

## How accessible is my local High Street?

Context	As the UK becomes a country with an ageing population, questions begin to be asked of how accessible our urban spaces are for elderly people as well as those with different levels of mobility. Urban design, legally, needs to include design features which enable everyone to access spaces equally. However, in practice, many High Streets and similar urban areas do not meet these standards and levels of accessibility can vary across a space.		
Length of time	Half day and one homework	Suitable locations	A High Street, parade of shops or similar
Equipment needed	Clipboard and a map of the survey area.		
Suggested delivery	Key Skills		
<p>Students should begin their investigation by thinking about the kind of features in urban planning that make places more or less accessible. This can be done through a mind mapping exercise in class time and should result in a list of at least ten different features. Students should be able to recognise the importance of accessibility features in urban spaces such as tactile paving, ramps, dropped kerbs, benches and dedicated accessible parking spaces.</p> <p>As part of a homework task, students should then take this list of ten features to someone in their home life who may benefit from having a more accessible High Street, such as an elderly relative or someone who uses a wheelchair or walking aids. Presenting their list to this person, they should ask them to rank the features in order of importance to their needs, with a ranking of 1 being most important to 10 being least important.</p> <p>Back in the classroom, students should collate their ranking scores with their peers to create one single scoring system for each of the ten design features on their list. This will then be used in the field to determine how accessible different spaces are in their local town.</p> <p>Different sites for doing an accessibility survey should be decided in advance of entering the field, the number of which depend on the size of the survey cohort, the size of the space and the time available. Ideally, students should be able to survey a minimum of two sites to allow them to see spatial differences in accessibility scores.</p> <p>The different survey sites should be marked on a map and visited by each group of students in turn. At each site, the students conduct a 360 observation of the urban landscape around them, noting any urban feature they witness that appears on their scoring list. As they do so they should total the score applicable to each place. For example, if a student observes that Site A has two sections of pavement with dropped kerbs, and dropped kerbs have a score of two out of ten in importance in their scoring system, that area will score a total of four. This allows each site being surveyed to gain an accessibility score which is then comparable with each other.</p> <p>Back in the classroom, students can use annotated maps and sited photographs to explain how different areas received different accessibility scores. Choropleth shading might be used to show the areas with the highest and lowest scores.</p> <p>For older students, they might like to make a hypothesis as to which areas they think might be most accessible and which areas least accessible. These predictions can then be compared to the actual scores those areas receive.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students need to work independently to find out the opinions of someone in their homelife.</li> <li>• Working collaboratively to come up with an accessibility scoring system.</li> <li>• Using key observation skills to identify different features in the landscape.</li> <li>• Using mapping techniques to compare one area with another.</li> </ul>
Potential risks to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students should be aware of the key rules to keep safe when crossing a road and use a formal crossing wherever possible.</li> <li>• Students need to take care when surveying areas on a pavement to ensure that members of the public are not forced to step into the road in order to pass by.</li> </ul>		
Possible follow-up activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can design an accessibility management plan for the chosen area to try to best deal with some of the problem areas identified by the study.</li> <li>• Students could carry out a second survey in their own time for a contrasting place and look for varying levels of urban accessibility.</li> </ul>		
Useful links	Accessibility and Disability Inclusion in Urban Development <a href="#">Document</a> Cities For All <a href="https://cities4all.org/">https://cities4all.org/</a>		

These resources have been created by the Fieldwork and Outdoor Learning Special Interest Group.