

# WELCOME TO KINGS HEATH

ACCESS FOR ALL

HOW TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY  
AND HELP MORE PEOPLE USE YOUR  
BUSINESS OR SERVICE.

GUIDANCE FOR KINGS HEATH BUSINESSES.

# HOW TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND HELP MORE PEOPLE USE YOUR BUSINESS OR SERVICE.

## Guidance for Kings Heath Businesses.

COMPILED BY OUR SCENE CIC.

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### CONTACT DETAILS

Contact Kings Heath BID to update accessibility information listings.

**community@enjoykingsheath.com**

Contact Our Scene CIC to arrange free advice on creating wheelchair-friendly environments and testing ramps, and to sign up to FREE Dementia Friends Training.

**team@ourscene.org**

### SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [www.enjoykingsheath.com/accessibility/](http://www.enjoykingsheath.com/accessibility/)
- <https://youtu.be/0PE3xYdKg5U> (Training Film. 20 mins) "How your business can tap into the spending power of households affected by disability and dementia."
- **Information around disabled households and their spending power**  
<https://business.scope.org.uk/article/accessibility-and-disability-facts-and-figures>
- **The Social Model of Disability - explained** <https://youtu.be/0e24rfTZ2CQ>
- **The National Disability Strategy around shopping - explained**
- <https://disabilityunit.blog.gov.uk/2021/07/28/shopping-national-disability-strategy-explained/>
- **Dementia-friendly retail guide** - Alzheimer's Society.

The Access for All Kings Heath project is delivered by Kings Heath BID in partnership with Our Scene CIC and with support from local volunteers, Home Instead and members of Disability Linx and Ability Life Opportunities.

It is funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.



# IMPROVING ACCESS FOR ALL MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE!

## WE WANT TO HELP.

This guidance has been created for you by real Kings Heath shoppers and visitors with lived experience of disability and sensory access needs.

This is not designed as an exhaustive guide on how to improve accessibility. This booklet contains the voices and recommendations of local residents who want to give their custom to more Kings Heath businesses. Unfortunately, barriers exist which prevent them, and thousands of others, from spending their money in so many of the area’s shops and hospitality venues. Maybe even yours!

This guide will help you understand small and critical changes you can make to tap into the loyal spending power of households affected by visible and non-visible disabilities and dementia.

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Are you ready to find out how to boost your business and promote equality, independence and choice for more local shoppers and visitors to Kings Heath’s main shopping area?

# HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE PURPLE POUND?

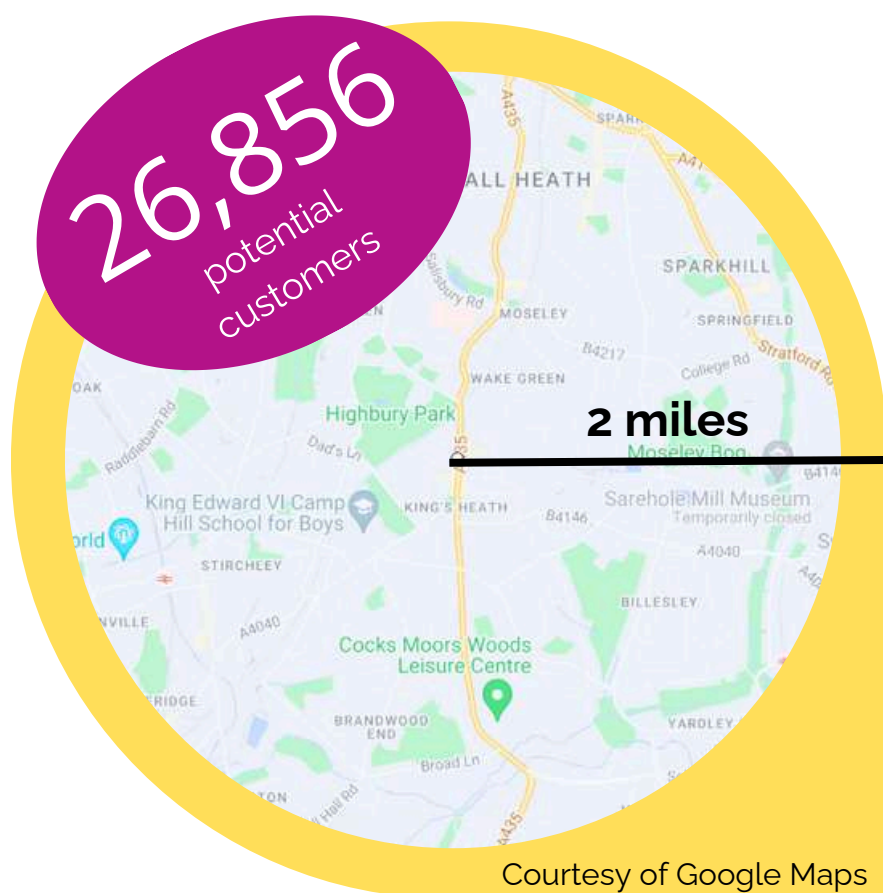
This is the spending power of disabled people and their household. It is estimated to be worth £274 billion per year to UK businesses. It is estimated to be worth £267 million to High Street Shops and £163 million to restaurants and bars.

