

# Healthy retail

Hints and tips on accessibility

**Retail  
Order:**  
120/80



[www.ilcuk.org.uk](http://www.ilcuk.org.uk)

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Sales receipt

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Welcome more customers.....	££££s
Small change makes a big difference.....	££££s
Map the customer journey.....	££££s
Keep customers loyal.....	££££s
Increase net profit.....	££££s
Doing the right thing.....	££££s
More than just a shop.....	££££s
<b>Total savings: ££££££s</b>	



UNIVERSITY of  
**STIRLING**



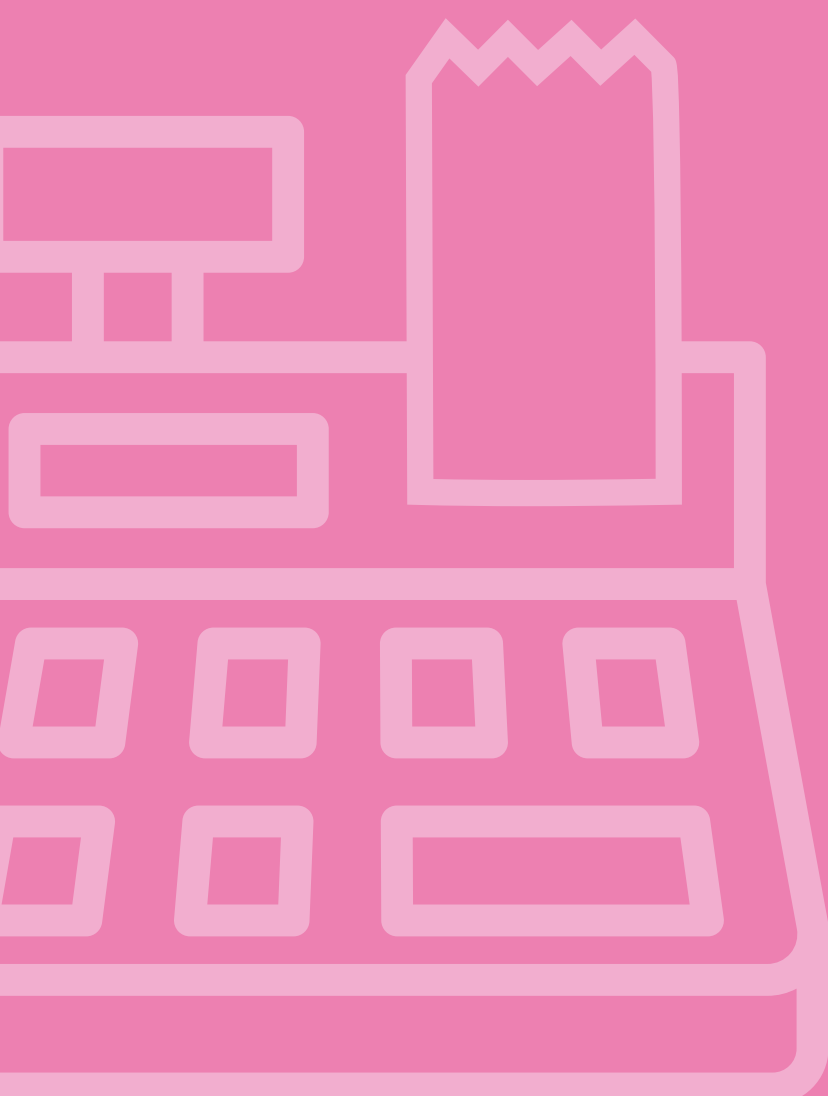
UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge



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Thank you for your custom



## ILC retail guides

This guidance on **Healthy retail: hints and tips on accessibility** should take approximately **6** minutes to read. It gives you the basics on why it's important to make shops accessible, and how both retailers and customers can benefit.

This one of a series of guides created to help retailers understand the barriers older people may face when shopping. They also explain why it makes commercial sense for retailers to focus on inclusivity, to welcome a wider range of customers, and to re-discover and welcome forgotten ones.

Everyone's entitled to a healthy, happy and long life – but the ageing process affects us all differently. Retailers have a key role to play in helping customers and staff live healthier, more active lives. Making shopping environments more accessible supports independence, helps us stay fit, and ensures that people who have a health condition, disability or caring responsibility can maintain access to the products and services they want.

This guide suggests ways to minimise the current barriers faced by these customer groups, with helpful real-life examples and signposts to further information.

ILC has created this series of guides to help transform the way the retail sector sees and serves older consumers. We believe that encouraging inclusive shopping spaces is better for everyone, **no matter our age or ability.**



## The facts

### We're all living longer



**One in every four girls** born today **will live to 100**



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Globally, **one in every six people** will be **over 65** by **2050**



**By 2030** there will be more **retail workers over 50** than **under 30.**

Retail Order: 1237 | 

## UK businesses are ignoring customers

High street shops lose **£267M** every month **not being accessible** for customers with disabilities



**1 IN 4** People with dementia **give up shopping** post diagnosis



Older people make up **47%** of the population **but** **only 12%** of adverts are led by them

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## Older UK households spend more

### Spending more on non-essentials

People aged **50+** are spending more on **non-essentials**, like recreation, culture, transport, and household goods and services.

