the photographs in this guide are taken from places in Wiltshire.





Websites & Social Media



Accessibility Information

If you have a website, make sure to include access information. This should be easy to find - no more than 2 'clicks' away from your homepage. If you can, add images, so people can make well-informed decisions when deciding if your space is accessible to them.

Things to include on the website:

- Do you have parking?
- Is there step-free access?
- If on multiple levels, is there a lift?
- Do you have accessible toilets?
- Do you charge concession rates, or supply carer tickets?
- Do you have a 'quiet' hour?

Image Descriptions

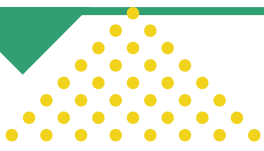
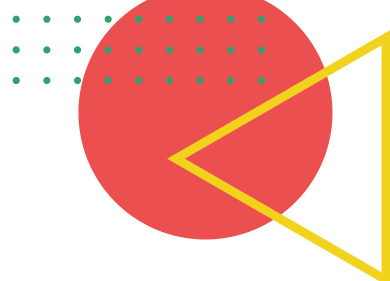
Include image descriptions or 'alt text' on all images posted on your website and social media. Image descriptions are used by screen readers to describe an image to people with visual impairments. Descriptors should be concise whilst communicating all the key details of the image. How to add descriptors or 'alt text' varies between each social media platform. If in doubt, add your image description as a comment or caption to your image.



Captions

Any videos posted on your website or social media which contain speech should be captioned. This can be done by using a mobile video editing app. Some social media apps like TikTok and Instagram have captioning capabilities in the app itself.





Outdoor Spaces

Parking

If you have a car park, make sure you have designated disabled bays. An accessible bay should be at least 2.4m x 4.8m with a 1.2m wide safety zone marked out alongside one side of the bay. The space should be identified with clear signage and markings on the ground.

Consider where the bays are positioned, they should be near the entrance and near a dropped kerb. The terrain should be level and paved if possible, gravel or grass can be very difficult to navigate with mobility aids. Disabled parking should preferably be free of charge.

More details on parking guidelines can be found in 'Our Resources'.



Level Access and Ramps

Where possible, there should be level, step-free access into your building. If this is not possible, you should look at installing a ramp. Preferably this should be a permanent ramp, but there may be scenarios where only a temporary ramp is possible.



Make sure temporary ramps are easy to request. Have a sign outside advertising that you have a ramp. We recommend having a doorbell next to the sign so people can press it to request the ramp without coming in the building.

Mobility Aids

If you are a park or outdoor space, consider having mobility aids available for disabled people to hire to access your space. This may include mobility scooters, wheelchairs, all-terrain wheelchairs and walkers.



Indoor Spaces

Doors

The gold standard of accessible doors are 'power-assist' doors that are activated via a button or motion sensor. If power-assist doors are not possible for you, make sure to keep heavy doors propped open. Ideally the door opening should be 0.9m in width. There should be a clear space of 0.3m between the edge of the door and the nearest obstruction to the side eg. a wall. Hallways should be at least 1.2m wide to allow wheelchair users to move and turn.



Accessible Toilets

Accessible toilets benefit many different people. For a toilet to be accessible it should have:

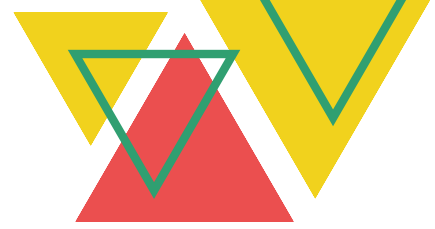
- A large enough space to allow a wheelchair user to fully turn around inside.
- A raised height toilet.
- Supporting grab rails around the toilet and sink - preferably contrasting colours to support people with visual impairments.
- A basin with lever taps.
- Door which opens outwards.
- An emergency assistance alarm (red cord). These should be near the toilet and reach the floor. They should never be tied up.
- Toilet flush to be paddle type design.

Accessible toilets should not be used as storage areas and should always be kept clear. The gold standard of accessible toilets is to install a 'changing places' toilet. More details of these can be found in 'Our Resources'.





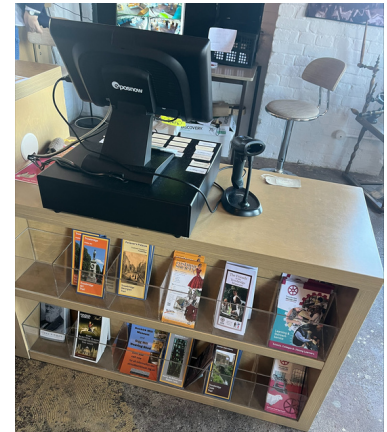
Indoor Spaces



Counters & Reception Areas

Consider having a lowered counter or till-point. Everything should be accessible from a seated position including card machines.

If you have any interactive screens available for completing forms / signing waivers, ensure these can be moved lower to seated height.

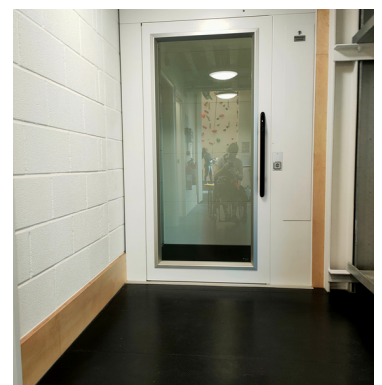


Environment

Some people can find busy or loud environments very overwhelming. Support them by not having loud music or strong smells. If you do have to have strong smells, loud noises or strobe / bright lights due to the nature of your group or building, then make people aware of this in advance. Have a sign outside your building and/or information on your website. If you have a noisy environment, you could also have ear defenders available for people to use.

