

Accessible places

Blind personal shopping at intu.

At intu, we want to make our customers smile, and for them to leave our centres happier than when they walked in. But people with sight loss are not always able to go shopping by themselves, meaning that they can miss out on the fun part of, for example, getting ready for a summer holiday or getting a loved one a gift for a special occasion.

Our journey started with a simple customer request asking if a member of staff could find the time to help them visit the shops. intu Braehead jumped at the opportunity to give our customers a better shopping experience. Not only did they accommodate this customer but engaged local visual impairment groups Visibility, and the Renfrewshire visually impaired forum to recruit staff volunteers, deliver bespoke sighted guide training for intu staff and develop a framework and guidelines.

Customer feedback has been so fantastic, intu Braehead is now offering the service the first Thursday of every month.

Other centres are also providing this service. Both centres in Newcastle - intu Eldon Square and intu Metrocentre - and intu Merry Hill in the Midlands have also worked with local sight loss charities to provide this service to our customers. intu Merry Hill centre has teamed up with Sedgley sight loss charity Beacon Centre to offer a series of assisted shopping sessions with trained staff.

During the hour-long shopping sessions, trained members of intu staff assist shoppers around the centre by offering guidance and support. More than 50 members of intu staff have undergone training, which saw them try on specialist goggles that replicate sight-loss conditions and guide each other around the malls. The centre is also working with experts from the charity to develop a user-friendly mall guide, as well as trialling improvements to the centre to make it more accessible for those with visual impairments.

intu Metrocentre and intu Eldon Square has partnered with sight loss charity Henshaws to bring blind personal shopping experiences for our customers.

Staff at intu Metrocentre and intu Eldon Square have received professional training focusing on how to support blind shoppers. The course is a practical and engaging training session, aimed at helping individuals understand the needs and concerns of people living with a visual impairment, and has been embraced by businesses and organisations across the North of England. During the course, intu's staff members were shown how to guide a visually impaired person throughout the centre, overcoming all the obstacles an individual would face.

Like with becoming autism friendly, we will be extending this initiative across our portfolio over the next couple of years.

"We are delighted that intu Merry Hill has shown such a commitment to helping people with visual impairments. It was very clear when working with the team that offering excellent customer service is a very high priority."

Donna Gordon, Partnership Development Manager, Beacon Centre

Impact:

- ✓ Choice: customers able to choose better, can touch, feel, smell clothes
- ✓ Freedom: customers don't have to depend on others to go shopping so can be and feel independent
- ✓ Time: customers able to take the time to find things they like
- ✓ Personal: the more customers visit, the more the volunteers know what they like
- ✓ Social: customers and volunteers make friends
- ✓ Staff: improved skills and help them see things from a different perspective

Metrics: £32k in PR, reach of 700,000+ (intu Braehead)



"We want to ensure that every shopper that comes through our doors feels comfortable and welcome, so it is key for us to understand the needs of everyone. Working with the Beacon Centre has given our staff an appreciation of some of the challenges faced by sufferers of sight loss. We aim to improve their shopping experience through the world class customer service we give."

Naomi Campbell, Community Development Manager, intu Merry Hill

"Superb guys, always good to know these services are available"

Facebook user Alan Macdonald

