

# Stoke on Trent City Council

## Mystery shopping assesses facilities for disabled people

### Client Issue

With a population of 240,000, Stoke is home to over 8,000 businesses and the economic capital of the North Staffordshire and South Cheshire region.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council is responsible for a huge range of public buildings, ranging from leisure centres, swimming pools and golf courses to libraries, council information points and three internationally renowned museums including the Etruria Industrial Museum.

Like all UK public sector organisations, Stoke City Council is required under the Disability Equality Duty to ensure disabled people have good access to its services and to all its public buildings. As well as reviewing policies and providing appropriate means of access (ramps, induction loops, etc.), it was important for the Council to know about the experience of disabled customers when they went to a museum or turned up at a swimming pool.

Grass Roots was asked to assess the facilities at different venues and provide feedback.

### Grass Roots Solution

Grass Roots created a mystery shopping programme to visit a total of 25 venues and provide individual site results as well as an overall report for the Council.

Local mystery shoppers, with a range of disabilities covering mobility, hearing and visual impairments, were selected from the Grass Roots disabled mystery shopping panel. For each venue, it was agreed what type of disability would be most appropriate and five venues, including the museums and the main library, received two visits by mystery shoppers with different disabilities to fully assess their facilities.

Our mystery shoppers measured specific aspects - the initial welcome on arrival, signage, toilet facilities, accessibility of the main attraction or purpose of the venue and overall friendliness and helpfulness of the staff. They were also encouraged to suggest improvements that would make future visits easier and more enjoyable.

The online questionnaire called for mystery shoppers to rate each response and also provide full verbatim comments on their findings.

### Result

Stoke City Council had a snapshot of how disabled people fared when they visited each of their public buildings. The detailed site reports showed what went well and, where things did not go well, explained how facilities or service could be improved.



*“Grass Roots provided a really detailed and actionable report based on real customer experiences and all within a very tight budget. Being able to see actual customer comments gave us valuable insight.”*

### Access Officer