

Goods and Services

Making access to goods and services easier for disabled customers

A practical guide for
small businesses
and other small
service providers

The Disability Rights Commission

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is an independent body, established by Act of Parliament to eliminate the discrimination faced by disabled people and promote equality of opportunity. When disabled people participate – as citizens, students, customers and employees – everyone benefits. So we have set ourselves the goal of ‘a society where all disabled people can participate fully as equal citizens’.

We work with disabled people and their organisations, the business community, Government, public sector agencies and the education sector to achieve practical solutions that are effective for employers, service providers, education providers and disabled people alike.

There are about 10 million disabled people in Britain – one in five of the population. This includes people with epilepsy, cancer, schizophrenia, Down’s syndrome and many other types of impairment.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, legal rights and obligations affecting disabled people’s access to services, employment and education are in force. The DDA was amended in 2002 to include education, some duties came into force in September 2002, some in September 2003 and some will come into force in September 2005.

Many people are still not aware that they have many new rights. In addition education providers, employers and service providers are often unsure how to implement ‘best practice’ to make it easier for disabled people to use their services or gain employment.

The DRC has offices in England, Scotland and Wales. For further details of how we can help you, please contact our Helpline – contact details are given on the back cover of this publication.

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Foreword

by the Federation of Small Businesses

As the main organisation representing small businesses, we welcome this practical guide on making access to goods and services easier for disabled customers.

Among our 160,000 members – covering all types of businesses – we know that there is an appreciation of the needs of disabled customers and a willingness to do what is practically achievable to improve both premises and service provision for all customers. This guide has been written specifically with small businesses and other small service providers in mind, and we are certain that you will find in it plenty of practical suggestions for how to respond positively to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The Federation will do what we can to help promote the guide among our membership and beyond.

Charles McKeown

UK Policy Unit

Federation of Small Businesses

This guide does not have statutory authority. It is intended to provide practical advice.

Introduction

**By Bert Massie, Chair, Disability Rights Commission
and Joan Harbison, Chief Commissioner, Equality
Commission for Northern Ireland**

Since October 2004 companies and organisations that provide services to the public are required by the Disability Discrimination Act to ensure that their services are reasonably accessible to disabled people. In many cases the most sensible/obvious way of doing this has been to ensure that the building within which the service is offered is accessible. This is the first time that the law has required businesses to consider whether their buildings are accessible and it has presented a new challenge for many of them. However, focusing on the needs of disabled people can also provide an opportunity to gain from a significant consumer market.

This guide has been produced to help small businesses through this challenging but important process. It was based on a wide-ranging consultation by the Disability Rights Commission in Britain and the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland with almost 650 responses received. These were considered by a Working Group which included both Commissions and representatives of business and disability organisations.

The Disability Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland believes that this Guide is a valuable tool for small businesses and encourages all service providers to implement the advice to ensure that their premises meet the requirements.

Our two Commissions are pleased to provide ongoing advice and assistance to employers and service providers in relation to all aspects of the Disability Discrimination Act. These new requirements are a challenge but we believe it is one which will bring additional business and benefit all customers including disabled people. Together we can turn this challenge into an achievement of which to be proud.

Bert Massie Chair
Disability Rights Commission

Joan Harbison Chief Commissioner
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

About this guide

This practical guide is intended to help small businesses and other service providers in all sectors of the economy find ways of providing better access to goods and services for disabled customers. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), if you provide goods or services to the general public – whether paid for or free-of-charge – you are a ‘service provider’ and you have responsibilities under the Act.

Small service providers are likely to be independent rather than part of a chain, employ only a small number of people, and are unlikely to have in-house technical resources such as a building services department or facilities manager.

The guide will help you:

- understand the implications of Part 3 of the DDA
- think through how customers with different disabilities would access your premises, goods and services and how this might be improved
- understand the issues better and guide you on how to make the best decisions
- focus particularly on making reasonable adjustments to the physical features of your premises in accordance with the new duties that came into force in 2004
- find the advice, information and other help that you might need.

How the Disability Discrimination Act affects you

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) introduces new laws aimed at ending the discrimination that many disabled people face. It affects virtually everyone who provides goods, facilities and services to the general public whether paid for or not (referred to in this guide as 'service providers').

The DDA defines **disability**, and identifies who is protected under it. The definition is broad: 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Part 3 of the Act introduces duties on service providers in three stages:

- since December 1996, it has been unlawful for service providers to refuse to serve a disabled person, offer a lower standard of service or provide a service on worse terms to a disabled person for a reason related to his or her disability
- since October 1999, service providers have had to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the way they provide their services
- since October 2004, service providers have had to make reasonable adjustments in relation to the physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access.

Since October 2004, where a physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled customers to make use of a service offered to the public, service providers have had to take measures, where reasonable, to:

- remove the feature, or
- alter it so that it no longer has that effect, or

- provide a reasonable means of avoiding the feature, or
- provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service available to disabled people (this fourth duty has been in force since October 1999).

Physical features are defined under the DDA as 'anything on the premises arising from a building's design or construction or the approach to, exit from or access to such a building; fixtures, fittings, furnishings, equipment or materials and any other physical element or quality of land in the premises ... whether temporary or permanent'.

Several factors will have a bearing on whether a change is a reasonable one for service providers to have to make, particularly for physical adjustments to premises.

These include:

- whether taking any particular measures would be effective in overcoming the difficulty that disabled people face in accessing the services in question
- the extent to which it is practicable for the service provider to take the measures
- the financial and other costs of making the adjustment
- the extent of any disruption which taking the measures would cause
- the extent of the service provider's financial and other resources
- the amount of any resources already spent on making adjustments
- the availability of financial or other assistance.

Responding to your duties as a service provider under the DDA means coming up with solutions that are reasonable in all the circumstances and which result in as many disabled customers as possible being able to access your goods and services. For small service providers (as compared to larger ones with more resources at their disposal) the emphasis is likely to be on practical, low-cost adjustments, although you

should also consider more major physical alterations to improve access to your premises if feasible and affordable.

The Code of Practice for Rights of Access: Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises provides fuller guidance on the three stages, including the new duties that came into force in 2004*.

Other guidance available includes:

- Act Now Video
- Guide for small business top tips pack
- Creating an inclusive environment
- What it means to you guide for disabled
- What it means to you guide for service providers
- Making your business open for all

(See **Publications**, page 47 for details.)

*** Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Code of Practice:
Rights of Access, Goods, Facilities, Service and Premises**
The Stationery Office, 2002

Deals with the duties placed by Part 3 of the DDA on those providing goods, facilities or services to the public and those selling, letting or managing premises. (A separate Code has been published for use in Northern Ireland.)

Available price £13.95 from The Stationery Office or on the internet at www.drc-gb.org

Disabled customers

There are around 10 million people in the UK* with a current disability covered by the DDA. Of these, over 2.75 million have a significant hearing impairment and over 2 million have a significant visual impairment. Some people have more than one disability; some have disabilities that cannot be seen; and the popular perception that people with disabilities always use wheelchairs is inaccurate.

Those who are likely to benefit from improvements made by small businesses and other service providers include:

- disabled customers (both existing and new ones)
- their friends and families accompanying them
- customers with pushchairs or carrying heavy shopping or luggage
- customers with children
- some older customers who may not consider themselves disabled but who do appreciate easier access.

Meeting the needs of your disabled customers

To some extent you will be able to anticipate what customers with different disabilities may need in order to access your goods and services. It is also a good idea to talk to individual customers about any particular problems getting in and around your premises or finding what they need, and any ideas for how you could improve access to your goods and services. (But remember that what makes goods and services accessible to one disabled customer may not work as well for another disabled customer.)

