

# Open for business

Creating a barrier-free customer experience

The authoritative guide addressing the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, in relation to customers, employees and the built environment.

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### **Employers' Forum on Disability**

The Employers' Forum on Disability makes it easier to employ disabled people, serve disabled customers and work with disabled stakeholders. This latest edition of 'Open for business' helps businesses make their premises more accessible to millions of disabled customers, in line with the principles of the DDA.

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## Foreword

Customer service is of paramount importance for any company. I am therefore delighted to introduce this unique guide, produced by the Employers' Forum on Disability, which provides guidelines on how to make our business premises more easily accessible by all.

There is growing recognition in the business community of the value that high quality customer service can bring in both acquiring and retaining customers. Many companies are committed to excellence in customer care but it is all too easy to give poor service or, worse still, offend by failing to appreciate the specific requirements of disabled customers.

This practical guide highlights the measures that can be taken to provide easy access for everyone to the goods and services we offer. It will help you to better serve disabled customers and to retain their custom through a focus on high quality service for everyone.



**Sir Roy Gardner**  
President, Employers' Forum on Disability  
Chief executive, Centrica plc

## Introduction

It is estimated that one in four of your customers is either disabled or close to someone who is. Disabled people and their relatives and friends therefore constitute over 25% of your potential market.

As a provider of goods and services, you simply cannot afford to miss out on the estimated £80 billion spending power of ten million disabled adults in Britain who face barriers in terms of access to buildings, information and services.

- **So how do you make your premises fully accessible to this portion of your market?**
- **Is it complicated?**
- **What does the law require?**
- **How much will it cost you in time and money?**

This publication provides practical, straightforward advice for any business concerned with the user friendliness of its premises. 'Open for business' will help you to make adjustments, or to design your premises, in a way that reflects best practice. It will also show you what your business should be doing to comply with the changes to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 which came into force in October 2004.

## Access for everyone

Many people associate disability with wheelchairs. They think that access is about ramps and special lifts. They assume that the cost of adapting existing premises is prohibitive. They are often not sure where to start.

In fact, fewer than 8% of disabled people in the UK use wheelchairs. Refurbishment and new building programmes are an opportunity to take account of the needs of wheelchair users – and other disabled users.

Making goods and services easily available to all disabled people also means taking into account people who are deaf or hard of hearing, people who find it difficult to walk, people with sight problems and people with learning difficulties and more.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 requires service providers to anticipate the needs of disabled customers. It is vital therefore to review practices, policies and procedures, equipment and physical features of premises in advance of an individual disabled person requesting an adjustment.

There are many adjustments that can be made so that your business is open to all. Some will cost time and money; other adjustments will simply be a matter of good management and good design brought about by a better understanding of disabled people, your business, your service and your premises.

Improving access can also benefit other customers including older people, carers and people with pushchairs.

## Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995

The DDA came into force in 1996. It is now unlawful for service providers to discriminate (unless there is justification) by refusing a disabled person service, providing a different standard of service or providing a service to a disabled person on different terms.

The expansion of the DDA Part III in 2004 has given your disabled customers new rights of access.

Since October 2004, you must, as a service provider, have taken reasonable steps to change or overcome physical features of your premises that make access impossible or unreasonably difficult.

Service providers must also where reasonable and necessary:

- **change practices, policies and procedures if they make it impossible or unreasonably difficult to use the service**
- **provide auxiliary aids or services**
- **provide the service by alternative means where physical features of the premises make it impossible or unreasonably difficult to use the service.**

## Population growth

40% of the UK population is over 45 – the age at which the incidence of disability begins to increase significantly. Forecasts predict that 45 to 59 year olds will soon form the largest group in the labour force.

As a consequence, there will also be an increase in the number of disabled people travelling on business, staying in hotels, visiting exhibitions and attending conferences. In short, organisations which are disability aware will be better placed to respond to a large – and growing – customer base.

## Commitment to quality

This guide is intended as a bridge between broad commitment policy and the detailed technical manuals required by providers or their contractors to consult as they move into action. It is not a comprehensive survey of all that can be done, but a spur to action. It shows that new equipment and building are not the only ways of improving access. Sensible management decisions, some of which cost nothing, can also make a substantial contribution.

This guide draws on the Forum's 15 years' experience of helping organisations establish a good track record in developing the services and facilities that make it just as easy for disabled consumers to spend their money with them as with anyone else. The Employers' Forum on Disability represents more than 400 employers who, between them, respond to millions of customers each day.

This guide has been revised and updated in consultation with Dr David Bonnett, one of the UK's leading authorities on inclusive design and visiting Professor of Oxford Brookes University, Oxford. Dr Bonnett has reviewed all available building codes and standards as they apply to the built environment, and provided authoritative guidance on what a service provider can be expected to work towards and to deliver as changes to the law come into force.

Endorsed by the Disability Rights Commission and the Centre for Accessible Environments, 'Open for business' is essential reading for those responsible for ensuring as many people as possible have easy access to goods and services – and are welcomed as valued customers and stakeholders.

## The wider community

Working to the mutual benefit of business and disabled people, the Forum sets the standard by which a business should measure its performance regarding disabled people, be they employees, customers or stakeholders.

'Open for business' is one of a series of publications produced by the Employers' Forum on Disability and widely used throughout the private and public sectors, often as part of staff training. The attitudes and understanding of staff are every bit as important as the purely physical aspects of access.

Particularly recommended are the Forum publications 'Welcoming disabled customers' and the 'Disability communication guide', as well as the full set of 'Impairment' and 'Policy' Briefing Papers, and Employment Action File series comprising 'Recruitment that works: A better balance between supply and demand', 'Retaining your workforce: A best practice guide to the Disability Discrimination Act', and 'Monitoring for change: A practical guide to monitoring disability in the workforce'.





# 1

Improvements to car parking, approach and entrances may only require a sensible re-arrangement of existing facilities, supported by clear signs and regular maintenance and information provided to customers in advance where possible, for example on a website. Good management of the parking and approach areas will ensure they are used as intended. Alternative provision might be negotiated with a neighbouring business if necessary.

# Arriving at the building

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Parking

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Getting to the building

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Outside ramps and stairs

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Entrances

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Checklist

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### What to look out for

Car parking facilities that are too far from the building.

Narrow parking spaces which make it difficult to open a car door if the next vehicle is too close.

Develop a policy outlining who has access to disabled parking bays. For example, only customers who hold a Blue Badge, or leave it to the customers' own discretion.

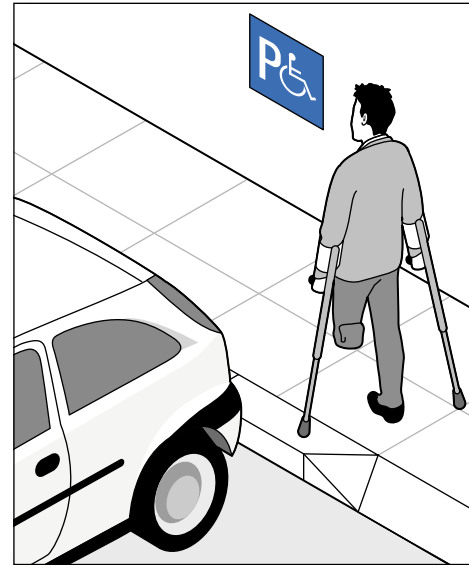
Ensure that the use of designated car parking bays is not abused.

### Policy and management

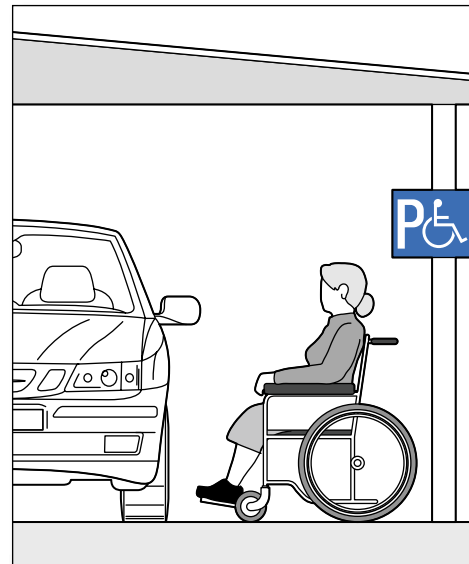
Inform customers before arrival of allocated parking arrangements and the related telephone enquiry number, for example mention in publicity material and website.

Ascertain who is responsible for managing the use of designated parking spaces to ensure that non-disabled customers do not use them, and that surfaces between car park and entrance are maintained free of leaves, snow, ice and other potential hazards.

If no special parking provision can be arranged on the premises, consider negotiating with the highway authority for designated parking bays in the street, or with neighbours for the use of a shared space. Offer a delivery service for your customer where possible and promote via local community organisations.



Designated parking space



Provide shelter from the weather

### Equipment

The designated parking space should be clearly marked with a right facing wheelchair symbol, normally white on a blue background, plus the letter 'P'. If writing appears on the overhead sign it should be both easy to read and easy to understand from a distance. Typeface and size are important.

If there are barrier controls, check that these are easily accessible, for example can the ticket machines be reached without leaving the car? Visual indicators should supplement voice announcements.

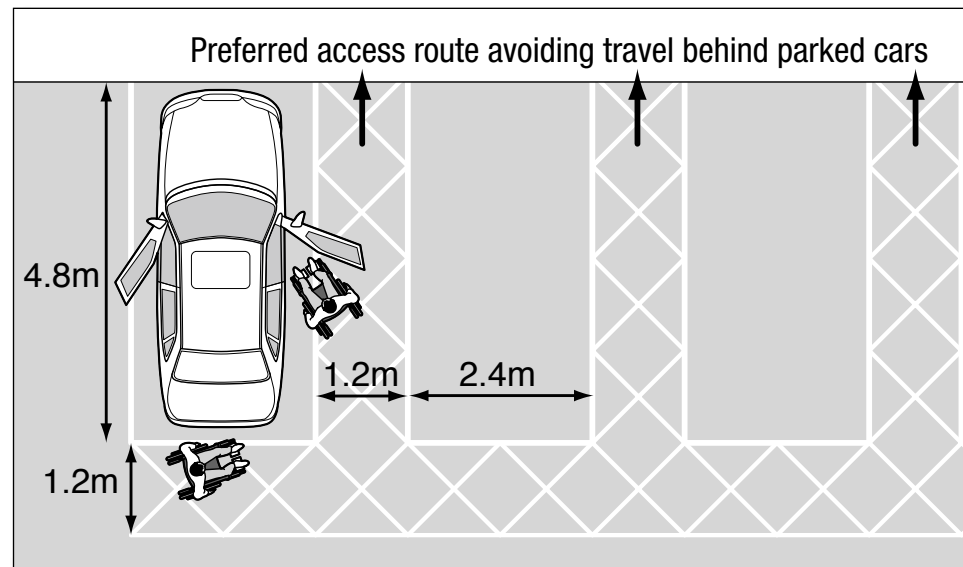
## Building and design

Parking spaces designated for physically disabled people should be located as near the main entrance as possible. Six spaces per hundred (6%) should be reserved for shopping, recreation and leisure facilities. All other service providers need to reserve five spaces per hundred (5%).

Ideally the designated parking space should be sheltered from the weather, because transferring from the seat in the vehicle to a wheelchair or scooter may take a little time. A lightweight canopy solves this problem.

The surface of the car park needs to be firm, durable and slip resistant to enable users to safely enter and exit their vehicles.

The recommended width for a designated parking space totals 3.6m, the length 6m minimum. This gives the car sufficient space to get in and out. A wheelchair user can now get in and out of the car easily and safely.



Provide sufficient space to get in and out

Three standard parking spaces can normally be turned into two designated spaces. In this way two standard spaces can share a narrow passage, giving passengers in either vehicle enough room to get in or out. This access passage needs to be 1.2m wide both along the side and at the end of the bay, and should be at the same level as the rest of the parking area. Ideally the passage is linked with a 'pedestrianised route'.

Wherever possible, provide a designated setting down point for disabled passengers that is close to the accessible entrances and includes a safe route to the building.

Ticket machines, where necessary for wheelchair users, should have controls no higher than 1.2m above the ground.

**Having parked, your customer can now proceed to the entrance of the building.**

**How can you make the journey easier and safer?**

### What to look out for

Changes in levels between the parking area and the pathways or pedestrian routes to the building.

Narrow or slippery pathways between the parking area and the building.

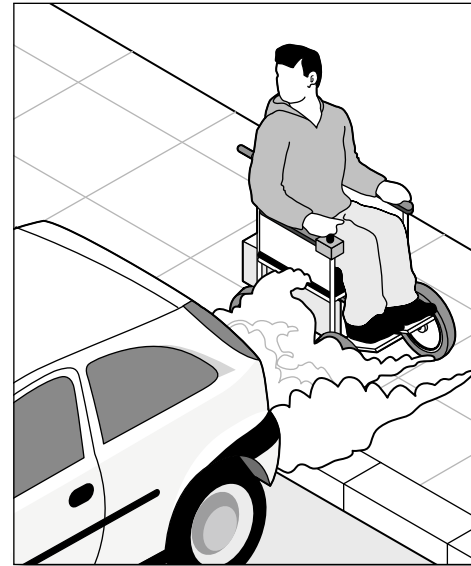
### Policy and management

Provide customer assistance – such as carrying shopping to the car – where this might be helpful.

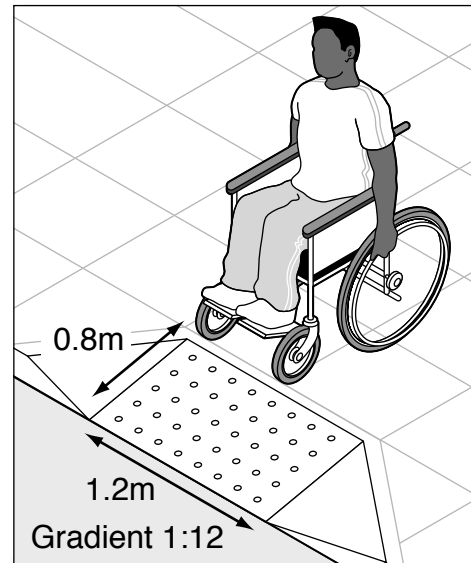
Assign responsibility for maintenance and cleaning of external areas and ensure that routes remain unobstructed.

Don't forget that disabled people who drive their own cars may prefer to disembark at the front entrance, providing someone is available to park their car for them. The entrance to the building should be level with the driveway, or at least step-free to provide a setting-down point. It also helps if the entrance is sheltered with a canopy.

If portable ramps are used, allocate responsibility for their storage and ensure training is provided for its use.



Avoid paths behind parked cars



Provide drop kerbs where necessary

### Equipment

Ensure that signage is clear, consistent and visibly located.

At steps, ramps, crossing points and main entrances, good lighting is essential – especially where levels change.

Portable ramps could be provided but only if permanent ones are impractical.

Provide suitable handrails to both sides of the ramps.

## Building and design

### A safe route

The pathway (or pedestrian route) to the building should be as short as possible and well lit after dark. As crossing the area may be hazardous, the pathway should go along the edge of the parking area. If possible, ensure that the path does not take customers behind parked cars.

If it is a long way to the building, or if wheelchair users have to go another way, directions should be clearly indicated. Older people, crutch-users and people with less strength appreciate benches at regular intervals, for example every 50m.

People with sight problems find it helpful if a pedestrian crossing point across a driveway is indicated by tactile paving.

The pedestrian route should be level with the parking area, or should be connected by a dropped kerb. A dropped kerb to get from

the parking area to the pedestrian route should be located so that it will not be obstructed by other vehicles such as delivery vans.

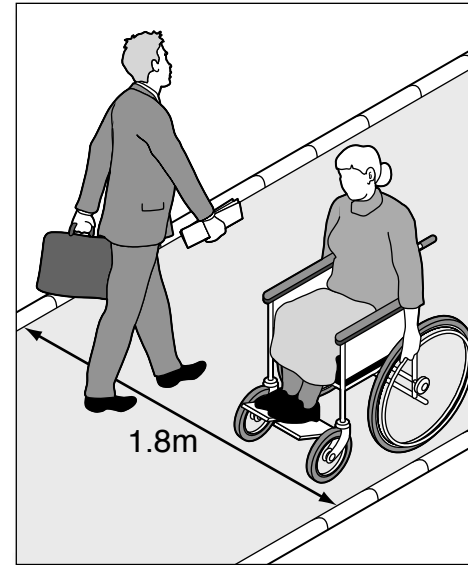
Where pedestrian and vehicle areas are on the same level, their separation should be clearly indicated, for example with decorative paving.

The pathway should be surfaced with a material that is not slippery, unstable or easily damaged.

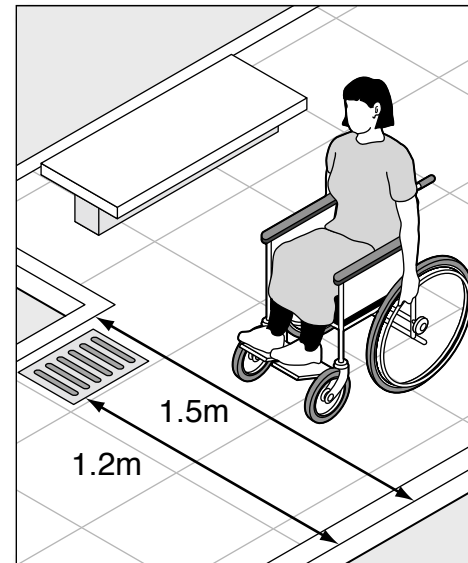
Pathways which have gravel, or which are not cleared in winter, can cause problems for people who use wheelchairs, crutches or sticks.

For someone in a wheelchair to get by, or go side-by-side with a pedestrian, the pathway should be 1.8m wide. Where this is not possible, 1.5m is acceptable, but do ensure that there are places for wheelchairs to pass each other that are 1.8m wide and 2m long.

Drains and gulleys should be placed away from the centre of the path to leave enough room



Pathway between 1.5m and 1.8m



Grid bars perpendicular to pathway

for a person in a wheelchair to get by. Grates in a grid form are recommended. Those with parallel bars placed so that the bars are perpendicular to the path of the wheelchairs will ensure safe passage.

**The customer is now at the entrance of your building.**

**Are there any obstacles to actually getting in?**

### What to look out for

If there is no ramp as an alternative to a set of stairs, wheelchair users will require assistance or may not be able to enter.

If only some entrances are accessible these should be clearly signed.

A ramp which is too steep or which does not have handrails on both sides is dangerous. A staircase which is too steep, or which has no handrails, is also an obstacle for children, older people, people with a weight problem and customers carrying packages, to name but a few.

### Policy and management

If a ramp is not available, offer customer assistance only if reception staff have been trained in manual handling.

Ensure that steps and ramps are kept clean, in good condition, and free of obstructions. If a stairlift is installed, ensure that it is not obstructed, for example blocked with goods deliveries.

### Equipment

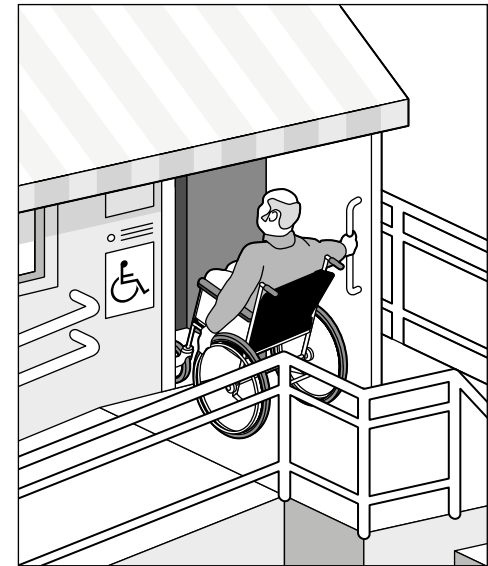
Both ramps and stairs should be effectively lit at night and, if possible, sheltered.

Distinguish the edges of steps from their background, for example by a white line on the nose or on the wall/stair junction and/or by introducing change of texture.

A portable ramp, though not a permanent solution, can be used where there is not a big difference in level between the door threshold and the ground (a few steps for instance). Portable ramps and their specification are available from specialist suppliers.

If it is not possible to introduce a ramp or make modifications to the stairs, a buzzer or intercom could be placed at the bottom of the steps to inform reception staff of waiting visitors. The button should be between 75cm and 100cm from the ground. A wheelchair stair or platform lift, if ramps are not possible, should be considered.