[WWW.WEAREPURPLE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.WEAREPURPLE.ORG.UK)

Research shows that 75% of disabled people and their families have walked away from a UK business because of poor accessibility or customer service.

## 1 IN 5 PEOPLE ARE DISABLED

This means that 23% of working age adults and 45% of pension age adults in the UK are disabled by barriers in society, including in retail environments.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Within a 2 mile radius of Kings Heath High Street, **26,856 local people\*** self-identify as Disabled under the Equality Act.

That's **a lot of potential new customers** if you can improve access to your business!

(\*Profile compiled from Census 2021 data.)

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Can you afford to miss out on the Purple Pound?

# HOW ACCESSIBLE IS KINGS HEATH? WE ASKED LOCAL SHOPPERS

151 people with, or caring for someone with access needs responded to our public survey in January 2024 about accessibility in and around Kings Heath High Street.

**70%** of respondents have a B14 or B13 postcode (mainly Kings Heath and Moseley).

Surveys were completed by, or on behalf of people age 0-94, including:

- 64% experiencing mobility issues
- 28% experiencing hearing or sight loss or sensory sensitivities
- 11% who are affected by dementia
- 34% who are affected by a long term illness or mental health condition
- 50% who identify as neurodivergent or having learning difficulties.

Survey respondents gave Kings Heath High Street an average accessibility rating of just **4/10**.



**74%** of respondents said they would highly likely (30%) or probably (40%) shop more frequently in Kings Heath if more places provided wheelchair access or made other changes to improve accessibility.

*"There are a number of independent stores in Kings Heath it would be good to visit but we are now restricted by the access issues."*

*"Accessibility doesn't just affect people in wheelchairs. It affects people in prams, old people, people who have sprained their legs playing sports or on crutches."*

*"If a place becomes well known for being accessible, people will travel, you know, and not just from Birmingham but from other parts of the country as well."*

*"I don't think anybody deliberately goes out of the way to be inaccessible, it just doesn't register until it affects you personally."*

(Survey & focus group participants, 2024)

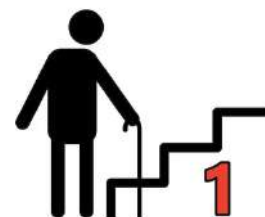
Can you help increase that accessibility rating nearer to 10?

# WHEELCHAIR-WELCOMING BUSINESSES



A team of local residents including wheelchair users and autistic individuals carried out fact-finding visits to 273 businesses in early 2024. We discovered that only half of the businesses in and around Kings Heath High Street welcome wheelchair users as customers.

**Over 100 business entrances in and around Kings Heath High Street have 1 step.**



Are you one step away from more customers?

LITTLE AND INEXPENSIVE CHANGES  
YOU CAN MAKE TO CREATE A MORE  
WHEELIE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS.

Within 2 miles  
**8,803**  
children are aged 0-4  
and travel on  
wheels too!

## **Invest in a portable ramp**

- These are inexpensive and can be even shared between neighbouring businesses with the same step height. A threshold ramp can cost as little as £40.
- Ask a person with lived experience of using a wheelchair/mobility scooter to help you test the appropriate height and length of a ramp. We can help with this!
- Put up a sign in your window to indicate that your business has a ramp available.
- Ensure that your staff are trained in how to deploy the ramp.

