

Factsheet 7 – Inclusive building management

Introduction

The way a building is managed can have a significant effect on the accessibility of services and facilities. Poor building management can potentially make an accessible building inaccessible.

Building management covers a range of practical issues including caretaking, cleaning, equipment servicing, repairs and maintenance as well as customer service and operational issues. It also covers staff training and systems and procedures for implementing and monitoring good practice.

Managing access

The access plan

Having an access audit carried out of your premises is the first step towards improving access. But the process does not end there. When the audit has been completed, you should prepare an access plan that will provide the strategy for how the improvements will be implemented.

Developing a plan will help you ensure that access is not only a one-off concern, identify opportunities for change and help you meet your obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA).

The Code of Practice for Part 3 of the DDA states:

‘Service providers are more likely to be able to comply with their duties to make reasonable adjustments under the Act if they:

- audit physical and non-physical barriers to access for disabled people
- make adjustments and put them in place
- provide training for staff which is relevant to the adjustments
- draw the adjustments to the attention of disabled people
- let disabled people know how to request assistance
- regularly review the effectiveness of adjustments and act on findings of the review’

It is important that you ensure that access is included in, for example, planned maintenance programmes. This will ensure that access improvements can be made in a sensible and cost-effective way.

Specific management issues

There are a range of issues that should be considered by management to ensure that access is achieved and managed:

Car parking – ensure that accessible parking bays are not only provided but actively managed to ensure that they are only used by disabled people.

External routes – ensure that they are kept clear and free of snow, ice, water, leaves and so on.

Doors – ensure that door closers work properly and that the ironmongery is kept in good shape.

Horizontal circulation – ensure that corridors and other circulation areas are kept free of obstructions, that seating is accessible and that auxiliary aids such as portable ramps are available if needed.

Vertical circulation – ensure that lifts are regularly checked, maintained and serviced.

WCs – ensure that spaces in accessible toilets are not obstructed by bins or other equipment, that the alarm cord is not tied up and that soap, toilet paper and paper towels are available.

Communication – ensure that all signage is accurate, up to date, matching, and adheres to good practice, signers and audio description provided as necessary and necessary literature provided.

Hearing enhancement system – ensure that its availability is advertised and that it is maintained and serviced.

Alarm system – ensure that it is checked and that there are procedures in place to deal with emergencies.

Lighting – ensure that broken bulbs are replaced, windows are cleaned and so on.

Means of escape – staff training, regular practices, maintaining fittings and equipment and reviewing of evacuation procedures.

Training – ensure that staff training is ongoing and appropriate.

Responsibility – ensure that there is a person responsible for access.

Policy review – regularly review all policies, practices and procedures affecting access.

Staff training

Staff training is essential to maintaining access, particularly where there are shortcomings in the building's design. Training can cover a wide range of areas, for example disability awareness and equality, use of equipment such as induction loops, British Sign Language (BSL) and access awareness.

Where access improvements are carried out to a building it is very important that staff understand how these improvements work in practice. Training will also help give your staff the confidence to make disabled people feel welcome as users and employees.

More information about staff training can be found in the *Staff training* factsheet.