For people with partial hearing, an entry-phone system with a visual 'enter' indicator would be helpful.



Independent access

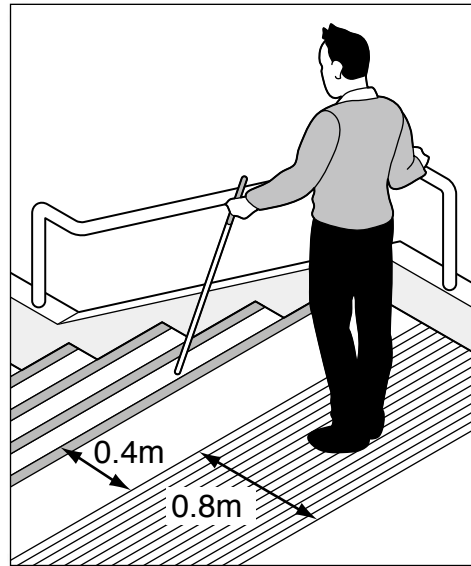
## Building and design

Disabled people naturally want to use the main entrance to the building like anyone else. If, however, the main entrance cannot be made accessible, another public entrance should be provided. Directional signage including the wheelchair pictogram will be helpful.

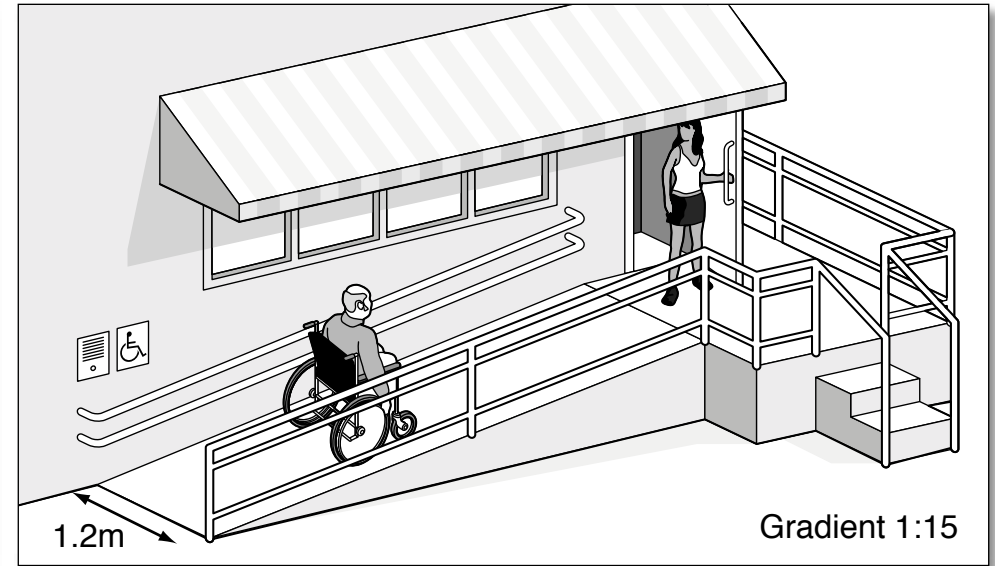
A person with sight problems detects that they are at the bottom of a staircase when their stick hits the first step. At the top of a staircase, however, a tactile strip will indicate a descending staircase and potential hazard.

People who use sticks often prefer to take the stairs rather than using a ramp that may involve extending walking distance. If there are more than two steps there should be handrails on both sides.

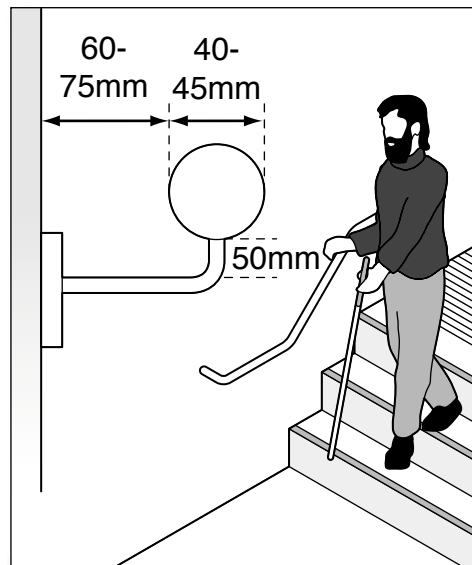
A handrail should be solidly attached and go along the entire length of the stairs, even on the landings. The ends at both top and bottom of the stairs should be



Tactile strip warns of potential hazard



A ramp should have a gentle slope



Easy-to-grip handrail

extended and curved downwards or towards the wall for safety. Handrails should be easy to grip, not cold to the touch and contrast in colour to their surroundings. They need to be 40mm to 45mm in diameter and 60mm to 75mm from the wall.

A step should be 15cm to 17cm high and no less than 28cm deep. For people with sight problems each step nosing should be distinguishable by contrasting brightness or texture.

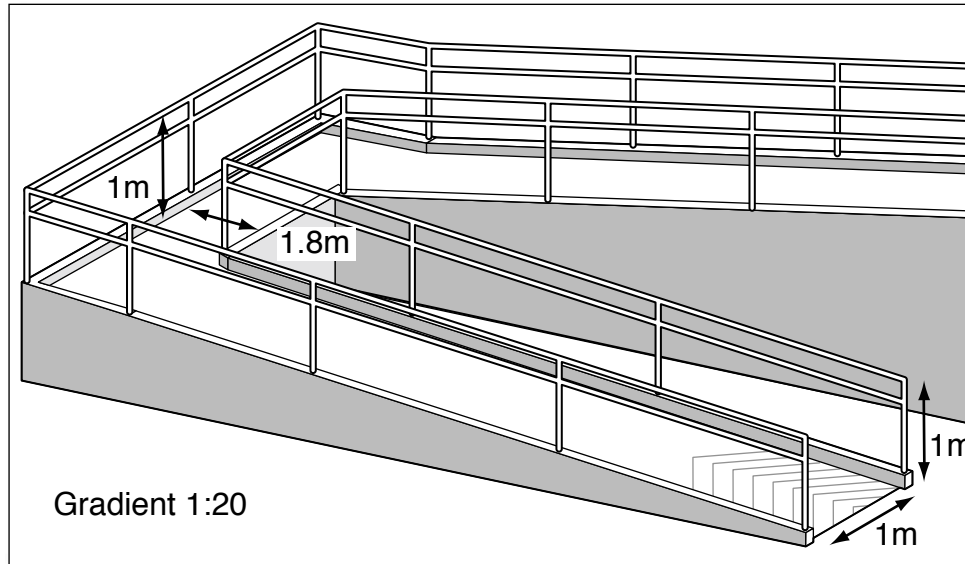
If a stairway has more than ten steps, landings should be included to allow people to rest, if required.



## Arriving at the building Outside ramps and stairs

As an alternative to stairs, a ramp can be added. Ideally the gradient should be 1:20, i.e. for each length of 20cm there is a 1cm increase in height. A steeper gradient of 1:12 is acceptable for shorter ramp distances of 2m. A 5m ramp needs to have a ramp gradient of 1:15. No ramp flight should be longer than 10m and have an incline of more than 50cm.

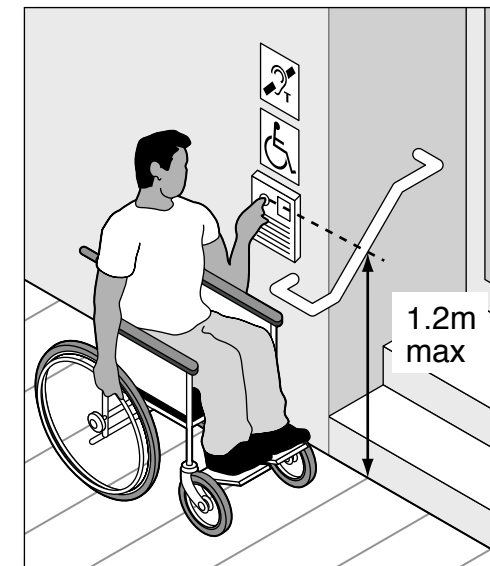
A ramp should therefore have a gentle slope with a landing every 5m to 10m, depending on the gradient (1:12 is steep and 1:20 gentle) and length. There should also be a landing wherever the ramp changes direction. Ramps should have an unobstructed width of 1.5m minimum. Where a wheelchair user would not be able to see from one end of the ramp to the other, or there are three or more flights to the ramp, ensure that intermediate landings are at least 1.8m wide. This enables two wheelchair users to pass one another.



Double handrail on both sides

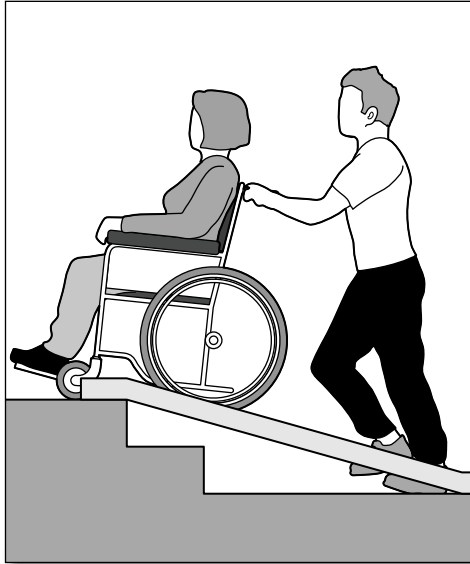
If the entrance door opens outwards, the landing at the top of the ramp should be wide enough to accommodate the wheelchair and able to open the door without any difficulty. The landing needs to be at least 1.2m long in addition to the space needed for the door to open.

Like stairs, the ramp should have a solidly attached handrail on both sides, sturdy uprights, and be kerbed along both sides to prevent chair wheels from going off course. These kerbs also help brake the wheelchair in case of emergency. Instead of kerbs, a very low guardrail, not far from the surface of the ramp, could serve the same purpose.



Buzzer at the bottom of the steps





A portable ramp

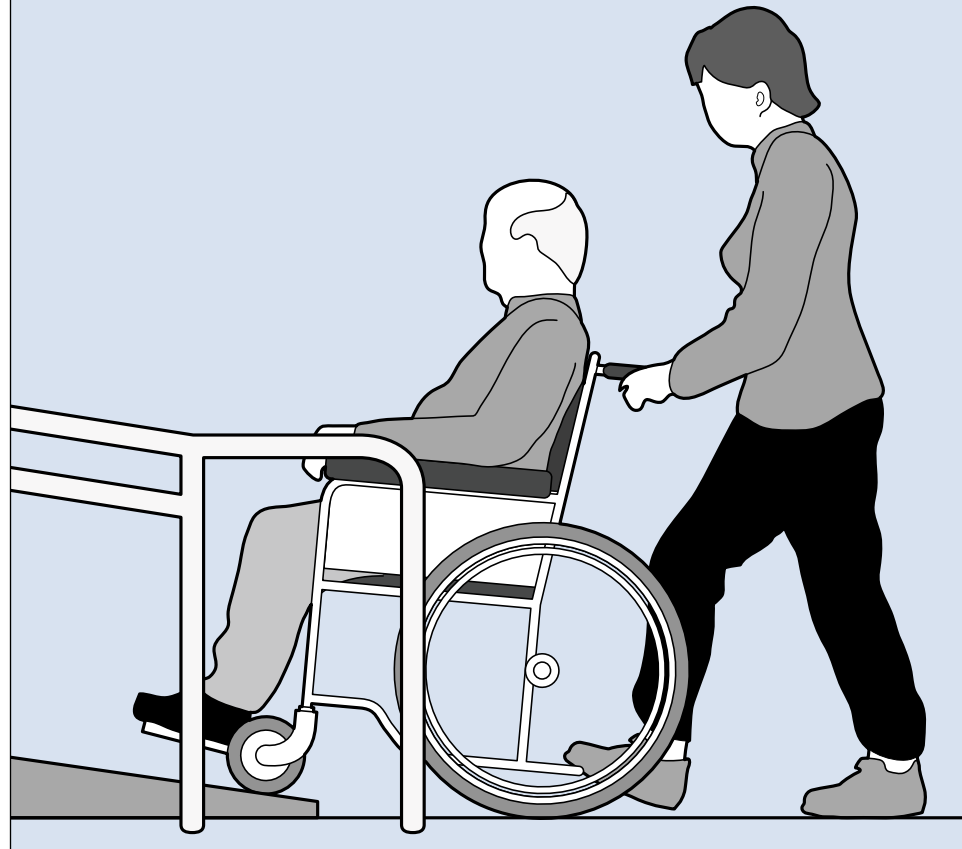
The ramp surface needs to be slip resistant, especially when wet, hazard free, and of a colour that contrasts visually with that of the landings.

If the ramp is not sheltered from the weather, landings should have a cross-fall gradient (maximum 1:50) to help drain water and reduce the effect of wet conditions.

Ensure that ramps are well lit to aid visibility.

When assisting someone in a wheelchair up a ramp, you may have to tilt the chair backwards slightly in order to stop the wheels from butting the edge of the ramp, thus throwing the person forward. When assisting a person in a wheelchair to go

down a steep ramp it is safer to go down backwards. If the ramp has a gentle slope, you should ensure that the person is comfortable and not sliding forward in the chair. Always ask the person how they prefer to be assisted.



Assisting using a ramp

Where a ramp is placed depends on the structure of the building. A ramp parallel to the front of the building usually takes up less space than a protruding one.

If there is only one step up to the entrance door, it could be replaced with a short ramp or the path might be raised.

**Your customer is now at the door.**

**Just how easy is it to get in?**

### What to look out for

There should be enough room in front of the doorway for a wheelchair user to negotiate an entry.

A door threshold that is too high may require tilting of the wheelchair, increasing risk of an accident.

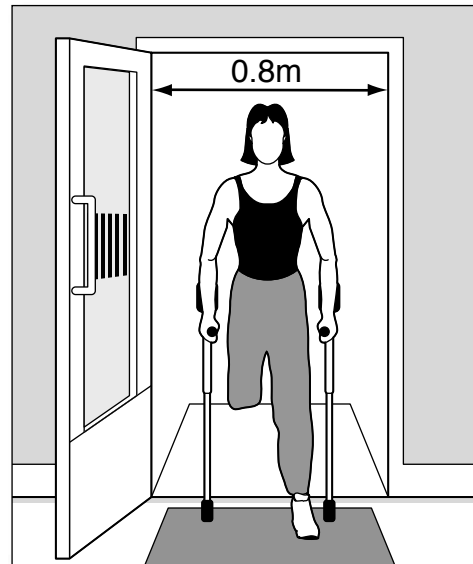
A heavily sprung door can be difficult to open.

Some doorways are too narrow for wheelchair users and are awkward for crutch-users.

### Policy and management

If the main entrance cannot be adapted or is unsuitable for use by disabled people, investigate an alternative entrance to your premises (e.g. a fire exit), or negotiate access through adjoining premises.

If the accessible entrance is not the main entrance, provide a map on any publicity literature and indicate nearby parking.



Ensure doors are wide enough

Ensure that main and alternative entrances are kept clean and clear of obstructions.

Provide staff training in assistance and greeting, and especially in emergency evacuation procedures for disabled people.

### Equipment

Install clearly visible directional signs to the accessible entrances from the point of arrival.

Check that the door matting is safe, securely fitted and level with the floor, i.e. within a matwell.

Provide a bell for assistance if the entrance is not immediately accessible.

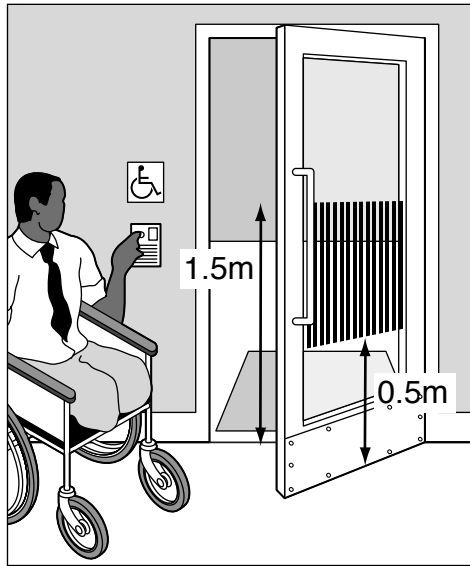
Door entry systems need to be accessible to people with hearing and speech impairments.

### Building and design

Anyone should be able to open a door independently. The number of doors should be kept to a minimum or held open where possible. The clear opening width of an entrance door should be no less than 80cm (75cm is acceptable for existing buildings), wider if possible, to accommodate people who use wheelchairs or crutches. Revolving doors present access problems for a wide range of users.

Automatically opening and closing doors, either hinged or sliding, are the ideal solution, but the door should close slowly to give enough time to get through. Such doors are controlled by a button or by an electronic eye. The control button should be on the same side, both inside and outside, between 75cm and 100cm from the ground, easily seen and illuminated at night if appropriate.

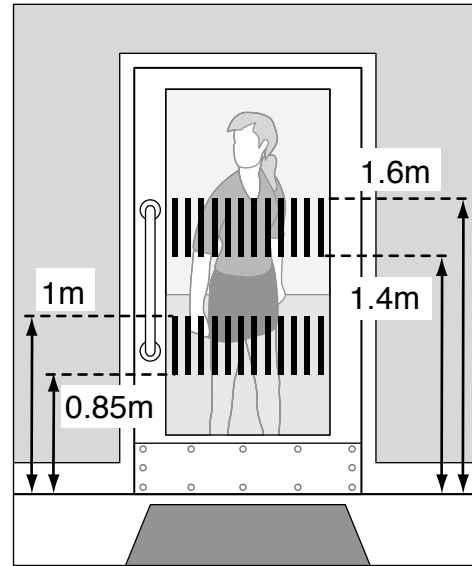
A frequently used door should have a kick-plate (40cm in depth) at the bottom to stop the footrests



Kick-plate and push buttons

of a wheelchair or trolley from causing damage – footrests are often used to open the door. It also helps if a door has a vision panel no higher than 90cm from the floor so that people, including wheelchair users, can see through safely to the other side.

To prevent people with sight problems from bumping into a glass entrance door, it should be marked with an easily distinguishable strip/design between 50cm and 150cm from the floor. Two separately



Easily distinguished strips

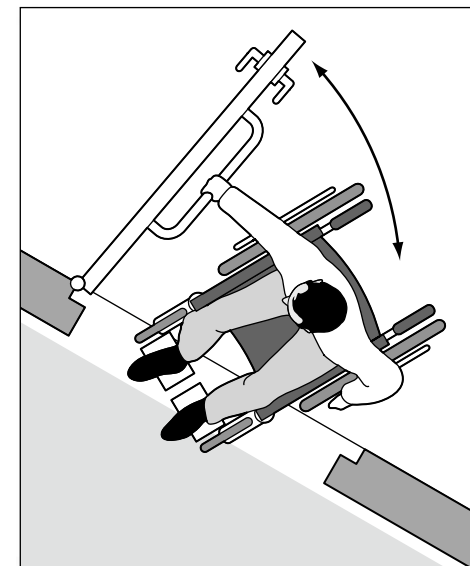
distinguishable designs can also be used at 85cm to 100cm and 1.4m to 1.6m from the floor.

The threshold (i.e. raised threshold or waterbar) of a doorway should be no higher than 12mm, otherwise it may be an obstacle for a wheelchair user to enter. An economical way of overcoming a threshold is to put down a bevelled piece of wood on either side.

All hinged internal doors should open wide enough to allow

sufficient room for a wheelchair user to get through with a clear opening of 80cm (75cm in an existing building is acceptable). Where space is very restricted, changing the direction in which the door opens may increase the width of the door opening and its access. Cranked hinges further increase available space for passage.

All internal glass doors or doors with vision panels also need to have a pattern or design on the glass to ensure that they are



Sufficient room and pull handles

clearly visible to people with sight problems.

The effort required to open a door can easily be kept to a minimum by adjusting the closing mechanism – this must not exceed 20N. The handle should be at 1m above ground level, and needs to be easy to grip, not cold to the touch and contrast in tone and colour to its surroundings. The various types of handles shown are all easy to use. In addition to the handle, a horizontal door pull will help a wheelchair user to close the door after entry.

Like proper door handles, control buttons for an automatically opening door should be easy to reach and use and should not require much strength to operate.

