



The Women and Equalities Committee

Making products and services accessible to disabled people

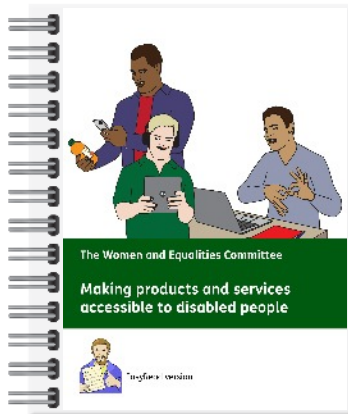
What you told the Women and Equalities Committee and what the government will do next



EasyRead version



In 2023 the Women and Equalities Committee checked the accessibility of services and products to disabled people.



The committee wrote a report and sent it to us (the Government).



The committee's report talked about 3 things:

1. Accessibility of private business websites and how Disability and Access Ambassadors can help.



2. Flat bank cards and inaccessible automatic teller machines.



3. Accessible food packaging.



The committee made some recommendations for change.

Recommendations are ideas about how we can make things work better.



We read the recommendations and wrote our replies in this document.

Accessibility of private business websites and how Disability and Access Ambassadors can help



What the committee told us

Products and services should be **inclusive**.

Inclusive means making products and services that give people with disabilities the same access as everyone else.

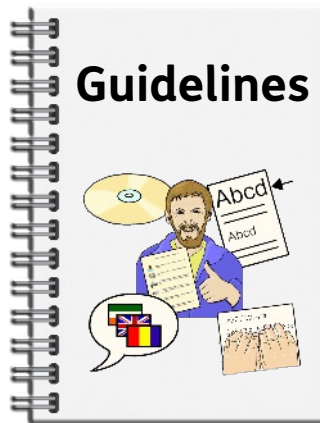


Many private businesses do not think about the needs of disabled people who use their products and services.

The committee recommended



The Government should ask Disability Access Ambassadors to talk with private businesses about ways to be more inclusive so disabled people can access their products and services.



Then the Government should work with different businesses to publish guides on how to do this well.

Our reply

Disability Access Ambassadors are also called DAAs.

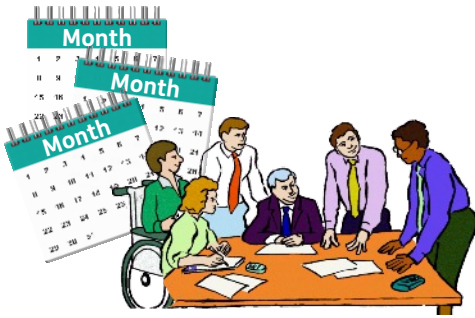
DAAs are 20 senior business leaders from different business areas.



- They look at examples of where products and services are not accessible to disabled people in their area.



- Then they encourage improvements in the accessibility and quality of products and services.



- DAAs meet the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work every 3 months.



- DAAs also talk with junior ministers of other government departments called Ministerial Disability Champions.



- Disability Access Ambassadors use their skills to understand barriers to people with disabilities and look for practical ways to include disabled people.



Examples of how DAAs work

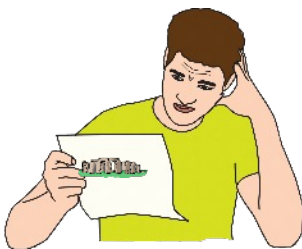
- The DAA for Aviation helped the Department for Transport set up ways for neurodivergent people to avoid the airport's Duty Free section.



- The DAA for Banking wrote a report about including d/Deaf people in banking and credit.



- The DAA for Recruitment looked at practical ways to include people with disability in the workforce.



- The Heritage DAA made a guide for helping tourists with dementia.



- The University DAA wrote a report about ways to support disabled university students.



- The Aviation DAA made a film to show baggage handlers how to care for powered wheelchairs in air travel.



- The DAA for the Built Environment looked at ways to design buildings for people who are neurodiverse.



- The Tourism DAA made a toolkit about making accessible buildings, employing disabled people and making information accessible.

Other things we will do

We are still working on other ideas in the Disability Action Plan that we published in February 2024:



- check if training schemes to help people to understand the needs of people with disabilities are working



- check if disabled people know their rights and how to speak up about their rights



- share our research on the accessibility of private sector products and services.



