

Secret Shopper Accessibility Report



W.H.Smith, Stirling - Accessibility.

On 2nd October 2008 at 5:15pm, Dawn Marie McIlwraith and I visited the above shop & Post office in order to determine its accessibility for users.

W.H.Smith can be accessed from ground floor level in the Thistle shopping centre, Stirling. It is fully carpeted and has reasonably wide aisles. This allows for ample manoeuvring, whether ambulant, pushing a pram, using walking aids or wheelchair bound.

Our aim in this shop was to purchase a few items in order to gauge if there were any problems performing what may seem such a simple task.

When shopping from the use of a wheelchair, one of the main obstacles is not being able to reach for items on display, as many can be out of reach.

On this occasion I could not reach a card I wished to buy, so I asked Dawn to pass this down to me. In an ideal world I would love to have reached this for myself. I did learn that if I had not had someone with me, I would have been able to ask a member of staff, who showed willing to assist. This was demonstrated at the counter where I could not reach the chip & pin and the assistant detached it from the pod and handed it down to me.

Our next task was to proceed to the Post office, which was accessed via a lift at the rear of the shop. The lift button was at an ideal height from a wheelchair user perspective. It also had Braille on the call button and was voice active. The approach entering and exiting the lift had a non-slip floor grip covering. The upstairs shop area was fully carpeted in the same fashion as downstairs.

The Post office area was very well set out – the flooring for this section was laminated but was not slippery. The queuing area was zig-zag, however, when I spoke to a staff member, I was assured wheelchair users could come to the right hand side and make themselves known to staff, who would ‘skip’ them into queue and they would be served directly. There is a high counter at the till but there is a lower shelf for writing.

I did inform the till assistant that we were carrying out an accessibility exercise. She was very helpful and forthcoming in any questions that we wished to ask.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that the Post Office within WH Smith, Stirling is accessible and user friendly and although it was a quiet period whilst we were there, I believe that the set-out of the shop and post office provides wide enough aisles and accessibility for all users. I also believe that if someone did require assistance that this would be done with no qualms.

Jean O’Hare
Dawn Marie McIlwraith