**Your customer is now in the building approaching the counter or reception desk.**

## Arriving at the building Checklist

### Parking

- Do you have any designated parking spaces for disabled people?
- Are 5% of parking spaces designated?
- Are the designated spaces as near the main entrance as possible?
- Does the size and layout of the spaces meet the recommended specifications?
- Is the designated parking clearly indicated both at the entrance and at the bay itself?
- Is it sheltered from the weather?
- Are any barrier controls easy to operate from the car?
- Are PA announcements supplemented by visual indicators?

**Cost comment:** Providing new car parking can be expensive, whereas improving existing facilities may be low cost.

### Getting to the building

- Is the pathway from car park to building entrance as direct as possible?
- Is it clearly signposted and well lit?
- Is there a dropped kerb or slope between the parking area and the pathway?
- Is there tactile paving at pedestrian crossings on the pathway?
- Is the pathway surfaced with a suitable material?
- Is the pathway/external ramp kept clear in winter?
- Is the pathway wide enough?
- Are grates on the pathway correctly placed?
- Are there resting places on the pathway if it is long?
- Are your reception staff trained in assisting wheelchair users who drive their own cars to the entrance, e.g. are they ready to arrange for the car to be driven to the car park?

**Cost comment:** The cost of upgrading 'priority' paths can be met from landscaping budgets. Annual costs for maintenance and clearing should also be considered for improving access. If built with maintenance schedules in advance, costs can usually be maintained.

### Outside ramps and stairs

- If you have a permanent ramp, does it meet the recommended specifications? Does the ramp need a landing?
- Is the ramp/stairway adequately lit?
- Does the ramp have handrails/kerbs/guardrails?
- Is the surface of the ramp slip resistant?
- Can a wheelchair user easily open the door on the ramp landing?
- Is the entrance clearly indicated?
- Is there a tactile strip at the top of any external steps or stairways?
- If there are more than two steps, are there handrails?
- Do handrails meet the recommended specifications?
- Do steps meet the recommended specifications?
- If there are more than ten steps, are/is there a landing(s)?
- Do you have/need a buzzer at the bottom of the steps for wheelchair users to inform reception of their arrival?
- Does the intercom meet the height specification?
- Do you have an entry-phone system with an induction loop?

**Cost comment:** Most step improvements are low to medium cost, relative to safety. The cost of ramps depends on their length and height.

### Entrances

- Can your entrance door be opened independently?
- Does it meet the width specification?
- Is an automatic door a preferable alternative?
- Do the automatic doors meet the recommended specifications?
- Do your doors have kick-plates that meet the recommended specifications?
- Do your doors have vision panels?
- Do glass doors have contrasting strips at eye height?
- Do the thresholds of your doors meet the recommended specifications?
- Are your hinged doors wide enough for wheelchair users?
- Do your doors open in the right direction?
- Do your doors meet the recommended weight specifications?
- Do door handles and door pulls meet the recommended specifications?
- Is door matting set into a matwell?
- If difficulties might be experienced, is there a bell for assistance which will be responded to?

**Cost comment:** Minor improvements to doors are usually low cost. Automatic doors are more expensive, but power-operated equipment fitted to existing doors will keep the costs down.



# 2

## Inside the building

You will want to minimise the number of requests from customers for staff assistance by making the built environment as user friendly as possible. The better quality your information, signs and equipment, the less pressure there is on staff.

Larger WC/unisex cubicles can tend to become storage areas for cleaning materials. Maintain the benefit of your investment by keeping accessible WCs clear for disabled users.

Negotiate with your phone and vending machine companies over equipment. You have a shared interest in ensuring as many customers as possible use them.

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Reception desks

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Moving around inside the building

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Getting from one floor to another

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The workplace

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Toilets

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Telephones

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Vending machines

---

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Checklist

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### What to look out for

High staff counters can obscure sight of a wheelchair user, child or someone of small stature.

Wheelchair users (if asked to fill in a form) need knee clearance under desks and a writing surface at an appropriate height.

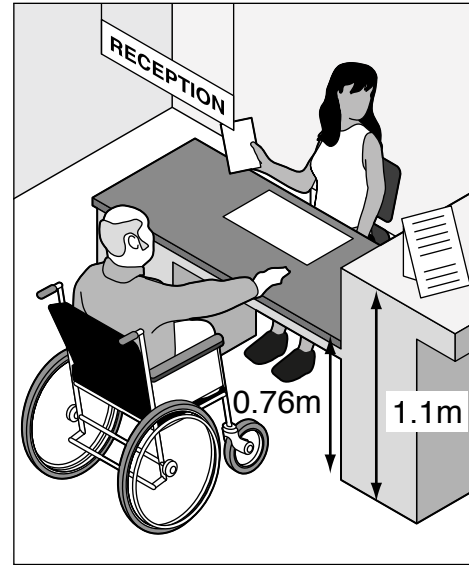
The height of the counter should be suitable for everyone, be they standing or sitting.

### Policy and management

At the booking stage, ensure that staff ask about any additional access requirements. Provide information leaflets with clear text, within easy reach of the customer. Consider providing large print leaflets and/or simple text and picture versions.

Hotel receptionists should ideally have information about the location and accessibility of places such as tourist offices, restaurants and entertainment spots.

Ensure that security, reception and other front-line staff have training in welcoming disabled customers, and company policy regarding the DDA.



A dual height counter is beneficial

### Equipment

Provide chairs for people who may require frequent rest.

The window over the counter will require an induction loop, which amplifies the voices of both the receptionist and client. These are installed for the benefit of people with hearing aids. Don't forget to advertise the availability of such equipment with the appropriate international symbol. Providing a pen and paper for communicating is a possible alternative.

Ensure that lighting in the reception area is effective, including to the faces of staff in order to assist with lip reading and for those people who have sight problems.



## Building and design

The space separating the reception desk from the entrance should be free of obstacles such as chairs, plants or stairs.

People on either side of a desk need to see each other. An information or reception desk on two levels would be effective.



Facilitating communication with an induction loop

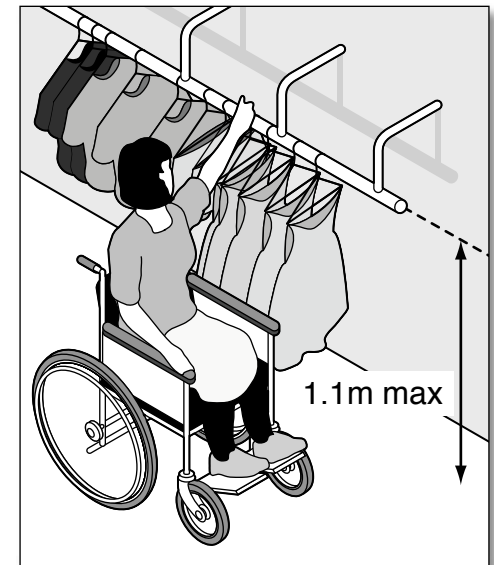
As an example, the lower level could be a hinged surface that is raised for use by a person in a wheelchair. The desk should also have its own local lighting. If the customer has obvious difficulty writing, offer assistance.

Security glass between the visitor and staff creates various problems in communicating by sight or hearing. Proper lighting can reduce reflections.

If there is a customer comments form to fill in, include a section that enables the customer to say if he or she has any particular requirements.

The cloakroom counter should be lower than the reception desk to make it easier for people with heavy items.

If there is an accessible clothes-hanging area for customers' use, there should be enough room to move about in it. Pegs, coat racks and bars for hangers could be at two different heights, one at not more than 1.1m for wheelchair users.



Provide enough room to move about



Seek feedback from customers

**Your customer is now ready to move around the building.**

### What to look out for

Signs for the lift and for the toilets should be clear and posted in a sensible place.

Carpeting that is poorly attached to the floor can cause accidents.

If there is not enough room or an area is inaccessible for customers to move freely about they may miss out on some of your services, for example a drink on the terrace.

### Policy and management

Train staff to guide and assist customers where necessary, and in particular as part of emergency evacuation procedures.

Plan routine cleaning and maintenance to ensure that all surfaces remain in good repair and are well lit.

Ensure all areas remain free of moveable obstructions, for example chairs.

If all routes within the building are not equally accessible, identify the most accessible routes, prioritise them, and signpost your customers along the route.

### Welcoming

When greeting a person with sight problems ensure that you speak on approach, especially before physical contact is made.

If the visitor wishes to be guided, position yourself closely when offering your arm. Relax your arm at your side as a neutral position for walking.

On route it may be useful to indicate key facilities such as toilets, cloakroom or public telephones.

### Equipment

Colour and tonal contrasts can assist those with sight problems. For example, colour contrast key features such as doors and potentially hazardous permanent features such as columns.

Reposition any fire equipment that obstructs corridor widths.

When a doorway is too narrow for both, indicate this physically by moving your guiding arm position to behind your back.

Where guiding on stairs, it is important to announce the top and bottom step and to indicate where landings are coming up.

If guiding to a seat, ensure that you place the visitor's hand on the backrest. This can apply to tables and seating also, where the edge of the table is the first reference point.



Relax arm parallel to body

## Building equipment

### Signage

Obvious signage in a building should help people find their way around easily. In a large building, such as a museum, a large hotel or an auditorium, a map should be located near the entrance and/or at reception.

People with sight problems may find tactile, embossed maps useful for orientation, especially where the building is unfamiliar. These are best made available as pre-visit information.

A matt finish on the surface of a sign will avoid reflections otherwise visibility will be reduced. There should also be good lighting on signs.

Information conveyed on maps and signs should be in upper and lower case lettering without serifs, for example Arial. The lettering should also contrast with the background.



Provide clear, consistent signage. Use accompanying icons where appropriate



Use upper and lower case lettering

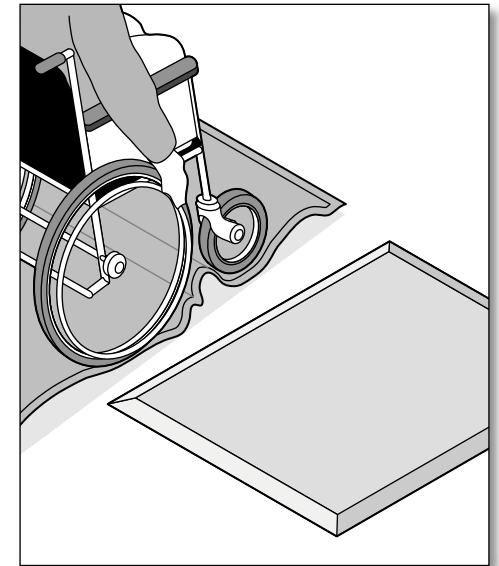
As a general rule, the height of lettering should be increased by 10mm for every metre of viewing distance. No external lettering should be less than 22mm high. The lettering size for a wall mounted directory, such as at reception, should be a minimum height of 15mm to 25mm.

Wall-mounted tactile signs with embossed letters or numbers should be positioned within easy reach, i.e. 1.4m to 1.7m from floor level, and in a consistent manner.

### Floor surfaces

Floor surfaces should be even so as not to hinder the movement of wheelchairs or people unsteady on their feet. If the floor-covering is rubber, ceramic, tiles or wood, the risk of falling can be reduced with a slip-resistant floor-covering.

Avoid high gloss finishes as these can remain slippery and can also produce glare and visual confusion. Carpeting should have a short pile and be firmly attached to the floor. Mats with tapered edges minimise risks.



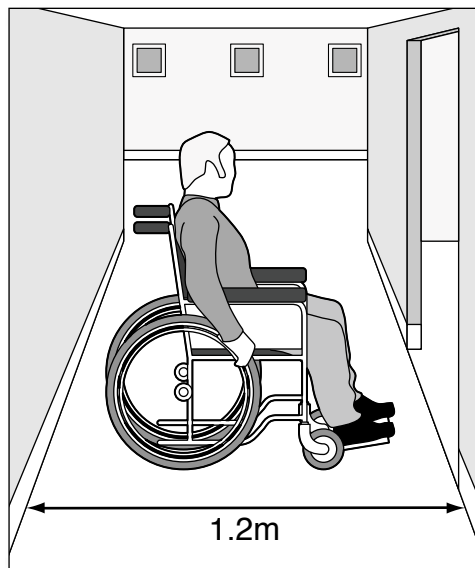
Mats with tapered edges minimise risk

### Corridors

A corridor should have regular lighting with no dark areas and with no obstacles at the bottom of walls. It should be at least 90cm wide to allow the passage of a wheelchair. To enable a wheelchair user to make a half turn through a doorway, the corridor should be at least 1.2m wide.

Ideally, a very long corridor will have somewhere to sit every 50m or so to allow people to stop and rest.

## Inside the building Moving around inside the building



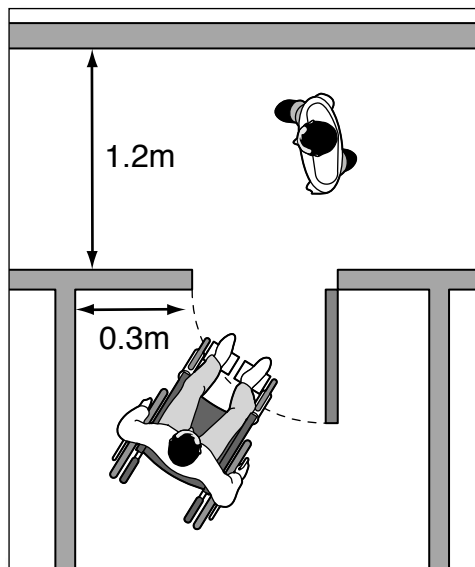
Allow room for turning

Doors across corridors need a window or a vision panel that extends down sufficiently to the wheelchair user. The bottom of the panel should be no higher than 50cm from the floor, extending up to at least 1.5m. If the door is made of glass, there need to be two separately distinguishable designs on the glass; 85cm to 100cm from the floor, and 1.4m to 1.6m from the floor.

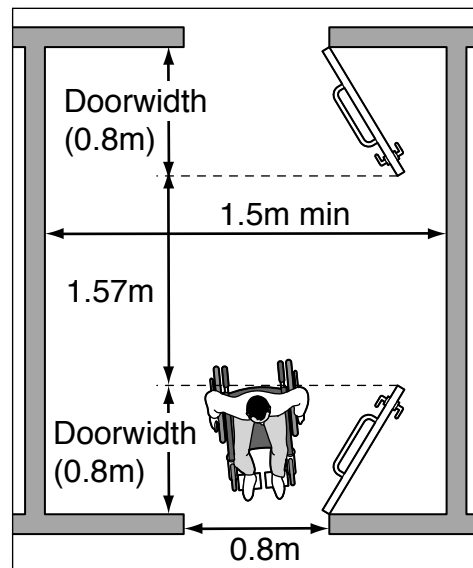
Hinged doors should not open outwards onto the corridor but should open inwards to avoid collision with anyone going down the corridor.

Doors should, ideally, be set back from a corridor which is particularly busy. Doors opening onto stairwells should be clearly signed to reduce risk of accidents.

Doors can be difficult to use, especially if they are closed by springs. Hold them open if possible; even some fire doors can be held back on special catches linked to the fire alarm system.



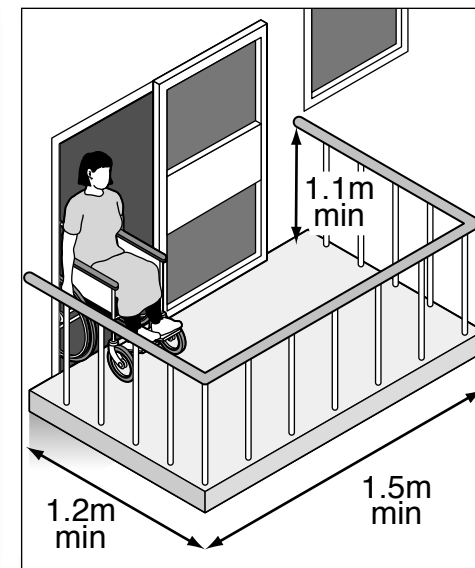
Avoid doors opening into corridor



Allow enough space for wheelchairs

Wheelchair users need sufficient room on both sides of doorways but especially on the pull side. Here there should always be a distance of 30cm free of obstacles on the side of the door handle.

The length of the lobby needs to be 1.57m plus the total door widths for doors opening into the lobby. If the lobby is less than 1.5m wide, the distance between the doors should be at least 2m.



An accessible balcony

If the building has terraces or balconies they should have sufficient space for manoeuvring a wheelchair. The threshold of the door opening onto the balcony should be no higher than 12mm. Sliding doors are best because they allow for maximum use of balcony space. The outside area should have a top railing 1.1m high for safety reasons.

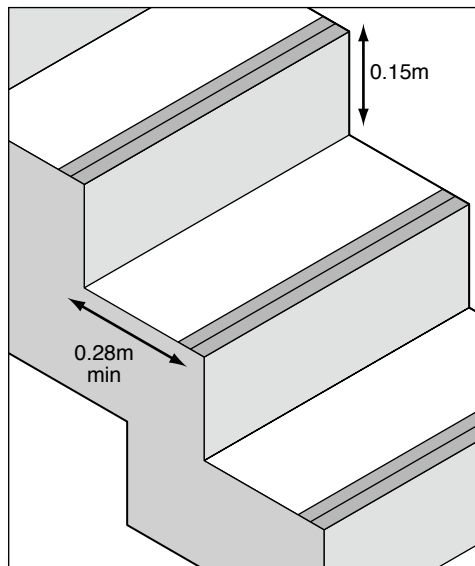
**Having moved around downstairs your customer must now go upstairs. How?**

<p><b>What to look out for</b></p>	<p><b>Policy and management</b></p>	<p><b>Equipment</b></p>	<p><b>Equipment</b></p>
<p>How will wheelchair users get upstairs?</p>	<p>Provide customer service at entrance level.</p>	<p>Ensure that the lift door closure has an adequate delay to allow wheelchair users, parents with buggies or elderly people to enter safely.</p>	<p>Provide a temporary ramp or other alternative if a permanent access solution is currently not feasible.</p>
<p>Is there enough room outside and inside lifts?</p>	<p>Consider locating a customer service point at entrance level if access to upper floors is not possible.</p>	<p>Train staff to respond to assistance buttons with speed and courtesy.</p>	<p>In the absence of a lift, at least provide hand rails on both sides of stairs.</p>
<p>Some people prefer to use stairs rather than the lift, even though it takes them longer.</p>	<p>Ensure good maintenance and cleaning of lifts and ensure that you have alternative arrangements in place in case of lift failure, for example signage and staff procedures.</p>	<p>Consider how services provided above ground level can be made available to disabled people if access cannot be improved?</p>	
<p>The absence of a handrail may prevent a customer from otherwise using stairs and steps.</p>	<p>Install an internal telephone near the entrance and at a height suitable for wheelchair users, clearly indicating the assistance button.</p>		

### Building and design

Staircases connecting floors should be designed in keeping with the principles for outside staircases. Between the flights of stairs there should be landings and the staircase should have securely fixed handrails.

Each flight should have a maximum of 12 steps. Avoid using single steps as these may present an added obstacle.



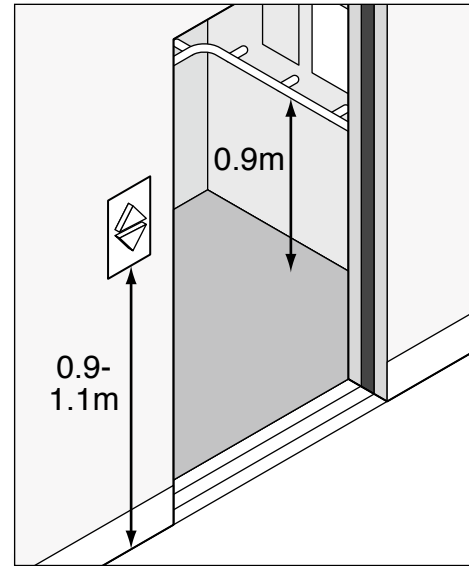
The correct height of steps

### Steps

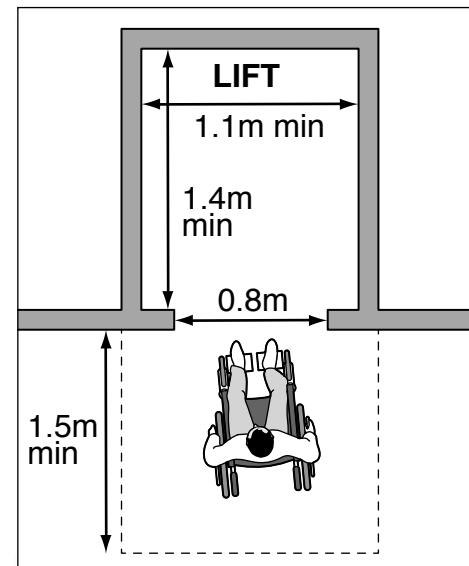
The strip across each tread should contrast with the main colour of the step. This helps people with sight problems judge the height and number of the steps. Risers should ideally be no more than 15cm high but 17cm is acceptable for an existing stair. Treads should be no less than 28cm deep. But 25cm is acceptable for an existing stair.

