Inclusive Futures
Promoting disability inclusion

Accessibility standards

The following pack is a step-by-step guide to undertaking an accessibility audit and was developed by Sightsavers

Accessibility standards

for buildings in low and middle income settings

Sightsavers

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About Sightsavers

Sightsavers is an international development organisation working in more than 30 countries to protect sight, fight disease and promote the rights of people with visual impairments and other disabilities.

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The standards included in this document follow universal design principles and combine recommendations from the following documents:

- 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design
- Approved Document M: access to and use of buildings, volume 2: buildings other than dwellings. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, England
- Health Building Note 00-01: General design principles. Department of Health and Social Care, England
- Neufert: Architects' Data, Fourth Edition, 2012, Wiley-Blackwell
- The Accessibility Code of Pakistan 2006. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education, Directorate General of Special Education, Islamabad
- Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) 2015 (final draft). Housing and Building Research Institute
- Construction and maintenance regulations: technical devices for accessibility, circulation and use of systems for people with a physical disability or conditioned mobility. Council of Ministers of the Republic of Mozambique, Decree no. 53/2008, 30 December

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The pack was developed to follow best practice for accessible design:

- Text is easy to read and is written in simple, clear language.
- The chapters feature tabs for easy navigation, using different colours and numbers.
- Colours have been chosen to ensure a strong contrast between the text and background.
- Diagrams and photography are used for reference throughout.

Sightsavers welcomes feedback on the accessibility standards and audit pack. Please email your suggestions to **apregel@sightsavers.org**

What's in the pack?

Thank you for using Sightsavers' accessibility standards and audit pack. Inside you should find the following:

- Accessibility standards
- Accessibility audit checklist with consent form
- Writing board
- Audit tape measure
- Pen
- USB stick

On the USB you will find the following digital files:

- Accessibility standards
- Accessibility audit checklist with consent forms
- Accessibility audit training: PowerPoint
- Accessibility audit costing Excel template
- Accessibility audit report Word template

If any of the contents are missing from this pack, please contact Andrea Pregel: **apregel@sightsavers.org**

Permissions of use

The accessibility standards and audit pack is a toolkit designed and produced by Sightsavers to improve the accessibility of buildings in low and middle income settings.

Whether you are part of a government authority, a multilateral agency, a non-governmental organisation, a disabled people's organisation or any other institution working in the development sector, we encourage you to use this pack as part of your initiatives to improve the accessibility of your infrastructure.

We think the toolkit can be useful for many different sectors, so you are encouraged to try it out.

If you have any feedback, please get in touch. To share your thoughts on using or adapting the toolkit, or to explore collaboration opportunities, please contact Andrea Pregel (**apregel@sightsavers.org**). Together we can build more inclusive societies for all.

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The creative concept and product design of this pack, along with its unique accessibility features, belong to Sightsavers. Any use of or reference to the pack should be attributed to Sightavers by way of the below citation.

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Disclaimer

Nothing contained in this pack shall be considered as rendering of legal advice. It is recommended that the user of this pack ensures that they have informed themselves with any and all updates of standards, law or regulation as may be applicable in their country.

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Purpose of these guidelines

This document aims to provide guidance to property managers as well as disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and other stakeholders to enable them to improve the accessibility of buildings in low and middle income setting

The standards and the accompanying audit pack can be used to:

- develop or revise contextually relevant national standards for accessibility
- assess the accessibility of existing infrastructure, and offer recommendations so improvements can be made
- guide the development of new infrastructure, ensuring accessibility is embedded throughout the project from the design stage.

Definitions

Accessibility: The degree to which a product, infrastructure, environment or service is available to as many people as possible, and in particular to people with disabilities.

People with disabilities: This includes people who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Reasonable accommodation: Necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments that do not impose a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure people with disabilities can exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.