* source: **Family Resources Survey 2002/03.**

Think broadly about the wide range of disabilities including:

- sight impairments
- hearing impairments
- physical/mobility impairments
- mental ill health
- learning disabilities.

Disabled customers can benefit from a range of improvements, some of which can be relatively easy to implement, such as a suitably positioned handrail, clearer signs or a well-planned, logical layout within premises.

If you currently have few disabled customers, this could simply be a reflection of how difficult access to your premises and goods and services is. So, in addition to your existing customers, give some thought to what improvements you can make for people who may become new customers.

Equality, dignity and respect

This guide is based on the principle that – as far as possible – disabled customers should be able to obtain goods and receive services in just the same way as other customers who are not disabled. This would mean that all customers receive as near to equal service as possible, and occasions where some customers feel that they are being treated differently are reduced to a minimum.

However, given the constraints of operating from existing buildings, there will be some situations where the same treatment will not be possible. In such cases, you will need to decide how best to serve your disabled customers: whatever solutions you come up with should respect the dignity of disabled customers. And, of course, there is nothing to prevent you from making extra provision for them.

Principles to bear in mind

The sections immediately following this one look at different aspects of how disabled customers use premises and access goods and services. When reading them, it is useful to bear in mind some general principles outlined below.

Inclusive approach

- **Meeting the needs of as many customers as possible:** remember that the objective is to take an 'inclusive approach' – that is, to find ways of providing access to your goods and services in the same way for as wide a range of customers as possible, acknowledging that there will be some circumstances where particular provision may have to be made for customers with certain disabilities.
- **Who will benefit:** some physical improvements can specifically benefit customers with particular types of disability (for example, repairing a loose-fitting carpet that might have caused a tripping hazard will particularly benefit blind or partially sighted customers as well as customers with physical impairments such as poor balance). But suggested improvements will often also be of general benefit to all customers, whether or not they have a disability.

Existing buildings

- **Practical improvements:** in existing buildings (as against new buildings) it is often not possible to meet all 'best practice' accessible design solutions, but you should achieve best practice where possible. The most useful approach is to look for practical improvements that you can make.
- **Design guidance:** we have deliberately avoided giving 'off-the-peg' design solutions, because in existing buildings there are so many variable factors to take into account, and a design solution that may work well in one building may be inappropriate or simply not possible in

another. Design guidance can be found in a variety of sources (see **Publications**, page 47).

- **Rethinking use of spaces:** it may be possible to improve access to goods and services for disabled customers by rearranging the layout of the premises (with little or no physical alteration) to maximise use of accessible areas. For example, in an office where interview areas for the public are needed, it may be possible to relocate this function from an upper floor to the ground floor.
- **Retaining positive features:** ensure that any features which assist access are retained and that opportunities for improvements are considered when undertaking routine maintenance or refurbishment.

Timing of improvements

- **Making a start:** you will probably find that you have already implemented some of these ideas anyway; some you might be able to apply quickly and at very little or no cost. Others may be things you want to plan for the future, perhaps incorporating them when you are undertaking routine maintenance, next redecorating, or replanning the interior of your premises. They do not necessarily have to be done all at once, but the important thing is to get started.
- **Taking a long-term view:** it is a good idea to have a long-term plan of gradual improvements to make it easier for disabled customers to access your goods and services.
- **Getting input and advice:** you will find that you will be able to implement some of these suggestions yourself. For others you may need some additional input – perhaps by asking your existing disabled customers for their views or inviting a local access group to visit the premises and make suggestions. Others still may require more technical advice from professionals (see **Where to get further help and technical advice**, page 41). Some changes to physical features may need planning permission, building control approval and/or other consents.

Non-physical adjustments

- **Making services available by alternative methods:** as well as making physical improvements (that is, removing or altering physical features that present obstacles), access can be improved by providing a means of avoiding the features or providing reasonable alternative methods of making services available to disabled people.
- **The way you run your business:** the day-to day management of your business and premises will have a huge impact on how easy they are to use by disabled customers. Staff management and policies and attitudes towards serving disabled customers are just as important as the premises themselves.



Staff awareness and an understanding of the needs of your customers and potential customers can improve access for disabled people.

- **Staff awareness:** ensure that all staff are aware of the DDA and that training in how to meet the needs of disabled customers is provided as appropriate (see organisations concerned with disability and employment under **Organisations**, page 50, for information on disability awareness trainers).



The contrast in colour between this door to a café and the door surround makes it much easier to see and is very attractive.

Identifying and finding the premises

Consider who your customers are (or potentially might be), and how they identify your premises: the entrance should be easy to find from the street, car park or other routes to the building. Customers with visual impairments or learning disabilities, for example, may have more difficulty identifying the premises and the entrance door than other customers.

Practical suggestions:

- **Clearer signs:** could there be clearer signs directing people to the entrance or on the premises itself saying what is in the building and also identifying the premises by street name and number and telephone number?
- **Using colour:** could the entrance door itself be made easier to see, for example by painting the door a contrasting colour or tone from the surround?
- **Locating an alternative entrance:** if some disabled customers access your premises by an entrance other than the one normally used by other customers – and it is not practical to make this the main entrance for all customers – could the alternative entrance be more clearly signed?

Approaching the premises

Think about how customers with different types of disabilities will be able to get to your premises. Routes which are easy to negotiate by customers using sticks, crutches and wheelchairs are also likely to present fewer obstacles to customers with visual impairments, as well as making it easier for customers pushing children in pushchairs, carrying heavy shopping or with shopping trolleys.



Bushes which have grown across a path present a hazard to disabled people, keeping these cut back would improve access.

Practical suggestions:

- **Better lighting:** could external lighting be improved to help people find their way to your premises?
- **Car parking:** if you have a car parking area for customers, could there be better provision for disabled customers to manoeuvre a wheelchair in and out of a car? (This requires a wider parking bay than standard.) Can you find a way to ensure that drivers who are not disabled do not occupy bays intended for disabled customers? If there is usually no parking provision for customers but you have staff car parking spaces, could you arrange for these to be made available for disabled customers by prior arrangement?
- **Paths and other routes:** could routes, path surfaces or the frontage to your premises be improved to make them more even, less slippery and free of obstacles? Some common problems are:
 - cracked or uneven paving slabs
 - rough surfaces or sudden changes in level
 - positioning of things like litter bins and free-standing advertising boards
 - protruding or overhanging objects, grass or other vegetation which might present a danger
 - ice or mossy growth that might make surfaces slippery.

Entering the premises

Step (or steps) to entrance door

Steps are the single biggest barrier to independent access for people with mobility impairments: many small shops and other businesses are located in premises where there are one or more steps to the front door.

If you have a step or steps to your main entrance door, it is worth looking at all the possibilities and then deciding which ones are realistic for you to undertake. Structural alterations might include:

- raising the pavement or other approach up to the level of the entrance
- installing a permanent external ramp (ideally in addition to the steps rather than as a replacement because some people find steps easier to use than ramps)
- installing a permanent ramp just inside the premises
- moving the entrance to a position where it is more easily accessible from the street.

These types of solutions may or may not be possible depending on a range of factors, and you would need technical advice and guidance on these options (see **technical advice**, page 41). Careful consideration should always be given to safety. If there is no reasonable and practical way of replacing the step or steps, here are some other adjustments that you might be able to make.