At the top and bottom of the steps, a wider strip of a contrasting colour/texture of slip-resistant material will indicate to people with sight problems that a staircase and/or potential hazard is near.

Where there is only one staircase, installing a lift is the best way to provide another way of going from one floor to another.



Control buttons at the right height



Lift floor should be slip resistant

### Lifts

A passenger lift may be installed inside or outside the building. If it is inside, depending on the number of floors, a lift shaft will have to be constructed. On each floor an opening will have to be cut and a door added. The lift shaft could also be built on the outside wall of the building. New passenger lifts can be designed to meet emergency evacuation standards.

Many existing lifts can also be converted for this purpose.

The floor level can be marked with a number located close to the lift doorframes on each floor and directly opposite an exit. The number should be located at between 1.4m and 1.7m from floor level and ideally in relief, i.e. raised from the surface.

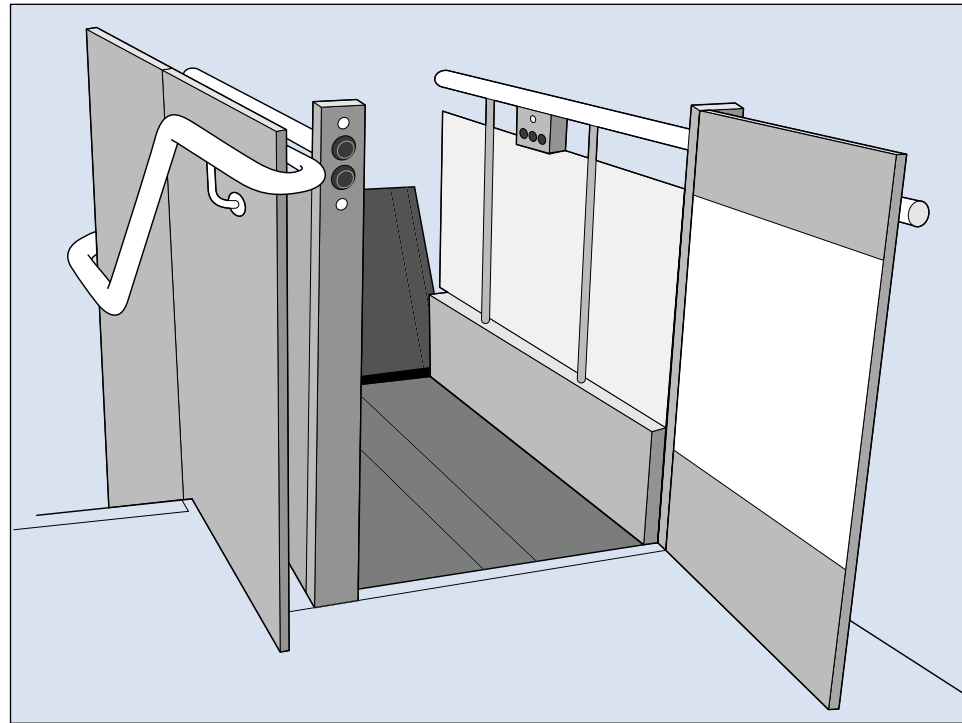
There should be a clear landing space of at least 1.5m by 1.5m in front of the lift door, and the area should be well lit.

The lift location should be signed and the lift car should be large enough for someone using a wheelchair and one other person.

The doorway should be wide enough for a person using a wheelchair. A handrail on two sides of the lift car, at a height of 90cm, will provide helpful support. The floor of the lift should be slip resistant and have tone and colour contrast with the lobby floor.

Outer control buttons should be between 90cm and 110cm, and inner control buttons should be between 90cm and 120cm. Numbers and symbols on the buttons should be raised and bold enough to be easily identifiable by a person with sight problems.

Both a floor announcer and a visual signal should indicate the arrival of the lift, to both the people inside and those waiting outside the lift.



An unenclosed platform lift between half levels

Lifts that have been installed or converted for use in emergency evacuations should have an independent power supply and a communication link to a control room or management office.

A platform lift is less costly than a normal lift, and can be advantageous if there is limited room. The vertically moving platform lift requires a minimum area of 105cm by 125cm. The controls need to be operated by the application of continuous pressure and designed to prevent unauthorised use. It is possible to provide additional controls for people with manual dexterity problems.

An automatic stop-mechanism is standard. An open platform lift is often used for overcoming a half flight of stairs, with a maximum height of 2m. Over 2m requires an enclosed lift and it must be installed in accordance with British Standard BS 6440:1999 'Powered lifting platforms for use by disabled persons'.

**And now for some of the facilities your customer will be looking for.**



### What to look out for

Check that the basic physical requirements for your employee are met first.

Research the need for any special equipment, who supplies it and how it is maintained.

Managing access means not only solving problems, but also ensuring they continue to work effectively.

### Policy and management

A sudden change in an employee's ability to get around may require a quick response, even if temporary. This is where good management can be most effective.

Being located close to entrance points, lifts, WCs etc will minimise unnecessary travel distances for staff with walking difficulties. Arranging for a desk near a window may help staff with sight problems. It will be vital to agree an emergency escape plan with any employee who requires assistance.

### Equipment

Even in the best-designed buildings, individual adjustments will be necessary and these usually relate to individual use of equipment. Anticipate the need to deal with these adjustments effectively and promptly.



'Task' lighting can be useful

General lighting levels in offices are not suitable for all but can be supplemented by 'task' lighting. Blind people using talking software and/or Braille printers will require acoustic screens and/or printer housing. Be prepared to provide appropriate chairs, keyboards and other computer equipment. Vibrating pagers are available for employees unable to hear fire alarms.

### Building and design

Providing physical access for disabled customers and clients will usually also meet the requirements of disabled employees. Check for strengths and weaknesses of your premises by undertaking an access audit.

If a main entrance cannot be altered, an alternative may need to be used. Ensure that a disabled employee can make use of such arrangements independently, without relying on other staff, particularly out of office hours. For instance, removing unnecessary furniture helps improve circulation to and at the workspace.

Discuss your escape plan, including disabled employees, with the local fire officer.

Ensuring accessibility in the workplace is only part of the employer's responsibility under the Disability Discrimination Act. Other recommended publications produced by the Employers' Forum on Disability are listed on page 79.



**What to look out for**

Is there enough room in the toilet? If a WC cubicle is too small and the door opens inwards, a wheelchair user might be able to get in, but not then able to close the door.

Are handrails fitted to provide support for wheelchair users, those with a weight problem or older people?

Are the mirror, hand dryer, toilet roll holder and towel dispenser at the correct location and height?

**Policy and management**

Disabled people should be able to access toilet facilities as easily as non-disabled people.

It is important to take into consideration how long it will take a disabled person to reach an accessible toilet when deciding its location. A wheelchair user should not have to travel for more than 40m on the same floor to get to an accessible WC. If accessible toilets cannot be provided, arrange for an alternative to be available nearby.

Ensure that accessible toilet facilities are clearly signed.

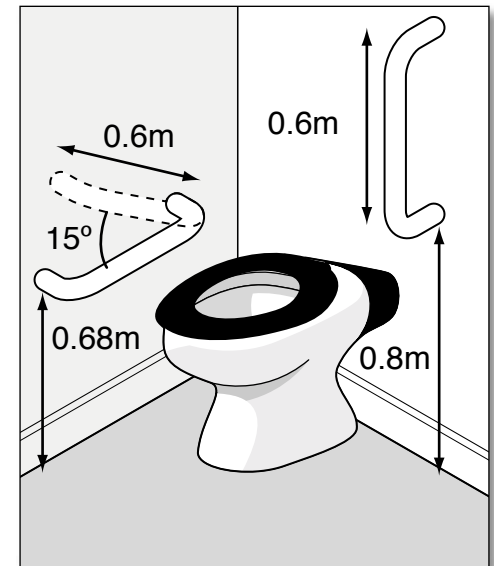
Ensure that staff are trained to respond to assistance alarms and give emergency assistance when required.

Ensure accessible toilets are not used as storage spaces.

**Equipment**

Provide an assistance alarm in the WC that has both visual and auditory alerts which are independent from the fire alarm alerts. The alarm needs to have a reset control that a wheelchair user can access. The alarm should be activated using red pull cords with red 5cm bangles at 10cm and 90cm above the floor. This is particularly important so that a person who has fallen can activate the alarm from floor level.

Make sure that fittings, lights etc are clearly distinguishable and switches are within reach. Slip resistant floors are essential.



Handrails must be fitted

### Building and design

At least one accessible toilet should be available wherever toilets are provided for the use of customers or the public. Unisex WCs allow a partner/assistant of the opposite sex to provide assistance to a wheelchair user.

These WC cubicles need a 1.5m turning circle to enable a wheelchair user to turn around easily.

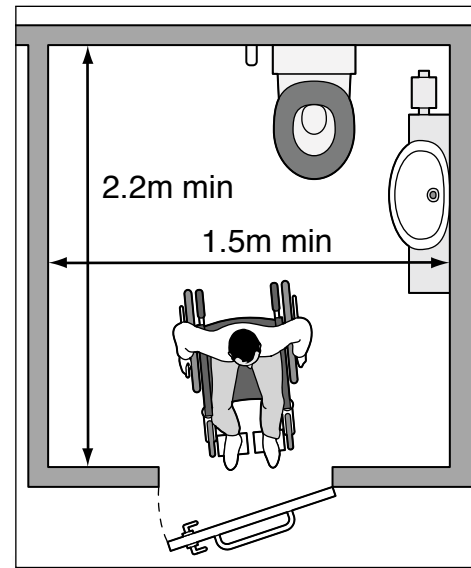
Ensure that toilet facilities are clearly signed from key information points such as the reception and lift areas.

A WC cubicle should measure at least 1.5m by at least 2.2m. The door should have a clear width of at least 80cm and open outwards. It should not, however, severely obstruct circulation in the adjoining lobby or area.

If there are three rather narrow cubicles, two could be turned into a larger, single one for wheelchair users and others who require additional space.

One WC and one partition would have to be taken out, the door widened, and the direction in which the door opens changed.

Do not keep accessible toilets locked unless all public toilets are also kept locked.



Cubicle door should open outwards

Access may be required to allow emergency assistance, usually by turning the indicator bolt from the outside.

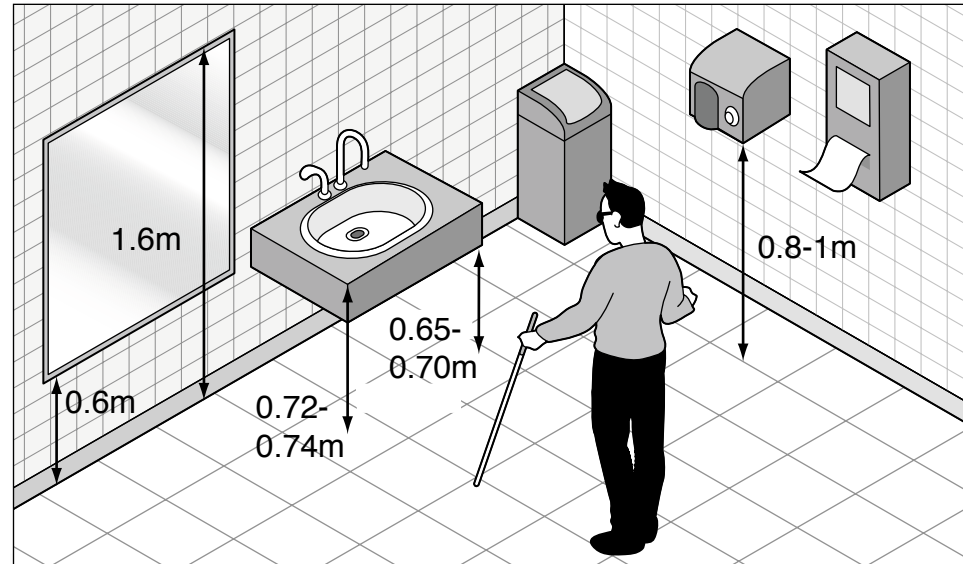
Near the WC there should be at least one grab rail, preferably two. The traditional floor-mounted WC with a cistern next to the wall is better than the wall-hung WC as it is more solid and provides back support. There should be enough room to move in front of, and to one side of, the WC to allow transfer between wheelchair and WC.

The centre of the WC should be 50cm away from the nearest side wall with the grab rail and/or sink.

The toilet paper dispenser should be within easy reach. Toilet paper on a roll is easier to use than folded pieces of paper.

All fittings such as paper dispensers, hand dryers, soap dispensers etc should be as easy as possible to use by people with any impairment that affects the movement of, or strength in, the hands or arms.

Wash basins and other fittings should contrast in tone and colour to the walls as this is helpful to people with sight problems. In other words, here's a chance to get away from conventional all white toilets!



Provide facilities that everyone can use

Wheelchair users should be able to get to the front of the washbasin easily. The edge of the washbasin should be 72cm to 74cm above the floor.

Clearance of between 65cm and 70cm at the edge of the washbasin is needed so that a wheelchair user can get to it comfortably and turn on the taps.

The surround should be not more than 50cm deep so that the taps can be easily reached.

Round taps should be replaced by the lever type. This makes turning taps on and off much easier for people with less strength. Hot water should not exceed 41°C.

The bottom of the mirror should be 60cm above the floor, unless it is above the sink when it should be as close as possible to the top of the basin. The top of the mirror should be at least 1.6m from the floor, and the hand dryer and paper towel dispenser between 80cm and 100cm.

An ambulant disabled toilet facility (i.e. a toilet for a disabled person who doesn't use a wheelchair) could be added by providing a wider cubicle with an outward opening door and a rail for support. These also accommodate people who are of a larger build.

**Your customer is now ready to move on, but first needs to make a phone call.**

### What to look out for

Telephones located at standing height are impractical for wheelchair users and people of small stature as they are too high.

Old-fashioned telephone booths inside a building may be too small and poorly lit.

People with partial hearing cannot always hear a telephone ringing.

People with sight problems and people with dexterity problems may have difficulty with dialling.

### Policy and management

Consult the customer service department of your telephone company about:

- having a public phone installed at the height suitable for wheelchair users or people of smaller stature
- large size dials and keypads that can be attached to the dials and keypads of ordinary telephones for the benefit of people with sight or co-ordination problems
- installing an inductive coupler to the public telephone for people who use hearing aids. These should have the standard ear symbol sign with the 'T' located at the facility
- publicise your textphone number and train staff on how to use Tynetalk.

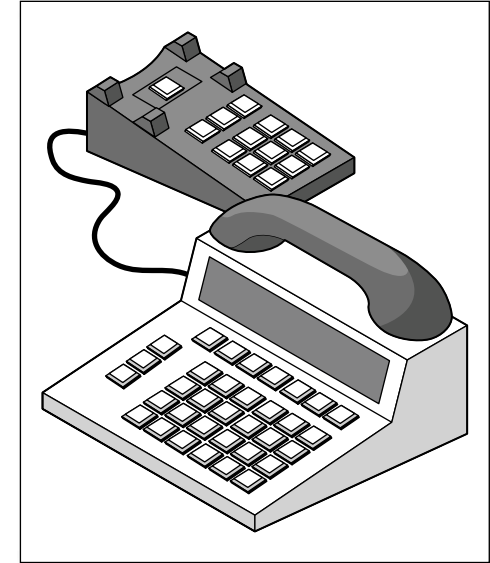
### Equipment

Many deaf people use a textphone, which enables them to type and read their own phone calls. Restaurants and hotels with this device can take reservations or answer inquiries from deaf customers.

There is also a free BT/Tynetalk relay service that enables deaf people to communicate through a special operator.

An online message/service facility via computer, is increasingly being adopted to manage enquiries and bookings.

Textphone, Tynetalk and an online message/service facility are all examples of auxiliary aids which service providers should provide.



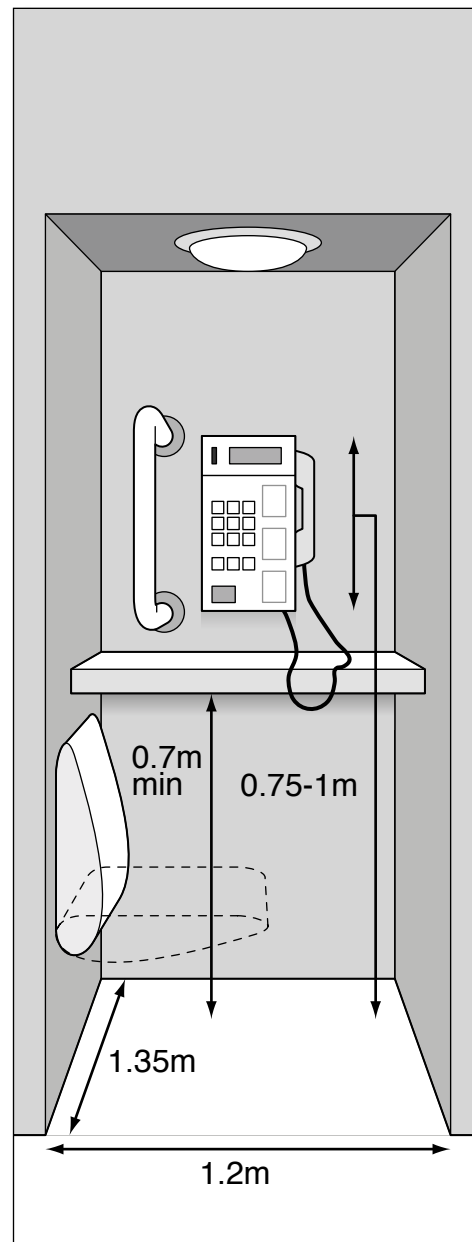
Extending the use of the phone

## Building and design

Public telephones should be lit so that the numbers on the phone can be seen and the telephone book can be read. A magnifier for the book may be helpful and could be attached to the unit.

Inside a building, a public telephone booth or alcove should measure 1.2m by 1.35m – large enough for a person in a wheelchair to get to the phone. Telephones, fitted at high positions, make it difficult for wheelchair users or those requiring the use of a seat to reach. If you provide several telephones for the use of the public or customers, provide one that is wheelchair accessible.

Ensure that an induction coupler has been fitted to at least one accessible telephone for hearing aid users. Ensure that there are clear signs to the telephone booth. Highlight the provision of any accessible booths and those with inductive couplers.



An accessible telephone booth

The telephone and other fittings should contrast in tone and colour to the surroundings of the booth for the benefit of visually impaired telephone users.

Provide clear instructions for the use of the telephone, using a font type that is easy to read. The lettering needs to be of a larger size and effectively lit to enable users to read the instructions from a reasonable distance.

There should be a sturdy folding seat at least 56cm high and a handle for support.

**Your customer is now in need of a drink. Will there be any difficulty in finding or operating a vending machine?**

### What to look out for

If the vending machine isn't signed people may not find it.

Tucking a vending machine away in an alcove may prevent some customers from using it.

A wheelchair user – or indeed children – may not be able reach the operating devices if these are too high.

### Policy and management

Keep space around machines clear of obstructions. If spillage is likely, install a suitable mat in front and/or ensure that staff are available for assistance, for example, carrying hot drinks to the table.

### Equipment

Where vending machines are out of view or not in an obvious position, provide clear signage.

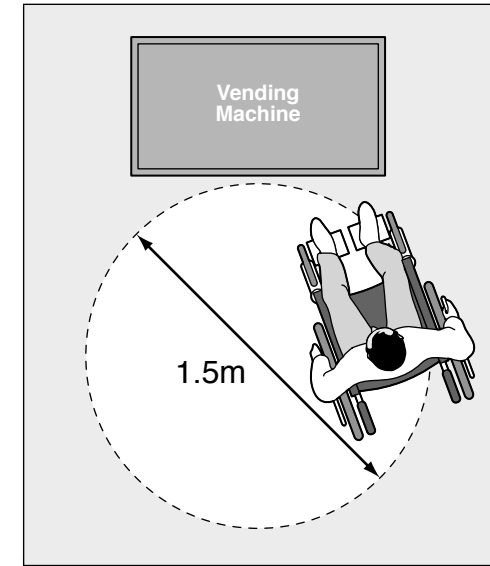
### Building and design

For people of short stature and wheelchair users the controls on a vending machine should be within easy reach – no higher than 1.2m from the ground, including the coin slot.

