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|  | Team | Equality and Diversity |
| Contact | Ann Webster |
| Our ref |  |
| All Derby Stores | Email | ann.webster@derby.gov.uk |
| Tel | 01332 643722 |
| Fax |  |
| Mobile | 07812301144 |
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Hello Store Managers

**Disabled people and social distancing procedures**

It’s so good to see as many stores as possible are now starting to open as we move into a ‘new normal’ phase of shopping, drinking and eating.

I know you want to make it the best experience as you can for all your customers, but here are just a few guidelines to help with making access better for your disabled customers. The Government guidance makes it clear that the Equality Act still applies, so any social distancing measures must be worked through so that access is not compromised for disabled people…

* Please don’t use disabled people’s blue badge bays for queues for social distancing in your car park, unless you are creating some replacement bays nearby – remember these are reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act and are very much needed.
* Allocate a team member as a Queue Manager so issues around supporting disabled customers can be dealt with quickly and with dignity.
* You can’t always tell if someone is a disabled person as many people have hidden impairments - so if someone comes to you as Queue Manager and says they cannot queue, due to the nature of their impairment, then please respect this and let them go to the front. Some disabled people carry an Access Card, but not all do. Be proactive and if you see other disabled people in the queue, please ask them if they need to go to the front. This is a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act.
* Some stores are allowing only one customer in at a time, but if a disabled customer needs to go in with a carer or personal assistant then please let the two of them in. Again, if they have an Access Card, this will indicate they need a carer.
* Some one-way systems can be difficult for visually impaired people and others who struggle to walk far – so if you have a one-way system that is through one door and out another on a completely different road, then make adjustments to allow that customer to go out the quicker route making sure that they still social distance though.
* Have clear signs and symbols/photographs so that Deaf people know what’s going on. And if you are wearing a mask, take it off while you are communicating with a Deaf person, but make sure you keep a social distance.
* Please try not to clutter your store – we know one-way systems are difficult but make the route wide enough for wheelchair users and mobility scooter users. You also need to keep your aisles clear for visually impaired people too.
* Guide dogs are trained to guide their owners to store doors, so will go straight there and not queue, so please let them in. Also, put up a notice in your store asking customers to respect social distancing if they see a visually impaired customer– it’s easier for sighted people to social distance than it is for visually impaired customers.

We hope these few guidelines help, but please contact me if you need any help or want to chat though a situation you have found yourself in - I’m always happy to help you. All these guidelines are reasonable adjustments that you are expected to make under the Equality Act.

Best wishes

**Ann Webster**

Ann Webster

Lead on Equality and Diversity