

Healthy retail

Hints and tips for a healthy retail environment

Retail Order:

8.5-10



healthyretail.org

Sales receipt

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
Total savings: ££££££s	



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STIRLING

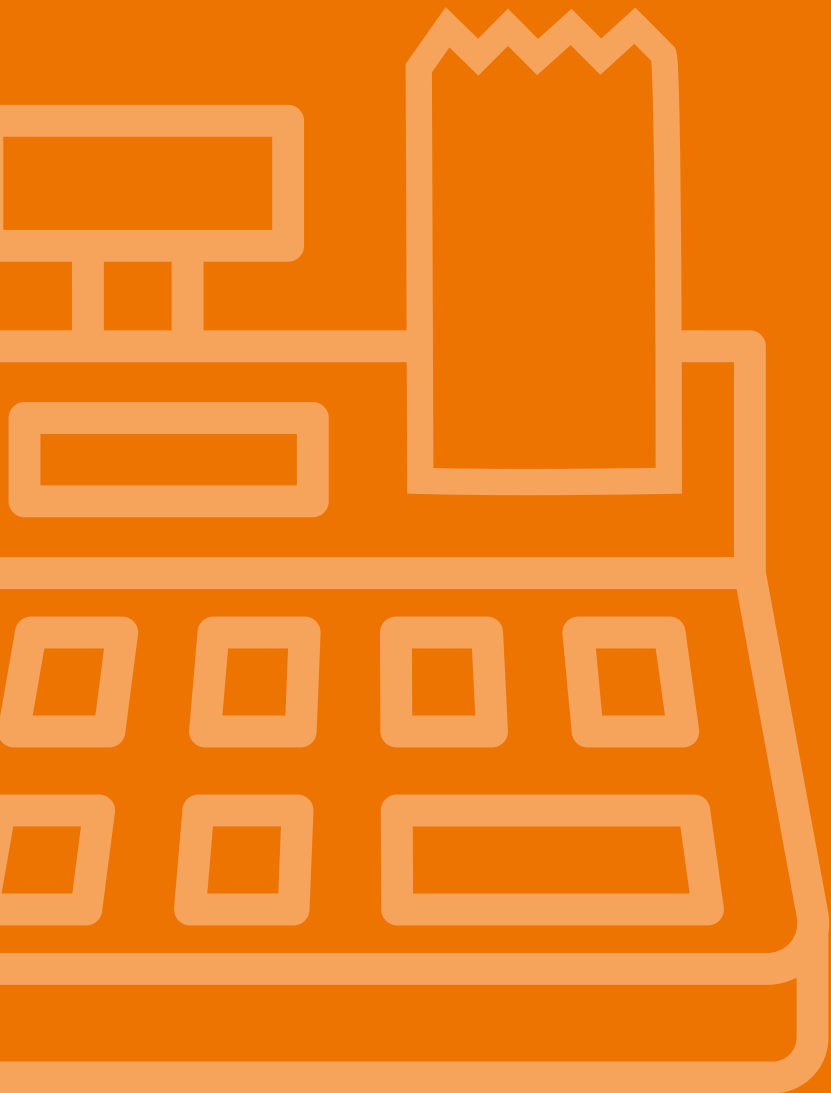


UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge



Delivered by
Innovate UK
and ESRC

Thank you for your custom



ILC retail guides

This guidance on **Healthy retail: hints and tips for a healthy retail environment should** take approximately **6** minutes to read. It gives you the basics on why it's important to keep our high streets healthy and accessible, and how everyone can benefit: customers, workers and retailers.

We've created these guides to help retailers understand how they can respond to an ageing population, and why being inclusive makes commercial sense. Welcoming a wider range of customers and workers opens up new opportunities for businesses.

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 enabling customers and staff to live healthier, more active later 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.

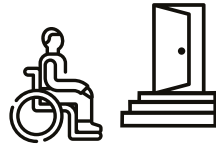
This guide suggests ways to minimise the current barriers that older people, those with buggies and small children, and those with limited mobility or impaired vision may face when using the high street. It also makes suggestions for ways to improve the local shopping environment, with helpful real-life examples and signposts for further information.

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

The facts

Not going out?