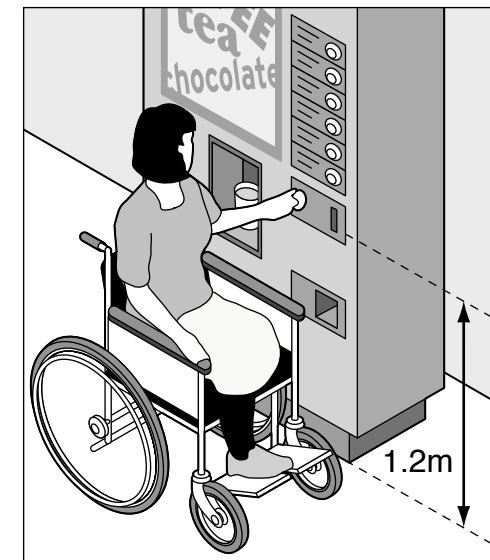
Buttons should be easy to operate, protruding rather than flush with the bodywork.

Instructions on use should be clearly presented and easy to understand.

There should be sufficient space in front of the machine for a wheelchair user to turn round, i.e. a circle 1.5m in diameter.



Allow sufficient space to turn around



Controls should be within easy reach

### Reception desks

- Is the space between entrance and reception desk clear of obstacles?
- Can people on either side of the desk see each other?
- Is there clearance under desks or counters to enable wheelchair users to get close enough to fill in forms?
- Is the reception area well lit, to enable people with hearing impairments to lip read easily?
- Do you have an amplifying device or induction loop at reception and is this signed?
- Do registration forms enable a customer to indicate any particular requirements?
- Does the cloakroom counter have a low level surface?
- Is there sufficient room in clothes hanging areas for wheelchair users to manoeuvre?
- Are pegs, coat racks and hanging rail located at the recommended height?
- Have you provided a convenient chair?
- Have you provided clearly printed leaflets, other information and alternative formats?
- Are the staff trained to assist disabled people and give advice on local accessible facilities and services?

**Cost comment:** Detailed improvements to existing arrangements can often be made at modest cost. Even special equipment such as induction loops are relatively inexpensive.

### Moving around inside the building

- Is there a map of the building layout near the entrance?
- Is it tactile, for the benefit of people with sight problems?
- Do signs have a matt finish and are they well lit?
- Is the lettering on notices in contrasting colours, meeting the recommended size specifications?
- Are maps and signs in sans serif upper and lower case lettering?
- Are tactile signs at the recommended height from the floor?
- Is floor covering slip-resistant and safely secured to the floor?
- Are corridors well lit?
- Do corridors meet the recommended width and turning specifications?
- Do long corridors have some rest seating?
- Do doors in corridors present any obstacles?
- Do doors opening onto stair wells meet the recommended specifications?
- Do door widths and handles meet the recommended specifications for wheelchair users?
- Do doors in lobbies or on landings meet the required specifications?
- Do terraces and balconies meet the recommended specifications regarding space, thresholds and railing heights?
- Are features of the building decorated in distinctive tones or colours to aid orientation?
- Are staff trained to direct and assist in the case of emergency?



## Inside the building Checklist

### Getting from one floor to another

- Do internal staircases meet the recommended specifications (see checklist for outside ramps and stairs)?
- Do treads and risers of the stairs meet the recommended specifications?
- Are the nosings slip-resistant and do they have contrasting colours to aid people with sight problems?
- Are lift locations clearly signed?
- Do lift cars meet the recommended size specification?
- Do lifts have handrails at the recommended height?
- Do lift control buttons meet the recommended specifications?
- Does the landing space in front of lifts meet the recommended specifications?
- Do lifts have floor announcers and visual signals?
- Are floor numbers indicated close to the lift?
- Is there an adequate delay on the door closing mechanism?
- Would it be appropriate for you to install a platform lift, in accordance with the British Standard Code of Practice?
- Have you ensured a good standard of cleaning and clearance of obstructions?

**Cost comment:** Lifts are expensive, but consider the benefits in relation to all customers, as well as to your staff. Existing lifts can usually be improved, for example by changing the height of controls. It is rarely possible to renew staircases completely, but low cost improvements are usually feasible.

### Toilets

- Is there enough room in the toilet (washing area and WCs) for wheelchair users to turn around?
- Do WC cubicles meet the recommended size specifications?
- Are the WC cubicles equipped as recommended?
- Could you turn two WC cubicles into one?
- Could you create a unisex toilet adapted for wheelchair users and people who require additional space?
- Does access to the washbasins meet the recommended specifications?
- Do the washbasins have lever-type taps?
- Are controls to fittings and lights easily distinguishable and easy to use?
- Is there an assistance alarm and is the alarm cord at a suitable height?
- Are your staff trained to respond to and deal with calls for help?
- Are the toilets clean and clear of obstructions?

**Cost comment:** It is usually less costly to alter existing toilet facilities than to provide new ones. But where structural alterations are necessary, converting a suitable space such as a store room, into a unisex WC cubicle, may be more viable.



## Telephones

- Are public telephones well lit?
- Do public telephone booths or alcoves meet the recommended specifications?
- Is there a sturdy folding seat?
- Is there a coin slot at the recommended height?
- Is there a shelf at the recommended level?
- Have you taken full advantage of the services provided by your telephone company, e.g. positioning public phones at the desired height and providing aids for people with partial hearing or sight problems?
- Do you have a teletype device?
- Do you know about Typetalk as a service?

**Cost comment:** The telephone companies have an interest in extending customer use. Ask them how they can help.

## Vending machines

- Can a wheelchair user access and then turn round in front of the vending machine?
- Are the controls within the recommended height specifications?
- Are control buttons easy to operate?
- Are the instructions clear and readable?
- Is there clear signage to help locate the vending machines?
- Is space around the machines clear of obstructions, with a slip-resistant surface if spillage is likely?
- Are staff trained to give assistance if required?

**Cost comment:** Because soft drink vending machines are designed for children to use, they usually represent the most accessible standards, whereas tea/coffee machines are usually less accessible.



# 3

## Hotels and restaurants

Examine your facilities closely and make best use of the larger spaces and rooms by making sure that disabled people can use them. This may involve simply re-arranging furniture. Invite comment from disabled customers – they will give you advice based on direct experience.

Some disabled and older people prefer to do things like swimming in similar company. Consider how you might cater for this and for other activities on a group basis, and how to promote such arrangements, if there is a demand for them.

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Restaurants and bars

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Service

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Bedrooms

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Bathrooms

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Leisure pools

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Checklist

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### What to look out for

In some restaurants the tables do not allow enough under-table leg room.

Wheelchair users cannot sit at tables with fixed seating.

A narrow space between two tables is as impractical for staff as it is for clients.

Many self-service counters are so wide it is difficult for wheelchair users – and others – to reach across.

It is unlawful to treat a disabled customer less favourably than a non-disabled customer, i.e. giving a facially disfigured customer a table hidden from other customers or refusing to serve.

### Policy and management

Self-service staff should be ready to offer to carry trays from the counter to the tables of wheelchair users or customers who use sticks or crutches.

If the counter is inaccessible to some disabled clients, provide table service.

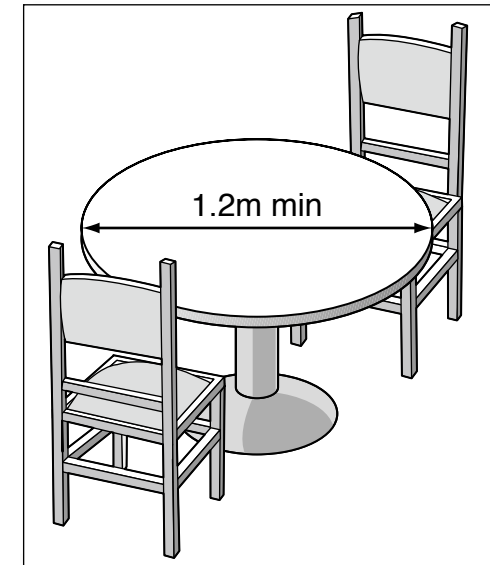
Provide ‘Welcoming disabled customers’ training, which takes into account physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities.

Modify a ‘no dogs’ policy to ‘guide dogs are welcome’. Provide staff training and signage adjacent to the entrance.

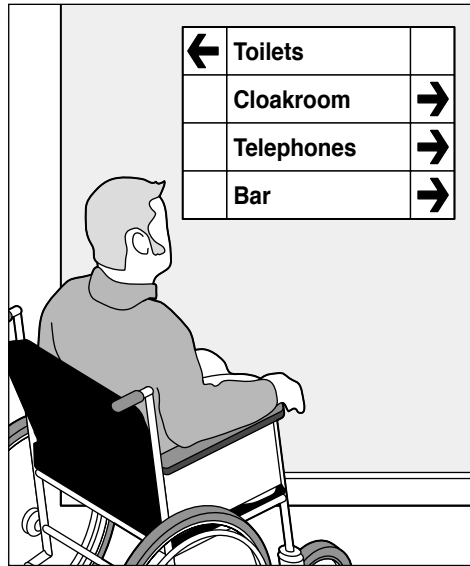
### Equipment

Consider providing booster seats or cushions for children and people of small stature to sit at the table comfortably. High chairs for very young children are also helpful.

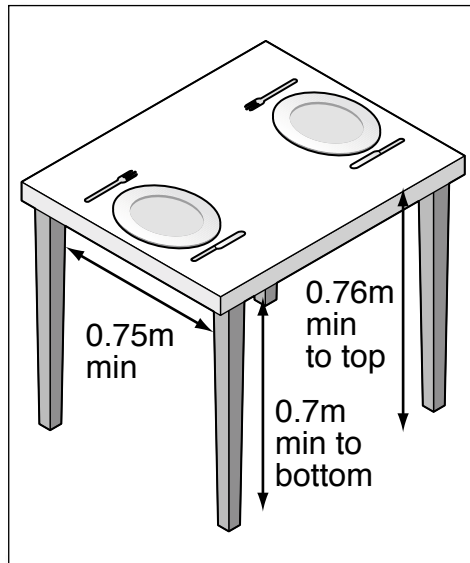
In a restaurant where most tables have fixed seating there should be some tables with alternative chairs. Chairs with armrests will be appreciated by a range of customers including pregnant women, ambulant disabled people and those who find it difficult to lift themselves out of a standard chair.



Accessible but liable to topple



Provide clear, readable directions



Corner legs improve stability

## Building and design

Immediately at the entrance of the restaurant or bar, clear, readable directions under a direct light should indicate where the cloakroom and toilets are.

A space free of obstacles should be left between the tables to allow room for movement to the table. A minimum width of 90cm allows a person in a wheelchair to get by. There should be a clear area of 1.5m in diameter so that a wheelchair user can turn round (unless there is a suitable alternative route).

A wheelchair user should ideally have the option to sit at the table without having to transfer to a chair. The wheelchair should not block the passage for other people.

If a customer appears not to understand what you are saying or does not respond to your questions, he may have partial hearing. Stand within the light and in clear view so that he can see your face.

Speak normally, enunciating clearly without exaggerating lip movement. Be natural! Your ability to communicate will depend on natural lip movements, facial expression and gestures.



## Hotels and restaurants Restaurants and bars

The minimum clearance required under the table to allow a wheelchair user to sit comfortably is 70cm with a 80cm wide clearance between tables.

Rectangular tabletops on which meals are served should therefore measure at least 75cm by 90cm. It is easier for a wheelchair user to sit at a table with legs at the corners, rather than in the centre.



Allocate tables adjacent to counter

Round tables must be stable enough to take weight at the edges without tipping.

If the bar counter does not have two different levels for serving customers, then tables located close to the bar would become suitable for wheelchair users. Stools that can be moved are better than those fixed to the floor.

In a self-service restaurant the counter for trays and the cashier's counter should be 85cm high. Food on self-service shelves should be no higher than 1.2m and within 50cm from the edge of the counter.

Provide a clearly visible, large print display menu. Train staff to read out and explain the menu to customers who cannot read it.

The passage between the counter and the service barrier/rails should be no less than 80cm wide, just wide enough for a wheelchair. The same goes for the cashier counter aisles.



Self-service with an option of staff assistance

**Comfortably seated, your customer now has the menu and is ready to choose what to eat.**

## What to look out for

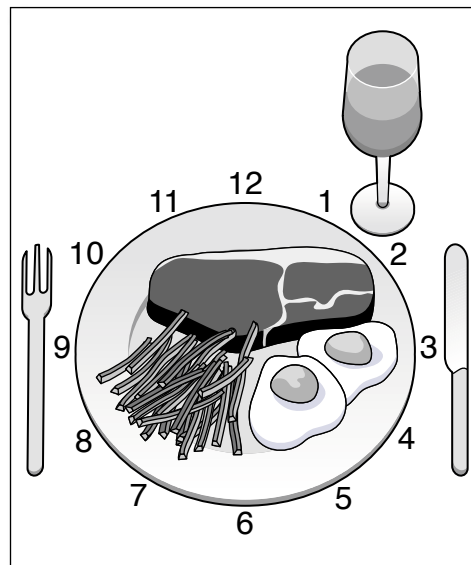
Customers who have difficulty reading the menu.

Staff having to repeat the menu or wine list.

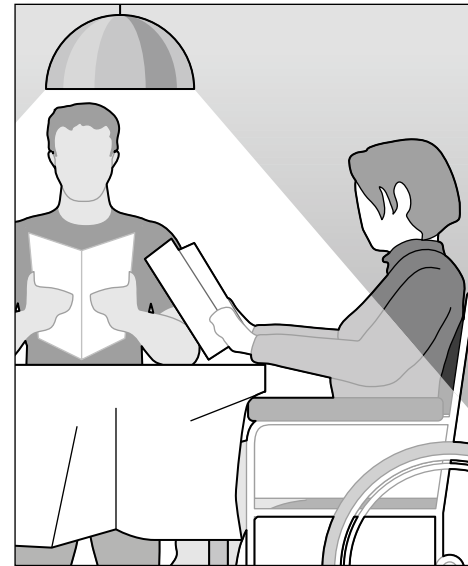
For self-service, position the menu board so that it can be seen while customers are queuing.

## Policy and management

When you put a drink or a plate in front of a person with sight problems, say where it is. If required, you can indicate where the food is on the plate in relation to the positions on a clock. For example, the meat is in the twelve o'clock position, the eggs at four o'clock and the chips at eight o'clock.



Indicate where the food is



Good lighting helps customers read the menu

## Equipment

Reading the menu is easier if each table has its own light, as well as a lighting system that allows brightness to be adjusted, if required.

People with sight problems – indeed most people – prefer to see a menu printed on matt-finished paper, in sans-serif upper and lower case letters. The upper case letters should ideally be 4.5mm high (16 point) with 12 point as a

minimum. The menu is easier to read if the lettering contrasts well with the background colour.

Avoid the use of italics or underlining, and produce information that is aligned to the left of the page. Arranging information in the centre of a line can make it difficult for some disabled people to read.

## Building and design

Carpeting on the floor, curtains and other soft furnishings will help eliminate reverberation of sound.

A menu on the wall should be at a convenient height for people in wheelchairs and shorter people and should be well lit. People should be able to get close to the posted menu. Ensure there are no obstacles in front of it.

Alternatively, provide a hand-held version for 'Today's specials' for instance.



### What to look out for

Underside of tables too low for a wheelchair user to sit at.

Wardrobes in which the clothes-hangers are too high and shelves too deep, and dressing-tables in which the drawers are hard to open.

Beds that are low are less easy for people to get up from.

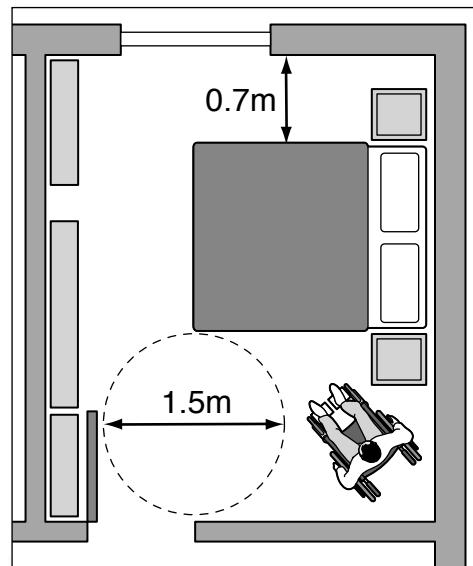
Insufficient space beside the bed for wheelchair access.

Fixed position beds that allow access from one side only for a wheelchair.

### Policy and management

At least 5% of bedrooms should be wheelchair accessible.

Offer to reposition any furniture or equipment, such as a telephone, to suit a guest. Ask if any extra blankets or pillows are required where these are stored in high cupboards.



Suitable layout for double bedroom

### Equipment

A footstool near the bed could be provided if the bed is high. A bedside table on rollers is practical as it can be moved around easily.

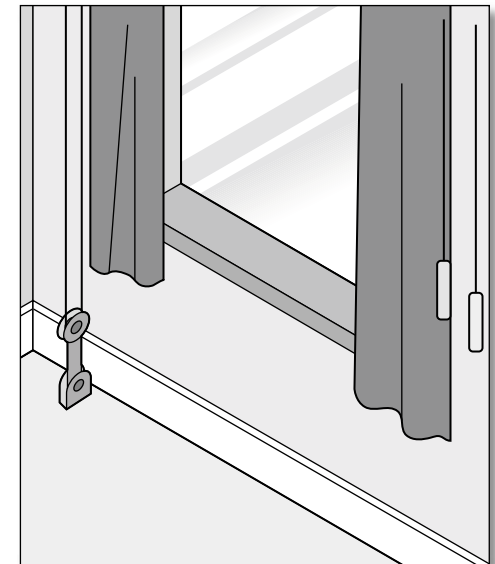
Provision of teletext facilities enables people with partial hearing to watch closed captioned television.

Clear instructions should be provided on what to do in an emergency. Provision of vibrating alarms can ensure that guests with partial hearing know independently when there is an emergency evacuation.

### Curtains and blinds

Curtains, like windows, should be easy to open and close. Pull-cord operation is especially helpful.

Cords on the different types of window curtains and blinds could be hooked to a pulley system, located close to the floor. If the cord is not somehow attached to the floor, it should be long enough for a wheelchair user to reach. It should have a tassel or a ring that is easy to grip or to pull.



Easy-to-open curtain pull-cord options

## Building and design

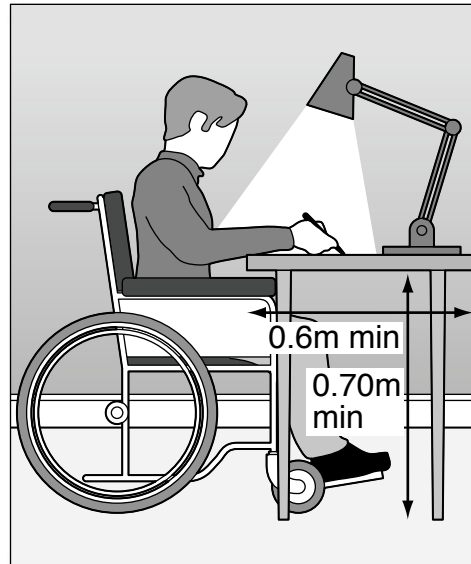
Numbers on the doors of rooms should be at least 22mm high (80 point) placed from 1.2m to 1.5m above floor level and readable at a distance of 1.5m. The number on the door could also be displayed in relief, i.e. raised from the surface.

### Lighting

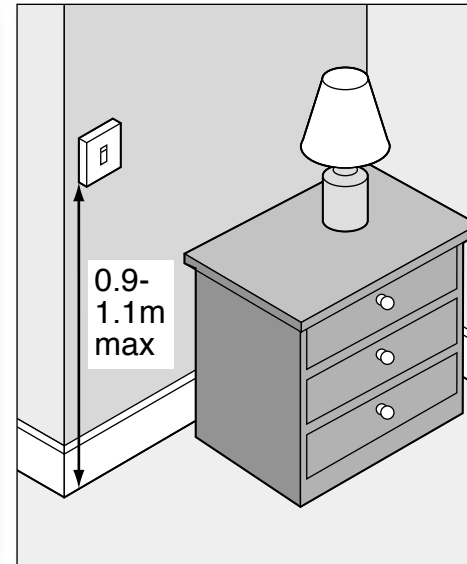
There should be a light switch at the entrance of each room and an overhead light inside the room. Light switches need to be between 90cm and 110cm above the floor.

