

ACCESS FOR EVERYBODY

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INTRODUCTION

There is a UK-wide decline of town high streets [1], exacerbated in more deprived areas. Bedminster Business Improvement District (BID) [2] aims to combat this with a range of initiatives and events.

Poor shop accessibility has been identified as one of the main barriers to increasing footfall, and made it a top priority issue to solve.

Many businesses are interested in such an initiative, however some are intimidated by the regulations [3] and overwhelming variety of solutions available to them.



Bedminster Area

THE CLIENTS

Bubble Play Café is an artisan café with a children's soft play area. Stroller and wheelchair users are facing accessibility issues due to an entrance step and a heavy door. A sturdy, permanent solution was required for both.

Trylla is a ceramics workshop and craft store. Two large steps made it difficult for elderly and disabled customers to attend classes and browse the store. The solution needed to be portable, and fit in the limited space in front of the store.

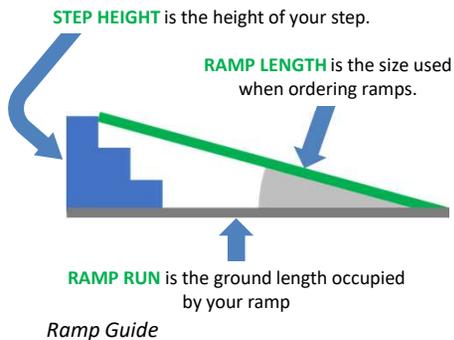
OUR APPROACH

A common issue across the BID was steep entrance steps. The team initially researched a variety of designed and Commercial Off The Shelf (COTS) ramps, and scored 8 possible solutions against customer requirements in a table similar to below:

Requirement	Wt.	Foldable	Telescopic	Rollable
Weight	20%	3	4	4
Setup Time	20%	5	2	4
Storage	20%	3	4	5
Price	15%	3	3	2
Surface Grip	10%	NA	5	4
Weather-Proof	5%	NA	5	5
Durability	5%	4	4	3
Manufacture	5%	3	NA	NA
Average Score	100%	3.53	3.58	3.89

After ranking solutions against the requirements, the team decided that a roll-up COTS ramp was the best solution for our clients' entrance steps.

This solution was presented to Bubble Play Café and Trylla, who accepted our proposal.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The team released a survey to the wider Bedminster community to understand their views on accessibility.

Despite the community interest, the survey response rate was low. The decision was made between the team and customers to focus solely on the needs of Bubble Play Café and Trylla.

The initial deliverables were aimed to be:

- A Commercial Off The Shelf ramp
- Designed modifications to secure the ramp to the ground, and reduce the trip hazard
- A semi-automatic door
- A Roadmap for the implementation of solutions to the wider community

The team kept regular contact with the customers to update them on progress and manage expectations.



Deliverables (Ramp delivered, Door Mechanism recommended)

DELIVERED

The Final Deliverables were:

- A 5ft roll-up COTS ramp [~£150]
- The designed modifications were excluded from the deliverables as deemed unnecessary
- A contact for a semi-automatic door [~£1,125 excl. VAT]
- An accessibility improvement Roadmap for the BID

LESSONS LEARNT

The team gained a very good learning experience from the project, such as:

- When dealing with multiple stakeholders, keeping everyone involved at the same level with regular communication is fundamental.
- Adapt the method of communication and target it according to the nature and type of audience.
- Monitor the activities delegated to third parties and make sure that the time schedule is respected by everyone who has an impact on the deliverables.



Delivered ramp

THE FUTURE

The deliverables were well received by both clients, meeting their needs.

The delivered ramp was tested by café users and immediately shown to improve access. As the clients stated:

"It was great...we were able to see in person that all their research paid-off!"

The Roadmap will be discussed in the next BID committee meeting, with the aim of distributing it to enable all business owners to solve their own accessibility issues.

[1] "Understanding High Street Performance", Department for Business Innovation and Skills, December 2011

[2] <https://www.bedminster.org.uk>

[3] The Building Regulations 2010 Approved Document M: Access to and use of buildings, Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings