

**Building
Access: A good
practice guide for
arts and cultural
organisations**

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1. Introduction

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Whatever shape they take and wherever we experience them, creative activities and cultural experiences improve our lives.

Our Strategy for 2020-30, *Let's Create*, sets out our vision of a country in which the creativity of everyone living here is celebrated and supported: in which culture forms and transforms communities, and in which cultural institutions are inclusive of all of us, so that whoever we are and wherever we live, we can share in their benefits.

We believe that our national diversity is one of our great resources. Our definition of diversity encompasses race, ethnicity, faith, disability, age, gender, sexuality, class and socio-economic background and any social and institutional barriers that prevent people from creating, participating or enjoying arts and culture.

Our strength as a nation owes much to our diversity and to our ability to draw on all the talent we have at our disposal. A society built on inclusion and equality of access and opportunity will have the ideas and resources to meet the great challenges we all face. We believe in the inherent value of creativity and culture: in their power to delight and move us, and in their capacity to help us make sense of the world. We want to make sure that England's diversity is fully reflected in the workforce, leadership and governance of organisations and individuals we support, the audiences they reach, and the culture they produce.

The Arts Council is therefore committed to ensuring that the physical environment does not create barriers to creativity, participation, learning and employment. An inclusive environment recognises and accommodates differences in the way people use the built environment. It facilitates dignified, equal and intuitive use by everyone. It should welcome diverse user needs – from childhood to adulthood, across all abilities and disabilities and include everyone.

The Arts Council uses the social model of disability. The social model is based on

the principle that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. It puts the emphasis on what needs to be done to identify and remove barriers.

Arts and cultural organisations occupy a range of building types: some are purpose-built for arts and cultural use while others have been adapted for this purpose. Many of these are heritage buildings. Although each building is likely to have a specific set of physical challenges, we want to ensure that arts and cultural organisations make 'reasonable adjustments' to their properties to overcome these physical barriers. In doing so, we expect the built environment to respond to the national diversity of the people who use them.

When planning building work, we expect arts and cultural organisations to adopt the principles of inclusive design and see diversity as an opportunity. We expect organisations will not only observe minimum legal standards in terms of the Equality Duty 2011 and Equality Act 2010, but set high standards of practice across all areas of their work.

We do not consider reliance on the minimum standards of the building regulations sufficient to secure an inclusive environment. We recommend that arts and cultural organisations aim to exceed minimum statutory requirements, where practical, in relation to access provision.

This guide aims to set out best practice to support you in identifying and removing the barriers that may exist in your physical environment. It aims to:

- help you understand the statutory context in relation to the built environment
- provide an illustrated guide to the key stages for designing for inclusion and accessibility
- highlight the main areas you need to consider in creating an inclusive environment
- demonstrate through case studies how Arts Council funded projects have overcome design and management challenges to achieve a high level of accessibility. Common to all of these studies is a design process that included at its heart consultation with D/deaf and disabled people, using both access consultants and local community engagement. We hope you will be inspired to approach your capital project in this way
- signpost useful resources and further reading

This guide does not attempt to provide the detailed technical requirements set out in the building regulations and British Standards. It aims to set out some of the issues for you to look at when considering access for all to the built environment. However, you must ensure that you comply with all relevant legislation in relation to any building project and we recommend you seek appropriate professional advice.

If you are planning to apply for capital funding from us, please refer to the published guidance for applicants relevant to the particular fund for further details on our application requirements.

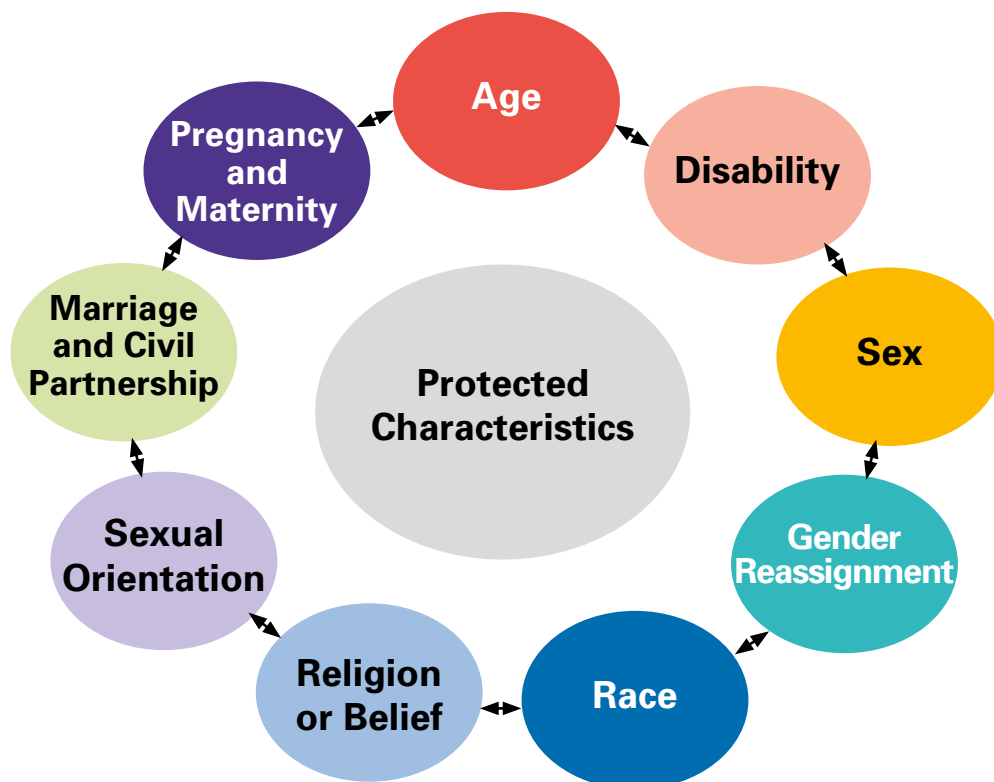
2 ● The statutory context

The Equality Act

The Equality Act (2010) provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. The Act covers discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual

orientation. These categories are known in the Act as 'protected characteristics'.

Under the Act, people¹ are not allowed to discriminate, harass or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics. People are also protected from being discriminated against because they are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics



¹ Those with a responsibility under the Act are government departments, service providers, employers, education providers (schools, further and higher education colleges and universities), providers of public functions, associations and membership bodies and transport providers.

or because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. The Act sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone, such as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person.

The Equality Act gives people protection from discrimination in a range of areas including the accessing of services, education and employment. When considering buildings and their surroundings, it is necessary to ensure a broad range of people can access and use the facilities. This means taking account of duties relating to the protected characteristics and considering potential barriers to access.

How does the Act affect standards of access provision in the built environment?

Under the disability equality duties of the Equality Act, organisations and individuals need to adapt their premises to allow disabled people to access services and employment:

- i) As a **service provider**, you need to anticipate the needs of your building users. Disabled people should be able to access your premises in a dignified and equal manner to everyone else and to use your facilities with ease. Under the Act, service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people (including actual and potential service users or members of associations of guests) are not substantially disadvantaged when compared with non-disabled people.

The Act requires service providers to be proactive in identifying potential barriers to disabled people and to have a plan of action to reduce or eliminate these. The Act requires that 'reasonable adjustments' are made when providing access to goods, facilities, services and premises. The duty to make reasonable adjustments is a continuing duty and service providers are expected to regularly review their response in the light of experience and feedback from service users.

- ii) As an **employer**, you need to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people can access and progress in employment. Regardless of their impairment, people should be able to gain access to buildings and use the facilities. This could mean that an employer may need to make some physical alterations to their premises to take account of the disabled person's needs.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments applies to all employees no matter how large or small the organisation. It is likely what is considered reasonable for a small organisation to do will differ from what is expected of a large organisation as the individual circumstances of employees vary widely.

Although not required by law, it is good practice to have an equality policy. The Arts Council requires all grant recipients to have appropriate policies and procedures in place, including equality and diversity. National Portfolio Organisations are also required to have an equality action plan.

Reasonable adjustments could include:

- the structure of a building such as addressing changes of level, emergency exits or adjusting narrow doorways
- avoiding heavy doors, inaccessible toilets or inappropriate lighting
- installing suitable toilet facilities such as self-contained unisex toilets and Changing Places cubicles
- in workplaces, workstation access may need to be modified in terms of width and height to accommodate wheelchair users, for instance

With regard to what is 'reasonable', the considerations can be:

- how effective the change will be
- its practicality
- the cost
- the organisation's resources and size
- the availability of financial support

It is important to note that the Act:

- does not override other legislation such as listed building consent or planning legislation. You must ensure that you have sought professional advice and obtained the necessary appropriate approvals in the case of any changes you wish to make to your building to improve access
- does not include standards for accessible building design. This guide explains more about building regulations and the British Standard that can help provide a reasonable standard of access and thus support you in fulfilling your duties under the Act

Building regulations

Building regulations are minimum standards for design, construction and alterations to virtually every building. The regulations are developed by the UK government and approved by Parliament. They cover the construction and extension of buildings and these regulations are supported by 'Approved Documents' which set out detailed practical guidance on compliance with the regulations.

Please note that building regulations approval is different from planning permission and you might need both for your project. You should therefore seek appropriate professional advice specific to your circumstances.

How do the regulations affect access provision?

There are minimum standards that you will need to meet in order to ensure your venue is accessible and that your project obtains planning approval.

These are set out in [Approved Document M: Access to and use of buildings, Volume 2 – Buildings other than dwellings](#).

Approved Document M is used in conjunction with [Approved Document K: Protection from falling, collision and impact](#). These are regulations relating to the design of stairs, ramps and glazing which are no longer covered by Approved Document M.

Approved Document M provides a baseline for accessibility in the built environment. However there may

be situations – for example on listed buildings – where Approved Document M may be overridden for conservation and heritage reasons and where a temporary rather than permanent solution may be required.

You may adopt an alternative solution to that proposed in Approved Document M if you can offer one that provides a higher level of accessibility or that works equally well but better suits your building.

Proposals for new buildings will need to demonstrate how they meet or exceed Approved Document M in all aspects from the site boundary and entrance, through to emergency exit points. The 60-page document provides detailed specifications for all areas of a building and its approaches.

Where building works are carried out on existing buildings, the works themselves must comply with building regulations. Reasonable provision must be made for people to gain access to and to use new or altered sanitary conveniences. The building as a whole, including access to it from the site boundary and from on-site car parking where provided, must be no less compliant following a material alteration of a building. Where there is a material change of use of the whole of a building, it must be upgraded, if necessary, so as to comply with building regulation requirements.

When works are carried out to historic buildings, they should aim to improve accessibility where and to the extent it is practically possible, provided that the work does not prejudice the character of

the historic building, or increase the risk of long-term deterioration to the building fabric or fittings.

If your project also includes accommodation, for example an artist's residence, you will also need to meet the standards set out in Approved Document M: Access to and use of buildings, Volume 1 – Dwellings

The British Standard

British Standard 8300 is a best practice guide that provides more detailed recommendations for achieving access and covers more areas than the Approved Documents, including signage, furniture, lighting, décor, specialist equipment, management and maintenance. This standard is also useful if you are planning to provide or replace equipment specific to the needs of D/ deaf and disabled people, such as hoists, lighting and communication aids.

