



Accessibility and Community Buildings

Introduction

This factsheet on accessibility has been produced by Community Places to provide an introduction to accessibility issues for the management committees of community buildings. For a more comprehensive guide to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act please refer to the sources of advice and information listed below.

It is good practice to consult with and involve disabled people in making your building more accessible. You could also engage a qualified access auditor to assess all aspects of your building. The most important thing to remember is that you must take all reasonable steps to make your building accessible. If you are not able (eg for financial or practical reasons) to take all the steps required immediately you should have a plan for when you will do so. You should also train your volunteers and staff in disability awareness.

Some of the issues you need to consider and some practical suggestions are presented below.

Building Location and Approach

- Ensure your building can be seen from the street by using clear signs.
- Provide car parking space(s) close to the entrance for use by disabled drivers.
- Repair or re-surface pathways so that they do not make access difficult.
- Install lighting to external areas to improve visibility and security.

Access into the Building

The best solution to initial access is one that enables a disabled person to access your building without requiring assistance. Measures to consider include:

- Providing a ramp with a minimum gradient of 1:12 at the stepped entrance of the building to facilitate people in wheelchairs or with other mobility difficulties. If a permanent ramp is not possible consider using a temporary ramp.
- Providing handrails at a stepped entrance.
- Painting the entrance door a colour that contrasts with the rest of the building to highlight it for people with impaired vision.
- Providing an intercom entry system which incorporates provision for people with impaired hearing.

Moving within the Building

Consider how people (with mobility impairments in particular) would move around the building and how it might be possible to make that movement easier. For example:

- Providing a low reception desk and fitting an induction loop system.
- Move furniture and fittings that obstruct wheelchair users and lower leaflet and other display shelves.
- Provide signage that enables everyone to find their way around the building easily.
- Provide an internal ramp, handrails and/or an assistance call button where there are steps or other changes in level within the building.
- Widen doorways to provide a clear space of no less than 750 mm to allow wheelchairs to pass through comfortably.
- Reposition door handles so that they are 1000 mm above floor level.
- Replace door handles with D-shaped ones that are easier to grip and in a colour that contrasts with the colour of the door.
- Provide a passenger lift or a stair lift in the building.
- Replace a narrow staircase with a wider one to allow a minimum of 1000 mm between handrails.
- Ensure that the edges of steps clearly contrast in colour with the rest of the steps.
- Lay floors that are slip resistant but easy to clean.
- Replace shiny surfaces that might reflect light and cause confusion for people with impaired vision.
- Paint walls a colour that contrasts with the colour of the floor.

Facilities, Equipment and Products

- Upgrade the toilet and wash facilities to make them accessible.
- Provide an accessible kitchen that can be used by all.
- Provide a seat beside the public telephone.
- Provide an induction loop in advice, training and other rooms.

Sources of Advice

If you manage a local community facility you should discuss access issues with your nearest disability group and with disabled people living in your area.

Disability Action provides information and advice on access issues - telephone 9029 7880, textphone 9029 7882, email hq@disabilityaction.org and www.disabilityaction.org. Disability Action also administers a Community Access Grant.

There are some useful publications available through the Equality Commission website www.equalityni.org. These include 'A Practical Guide for the Retail Sector'. The Disability Rights Commission in England has a useful guide called 'Making Access to Goods and Services Easier for Disabled Customers - A Practical Guide (see www.drc-gb.org and telephone 08457 622 633).

Contact Details

Community Places
2 Downshire Place
BELFAST
BT2 7JQ

Telephone - 028 9023 9444
Fax - 028 9023 1411
Email - info@communityplaces.info



Accessibility and Community Buildings (Update)

Introduction

The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 were amended on 30 November 2006. This update to our Factsheet provides examples of the types of changes introduced and should be read along with the original factsheet.

Technical Booklet R "Access To and Use Of Buildings" of the Building Regulations has been amended to enhance the means of access to and within buildings for people who visit or work in the building.

Examples of Changes

In relation to community buildings some examples of changes to the legislation include the following:

- Any extension should be treated in the same manner as a new building.
- The extension should have its own accessible entrance or be accessible through the building.
- Accessible toilets should be provided within the extension **or** the existing sanitary accommodation should be upgraded to meet these new standards.
- Where a building is altered "reasonable" provision shall be made to provide access within the building and to the principal entrance from the boundary and from any on site car parking.
- Where a building undergoes a "change of use" to be used as a community building it should be treated as a new building and have suitable access to and through the building and with suitable toilets.

Typical Access Standards

- A level approach not less than 1500 mm wide or ramped approach at a gradient of between 1:12 and 1:20 depending on the length of the ramp.
- A clear entrance door width of 1000 mm in a new building or 775 mm in an existing building.
- Corridors with an unobstructed width of 1200 mm.
- A passenger lift should be provided to any other storey above the principal entrance storey building.

- Where space within a building is severely restricted or the installation of a passenger lift would severely affect the existing accommodation a platform lift should be provided.
- Where a fixed reception counter is provided it should have a lowered section to accommodate a wheelchair user.
- An accessible unisex toilet measuring 1500 x 2200 mm but where only one toilet is available it should be 2000 x 2200 mm.

Contact Details

Community Places
2 Downshire Place
BELFAST
BT2 7JQ

Telephone - 028 9023 9444
Fax - 028 9023 1411
Email - info@communityplaces.info