



Press Release: Click-Away Pound 2019

“UK Retailers Lose Out On £17 Billion by Ignoring Needs of Disabled Shoppers Online”

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UK retailers could be missing out on online sales estimated at £17.1 billion a year according to research from Europe’s leading disability consultancy, Freeney Williams.

The new [Click-Away Pound](#) Survey shows that nearly three quarters of disabled online consumers (69%) will simply click away from web sites that they find difficult to use due to the effect of their disability. That represents 4.9 million online shoppers with a collective purchasing power of £17.1 billion, which is around 10% of the total UK online spend.

In fact, 83% of participants with access needs limit their shopping to sites that they know are accessible and 86% have chosen to pay more for a product from an accessible website rather than buy the same product for less from a website that was harder to use.

Most businesses will be unaware that they are losing out because only 8% of disabled customers who have difficulty using a site will contact the site owner.

The 2019 Survey also compared progress against the original 2016 Survey results, and shows a distinct and disappointing lack of progress in removing barriers over the last three years.

In the most recent survey 72% of participants with access needs said they experienced barriers on more than a quarter of websites they visit for the first time: this remains almost unchanged from the 2016 figure of 73%.

Rick Williams, co-author of the Survey and Managing Director of Freeney Williams, said:

“After 20 years of legislation, most high street retailers in the UK understand they need to take disabled shoppers’ needs into account when designing ‘bricks and mortar’ shops. Although the same law applies to their online presence, many of those businesses seem oblivious to the need to make their websites accessible. This is also very disappointing given the amount of guidance, publicity and information which has been made available since the last Survey”.

Rick went on to say: “We are coming to the conclusion that promoting the business case has not served disabled shoppers well and continues to fail them. Therefore, there seems little choice but to look to another approach which comes down to making the law more effective. There are provisions in the Equality Act about ensuring the accessibility of websites, but this has proved ineffective. We need now to introduce more specific regulations for all websites, as is now the case for public sector sites. Such sites are under a specific legal obligation to achieve international standards with associated monitoring and sanctions. We are now calling for similar legislation for all websites and apps otherwise, as performance to date indicates, disabled people will continue to be discriminated against online”.

Susan Scott-Parker of Business Disability International and internationally recognised expert on disability issues said: “This report highlights the urgent need to tackle the digital divide and review the effectiveness of the law on web accessibility. The market has clearly failed to address these issues despite the business case about getting this right. Given the impact on disabled people’s ability to take advantage of online shopping and the unfairness of not being treated equally there seems little option but to require business not to discriminate; the current legal framework clearly isn’t working”.

The report of the Click-Away Pound 2019 Survey can be downloaded from clickawaypound.com

Notes for editors

Calculation of the ‘Click Away Pound’

Based on estimates of average spend per capita those customers who click away have a spending power of £17.1 billion in the UK alone or potentially around 10% of the total UK online spend in 2018.

- The most recent (ONS) estimate of the UK population is 66.44 million in mid-2018 ¹. 53.81 million are aged over 16, of whom 89.4% (48.13 million) have internet access. ²
- IMRG Capgemini reported UK online retail spending in 2018 as £166.6 billion ³ equating to an average spend per person over 16 in the UK with internet access of £3,460.

¹ ONS: *Population Estimates for UK: mid-2018*. June 2018

² ONS: *Internet Users, UK 2019*. May 2019

³ IMRG Capgemini: *e-Retail Sales Index*. January 2019

- In 2019, ONS estimates that the number of UK disabled adults who are active internet users is 10.07 million. ⁴
- This Survey found that 71% of internet users with a disability have access needs; this translates to 7.15 million people.
- Taking an average spend per head of £3,460, the online spending power of 7.15 million disabled people with access needs in 2018 is £24.7 billion.
- The Survey found that 69% of the total 7.15 million disabled internet users with access needs (4.9 million people) simply click-away when confronted with a problematic website.
- These figures equate to a click-away figure in the UK alone of £17.1 billion lost in 2018 from those sites which present barriers to users with access needs.

About Freeney Williams

Freeney Williams Limited is one of Europe's leading disability and diversity consultancies. It works extensively in all sectors to achieve long-lasting and self-sustaining change designed to meet the needs of employers and service providers in the real world.

The consultancy enables companies and organisations to successfully:

- Recruit, employ and retain disabled people and ensure they are effective members of the workforce
- Develop and sell products or services that are accessible to all customers
- Meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010

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⁴ ONS: *Internet Users, UK 2019*. May 2019