## **Many doors are too heavy to be opened independently by wheelchair users.**

You can become more accessible by:

- Adopting an open door policy either by raising staff awareness of opening the door, or ensuring the door is always open.
- Installing a doorbell at a wheelchair user's height so that customers can get your attention.

## **Think about how easy it is for wheelchairs to move around your business.**

- A wheelchair/mobility scooter should be able to turn a full circle.
- Ask a person with lived experience of using a wheelchair/mobility scooter to advise on layout. Narrow aisles can cause stress for fear of 'getting stuck'.

**3** That one step is also a barrier for you to engage more customers.



*"I can manage steps into businesses, but if they are deep steps a ramp would make things much easier. There is rarely clear signage in shop windows as to how to ask for the ramp to be put out."*

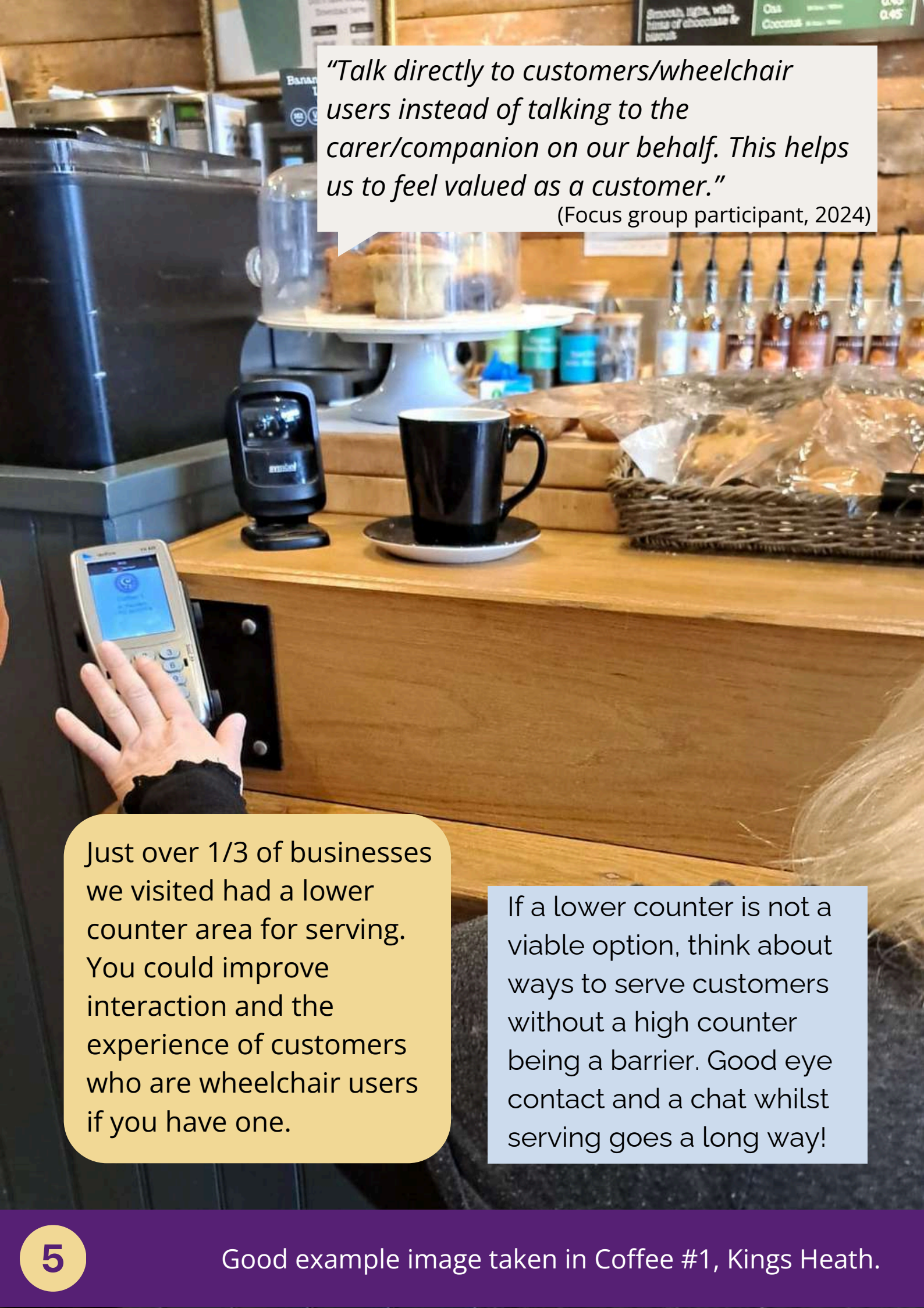
(Survey respondent, 2024)



If you have a portable ramp or can offer assistance by opening doors, please display a sign in your window.