The switch should be of a large push pad design so that it can be easily turned on and off by people with limited strength.

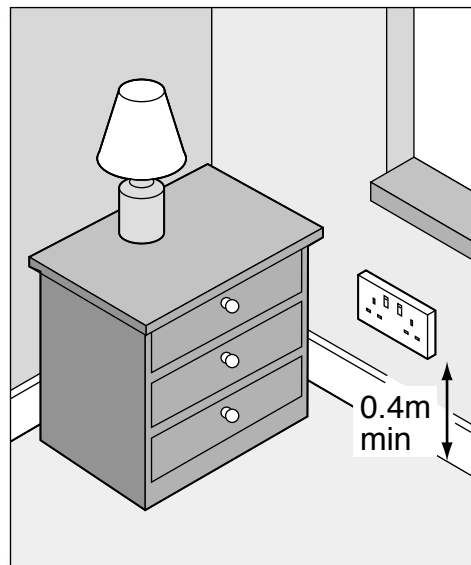
If automatic lighting is used remember that timings have to take into account the additional time that a disabled person may require.



Sitting comfortably



Ideal height for a switch



Power plugs away from corners

A table or desk should be high enough for a person in a wheelchair to sit at it comfortably, with leg room of at least 70cm between the underside of the table and the floor and a depth of 60cm.

Power plugs should be at least 40cm above floor level, and not in the corners of the room, so that a wheelchair user can get to them easily.

Table, wall and ceiling lamps should ideally have a switch on the flex, or a cord-pull, which are easier to use than a push-button switch. Lamps should have a solid, heavy base, so that there's less chance they will tip over.

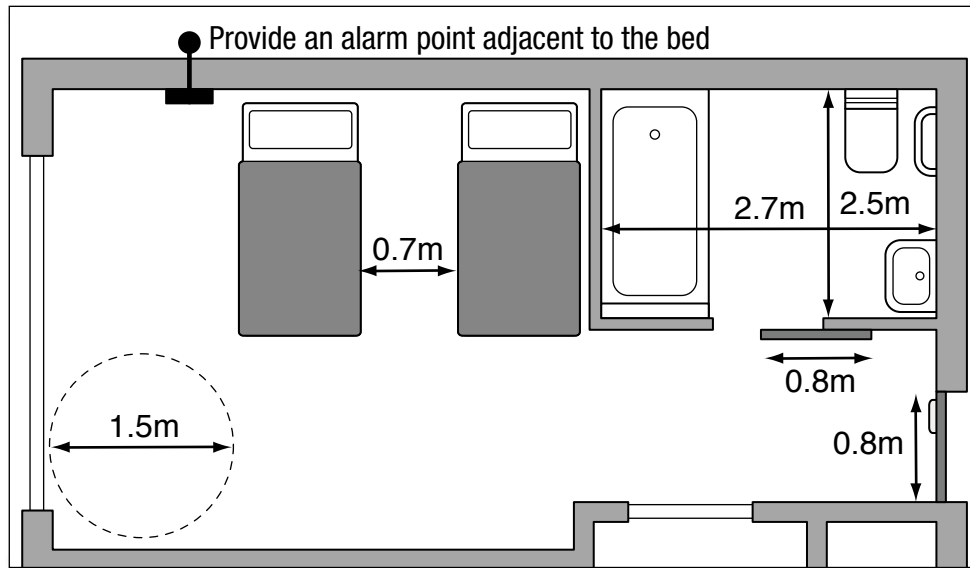
### Furniture arrangement

The furniture arrangement should give your guest easy access to chests-of-drawers, wardrobes and windows. Around all items of furniture there should be a clear path.

There should also be 1.5m between one side of the bed and the wall (or a piece of furniture) so that a wheelchair user has enough room to transfer from wheelchair to bed or vice versa.

The bed should be 48cm high and placed so that it is wheelchair accessible from at least one side. It should have a sturdy headboard and a firm mattress. There should be a space under the bed of at least 15cm to accommodate mobile hoist supports if one is required. Purpose made 'raiser

## Hotels and restaurants Bedrooms



Suitable layout for twin bedroom

cup's firmly placed under the feet of the bed are a way of giving extra height to suit the user.

Wall heaters such as radiators in bathrooms should be insulated since some people may tend to burn themselves without realising it. The thermostat control should be between 1.2m and 1.4m above floor level.

### Wardrobe storage

Where wardrobes have swing doors, they need to swing through 180°. There should be lighting



Lighting inside the wardrobe

inside the wardrobe which turns on automatically when the door is opened.

There should also be plenty of room to move in front of it and, ideally, a choice of hanger heights. Shelves at the right height are better than dressing-tables or chests-of-drawers with drawers that may stick or are too low. A height adjustable clothing rack or one on rollers is ideal.

### Sliding doors

A sliding door can assist some disabled people since it does not take up the space usually necessary to open a hinged door. A sliding door could be used at the entrance to the bathroom.

If you are describing a room to a blind person indicate where the bedside table, bed, telephone, switches, wardrobe, dressing-table and bathroom are, and, for example, that there is a chair adjacent to the bed. Show them where their luggage is. The use of curtains and how to contact reception should be explained on arrival.



### Ventilation

Window opening controls should be at least 80cm above floor level. There should be no furniture in front of the window and it should not be near a corner of the room because this may prevent wheelchair users getting close enough to open and close it.

If the room is not air-conditioned your guest should be able to open the windows easily with just one hand. If there is a handle it should be within reach of a seated person. Some kinds of window are particularly appropriate, such as sliding windows. Sash windows are often difficult to open and close. Top hung windows can be modified for easy opening.

### Locks and springs

Consider carefully any locks or swipe card entry arrangements so they can easily be used by someone with limited reach or a poor grip. These need to be located at between 80cm and 100cm above the floor.

Door closer springs are often far stronger than they need to be and can actually prevent independent access and egress.

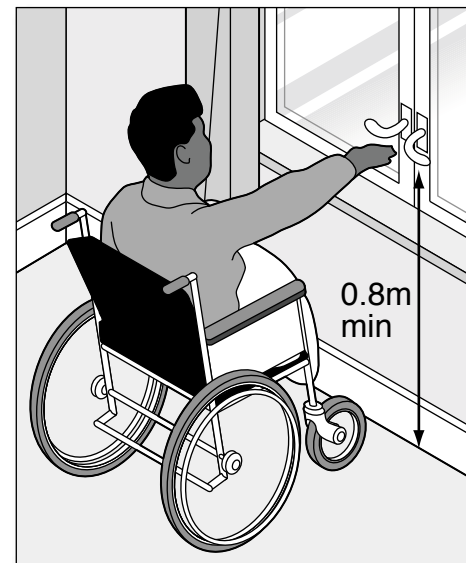
Security peep holes in entrance doors to bedrooms need to be located at a low level (105cm) as well as at a higher level (150cm).

### Other equipment

A wide range of equipment might be available including heating, minibars, telephones, television, hairdryers and kettles. Positioning these so that controls can be easily reached and safely used is crucial. Products designed with accessibility in mind, such as easy grip and easy fill kettles, should also be considered.



Install sliding doors if possible



Windows clear of furniture

**Your guest has now unpacked and is ready for bed. Will the bathroom present any problems?**

### What to look out for

It can be awkward if the bath, shower or WC are too close together.

Wheelchair users need to be able to reach the cabinet or items stored above the washbasin or bath.

Round tap handles can be difficult to grasp and turn.

It is inconvenient, indeed risky, for wheelchair users and people who use crutches if there are no grab rails near the WC.

### Policy and management

Ensure that staff are trained to respond to assistance alarms and give emergency assistance.

Keep slip-resistant flooring clean and dry.

### Equipment

#### Alarms

An alarm in the bathroom will notify staff that a person requires assistance. The pull cord needs to reach close to the floor so that a person lying on the floor can reach it easily. It should be marked 'For emergency use only', and it should be red in colour. There should be two red 5cm bangles on the cord, set at 10cm and 90cm above the floor. A push button version is available. It is important that alarms can be accessed by people who may have fallen on the floor.

Make sure that fittings, lights etc are clearly distinguishable and easy to use.



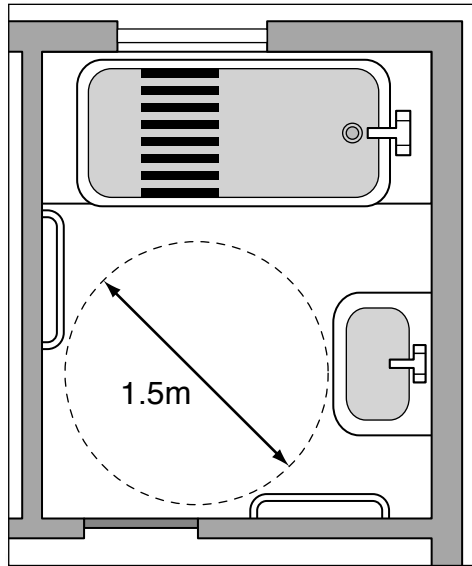
Ensure help alarm is accessible

### Building and design

#### The bathroom

The bathroom should have at least one central light, with a large push pad switch outside the bathroom between 90cm and 110cm above floor level. The doorway should be wide enough for a wheelchair to pass through. It is best if the door opens outwards to make the most efficient use of space inside.

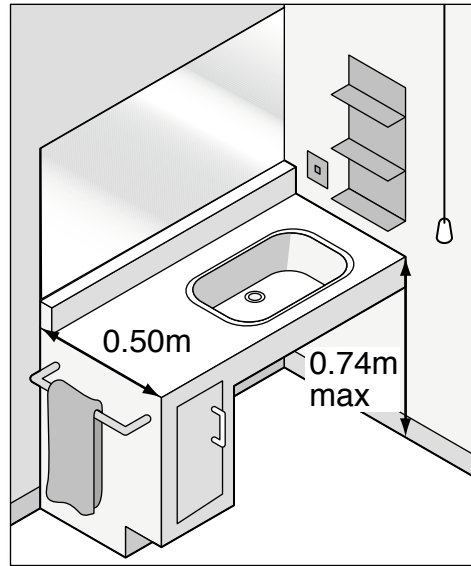
There should be room for a turning circle 1.5m in diameter. Bathroom fixtures should be within easy reach. Possible arrangements are shown in the illustration. The washbasin and WC should be located within easy reach and in keeping with the criteria for toilets.



A bathroom with turning room

### Washbasins

The shape and size of the washbasin surround should allow a wheelchair user to reach the items placed on it easily. The adjacent shelves, cabinets and towel rails should also be accessible. The washbasin surround should be no more than 50cm in depth. A mirror that is slightly tilted downwards will ensure the wheelchair user is able to comfortably use it.



Washbasin dimensions

### Bath and shower

There needs to be enough room for a wheelchair user to turn and position themselves. This turning circle needs to be 1.5m by 1.5m. Grab rails should be attached to the two adjacent walls. People who use crutches or are unsteady on their feet find rails and a seat very helpful.



A wooden bench and grab-rails

The bath, like the shower, should have taps that are easy to use, and a flexible hand shower. These should be positioned at a low level. A rubber mat prevents people from slipping. A folding bench is very useful in the shower, or for getting from a wheelchair into the bath.

An adjustable shower head should have the flexibility to be lowered to between 1.2m and 1.4m from the floor, with shower controls between 75cm and 100cm in height.

**After a good night's sleep your guest decides to take an early morning dip. How accessible is your swimming pool?**

### What to look out for

Where safety and emergency procedures are not evidently in place, people who are physically disabled or who have various sensory abilities may be deterred from using the pool.

Getting in and out of the pool can present particular risks for the visitor.

Courtesy wheelchairs designed for wet areas are available.

### Policy and management

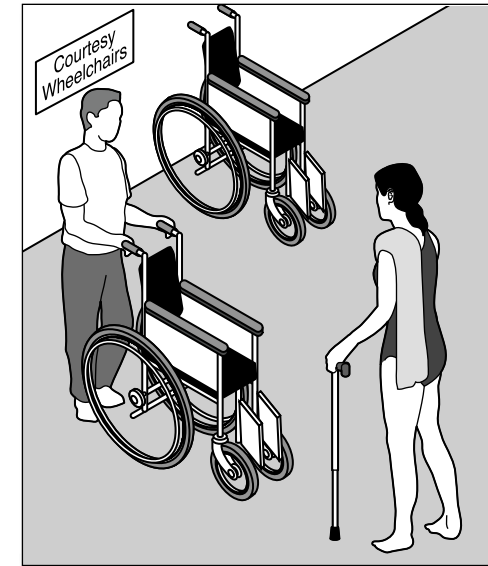
You should advertise the accessibility of your leisure pool whenever possible, in your brochure, at reception, at the entrance to the pool and on your website.

The pool attendant should be trained in the possible requirements of disabled customers. This could extend beyond medical concerns to awareness training and the use of auxiliary aids, for example wheelchairs for assistance.

### Equipment

A courtesy wheelchair could be available for use in the pool area when required.

A hoist can be made available to transfer disabled people into the pool. Staff using a hoist need to be appropriately trained.



Courtesy wheelchairs could be available



## Building and design

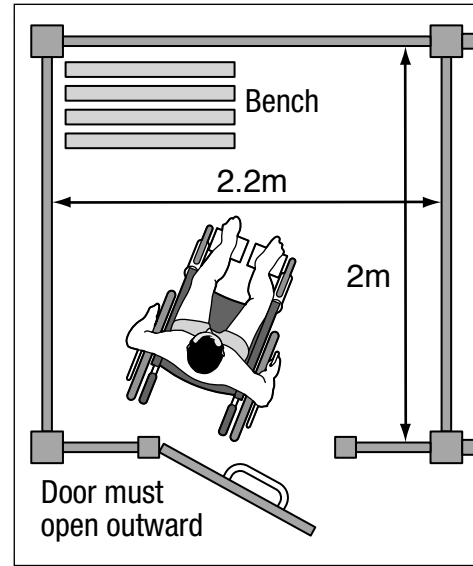
### Changing cubicles

At least one changing and one shower cubicle should be large enough for wheelchair users, i.e. at least 2m by 2.2m, and should have an outward opening door.

An 'assistance required' light could be fitted on the outside, usually operated by a pull-cord within the cubicle.

A changing room close to the pool edge will suit those who are shy or who cannot walk far.

Locks to doors and cupboards should be easy to use. Doors should be openable from outside in an emergency.



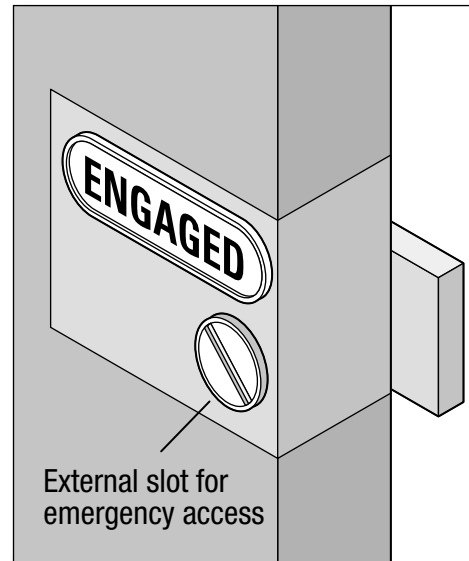
Large enough cubicles

### Entering the pool

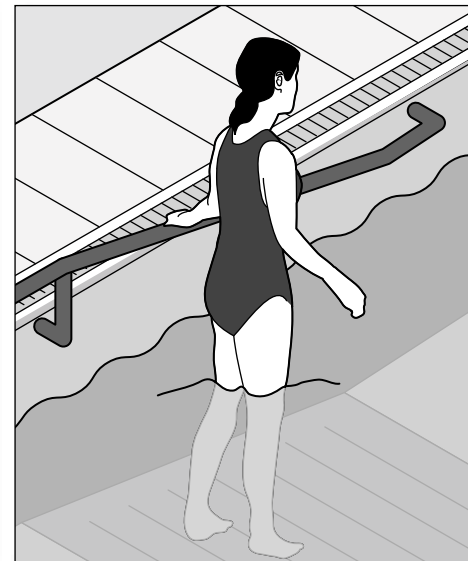
The surface of the pool surround should be slip resistant, even when wet. A tactile hazard strip – usually 'corduroy-lined' tiles – tells a person with sight problems where the edge of the pool is.

Entry to the pool might be down a suitable ramp or steps. In both cases there should be a secure handrail to both sides.

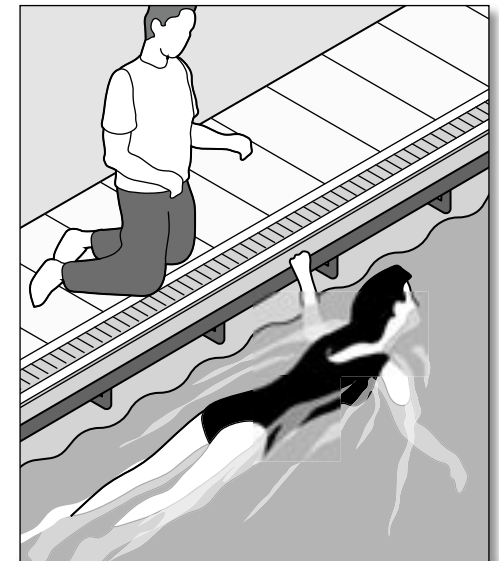
The drainage recess at water level acts as a grab rail so should be easily distinguishable and easy to grip.



Openable from the outside



A gently sloping gradient



Easy to grip grab-rail

## Hotels and restaurants Checklist

### Restaurants and bars

- Are the signs to the cloakroom and toilets clear and well lit?
- In the restaurant, is there enough room between tables for a wheelchair user to pass?
- Can wheelchair users sit at the tables comfortably?
- Do rectangular tables meet the recommended specifications?
- Do round bar tables meet the recommended specifications?
- Is there provision for seating pregnant women and larger people?
- Is there provision for seating shorter people and children?
- Does the bar counter have two different levels to accommodate wheelchair users?
- If not, have tables adjacent to the service counter/bar been allocated for disabled users?
- In the self-service restaurant, do the cashier's counter, the tray counter and the food shelves meet the recommended specifications?
- Is there a clearly visible, easy to read, wall-mounted display menu?
- Do the passage widths between the counter and the seating area meet the recommended specifications?
- Are staff trained to assist disabled customers?
- Are cushions, booster seats, high chairs, and chairs without arms available?
- Are guide dogs permitted?

**Cost comment:** Restaurant furniture and fittings can be expensive to replace. Concentrate, if necessary, on the seating near entrances, main circulation aisles and especially those near payment points.

### Service

- Is the overall lighting system adjustable?
- Does each table have its own light?
- Are the floors carpeted to reduce sound reverberation?
- If so, is the carpet short pile?
- Are menus printed on matt-finish paper and easy to read?
- Are wall menus effectively lit and at a useful height for wheelchair users and shorter people?
- Are staff trained in assisting customers with sight problems?

## Bedroom

- Do door numbers meet the recommended specifications?
- Are the floors carpeted to reduce sound reverberation?
- Is the furniture arranged to give easy access to the bed, chests-of-drawers, wardrobes and windows?
- Does the bed meet the recommended height specifications? If not, can it be raised or lowered?
- Can wheelchair users sit comfortably at desks and tables?
- Is there enough room to turn a wheelchair around?
- Are switches and power plugs located at the recommended height for wheelchair users?
- Do lamps have a switch on the flex, or cord-pull?
- Is there automatic interior lighting in the wardrobe?
- Is there a clothing rack on wheels or a lowered clothes rail?
- Does the bathroom have a sliding door if space is limited?
- Are windows at the right height, accessible and easy to open?
- Can the curtains be opened and closed independently?
- Are staff trained to make adjustments such as repositioning furniture to suit or get out-of-reach items such as extra blankets?
- Can you offer a closed captioned TV service?
- Are escape procedures clearly signed? Do you provide personal alarms such as vibrating emergency alarms?
- Are your staff trained to deal with emergency evacuation of disabled clients?

