

A woman with short hair, glasses, and tattoos on her arms is sitting in a wheelchair. She is wearing a black tank top and light-colored pants. She is looking towards the left of the frame. In the foreground, there is a pink plate with sliced watermelon and other fruits. The background shows a kitchen with white cabinets and a wooden countertop. The lighting is warm and natural, suggesting an indoor setting with large windows.

A Guide to
Accessible Lettings

An Introduction From Chestertons

Chestertons is a founding partner of the Accessible Lettings Scheme, an initiative set up by AccessiblePRS in collaboration with disability charity, Enham Trust, to support people with accessible housing needs find suitable rented accommodation.

There are 1.8 million people living with accessible housing needs in the UK, which includes an estimated 1.2 million wheelchair users, people living with disabilities and older people who have lost some of their mobility.

Unfortunately, many of these people experience severe difficulties in securing a home to rent and, according to research¹, 91% of wheelchair users surveyed experienced barriers accessing the private rented sector.

Working closely with AccessiblePRS, Chestertons is addressing this situation by improving the information provided about our rental properties, and also by encouraging landlords to approve adaptations to their properties when requested.

To find out more about accessible lettings, contact your local Chestertons branch or email accessiblelettings@chestertons.co.uk

39% of people living with accessible housing needs are in the top half of income demographics², busting the myth that people living with disability are always in need of social and financial support.



What Is Chestertons Doing?

Chestertons is committed to help more people with accessibility needs find suitable accommodation.

Having consulted on the issue, it is clear that the process of finding accessible housing is a huge and unequal issue faced by people with disabilities. Agents rarely include the type of information that is essential to people with accessibility needs, and the delays experienced in getting this information mean that those tenants often miss out on properties to those that have less specific requirements.

To help level the playing field between non-disabled and disabled renters, Chestertons is training its staff to improve the information they provide for each property, so that listings pass the “3am test” – i.e. can a disabled renter searching online at 3am make an informed decision on whether a property is suitable, without the need to call an agent for further information?

We will also be asking our teams to add ‘Access Information’ and searchable key phrases to each listing, noting possible barriers.

Specific requirements depend upon the individual’s needs and circumstances, however the most common considerations are:

- Step-free access
- Width of doorways
- Wheelchair accessible bathrooms and/or wet rooms

While it is not yet practical to include all relevant information for every listing, Chestertons is making its properties searchable by five key accessibility factors:

1. Step-free access – includes entry into the building, the property and throughout the property
2. Lateral living space – properties that have a kitchen, living room, bathroom and at least one bedroom on the entry level
3. Floorplan available
4. Video tour available – allows a tenant to judge suitability against their own requirements
5. Photos that capture key details

“As a trusted Registered Provider of housing for disabled people, Enham Trust sees daily the positive impact of accessible housing. We fully support this valuable scheme”

Heath Gunn, former CEO, Enham Trust



Landlords

The primary aim of the Accessible Lettings Scheme is to improve the information provided to tenants with accessibility needs, placing the onus on Chestertons rather than the landlord.

However, with an ageing population and a huge unmet demand from disabled tenants, owning properties that are more accessible has numerous long-term advantages for landlords:

- Ensure a resilient income stream in an area of the market that is chronically short supplied
- Reduce voids
- Expand their property's target audience
- Provide greater inclusivity within their portfolio

Think Accessible

If you think your property would be suitable for a disabled tenant, please flag it to your Chestertons contact so that they can review it and ensure that the relevant information is added to the property description.

Be Flexible

There are instances where tenants living with a disability will request adaptations³ to the property in order to make it safe for them. This may include things such as installing a ramp over steps, replacing standard taps with lever taps or modifying bathrooms. The costs of these modifications will generally be carried by the tenant or the Local Authority via a Disabled Facilities Grant, and will only require your consent. If you are asked for permission, please be flexible and allow the modifications.

Consider Modifications

If you are planning works on your property, please consider making it an accessible property by including the following:

- Walk-in shower/wet room
- Wider door frames
- Ramped, rather than stepped, exterior accesses
- Switches and sockets between 700mm to 1,000mm above floor level and located a minimum of 700mm away from an inside corner

We Look Forward to Working With Accessible PRS

We look forward to working alongside Accessible PRS by providing disabled tenants with a much needed improvement in awareness and service within the private rental sector. This is a new initiative for us, so please work with us as we look to become more fully inclusive.

Additionally, we have set up a dedicated email for tenants with accessible housing requirements who require help or support from Chestertons, or if they wish to give feedback – both good and bad: accessiblelettings@chestertons.co.uk



Source:

1. Commonweal funded Abode Impact Research: <https://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/static/uploads/2018/12/Abode-Impact-Research-Report-ilovepdf-compressed-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf>
 2. London School of Economics / Habinteg research: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/business/consulting/assets/documents/No-Place-Like-an-Accessible-Home.pdf>
 3. For more information, visit: <https://www.nrla.org.uk/campaigns/adaptations.pdf>
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