Practical suggestions:

- **Ramps:** in situations where for some reason it is not feasible to create wheelchair access using a permanent solution (see above), could you use a temporary ramp? The disadvantage of temporary ramps is that they need to be stored somewhere when not in use and they can be awkward to handle. To ensure safety, temporary ramps should be obtained from commercial suppliers. They should be firm, secure and have non-slip surfaces.

- **Fitting handrails:** could you fit a handrail to one or both sides of stepped entrances to help customers with mobility impairments up and down the step(s)? Having something to grip and provide support makes access much easier and safer.
- **Marking the steps more clearly:** could the edges of steps be made easier to see using a colour that contrasts with the main part of the step? This can help customers with visual impairments or learning difficulties to identify the existence of a step or steps.
- **Lighting:** could lighting at the entrance be improved?



A handrail next to a step or short flight of steps makes a big improvement to access for many disabled people. If this handrail was also a contrasting colour to the wall and easier to grip it would be more useful.



Although making the main entrance accessible would always be the best solution, where this is not possible an alternative entrance may be designated but this should be safe, pleasant and easy to use.

- **Call bells/entryphones:** if the layout of your premises means that staff inside the building cannot easily see if someone needs assistance to get in, could you fit a call bell or an entryphone system? If you do this, think about how someone in a wheelchair would reach it and how customers with hearing or visual impairments would use it.
- **Relocating the main entrance:** is there a rear or side entrance or an entrance further along the frontage where level access is possible? If so, could this be made into the main entrance for everyone, so all customers use the same entrance?

- **Designating an alternative entrance with level access:** if the main entrance cannot be made accessible or relocated, could a rear or side entrance nearby – perhaps one normally used by staff or for deliveries – be designated as an accessible entrance for wheelchair users and others? Although not ideal, this might be the only way to enable disabled customers to have access to your premises. This approach should only be taken if it is a safe alternative and is not unpleasant or undignified to use. Ensure that the entrance is clearly marked, left open and clear of obstructions during business hours or that there is a call bell or other means of alerting staff so that they can come and open the door on request.
- **Offering assistance to customers over the step:** although you should not assume that a disabled customer wants to be assisted without asking first, where stepped access cannot be avoided, wheelchair users and others may be willing to accept assistance from staff to get into the premises.
- **Alternative methods of providing services:** there may be situations where it is not reasonable to remove, alter or avoid a physical feature (such as a flight of stairs) that creates a barrier to access for some disabled people. In such cases, could you come up with alternative methods of providing the service, such as bringing goods to the customer at the entrance, home delivery or through the post?

Making doors easier to use

Doorways and doors are another typical barrier to access for disabled customers, whether because of their width, design of threshold, heaviness of operation, or difficulties in operating the door handles.

In terms of access for wheelchair users, at least 750mm clear opening width (ie the actual space that is available between the door frame and the door in the open position) and a maximum of 13mm lip at the threshold is generally considered suitable. It is worth considering whether physical

adaptation could achieve this, and you will need technical advice if you are planning to adjust or widen a doorway (which may or may not be possible depending on various factors) or alter the threshold (see **technical advice**, page 41). Even without carrying out major structural alterations, there are many things that you can consider doing to make doors easier to use by many of your disabled customers.



This entrance has a wide door, no step, flush mats, a good handle and the glazing is divided and has markers on the glass so that the glazing and door are more obvious. It could be improved by making the door and frame contrasting colours.

Practical suggestions:

- **Positioning of the door handle:** could the handle be positioned more conveniently (recommended height 1000mm)?
- **Replacing the door handle:** could the handle be replaced by one which is easier to grip, such as a D-shape handle, and with better colour contrast? These adjustments would benefit customers with, for example, arthritis and with visual impairments (indeed many older customers who would not necessarily consider themselves disabled do have difficulties using knobs and handles).
- **Making the door easier to open:** door opening pressure can often be altered very easily to make the door much easier to open. This benefits customers who have mobility impairments or difficulty balancing. Magnetic devices which hold the door open for normal use but allow them to close for fire protection may be considered.
- **Checking that entrance mats are flush:** this can prevent a potential tripping hazard to customers with visual impairments (who may not see the hazard) and to customers using aids such as walking sticks or crutches or who have difficulty keeping their balance. It is best to avoid bristle matting which may be difficult for wheelchair users to cross.
- **Glazed doors:** people with impaired vision may not recognise fully glazed doors and may walk into them. Could you add safety markings halfway up the door?
- **Maintaining doors:** ensuring that door closers are regularly maintained, that door ironmongery is kept clean and free-moving and that standard (side-hung) doors accompanying revolving doors are kept unlocked can benefit all customers, particularly those with mobility impairments and those using assistance dogs as well as customers carrying shopping or with buggies.

Finding the way around

How easily would disabled customers – particularly those with visual impairments or learning disabilities – orientate themselves in your premises, be able to locate goods or service points they want to find, and move around safely? Bear in mind that logically planned and well-lit premises – with good, clear signs and use of colour contrast in internal decoration – are likely to benefit all customers.

Practical suggestions:

- **Making signs easier to read:** could you use more signs or use them more effectively in your premises? Signs that work best are:
 - simple and short
 - easily read and understood with clear typefaces in a mixture of upper and lower case
 - well-contrasted with background (ie with strong contrast of light and dark between lettering and background)
 - supplemented by visual/pictorial symbols.

Signs with glass in front of them can be hard to read because of light reflection, and lettering applied directly onto glass can be difficult to read depending on what is beyond the glass. Ensure that new signs integrate with the existing signs and that signs are replaced correctly after being removed for redecoration.

- **Using different colours effectively:** colour can be used creatively to help some customers with visual impairments who may see 'blocks' of colour more easily than identify detail. Compared to a monotone colour scheme, they will find it easier to move around independently if floors, walls, ceilings and doors are distinguished from each other using contrasting colours or light and dark tones of the same colour. A practical tip for assessing colour contrast is to take a black-and-white

photograph and see how easy it is to distinguish between different coloured surfaces.

- **Offering staff assistance:** it is not always possible to create the physical conditions in which customers with different disabilities can move easily and safely around the premises independently and gain access to goods and services. In such cases, could you ensure that staff assistance is provided, for example to escort a blind person around a shop or to a safe place where goods can be brought to them? Information about how best to meet the needs of customers with visual impairments is available from organisations concerned with access or visual impairment (see **Organisations**, page 50).
- **Glazed panels:** people with impaired vision may not recognise glazed panels or internal glass walls and bump into them. Could you add conspicuous safety markings halfway up?

Lighting

Improving lighting conditions in your premises can be of particular benefit to customers with partial sight.

Practical suggestions:

- **Highlighting hazardous areas:** could you add extra lighting in potentially hazardous areas like stairwells or changes in level, and ensure that your lighting does not cause pools of bright light and shadow on the walls and floors concealing potentially hazardous objects in the shade?
- **Maximising light:** ensure that windows, lamps and blinds are kept clean in order to maximise available light and that blown light bulbs are swiftly replaced.
- **Highly reflective surfaces:** large surfaces of a white or highly reflective finish (such as ceramic tiles, mirrors or stainless steel) may create glare and reflection, causing problems for people with partial sight. Could your lighting be adjusted or relocated to reduce these effects?



This sign gives clear information for all customers but the reflection caused by the glass could cause difficulties for some customers with a visual impairment.

Moving about within the premises

Think about how customers with mobility impairments in particular would be able to move around within your premises. Making major structural changes such as installing a lift will require careful planning and technical advice. You may also need advice with things like widening doorways and installing internal ramps (see **technical advice**, page 41) but there are many other changes that might be possible without major expense or upheaval.