Universal design: The design of products, environments, programmes and services so they can be used by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

Acronyms

DPO: Disabled people's organisation

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

UNCRPD: United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Amendments

These accessibility standards provide the ideal measurements to ensure a building is accessible. The following symbol indicates where there is a space to write alternative measurements.

This may be useful if your country has specified different recommendations.

Conducting accessibility audits in existing locations

The standards included in this document and the tools included in the audit pack can be used to conduct accessibility audits of existing buildings, and to coordinate plans to renovate the buildings and improve the accessibility of the location.

As part of this process, Sightsavers recommends following 10 steps, as detailed below and on the following pages.

Step 1 Review the audit tools

At the beginning of the audit process, we recommend reviewing the accessibility standards included in this document and the audit pack to ensure they are in line with existing national guidelines on accessibility (if these exist).

The standards in this document have been informed by guidelines and regulations from different countries, but they may not fit perfectly in every context. For this reason, the physical and digital versions of these standards and the audit pack are designed to be flexible, allowing sections to be adapted to different circumstances. If any measurements or recommendations relevant for your region are different from those included in these standards, please record them in the spaces provided.

When planning the accessibility audits, it is also important to consider who will be conducting the assessments and in what regions. If needed, the resources in the audit pack should be translated into the local language, and reasonable accommodations should be provided if they are needed by any members of the audit team.

Step 2 Create an inclusive accessibility audit team

To carry out accessibility audits within existing infrastructure, the first step is to create an audit team. If the accessibility audits are coordinated by the government, the physical planning department at the relevant ministry or other similar group will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the audit activities. If the audits are coordinated by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or other development agency, a team needs to be assembled, involving several stakeholders.

To ensure a participatory and inclusive process, we recommend that people with disabilities and their representative organisations are consulted at all stages, from initial planning and design through to implementation, monitoring and review. Disabled people's organisations (DPOs) often have experience in accessibility auditing, and may have internal resources such as checklists and manuals that can be used. When this is the case, DPO members can be invited to join the team, to lead or support the audits, and to build on the skills and resources of other participants, such as government officials, property managers and engineers, and NGOs.

It is important that the audit team includes people with different impairments and lived experiences of disability. While the standards have been designed to be comprehensive and inclusive, this process will promote greater representation, better reflect user experience, and help to identify potential gaps in the audit process.

For example, if people with physical impairments or bodily differences, such as a wheelchair user, someone using crutches, a person with missing limbs, or a person with dwarfism, are involved in the audit, they will be able to directly test physical components included in the standards and provide additional recommendations based on personal experience.

Similarly, involving a blind person or a person with sight loss, and a Deaf person or a person with hearing loss, is useful to test aspects relating to directions and mobility, light, colour contrast, sound and noise, and access to information and communication. Finally, including a person with mental health conditions or psychosocial disabilities, such as anxiety or mood disorders, a person with a learning or intellectual disability, such as Down syndrome, and people with neurodiverse conditions such dyslexia or autism, will enable the team to gather more information on elements such as access to information, communication, and potential sources of stress and discomfort. This will enable the team to make more accurate recommendations to improve services.

It is important to include at least one engineer or architect, either from the main planning department or someone responsible for the infrastructure of the buildings being assessed. Involving them may improve their understanding of accessibility and universal design, and will ensure all recommendations are provided with sound technical expertise.

Conducting the accessibility audits can also be an opportunity to raise awareness among participants, such as representatives from relevant ministries or those responsible for buildings in a certain region. Involving them in the audit team is a chance to improve their understanding of accessibility, universal design issues and the barriers faced by people with disabilities when accessing built environments, and can promote greater support and longer-term sustainability.

Step 3 Train the audit team

Once people have been invited to join the team, we recommend developing the skills and knowledge of all team members so they are able to conduct the assessments to the best of their ability.

The format and duration of training sessions can vary, but we recommend conducting at least a three-day workshop, including theoretical training and some practical exercises. It may be useful to make arrangements in a few local buildings where participants will be able to practise their auditing skills.