**Promote your accessibility!**





*"Talk directly to customers/wheelchair users instead of talking to the carer/companion on our behalf. This helps us to feel valued as a customer."*  
(Focus group participant, 2024)

Just over 1/3 of businesses we visited had a lower counter area for serving. You could improve interaction and the experience of customers who are wheelchair users if you have one.

If a lower counter is not a viable option, think about ways to serve customers without a high counter being a barrier. Good eye contact and a chat whilst serving goes a long way!





**Too high?  
Don't try!**

**Please ask for  
assistance**

*"Supermarkets not having staff keeping watch for those of us who cannot access the top shelf units, ditto freezer units and chilled units. These are the reasons I shop mainly on-line." (Survey respondent, 2024)*

# HELPING YOUR CUSTOMERS FEEL COMFORTABLE AND AT EASE

Within a 2 mile radius of Kings Heath High Street 13,577 people are aged 70+. With ageing comes an increase in mobility issues, poorer eyesight, hearing loss and the need to use the toilet more frequently. It's not just people with disabilities who will benefit from improved accessibility.



Profile compiled from  
Census 2021 data.

## LARGE PRINT MENUS

When we visited 273 businesses in early 2024, out of the 64 hospitality venues and takeaways reviewed, only 16% offered a large print menu.

- Think about promoting online menus that customers can resize to their needs.
- Not everyone has access to digital, so as a quick fix you can print a menu at 16pt+ or enlarge your printed menu on a photocopier!

## TOILETS

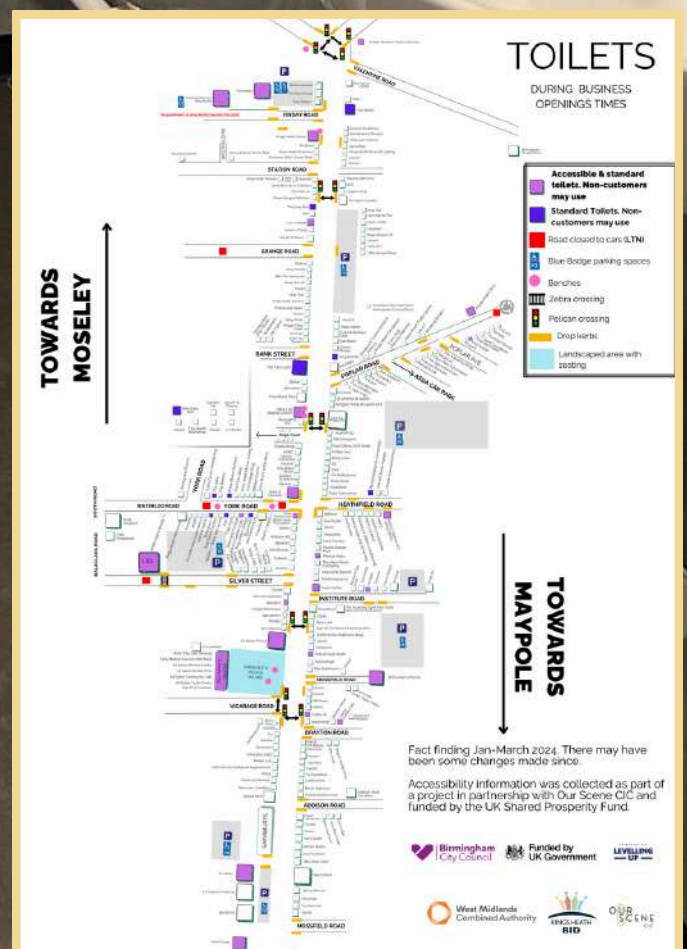
- If you don't have a customer toilet (standard or accessible), find out where the nearest ones are and share this with your staff. There is a Toilets Map which can be downloaded from [www.enjoykingsheath/accessibility/](http://www.enjoykingsheath/accessibility/) to help people plan ahead.
- If you have an accessible toilet, make sure the red cord hangs to the floor after cleaning. In an emergency, such as a fall, it needs to be reachable.
- Make sure your toilets are clean and have toilet paper!
- A hook or bar on the back of the toilet door means crutches/stoma bags can be hung for comfort and hygiene.