Practical suggestions:

- **Making circulation easier:** aisles and corridors, areas near doors and other circulation space are often unnecessarily restricted due to the positioning of furniture and fittings,

display of goods, deliveries, rubbish or storage. You may be able to improve internal circulation very easily by making sure that these spaces are kept uncluttered. This will benefit wheelchair users (if the circulation space is big enough to accommodate people using wheelchairs) and users of other mobility aids such as walking sticks or frames, as well as people pushing trolleys and pushchairs. Make sure that goods are not left on the floor, particularly in premises like toy shops and shoe shops, which can obstruct circulation or cause a tripping hazard.

- **Fitting handrails:** for example, where there are one or more internal steps or internal ramps. Handrails should extend beyond the rise or fall of a ramp or steps to indicate the end of the rise or fall to visually impaired customers and to provide support for customers who have difficulty balancing.
- **Clearer markings of internal steps and safety hazards:** could you mark more clearly, in a contrasting colour, the edges of internal steps and protruding features that customers with visual impairments may bump into?
- **Ensuring that surfaces are as level as possible:** could you re-lay poorly fitted mats or repair uneven junctions of floor surfaces?
- **Surfaces – ensure that:**
 - cleaning and polishing does not make slip-resistant surfaces slippery
 - junctions between different flooring materials do not become worn, presenting a tripping hazard
 - when flooring is renewed, careful consideration is given to the type of surface chosen
 - the redecoration of interiors does not compromise a carefully selected colour scheme designed to impart information to people with a visual impairment or compromise contrast with features such as door frames, control panels, signs etc.

Communicating with staff

Your customers need to communicate with staff about a whole host of issues relating to goods and services on offer, such as pricing, availability, contracts and after-sales service. Customers with different disabilities will have different needs. If in doubt, find out from them individually what method of communication suits them best. In addition to the telephone, textphone and email can benefit a range of customers.

There are a range of systems to enhance communication for people with hearing impairments that you may want to consider fitting. Some are relatively simple, such as induction loops (particularly suitable at box offices, ticket counters, reception desks, cashiers' windows and in interview or meeting rooms), while others are more complicated, such as infrared systems (more suitable for controlled areas such as cinemas, theatres and lecture rooms where headsets can be borrowed from a central source). You will need technical advice on choosing and installing these types of systems (see page 41). Once installed, make sure that the systems are advertised and regularly checked. Consideration should also be given to protecting the privacy of customers where appropriate.

Keeping background noise to a minimum enables customers with hearing impairments to maximise use of their hearing. You might want to consider putting in sound insulation and avoiding too many hard surfaces, which tend to cause problems for customers with hearing impairments. Again, you may need technical advice on these issues (see **technical advice**, page 41).

Practical suggestions:

- **Improving lighting conditions:** could you make it easier for people with hearing impairments to lip-read by improving lighting conditions? Light shining onto the face is preferable to lighting from behind.

- **Using alternative means of communication:** in situations where it is not reasonable to install an induction loop or other type of voice enhancement system, staff could communicate in other ways, such as exchanging written notes with customers with hearing impairments.
- **Making communication easier:** staff can be encouraged to look straight at customers and not cover the mouth when they are speaking to them. This will benefit in particular people who use any level of lip reading, including many who would not consider themselves to have a hearing impairment. Allowing extra time, and repeating back to the customer to check accuracy and understanding, can benefit customers with learning difficulties and with speech impairments.
- **Separating quiet and noisy areas:** could you plan the use of your space to benefit all customers, particularly those with hearing impairments, by locating a customer helpdesk away from noisy machinery or equipment such as computers, photocopiers and air-conditioning units?

Getting to goods and services

Shelves, display racks etc

Think about how your disabled customers access goods or information such as brochures and leaflets on shelves and display racks. If you are considering refitting with new units, it is worth seeking advice on dimensions for achieving the best accessibility and on layout (see **technical advice**, page 41). Even without major replanning of the fittings and fixtures, there are many simple things you might be able to do.

Practical suggestions:

- **Repositioning existing units:** sometimes a free-standing shelf unit that is restricting access, for example very near a door, might be able to be moved to a location which improves access and circulation.
- **Adapting existing units:** could you make simple changes to existing units to make access to them easier? Could you consider the heights of shelves etc, for people using wheelchairs or with limited reach?
- **Arranging goods so that the same items are available at a range of heights:** if you have a popular, high-volume selling range, then rather than putting them all on a very high or very low shelf, could you arrange the goods over a range of shelf heights?
- **Making product information easier to read:** could labelling, prices and other important customer information be made larger and easier to read? 24 point size is recommended for shelf bar labels.
- **Using alternative methods of providing services:** sometimes the barrier may be to a certain part of the premises – such as a flight of stairs to another level. In such cases, is it possible to relocate certain services, offer services at the entrance level or come up with an

alternative? For example, a clothes shop where the changing rooms are upstairs might offer disabled customers the option of returning clothes, having tried them on at home 'with no questions asked'.

- **Staff assistance:** in situations where disabled customers cannot see or cannot reach goods or other items, could staff fetch goods for them and make sure that customers know that this service is available?

Queuing systems, waiting areas and seating

If customers may have to wait to receive a service, or to walk considerable distances within the premises, you should consider circulation space and whether it is possible to provide suitably designed seats for people with mobility impairments to sit and rest. In very small premises where there is not enough space to provide seating adjacent to queuing areas, it is important to make alternative provision for customers who cannot stand and wait. Any such arrangements should be made publicly known to avoid customers getting upset if they think other customers are queue jumping.

Practical suggestions:

- **Providing additional seating:** a mixture of seating with and without armrests and at a range of heights is preferable.
- **Queuing systems:** where some customers are standing and others are seated, can you provide a means of ensuring that seated customers do not lose their place in the queue?
- **Repositioning furniture in waiting areas:** could furniture be arranged so that there is space for a wheelchair user to pull up alongside a seated companion?
- **Ensuring that announcement systems are both visible and audible:** so that they can be understood by customers with hearing and visual impairments.



Providing seating can be very helpful and it shouldn't become an obstacle in itself. It should be a clear contrast to its surroundings or a folding seat is sometimes an option.



Counters, service desks and checkouts

Think about how disabled customers get to and use counters, service desks and checkouts. You may want to consider fitting an induction loop system at counters with glazed screens (for example cashiers' windows in banks, building societies or post offices) or where there is background noise to help people with hearing aids (see **technical advice**, page 41).

Practical suggestions:

- **Creating a lowered section of the counter or service desk:** with sufficient space to write cheques, sign documents etc, to suit both standing and wheelchair-using customers and short people. Alternatively, a lower writing shelf could be provided. Equipment such as lap trays or clip boards (for people to write cheques or sign papers if they cannot bend down to reach a counter top) can be useful.
- **Making sure that any service call bell is in an accessible and obvious position.**
- **Keeping glazed screens clear of notices, grilles or other distractions that make it difficult for people to lip-read.**
- **Improving lighting:** so that it is easier for someone who is lip-reading to see the staff member's face.
- **Positioning service desks:** so that they are not located in front of windows where bright sunshine will cause the staff member to be in silhouette, making lip-reading difficult.
- **Altering staff practices:** in situations where it is not reasonable to make counters and service desks fully accessible, it may be possible to alter practices. For example, a member of staff could come out from behind a service desk to meet a wheelchair-using customer who cannot approach the desk and carry out any transactions with them in another part of the premises, maintaining any necessary privacy.