## Bathroom

- Is the light switch at the recommended height?
- Is the doorway wide enough, with an outward-opening door?
- Is there room for a wheelchair user to manoeuvre and are the main fixtures within easy reach?
- Is the washbasin and all its fittings easily accessed by a wheelchair user?
- Are the bath and shower accessible and do they have seating and handrails?
- Are the bath and shower taps easy to turn on?
- Can the user easily control the water temperature?
- Is the shower threshold at the recommended height?
- Is there an alarm cord positioned at floor level in case of a fall and are staff trained to respond appropriately?

**Cost comment:** Some access improvements for bedrooms can be managed as refurbishment at little extra cost. Focus on rooms nearest to lifts or staircases. Because of the extra space required, especially to bathrooms, wheelchair accessible rooms will be more expensive to construct or adapt. Therefore, adapting larger bedrooms can be less expensive, more cost-effective and appropriate.

### Leisure pools

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- Do the changing and shower cubicles meet the recommended specifications and have an outward-opening door?
- Are locks to doors and lockers easy to open?
- Is there a courtesy wheelchair available?
- Does the surround to the pool have a slip-resistant surface?
- Is there a tactile strip round the edge of the pool?
- Is access to the pool easy and is there a secure handrail?
- Is the rail/recess at water level easy to distinguish and to grip?
- Is the pool attendant trained in meeting the requirements of disabled customers?
- Do you advertise the accessibility of your pool and awareness trained staff in your brochure, at reception and at the pool entrance?

**Cost comment:** The design and fittings in pools should have as wide an application as possible, especially for older and disabled people.

# 4

Telling your potential customers how accessible your facilities are costs virtually nothing and could make a significant difference to your business.

Consider what use you can make of pictograms and ensure that the availability of good design and convenient arrangements are made clear in any promotional literature.

## Shopping, business and leisure

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Smaller retail premises

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Travel agents

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Conference facilities

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Theatres, cinemas and auditoriums

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Exhibitions, museums and galleries

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Checklist

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### What to look out for

You have a potential customer but he or she may have difficulty in getting into and around your premises.

Failure in communication can cause embarrassment on both sides.

Discussions at the counter can take time – make your customer as comfortable as possible, for example by providing a seat.

### Policy and management

#### Customer services

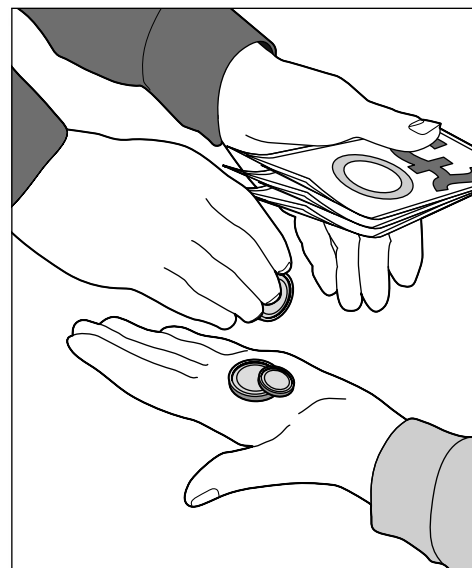
If you are confident that you can call yourself ‘access friendly’, advertise it at the entrance to your premises, on your website and in marketing material.

When giving change to a person with sight problems, give coins first, which can be identified by touch. Notes should be handed over one at a time, telling the customer what the value of each one is.

#### Entering premises

Keep circulation spaces clear of obstacles for people with trolleys, baby buggies as well as wheelchair users.

Disability awareness training will develop communication skills in a number of ways. It will also ensure that the level of service is comparable and that staff are confident with a broader range of customers and work colleagues.



In change, give coins first

You may wish to ask your disabled customers, local disability groups or disability employee network to advise on improvements.

If you have a portable ramp specially constructed for your entrance, you should advertise its availability.



Access friendly



If level access is not possible

## Equipment

Have a note pad to hand in case someone's speech is difficult to understand or is unclear.

## Building and design

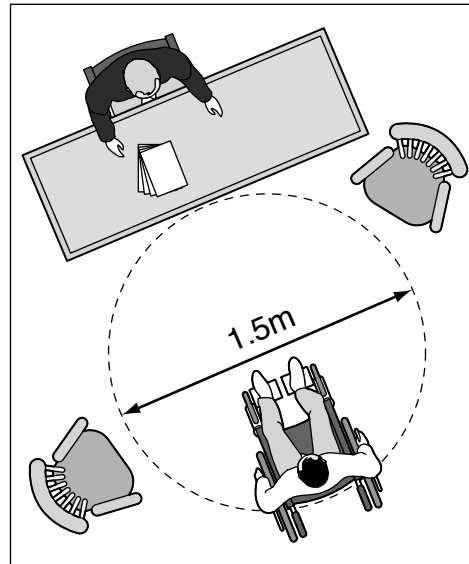
Level access into your premises is ideal, but if there are steps these should be clearly marked and provided with handrails.

Make sure that foot-wipe mats lie flat so that people don't trip. They should ideally be set into a matwell and/or have tapered edges.

### The service counter

There should be sufficient space in front of the counter for a wheelchair user to turn around, i.e. a circle 1.5m in diameter.

Customers who have difficulty in standing appreciate a seat near the counter. A hard chair with arms is more suitable than a low, well-upholstered chair.



Enough space in front of the counter



Provide a seat near the counter

The lighting in the area of the counter should enable the face of the counter assistant to be seen clearly by the customer. This will contribute in assisting people who lip read.

### Assistance

If objects on display are located low down or high up, assistance may be required to reach them. Display a notice inviting customers to ask for help if required.

### Information

Information brochures should be within easy reach and brochure racks should be unobstructed by other furniture. This is particularly relevant in information centres or tourist offices where customers need to browse at leisure.



Assistance may be required

There should be a surface at a convenient height for a seated person to write a cheque or pay by card. Alternatively, the assistant should have a clipboard at hand.

**Having done some early morning shopping, your customer wants to check the details of a travel insurance.**



### What to look out for

The customer should feel as comfortable as the staff member at the service desk especially when the service may take some time to deliver.

Ensure that the customer can comfortably see the computer monitor providing the information.

Information leaflets and brochures should be within easy reach.

Space is at a premium in small offices. Identifying a desk near to the public entrance can often allow the extra space required for easy access.

### Policy and management

#### Customer services

Staff training in communication is essential, as transactions are often lengthy and complicated, and staff must ensure that their customers understand all the issues before any agreements are made.

Staff will benefit from disabled customer service training. This will encourage a better understanding between other staff members as well as customers.

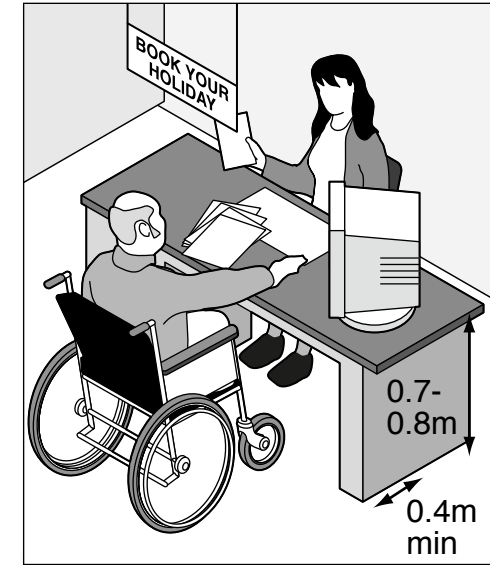
### Equipment

#### Information

Large print versions of literature will help customers with sight problems. It may be helpful to increase the computer display's percentage size to enable easier reading.

Products and services provided should be clearly indicated by clear signs and/or information panels to enable customers to see for themselves what is on offer.

Provide some extra seating for waiting customers or for those who just want to browse in the brochure section.



Ensure there is enough knee room

Consider providing information about your services on audio tape as well as in large print as an auxiliary aid. If you have a website ensure that it is accessible, a publication 'Accessible website design' is available from the Employers' Forum on Disability,

### Building and design

Issues of access to premises and moving around inside are similar to those of any small retail premises.

#### Service counters

The special feature of agents' offices is the customer service desk, usually equipped with a computer terminal. Careful design of this feature will ensure comfortable use by everybody. Desk height and clearance underneath should be suitable for wheelchair users. For other customers, a firm but comfortable chair with armrests is best.

Ensure that there is sufficient knee space underneath the desk so that the desk may be used for writing by disabled customers as well as disabled staff.

Customers who have partial hearing and/or who wear hearing aids will appreciate the provision of an induction loop. A portable version is acceptable as an interim measure and is relatively low cost. Appropriate signage should identify its location, such as at the service counter.

#### The display monitor

The computer monitor should be positioned so that the customer can also read the information on it. This might require it to be swivelled between the customer and agent, making it possible for details to be pointed out. Ensure that there are no distracting reflections on the screen.

A table lamp will provide flexibility where general lighting levels are not enough.



Check stand height is convenient

#### Information

Good local desk lighting will make printed information easier to read. It should also facilitate lip reading.

#### Brochure display

Good general lighting will ensure that brochures and other publicity can be seen in the rest of the office.

Check that the height of brochure stands is convenient for people in wheelchairs and for people of small stature. Space in front of the stands should be unobstructed.

**Your customer now heads for the building where he or she is attending a conference.**

### What to look out for

Delegates need to know in advance of a conference how you can meet their particular requirements, and so do speakers.

Delegates cannot participate fully in the main speaker sessions in workshops or seminars if they are unable to communicate because their requirements could not be met.

People with partial hearing may be unable to book if you do not have a typetalk/textphone device to receive their calls.

### Policy and management

#### Customer service

Remember that under the DDA you have a duty to anticipate the needs of your disabled customers. You must ask whether anyone has any particular requirements.

Conference information both on the day and in follow-up material should be made available where required in other forms, for example large type and on tape. Ask delegates if any support is required for the event. For example, an audience member might only communicate via sign language and would require a sign language interpreter.

### Equipment

#### Seating

Ensure that some chairs with arms are available in the conference/meeting rooms.

Conferences sometimes include a buffet or refreshments of some kind. There should be chairs and side tables for people who cannot stand and eat. Staff assistance with serving and carrying trays or drinks is often appreciated.



Allow space for a guide dog

### Building and design

#### Seating

To ensure that most people can see/hear a speaker, the best position for him or her is near the centre rather than at one end of the room. This is especially helpful if there are several wheelchair users in the audience. These attendees should be provided with suitable quality spaces (i.e. preferably not all in a row or in a corner).

Seminar/workshop rooms as well as the main conference area will need to be accessible for people with both physical and sensory impairments.

Delegates may bring their note-takers with them, for whom space must be allowed. Delegates with guide dogs will require space for the dog to lie down without causing an obstruction, plus someone to walk the dog and provide water.

Ensure that there is suitable means of access to the stage or podium. A portable ramp may solve this problem.

Do not assume that disabled people will want to sit together – or automatically cluster all spaces for disabled people at the front or back.



Quality spaces should be provided

### Sound

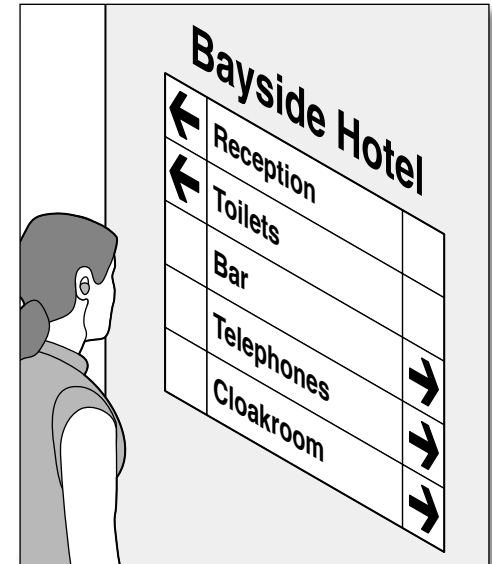
In theatres and cinemas communication is one way. At conferences, however, communication aids need to work both ways. Roving microphones should be connected to an induction loop.

Good soundproofing from external noise is also a requirement.

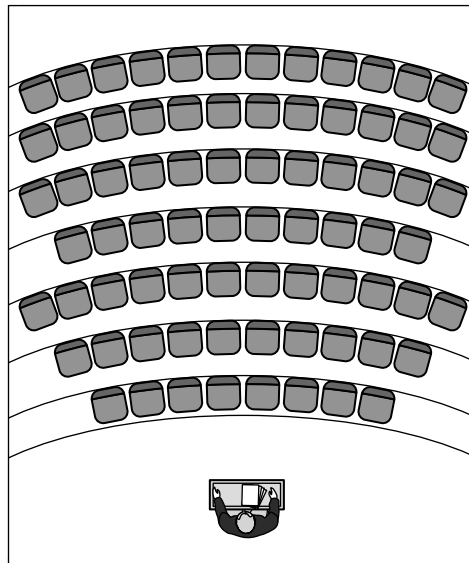
Ensure that technical equipment is operational and maintained on a regular basis

### Signage

The location of accessible toilet facilities, catering rooms and meeting rooms should be clearly signed in the conference area and access ensured.



Facilities should be clearly signed



Speaker at the centre

**After the conference your customer returned to the hotel for a relaxing drink and a meal.**

### What to look out for

Places of entertainment and public halls should be designed to accommodate a range of disabled users such as wheelchair users, stick users, people with sight problems and people with partial hearing.

If the necessary sound aids are not available, for example, induction loops, people with partial hearing may not be able to enjoy a concert or play.

Identify the easiest seats to get to as the most accessible for disabled and older people. Offer these as a choice.

### Policy and management

#### Box office

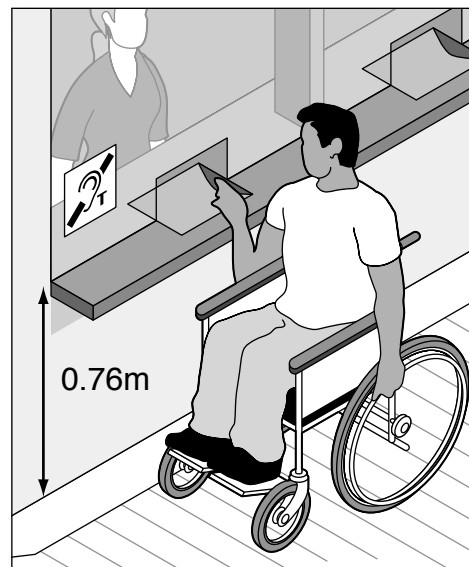
Provide staff training on how to assist disabled visitors. Ensure that staff are trained to know which seating positions are best for deaf or blind people and for people who may find steps difficult. This might be usefully indicated on the auditorium plan.

Ensure that technical equipment is working, regularly checked and maintained.

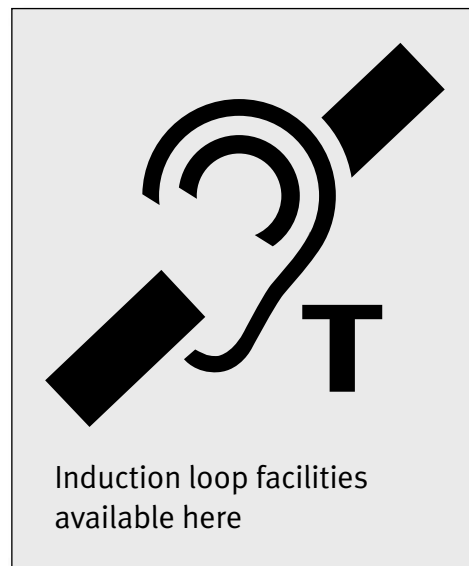
Clear plans or directions showing accessible toilets and escape routes will also improve the level of service and customer confidence.

### Equipment

An infra-red system works better than induction loops in larger auditoriums and concert halls; the visitor is given a receiver for this function.



Money and tickets easily exchanged



Advertise your facilities

### Building and design

The counter of the box office or ticket booth should be maximum height of 76cm from floor level so that money and tickets can easily be exchanged.

Theatres and auditoriums should provide a sound amplification facility for people with partial hearing. For instance, infra-red transmitter-receiver systems make sound signals audible via a pair of headsets. A pictogram to indicate that these services are available should be placed near the box office.

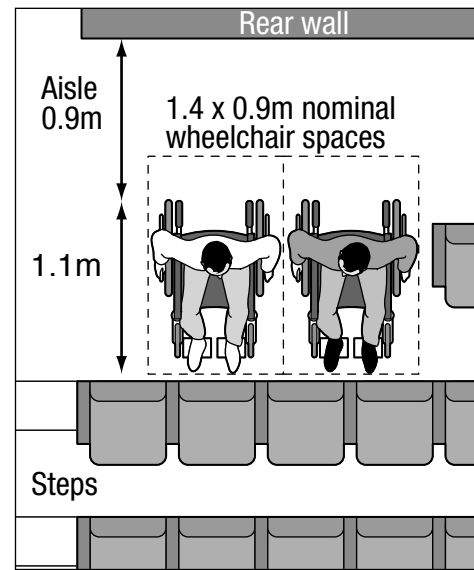
### Wheelchair users

In theatres and cinemas, suitable space should be identified for wheelchair users. Six spaces, or 1/100th of the audience seating, whichever is the greater, should be reserved. For stadiums with large capacities, and for small theatres, a smaller proportion is acceptable.

A wheelchair is longer than it is wide. To make room for it one seat must be removed from each of two consecutive rows or space allowed in the rear aisle.

The distribution of spaces for wheelchair users depends on the layout of the seats in the auditorium. They are best located near the exits and/or placed in groups of two or three to allow for companions and family.

Ideally wheelchair spaces should provide as much choice as possible.



Adequate space should be reserved

### As a minimum

Some of the reserved spaces could be located near the exit/entrance or at the rear, assuming there are no steps.

Folding chairs could be made available to those accompanying a wheelchair user so that they can sit together.

Aisle seats with a removable or folding armrest may be suitable for wheelchair users who can, should they wish to do so, transfer from their wheelchairs. Don't forget to set aside space for storing wheelchairs.

Consider providing an audio description, subtitling equipment and signed performances. Where these services are available ensure that they are advertised.

**Rather than sitting in a theatre or a cinema the customer may prefer to go to an exhibition.**

### What to look out for

Wheelchair users and children cannot see exhibits, such as a large model in a glass case, which are displayed too high.

The printed information provided about the exhibits is sometimes too small or is placed too high for everyone to read, especially if there is a barrier to prevent visitors from getting up close.

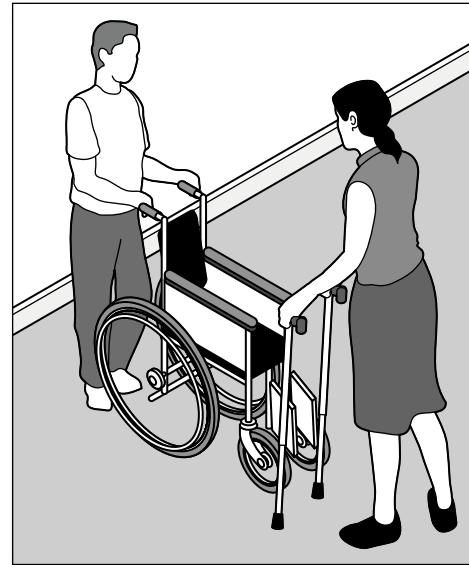
### Policy and management

#### Guided tours

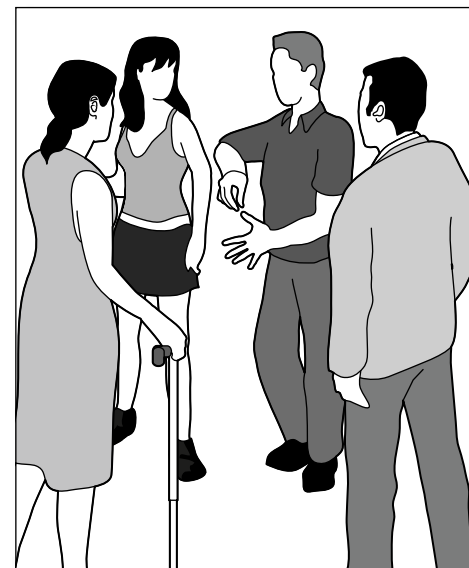
Where trained personnel are available, the museum or gallery could offer signed tours. If these were on a regular basis they could be promoted.

Showing consideration for visitors with partial hearing may be as simple as ensuring the guide pauses at locations where light and sound factors are favourable.

Staff training greatly improves customer service and staff awareness. The greeting process, awareness of services and facilities for disabled people and access features of the building should be understood by front of house staff.