Not knowing if and where toilets will be available during a shopping trip or evening out can be a barrier for some people and a reason not to go.

If you've got a loo - promote it too!



Good example image of an accessible toilet.






Good supermarket example. A rest area is set up in Morrisons, Starchley. You can position them around your store.

Around 3/4 of businesses we spoke to told us they have a chair available if asked. If you do, please put up a sign. This will help customers feel more at ease in your business.

People can get embarrassed and don't want to make a fuss if they feel faint, weak or need to rest during a shopping trip. Make it nothing to worry about!





As of April 2024, only 6% of businesses in and around Kings Heath High Street have a Hearing Loop Induction System to enable clearer communication with hearing aid users.

This system works when a person's hearing aids, cochlear implant or loop listener is switched to the hearing loop setting. It reduces the distracting background noises.

**Promote if you have one!**

Think about other ways to make communication easier for people who have hearing loss or might be sensitive to noise, including people who are living with dementia.

- You can turn off background music to create a calmer environment to communicate.
- Promote quiet shopping times of the day.
- Offer your staff Deaf Awareness training to help them feel confident in how to communicate and assist customers.

# SENSORY SENSITIVITY & ENVIRONMENTS

Our fact-finding visits to 273 businesses by autistic individuals with high sensory needs in early 2024 identified 46% of businesses to have a noise or lighting level, or both, that could potentially cause sensory sensitivity for some customers.

## LIGHTING

Bright LED panel lighting, spotlights, light filters and lights that flash or buzz can cause sensory overload for some customers and can lead to anxiety and non-repeat visits.

When thinking about how you can change the lighting to improve accessibility and the comfort and experience of customers with sensory needs, we recommend you consider:

- Using natural lighting where possible.
- Swapping to dimmer bulbs to reduce brightness, while ensuring potential trip hazards are still lit and people can see clearly around the store.
- Don't angle spotlights directly onto people (e.g. when seated at tables).
- Ensure lighting does not emit sound.

## SOUNDS

While low background music is generally fine, it is worth recognising that people with sensory sensitivities may find loud or thudding music and machinery noises (such as in a hairdressers, key cutting shop or nail

*"Black Market Barbers is an example of an independent where access is well accommodated - physically able to get into the shop and they have also supported my son when he has visited them for a hair cut for the last few years. Hair cutting is a difficult sensory experience and they accommodate his needs well and make it as good experience as it can be."*

(Survey respondent, 2024)

bar) a cause of distress and they may naturally avoid some venues and shops unless adjustments can be made.

Sudden banging doors can also make people jump and may cause anxiety.

Does your door bang shut? A quick fix would be to add foam strips or felt pads to reduce the noise.



# SMELLS

Be aware that overpowering smells may also cause issues with sensory sensitivity.

# SIGNAGE

Many of your existing and potentially new customers may have non-visible disabilities which include people with:

- Mental health conditions
- Autism and ADHD
- Learning disabilities
- Visual impairments or restricted vision
- Hearing loss
- Sensory and processing difficulties.

They may find it more challenging to navigate around your shop or venue.

Things to consider to improve accessibility include:

- Try to avoid making assumptions about what customers know or should know.
- Use signage to display rules and expectations people need be aware of when visiting your retail shop or venue.
- Use clear signage to avoid miscommunication such as 'card only', 'pay here', 'wait to be seated', 'order at the table', 'no food or drink' etc...
- Visibly display information relating to how your staff can support people with disabilities and access needs.
- Give people more time to process information during interactions.
- Offer non-visible disabilities or Autism Awareness training to your staff.

# LAYOUT

Sensory perception can be challenging for some people with non-visible disabilities. To help customers enjoy their experience with you:

- Avoid low hanging ceiling signs and items, and placing stock on the floor as customers may bump into them.
- Lay out products so they can be clearly seen around the shop.
- Leave enough room for people to move around and consider the layout of tables and counters.
- Put a tactile or yellow strip on any internal steps to make them visible to avoid tripping.
- Use floor markers and signs so people can see where they have to queue, or wait to pay.

# QUIET TIMES

Have you considered having allocated 'quiet hours' within your shop or business which can support customers with high sensitivity?