Another committee recommendation

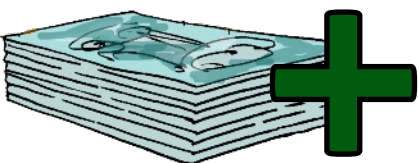
The Government should set up an Extra Costs Taskforce by summer 2024.

Our reply

We will set up the Taskforce, the Disability Unit will bring together:



- disabled people
- regulators
- businesses.



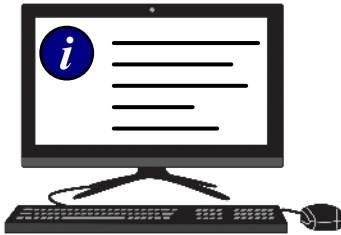
The Taskforce will look at the extra costs faced by disabled people.

Website accessibility



What the committee told us
Disabled people go online for:

- services
- information
- social networking.



There are rules that say national and local government organisations must make their websites and applications accessible to everyone.



But private businesses do not have to follow the same rules as national and local government.



Committee recommendations

The Women and Equalities Committee asked us to make some laws that say all websites that provide essential products and services must be accessible.

To make these laws the committee thinks the Government should work with:



- businesses
- its Disability and Access Ambassadors
- and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs).

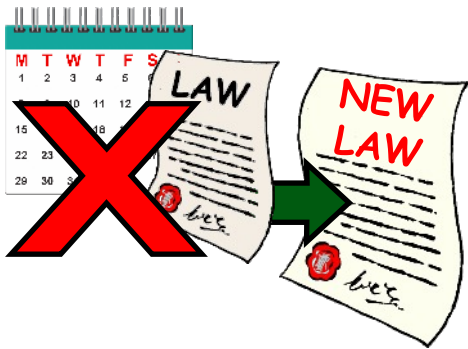


The committee wants us to say how we are going in 6 months.



Our reply

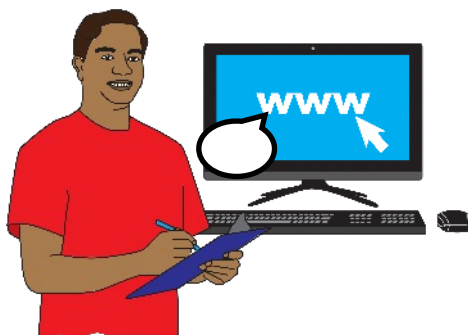
We know it is important for everyone to have access to online information and services.



There is no time left in this Parliament to change the law to force businesses to make their website more accessible.



Our Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has set up a group across the government to look at how online information and services exclude people with disabilities.



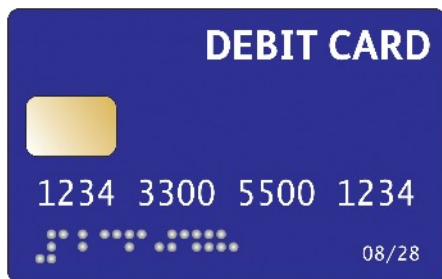
We are also checking the accessibility of government websites.

Bank cards and ATMs

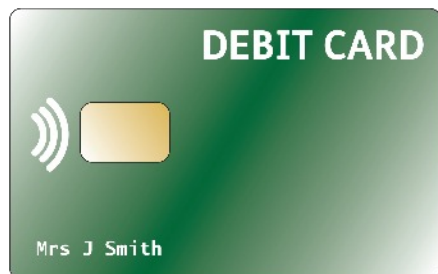


What the committee told us

Bank cards are debit and credit cards.



Some have raised dots or notches for blind and partially sighted people.



But many cards are now completely flat.



Some ATMs do not have access for a wheelchair or they are broken.

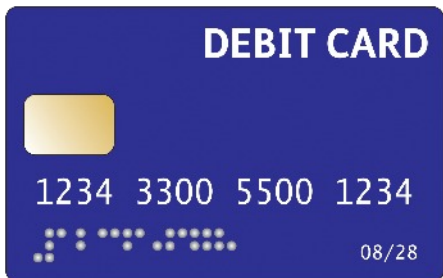
Committee recommendations



The committee wants the Financial Conduct Authority to work with the banking sector and organisations such as the Royal Institute of Blind People to make:



- flat bank cards that are accessible to disabled people. The cards need clear design, colours and contrast that are easy to read and large text



- make embossed cards for people who ask for them. Embossed cards have bumps on them to help blind people know what they are handling.