When organising the training workshop, consider whether the room is accessible for participants with different impairments, and ensure that reasonable accommodations are in place for any participants who may need them (such as sign language interpretation for deaf participants, for example). Before the workshop, copies of the standards and the accessibility audit checklist should be prepared for all team members.

At the beginning of the workshop, trainers should provide an overview of the key principles and concepts relating to accessibility and universal design. They should also introduce the tools that will be used during the audits, including:

- Accessibility standards
- Accessibility audit checklist
- Measuring tape
- Camera
- Consent forms for pictures and videos
- Example of floorplan from local built environment
- Report template
- Scoring tool
- Renovation planning tool

Trainers should also introduce the main roles and tasks that will be required to complete the audits.

- One team member should be in charge of using the checklist, asking one question at a time and taking note of observations and relevant comments.
- One team member should be responsible for checking the accessibility standards during the audit, particularly to consult criteria mentioned in the checklist.
- One team member should hold the floorplan and ensure all rooms, circulation paths, toilets and other areas are assessed during the audit.
- Two team members should work together to measure doors, ramps, steps and other elements included in the checklist and standards. Sightsavers' accessibility pack includes a bespoke measuring tape: as well as measurements in centimetres, it also shows some of the measurements, icons and colour references mentioned in these standards to make the process easier and more accessible.
- One team member should use the camera (or a smartphone) to take photos of elements that do not meet the accessibility standards. These will be used to compile the final report.
- One team member may need to use a stopwatch to measure the speed of closing doors, stairlifts and other elements.
- Other team members should provide additional support and observations throughout the audit. They can test specific components such as colour contrast or the ease of using doors and handles, for example.

Once participants are familiar with the process, roles and resources, at least two practical exercises should be conducted within the selected locations. As part of these exercises, participants can be invited to practise different roles (such as checking the standards, taking pictures or taking measurements). Trainers should observe participants and provide guidance when needed. This could include answering questions, reminding participants to pay attention to specific details, and providing feedback during and after the activity.

At the end of the process, we recommend identifying specific roles for each member of the audit team. It is also useful to identify a team leader to take charge of guiding the team during the audits and ensuring all relevant steps are completed.

The final part of the training focuses on writing the report and using the scoring system. Participants are invited to use Sightsavers' template to develop a contextually relevant score card. This will be used to evaluate each building's current level of accessibility, and to measure progress following any improvements to the infrastructure.

Step 4 Plan the audits

At the beginning of the audit process, the department, team or individual responsible for coordinating the audits must work closely with building authorities and managers. Audit planners should provide details about the purpose of the audits and the steps involved. Timings should be planned to ensure minimum disruption to the buildings' services. Where available, obtain a floorplan of the location.

All audit team members should be given communications and logistical support so they can carry out the audits on the designated dates. This should include reasonable accommodations for team members who may need them.

Set aside at least two days to complete the audit in a secondary location. Depending on the size of the building), more time may be needed. Audit planners should consider the time required and allow sufficient time and resources to ensure the audit team can reach the buildings.

Make sure enough time is allocated to gather input from all team members immediately after the audit, agree on an audit score, and draft initial observations and recommendations. More time will be required to complete the full report. One or more members of the team should take responsibility for drafting the report.

Step 5 Carry out the audits

At the start of each accessibility audit, the team should arrive at the building and meet the relevant managers or authorities, then provide them with a summary of the audit process and obtain a final authorisation to proceed. It is always useful to invite a representative of the building to join the audit, to guide the team around and provide any relevant information. The audit team should also ask for permission to take photos of any elements that do not meet the accessibility standards, and ask the relevant manager or authority to sign the consent form. All audit participants should also sign consent forms.