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Between 2000 and 2018, **spending by older households grew twice as fast** as that of households led by under-50s.



By **2040**, older households could be responsible for **63p of every pound** spent by consumers.



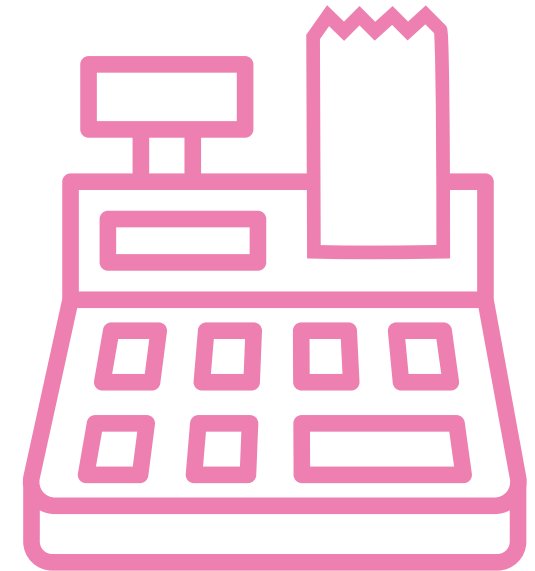
Retail Order: 5691 |



## Why does this matter?

Customers must be able to go shopping to spend. Most shops cater for able-bodied customers with regular cognitive ability. We assume customers can all see and hear well, reach products on higher and lower shelves, reach clothes rails at a standing eye level, fit along narrow aisles, use self-service checkouts, and download multiple phone apps for in-store offers, loyalty schemes and promotions.

People using a mobility aid or a wheelchair, pushing a buggy, caring for someone living with dementia, wearing a hearing device, or living with a cognitive impairment or hidden disability all need consideration when it comes to accessibility. Ignoring the needs of these different customer groups makes them feel unwelcome and less likely to spend.



## Doing the right thing puts money in tills

Doing the right thing actively supports healthy ageing, attracts loyal customers over time, and brings more customers to your business.

Undervaluing certain customer groups will mean that they shop elsewhere. Shops that create an environment which caters to these shoppers' requirements will make them feel valued and more likely to spend.

The award-winning disability advocate and presenter Sophie Morgan reported on social media that the number of steps around Marylebone High Street makes it impossible to access the shops. She said:

**“Big mistake. Huge. I could've been spending my money in your shop, but now I'm not. I'm going elsewhere to shops that are accessible.”**

A 2016 study found that older people chose supermarkets according to their perception of which had **'helpful staff'**. This included a couple who **changed supermarket** due to the toilet being out of order frequently. Another older shopper **preferred** to shop at a supermarket much further away, as they found the staff more friendly – and because stock was moved around less. A paper in 2011 showed that attachment to places increases with age: this includes the **social attachment** linked to the community that uses the space, and having a sense of **belonging**. But this can be disrupted easily; for instance, when shops change the location of familiar products it can transform them into **unfamiliar and inaccessible** places.

### Shops aren't just places to shop

80% of people with dementia list shopping as one of their favourite activities. The UK's 17,000+ rural shops are a crucial lifeline to their local communities – which makes it even more important that they're accessible for all.

## Missing out on older spenders

The over 50s UK market controls over £6 trillion-worth of assets, yet research shows us that most **older people don't use their financial wealth** in retirement; they tend to leave it to family, friends or charitable organisations. They tend to spend on **non-essentials** such as household goods and services – including gadgets, furniture and furnishings, recreation and culture, and transport. They hold **69.7% of all household wealth**, yet could be spending more. If we tackle the barriers that stop people aged 75 and over spending by 2025, **we could add 2% to the UK's GDP by 2040**. Retailers that invest in these areas will reap the rewards. Customers are more likely to be loyal to those who cater to their needs and make them feel more respected.



**“So the customers are really our main, key players.**

**We're here for them so we have to know exactly what they want.”**

New York supermarket retailer

## What can you do?



### Step up

Start by considering **different types of customer journey** for the customer profiles in this guide, including entering, moving around and leaving. If your shop has steps, can you introduce a ramp? These often include promotional decals for shop fronts and can be used to demonstrate an inclusive welcome.

Keeping corridors and aisles free of clutter, stock trolleys and packaging gives clearer access. Similarly, if you avoid washing or polishing the floor during opening hours it will make it easier and safer to get around, especially for those with limited mobility.

Talking Retail has a checklist [to help you assess whether your shops are 'disability smart'](#).