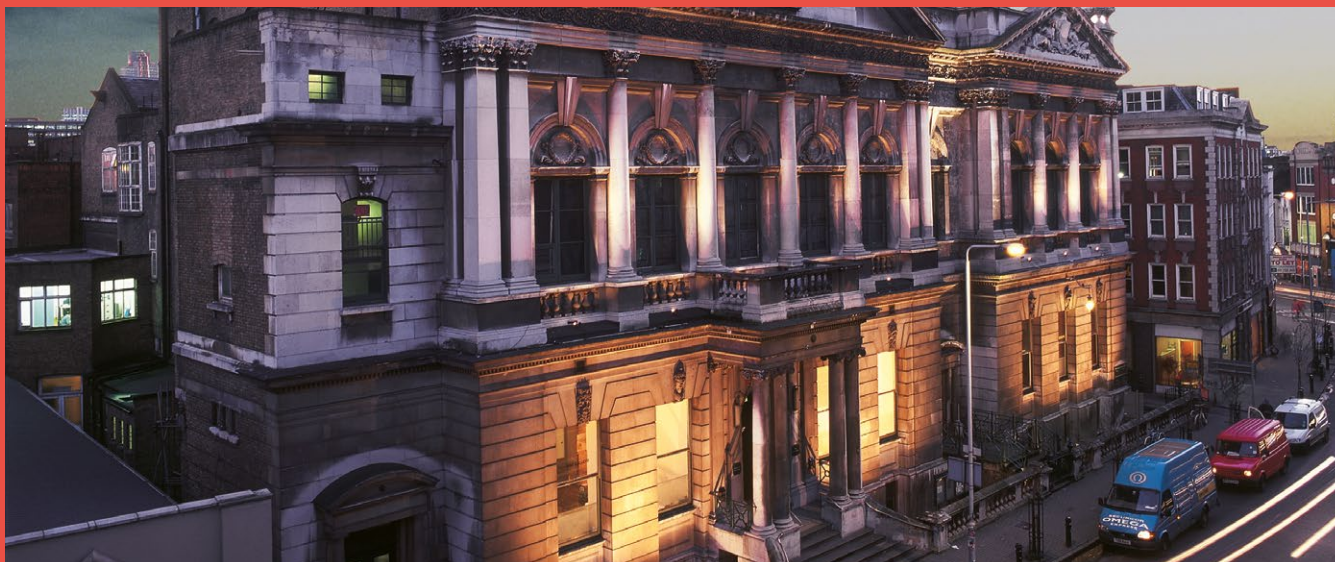
BS 8300 works in tandem with Approved Document M to give practical guidance on how its requirements can be incorporated into the built environment. It's a tool that will help you to plan, deliver and create an accessible and equitable environment. And, in creating an accessible and inclusive environment, you are creating a space that benefits not just disabled people but everyone.

The standard comes in two parts:

- i) BS 8300-1:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. External environment. Code of practice
- ii) BS 8300-2:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. Buildings. Code of practice

While BS 8300 is a code of practice and compliance with it is not compulsory, we recommend that arts and cultural organisations use this standard as a benchmark wherever practical. Furthermore, using best practice guidance can assist arts and cultural organisations meet their duties under the Equality Act.

Case study: A business case for access



Capital cost

(phase one) £500,000

Client

Shoreditch
Town Hall Trust

Architect

Reed Watts Architects

Opened in 1866, **Shoreditch Town Hall** was known as one of the grandest Vestry Halls of its time and was originally the centre of local democracy for the Metropolitan Borough of Shoreditch before the borough merged into the London Borough of Hackney in 1965.

Over the course of its rich and colourful history, the building had been a music hall and a boxing venue, had survived a huge fire and two world wars. Yet this Grade 2 listed building fell into a state of neglect during the 1980s and 1990s that led to its inclusion on English Heritage's 'Buildings at Risk Register'. A campaign was launched to save the town hall, and in 2002 Shoreditch Town Hall Trust secured a 99-year lease to manage, operate and preserve the building.

Photo courtesy of Shoreditch Town Hall Trust

In 2012, the trust adopted a more dynamic vision to recognise the town hall's full potential as a thriving arts, events and community space, yet in order to achieve this the organisation needed to address its access provision. Of the eight principal spaces across the building, only two were suitably accessible to those unable to use stairs.

Five of the spaces, including the main Assembly Hall (which now has a capacity of 772) were on the first floor, and while there was a mechanical stair climber, it was not possible for those with electric wheelchairs or people over a certain weight to use it. Besides, the stair climber didn't lend itself to the comfortable, enriching environment



Photo courtesy of Shoreditch Town Hall Trust

the trust wanted to create for all users of the building.

In addition to the upper levels, The Ditch basement spaces could only be entered on the level from the rear of the building rather than via the main foyer and welcome areas.

While the organisation was financially stable, it was turning away potential business from cultural projects and commercial hires due to access issues that could have generated an estimated £250,000 in income. The long-term resilience of the organisation was therefore dependent on improving building access.

In 2012 the Trust applied to the Arts Council for a small capital grant of £175,000 towards phase one of a larger building development project. The business case put forward was that access improvements alone would enable the organisation to increase net income from ticket sales by 48 per cent per annum, and double commercial event hire income. The result would be

that within five years the Trust would be able to invest more in artists from generated income than the total Arts Council grant, and that surpluses could be used to fund innovative new arts projects.

These ambitions have been borne out. A passenger lift now provides step-free access to The Ditch and first floor for the first time, with only the Assembly Hall balcony on the second floor remaining inaccessible except by stair.

The phase two project enabled further renovation works, including the installation of a goods lift, acoustic and decorative improvements in all spaces used by artists and community groups, new bar and toilet facilities, improved external signage, and the installation of balcony seating and technical infrastructure in the Assembly Hall.

Shoreditch Town Hall now develops, presents and commissions bold new work across theatre, dance and music, and delivers a talent development programme that provides support to artists to develop their ideas and creative practice. The passenger lift ensures that everyone can access the town hall's high-quality artistic programme, and this is complemented by the programming of BSL interpreted, audio described (www.3playmedia.com/2017/02/16/what-is-audio-description) and captioned events (www.stagetext.org), as well as pre-event Touch Tours (www.doingthingsdifferently.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Guidelines-for-Touch-Tours.pdf) for certain activity.



Useful links

For advice on the issues relating to historic buildings:

historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/compliantworks/equalityofaccess

historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-to-historic-buildings/heag010-easy-access-to-historic-buildings

historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-historic-landscapes

‘The outcome of improving our building’s accessibility has had a transformative impact on Shoreditch Town Hall, and has been vital both in terms of improving our long-term resilience and ensuring that we can deliver great art that’s accessible to all.’

James Pidgeon, Director

Photos courtesy of Shoreditch Town Hall Trust

3. How to plan and implement an access strategy

Whether you are planning a major capital build project, renovation or extension, the process of designing an accessible building will be a central consideration. There are key elements to making sure this happens effectively and at the right time.

Consultation

To ensure the access provisions you plan will really work for your audience and to avoid costly mistakes, you will need to involve a wide range of people, including disabled people, in the early stages of the planning process. 'Nothing about us without us' is a useful reminder.

A good place to start is to talk to your current users and seek out local disabled people's organisations. You can visit organisations in their own premises, or better still invite representatives to your organisation to discuss your project and get some immediate feedback and ideas about your approach. They will readily tell you what does and doesn't work for them in your existing building.

Some people may be interested in helping you form an access advisory/working group if you don't already have an active access group, to input to the designs as they develop and provide ongoing advice for the duration of the

project and beyond. Sometimes an access consultant can help you identify groups as they may already have local and regional contacts.

Useful links

- Regional and national disabled people's organisations
www.disabilityrightsuk.org
- Setting up a disability advisory group
www.musedcn.org.uk/2018/08/02/setting-up-a-disability-advisory-group-horniman-museum-and-gardens

Running an access advisory group requires proper resourcing as a key part of your project. You may need to consider booking an accessible venue to host the meeting. In terms of staff time, this will include drawing up meeting agendas, contacting people, booking interpreters, organising payments, chairing meetings, taking and circulating minutes, agreeing terms of reference and so on, as well as, importantly, ensuring that group recommendations are presented to the project team. Generally, groups meet three or four times a year, possibly more frequently on larger projects.

Group members also need to be paid for their time and out of pocket travel expenses. Facilitators such as British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for D/deaf BSL users, and audio describers (AD) for visually impaired people may be needed. These will also need budgeting for. The cost of running an access group should be seen as a cost-effective investment towards achieving a successful project that is inclusive and welcoming to all.

Such groups invariably end up playing an important ongoing role in your organisation, helping you to reach out to D/deaf and disabled audiences, provide activities and services that meet their needs and interests, as well as represent them, and increase employment opportunities.

Access audits

An access audit is an essential tool in understanding from the outset how your building meets the needs of your D/deaf and disabled users (including visitors and staff) and what you will need to do to ensure your project addresses any barriers identified. A building-based audit commonly takes the form of a sequential journey from arrival through to departure, taking in all areas of a building and its approaches.

The Arts Council expects you to have undertaken a building access audit report as part of a capital application, whether your project is a new build, refurbishment or extension. For new build projects an access audit can cover the site, where it sits in relation to other buildings and public transport networks,

and local topography. For extension projects the access audit should include areas that are linked to but not being addressed by your project as this will help inform how you operate your building as a whole.

For an existing building an access audit will identify existing levels of accessibility and make prioritised recommendations for improvement. It should also identify best practice that can be built upon.

The recommendations from any access audit should form the foundations for your project designs and the basis of an action plan. The action plan will identify how to take recommendations forward with named lead staff and achievable timeframes for implementation and completion.

A wider access audit will cover all areas of an organisation, not only its premises, but also how it operates, what it programmes, interpretational tools and formats for artform delivery, and how it markets its activities to the public, including via literature and the website. It can also cover your policies, practices and procedures, including recruitment, employment and training.

