



**PRESS RELEASE**

**DECEMBER 2009**

## **NO ROOM AT THE INN FOR DISABLED PEOPLE THIS CHRISTMAS**

'Tis the season to be jolly... especially as the number of disabled people in employment this year has tripled since 2004.

But a new report from Capability Scotland has revealed that a lack of information about access to, and within, popular work Christmas party venues is leaving disabled people out in the cold this festive season.

More than five years on from the changes to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) that required businesses to improve access for disabled people, many assume that accessibility problems are a ghost of Christmas past. To test this out, Capability recently visited 18 randomly chosen venues split between Edinburgh and Glasgow, concentrating on two of the most popular Christmas party areas in the cities - George Street in Edinburgh and Merchant City in Glasgow.

We found that 4 of the 18 venues were completely inaccessible to a wheelchair user. Furthermore, a wheelchair user could not get into any of the venues without assistance. Problems included accessible entrances sited on inaccessible cobbled streets, staff being required to operate lifts, overly heavy doors and ramps that were simply too steep.

Once inside the problems didn't stop. In one venue, a staff member had to be found to empty the accessible toilet of cleaning supplies before it could be used. In another, once our wheelchair user had managed to make his way into the bar, he found that he couldn't actually get to the accessible toilet.

Colin Jardine, a volunteer for Capability has experienced access issues when out with his colleagues. Colin said: “On one night I went to an accessible toilet, but it was too small for me to turn my wheelchair around. As I only have the use of one arm, this meant I was not able to lock the toilet door.

“Another night out with colleagues was organised at a venue which I knew was accessible by a lift. I had telephoned to check the access and it was confirmed that there was a lift and I left my phone number in case there were any problems, but when I arrived was told that the lift was broken. Even though they had my number, no-one had the courtesy to let me know it was not available.”

Richard Hamer, Director of External Affairs at Capability said: “Our research shows that 20% of annual bar sales occur in the Christmas season making it by far the most lucrative time of year. With the poor economic situation hitting businesses hard, can they really afford to turn down the spending power of groups on a work night out who include a disabled person?”

Capability is now supporting a national campaign around pub and bar access. The Barred! campaign was debated in Parliament on 3rd December and aims to improve the accessibility of pubs and clubs for all disabled people in Scotland. We are currently lobbying for an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Licensing Act so that licence applicants have to say how accessible to disabled people their premises are.

**ENDS**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

Capability Scotland campaigns with, and provides services to, disabled children and adults across Scotland, supporting them to achieve equality and have choice and control in their lives.

A Mintel Market Intelligence report published in April 2008 showed that the sales value of alcohol was £41,031m in 2007 with £8,208m of this accounted for by Christmas sales.