### Best practice

Newcastle Building Society has regular 'slow shopping' sessions for customers living with visible, invisible or intellectual disabilities. These sessions **reduce background noise** (like music) and **always have staff on hand** to help.

### "...what's right for Crouch End may not be right for Huddersfield"

James Daunt, MD of Waterstones and CEO of Barnes & Noble



Some chains allow individual managers to **choose products that are relevant to the local neighbourhood**. A focus on local suppliers, authors and interests is more eco-friendly and reliable and creates a bespoke offer.



### Happy talk

A 2018 report found that shop managers prioritise **customer demand** as one of the key factors influencing product selection, pricing and placement. It could be profitable to consider what products these customer groups would prefer - you could ask them what they'd like to see. One example is [Bite Back](#), a youth movement demanding transparent food labelling and promoting healthier alternatives among shops and suppliers.

### Best practice

The nearest supermarket to Cletwr in Mid Wales used to be **completely inaccessible for non-drivers**, requiring an 18-mile bus ride, while the village had no community amenities at all

In 2013, local volunteers opened the Cletwr Community Shop in a former petrol station, with one paid member of staff. Since then, the business has grown, with 20 paid employees and over 40 volunteers.

The shop and café are also flourishing as a community hub, bringing people together who never previously had the chance to meet, despite living in the same village.





## is it in reach?

We know that retailers may be contractually obliged to promote certain products and not others - and that sometimes they need to promote over-bought stock. As a result, regular brands may be taken off the shop floor or moved at feet or above head level. Consider keeping **product staples in a familiar, accessible place** so customers can always locate them.

### Best practice

The 2,500 garden centres across the UK have enough land to offer generous parking, including coach spaces for organised days out. This **easy accessibility** also extends to automatic doors, wide aisles, entrance ramps, and often being on one level.

They always have more than the minimum legal requirement of toilets, disabled toilets and disabled parking spaces, high chairs and wheelchairs are always available, and catering is often on site. Staff are always on hand to lend experience and advice.

The convenience and welcoming nature of garden centres make them a destination shopping experience. They host lots of events and activities, even weddings – they often have a full-time events manager to co-ordinate this lucrative area. It's not surprising that this **sector's worth £5.6 billion**.



## Spending a penny

Many customers need to be able to find amenities easily, such as toilets, lifts or the customer service desk. It's important to make exits obvious too.

Avoid background music, or keep it low, and use bright, consistent lighting with no glare or shadows. It's vital that customers are able to read signage easily and hear clearly in-store.

Ensure clear signage to and from facilities, like toilets, exits and payment points. Use clear sans serif fonts (which appear less crowded) with no italics or underlining. Make sure that the font size is at least 48 points and has clear contrast with the background. Consider using symbols in case a customer forgets the name of the facility. [The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's guide to accessible retail has great tips for better signs.](#)

Investigating how a space may look to someone with dementia may help you understand their perspective. Reflective surfaces, such as mirrors, can be distracting and patterned flooring can be disorientating, while rugs that contrast with the floor surface may appear to be holes in the floor.

The Alzheimer's Society offers a [Dementia-Friendly Retail Guide](#), along with other guides.



## Best practice

The University of Stirling has an award-winning dementia services development centre, where researchers, architects, academics and health and social care professionals advise industry sectors and inform government policies. The Centre offers a freely available, low-cost tool to help shops and businesses become dementia-inclusive, with free self-certification.

### “Their customers have become their best commercial”

CBS News reporting on Kaiser's, Germany

The German supermarket chain Kaiser's redesigned their Berlin store and offering in 2007 to attract a wider range of customer groups. This wasn't a social welfare initiative but a specific drive to increase sales. The changes to their “generation store” included: better lighting and wider aisles; **re-sized portions for smaller households**; in-store relaxation zones with comfortable chairs; and lighter, stronger shopping trolleys with magnifying glasses attached to the handles, as well as others attached to shop shelving. After the relaunch, revenue went up by **30%**.

These guides were written by Ailsa Forbes, Retail Impact Fellow at the ILC.

The Retail Impact project is supported by the [University of Stirling](#) and [UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\)](#) as part of the UK Government's Healthy Ageing Challenge.

### The International Longevity Centre UK (ILC)

The ILC is the UK's specialist think tank on the impact of longevity on society, and what happens next. We want a society that works for everyone, regardless of their age.

We've created an online resource with further information on the ILC's project to transform how the retail sector sees and serves older consumers, as well as all the references for the data contained in this guide. You can find this and more at: [healthyretail.org](https://healthyretail.org)

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## About ILC

The International Longevity Centre UK (ILC) is the UK's specialist think tank on the impact of longevity on society. The ILC was established in 1997, as one of the founder members of the International Longevity Centre Global Alliance, an international network on longevity. We have unrivalled expertise in demographic change, ageing and longevity. We use this expertise to highlight the impact of ageing on society, working with experts, policy makers and practitioners to provoke conversations and pioneer solutions for a society where everyone can thrive, regardless of age.



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