Useful links

- Access all areas: A guide to destination access audits www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Images/Business-Advice-Hub/access_all_areas_a_guide_to_destination_audits.pdf

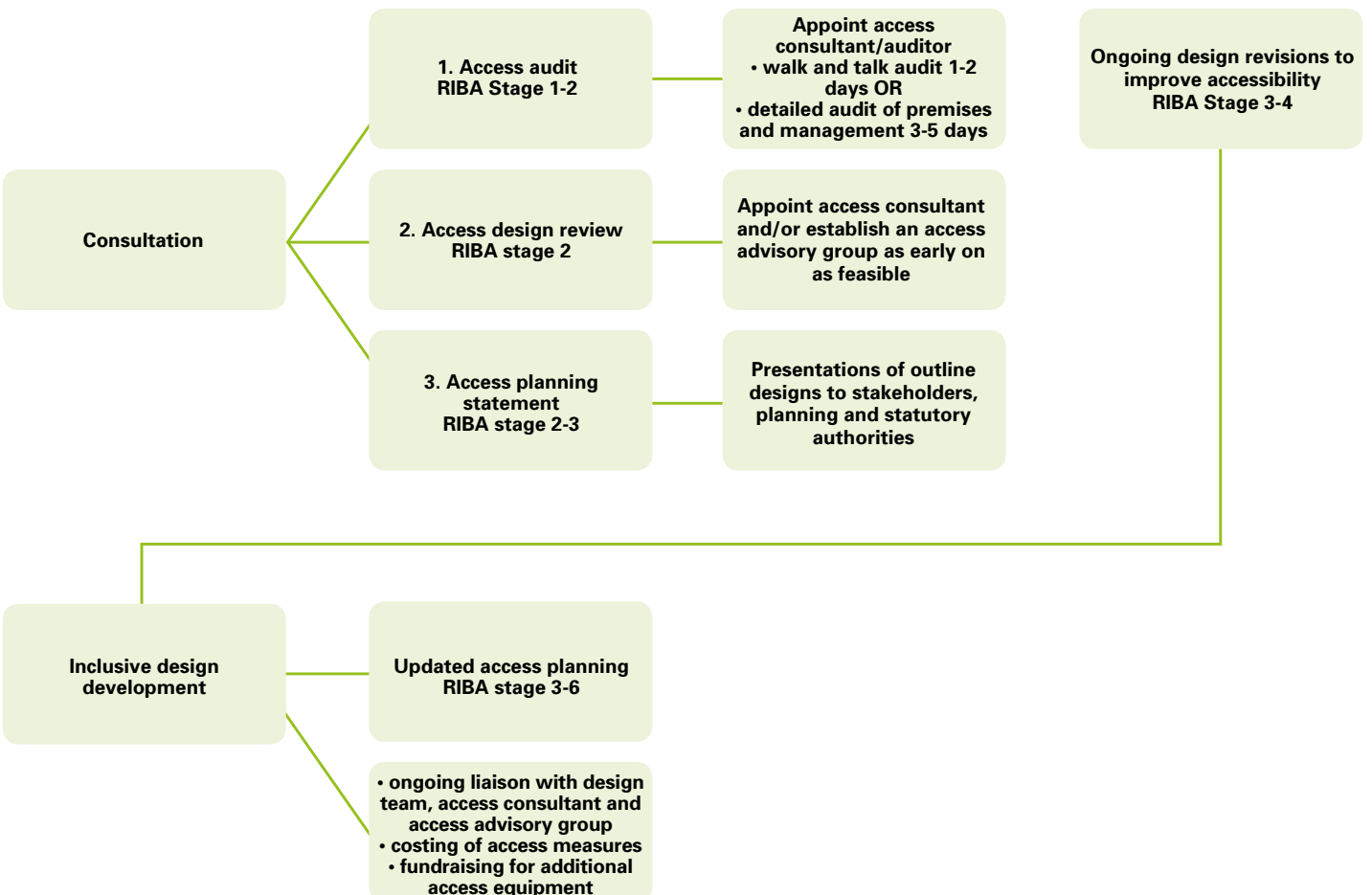
- Involving disabled people in access audits – a guide to best practice www.accentuateuk.org/?location_id=2166
- Register of access auditors www.nrac.org.uk
- Museums Association www.museumsassociation.org/find-a-supplier

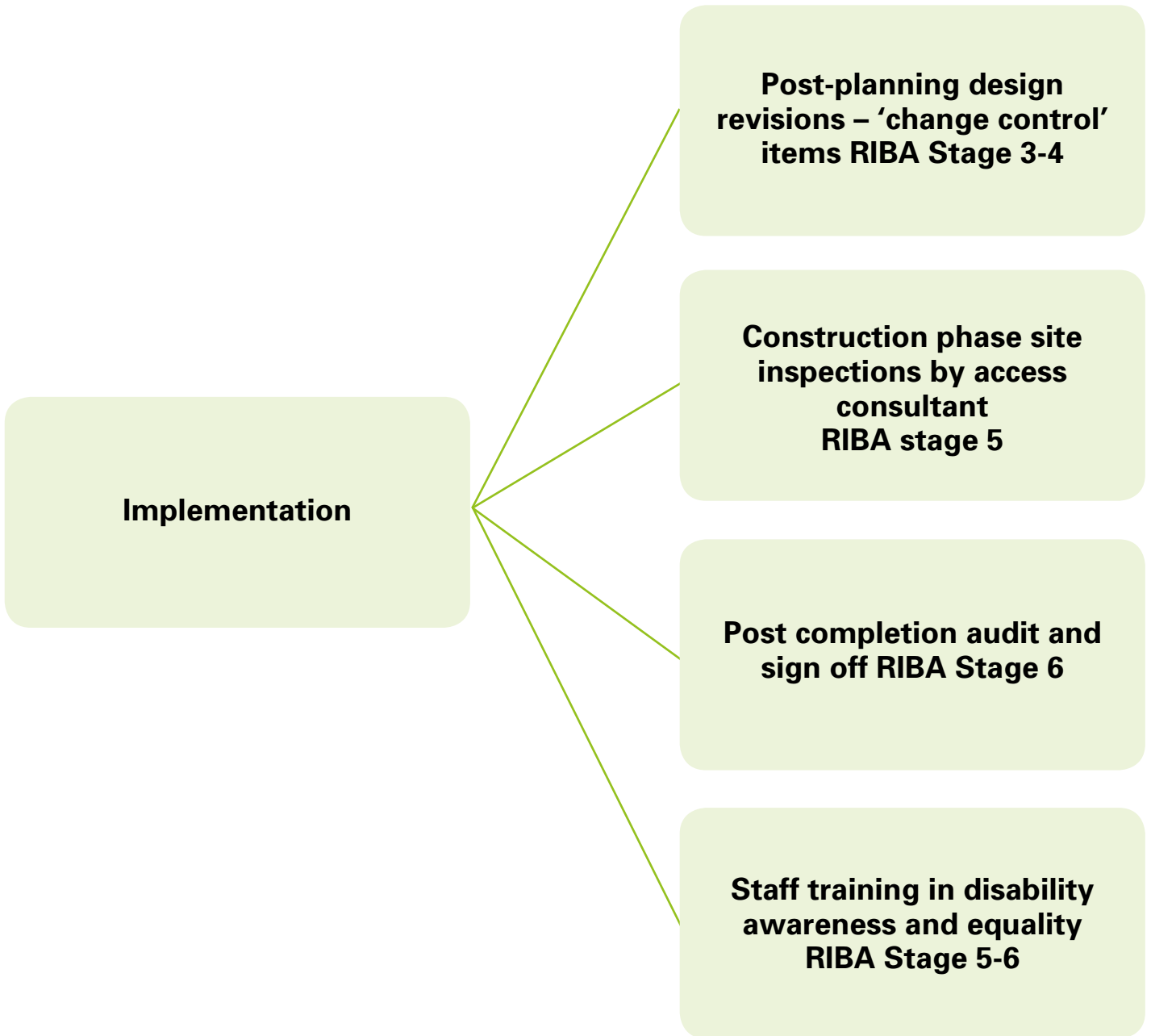
It is worth noting that some trusts, such as The City Bridge Trust (for London projects only) will cover the cost of an access audit in support of an application.

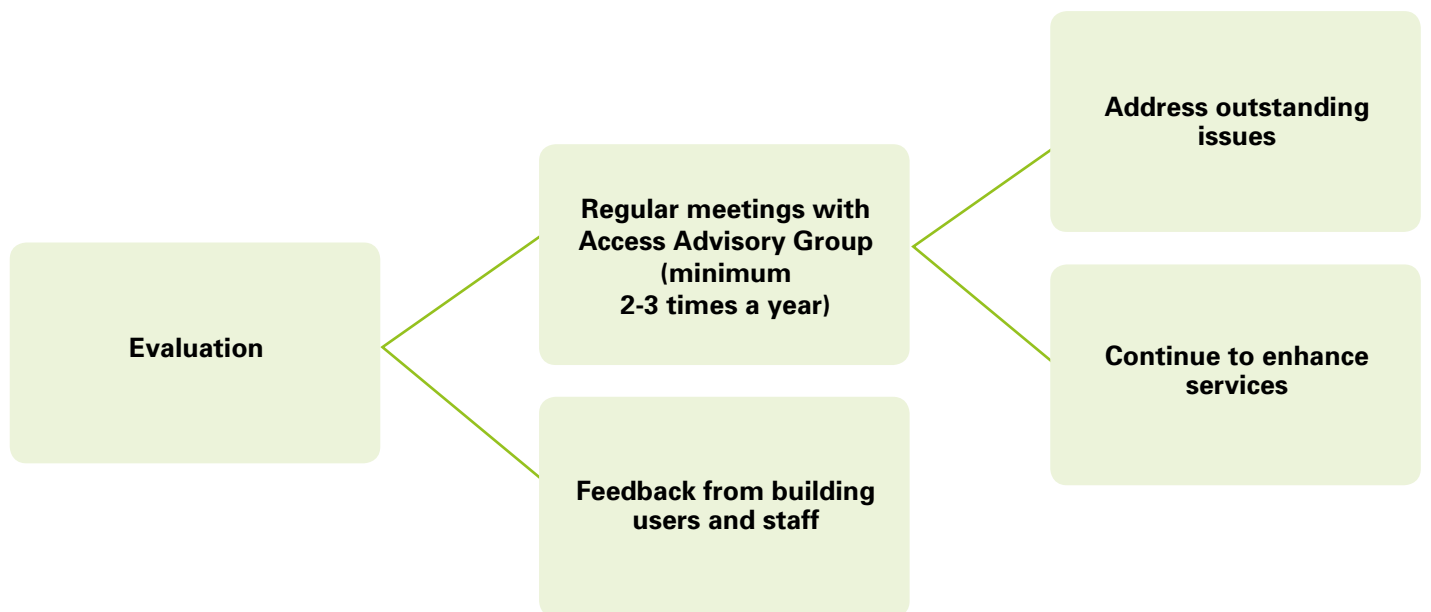
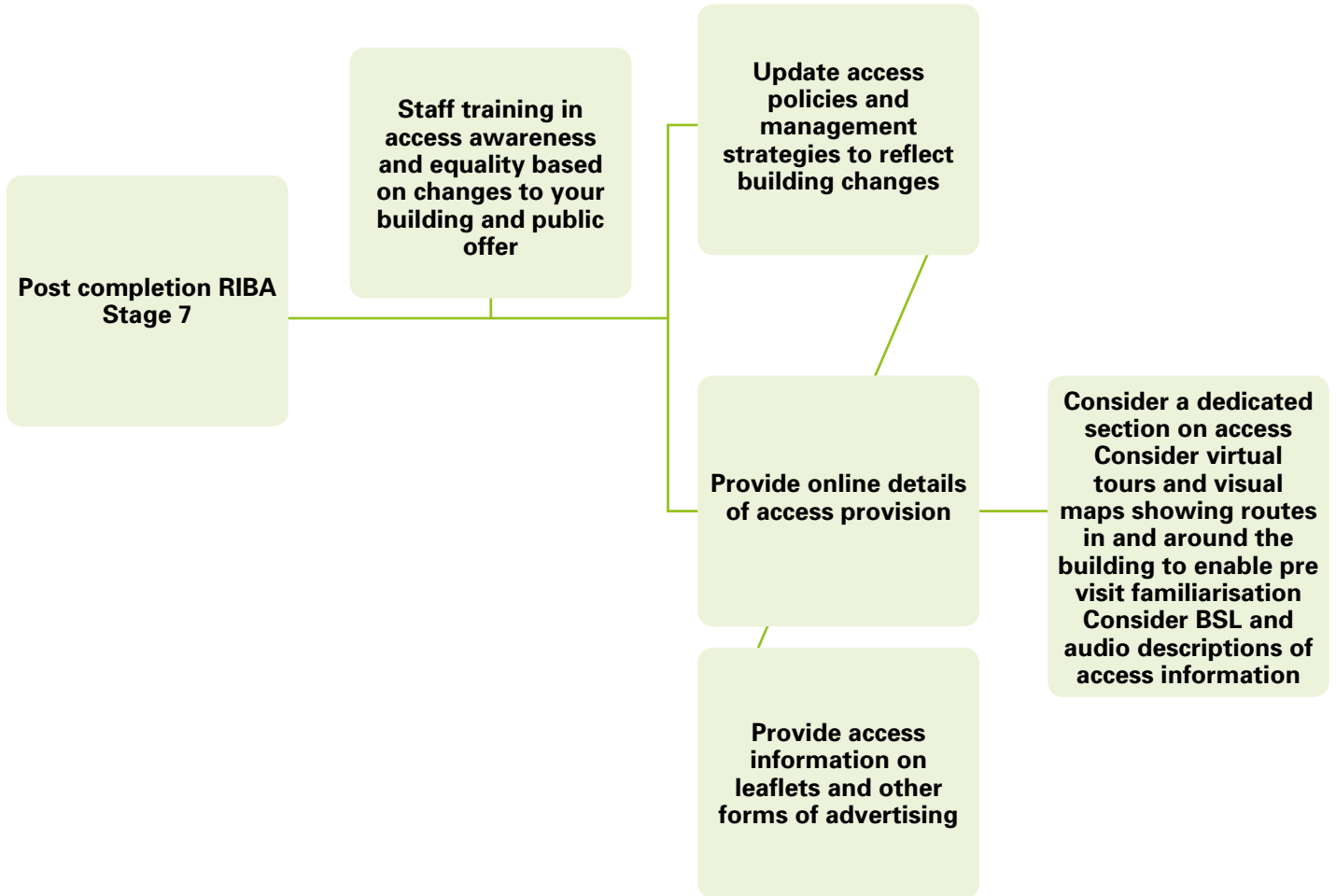
Access consultant