Make wheelchairs available for loan



Guides should locate themselves in quiet and well lit positions

### Equipment

Tour microphones for the guides are available which amplify the messages via a visitor's hearing aid or headphones with a neckloop. They are not, however, a substitute for a guide giving an informed and personable explanation of what is on show.

Loan wheelchairs should be provided for disabled customers. A selection of medium-sized wheelchairs plus small and large size options should cover all eventualities.



## Building and design

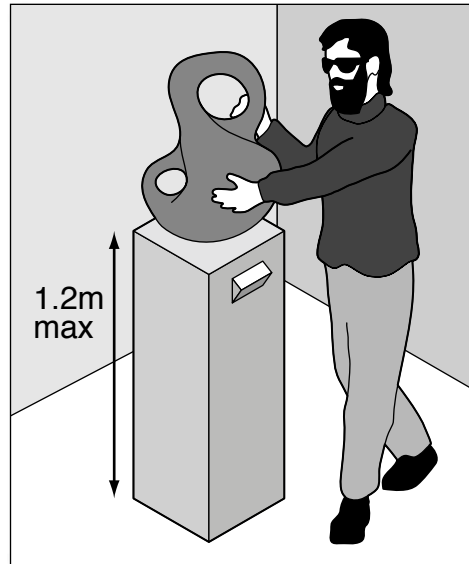
Ensure that the information/ ticket desk is accessible (see 'Reception desks', page 26).

Space around exhibits and in circulation corridors is important. Benches or seats are much appreciated for resting. Next to these there should be room for a wheelchair, or to park a walking-frame or baby buggy without obstructing an aisle.

### Touch exhibits

Putting exhibits behind glass should be avoided if possible, so that people with sight problems can get as close as possible.

Ideally exhibits are suitable for touching as well as seeing. This may require gloves, which could be made available. It may also require the removal of rings and other hand jewellery to avoid potential damage.



Avoid putting exhibits behind glass



Angled display is effective

Some paintings have 'companion', a thermoform (relief) image that can be touched. Depending on size, these may require a suitable bench or space and ideally a taped commentary to accompany them. If you do not have your own thermoform or 'touch' art you may be able collaborate with galleries that do.

Braille readers appreciate a Braille transcription or audio tape of the information. There are services which produce texts in Braille in a short space of time at reasonable cost.

### Glass display cases

These require careful consideration for disabled visitors, for example reflections caused by lighting can obscure viewing. Lamps located within the case can help to balance the effect.

It is best if the table or stand on which an object is exhibited is no more than 1.2m high.

If exhibits must go in glass cases, they should ideally be placed

as an angled display, so that all visitors – whether standing or sitting – can see them.

The information cards describing the exhibits should ideally be in upper and lower case, sans serif lettering at least 20mm high (72 point). This combined with a maximum display height of 1.2m above floor level will increase readability.

There is detailed design guidance for label and text design. The key factors to consider include typeface, type size, location, lighting, tonal contrast legibility and content.

**Your customer has come to the end of a busy, enjoyable but exhausting day. He or she can now return to the hotel for a drink, a meal and a good night's rest.**

## Shopping, business and leisure Checklist

### Smaller retail premises

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- Can a wheelchair user get into your premises?
- Are foot-wipe mats flush with the floor surface?
- Can a wheelchair user turn around in, and move around, the premises?
- Is there rest-seating near the counter?
- Are information brochures within easy reach for all?
- Are brochure racks unobstructed?
- Are reception staff and counters adequately lit?
- Are there facilities to allow someone to sit down to write a cheque or pay by card?
- Are staff trained in disability awareness generally and in how to give change in particular?
- Have you installed an 'Access friendly' sign if appropriate?

**Cost comment:** In smaller shops detailed changes in layout arrangements and fittings can make a significant difference for little cost, for example improved lighting or a chair by the counter. No major re-fit should be undertaken without considering access improvements.

### Travel agents

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- Does the agent's desk comfortably accommodate wheelchair users and seated customers?
- Can clients easily share viewing of the computer monitor on the agent's customer desk?
- Are staff prepared to provide assistance where it is not possible for disabled people to access the goods?

### Conference facilities

- Are your roving microphones connected to an infra-red system or induction loop?
- Do you make provision for (a) note-takers accompanying delegates and (b) guide dogs?
- Are seminar/workshop rooms accessible and equipped to meet disabled people's requirements?
- Where buffets or refreshments are served, are there chairs and tables available?
- Does the conference facility include access to meeting rooms, catering areas and toilets?
- Are these facilities appropriately signed?
- Do you ask delegates and speakers what their access requirements are before the conference?
- Are you able to arrange for signers?
- Can you provide alternative formats for conference information and any follow-up material required?
- Are speakers and workshop facilitators aware of the needs of disabled delegates?

**Cost comment:** People who rely on guide dogs or use wheelchairs take up twice the space of a standing person. Too little space may result in some disappointed customers.

### Theatres, cinemas and auditoriums

- Is the box office/ticket booth counter at the recommended height?
- Does your theatre or auditorium have a sound amplification system for people with partial hearing? If so, is this facility advertised with a pictogram near the box office?
- Is there the recommended number of spaces for wheelchair users in the auditorium?
- Is the space for wheelchair users near the entrance/exit?
- Is there an accessible level platform for wheelchair users in the auditorium?
- Is there a choice of seating positions for wheelchair users?
- Do you provide folding chairs so that a wheelchair user and his/her friend can sit together?
- Do any end aisle seats have removable or folding armrests?
- Is there clear signage to the accessible toilets and emergency escape routes?
- Are staff trained in assisting disabled people in case of an emergency?

**Cost comment:** Flexibility in meeting a variety of seating requirements is the key to success. Removable adaptable seating makes sense in both smaller theatres and auditoriums.

### Exhibitions, museums and galleries

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- Is the reception/ticket desk designed to be accessible?
- Is the information about exhibits at the recommended height and printed in the recommended lettering?
- Do you provide alternative forms of exhibit information?
- Do you provide a guide for visitors with partial hearing, and if so a signer if required?
- Are objects on display at the recommended height?
- Are exhibits in glass cases placed, where required, on a sloping stand for the benefit of wheelchair users?
- Are glass cases and their contents effectively lit to avoid reflections?
- Do you provide rest seating for visitors with room for a wheelchair alongside?
- Do you provide loan wheelchairs of various sizes and types, e.g. pushchairs and self-propelled?

# 5

## Helpful information

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Legislation

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Bibliography

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Accessibility symbols

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The wheelchair

---

Useful names and addresses

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The Employers' Forum on Disability

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### The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995

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#### Part III - Access to goods, facilities and services

Part III of the DDA applies to providers of goods, facilities and services who are commonly referred to as 'service providers'.

A service provider includes anyone who provides a service directly to the public whether for payment or free.

Under the DDA service providers must anticipate the needs of disabled customers to ensure that they do not discriminate against them.

#### What is discrimination?

It is unlawful for service providers to discriminate (unless there is justification) by:

- a) refusing to provide a service to a disabled person, e.g. a pub refusing entry to a group of people with learning difficulties because other customers might not like it.
- b) providing a different standard of service or the service in a different manner to a disabled person, e.g. asking a person who needs forms read to them because of a sight problem or learning difficulty not to come into a post office at lunchtime when it is busy because it takes too long to serve them.

- c) providing the service to a disabled person on different terms, e.g. a holiday company insisting that a person with multiple sclerosis pay the full price of a holiday rather than just a deposit because the company thinks that they are more likely to cancel.

#### Reasonable adjustments

Service providers must also make reasonable adjustments to ensure that they do not make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use the service.

There are four types of reasonable adjustments that a service provider might have to make:

- 1) Changing practices, policies and procedures.

For example, amending a 'no dogs' policy to allow disabled people who have service dogs to enter.

- 2) Providing auxiliary aids or services.

For example, providing information in alternative formats (such as larger print), extra assistance or a textphone where this would make it easier for a disabled person to use an otherwise inaccessible service.

**3) Providing the service by another means.**

Where a physical feature – for example, a flight of steps – makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use the service, service providers must take reasonable steps to provide an alternative method of making the service available, e.g. providing the service on the accessible ground floor.

**4) Making buildings where services are provided more accessible by removing or altering the feature where this is reasonable, or by providing a reasonable means of avoiding the feature.**

If the service provider is a tenant and needs the consent of their landlord to make the changes the landlord cannot unreasonably withhold this consent.

**What is meant by reasonable?**

The Code of Practice states that what is reasonable will vary depending on:

- type of service being provided
- nature of the service provider and its size and resources
- how effective any steps would be in overcoming the difficulty that disabled people face in accessing the services
- how practicable it would be for the service provider to take these steps
- how disruptive taking the steps would be
- extent of the service provider’s financial and other resources
- amount of any resources already spent on making adjustments
- availability of financial or other assistance.



### When can discrimination be justified?

Service providers can justify discrimination in limited circumstances where there is a genuine and reasonable belief that the less favourable treatment is necessary. This could be, for example, where the health and safety of the disabled person or someone else is at risk or if it would otherwise be impossible to provide the service at all.

Service providers cannot, however, charge disabled people more than others who are not disabled or who have a different disability to cover the cost of making reasonable adjustments under the DDA.

Service providers do not have to change the fundamental nature of their business. A nightclub does not, for example, have to turn up the lights for a customer who has sight problems, because this would change the atmosphere and ambience of the service being provided.

### Standards

There is an increasing number of access design guides available. These reflect changes in standards as they improve. There are two publications that you should have if you need to check current standards. The first is the 'Building Regulations Part M', which sets out all the basic requirements. The second is 'British Standard 8300' which provides a lot of additional detailed information. The full titles of both of these are in the Bibliography on page 79.

### Building regulations

The Building Regulations 2000 Approved Document M Access to and use of buildings 2004 Edition.

This sets out the requirements that must be included by designers of new buildings. Designers need to submit their designs for approval by the building control officer. The standards set out in Part M represent a minimum provision. Often these standards can be improved upon to meet 'best practice'.

### Historic buildings

Finally, it is often supposed that historic buildings cannot be altered, even to improve access, but improvements often can be made, especially to parts of the building that have already been altered. If the historic building is listed approval for change will be necessary.

### British Standards

- **Fire Precautions in the Design, Construction and Use of Buildings.** Code of Practice for means of escape for disabled people. BS 5588-Part 8:1999
- **Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people.** Code of Practice BS 8300:2001.

### Building regulations

- **The Building Regulations 2000 Approved Document M Access to and use of buildings 2004 Edition.**

### Legislation

- **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995**
- **Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.**

### Best practice access guidelines

- **Access Audits: A guide and checklists for appraising the accessibility of buildings.** CAE 2004
- **Bringing the DDA to Life for Small Shops. Improving access to goods and services for disabled customers.** i) Café, ii) Clothes shop, iii) Hairdressing salon, iv) Newsagent, v) Publicans. DRC CAE & DWP 2004
- **Building Sight: a handbook of building and interior design solutions to include the needs of visually impaired people.** RNIB 1995
- **Buildings for All to Use. Improving the accessibility of public buildings and environments.** CIRIA 2004
- **Easy access to historic properties.** EH 2004

- **Good Loo Design Guide.** CAE 2004
- **Rights of Access. Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises.** DRC 2002
- **See It Right Pack.** RNIB 2002
- **Sign Design Guide. A guide to inclusive signage.** JMU Access Partnership and the Sign Design Society 2000
- **Specifiers Handbooks for inclusive design i) Platform lifts ii) Automatic door systems, Internal Floor Finishes: Improving Access for all.** CAE 1997; 2005
- **Parking for Disabled People. Traffic Advisory Leaflet 5/95:** Department of Transport Traffic Advisory Unit 1995.

### Employers' Forum on Disability publications

- Particularly recommended are the Forum publications '**Welcoming disabled customers**' and the '**Disability communication guide**', as well as the full set of '**Impairment**' and '**Policy**' Briefing Papers, and the Employment Action File series comprising '**Recruitment that works: A better balance between supply and demand**', '**Retaining your workforce: A best practice guide to the Disability Discrimination Act**', and '**Monitoring for change: A practical guide to monitoring disability in the workforce**'.

### Abbreviations

- CAE** Centre for Accessible Environments
- DRC** Disability Rights Commission
- DfEE** Department for Education and Employment
- EH** English Heritage
- JMU** Joint Mobility Unit (RNIB)
- RNIB** Royal National Institute for the Blind

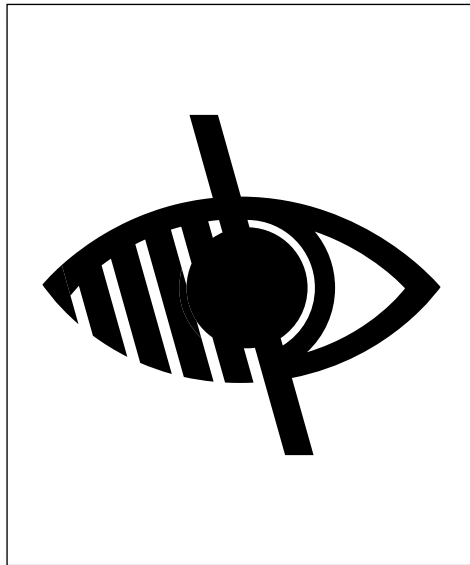
## Helpful information Accessibility symbols

This section includes reproductions of the international access symbol and the symbols for facilities for people with sight problems, facilities for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and provision of equipment for people who are deaf or hard of hearing and symbols for car parking and toilets.



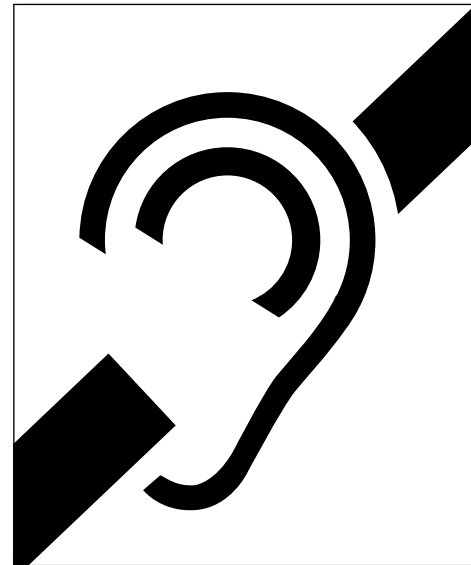
### International access symbol

A universal and international symbol to indicate accessible facilities.



### Facilities for people with sight problems

Used to show the location of large print, Braille or taped material, reading machines etc.



### Facilities for people who are deaf or hard of hearing

Indicates that staff are trained in the Sympathetic Hearing Scheme.



### Provision of equipment for people who are deaf or hard of hearing

Indicates that special equipment (induction loop system) is fitted to improve the quality of sound for those wearing hearing aids.



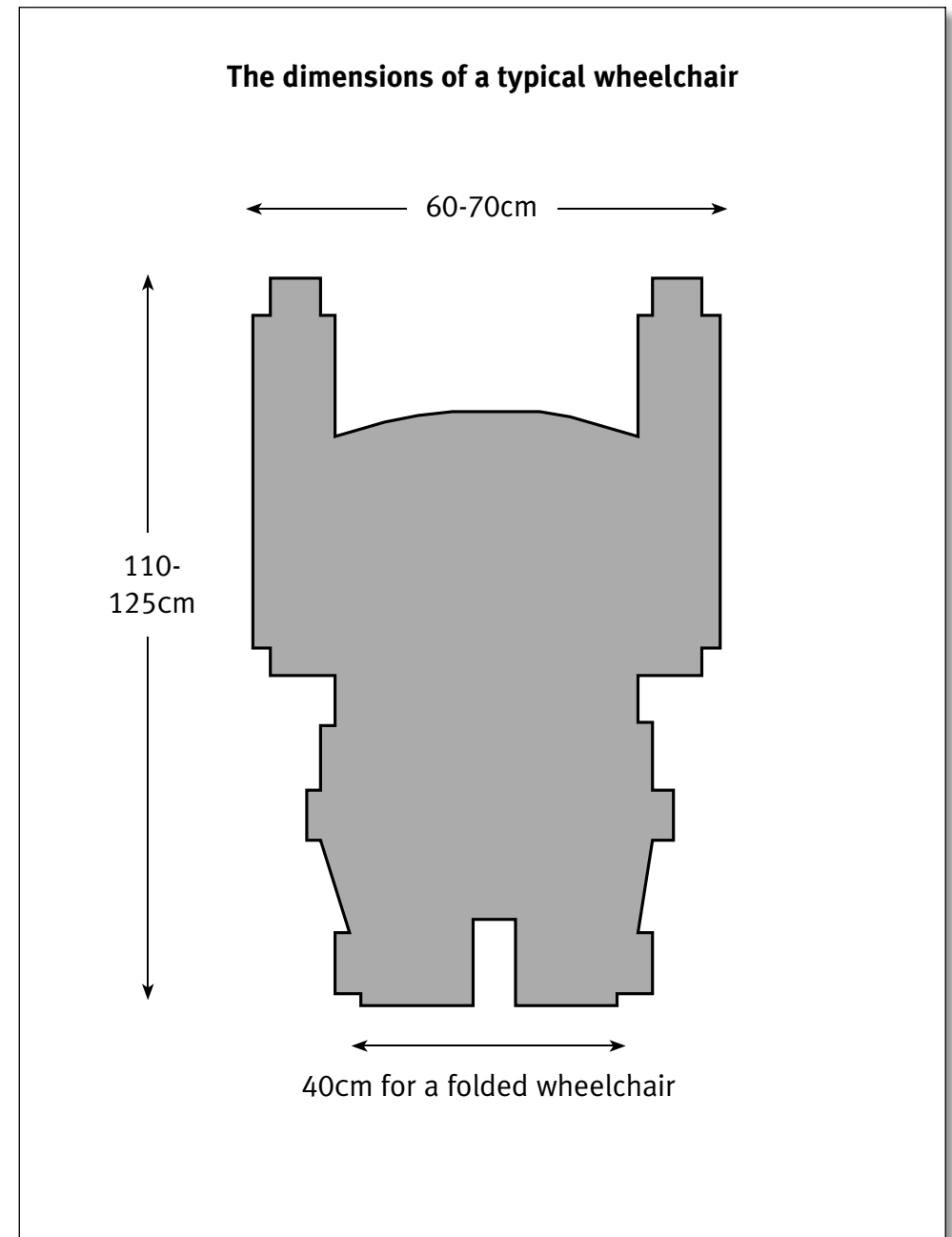
**Car parking facilities**

Used to show existence of, or direction to, parking facilities for holders of the disabled motorists 'blue badge'.



**Toilet**

Indicates location of an accessible unisex toilet in accordance with BS5810. Accessible single sex toilets should use standard male/female sign accompanied by the International Access Symbol.



## Helpful information Useful names and addresses

### **Disability Rights Commission (DRC)**

7th Floor, 222 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8HL.

Tel: 020 7211 4066; Helpline: 08457 622 633; Website: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

Independent body established by Act of Parliament to stop discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

### **Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE)**

70 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL.

Tel: 020 7840 0125; Fax: 020 7840 5811; Website: [www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)

Advice on assessing premises and problem-solving.

### **Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)**

12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF.

Tel: 020 7250 3222; Fax: 020 7250 0212; Minicom: 020 7250 4119;

Website: [www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk)

General advice on access for people with physical disabilities.

### **Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)**

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE.

Tel: 020 7388 1266; Fax: 020 7388 2034; Textphone: 0845 758 5691;

Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

Advice on access for people with sight problems.

### **Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)**

19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL.

Tel: 020 7296 8000; Fax: 020 7296 8199; Website: [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)

Advice on access for people with hearing impairments.

### **Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)**

380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU.

Tel: 020 7289 6111; Fax: 020 7266 2922; Website: [www.dlf.org.uk](http://www.dlf.org.uk)

Advice on equipment supply.



The Employers' Forum on Disability is the authoritative employers' voice on disability as it affects business. Through networking events, publications, briefings, website and a member helpline, the Forum makes it easier to employ and retain disabled people and to serve disabled customers. Forum members represent organisations employing nearly a quarter of the UK workforce.

The Employers' Forum on Disability  
Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY

Tel: 020 7403 3020

Minicom: 020 7403 0040

Fax: 020 7403 0404

Email: [enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk)

Website: [www.employers-forum.co.uk](http://www.employers-forum.co.uk)

For details of more organisations specialising in disability, contact your local authority.