Having a section of a counter at a height for wheelchair users is very useful.

Information about goods and services

Think about how people with visual impairments and with learning difficulties get the information they need about your products and services.

Practical suggestions:

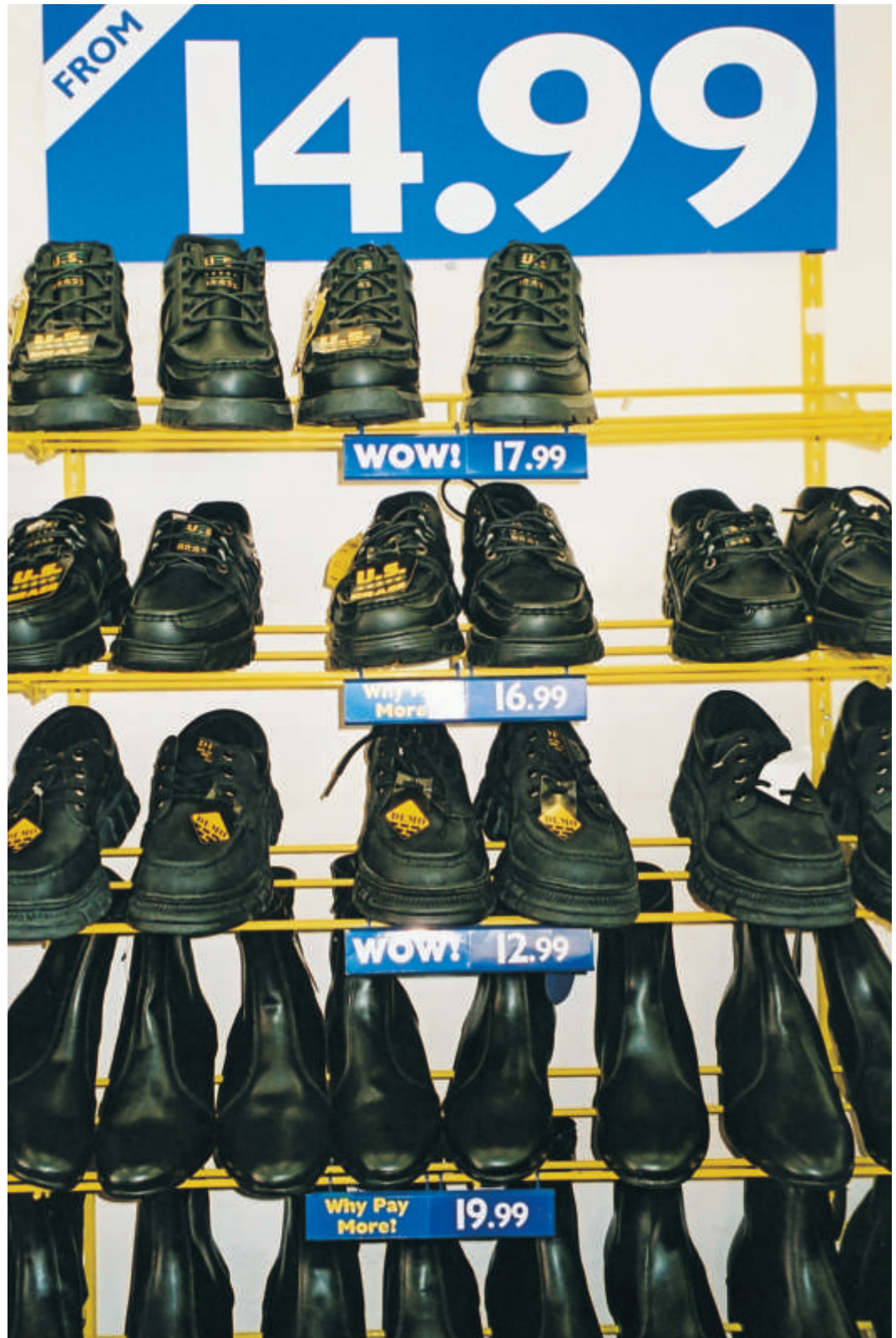
- **Making labels, pricing, menus etc, clearer:** could your standard labels, prices and menus be easier to read and understood – for example, graphics/symbols, bigger typefaces or print size, clearer contrast between the lettering and the background?

Or could you provide an alternative larger format specifically for people with visual impairments?

- **Providing braille or tactile information:** could you provide braille or tactile information, for example on where to find goods and services within the premises?
- **Staff assistance:** could staff be trained to assist blind customers by describing and explaining products or services to them?



The majority of these price labels could be difficult for any customers to see but the larger label for £2.99 is clearer and much easier to identify.



The price labels and whole display are very clear and contrast with each other and the background wall colour and will make it easier for disabled people and other customers.

Customer toilets

For some service providers, such as small shops, the issue of providing toilets does not arise – customers do not expect to have access to a toilet. But where customers may be on the premises for some time (eg a hairdressing salon, beauty parlour or solicitor's office) or where toilets would normally be provided (eg a restaurant, cafe or bar) you should consider how accessible the toilets are – both in terms of getting to and using the facilities.

If there is sufficient space available, a toilet compartment might be modified to full wheelchair-accessible standards. This may be achieved in a variety of ways, such as fitting out an existing compartment which is already big enough, knocking two compartments into one to create enough space or moving a toilet from an inaccessible location to an accessible location (see *Designing for Accessibility* listed under **Publications**, page 47). You will need technical advice on creating a wheelchair-accessible toilet compartment, as the layout, dimensions and positioning of fittings are all critical.

The following checklist suggests other improvements that can be made to toilets (even without creating full wheelchair access) that will benefit many other disabled customers.

Practical suggestions:

- **Fitting grabrails:** appropriately positioned grabrails can be of great benefit to customers with limited movement, balance or grip.
- **Better lighting:** improving lighting in toilets will benefit everyone, particularly those customers with visual impairments.
- **Use of colour:** customers with visual impairments may find 'all-white' areas difficult to orientate themselves in and to identify fittings such as basins and the toilet itself. Making fixtures and fittings stand out more easily through use of contrasting colour makes toilet compartments and washroom areas much easier to use for these and other customers.

- **Floor surfaces:** for safety reasons, could you change shiny or slippery floor surfaces to non-slip surfaces? This will benefit all customers, particularly those with visual or mobility impairments.



This toilet has an outward opening door, good contrast between the colour of the walls and the fittings, a non-slip floor and a grab rail. Although not suitable for use by most wheelchair users it would be accessible for many disabled people.

- **Outward-opening doors:** particularly in small toilet compartments, if the door can be changed so as to open outwards, this can greatly improve manoeuvring space within the compartment, and make all the difference between some customers being able to use the toilet or not. It is also better from a safety point of view to have an outward-opening door that can be opened in an emergency without being obstructed by anyone or anything inside the toilet compartment.
- **Avoiding shiny ceramic tiles and floors:** these can cause reflection and glare which may be visually confusing – could you replace them with less shiny tiles, perhaps when undertaking a refurbishment or redecoration?
- **Clearer signing to toilets:** including pictorial symbols is beneficial to all customers, particularly those with visual impairments or learning difficulties.
- **Providing information on nearest accessible toilet facilities:** if it is not reasonable to provide a wheelchair-accessible toilet for your customers, it may be possible to arrange with a neighbouring business where there is an accessible toilet for your customers to use it. Alternatively, you may be able to help your disabled customers by letting them know where the nearest accessible public toilet is.
- **Management:** ensure that supplies of toilet tissue and paper towels are regularly replenished and that toilets are not used as storage areas and are kept free of obstructions.
- **Maintaining alarms:** ensure that alarm systems in toilets are regularly checked. Pull-cord alarms should be capable of being activated from floor level. It is important that staff are familiar with any alarm systems.