An access consultant should be appointed to the design team in its early stages to input to all RIBA stages of the design process, from outline/concept design stage to completion and handover. The consultant will work with the various disciplines of a design team but particularly the architect, cost consultant, and, on heritage properties, the conservation consultant. It is also essential that the access consultant works with the access advisory group. Key tasks carried out by an access consultant are access design reviews and access statements.

Key tasks carried out by an access consultant







Access consultant

An **access design review** is a process by which the access consultant evaluates the design proposals against access standards such as Approved Document M and BS 8300 as well as local, regional and national planning and statutory guidelines, and legislation (particularly the disability duties of the Equality Act). This will identify any areas that are non-compliant or can be improved upon. Access design reviews are usually carried out at key milestones during the design development process, usually towards the end of each RIBA design stage (see the RIBA plan of work chart at: <https://www.ribaplanofwork.com/>). These are a critical part of the inclusive design process. Recommendations will often fall into two categories: essential (non-negotiable) and desirable (budget and time permitting).

An **access statement** (otherwise known as a strategy) is a short report accompanying and supporting a planning application. It usually forms part of the architect's design and access statement and provides a framework for applicants to explain how a proposed development responds to its site and setting, and how prospective users will access it. The access statement is usually prepared by the access consultant and is updated as the project progresses from the drawing board to construction and post occupation by the organisation. It reflects any design changes made over the project delivery period and forms a useful basis for your subsequent maintenance and management strategies.

Useful links

- Register of access auditors
www.nrac.org.uk

- Museums Association
www.museumsassociation.org/find-a-supplier
- Regional and national disabled people's organisations
www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Areas beyond your control

There are frequently areas of the public realm that, while outside your site boundary and area of control, nevertheless impact on accessibility to your premises. You may wish to ensure that there is on-street parking for Blue Badge holders close to your entrance, for instance. A lack of nearby parking provision can be a huge deterrent to disabled people in using your venue. In this instance you would need to consult the local authority's highways department to discuss provision of dedicated parking bays with appropriate signage, road markings and dropped kerbs. The local planning department would similarly need to be approached if you wanted to extend outwards of your boundary, for instance to provide ramped access to your building.

You may be located within a park or estate and want to ensure that disabled visitors have access to the most convenient entrance and exit points during your operating hours and that pedestrian routes are safe and easy to use, with good lighting, level footpaths cleared of leaf fall, and clear signposting. In this instance you would need to contact the local parks and amenities department of your local council to agree mutually beneficial operational, maintenance and investment programmes.

In all cases, early dialogue is essential as negotiations with third parties can often be lengthy.

Case study: Building for an inclusive culture



Client Whitworth –
Manchester University

Capital cost £15 million

Architect MUMA

The Whitworth is owned and managed by the University of Manchester and is regarded as one of the UK's leading art galleries, with a

collection of over 55,000 artworks. In 2015 it reopened its doors following a £15 million redevelopment that saw it double in size and embrace its location within Whitworth Park. The Whitworth was winner of the Visit England's gold prize award for large visitor attraction of the year in 2016 and winner of the Art Fund's museum of the year 2015.

During the redevelopment the Whitworth teamed up with local disability training organisations and access consultants to help support the vision of being open and accessible for all.

Head of Visitor Teams, Chad McGitchie, took on the role of access lead: 'This was the beginning of not just my team's understanding, but everyone's in the organisation, to include access and accessibility at the heart of everything we do'.



'As a gallery in a park, we have a unique offer for those who visit us and those who use our surrounding green spaces. During our redevelopment, we explored how we connected our indoor/outdoor experiences. For the most part this has been a huge success, however we did find a few barriers (literally) along the way. We commissioned artist Simon Periton to create a new gate that leads visitors from our adjacent road to our new park-side entrance. Initially this worked very well. We took responsibility from the council (who normally locks/unlocks the park) to open/close this gate in line with our opening hours.

What we found, particularly in the summer months, was that when the gallery closed and the park was still open there was no longer easy access to the disabled bay parking. A member of the public raised this with us and we took action fast. Working with the council we are installing another council gate beside ours that will open/close with the rest of the park. We are very happy we found a solution that meant better accessibility for everyone visiting us and using our surrounding park.'

Chad McGitchie, Head of Visitor Services

Chad continues: 'As a result of the redevelopment, access has now become a regular subject on meeting agendas and there has been a seismic cultural shift in how the organisation continues to become more inclusive. We radically changed how we design exhibitions, use our spaces and build our teams. We also changed our recruitment process, removing application barriers and changing the way we advertise any opportunities to work with us. We have seen a major increase in applications from people who require additional access support. We continue to train and support our teams with mental health and enhanced disability awareness courses bespoke to our work.'

This year, Chad dropped his role as access lead as it is no longer needed. He says, 'Access is the responsibility of everyone in the organisation and this has been fully embedded, not only within our daily work, but written into our mission, vision and core values. The Whitworth aims to be the most inclusive, imaginative and caring gallery and continues to be for the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester.'



Photo © Simon Periton

Useful links

- Setting up a disability advisory group www.musedcn.org.uk/2018/08/02/setting-up-a-disability-advisory-group-horniman-museum-and-gardens/
- Find your local disabled people's organisations www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Access implementation plan

An implementation plan will put all the above elements, as well as those relating to operations, recruitment, marketing and activity, into an easy-to-refer-to framework.

It will provide you with an overview of aims and outcomes broken down into a series of actions set against target dates and those on the staff or design team who have lead responsibility for each action. In this way you can check progress.

Area	Item	Start date	End date	Lead person	Outcome
Building design – ground floor					
Main entrance	Entrance doors	02/03/19	31/08/19	X (staff member)	Decision on automated/ semi-automated opening v manual
Toilet block	Changing Places cubicle Access group meeting no. 2	02/04/19	31/08/19 RIBA 2	X	Decision on best location for CP facility

Area	Item	Start date	End date	Lead person	Outcome
Training					
Disability equality training	Induction for new staff	Recruit 03/10/21	Delivery by 03/04/22	X	All new staff inducted and familiar with new building
Disability equality training	Revision for existing staff re building changes	Booking 03/10/21	Delivery by 03/03/22 RIBA 6	X	All existing staff familiar with new layout and measures including fire evacuation strategy
Operations					
Park entrances	Gates N and E	02/02/19	02/02/20	X	Agreement from parks and estates for gate opening times to be extended
Access advisory group	Post completion meetings cycle	02/02/22	ongoing	X	Ongoing advice. Updated marketing plan. Agree Disability Arts' festival format for 2022

Area	Item	Start date	End date	Lead person	Outcome
Marketing					
Website	Whole site. New access pages	02/02/21	02/02/22 for dummy run and user trial	X	Updated pages with detailed access information and site to <u>W3C WAI</u> * standards
Website	Visual trail	02/11/21	02/04/22	X	Picture trail of routes to and around building and its facilities including pop-up large print captions
Park entrances	Gates N and E	02/02/19	02/02/20	X	Agreement from parks and estates for gate opening times to be extended
Gallery leaflet	Updated information and welcome message	02/12/21	02/02/22	X	Formats to include large print as standard, audio and BSL versions online
Soft opening	Dedicated events	02/12/21	02/03/22	X	Touch tour behind the scenes tour; BSL events

An accessible building, however, is only the start. As you progress your project you will need to consider additional factors such as customer care, marketing, employment, and information (including access to and on your website). The following article by the Museums Association highlights the importance of making information about access as widely available as possible:

www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/comment/01102018-voxpath?utm_campaign=1345014_15112018&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museums%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,STTI,27LRK7,2YXST,1

Case study: Making the Grade



Capital cost £4 million

Client South London Gallery

Architect 6a Architects

Access consultant Earnscliffe, Making Access Work

In September 2018 the **South London Gallery** extended into the former Peckham Road Fire Station

and Kennedy's sausage factory 120 metres across the road from its main gallery. An anonymous benefactor donated the Grade 2 listed Victorian building to South London Gallery in 2014, and the gallery went on to raise the £4 million project costs, including major support from Heritage Lottery Fund, the Mayor of London and the Arts Council.

