

Supporting All Customers

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Rural Shops

There are **17,261** rural convenience stores in mainland UK

Rural convenience stores in mainland UK provide over

138,000 jobs

Over the last year, rural convenience stores have invested

£195m in their businesses

Achieved **£15.8bn**
in sales

Contributed **£3.5bn**
in GVA

How We Operate

79%* of rural convenience stores are **independently owned**



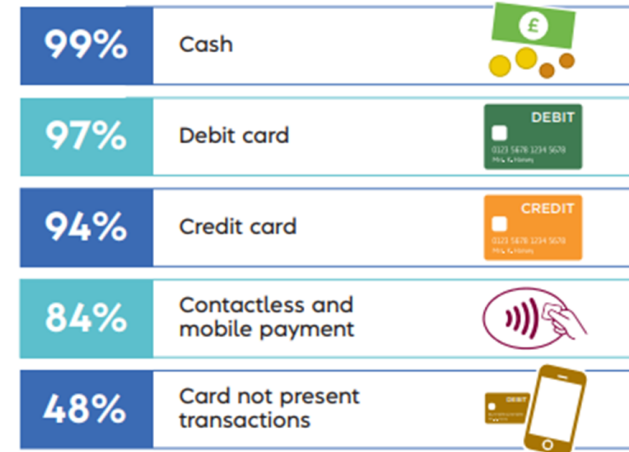
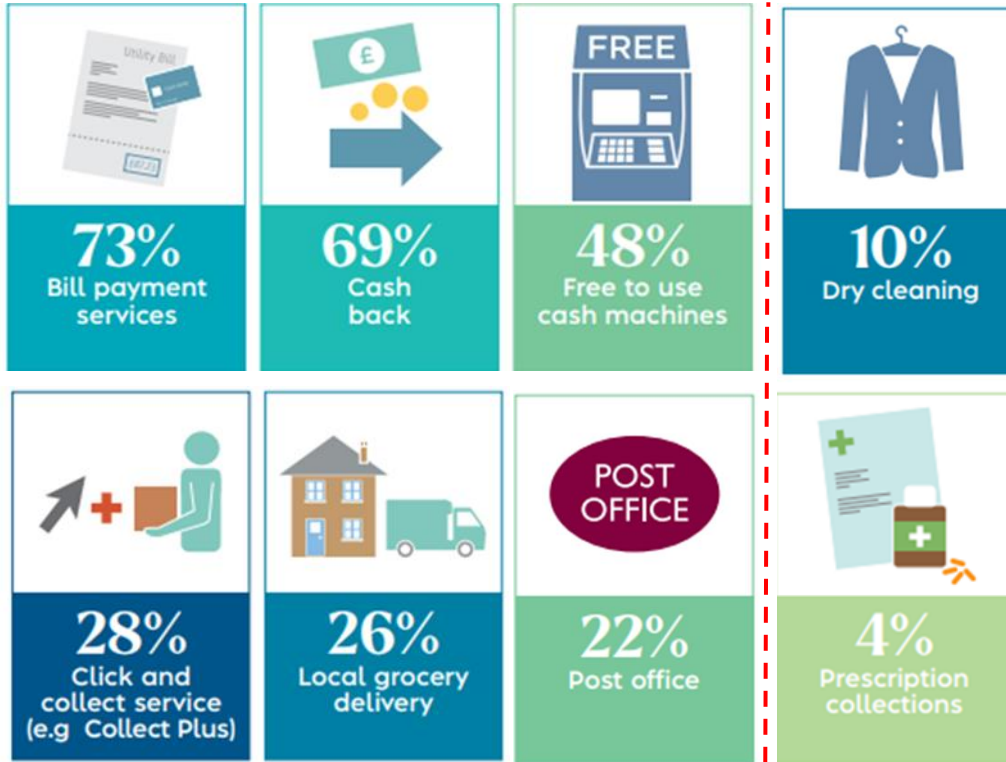
28% inherited family business

72% started business

Source: ACS/Lumina 2020



What's In Store



Who We Serve

Customer's relationship with convenience store colleagues



17% of customers know the people running and working in their local shop very well