If a floorplan of the building is available, the team should begin the audit process by identifying the route they will follow. As indicated in the checklist, each audit should ideally start outside, before moving to the parking area (if provided) and the entrance, reception and waiting areas. The team should then audit all rooms, bathroom facilities, circulation paths and lifts (if present). Specific elements, such as stairs, ramps, doors and fire alarms, are likely to feature in multiple locations and should be assessed whenever the team encounters them.

Step 6 Draft the audit report

Once the audit has been completed, the team should gather to debrief and discuss the building's level of accessibility, reflect on positive aspects and potential challenges, and start drafting the audit report.

The team leader should take responsibility for writing the report using the template provided in the accessibility pack, which follows the structure of the checklist. All team members should contribute by sharing their comments and observations, selecting the photos to be included and providing recommendations to improve the accessibility of the building.

It is useful to record as much information as possible in the report immediately after the audit, when memories are still fresh and more accurate. If it is not feasible to complete the report in one session, the team leader should take responsibility for finalising the draft and sharing it with other team members for feedback and final approval.

Step 7 Assign a score to the built environment

Following the audit, it may be useful to assign a score to the location's overall accessibility using the scoring tool included in the accessibility pack. The scoring system features a scale from 0 to 100, and is divided into four categories:

- **76-100:** Good accessibility, low need for adjustments
- **51-75:** Moderate accessibility, moderate need for adjustments
- **26-50:** Low accessibility, strong need for adjustments
- **0-25:** Minimal accessibility, high need for adjustments

Each category includes a description of key features that a building in that category may have. The team is encouraged to use the space provided to adapt the narrative descriptions and ensure they are contextually relevant in their setting.

Every member of the team should assign a personal score to the building, based on their observations during the audit. Team members should then discuss in pairs, share their scores, and reach an agreement on a single score. Each pair should then discuss with another pair, and the process should be repeated until the entire audit team agrees on a final score for the building.

This score can provide a snapshot of the amount of adjustments needed to make the building more accessible. It can also be used for monitoring, for example within a log frame, to measure progress after any renovations have been completed and a second audit has been carried out.

Score	General description
Good accessibility (76-100)	The experience of visiting the centre is positive and free from issues. All the infrastructure elements along the route (such as rooms, doors, stairs and ramps) are easily accessed, and reasonable modifications have been made to ensure access for people with different impairments.
Moderate accessibility (51-75)	The experience of visiting the centre is generally positive and free from issues. Most infrastructure elements along the route (such as rooms, doors, stairs and ramps) are easily accessed, and reasonable modifications have been made to ensure access for people with different impairments.
Low accessibility (26-50)	The experience of visiting the centre is generally negative, and there are multiple issues. Some of the infrastructure elements along the route (such as rooms, doors, stairs and ramps) are not easy to access or use. Some reasonable modifications have been made to ensure access for people with different impairments, but this is not sufficient.
Minimal accessibility (0-25)	The experience of visiting the centre is generally negative, and there are multiple issues. Many of the infrastructure elements along the route (such as rooms, doors, stairs and ramps) are not easy to access or use. No reasonable modifications have been made to ensure access for people with different impairments, or modifications cannot be used as intended. A person with disability could not visit this location independently.

Step 8 Develop plans to adjust and improve the infrastructure

Once the audit report has been completed, it should be used to plan infrastructural adjustments to improve the accessibility of the built environment.

The first step is to obtain cost estimates for each recommended adjustment, such as installing a handrail, building a ramp or widening a door. The physical planning department, DPOs, or the architect or engineer who has been involved in the audit could lead this activity, as they may already have a list of trusted suppliers. If no list is available, stakeholders should collaborate to identify potential suppliers and request quotes for each suggested modification. Once quotes are obtained, these can be included in the renovation planning tool provided within the pack.

When all cost estimates have been obtained, the built environments, authorities, the audit team and other relevant stakeholders should arrange a meeting. During this meeting, the audit team can provide a summary of the audit process, present the observations and recommendations included in the report, and give an overview of the cost estimates for each suggested adjustment.