Photo © Johan Dehlin

The designs to restore and convert the building, which was built in 1867, into a mixed-use arts centre were led by 6a Architects, with support from a multi-disciplinary team that included conservation and access consultants. The conversion included the creation of galleries, an archive room, artists' studio, kitchen and terrace, community and education facilities, and lift access to the three upper storeys and wheelchair accessible toilets.

The design team faced many challenges associated with the building's listed status. The reconfiguration of vertical circulation to create a public and fully accessible route through the building was key; a new lift shaft was carefully threaded through the listed structure and within the existing pitched roofline. At each level, the staircase and lift arrive at a common landing overlooking the generous entrance hall so that all visitors share the experience of moving through the height of the fire station.

In the entrance space, the desire to retain the original brick chevron floor once used to drain and clean down the engine garage was balanced against the need to provide a safe, accessible and comfortable surface for everyone, including wheelchair users. The design solution was to infill the drainage grooves with a dark coloured mortar to offer a smoother, more even surface without detriment to the appearance or character of the floor.

Useful resources

For advice on the issues relating to historic buildings:

- historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/compliantworks/equalityofaccess
- historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-to-historic-buildings/heag010-easy-access-to-historic-buildings
- historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-historic-landscapes



Photo © Johan Dehlin

4 ● Making your building accessible

This section outlines the areas you should consider in making your building accessible. We highlight specific areas to consider for arts and cultural buildings that represent best practice based on BS 8300 and Approved Document M.

The overall aim of inclusive physical access should be the provision of non-segregated access where everyone can use the building and its facilities safely, independently and with comfort, confidence and ease.

An inclusive environment recognises that we all benefit from improved accessibility, including disabled people, older people and families with children, carers and those of us who do not consider ourselves to be disabled.

This can be achieved through a process of inclusive design, where the needs of everybody are considered and embedded in the proposals for the design, development and subsequent management of the built environment from the outset. These needs are based on:

- ease of use
- freedom of choice and access to mainstream activities

- embracing of diversity and difference
- legibility and predictability
- high quality

Areas you should consider in your building

You should consider the following areas as a minimum:

- nearby Blue Badge parking for disabled drivers
- external seating
- safe, level drop off points near entrances
- level/ramped access into the building
- easy access, high visibility, entrance doors. For example, automatic doors will assist most disabled people, including wheelchair users and those with assistance dogs or guides. If automatic doors are used they should remain open for sufficient time to enable a person with slow mobility or impaired vision to pass safely through
- clear navigation with intuitive building layout, clear sightlines and high visibility wayfinding signage suitable for everyone, including those for whom written English is a barrier

- a clearly visible and welcoming reception area with informed staff and wheelchair accessible information/ticketing counter
- easy to locate entrances, exits, lifts, toilets and rest areas
- a comfortable acoustic environment with sound absorbing surfaces to reduce unwanted noise
- sound enhancement equipment at service counters, and in meeting rooms and performance spaces, for the benefit of D/deaf people and partially deaf. The provision of induction loops will enable visitors to communicate with staff, particularly in busy areas
- a décor scheme that helps to define different areas of the building, with use of high contrast colours or tones to distinguish between walls, floors and doors, furnishings fixtures and fittings
- good lighting that helps define different areas and features, and assist with wayfinding, and reading of signs and information
- consideration of wellbeing issues to ensure physical and emotional comfort
- plentiful comfortable seating, and a furniture layout that enables wheelchair users and those with walking aids and assistance dogs to move about with ease and to sit with companions
- quiet breakout spaces where people can escape from the crowds
- toilet and changing facilities suitable for all
- easy access routes to back-of-house staff and performer areas
- accessible toilet, change, work, meeting and rest spaces for staff
- accessible toilet, change, green room, studio and stage facilities for performers and artists
- robust safety evacuation procedures and provision of refuge spaces
- a maintenance programme and budget for the upkeep of specialist equipment such as lifts, sound enhancement equipment and accessible hoists
- operational procedures for crowd management and visitor assistance
- staff training
- availability of communications materials and media including the organisation's website

Case study: A story of accessible design



Capital cost	£37 million
Client	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Design architect	Bennetts Associates
Executive architect	Ellis Williams Architects
Theatre consultant	Charcoalblue
Access consultant	HADA
Access advice	Cheshire West and Chester Council's access team; Graeae Theatre Company

After a two-and-a-half-year construction period to transform Chester's 1930s Odeon cinema into an international cultural centre, **Storyhouse** opened to the public in May 2017. Offering a programme of opera, music, dance, drama, comedy, cinema and literature, the venue has its own repertory theatre company that is among the largest in the country. It also provides diverse education and community engagement programmes. This has all been possible through operating from a building that has a high level of accessibility.

The £37 million project that received a £3 million capital grant from the Arts Council comprises the original Grade 2 listed shell of an Art Deco cinema with a new extension building. The cinema building now provides a café/restaurant, library, and boutique 100-seat cinema housed in a glass-clad 'lightbox' suspended on the first-floor mezzanine. Cinema audiences pass through and under the cinema screen to reach the 800-seat main auditorium located within the copper and glass clad extension building. Open stairs and walkways, visible from the street through the glass cladding, wrap around the auditorium that can be configured in proscenium or

thrust stage format. The 150-seat Garret Theatre located above the auditorium offers a flexible events/studio that doubles as a rehearsal space, while the fourth-floor bar provides panoramic views across the city.

The design team (that included inclusive design consultant, HADA) visited internationally acclaimed Graeae Theatre Company (www.graeae.org), champions of the inclusion of D/deaf and disabled people in the arts, at their bespoke Bradbury Studios in East London, to better understand the performers' journey sequence from arrival to the stage and backstage areas.



Photo © Mark Carline

'Working with Graeae helped to reinforce the need for accessible theatres to enable them to tour around the country. Many theatres now have mobile sound desks and lighting rigs on pulley systems without having to access the gantry. So even where the sound and light booth may not be accessible, especially in existing theatres, access is still possible.'

Other key issues were the proximity of accessible changing rooms to the stage for speed of costume change and ensuring that the Green Rooms, socialising areas and curtain call were also accessible.'

Helen Allen, HADA

The design process also included working with representatives of local disabled people's groups and with Cheshire West and Chester Council's access team. The group met with the design team in meetings held in Ellesmere Port. The architectural designs were made accessible via presentations that included tactile plans for visually impaired attendees. One group member was a representative of the [Changing Places](#) initiative and had detailed knowledge of the design of Changing Places cubicles.

The old cinema had no step-free entrances or lift. As part of the Storyhouse project entrance ramps and an internal lift now offer ease of access into the building and to every storey. Wheelchair positions are provided at stalls, circle and gallery levels within the Storyhouse theatre, cinema and studio theatre. Induction loops are available across the building and include fixed, counter-top and portable systems. Accessible toilets are located on each of the four floors. While HADA's recommendation for a parent room and dedicated children's toilets for the storytelling area was value engineered out, the venue was able to provide a Changing Places cubicle, the first such facility in the city.

According to Storyhouse, 11 per cent of their visitors have long-term health issues or a disability, of whom 91 per cent rated the disability access as good or very good.

In September 2018 Storyhouse, in partnership with Voluntary Action and People's Choice Group, hosted the week-long Kaleidoscope Festival, celebrating disability and challenging stereotypes. The programme was chosen by 23 local disability-led charities and organisations and included a seminar organised by the national Access Association (www.accessassociation.co.uk) to look at the arts, theatre design, and building regulations and ask whether developments are succeeding in the creation of a truly barrier inclusive environment for everyone.

Other events included screenings of a selection of films exploring disability including the Emmy Award-winning short film *Notes on Blindness* (www.notesonblindness.co.uk), dance moments from *11 Million Reasons to Dance* featuring D/deaf, visually impaired and disabled dancers (www.doingthingsdifferently.org.uk/events/11-million-reasons), Makaton (www.makaton.org) events, Dee Sign BSL choir, and an open mic performance by the world's first visually impaired ukulele band.

Useful resources

Setting up a disability advisory group
www.musedcn.org.uk/2018/08/02/setting-up-a-disability-advisory-group-horniman-museum-and-gardens

Find your local disabled people's organisations

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org>

Arts and cultural buildings

This section sets out more specifically the Arts Council's expectations of arts and cultural organisations in ensuring their buildings provide inclusive access for everyone. When planning a new building, refurbishment or extension of an existing building, you will need to consider access in relation to all aspects of the building, including areas used by performers and staff as well as those areas that are publicly accessible. This includes areas such as changing rooms, green room, workshops and control rooms.

Audience spaces

Public spaces for audiences will vary from venue to venue. They may include performance areas, break out spaces, galleries and retail areas. Each area will have its own specific requirements dictated by usage. Across all public areas, however, we recommend that you ensure that:

- assistance dogs are admitted to all staff and public areas of the building (except for kitchen or food preparation areas) and that provision is made for them (eg drinking bowl, external exercise area)
- there is sufficient space for assistance dogs, buggy parking and walking aids
- wheelchair users can sit with companions away from circulation routes

Galleries and museums

When designing gallery spaces, it is important to allow enough room for everyone to circulate and approach the displays with ease. You need:

- enough room between displays to enable wheelchair users and visually impaired people with escorts or guide dogs to move freely and get close to colour or tonal contrast between the edges of plinths and display cases and the floor and walls
- to avoid, unless guarded, wall hung cases or objects that project by more than 100mm where they are located at over 300mm from floor level and are not detectable by the sweep of a cane
- to ensure exhibits are displayed at a height suitable for wheelchair users to view comfortably
- to ensure display furniture for interactive devices has sufficient knee room to enable wheelchair users to pull in and reach controls
- seating to be provided at frequent intervals where it will not impede circulation or the approach to displays
- good lighting for exhibits and navigation
- labels that are clearly visible and at a suitable height to be read by wheelchair users
- non-visual or text-based forms of interpretation that are suitable for visually impaired visitors, including touch items, audio described guides or captions
- British Sign Language video captions for video and object labels for BSL users for whom standard text can be a barrier
- interactive devices that are easy to use with clear, Plain English or illustrated instructions

The layout of display furniture should make it obvious which, if any, is the preferred route. Clear signage, lighting and décor should further assist navigation. You need to ensure:

- clearly defined routes
- each area or room within the gallery is named or themed (this could be linked to the colour scheme) to help visitors orientate

Performance spaces (including auditoria and lecture theatres)

All performance spaces need to provide spaces for wheelchair users, but that is not the only access consideration. To provide adequate access we recommend you:

- provide a number of wheelchair spaces. We recommend that, where practical, organisations aim to achieve the level of provision set out in BS 8300 (2 per cent of total capacity to be permanent spaces, as opposed to 1 per cent as set out in Approved Document M)
- ensure that spaces for wheelchair users are fully integrated into all public seating areas, with a choice of viewing positions and seating prices, and with adjacent companion seating
- ensure all sloping floors within an auditorium or lecture room contain level areas where wheelchair users can park
- have identified 'easy access seats' which can be reached on the level or by one or two steps for those with mobility impairments, and for those with assistance dogs, space for dogs to lie down next to their owner