32% of customers know the people running and working in their local shop quite well

33% of customers don't know the people running and working in their local shop well, but will occasionally have a conversation

18% of customers don't know the people running and working in their local shop and don't interact with them

How customers get to store



The average rural customer visits their local store **2.5** times per week



Where We Trade

49%

Isolated store No other retail/service businesses close by



36%

Located on a small parade Up to five retail/service businesses close by

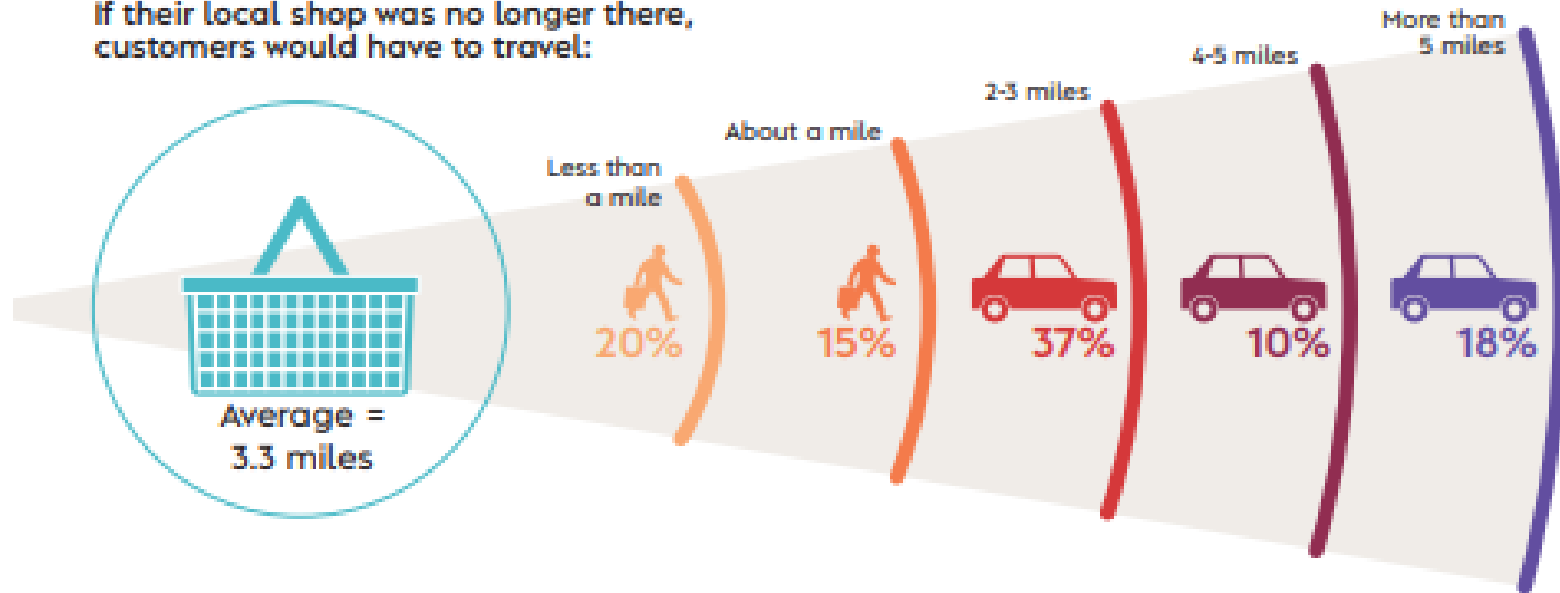


15%

Located on a larger parade or village centre More than five retail/service businesses close by



If their local shop was no longer there, customers would have to travel:



Community Barometer

Most positive impact on the local area



84% of **independent** retailers engaged in some form of community activity in the past year

Everyone Welcome Guide

- Brand benefits
 - Community reputation
 - Better customer experience (as standard)
- Financial benefits
 - Limited financial outlay
 - Accessing a growing market (an accessibility bonus)
- Legal benefits
 - Equality Act 2010

ACS | best practice

Everyone welcome: how to make your store inclusive for all

Everyday activities like shopping can present challenges for some customers. This guidance outlines some of the ways in which you can make sure your store is inclusive for all customers.