Stakeholders should then hold discussions to identify responsibilities and resources to support the accessibility adjustments. It can be useful to carry out a participatory prioritisation exercise to agree which adjustments are considered to be high, medium or low priority.

When all partners agree on key priorities and funding sources, the final step is to define roles and responsibilities to start carrying out the improvements. The aim is to produce a detailed plan featuring clear timeframes. It is important to ensure all stakeholders are involved in this process, and to identify the most suitable times to carry out the improvements to minimise disruption.

Step 9 Carry out improvements

During this step, it is important to document the process of improving the built environment's infrastructure. This will enable you to monitor progress against the action plan and gather key lessons and feedback.

Step 10 Repeat the audit

After all the agreed infrastructure adjustments have been made, a new accessibility audit should be carried out to re-assess the building's accessibility and identify any pending issues. Ideally, the original team responsible for the initial audit should be involved in this new assessment. This will ensure the results are consistent, and will give them the opportunity to measure the building's progress using the scoring tool.

Summary: the 10-step process for accessibility audits

Step 1	Review the audit tools
Step 2	Create an inclusive accessibility audit team
Step 3	Train the audit team
Step 4	Plan the audits
Step 5	Carry out the audits
Step 6	Draft the audit report
Step 7	Assign a score to the built environment
Step 8	Develop plans to adjust and improve the infrastructure
Step 9	Carry out improvements
Step 10	Repeat the audit

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Access to the building

01

1.1 External wayfinding

1. You should be able to easily identify the building.
2. Directional signs should provide instructions explaining how to reach the building.
3. The colour of the text on the signs should contrast with the background.

4. Text should not be *italic*, highly decorative or use any other unusual forms. A sans-serif typeface should be used. This will increase legibility for everyone, including people with dyslexia.

✔ **Use a font like this.**

✘ **Not a font like this.**

5. The size and weight of the text should be determined based on the positioning of the sign and the distance from where it should be read. Signs positioned further away from the reader should feature larger text.
6. There should be adequate spacing between individual characters and also between separate lines of text.
7. The signs may include pictograms or other visual information to make them more easy to understand for people with learning or intellectual disabilities, people who are illiterate, and people who do not speak the local language.

8. The surface of the signs should be non-glare.

1.2 Parking

1. The surface of the car park should be flat, firm and non-slippery. Avoid surfaces such as gravel or sand.
2. Reserved parking bays for people with disabilities should be provided within **30 metres** of the entrance of the building.
3. Reserved accessible parking bays should be at least **240cm x 500cm** in size.

A clearly marked reserved access area measuring **120cm** wide should be available on the side and at the rear of designated parking bays (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Accessible parking bay position and measurements

4. Vertical signs should indicate that the accessible parking space is reserved for people with disabilities. The vertical signs should be positioned at a height of **200cm**, so they can be seen even if cars are parked in the area.

5. The international symbol of accessibility should be painted on the ground within the accessible parking bays.

6. The table below can be used to calculate the total number of accessible parking bays needed.

Total number of parking spaces	Minimum number of accessible spaces
1 to 25	1
26 to 50	2
51 to 75	3
76 to 100	4
101 to 150	5

7. If visitors are required to buy a ticket to pay for the parking, ticket vending machines should be positioned so that a person in a wheelchair or a person with dwarfism can safely access the machine and use all its functions.

1.3 Pathway from the parking bay to the building

1. There should be a pathway at least **120cm** wide (and preferably **150cm**) between the parking bay and the building, with a minimum head height of **210cm**.

2. Footpath surfaces should be flat, firm, non-slippery and kept clear of hazards such as trees and bins, at both ground level and higher levels.

3. If there is a kerb along the pathway, an accessible ramp access point should be provided. For information on ramp gradients, see section 10: Ramps (page 68).

