Sharpe's is committed to making accessibility a regular part of finding, hiring and supporting employees with disabilities.

Sharpe's will let job applicants know that recruitment and hiring processes will be modified to accommodate their disabilities, if requested.
Our application form gives applicants an opportunity to request an accommodation for their disability at an job interview.

Sharpe's will make accommodating the accessibility needs of employees part of their human resources practices.

Sharpe's will document individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities after consulting with employee, supervisor and we understanding the accommodation necessary.

Safety is a priority at Sharpe's for all employees and customers so in an emergency we will provide individuals with special needs individualized emergency response information and assistance if we are aware of their special needs.

First contact

Don't be awkward about disability. If it's a visual disability and you know you don't have the right facilities in place then don't be afraid to point this out. Taking the time to give the customer extra care and attention is important as personal interaction will determine what experience the customer has. The catering industry can be a busy, fast-paced environment but disabled customers are just as important as nondisabled ones so if they require an extra few minutes of a staff member's time then they must get it. It can be something as simple as: guiding them to a seat or asking if they need the menu read out or explained. Telling a disabled customer you are there if they need you is not patronising – it's thoughtful good service.

Staff training

With two-thirds of customer-facing staff not trained to deal with disabled customers you will stand out if you have trained your staff. The BDF offers expert help to members to train your in-house trainer if you wish. Alternatively why not send a few members of staff on a relevant training course? Nominate one trained staff member per shift to take responsibility for disabled customers, to look after that customer and make sure all their needs are met. Of course, nobody expects staff to be experts in all disabilities but if your business isn't equipped with large print menus or hearing aid loops then having someone with some basic knowledge and good disability etiquette may help to overcome some of the challenges both staff and customers face. A better interaction will make the customer feel that their needs are being met or at least considered. And any cost of training will be recouped when the satisfied customers return.

Be informative

Let people know what facilities and access you have in place to cater for someone with a disability. If it's not possible to reach your first floor toilets apart from walking upstairs then let the customer know. Equally, if you have disabled access or staff who can communicate in British Sign Language then advertise it. The more information you have, the easier it will be for a disabled customer to make a decision on whether it is practical for them to

visit your establishment. It makes good business sense and shows you care, because you have stopped a customer from wasting their time on an unsuitable visit or enabled them to prepare to be able to visit you. Your website should contain all this relevant information, and make sure staff have this information if they answer a telephone enquiry – you could even pop a note in your window. This makes you look helpful and caring – and if they don't visit they may still recommend you to a friend.

Use technology

Advice and guidance is really important. In this day and age most people have a smartphone with internet access or access to a computer at work. Encourage staff to search for answers via the web if a disabled customer comes in and they aren't sure how to serve them. This initiative will impress the customer and

move staff along in providing a much more confident disability awareness service. And even if they aren't able to stay they will leave on a positive note.