An ACS advice guide for retailers www.acs.org.uk

Equality Act 2010



The Equality Act 2010

- Direct & indirect discrimination
- An anticipatory duty on businesses
- Service providers must make **'reasonable adjustments'** to premises and procedures that place a disabled person at a **'significant disadvantage'**
- What is reasonable? Cost, practicability, effectiveness, disruption, resources available.

Supporting Customers

- General principles
- Communicating with customers
- Sight loss
- Hearing loss
- Learning disabilities
- Wheelchair users
- Sticks and walking frames
- Disfigurement
- More help for customers...



Supporting customers

ACS | the voice of local shops

Accommodating the needs of customers does not necessarily need to be an expensive process. While accessibility and induction loops are important, many of the tips outlined in this guide do not require any investment but can still have a huge impact in improving your customers' experience.

This illustration sets out some of the main areas that a convenience store could address to support and communicate with customers. Which of these can you implement in your own store? Remember that it is not a definitive list and additional information will be available online.

You can download a larger version of this store map here: acs.org.uk/advice

Lighting

Ensure entrances are well-lit and that lighting throughout the store is consistent and natural where possible. Minimise shadows, glares and pools of light and avoid excessive lighting which can cause sensory overload. This will reduce the challenges for people who have challenges with perception, such as people living with dementia.

Move to the front of high counters

If you need to speak with someone in a wheelchair for more than a few moments, it is advisable to move to the front of any high counters in-store.

Lower counters

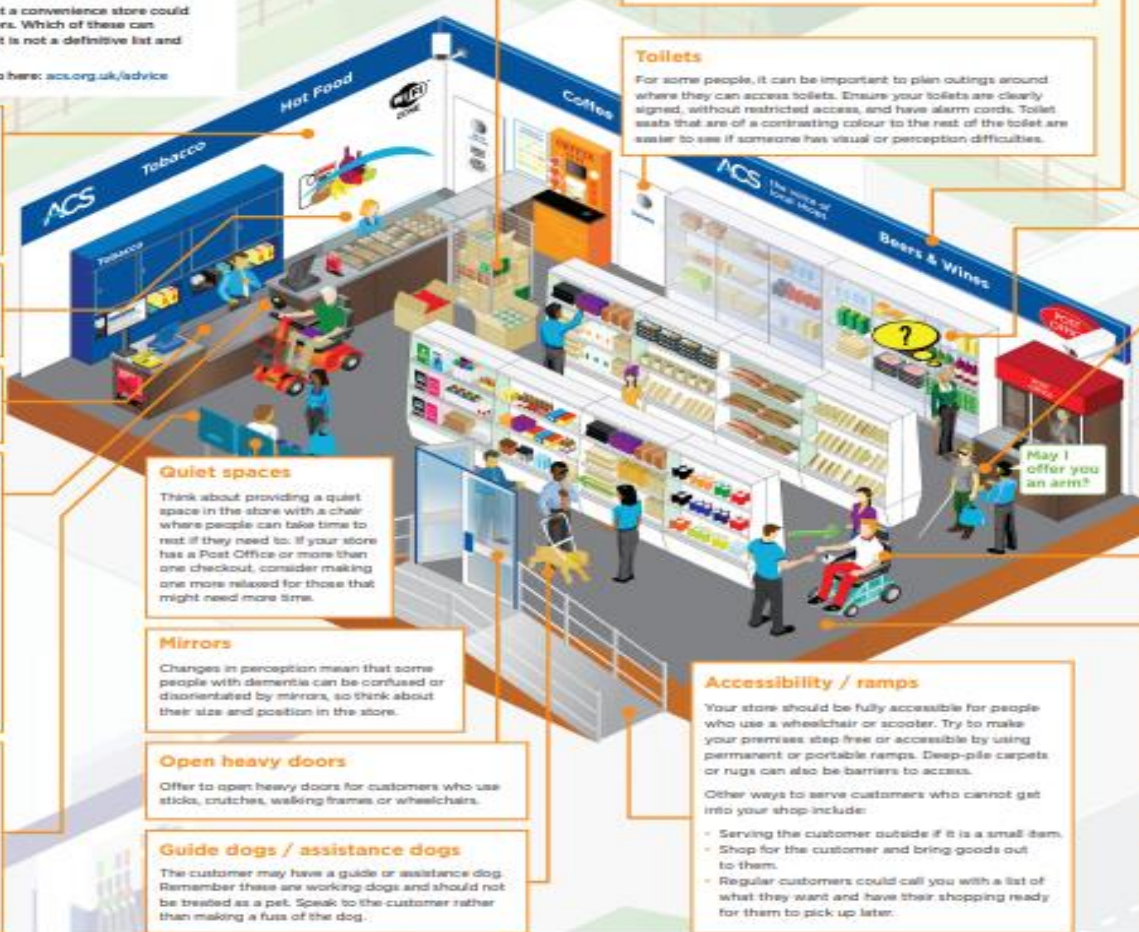
Lower counters will allow you to serve customers using wheelchairs more easily.