4. Tactile paving strips should be used on public pathways to help guide people with visual impairments. The colour of the tactile strips should contrast with the rest of the pavement.

For specific guidelines on tactile paving, see **www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-use-of-tactile-paving-surfaces**

Entrance, reception and waiting area

02

2.1 Entrance

1. Wheelchairs should be available near the entrance of the building for people who need them. The wheelchairs should be positioned carefully to make sure they do not obstruct walkways.

2. Staff should be trained to help those with limited mobility.

3. A tactile pictographic map of the building should be installed near the entrance, to provide information on the structure of the building and location of different rooms and corridors. This is useful for all visitors, including people with visual impairments.

2.2 Reception

1. The reception counter should be clearly signed and identifiable from the entrance.

2. The reception counter should be reached via an accessible circulation path. For reference, see section 4: Circulation paths and internal wayfinding (page 35).

3. One section of the counter should be lowered to ensure it is accessible for wheelchair users and people with dwarfism.

- The lowered section should be at least **150cm** wide.
- The surface should have a maximum height of **76cm**.
- There should be a knee space with a height of **70cm** from the floor and a depth of **50cm** from the base of the counter.

Figure 2: Accessible counter measurements

4. There should be a clear manoeuvring space at least **120cm** deep and **180cm** wide in front of the accessible counter.

5. The accessible section of the counter should be clearly marked with the international symbol of accessibility.

6. There should be enough space at the reception counter to give people privacy when communicating with staff.

7. It is recommended that a sign is installed at reception to provide priority access to people with disabilities.

8. A functioning hearing loop should be available at reception and should be clearly signed. A hearing loop enables people with hearing impairments using hearing aids to receive sound signals directly to their hearing aid, reducing background noise and improving the clarity of sound.

9. It is recommended that relevant materials are developed in accessible formats, such as large print and easy-read, and made available in the reception area to ensure people with visual impairments and intellectual disabilities can access the information. These could include posters or booklets explaining the activities carried out at the location.

Figure 3: Example of information material in easy-read format

When you arrive, you will be asked to sit in the waiting area for a few minutes.

The nurse will measure your height and weight.

A nurse will call your name. She will invite you to follow her into the examination room.

The nurse may ask you to do a blood test. She will prick your finger to collect a drop of blood. You will feel a small pinch, but it will not hurt.

The nurse will ask you a series of questions about your health.

You may even need a urine test.

10. It is also useful to develop a live action or animated video to provide information on the services available at the location. It is recommended that captions and sign language interpretation are embedded in the video.

11. It is recommended that sign language interpretation services are provided for people who need them.

2.3 Waiting area

1. The waiting area should be clearly identifiable.
2. Seats should be provided in the waiting area.
3. It is recommended that a sign is installed in the seating area to give priority access to people with disabilities.

4. There should be space for wheelchairs in the waiting area.

Figure 4: Seating area, overhead view

5. The floor surface should be flat, firm, non-slippery and non-glare.
6. The waiting area should have sufficient natural or artificial light and good ventilation. Flickering lights should be avoided.
7. The waiting area should be free from loud background noises (such as loud TVs or generators). High noise levels can increase stress levels and anxiety in staff and visitors.
8. The waiting area should be clear of any obstacles and hazards, at ground level and at higher levels. The colour of key items in the waiting area (chairs or counters, for example) should contrast with the colour of the floor and surrounding elements.
9. Child-friendly features should be incorporated in the waiting area. These could include a child recreation space with flat, firm, non-slippery flooring and age-appropriate recreational tools; and a private baby care and lactation area for those who may need it.

