



Exclusive: Get on board with accessible design or lose sales, warns expert

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Accessible kitchen design expert Adam

Thomas has encouraged KBB retailers to get to grips with inclusive and universal design or risk losing sales.

In the UK, one-in-five people have a disability, and Thomas believes that all KBB retailers need to understand how to design kitchens and bathrooms for a range of disabilities and how to respectfully discuss their unique requirements with customers.

Thomas warns retailers that they need to learn about accessible design, or customers will go elsewhere. He said: "Do you want to lose 20% of your market and see them go to a retailer down the road that does offer a service that makes them feel comfortable and understood?"

The conversation in the industry about accessible, universal and multigenerational design has grown substantially in the past few years. However, Thomas believes that there is still a lack of confidence among retailers to ask the right questions.

He said: "I always come back to this – the problems are always about training, knowledge and understanding. If you don't know the right questions to ask, how are you going to get the right answers and design the right kitchens?"

Thomas is currently moving towards the term 'universal' design rather than accessible, as it is more inclusive. Accessible design caters for specific disabilities, but creating universal creates spaces means anyone can use them. A concept that is especially true in multigenerational households where the one design has to be suitable for all ages and abilities.

Thomas explained: "You can design a kitchen that works for a wheelchair user, but no one else can use it. That is not a good universal design. What makes it good is a kitchen that a wheelchair user can use, but that a non-disabled person can use just as easily.

"You cannot have multigenerational design without being universal. If you design something that is accessible, then by its very nature, it is multigenerational.

"I don't care what we call this market – multigenerational, accessible or universal – as long as we have an industry that can design for everyone. If we have an industry that understands and designs for everyone, then that is the important thing, and it doesn't marginalise any particular group."