

Factsheet 4 – Part M of the Building Regulations

Building Regulations

In England and Wales, building design and construction are governed by the Building Regulations.

Part M Access to and use of buildings

The aim of Part M is to ensure that buildings are accessible and usable. People, regardless of ability, age or gender should be able to access and use buildings and facilities. The requirements apply if:

- a non-domestic building or a dwelling is newly built
- an existing non-domestic building is extended or undergoes material alteration
- an existing building or part of an existing building undergoes a material change of use to a hotel or boarding house, institution, public building or shop (note that 'shop' includes bars, restaurants and public houses)

The requirements do not apply to extensions or material alterations of dwellings or the parts of a building that is used solely to

enable the building or any service or fitting in the building to be inspected, repaired or maintained. However, any work carried out must never make access worse than it was before, even if the work is exempt from the Regulations.

The Approved Document M

Each Part of the Building Regulations is supported by an Approved Document which give practical guidance on how to comply with the Regulation. While their use is not mandatory, and the requirements of Regulations can be met in other ways, Approved Documents are used as a benchmark by building control authorities and approved inspectors. It is generally assumed that if you follow the guidance in the Approved Documents, your Building Work complies with the Building Regulations.

The Approved Documents contain general guidance, practical examples and solutions on how you can comply with each Part of the Building Regulations.

You can download the Approved Document M from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) website www.communities.gov.uk.

Access statements

Much of the guidance in the Approved Document M is based on the British Standard BS 8300:2001(Incorporating Amendment No. 1) *Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of practice*, which is based on ergonomic research. This often makes it more prescriptive than other Approved Documents in the Building Regulations series. But, you should remember that the guidance given in Approved Documents only indicates one way of complying with the Regulations and that there may be other, equally good, ways. This is particularly true when dealing with existing buildings.

The Approved Document M recognises this and in order to assist building control it introduces the concept of access statements. You should submit an access statement with your full plans application and it should identify which approach to inclusive design you have adopted, the key issues of the particular scheme, the sources of advice and guidance used.

At its very simplest an access statement might record that the intention of the client, designer or design team was to comply where appropriate with the guidance given in the Approved Document M. It might also show how you wish to depart from the guidance, either to achieve a better solution or to deal with the constraints of an existing building.

It may also be helpful to maintain and update the access statement as the building work goes under way in order to present the end user of the building with a record of decisions made that had an impact on access.

You can download guidance on access statements from www.cabe.org.uk

Further guidance

Department for Communities and Local Government
Eland House, Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
Tel: 020 7944 4400
Fax: 020 7944 9645
Email: contactus@communities.gov.uk
Website: www.communities.gov.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission
Helpline
Freepost RRLG-GHUX-CTRX
Arndale House
Arndale Centre
Manchester
M4 3EQ

Tel: 0845 604 6610
Textphone: 0845 604 6620
Fax: 0845 604 6630
Email: info@equalityhumanrights.com
Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com