- provide end of aisle seats that can be reached on the level, with removable arm rests, for those able to transfer out of their wheelchairs
- provide a nearby room set aside for the safe storage of wheelchairs and other equipment during a performance
- provide an induction loop or infrared sound enhancement system (these systems transmit sound through an infrared light signal and can only be heard through receiver headsets but have the added capability of simultaneous broadcast of audio description and second language, for instance)
- provide flare paths or tread lights to give adequate visual orientation when the lights are down
- provide adequate lighting levels when audiences are arriving and leaving
- provide large, clearly visible seat and row numbers

Shops, bars and cafes

Retail areas should enable people to move freely or to work in these locations. You need to ensure:

- counters (box office, bar, food serveries and shop counters) have a section which is approximately 760mm from the floor with a 700mm high x 500mm deep knee recess to enable wheelchair users to park up close
- behind-counter space at least 1500mm deep
- a cross-counter induction loop is now required across the board

- aisles are wide enough to enable wheelchair users and parents with double buggies to pass through with ease
- areas are provided where wheelchair users can turn around to avoid travelling in one direction down lengthy aisles
- shelves are between 650mm and 1000mm from floor level as far as possible, with staff assistance advertised for retrieving items on high or very low shelves
- all areas, including terraces and changes of level, are accessible to wheelchair users

For bars and cafes you need:

- large print menus and other alternative formats
- some adapted equipment – beakers, bowls, easy-grip cutlery and straws readily available
- visual intermission calls (for performance venues)

Lifts

When installing a lift, it should be designed for independent use by a wheelchair user, enabling the user to enter and exit the lift in a forward position and to turn around inside the lift. It is not only wheelchair users who need to use lifts. Older people, less ambulant people, those with visual impairments or hidden impairments and parents with children and buggies will all also use the lift in preference to stairs. The number and size of lifts should reflect the people capacity of the venue.

A platform lift is a useful and economical means of making different levels

accessible in existing buildings. All users should be able to reach and use the controls. Since platform lifts are operated by continuous pressure controls, they may not be suitable for single users with particular impairments – such as those that cause fatigue or limited hand strength. Stairlifts (lifts that climb the stair) should only be used as a last resort. These should be of a design that can accommodate an electric wheelchair.

Artist and staff facilities

Arts Council England expects that all areas used by artists and staff will be accessible to disabled people. Provision should be made for easy access to the stage from backstage or dressing room areas, and from the auditorium. We expect, where practical:

- accessible routes to enter the stage from stage left and stage right
- a level backstage crossover route from stage left to stage right
- a direct route that could be used by a wheelchair user from the stage to the auditorium
- a direct route suitable for a wheelchair user from backstage to front of house
- dressing room areas incorporating accessible toilets, shower and changing facilities
- an accessible changing room close to the stage
- assistance alarms in all accessible shower rooms and toilets
- some form of sensory or visual indicator available to alert D/deaf performers to curtain calls (this could be via video links or vibrating pagers)

Case study: Bridging the gaps



Client Mind the Gap, Bradford

Capital cost £2.2 million

Architect Allen Todd

Mind the Gap has been in existence for 30 years as one of Europe's leading learning disability theatre companies, creating cutting edge performances

for UK and international audiences. In 2008 it moved to MTG Studios in Lister Mills, Bradford. The £2.2 million venue comprising a 122-seat auditorium, three studio spaces and meeting rooms, was created specifically for Mind the Gap by Allen Todd Architects.

Photo: MTG Studios, showing new lighting, AllSpace © 2008, Tim Smith

The project was achieved through a partnership with Bradford Metropolitan District Council. Mind the Gap acted as project manager on the client side, meaning that key staff had direct communications with the architects and regularly attended progress meetings with the project architect, site manager and suppliers. A supportive and proactive site manager enabled members of the Mind the Gap wider ensemble of learning disabled artists and students to visit the site during construction. This directly influenced a number of decisions

along the way, including the introduction of some curved walls instead of straight, for both improved aesthetics and easier way finding.

Mind the Gap involved learning disabled people in regular user testing and piloting of equipment throughout the process. This informed decisions about how a building-wide system for using basic technology equipment was set up, as well as audio, video and production facilities.

In 2013 the organisation successfully applied to the Arts Council for a small capital grant of £120,000 towards £180,000 costs to provide accessible digital and computer technology, retractable seating, sound and lighting systems, signage and specialist equipment. This investment includes systems to support innovative access solutions within creative processes and

productions, eg integration of additional audio and visual content that audiences can access via mobile apps. Additional and improved sound, film-making and multi-artform facilities not only benefit Mind the Gap but also other building users including artists and organisations who research, develop and present their work at MTG Studios.

'Our intention is always to go beyond minimum physical access standards, particularly in relation to providing exemplary access standards for learning-disabled artists, participants and audiences. It's part of our ambition for MTG Studios to be recognised as a centre for excellence in learning-disability arts practice, and to exchange learning and expertise with the wider arts sector'.

Julia Skelton, Executive Director



New window signage © 2016,
Thompson Brand Partners



New camera equipment © 2018,
Rob Abbey

Artists' workspaces

Artists' studios are very individual spaces. Wheelchair access to some studio provision and to all common areas (kitchen, toilets, meeting room) is essential, and a system needs to be in place to ensure that artists who require it can use such provision. You need:

- some studio provision with level, ramped or lift access
- management systems and contracts to allow easy access to such spaces when required
- accessible common areas with tea making facilities and wheelchair accessible toilets
- portable features such as individually controllable lights and heaters
- if you are planning on-site artist accommodation, to ensure it is wheelchair accessible with access to accessible bathroom and kitchenette

Workshops too need to be accessible – whether they are areas for specific internal activity (such as set or prop making) or areas where groups can become involved in practical activities. They need to have:

- level or ramped access, or access via a lift
- accessible features such as height adjustable sinks with lever taps
- height adjustable desks, tables and chairs
- portable features such as individually controllable lights and heaters

- a range of equipment and supplies to enable choice and participation (eg a range of scissors and cutters, brushes and ways to apply paint). There is a wide range of access equipment on the market, including accessible potters' wheels and photographic equipment – you need to consult potential users to determine specific requirements

Technical areas

Technical areas are often the most inaccessible spaces within buildings, but there is no reason why this should be so, particularly in new and refurbished buildings. You need to ensure that all areas are accessible, including:

- rehearsal rooms
- green rooms
- broadcasting, film, lighting, sound control rooms and audio description booths
- orchestra pit and understage areas
- fly and lighting galleries
- equipment and scenery storage areas
- paint shops and wardrobe areas
- technicians' rooms
- kitchens, behind bar areas and counters

It is important to provide access to controls and equipment within these spaces. Controls, such as alarm systems, heating controls and thermostats need to be no higher than 1000mm and no lower than 400mm from floor level.

Assisted performances: captioning and audio description

Undertaking physical adaptations to front of house technical areas or auditorium rigging can allow you to make changes and/or equipment purchases that support the provision of assisted performances – in particular, captioning for D/deaf and partially deaf audience members and audio description for blind and partially sighted audiences.

These adaptations can include:

- creating a space from which service providers can work, for example, a booth adjacent to, or within, the technician's box. This should have clear direct sight of the stage, good sound quality, access to tie lines (3-pin XLR) and headphones with an attached boom microphone and small mixer desk (for describers)
- space left on the proscenium booms with easy rigging points for caption units
- infra-red radiators for hearing enhancement which can also be used for the broadcast of description. These need to be rigged carefully, in positions with a clear 'view' of as much of the auditorium seating as possible

Case study: Making it clear



Client The Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter

Capital cost £24 million

Architect Allies and Morrison

The **Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery** in Exeter holds a significant and diverse collection ranging from archaeology to fine and decorative art. In 2012 it reopened after a £24 million capital redevelopment by architects Allies and Morrison and exhibition designers Ralph Appelbaum Associates. In 2017 it welcomed over 260,000 visitors and won the Devon Tourism Gold

Award for Large Attraction of the Year and South West Tourism Excellence Awards (Silver and Bronze) for Access and Inclusivity.

Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture, said, 'We work hard to make the museum a safe place for people to find their voice, learn skills and build confidence.' This aim is underpinned by robust access policies that include admittance of assistance dogs and free access to ticketed events for carers – both of which are clearly communicated on an easy-to-navigate website (www.rammuseum.org.uk/visiting-us/enjoy-your-visit)

Photo: Matt Austin

The museum, supported by Arts Council England, offers a high level of physical, sensory and intellectual accessibility, with large print material, 16 videos with British Sign Language interpretation, subtitles and audio, a quiet room for visitors to use, and close-up object

captions. These are effectively promoted on the venue's website with information presented via a BSL video guide and using a 'visual story' – a photographic route map that guides visitors through the whole journey from getting to the museum to visiting the galleries.

This was produced through a regional initiative, Heritage Ability, run by local charity Living Options Devon with whom RAMM have a long-standing relationship and who also helped to produce its in-house access guide.

The visual story information was designed in-house following a template from Heritage Ability and using imagery and information gathered by graduate intern Charis Martin. While it was developed primarily to assist those with autism and their enablers, it is broadly accessible to all – including those for whom English is not a first language and people with learning disabilities for whom text can be a barrier – and it equips potential visitors with the tools to make informed decisions about their visit.

RAMM is now developing a navigational system to assist people with various impairments to find their way around the large museum. Currently called RAMMbingo, it brings together people working with local disability organisations to create, over a series of sessions, a set of bingo cards to make museum visits fun and welcoming, and to spark exploration and conversation.

The groups and individuals involved will also advise RAMM on how to be clear and sensitive in providing breakout space to those who might need it. RAMM is looking into the possibility of developing sensory spaces and interactives with the potential to calm people's nerves, as well as provide another way of relating to objects in the museum.

Photos courtesy of Royal Albert Memorial Museum

RAMM has a well-developed dementia-friendly programme, which includes monthly sessions for people with dementia – of all ages – to share a museum experience with carers. These range from object handling and hands-on art making to friendly tours and relaxed music events in the galleries. This is all possible in a building that has a high level of accessibility in its design.



In each room there is a book of Close Up Captions for you to use, it lists all the things on display in that room.



School groups often visit the museum. it can be noisy when they are visiting. The museum is usually quieter after 3pm.

It is not always straightforward, however. As Museum Manager **Camilla Hampshire** says, 'Visitors have conflicting needs. For example, too much signage can be as confusing as too little and we like to encourage an exploration of the museum rather than being prescriptive. Creating an accessible museum is a long-term commitment. It's an approach, a process and a direction of travel rather than a destination. It's all about listening to visitors, consulting experts, finding a balance and providing options to suit a range of needs.'

RAMM has a particular remit under its current (2018) round of Arts Council England National portfolio funding to work with D/deaf communities and increase disabled audiences. Disabled groups will be included in planning for exhibitions over the coming years. In early 2019, RAMM will showcase an exhibition curated by Yinka Shonibare MBE, a Nigerian-British disabled artist who promotes artists whose voices are underrepresented on the arts scene, including disabled people.



