

# **Darlington Association on Disability**

## **Information Guide**

### **Access**

An accessible environment is important to everyone. Access for disabled people is not just limited to physical access, for instance a ramp to an entrance door. It is important to remember that people need access to employment, education, transport, leisure activities, information etc. Access in this broader sense is covered by other sections of this guide.

This section looks at physical access to the environment and access to, into, around and out of buildings. It has details of rules and regulations regarding access and also sources of information available locally and nationally.

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### **Legislation and Design**

The laws and regulations governing access and design of the physical environment have been developed in a haphazard fashion. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which is covered in the Legal Rights section of this guide, goes some way to enforce the right of access for disabled people. There still remain several loopholes that allow many buildings to remain only partially accessible.

It is now a legal requirement to consider the accessibility of a building for all people who use it. Part M of the Building Regulations (Access to and Use of Buildings), provides architects, builders and developers with the minimum standards on access and one possible way of meeting the legal requirement. The regulations state that 'reasonable provision shall be made for people to gain access to and use the building and its facilities'.

Part M covers new, extended, altered buildings and material change of use. Listed building consent may override Part M in relation to historic buildings but often it is possible to work with English Heritage and local disabled people to balance access and conservation requirements.

Part M recommends putting together an access statement justifying decisions made to the built environment, in particular what guidance is being followed to meet legislative requirements, why and how this differs from the guidance presented in Part M.

Part M covers such items as the design and construction of ramped and stepped approaches to building, size and type of entrance doors, the design and construction of ramps, steps and lifts within building and the size of internal doors. Also included is the design of suitable sanitary conveniences.

It is important to remember that Part M is limited in scope and application. Meeting the requirements of Part M alone does not mean that a service provider or employer has met their duties under the DDA in terms of what might be considered 'reasonable'. Part M does not, for example, extend to means of escape in event of a fire or cover management issues, such as policy and procedure, associated with ensuring discrimination does not occur.

The British Standards 8300:2001 "Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of Disabled People - Code of Practice" offers further good practice guidance to developers. **Darlington Borough Council Building Control Service** has a copy. BS 8300:2001 has more thorough guidance about the accessibility and usability of the built environment. This includes signage, acoustics (the way in which sound carries or can be heard) and colour contrast. Following this guidance will enable more people to access and use a building, and a decision to or not to follow this guidance may well be taken into account when considering 'reasonableness' under the DDA.

The Disability Discrimination Act has made it unlawful for a service provider to discriminate against a disabled person. Copies of the Act and Code of Practice can be obtained from the **Equality and Human Rights Commission**. Examples of discrimination may include deliberately not providing goods, facilities or services to a

disabled person or providing goods and services at a lower standard than would be provided to a non-disabled person.

Service providers have to put in place practices, policies and procedures to avoid making their services 'unreasonably difficult' for disabled people to access. This should, for example, prevent a shop from obstructing an aisle with goods that makes it impossible for a wheelchair user to pass. It also ensures that, as far as it is deemed 'reasonable' a restaurant should make the menu available in a range of formats.

## **Creating an Accessible Environment**

**Darlington Association on Disability (DAD)** has an Access Interest Group that enables disabled people to work together to promote access issues in Darlington, working closely with Darlington Borough Council. More information is available on the Access Interest Group webpage, accessed from the homepage on DAD's website.

Darlington has an extensive network of wheelchair accessible routes and dropped kerbs. For details of wheelchair accessible routes contact or visit **Darlington Association on Disability**. DAD has also designed a website, 'Wheelygood', that enables disabled people to use an interactive map of Darlington Town centre to locate wheelchair accessible shops and services. There is a link from the homepage on DAD's website and also from the Contacts list at the end of this section of the guide.

The **Centre for Accessible Environments** promotes inclusive design and construction so that places and their surroundings can be used by everyone, including older people and disabled people. It offers an information and advisory service on design and technical matters, publishes guidelines and design sheets, administers a national register of architects with experience of designing for disabled people and runs an extensive training programme.

**Communities and Local Government** sets policy on housing, urban regeneration and planning. It also has responsibility for building regulations.

## **Other Sources of Information**

Other sections of this Information Guide may contain further information relevant to Access.

The **Education** section provides information on access to schooling and further education.

The **Employment** section gives details of support available for training and work.

The **Housing & Adaptations** section outlines housing and adaptations services.

The **Legal Rights** section gives general information on how to access legal advice, and how to make your voice heard.

The **Mobility** section looks at transport issues in more detail.

There are a number of local and national organisations providing broad information and advice resources. Please refer to the **Introduction** to this guide for contact details.

Contact **Darlington Association on Disability's** Information Service for assistance with searching for information about any subject in this guide or for support in dealing with your information requests.

## **Contacts**

### **Centre for Accessible Environments**

70 South Lambeth Road

London

SW8 1RL

Telephone and Minicom : 020 7840 0125

Fax : 020 7840 5811

E-mail : [info@cae.org.uk](mailto:info@cae.org.uk)

Website : [www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)

### **Communities and Local Government**

Eland House

Bressenden Place

London  
SW1E 5DU  
Telephone: 020 7944 4400  
Email: contact through website  
Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

**Darlington Association on Disability**  
20-22 Horsemarket

Darlington  
DL1 5PT  
Telephone : 01325 489 999  
Fax : 01325 488 188  
Minicom : 01325 245 061  
Email : [mail@darlingtondisability.org](mailto:mail@darlingtondisability.org)  
Website : [www.darlingtondisability.org](http://www.darlingtondisability.org)  
Town centre accessibility website : [www.wheelygood.org](http://www.wheelygood.org)

**Darlington Borough Council**  
**Building Control Service**

Town Hall  
Darlington  
DL1 5QT  
General Enquiries Tel: 01325 370 820  
Fax : 01325 370 829  
E-mail : [buildingcontrolenquiries@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:buildingcontrolenquiries@darlington.gov.uk)  
Website : [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk) (follow links to building control,  
via community and living section)

**Equality and Human Rights Commission**

EHRC Helpline  
Freepost RRLG-GHUX-CTR

Arndale House

Arndale Centre

Manchester

M4 3EQ

Telephone: 0845 604 6610

Textphone: 0845 604 6620

Fax: 0845 604 6630

Email: contact through website

Website: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

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