

PEOPLE WHO HAVE AN INTELLECTUAL (COGNITIVE) IMPAIRMENT:

This group of people may not initially be the most obvious and will benefit from flexible services, use of plain language and logical internal layouts to buildings. From an operational perspective staff will need training to provide effective communication and support.

PEOPLE WHO HAVE A PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPAIRMENT:

This group will also benefit from a flexible service approach and staff training.

DEFINING ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility is the degree to which a product, service or environment is available to as many people as possible. It is also referred to as ‘barrier-free’ or ‘inclusive design’ - a product of universal design thinking.

Accessibility is about ensuring that the largest number of people can efficiently access places unaided in comfort and safety. In the past this was reduced to a concern for ‘the disabled’ but we now recognise that accessibility is about transforming systems to be inclusive of everyone and especially the ‘vulnerable’. In Germany, according to ‘Accessible Public Buildings’ :

- 10% of the population relies unconditionally on barrier-free access.
- 40% of the population needs barrier free access as an essential support.
- 100% of the population appreciates the greater comfort of barrier-free access.

It is important to consider how space is categorised as this will often determine how it is used and / or how people believe it should be used. All spaces are either public or private, they can be categorized as internal or external and there are transition zones between each of them. Each ‘realm’ has specific ownership, management and liability profiles which accessibility requirements must address. Most importantly it is the coordination of these interfaces to ensure that transition zones do not become barriers that is critical to improving accessibility.

Accessibility in its broadest sense is not just a technical problem but one of changing perceptions and attitudes. It is moving from a position of dealing with vulnerability to recognising ability, breaking down both mental and physical barriers to make Dubai truly accessible to all users. Designing places so that they are accessible by everyone and creating an environment where the vulnerable can feel safe will make for a more vibrant public realm. Road space will need to become more subservient and not be dominated by motorised modes in order to allow multiple activities and safe use by non- motorised ‘vulnerable’ users in exciting outdoor spaces that will contribute to the enjoyment of the city. To achieve this will require the support of employers, service providers and developers alike.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this document is to promote good practice in the inclusive design of buildings and the public realm with respect to accessibility. The objectives for the design of buildings and public realm is design that:

- Places people at the heart of the design process;
- Acknowledges human diversity and difference;
- Offers choice where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users;
- Provides for flexibility in use;
- Aims to provided buildings and environments that are convenient, equitable and enjoyable to use for everyone, regardless of ability, age and gender; and
- A people led design methodology which places people at the top of the movement hierarchy with vehicles at the bottom is the first principle as outlined above.

STRUCTURE OF DOCUMENT

This document is structured to follow the typical ‘user journey’ from a to b via the public realm and via different transport modes. Each section includes a description of the content and the performance objectives followed by the ‘deemed to satisfy’ provisions and design guidance. Although it is mandatory to comply with the performance objectives there is the option to provide alternative solutions to those set out in the deemed to satisfy solutions. This provides designers with the flexibility to overcome non-standard situations and the ability to propose innovative solutions. Design guidance is provided to explain the reasoning behind the performance objectives in the context of best practice.

This document also includes the requirement for Project Sponsors or their agents to produce a detailed Access Strategy at the start of a project. The early development of an Access Strategy will allow Project Sponsors to:

- Demonstrate how access issues will be addressed from inception though design development, construction and into occupation.
- Provide an audit trail of the decisions made by the Project Team during design development and construction.

The Performance Objectives set out in this Code should be taken into consideration from the initial stages of the planning and design process in order to avoid potentially costly alterations at the construction stage.

The Scope and Use section explains in detail how the Code is to be used and applied.

DELIVERING THE ACCESSIBILITY DIVIDEND

The traditional view of designing for accessibility is to see a range of additional features and measures overlaid onto an existing design or setting. Whilst this view is often correct in older buildings and places the opportunity to positively design in accessibility exists when dealing with new or major refurbishment of buildings and places. Positive design involves eliminating many of the features associated with retrofitting by making accessibility an integral part of the design process.

The best solution is often the solution that is not needed. This statement is particularly relevant when it comes to accessibility. Whilst there are some features that will be needed regardless of how good the design and accessible thinking is, many features will not be required. When thinking along these lines it is possible to see that a built environment with a large number of accessible features will not necessarily be the most accessible environment. This is because when considering the retrofit option first other compromises in terms of design and accessibility will need to be made. What is good for one group can be detrimental to another group. By eliminating the need for these features it benefits all users. This benefit for all can be termed the ‘accessibility dividend’.

Delivering an accessible environment is not counter to delivering a high quality environment. High quality features can enhance the quality and character of a space. By making accessibility integral in the design process features such as paving, steps and balustrades can form part of the public realm design character, widening the scope of potential features rather than seeing these

features as distracting from the aesthetic quality of an environment. There are many examples of where a building or public realm has been enhanced aesthetically by putting people and accessibility first. They are not mutually exclusive aims.

If you plan for vulnerable users you also enable better access for all users, thus achieving the accessibility dividend. Only by placing users at the centre of the design and decision making process a seamless city can be delivered.