1 General information

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) is open at these times:

Monday	closed
Tuesday	10am to 5pm
Wednesday	10am to 5pm
Thursday	10am to 5pm
Friday	10am to 5pm
Saturday	10am to 5pm
Sunday	10am to 5pm

You do not have to apply to look around the museum.



2 Getting there

There are wheelchair accessible parking spaces at the back of the museum. If you want to use one of the spaces you need to phone the museum on 01392 265960 to book a space. If you use one of the spaces, you can go into the museum by the Garden Entrance. There are several car parks near the museum. The nearest one is at The Guildhall Centre.

There are lots of buses that come in to the centre of Exeter and the museum is only a short walk from the High Street bus stops.

Photos courtesy of Royal Albert Memorial Museum



This is the desk you will see if you come in to the museum by the Garden Entrance from the accessible parking spaces.



There are lockers near the entrance desk where you can put things which you don't want to carry around the museum. You might want to put your coat in a locker. You will need a £1 coin for the locker and you will get this back when you leave.



Staff in the museum

As you go through the museum you will see staff or volunteers in some of the rooms. They wear a RAMM badge around their neck. If you need help please speak to a member of staff or a volunteer.

Staff areas

Staff access is just as important as visitor access. You need to consider access to staff toilets, showers, locker rooms, staff rooms and kitchens as well as to offices, meeting rooms and storage areas. Open plan offices can offer more flexibility for an accessible layout of furniture, but the acoustic environment may be distracting to D/deaf staff. You need to consider:

- space for wheelchair users to circulate, with wheelchair turning in all areas including kitchenettes
- a services infrastructure that supports the use of induction loops in meeting and interview rooms and task lighting at desks
- the location of power sockets at between 400mm and 1000mm from floor level as set out in BS 8300
- the location of light switches at no higher than 1200mm from floor level and visually contrasted against the wall
- accessible toilets within 40 metres travel distance

Toilets and rest facilities

A fully accessible toilet needs to be designed to address the requirements of people with a variety of impairments.

Separate baby change facilities should be provided within the male and female toilets. Where there is sufficient space, a wheelchair accessible family change and feeding room should be provided, which incorporates a toilet for parents.

As a minimum you need accessible toilets which:

- are fully equipped for use by disabled people in both public and staff areas
- meet the minimum requirements set out in Approved Document M
- are easy to locate and are clearly signposted
- are designed to enable family members or personal assistants of either sex to enter, ie unisex rather than located within the male or female toilet block
- have outward opening doors (if inward opening doors are fitted they must have lift off or two-way hinges for emergency access, with extra cubicle depth to ensure a turning circle in front of the pan clear of the door swing)
- opens onto a private lobby to protect the dignity of users when a carer enters the cubicle, and for the safety of visually impaired people
- have an emergency assistance alarm fitted
- have a choice of left and right-hand transfer positions in buildings with more than one accessible toilet

Within male and female toilet blocks there should be at least one cubicle designed to ambulant disabled standard with:

- suitable grabrails
- an outward opening door
- where practical, the dimensions set out in BS 8300 of 1200mm wide

In larger buildings, accessible urinals should be considered for ambulant disabled people and wheelchair users who are able to stand with the aid of grab rails. Further details are contained in point 12.4.4 of BS 8300.

Access to showers and first aid rooms, and to the equipment and furniture within them such as beds, should also be considered.

Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability. Where feasible, and particularly in large venues, the Arts Council recommends that a personal care 'Changing Places' cubicle is provided in addition to standard accessible toilets. For new buildings and major refurbishments of sites with a capacity of 350 or more, building regulations now require provision of a Changing Places toilet. The Changing Places cubicle should provide:

- a room area minimum of 12 square metres (3m x 4m), with a ceiling height of 2.4 metres
- a height adjustable adult-sized change bench
- a centrally placed toilet with room either side
- a tracking hoist system (or mobile hoist if this is not possible)
- adequate space in the changing area for the disabled person and up to two carers
- a screen or curtain to allow some privacy
- wide tear off paper roll to cover the bench

- a large waste bin for disposable pads
- a non-slip floor

Where it is not feasible to install a Changing Places cubicle due to design constraints, Space to Change toilets plug the gap between conventional wheelchair-accessible toilets, and the 'desirable', additional, larger and better equipped Changing Places toilet facilities.

Many arts organisations are now designing gender neutral toilets to address the need for facilities that are suitable for everyone, including transgender and non-binary users. Where feasible, and particularly in large venues, the Arts Council recommends additional separate, self-contained unisex cubicles in addition to male and female toilets. These should also be in addition to separate accessible toilets.

Rest rooms

In large venues rest areas should be considered. These have a variety of uses – a private space to inject insulin, a quiet space to calm down if having a panic attack, or a space to rest if you are affected by fatigue. Where provided, these spaces should afford privacy but not be overtly 'medical' in appearance.

Case study: Changing within a level playing field



Client Attenborough Arts Centre, Leicester

Capital cost Original building: £1.94 million
Extension: £1.6 million

Architect Original building: Bennetts Associates
Extension: GSS Architecture

Founded by world-renowned filmmaker, actor and lifelong patron of the arts, Richard Attenborough, the pioneering **Attenborough Arts Centre** opened 20 years ago. Designed by Bennetts Associates and funded by the University of Leicester with support from the Arts Council, it won the RIBA Award for Arts and Health and was cited 'an outstanding example of universal design'. Today it continues to thrive under the patronage of Richard's son Michael who carries on the legacy of striving to include everyone in great art, culture and learning with a mixed programme of music, dance, theatre and visual art.

While the centre has continued to draw large and diverse audiences, a few years ago it was becoming evident that it was no longer fully meeting the access needs of all of its users. The centre regularly hosts events by arts companies such as Leicester based Bamboozle Theatre Company, who work with disabled children and young adults with complex needs. It is also popular with D/deaf and disabled audiences, artists and performers. A summer scheme for young adults with complex needs highlighted the need to resolve changing facilities as carers were resorting to changing on floor mats in the two wheelchair accessible toilets or in the activity space itself.

Around the same time, there was a growing awareness of the [Changing Places](#) initiative that had been launched in recognition of the fact that over quarter of a million people in UK were unable to use standard toilets. This includes people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

The director approached the university to see what could be done. She also applied to the Arts Council for a small grant of £2,000, which she believed to be sufficient for a Changing Places space. The university estates department provided a project manager who designed and produced the cubicle, and a further £10,000 towards the true cost of the facility, which was equipped with a height adjustable changing bench, shower, toilet and hoist. One parent carer said, after it was installed in 2013, that it has 'given us back our dignity'.



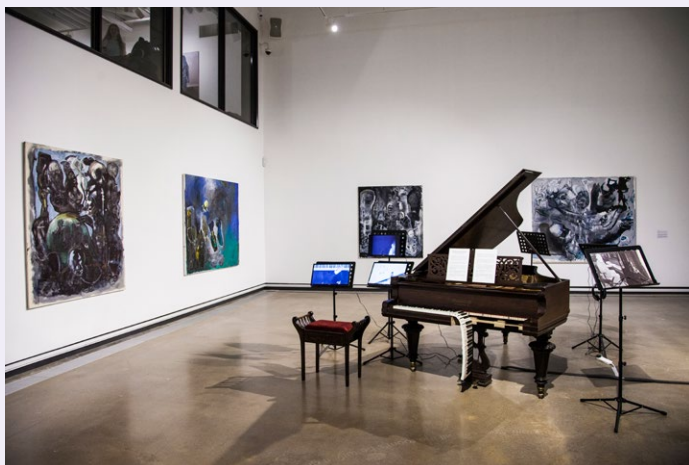
An additional benefit of creating the Changing Places facility has been its use as a shower/change facility for disabled performers, meaning that the centre has been able to expand its programming to include more inclusive or disability led dance and physical theatre.

The centre has also benefited from the closer relationship it now has with the university's estates department, working with them on another capital project, the £1.6 million extension that opened in January 2016.

'Looking around other venues and working alongside colleagues who have had experience of capital projects really paid off. We learned the importance of providing very detailed requirements within the design brief, for instance we insisted on a level concrete floor. When it was laid it was uneven and we were able to have it honed, at no additional cost to ourselves. We now have a beautiful level and polished concrete floor.'

Michaela Butter, Director

Photo courtesy of Attenborough Arts Centre



The extension, a series of interlinked spaces designed by GSS Architecture, has increased the building size by 50 per cent, making the centre the largest contemporary art gallery in Leicester and one of the largest in the East Midlands area. The extension has enabled a progressive visual arts programme of socially engaged exhibitions and events, many of them promoting disability culture and debate.

These have included: 'In Out There' in June 2018, curated by Shape Arts and showcasing the enduring influence of disabled artist and activist Adam Reynolds; and the recent 'Criminal Ornamentation' Arts Council Collection, curated by disabled artist Yinka Shonibare MBE, that utilizes the triple height gallery space.

'The continued drive to offer the best accessibility we can means we can work with lots of disabled artists and be confident that we can meet their needs. The next capital project is now being planned – an arts and wellbeing wing to support the work and mental health of university students'

Michaela Butter, Director

Useful links

- [Changing Places case study: Attenborough Arts Centre](#)
- [Changing Places case study: Helping everyone enjoy Leicester's theatres and arts venues](#)

5. Resources

Free downloadable resources

Equality Act 2010

Building for Equality: Disability and the Built Environment
publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/631/631.pdf

www.shapearts.org.uk/resources
www.shapearts.org.uk/News/social-model-of-disability

Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know? Disability quick start guide
assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85011/disability.pdf

Equality and Human Rights Commission
www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Building regulations and standards

Approved Document M Volume 1: Dwellings
 Approved Document M Volume 2: Buildings other than Dwellings
www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m

Approved Document K: Protection from falling, collision and impact (regulations relating to the design of stairs, ramps and glazing. No longer covered by Part M)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/protection-from-falling-collision-and-impact-approved-document-k

Access audits

Access all areas. A guide to destination access audits
www.accentuateuk.org/toolkits

Involving disabled people in access audits – a guide to best practice
www.accentuateuk.org/resources

Register of access auditors
www.nrac.org.uk

Regional and national disabled people's organisations

www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Setting up a disability advisory group
www.musedcn.org.uk/2018/08/02/setting-up-a-disability-advisory-group-horniman-museum-and-gardens

Live music for Deaf and disabled people

Attitude is Everything's charter of best practice for venues hosting music events to be inclusive to Deaf and disabled people

<http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk/the-charter-of-best-practice>

Listed buildings and sites

Advice on the issues relating to historic buildings

historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/compliantworks/equalityofaccess

historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-to-historic-buildings/heag010-easy-access-to-historic-buildings

historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-historic-landscapes

Accessible heritage – accessible and inclusive heritage events
www.accentuateuk.org/toolkits

Designing inclusive exhibitions

Toolkit one: Accessible exhibitions for all

Toolkit two: Engaging deaf and disabled young people with heritage
www.historyof.place/toolkits

www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/EXhibitions_for_all_NMScotland.pdf

www.shapearts.org.uk/News/accessible-curating

Toilet design

www.changing-places.org

cae.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CAE-Managing-Accessible-Toilets-Factsheet-Jan-2017.pdf

www.independentliving.co.uk/industry-news/space-to-change

Organisations such as M Shed, Bristol, provide a Wudhu ritual washing facility used by Muslims as they hire out rooms

for weddings. www.bbc.co.uk/religion/galleries/wudhu

Access to the arts – general advice

Shape Unlimited: Ensuring venues and events are open to all: A Brief Access Guide

www.shapearts.org.uk

Guidance on venue accessibility; accessible marketing; clear communication; assistance dogs essentials; social model of disability; captioning a video; access logos download; access tools.

www.graeae.org/about/resources

Disability Information Bureau – source of information on disability issues and organisations

www.dibservices.org.uk

Comprehensive list of disabled people's charities and equipment

www.disabledgo.com/disabled-charities

Using social media is currently one of the best ways of reaching D/deaf and disabled people.