Making payment simple

- Tell the customer clearly how much their items cost and ask the customer how they want to pay.
- Remember to tell the customers about any offers or special promotions.
- If a customer seems to be struggling to count out their money, you can help them by counting their change out with them. It can also be helpful to have a coin recognition chart next to the till.
- Have card machines that the customer can pick up so that if necessary they can hold it close to see the numbers as they enter their PIN.
- Some customers may struggle to remember their PIN. You can help by offering payment by chip and signature or providing a contactless payment option. Make sure your customers know you have these options.

Seating

People who use walking aids may find it hard to use their hands when standing up, for example to count out money. Offer a seat if you can and offer to open doors. If a customer has difficulty walking be prepared to offer a more personalised service. Find a place for the customer to sit down and bring goods directly to them. Some customers with non-visible conditions, such as dementia or anxiety, may also appreciate having seating available to give them a moment to rest.



Remove obstructions

Try to keep aisles free from obstacles and ensure furniture does not restrict access. This will aid customers' navigation in-store, such as those using wheelchairs or scooters and people who have difficulty walking.

Toilets

For some people, it can be important to plan outings around where they can access toilets. Ensure your toilets are clearly signed, without restricted access, and have alarm cords. Toilet seats that are of a contrasting colour to the rest of the toilet are easier to see if someone has visual or perception difficulties.

Signage

Clear signage will help all your customers navigate around your store but make a big difference to those with dementia. Ensure clear signage to and from store facilities, including toilets, exits and payment points. Make sure signage is at least 40 point size, there is a good contrast between the words and the background and consider using images which could help if someone forgets what an object is called.

Dementia

Customers may become distressed and not know where they are or why, for example those with dementia. Reassure them and allow them to sit down somewhere quiet. Tell the customer where they are and ask if they know what they want. People with dyslexia or autism, may also require guidance.

Assisting customers with sight loss

- Ask the customer how you can help.
- Remember to talk and speak clearly.
- Offer an arm to guide the customer to their requested location in-store.

Helping wheelchair users

- Avoid leaning on a wheelchair. This is the equivalent of leaning or hanging onto a person.
- Remember to speak to the wheelchair user, not their companion unless instructed otherwise.
- A wheelchair is a user's personal space. Never push a wheelchair without the user's consent, or move crutches, canes or walking frames without the user's consent.

Flooring

Changes in floor surfaces can cause some confusion for people with perceptual problems. Where possible avoid reflective flooring, which can look like water, and patterned flooring, which may be perceived as obstacles. Black mats in front of a door can resemble a hole which can cause distress so avoid using where possible or ensure the mat is the same colour as the rest of the floor. When the floor is black, a coloured rug/runner can be helpful.

Noise

Think about the right volume for music you are playing, and whether to vary this at different times to reflect different customer profiles during the day.

Quiet spaces

Think about providing a quiet space in the store with a chair where people can take time to rest if they need to. If your store has a Post Office or more than one checkout, consider making one more relaxed for those that might need more time.

Mirrors

Changes in perception mean that some people with dementia can be confused or disorientated by mirrors, so think about their size and position in the store.

Open heavy doors

Offer to open heavy doors for customers who use sticks, crutches, walking frames or wheelchairs.