Lift Access

If your building is across multiple levels, consider installing a lift. The minimum space for a platform lift should be 12.5m by 8m. Ensure your lift is well maintained and breakdowns are dealt with promptly. You should have an alternative evacuation procedure in the case of an emergency such as evacuation chairs. Make sure staff are fully trained on how to use these.



Quiet Spaces

Have a quiet area people can go if they feel overwhelmed. Or organise a 'quiet hour' where people can visit your building with any music turned off and background noise reduced.



Catering Facilities

Dietary Information

Make dietary information easily accessible for customers. Make sure it is in an easy to read and understand format. Try to avoid giving customers large binders of information and instead create simple and clear to read menus which detail allergens.

Flexibility

If you have a 'only food bought in these premises can be consumed here' policy, recognise that there may be exceptions to this. Some people have complex dietary requirements that cannot be catered for by your establishment, therefore they may need to bring their own food. Make it clear that this is acceptable if medically necessary.

Likewise some people may not be able to eat. Allow customers to only order drinks or to share drinks / food with other people. Make sure staff are aware of these exceptions so customers are not wrongly challenged or questioned.

Cutlery Available

Have a wide variety of cutlery and crockery available. This could include, wide handled cutlery, cups with two handles, cups with lids, straws and bibs. Promote that these are available with clear signage.



Space between tables

Ensure there is adequate space between the tables for wheelchair users to manoeuvre through your seating area.

Priority Seating

If your seating area is large or gets busy, we recommend allocating the tables easiest to access as 'priority seating'. These are reserved for customers who may find it difficult to move through the seating area such as, those with mobility aids or visual impairments.

Other Considerations

Concession Pricing

If your group / service requires a paid admission price, consider introducing a cheaper rate for disabled people and their carers. Some disabled people also require a personal assistant or carer to support them to access the community. If you can, offer free admission to personal assistants and carers. Carer tickets should be supplied without the need for an 'official' carer ID. Many people may be supported by friends, family or independently employed personal assistants, and so will not have a 'carer ID'.

Requesting Evidence

It is preferred that disabled people are not asked for any evidence in order to access concession pricing and the other accessibility features of your group or service.

If you feel that it is absolutely necessary to request evidence of disability, carefully consider how you do this. Commonly used forms of evidence are: Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Blue Badge, Visual Impairment Certificate, concession travel card, CEA / Nimbus card or a doctor's letter. However, be aware that some disabled people may not have access to these forms of evidence. Therefore, you should ensure that you have a process set up to accommodate these customers or members. This could be as complex as your own assessment process or as simple as a conversation with the customer to discuss their accessibility requirements. If your service or group is something people can visit multiple times, set up an access register so that customers only need to provide you with evidence once.

Queue Exemptions

Many disabled people face challenges when having to queue or wait for long periods of time. If possible, allow disabled people to bypass these queues or wait for a shorter time.

Training

One of the most impactful changes you can make is to ensure all people involved in the running of your group or service have received disability awareness training. Being aware of some of the challenges disabled people face is the first step in creating an inclusive space.

At Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living, we offer various disability awareness and community inclusion training courses. Contact us at 'userengagement@wiltshirecil.org.uk' to find out more.

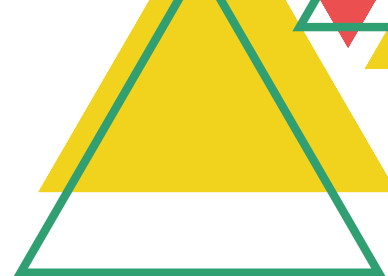


What happens next?



So how can you apply the recommendations in this guide to your group, building or organisation? Start by filling out this checklist, think about what you have already achieved and what you still need to work towards.

	Achieved	Working towards	N/A
Accessibility information available on the website			
Alt-Text on images posted online			
Captions on videos posted online			
Accessible parking bays			
Level access or ramps into the building			
Mobility aids or scooters available to hire			
Accessible doorways into the building			
Lowered counters / reception desks			
Accessible toilet facilities			
Lift access to upper floors			
Quiet space or relaxed times available			
Dietary information available on menus			
A range of cutlery available eg. wide handles			
Accessible & priority seating in cafe areas			



	Completed	Working towards	N/A
Concession Pricing and Carer tickets			
Accessible evidence requesting process			
Disabled exemptions to queues or waiting			
Disability training for all staff, volunteers and group leaders			

These ideas and recommendations are by no means exhaustive, they are simply just a few ways to get you started on your way to becoming more accessible. When implementing changes we always recommend you consult with and work alongside disabled people every step of the way.

If you would like more tailored advice, you may want to have a formal accessibility audit of your premises. This is carried out by an accredited auditor or consultant with expertise in disabled access regulations and best practice. To find an auditor local to you, we recommend visiting the 'National Register of Access Consultants' (<https://www.nrac.org.uk/>)

Our Resources

Here are some of the resources and references we have made throughout the guide. These websites offer more information to help you make your space more accessible.

<https://www.wiltshirecil.org.uk>

<https://www.dpaccreditation.org.uk/about-the-dpa/about-the-dpa>

<https://www.goaccess.co.uk/recommendations-disabled-access-door-width/>

<https://www.moreability.co.uk/help-advice/2018/08/disabled-toilet-size>

<https://www.changing-places.org/>





Produced by WCIL User Engagement Team
www.wiltshirecil.org.uk
userengagement@wiltshirecil.org.uk
Charity No 1120611 Company No 5480761