Getting out of the premises

As a general rule of thumb, the easier it is for disabled customers to get into and move around the premises, the easier it is for them to get out. However, when leaving shops all customers are likely to be carrying more goods – sometimes heavy or bulky. For example, doors that are easy to open are important for everyone.

You also need to consider means of escape in case of an emergency evacuation. Unlike the needs of staff, the needs of individual customers are not always known. Often customers' only knowledge of the premises is the route by which they entered. You will therefore need to have arrangements in place to enable customers to escape from the building, or at least to a place of relative safety or refuge where assistance can be provided if necessary. Management procedures and staff training and awareness are the key to the operation of emergency evacuation arrangements.

Practical suggestions:

- **Keeping exit routes free of obstruction:** such as stored boxes, old furniture, rubbish or other clutter.
- **Checking systems:** ensure that alarm systems are in working order and that procedures for emergency evacuation (such as fire drills) are in place and tested regularly.
- **Staff training:** ensure that new staff are trained in alarm response procedures. Could staff be briefed to pay particular attention to assisting customers with visual or mobility impairments off the premises and to alerting customers who are not reacting to audible alarms?

Public or common areas

Many small businesses operate in premises where they do not have responsibility for the immediate external environment – for example a shop with its entrance straight off the public pavement or an office on the first floor of a building.

In such cases, it is still helpful to think about how disabled customers – particularly customers with visual and mobility impairments – gain access to your premises. If you identify physical features that may create difficulties for disabled customers, there may be something you can do about it, such as:

- having a word with whoever does have control over the space – for example, your landlord or a neighbouring business. Explain the problem and ask if there is anything they can do to make access easier to your premises. Your landlord may be entitled to charge you for such work if this is permitted under your lease. Landlords who permit public access to common areas of the building may have responsibilities for considering access under the DDA.
- talking to the local authority roads department (or the local access officer if there is one) to see what can be done to tackle problems such as uneven paving surfaces, lack of dropped kerbs at street crossings, unclear street signs and awkwardly placed street furniture. You may have a stronger case if you get together with other local businesses – perhaps through a local chamber of commerce or business association – to lobby the council, particularly for more major alterations to the external environment, such as raising the level of a length of pavement so as to create level or near-level access to a row of shops (which may or may not be technically possible, depending on the circumstances).

Where to get further help and technical advice

The sources of advice and organisations listed below have been selected on the basis of their usefulness as a source of information or advice, but inclusion in this list does not imply endorsement by either the DRC or the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

England, Scotland and Wales

Access officers

Many local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland now have access officers, usually based in the planning or building control departments, who can visit your premises and advise on any action that you might take to improve access. Contact them by telephoning your local authority.

Local access groups

There are access groups in many local authority areas in England, Wales and Scotland. These groups represent the access interests of disabled people, and may also be a useful source of advice and information. To find out if there is a local access group in your area, contact **RADAR** (see details on page 54).

Access audits

An access audit establishes how well a particular building performs in terms of access and ease of use by a wide range of potential users, including people with mobility and sensory impairments and people with learning disabilities. As the starting point of an ongoing access plan, it can be used to highlight areas for improvement.

An access audit can be divided into two main stages: gathering information and making recommendations.

Ideally, both activities should be carried out by the same person or team, who will bring their technical knowledge to the auditing process. For details of accredited access auditors, contact the **National Register of Access Consultants** (see details on page 53).

Alternatively, you might want to carry out the first stage yourself, but you would then need to bring in a professional with a technical understanding of buildings to suggest any structural alterations. **Access Audits: a guide and checklists for appraising the accessibility of public buildings** (see details on page 48) explains how to carry out the first stage.

Technical advice/design guidance

If you are thinking of making significant structural alterations to your premises to improve access for your disabled customers, you will need professional advice. Architects and surveyors should be able to obtain technical design guidance and standards and be aware of any regulatory requirements covering things like widths of doorways, gradients of ramps and layouts of toilets. It might also be useful if you are familiar with some of this design guidance as well, so that you can be sure that you are asking the right questions of the architect, surveyor or builder.

Designing for Accessibility: an essential guide for public buildings (see details on page 48) is a useful source of technical design guidance covering both mobility and sensory impairments. Although written mainly for designing new buildings, much of the guidance can also be applied to adapting existing premises. Details of other, more specific, technical guidance can be found under **Publications** (see pages 47-49). Some of these publications may be available in your local library.

Building regulations

If your building was constructed in line with the Building Regulations (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or Technical Standards (Scotland), then a very limited range

of features may not have to be considered for alteration. An architect, surveyor or lawyer can advise you on this.

Disability awareness

Various organisations offer disability awareness training for businesses. If you employ quite a few staff, it might be worth considering in-house training as part of your response to the DDA. If you are a sole trader or employ a handful of staff, it might be worth getting together with other local businesses – perhaps through your local Chamber of Commerce – to organise joint training. The Employers’ Forum on Disability (see **Organisations**, page 50) can supply a list of disability awareness trainers.

Trade associations and professional bodies

Your trade association or professional body may be able to offer advice which is specific to the sector you are operating in.

Northern Ireland

Statutory advice

The Building Control Service of your local Council can advise on legislative requirements relating to the built environment (eg building regulations, associated legislation and design guidance). They may also act as a point of contact on access issues and fire safety.

If your building was constructed in line with **Part R of the recent Building Regulations**, then a very limited range of features may not have to be considered for alteration. An architect, surveyor or lawyer can advise you on this.

The Department of the Environment’s Divisional Planning Offices can provide advice on the guidelines relating to provision of access to buildings for disabled people.

The planning service also provides statutory funding to a voluntary organisation called Disability Action (see details on page 55) to enable it to operate an 'Access Officer Scheme'. Through the scheme Disability Action provides a service to developers and professionals in the building industry, offering advice on best practice in making buildings accessible to people with disabilities.

Access audits

An access audit establishes how well a particular building performs in terms of access and ease of use by a wide range of potential users, including people with mobility and sensory impairments and people with learning disabilities, giving a 'snapshot' of a building at one point in its life. As the starting point of an ongoing access plan, it can be used to highlight areas of improvement.

An access audit can be divided into two main stages: gathering information and making recommendations. Ideally, both activities should be carried out by the same person or team, who will bring their technical knowledge to the auditing process.

Alternatively, you might want to carry out the first stage yourself, but you would then need to bring in a professional with a technical understanding of buildings to propose any structural alterations. **Access Audits: a guide and checklists for appraising the accessibility of public buildings** (see details on page 48) explains how to carry out the first stage.

Access advisors

A number of local voluntary organisations representing disabled people, as well as some public and private organisations have advisors who can carry out access audits for your business. (Some of the organisations listed on pages 50-61 provide this service.)

There are also individual consultants working in this area. Details of some of the accredited access auditors based in Northern Ireland can be obtained from the UK-wide National

Register of Access Consultants (see details on page 53) but the majority of auditors on this register are currently based in Great Britain.

Local access groups

There are many local access groups operating throughout Northern Ireland. These groups represent the access interests of disabled people and may also be a useful source of advice and information.

It is considered good practice for organisations providing goods, facilities and services to consult with disabled people in the local area. To find out if there is a local access group in your area contact Disability Action (see details on page 55).