Guide dogs / assistance dogs

The customer may have a guide or assistance dog. Remember these are working dogs and should not be treated as a pet. Speak to the customer rather than making a fuss of the dog.

Accessibility / ramps

Your store should be fully accessible for people who use a wheelchair or scooter. Try to make your premises step free or accessible by using permanent or portable ramps. Deep-pile carpets or rugs can also be barriers to access.

Other ways to serve customers who cannot get into your shop include:

- Serving the customer outside if it is a small item.
- Shop for the customer and bring goods out to them.
- Regular customers could call you with a list of what they want and have their shopping ready for them to pick up later.

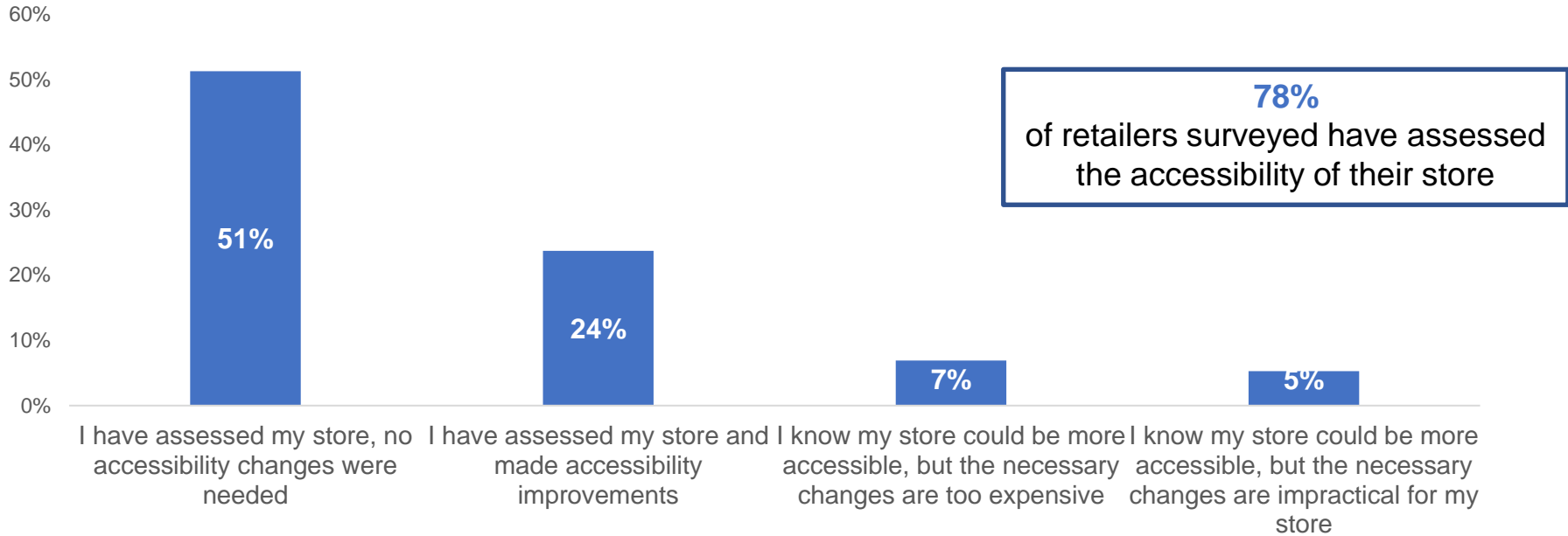
Dementia



- There are 900,000 people in the UK with dementia
- Dementia is not just about losing your memory
- It is possible to live well with dementia
- 25,000 Dementia Friends

Accessibility...

Which of the following best describes your position on store accessibility?



Base: 1,100 (Feb 2022)

... and capital allowances

- Capital allowances allow businesses to claim eligible expenditure against taxable profits

Allowance	For	Rate
Annual Investment Allowance	<u>plant and machinery, integral features and fittings</u>	100%
Structures & Buildings Allowance	<u>new building construction and renovation costs</u>	3%

- Key accessibility improvements are excluded from capital allowances (e.g. wheelchair ramps)

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