This might include dimming or turning off bright lights, and turning off music and non-emergency tannoy announcements during this time.

You can also promote the times of day when you naturally have less footfall and turn these into opportunities to bring in a different market.





Good example image of lighting levels in Harvest Home/Skincare, Kings Heath.

# Pay in, Cash out

- Take out cash
- Pay in notes and cheques
- Pay your bills
- Transfer cash and more



# HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE DEMENTIA POUND?

This is the spending power of households affected by dementia. It is set to increase to £22.7 billion by 2030.



[WWW.ALZHEIMERS.ORG.UK](http://WWW.ALZHEIMERS.ORG.UK)

One in three people born in the UK today will be diagnosed with dementia in their lifetime.

A customer with dementia will face a wide range of challenges and barriers in a retail environment which can cause confusion and anxiety. Their experience could include:

- Memory loss or changes in the speed by which they process information.
- Feeling overwhelmed and disorientated by bright lights and sound.
- Difficulties making decisions due to the volume of products available.
- Changes in perception. E.g. a dark mat at the entrance could look like a hole, or a wiggly patterned carpet like walking into a snake pit. Would you walk on it?

Business owners who make dementia-friendly changes to their retail shops and venues can create a positive shopping experience, retaining loyal customers and attracting new customers, especially those who are living with dementia, their family members and friends.

**Making your business more dementia friendly will also help customers with sensory sensitivities. Recommendations include:**

- Clear signage and communication.
- Neutral flooring. Avoid strong patterns.
- Uncluttered isles and consistency in layout.
- A calm and relaxed atmosphere with a rest area.
- Sign up to free Dementia Friends Awareness training for your staff to help them understand when and how they can assist customers.

**Remember, 1 in 3 people will be diagnosed with dementia in their lifetime.**

Can you afford to miss out on the DEMENTIA pound?

# HOW WE ARE HELPING YOUR CUSTOMERS TO PLAN AHEAD

During our fact-finding visits to Kings Heath High Street and surrounding streets our team of wheelchair users and autistic individuals with sensory needs gathered accessibility information. We have used this to help your existing and new customers to the shopping area plan their visits in advance.

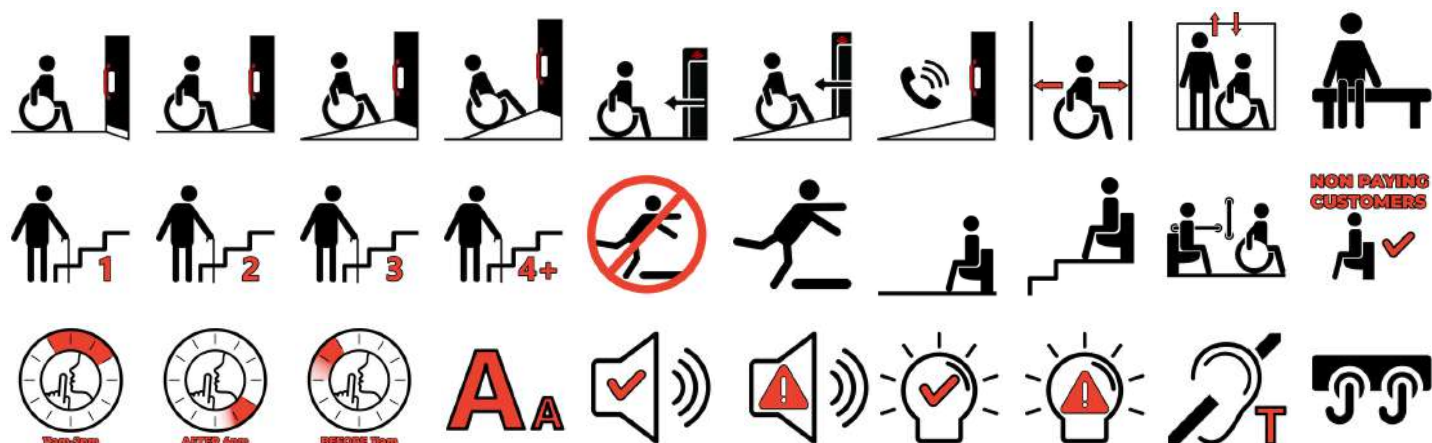
If your shop is located in this area, your individual web page in the [ENJOY KINGS HEATH DIRECTORY](#) has accessibility symbols awarded with explanations, based on our visits. As your business becomes more accessible, let the team at Kings Heath BID know so they can alter your page entry to reflect and promote your increased commitment to inclusion.