Professional/technical/design/legal guidance

If you are thinking of making significant structural alterations to your premises to improve access for disabled customers, you will need professional advice. Architects and surveyors should be able to source technical design guidance, for example on widths of doors, gradients of ramps and layouts of toilets.

It might also be useful if you are familiar with some of this design guidance as well, so that you can be sure that you are asking the architect, surveyor or builder the right questions.

Designing for Accessibility: an essential guide for public buildings (see details on page 48) is a useful source of technical design guidance covering both mobility and sensory impairments. Although written mainly for designing new buildings, much of the guidance can also be applied to adapting existing premises. Details of other, more specific technical guidance, can be found under **Publications** (see pages 47-49). Some of these publications may be available in your local library.

Solicitors can also provide legal advice about all aspects of the DDA.

Disability Awareness/Equality training

Various organisations offer disability awareness/equality training for businesses. This training enables participants to explore their attitudes to disability.

If you employ quite a few staff, it might be worth considering in-house training as part of your response to the DDA. If you are a sole trader or employ a small number of staff, it might be worth getting together with other local businesses – perhaps through your local Chamber of Commerce – to organise joint training.

Some of the organisations listed on pages 50-61 provide this type of training however there are likely to be other individuals and disability organisations in your local area that provide this type of training.

Publications

The publications listed below have been selected on the basis of their practical application, but inclusion in this list does not imply endorsement by either the DRC or the Equality Commission Northern Ireland.

Bringing the DDA to Life for Small Shops: improving access to goods and services for disabled customers

Series of four booklets with information for service providers about the DDA and each featuring a case study of a small business:

Hairdressing salon
Café
Newsagents
Clothes shop

DWP1 Act Now Video

Shows the adjustments needed to make businesses accessible and ideas on how to do this.

EMP5 Guide for small business top tips pack

This guide will give you information to help you meet your duties as an employer under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.

FOCUS7 Creating an inclusive environment

What is 'Inclusive Design' and how can it achieve a built environment to be enjoyed by everyone?

SP6 2004 – What it means to you: a guide for disabled people

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) gives disabled people rights in the way they receive goods, services or facilities.

SP7 2004 – What it means to you: a guide for service providers

Service providers already have a duty to make changes to the way they provide their services to disabled people. Since October 2004 these duties have become much more wide ranging – as this guide outlines.

SP10 Making your business Open 4 all

A guide aimed to inform large businesses what they have to do in order to become more accessible to disabled customers.

Available free of charge from the DRC website and Helpline

Open for Business: a best practice guide on access

by David Bonnett and Patrick Tolfree

Employers' Forum on Disability and The Bucknall Group.
Guide on better access for disabled customers.

**Available from Employers' Forum on Disability,
Telephone/Textphone 020 7403 3020.**

Designing for Accessibility: an essential guide for public buildings

CAE, 2004.

A guide to designing buildings which are accessible to people with a range of disabilities; also useful for adapting existing buildings.

£20.00

Access Audits: a guide and checklists for appraising the accessibility of public buildings

CAE, 2004.

Comprising guidance notes, audit checklists and a copy of Designing for Accessibility (see above), the Access Audits pack is a useful tool for assessing the current accessibility and usability of buildings by disabled people.

£30.00

Both publications available from CAE, for contact details see page 50.

RNIB Design and environment publications

Building Sight

by Peter Barker, Jon Barrick, Rod Wilson
HMSO in association with the Royal National Institute
for the Blind RNIB, 1995.

A handbook of building and interior design solutions which
include the needs of visually impaired people.

£20.00

Colour and Contrast – a design guide for the use of colour and contrast to improve the built environment for visually impaired people

RNIB

CD-ROM based on research findings into the use of colour
and tonal contrast in the built environment for the benefit of
people with sight problems. It shows how colour can be
applied effectively to suit design requirements and remain
aesthetically pleasing.

£15.00

Sign Design Guide

RNIB.

A guide aimed at anyone involved in planning access within
and around buildings, this guide gives information on
creating effective and consistent signs.

£20.00

**All publications available from RNIB Customer Services,
Telephone: 0845 702 3153 or Email: cservices@rnib.org.uk**

Organisations

The organisations listed below have been selected on the basis of their usefulness as a source of information or advice, but inclusion in this list does not imply endorsement by either the DRC or the Equality Commission Northern Ireland.

Organisations of use to service providers in UK

Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE)

70 South Lambert Road
London SW8 1RL
Telephone/Textphone: 020 7840 0125
Fax: 020 7840 5811
Email: info@cae.org.uk
Website: www.cae.org.uk

Provides technical information, training and consultancy in making buildings accessible to disabled and older people and advice on technical aspects of implementing the requirements of the DDA.

DIAL UK

St Catherine's
Tickhill Road
Doncaster DN4 8QN
Telephone/Textphone: 01302 310 123
Fax: 01302 310 404
Email: enquiries@dialuk.org.uk
Website: www.dialuk.org.uk

Can put you in touch with a local disability information and advice centre.

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

380-384 Harrow Road
London W9 2HU
Helpline: 0845 130 9177
Textphone: 020 7432 8009
Telephone: 020 7289 6111
Fax: 020 7266 2922
Email: info@dlf.org.uk
Website: www.dlf.org.uk

Provides information on aids and equipment that help disabled people with their daily lives. It administers a comprehensive database of products that can be used by disabled people in public buildings.

DRC Helpline (England, Scotland and Wales only)

Freepost/MID 02164
Stratford Upon Avon
CV37 9BR
Telephone: 08457 622 633
Textphone: 08457 622 644
Email: enquiry@drc-gb.org

For information and advice concerning all aspects of the implementation of the DDA. All DDA-related publications, including the Code of Practice: Rights of Access, Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises can be downloaded from the website.

Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD)

Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London SE1 2NY
Telephone: 020 7403 3020
Textphone: 020 7403 0040
Fax: 020 7403 0404
Email: efd@employers-forum.co.uk
Website: www.employers-forum.co.uk

Membership organisation which supports employers to work with disabled people as employees, customers and partners. Can supply a list of disability awareness trainers.

JMU Access Partnership

105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Telephone: 020 7391 2002
Fax: 020 7387 7109
Email: info@jmuaccess.org.uk
Website www.jmuaccess.org.uk or www.rnib.org.uk/jmu

Provided jointly by The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and RNIB, a pan-disability consultancy working to provide inclusive environments. Services include access audits, design appraisals, education and training, information, electronic wayfinding, publications and research.

MENCAP (covers England and Wales)

Mencap National Centre
123 Golden Lane
London EC1Y 0RT
Telephone: 020 7454 0454
Fax: 020 7696 5540
Email: information@mencap.org.uk
Website: www.mencap.org.uk

Provides information on the needs of adults and children with learning difficulties.

National Register of Access Consultants

70 South Lambert Road
London SW8 1RL
Telephone: 020 7735 7845
Textphone: 020 7840 0125
Fax: 020 7840 5811
Email: info@nrac.org.uk
Website: www.nrac.org.uk

Provides information on accredited access auditors and access consultants across the UK.

Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)

105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Telephone: 020 7388 1266
Fax: 020 7388 2034
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Help, advice and support for people with serious sight impairments and consultancy on issues such as colour contrast.

Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)

19-23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL
Telephone: (Free) 0808 808 0123
Textphone: (Free) 0808 808 9000
Fax: 020 7296 8199
Email: information@rnid.org.uk
Website: www.rnid.org.uk

Provides information and consultancy on the environmental needs of people with hearing impairments.

