



Case Study: Business Disability Forum and RICA conduct a review of the services O2 offer for disabled customers

The review:

Business Disability Forum (BDF) and Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (RICA) our specialist consumer research partner were commissioned by O2 to review the services they offer for disabled customers. Using a three-pronged approach, we built a better picture of:

- 1.** What disabled customers expect from a communication provider.
- 2.** The experience of disabled people accessing O2's services via the voice, online and stores channels.
- 3.** What constitutes 'excellence' with regard to meeting the needs of disabled customers via the stores, voice and online channels.

The project was led by Brendan Roach, Senior Disability Consultant at BDF and Caroline Jacobs, Head of Development at RICA. We first reviewed O2's products and services in 2014 where a recommendation was made to involve disabled people in reviewing the accessibility of all aspects of its products and services; this is what prompted this follow up review. RICA carried out a UK-wide mystery shopping exercise of O2's three channels (voice, online and stores) alongside a comprehensive insight review, which outlined O2's recent research for Ofcom's Communication Consumer Panel.

This research report explored in detail the extent to which communications providers are accessible to customers with additional communication support needs, such as people with disabilities and customers aged 75+.

Mystery shopping exercise:

To assess O2's customer service offering, RICA conducted 72 mystery shopping inspections in February 2016 across three O2 channels: voice, online and stores. Each

channel was reviewed by 24 participants with a range of disabilities and long-term conditions through a mixture of billing, technical and sales enquiries.

The participants were asked to report on their experiences in relation to:

- Accessibility - both in terms of physical accessibility of stores and digital accessibility in terms of compatibility with assistive software.
- Quality of customer service – for example empathy of customer service advisors and engagement with customers.

The shoppers' experiences of using O2's customer channels were recorded, analysed and fed back as evidence-based examples of where the organisation is performing well and where improvements can be made to its customer channels.

Best practice analysis:

Combining with RICA's mystery shopping exercise which reported on the experiences of disabled customers, BDF carried out in depth research and a review of existing pan-industry best practice in the provision of services to disabled customers across the voice, online and stores channels.

Drawing upon 20 years' experience of working with hundreds of disability-smart businesses, BDF outlined practical, evidence-based examples of best practice in relation to the following areas:

- Organisational values that prioritise improving disability performance.
- Improving the skills, confidence and knowledge of customer-facing employees.
- Practising inclusive design when developing new products and services.
- The usability of key service channels.
- The ease with which disabled customers can request and access adjustments to help overcome the barriers they face.
- Gaining insight directly from disabled people.
- How disability-related customer complaints are recorded, analysed and responded to.

The best practice report was designed as a 'road-map' to assist O2 in planning its service for disabled customers, whilst at the same time bringing benefits to the organisation. The market of disabled customers has an estimated annual spending power of £212billion per year.

Commenting on the project, Brendan Roach, Senior Disability Consultant at BDF said:

“Disability-smart organisations know the only way to ensure that their products and services are accessible and usable to disabled and older customers is to learn directly from them. By combining insight from disabled customers and learning from the disability-smart practices of service providers from the public and private sector, we were able to quickly establish an evidence base for the next step of O2’s strategy.”

Commenting on the project Caroline Jacobs, RICA’s Head of Development said:

“Mystery shopping by disabled customers is a great way to quickly monitor service and sales practice. RICA has a UK wide consumer panel of 750 disabled people to recruit from and 50+ years’ research experience with disabled consumers. Working in partnership with BDF we were able to combine resources and skills to provide O2 with both high quality customer insight and extensive, cross-sector policy experience.”

Commenting on how O2 has used the outputs of the project. Charlotte Hall, Head of Regulation for Complaints & Accessibility said:

“The outputs from the research project conducted by the Business Disability Forum and RICA have played an integral part in shaping our strategy for supporting customers with disabilities. Providing insight into what disabled customers expect together with their experience is particularly helpful, as is the best practice and case studies from other organisations. We have already made a number of improvements based on the research and have plans to make more changes to improve the services we offer to customers with disabilities.”

[Click here to view a case study of BDF's Whole Systems Review project with Scope](#)

[Click here to view more information about RICA’s research](#)

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