

Finding an immediate solution to workplace accessibility issues

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Insight from Emma and Chris Persey, directors of [The Stair Climbing Company](#)

Changing jobs is always a big deal with much to think about – aside from the challenges that a new role and responsibilities will bring, there are also practical aspects to be considered. Will you be working in the office, from home or hybrid? On office days, how will the new location affect your commute? And many more.

These are part of the broader ‘package’ for everyone, but for those with limited mobility, there’s also the immediate challenge of physically getting into, around and safely out of the workplace. As outlined in the Equality Act 2010, it is of course part of an employer’s responsibilities in creating an inclusive environment to offer ‘reasonable adjustments’. The definition of ‘reasonable’ for one company may however change from one workplace to another, based on practicality, affordability and disruption to others as well as suitability to the employee requiring the adjustment.

Whether it’s to provide a temporary solution in the event that a lift is out of use due to breakdown or emergency evacuation or for use in lieu of a lift in buildings where lift installation is not feasible or prohibitively expensive, stair climbers offer a cost-effective, easy-to-implement solution.”

As an example, wheelchair user Dan Smith first moved to London in 2014 and began his career in publishing. In 2022 keen to take another step up the career ladder, he applied for a more senior role at a different company.

The interview, at Immediate Media in Hammersmith, went brilliantly – Dan’s proven experience and expertise, and likeable personality placed him as top choice by the interview panel. However, as a

wheelchair user, the office's upper floor location wasn't ideal.

The company's facilities manager, Edel Ryan explains. "The offices here are accessible by lift, with step-free access into the lobby from the street. But my concern was that in the event of an emergency evacuation, Dan could be at risk because he would be unable to exit the building quickly."

Edel went away to look into the potential solutions. He found The Stair Climbing Company online – specialists in access and evacuation for wheelchair users across the UK – and contacted them for assistance.

Two days later, Chris Persey met with both Edel and Dan at the offices, to see the challenges at first hand and agree the best solution.

Dan says "I was really impressed with Immediate, as an employer willing to find a solution, and especially one that I could be part of the decision-making process for."

The Stair Climbing Company offers a particular model of stair climber called Skyline, which was recommended as the best solution, and Chris was able to offer customisation to make it a seamless fit with Dan's chair.

Once the climber had been adapted, it was trialled on site, with Dan and the team being fully trained on how to use the kit in event of evacuation.

Immediate Media swiftly became not only fully prepared to welcome Dan, but also future-proofed for the benefit of other wheelchair users seeking employment in their workplace.

Facilities manager Edel said "Of course we have statutory obligations towards our employees, but the excellent relationship that was forged so quickly between us and The Stair Climbing Company meant that we could really use it as an opportunity to fully embrace Dan and reassure him that we prioritise his health and safety at work. It's enabled us to create an ongoing pattern of servicing and retraining when required, giving faith to the entire team, and paving the way for future employees with additional access needs, showing that with the right supplier, it's a quick and simple solution."

The Skyline is a product in place around the UK, allowing wheelchair users the comfort and dignity of staying in their own chair where lift access isn't an option. The Stair Climbing Company works closely with The National Trust, Blackstone and Carnival Cruise ships to facilitate the same evacuation processes, ensuring that wheelchair users can safely and comfortably access all areas of a building regardless of circumstances.