Organisations of use to service providers in England

RADAR

12 City Forum
250 City Road
London EC1V 8AF
Telephone: 020 7250 3222
Textphone: 020 7250 4119
Fax: 020 7250 0212
Email: radar@radar.org.uk
Website: www.radar.org.uk

Provides information on the needs of disabled people and consultancy services.

Organisations of use to service providers in Northern Ireland

ADAPT Northern Ireland

Cathedral Quarter
Managed Workspace
109-113 Royal Avenue
Belfast
Telephone: 028 9023 1211
Textphone: 028 9023 4391
Fax: 028 9024 0878
Email: info@adeptni.org

ADAPT NI aims to promote universal accessibility by providing advice, guidance and support. ADAPT services include accessibility appraisals and training programmes incorporating access consultancy, disability awareness and etiquette.

Centre for Universal Accessibility

School of the Built Environment
University of Ulster at Jordanstown
Newtownabbey
BT37 0QB
Telephone: 028 9036 6086
Fax: 028 9036 6875
Email: sg.heaney@ulster.ac.uk

Offers education and training on the principles of accessibility, undertakes access audits and provides advice on a wide range of accessibility issues.

Disability Action (Head office)

189 Airport Road West
Belfast
BT3 9ED
Telephone: 028 9029 7880
Textphone: 028 9029 7882
Fax: 028 9029 7881
Email: hq@disabilityaction.org
Website: www.disabilityaction.org

Provides a range of services in Northern Ireland including information and advice on all aspects of the DDA. A team of Access Officers provide access audits, technical advice, information and training on how proposed or existing premises can better accommodate disabled staff, visitors and customers. Disability Action has offices throughout Northern Ireland in Belfast, Carrickfergus, Derry, Dungannon and Newry.

Employers Forum On Disability Northern Ireland

Banbridge Enterprise Centre
Scarva Road Industrial Estate
Banbridge
Co. Down
BT32 3QD
Telephone/Textphone: 028 4062 4526
Fax: 028 4066 9665
Email: info@efdni.org.uk
Website: www.efdni.org

Employer network, drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors working to promote training and employment opportunities and accessibility for people with disabilities as employees and customers. Services include advice and information, training and awareness-raising events.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (Disability Unit)

Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP
Telephone: 028 9050 0600
Textphone: 028 9050 0589
Fax: 028 9024 8687
Email: information@equalityni.org
Website: www.equalityni.org

For information, advice and training on all aspects of the implementation of the DDA. All DDA-related publications, including the Code of Practice: Rights of Access, Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises are available on request.

Mencap in Northern Ireland

Segal House
4 Annadale Avenue
Belfast
BT7 3JH
Telephone: 028 9069 1351
Information line: 0845 763 6227
Fax: 028 9064 0121
Email: mencapni@mencap.org.uk
Website: www.mencap.org.uk/ni

Provides information on the needs of children and adults with a learning disability.

RNIB Northern Ireland

40 Linenhall Street
Belfast
BT2 8BA
Telephone: 028 9032 9373
Fax: 028 9043 9118
Website: www.rnib.org.uk/northernireland

Provides a range of services in Northern Ireland including information, visual awareness training and undertakes access audits on the needs of people with a serious sight loss. RNIB NI also offers information and advice on matters relating to information provision and access technology.

RNID Northern Ireland

Wilton House
College Square North
Belfast
BT1 6AR
Telephone: (free) 0808 808 0123
Textphone: (free) 0808 808 9000
Fax: 028 9031 2032
Email: information@rnid.org.uk
Website: www.rnid.org.uk/about/in_your_area/northern_ireland/

Provides a range of services in Northern Ireland including information, advice and deaf awareness training. RNID NI also carries out access assessments for organisations to ensure their services and premises are accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The William Keown Trust

3 Church View
Dundrum
Co. Down
BT33 0NA
Telephone: 028 4375 1243
Fax: 028 4375 1444
Email: wkeowntrust@btconnect.com
Website: www.wkeowntrust.co.uk

Actively pursues a policy of improving access in the environment and carries out access audits. The trust works with individuals and organisations from all sectors to achieve a high level of access for people with disabilities.

Organisations of use to service providers in Scotland

JMU Access Partnership

c/o RNIB Scotland
Dunedin House
25 Ravelston Terrace
Edinburgh EH4 3TP
Telephone: 0131 311 8526
Fax: 0131 311 8529
Email: info@jmuaccess.org.uk
Website: www.jmuaccess.org.uk

The aim of the JMU is to bring about improvements to the built environment so that blind, partially sighted and deafblind people can move around safely, independently and without undue restriction. However, since the built environment is used by everyone in society, including other disabled people, the JMU is also fully conversant with the design requirements of all types of disability including people with physical disabilities and those with multiple disabilities.

RNID Scotland

Crowngate Business Centre
Brook Street
Glasgow G40 3AP
Telephone: 0141 554 0053
Textphone: 0141 550 5750
Fax: 0141 554 5837
Email: rnidscotland@rnid.org.uk
Website: www.rnid.org.uk/about/in_your_area/scotland/

RNID Scotland offers consultancy, advice and support to public, private and voluntary sector organisations to help them to meet their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Advice Service Capability Scotland (ASCS)

11 Ellersly Road
Edinburgh EH12 6HY
Telephone: 0131 313 5510
Textphone: 0131 346 2529
Fax: 0131 346 1681
Email: ascs@capability-scotland.org.uk
Website: www.capability-scotland.org.uk

Advice Service Capability Scotland offers information on Capability Scotland services, specialist advice on cerebral palsy and general advice on disability issues.

Margaret Blackwood Technical Consultants

Craigievar House
77 Craigmount Brae
Edinburgh EH12 8XF
Telephone: 0131 317 7227
Textphone: 0131 317 0150
Fax: 0131 317 7294
Email: mbtc@mbha.org.uk
Website: www.mbha.org.uk

Accredited by the Centre for Accessible Environments to offer access auditing to any organisation wishing to satisfy the needs of their disabled employees and customers. Can help ensure buildings meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

UPDATE

27 Beaverhall Road
Edinburgh EH7 4JE
Telephone: 0131 558 5200
Textphone: 0131 558 5202
Fax: 0131 558 5201
Email: info@update.org.uk
Website: www.update.org.uk

General information and contact details for advice on disability matters throughout Scotland.

Organisations of use to service providers in Wales

Disability Wales

Wernddu Court
Caerphilly Business Park
Van Road
Caerphilly CF83 3ED
Telephone: 029 2088 7325
Disability Helpline freephone: 0800 731 6282
Fax: 029 2988 8702
Email: info@dwac.demon.co.uk
Website: www.disabilitywales.org

National umbrella organisation of disability groups working to promote the rights, equality, inclusion and support of disabled people in Wales.

JMU Access Partnership

c/o RNIB Cymru
Trident Court
East Moors Road
Cardiff CF24 5TD
Telephone: 029 2044 9590
Fax: 029 2044 9550
Textphone: 0845 758 5691
Email: info@jmuaccess.org.uk
Website: www.jmuaccess.org.uk

Provided jointly by The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and RNIB, a pan-disability consultancy working to provide inclusive environments. Services include access audits, design appraisals, education and training, information, electronic wayfinding, publications and research.

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This guide has been prepared by the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) for the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Text drafted and produced by Andrew Lacey.

This guide does not have statutory authority.
It is intended to provide practical advice.

If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or language please contact the Helpline to discuss your needs. It is also available on the DRC website:
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