78% of disabled customers in the UK find it hard to enter shops and shopping centres, while 66% find this with pubs, bars, restaurants and cafés



Thank you for your custom



69% of customers with dementia stop going to the cinema due to lack of confidence



28% of customers with a hidden disability say their biggest challenge when shopping is standing for long periods

Retail Order: 1237 | 

Tricky transport



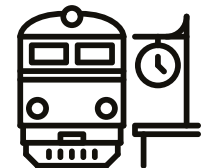
57% of UK drivers (almost 24 million) say they'd use their cars less if public transport was better

Retail Order: 1237 | 

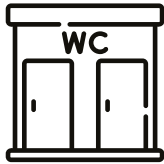
Bus journey numbers went **down 12%** in Scotland over the last five years



18 out of 23 rail companies reported "Pre-booked assistance not provided at rail stations" as a top five accessibility complaint in 2020



Access issues



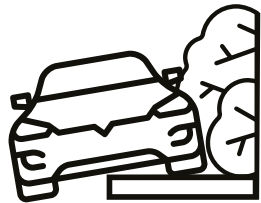
The UK has only **1 public toilet** for every **833 people**

“The anxiety relating to incontinence was tearing me apart, so I stopped going out.”

Steve Baughan, prostate cancer survivor



UK councils saw **10,200 claims for trips and slips** on pavements in 2018



70% of obstacles that blind and partially sighted people have collided with are **cars parked on pavements**

Retail Order: 1237 | 

Why does this matter?

“Going to the shops” isn’t just about getting essentials. It’s a pastime that provides us with physical and mental exercise, helps us socialise, and lets us support the local economy.

Along the way, we can see and use local natural amenities, like parks, green spaces, lakes and rivers, libraries, museums and galleries, leisure centres, post offices and cafés, all of which contribute to a vibrant neighbourly community – and many of which are free.

Our high streets are culturally and commercially important to our communities and neighbourhoods.

Retail is changing

The age profiles of our communities are changing – with rural and coastal communities ageing more quickly than urban ones. Family structures are changing. We’re all living longer, more people are living alone in middle and older age, and younger people are renting for longer with parents and carers to save for mortgages.

Proactively adapting to these changes can help you stay relevant as a retailer – and continue to serve the changing needs of your local community.

Understanding how your local community and customer base is evolving, and ensuring you evolve with them can help you keep making sales.



High streets can contribute to our wellbeing

In the UK, over 2.5 million women and 1.5 million men aged 65 to 74 now live alone. As we get older, our lives are more affected by our physical boundaries and social environments.

The [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) talked to older people about what makes for a 'good life' in old age. They attached great value to 'inter-dependence': this included being part of a community where people look out for each other; a determination not to be a burden, especially on close family; and an emphasis on mutual help and reciprocal relationships. Maintaining involvement in their neighbourhood by going to the shops can facilitate and encourage inter-dependence .

"The only day I leave the house is Wednesday, when I go to the shops with Age UK Kensington and Chelsea. It's great to meet other shoppers. Everyone's very friendly and you always feel welcome to the group."

A user of Age UK's shopping service in 2012

Best practice

The University of Surrey is running a research project called [Hospitality Connect](#), as part of the Government's Healthy Ageing Challenge. This has identified low-cost and no-cost opportunities for the hospitality sector to become more inclusive. These came out of workshops with older people, and include: the option of smaller portions; offering large-font menus; ensuring space for wheelchairs to pass between tables; and catering for special dietary requirements. Great ideas at a minimal cost.

Opportunity knocks

Only 262 independent retail and leisure outlets opened in the UK in 2022 – compared to 2,157 in 2021. These figures reflect the level of Government support available during the COVID-19 pandemic – and point to an opportunity for the Government to help the independent sector thrive again in the future.

[Charity Super.Mkt](#) is the brainchild of Wayne Hemmingway, founder of British fashion label Red or Dead, and Maria Chenowith, CEO of sustainable clothing charity Traid. It brings the UK's best charity retailers under one roof – and currently has pop-up stores in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bristol and Kent – with more happening all the time.

Government support to help small shops unite and use empty retail space in a similar way could mean a significant boost for the economy. For instance, 71% of stores in the convenience sector are independent - and sales at these independents are predicted to be worth over £48 billion by 2025.

What can you do?



Think accessibly

Being aware of the areas around our shops can help make our high streets more accessible and inclusive – contributing to a more healthy retail environment.

Consider the positioning of retail street furniture like advertising 'A' boards, café tables and chairs, roped off areas and shop planters. You can also ask delivery vans to avoid parking on pavements.

mySociety is a non-profit group that uses online tech to encourage citizens in civic participation. Customers, residents and retailers can all use the mySociety tool [Fix My Street](#) to report problems like faulty water fountains, overflowing rubbish bins or hedges blocking pavements.

[Wheelmap.org](#) invites users to rate wheelchair accessibility of public places, hospitality venues, museums and attractions, and shops and businesses, using a simple traffic light system. Wheelmap also supports campaigns for better access – so using Wheelmap PRO to create your own app could demonstrate your commitment to inclusivity.