*"I won't visit somewhere if I don't know enough about its accessibility and I don't feel able to (and sometimes literally can't) contact individual businesses to find out.*

*If I can't find information online I do not visit. (I use Google Maps street view to check shop access steps etc. but that doesn't tell you everything.) Chain shops are more likely to be accessible which is a shame as I like to support independent and local businesses."*

(Survey respondent, 2024)

Customers can use the BID's Directory to search which businesses are wheelchair accessible, have a hearing loop, where toilets are available (including for non-customers to use) and which businesses are identified as comfortable for people with sensory sensitivities in relation to light and sound levels. There are also maps highlighting these and the location of Blue Badge parking, crossings and drop kerbs.





*"If a shop is inaccessible to a wheelchair user, it is probably inaccessible to a parent with a buggy. If a shop is kind of inaccessible from a sensory point of view, to someone with ADHD or autism, it's probably going to be as much of a struggle for someone with dementia [...]"*

*The problems that disabled people experience are experienced by other people on a kind of a sort of sliding scale so I think by making things more accessible to the people with the biggest accessibility needs it then makes them more welcoming and more open to people who just have maybe a kind of minor accessibility issue that most of the time they can get over."*

**(Focus group participant, 2024)**

*"I feel left out. I used to come to the High Street everyday, shopping around to save money. I feel that businesses do not want my money! I would say that 80% of my income after bills is spent on-line - often at greater expense due to delivery fees. I doubt I'm the only one who feels the same as I do. There are a lot of people like me. Think of all that missed revenue!"*

**(Survey respondent, 2024)**

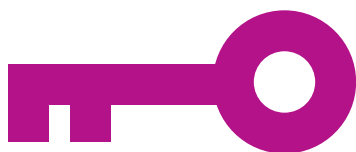
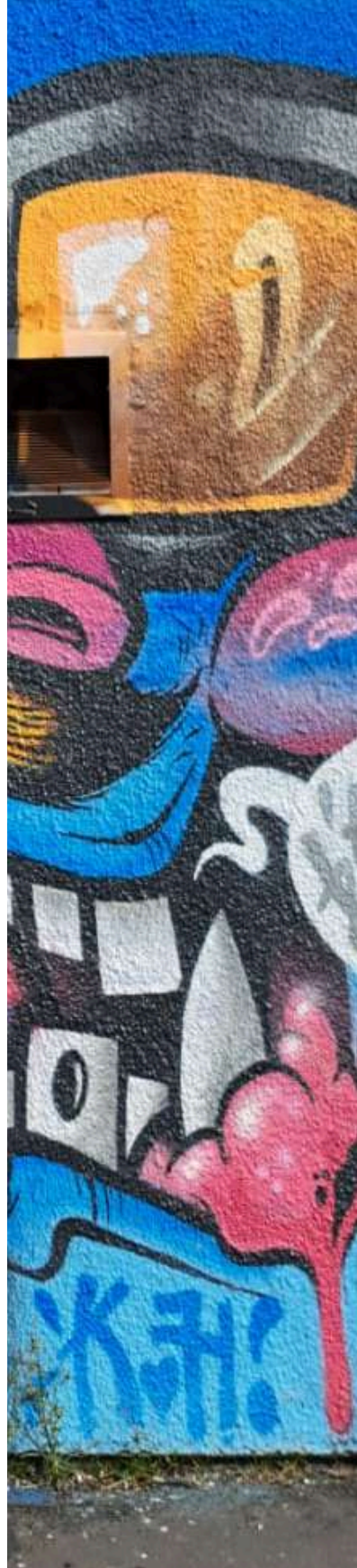


Image: Silver Street,  
Kings Heath.



Will you unlock the potential to reach more customers and benefit from their spending power?  
Improving access is the key to encouraging more people to use local businesses and services. When access is for all, everyone will benefit, including you.





A guide for Kings Heath businesses created by Kings Heath residents with access needs to help you unlock the potential to reach more customers and benefit from their spending power.

Improving access is the key to encouraging more people to use Kings Heath businesses and services.

When access is for all, everyone will benefit.

c. Our Scene CIC 2024.