ATMs or cash points should be:

- tested for accessibility by disabled people



- regularly checked to see if their accessible features are in working order.

Our reply



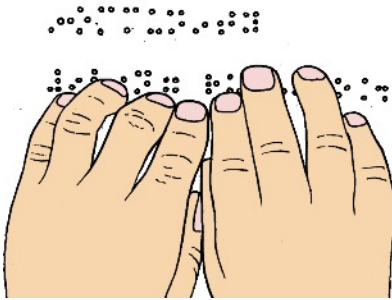
We know banking and payments services must be accessible for those who are blind and partially sighted.



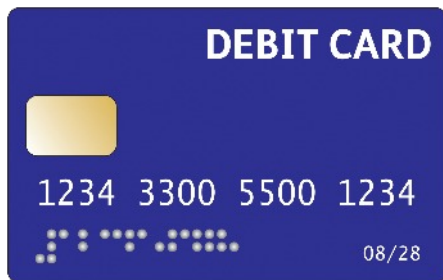
The law says banks and card machine makers must make **reasonable adjustments** in the way they deliver their services to support people with visual impairments.

Reasonable adjustment means they must treat people fairly and change how they do things to help you with your disability.

The financial services industry has worked with the Royal National Institute for Blind People to:



- make payment services more accessible



- make payment cards usable for visually impaired people through dot and notch features

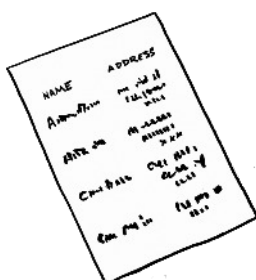


- provide **talking ATMs**

Talking ATMs can be used with headphones and give the customer audio instructions



- write a guide about electronic point-of-sale payment devices for visually impaired individuals



- publish a list of vendors who produce approved devices.

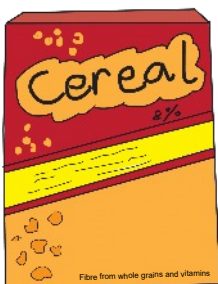
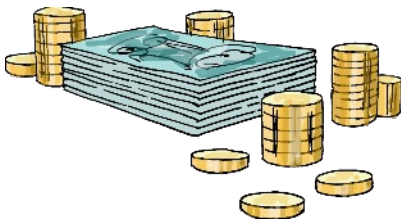
Accessible food packaging



What the committee told us

Labels on food tell you:

- how healthy the food is
- how to cook the food
- if there are any ingredients you may be allergic to
- the price.



Labels are sometimes not accessible.



Committee recommendations

They want the Government to check food labelling rules to make sure important information is accessible.

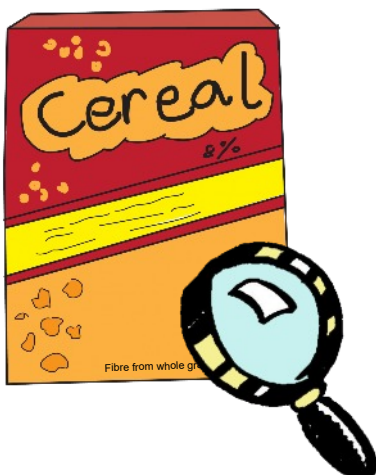


They want the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to explore new and accessible ways to show information about the nutrition, health and pricing information of food.



Our reply

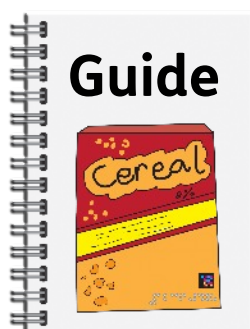
We know information on food labels must be clear to read.



But food packages can be small so the labels are small. People with low vision find small labels hard to read.



We know that there are now mobile device apps and QR codes that can help consumers with visual impairments access information on the label.



We are writing a guide with the Codex Alimentarius Commission on using technology to provide information on food.



We need to look carefully at how new labelling methods will affect the packaging and cost of food products.



Some shops are making food labels in formats that suit people with visual impairments. We are interested in seeing how these trials go.



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