Provide the right “facilities”

Toilets are key to making high streets more inclusive – and not just for older people. The [Great British Public Toilet Map](#) exists because many of us need to know where to go!

If you have a customer toilet, consider making it available to all, with no purchase necessary. You may find that word spreads, creating goodwill among customers.

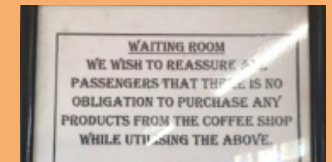
Another tick on the inclusivity list is seating. Offering a place to rest can be a big bonus for older shoppers, as well as those with disabilities.

Best practice

Anchor is a non-profit provider of housing and care for people in later life. When it found that 60% of older people are concerned about limited seating when shopping, including inside shops, the organisation created an awareness campaign utilising social media: Standing Up 4 Sitting Down #su4sd

Best practice

Since 2015, Nottinghamshire County Council's ["Take a seat" initiative](#) has encouraged local shops to offer a seat, toilet facilities and a drink to older people. It offers participants a branded folding chair and window sticker – and includes them in its online directory. It's based on previous initiatives in New York and Greater Manchester.





Club together

[Business Improvement Districts \(BIDs\)](#) are business-led and business funded bodies formed for five years to improve a defined commercial area, via an additional levy charged on all business rate payers in the area. They allow local authorities to work with business communities. Projects might include extra security 'rangers' on patrol, street cleaning schemes, improving shop fronts, free bus travel, and supplying additional free parking for shoppers.

One of the UK's 300+ BIDs is Positively Putney in southwest London. Their improvement projects include Putney in the Past, which displays local and historical pictures in the shopfronts of empty retail units.

You can also club together with other shops more informally. Discounted shopping evenings and special shopping events for repeat customers may encourage others into your shop too. [My Virtual Neighbourhood](#) is a directory of independent shops you can join for free.



Or you can take some inspiration from this [list of tips from independent retailers](#), outlining how they've built loyal customer bases.

[Scotland Loves Local](#) is a free scheme that Scottish retailers can join. There's a free shop directory and an annual awards event, with categories that include Enterprising Communities, Climate and Net Zero Town, and High Street Hero. Plus customers can buy gift cards to use in participating shops.



Embrace new ways of thinking

Some local authorities are working with business to adapt to changing demographics and serve their communities better. The World Health Organization (WHO) published their guide to [Global age-friendly cities](#) in 2007 – by 2012 the UK had a network of Age-Friendly Communities, supported by the Centre for Ageing Better, which now covers almost 25 million people.

Best practice

The [Dementia Space](#) is a pop-up at the historic Victorian Grainger Market, funded by a partnership between Newcastle City Council and local organisations since 2019. The space offers information and advice, learning sessions, and regular activities for those with and without dementia. Customers can pop in while they do their shopping. It doubles as a dementia awareness training centre for organisations like the local police. It's part of Newcastle's commitment to the Alzheimer's Society's [dementia-friendly communities programme](#).

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council has bought three floors of the Victoria Shopping Centre to create a 'hybrid high street' containing civic offices, along with retailers and health services like an NHS Blood Centre. The council estimates that 300-400 people will visit the centre each day, boosting businesses and centralising services.



Transform transport

Transportation to and from the shops is a key factor that helps older people maintain their independence.

Many councils run 'dial-a-ride' schemes in partnership with other organisations, including the [Community Transport Association \(CTA\)](#). The CTA provides support to charities nationwide, helping them deliver inclusive, accessible transport for older people and others.

Best practice

The Ron Short Centre is a Guernsey-based charity, part-funded by the [Channel Islands Co-op](#) stores. [The charity provides specially adapted minibuses](#) that take older people to the shops twice a week, all year round. This eases the financial burden on individuals of running and maintaining cars and creates a sociable outing.

The Centre for Cities offers evidence-based policy recommendations for improving city and town economies to national and local governments. One of their key campaigns relates to [improving urban bus transport – so better buses could be good for everyone](#).

Alternative forms of transport include walking, which of course also offers health benefits. [Living Streets](#) is a charity that promotes everyday walking, not just for health but also for improving the "liveability" of neighbourhoods and combating loneliness and isolation.



Last orders?

Shops or pubs can often act as a community hub in villages with few other amenities – but this can be challenging for independent retailers. Rural community charity [the Plunkett Foundation](#) and the [Campaign for Real Ale \(CAMRA\)](#) both support keeping pubs open. The Plunkett Foundation offers free advice on how communities can establish and run successful community businesses.

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.

We've put all the information about this ILC project online. You'll find more details about the information in this guide, along with further advice and the references for all our facts and stats.

It's all at: healthyretail.org

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About the 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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