Other resources

BS8300-1:2018 – external features

BS 8300-2:2018 – interiors

shop.bsigroup.com

Designing for Accessibility, 2012 – Centre for Accessible Environments
cae.org.uk/product/designing-for-accessibility

Access audit handbook, 2013 – Centre for Accessible Environments
cae.org.uk/product/access-audit-handbook

Access guide glossary

Access audit

An analysis in the form of a report which commonly takes the route of a potential visitor's sequential journey from arrival through to departure, taking in all areas of a building and its approaches. It should identify existing levels of accessibility and make prioritised recommendations for improvement to remove any barriers to access identified.

Access design review

A process whereby an access consultant evaluates design proposals (usually produced by architects) against access standards such as Approved Document M and BS 8300, as well as local, regional and national planning and statutory guidelines. This is not a full access audit.

Access design statement

A short report accompanying and supporting a planning application. It is usually prepared by an access consultant and is updated as the project progresses from drawing board to construction and post occupation. It forms a useful basis for future maintenance and management strategies.

Accessible WC

Often referred to as a 'disabled toilet' – a facility designed to meet the requirements of disabled people. Historically, such facilities were designed primarily around use by wheelchair users, but today they need to embrace the requirements of all users, including those with sensory and cognitive impairments who may prefer to use such facilities, as the layout will be familiar to them and it is a self-contained facility.

Ambulant disabled WC

A WC cubicle or compartment not meeting wheelchair requirements in terms of size and fixtures, but suitable for an ambulant disabled person, usually having support rails in designated places, with an outward-opening door.

Approved Document K

Part of the building regulations to be used in conjunction with Approved Document M (often referred to as Part M), the rules and specifications relating to the design of stairs, ramps and glazing which are no longer covered by Approved Document M.

Approved Document M

Provides a baseline for accessibility in the built environment. The document gives detailed specifications for all areas of a building and its approaches.

Assistive technology

Electrical and electronic equipment that assists disabled people.

Assistance dogs

An assistance dog is trained to aid or assist an individual with a disability – often people with sensory impairments such as visual impairment, as well as conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes and anxiety. Service providers have to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ for guide dog and assistance dog owners.

Audio description

A verbal or audio interpretation of a performance or artistic work either pre-recorded or delivered live to enable visually impaired people to engage with a performance, film or work of art.

Blue Badge

The Blue Badge scheme enables disabled people to park nearer their destination within a designated bay for badge holders.

Braille

A tactile system of writing and printing for people with profound vision loss, invented by Louis Braille in the 1830s.

British Sign Language (BSL)

A gestural language used by people who are deaf.

Building Regulations

Building Regulations are minimum standards for design, construction and alterations to virtually every building. The regulations are developed by the UK government and approved by Parliament. They cover the construction and extension of buildings and are supported by Approved Documents that set out detailed practical guidance on compliance.

British Standard BS 8300

A best practice guide that provides more detailed recommendations for achieving access and covers more areas than the Building Regulations Approved Documents including signage, furniture, lighting décor, specialist equipment, management and maintenance.

Captioning

An assistive technology that provides a text-based interpretation of a performance or film including dialogue, music and sounds to enable D/deaf people to engage with a performance or film.

Changing Places toilet facilities

Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all disabled people, particularly those unable to transfer from a wheelchair to a toilet or those requiring the assistance of one or more carers. A Changing Places toilet is a minimum of 12 square metres and includes a hoist and changing bench, and often showering facilities. These are now compulsory under building regulations for new builds and major refurbishments with capacities of 350 people or more.

Colour and tonal contrast

Contrast in colour and tone, for example where floors meet walls, to enable easier and safer navigation or improved legibility of a building, landscape or signage.

Dual sensory impairment

This usually means combined hearing and sight loss.

D/deaf

The term 'people who are deaf' in a general way is used when talking about people with hearing loss, especially when it is severe or profound (unable to hear anything below 70Db). D/deaf refers to people who are deaf as well as members of the Deaf community (see below).

Deaf community

Many deaf people whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language (BSL) consider themselves part of the Deaf community. They may describe themselves as Deaf with a capital D to emphasise their Deaf identity.

Direct discrimination

When somebody with a protected characteristic (one defined under the Equality Act) receives less favourable treatment than someone without that characteristic.

Disability led

There is no set definition for a disability led project or organisation, though usually key artistic leaders and decision-makers are disabled. Artistic work may or may not reference or be influenced by their disability.

Disability

A disabled person is a person with a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Substantial is defined as more than minor or trivial. Long term is defined as having lasted or being likely to last for at least 12 months.

Discrimination by association

A service user experiencing less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic does not have to possess that characteristic themselves – when the person who is associated with someone who has the characteristic (for example a carer) is treated unfavourably then this is discrimination by association.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act came into force in October 2010. It aims to legally protect people from discrimination in the workplace and in the wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand, and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the characteristics that are protected by the law and the behaviour that is unlawful. It supersedes the Disability Discrimination Acts that are repealed.

Equality policy

A document setting out an organisation's policy towards ensuring equality. The policy should set out the organisation's commitment to equality and include a plan of action with the names of staff with specific responsibility for equality issues and any practical measures such as the delivery of equality training.

Gender neutral toilets

Toilets not specified for either male or female use but for use by anyone, to meet the needs of transgender and non-binary users.

Hearing-enhancement system

Systems that enable sound signals to be transmitted to people with impaired hearing without interference from background noise or excessive reverberation. Such systems may use induction loop, infrared or radio transmission. Sound field systems are also used, especially in educational settings.

Inclusive design

A philosophy that embraces the needs of all potential users.

Indirect discrimination

When there is a policy rule or practice applied to everyone that places people with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared with people who do not have that characteristic.

Induction or inductive loop

A loop of wire fixed around a building or room, which may be built in at the outset or retrofitted. The wire is connected to an amplifier, a power source and a sound input device such as a microphone, or lead to a television. The sound is amplified and transmitted as a current around the loop, which works like a transmitting aerial. A hearing aid has a switch that, when in the T-position, picks up sound more clearly.

Infrared system

A wireless sound transmission system, which conveys sound from its source to hearing aids or headsets.

Listed Building Consent

A listed building is a building deemed to be of special architectural or historic interest requiring protection under the law. The list is compiled or approved by the Secretary of State under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Consent is required from the local planning authority (or in some circumstances the Secretary of State) for the demolition of a listed building or the carrying out of any works for the alteration or extension of a listed building in any manner that would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest. Failure to obtain consent when it is needed is a criminal offence.

Minicom

A trade name often used for a textphone (see textphone).

Neuro-diverse (ND)

A person with a cognitive profile that shows many peaks and troughs, denoting significant disparity between the best and worst of their information processing. Examples may include people with autism, Tourette's syndrome, dyscalculia or dyslexia. It is thought that 10 per cent of the population are significantly ND.

Palantypist

A typist who types speech into a machine, which displays it in real time on a computer screen to enable people who cannot hear speech to read it instead.

Personal Emergency Egress Plan (PEEP)

A plan setting out the arrangements for a disabled person to evacuate a building safely. These usually relate to members of staff rather than the public.

Protected characteristics

These are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex/gender and sexual orientation.

Plain English

A term used by the Plain English Campaign – an organisation set up to campaign against jargon, gobbledegook and misleading information, particularly

in documents produced by public sector bodies. The organisation reviews, edits and rewrites documents and since 1990 has awarded a 'Crystal Clear mark' accreditation for documents judged to be written in 'Plain English'.

Planning permission

Formal permission required in law from a local authority for the erection or alteration of buildings or similar development. 'Permitted development' is building work which has more limited impact and does not require planning permission.

Public realm

The public realm is defined as any publicly owned streets, pathways, right of ways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The duty on a public authority when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity.

Reasonable adjustments

Under the [Equality Act 2010](#) public sector organisations have to make changes in their approach or provision to ensure that services are accessible to disabled people as well as everybody else. Reasonable adjustments can mean alterations to buildings by providing lifts, wide doors, ramps and tactile signage, but may also mean changes to policies, procedures and staff training to ensure

that services work equally well for everyone, including those with learning disabilities. The duty is 'anticipatory'. What is reasonable depends on the circumstances including the size of the organisation, feasibility and resources available.

Refuge

An enclosed area with fire-resisting construction, served directly by a safe route; it is a temporary, safe waiting place used as part of a comprehensive evacuation management plan for the safe escape of disabled people.

Relaxed performances

A relaxed performance (or screening) is intended to be sensitive to and accepting of audience members who may benefit from a more relaxed environment, including (but not limited to) those with autistic spectrum conditions, and anyone with sensory and communication disorders or a learning disability.

RIBA

Royal Institute of British Architects.

RIBA stages

First developed in 1963, the RIBA Plan of Work is the UK model for the design and construction process. It has undergone various developments over time. The most recent version is the RIBA Plan of Work 2013, comprising eight work stages from preparation and brief, through concept and detailed technical design and finally building occupation. Each stage lists the tasks and outputs required.

Service provider

Anyone providing a service to the public in any sector whether the service is provided free or paid for.

Social model of disability

The social model (as opposed to the physical or medical model) of disability is based on the principle that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. It puts the emphasis on what needs to be done to identify and remove barriers rather on a person's impairment.

Spillover

Interference within one induction loop from a signal emitted from another induction loop nearby.

Space to Change toilet facilities

Where it is not feasible due to space constraints, Space to Change toilets plug the gap between conventional wheelchair-accessible toilets, and the 'desirable', additional, larger and better equipped Changing Places toilet facilities. All that's required is the addition of a hoist and an adult-sized changing bench, and sufficient space so that these do not compromise wheelchair turning and transfer space.

Tactile

Profiled surface or finish providing navigational guidance or warning to visually impaired people. For example, blister paving is a style of tactile paving used to provide guidance at crossings; tactile signs may have embossed images and text and/or Braille.

Textphone

A telephone facility with an electronic keyboard that enables D/deaf people to communicate – communication can be direct textphone-to-textphone, or via a Typetalk operator (relay service) from an ordinary telephone to a textphone.

Wayfinding

The process of identifying, travelling along, and adhering to a suitable route, usually comprising two main components – negotiation of obstructions or features, and navigation of a route or direction.

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