Rooms and halls

03

3.1 Rooms and halls

1. Rooms should have sufficient natural or artificial light and good ventilation, and should be free from loud background noises. Flickering lights should be avoided. Natural light is beneficial for visitors and staff, and lower noise levels can help to reduce stress and anxiety.
2. The colour of key items in the room (such as chairs and tables, for example) should contrast with surrounding elements. Using colour and art can reduce the physical and emotional stress of visitors and staff. It can also be used to help with wayfinding and reduce the number of signs required.
3. Floor surfaces should be flat, firm, non-slippery and non-glare.
4. Rooms should be clear of obstructions or hazards. Consider obstructions at ground level as well as at a higher level, such as:
   - protruding objects, such as shelves or suspended cabinets
   - grilles, covers or holes in the floor
   - sharp or abrasive surfaces.
5. The ceiling should be at least **203cm** high, and objects suspended more than **68.5cm** from the floor should not protrude more than **10cm**.

Figure 5: Minimum clearance measurements in rooms and halls

6. Rooms should have a minimum clear space of **150cm** by **150cm** to enable wheelchair users to comfortably manoeuvre through doors, turn and access all parts of the room.

7. Relevant equipment intended for public use, or where people are permitted to complete a specific task, should be accessible to everyone, including people with different impairments and body sizes.

Examples of tasks and activities

- Depending on the type of activity, people may be required to reach forward, sideways, above or below. Note that people with dwarfism usually have a shorter reach compared with people of average height using wheelchairs, as they have shorter legs and arms.
- People may need to reach forward above an obstruction (such as a table) to perform a task. If standard equipment is not fully accessible, alternative equipment should be used, or an alternative procedure should be used, as long as this does not compromise the quality or scope of the activity.
- Water fountains, food dispensers, switch controls and other objects should be accessible to everyone, including wheelchair users and people with dwarfism.
- It is recommended that hearing loops are installed within relevant rooms. Portable hearing loops should be available to use within the building.
- If dormitories are provided in the built environment, beds should be accessible to everyone. There should be a clear space at least **150cm** wide in front of the long side of the bed to enable wheelchair users to access it.

  People with dwarfism and wheelchair users who rely on their arms to transfer into bed may find it difficult to use beds that are too high. It is recommended that the surface of the bed is no higher than **50cm** from the floor.

  Raising beds, stretchers, examination tables and operating tables should be available within the building.
- Some people with limited mobility may not be able to transfer independently from a wheelchair to other seats, and may struggle even with the support of one or more carers. A mobile hoist or ceiling track hoist could be installed in specific rooms, such as in accessible Changing Places, to make transfer easier.

  For specific guidelines on Changing Places, see www.changing-places.org

  When installing a ceiling track hoist, it is important to consider the structure and weight limits of walls and ceiling.

Circulation paths and internal wayfinding

04

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4.1 Circulation paths

1. Pathways should be clear of obstructions and hazards. Consider obstructions at ground level as well as at a higher level.

   Examples include:
   - protruding objects, such as shelves or suspended cabinets
   - holes on the floor, grilles and manhole covers
   - sharp or abrasive surfaces.

2. The ceiling should be at least **203cm** high, and any objects that are suspended more than **68.5cm** from the floor should not protrude more than **10cm**.

3. The colour of objects and obstacles in the corridors should contrast with the background. Using colour and art reduces the physical and emotional stress of visitors and staff, and can be used to assist wayfinding and reduce the number of signs required.

4. Corridors should have a clear path at least **120cm** wide, as well as turning spaces for wheelchair users that measure at least **150cm** by **150cm**.

5. If the corridor is **15 metres** or longer, there should be a passing place for two wheelchair users that measures at least **180cm** by **180cm**.

6. Floor surfaces should be flat, firm, non-slippery and non-glare.

7. Circulation paths should have sufficient natural or artificial light, good ventilation, and should be free from loud background noises. Flickering lights should be avoided.

4.2 Internal wayfinding

1. Internal signs should conform to standards indicated in section 1.1: External wayfinding (see page 20) in terms of size, colour contrast, typeface, non-glare surface and use of icons, pictures and visual information.

2. Rooms should have signs providing relevant information about the room. For example, the sign could indicate the type of room (meeting room, for example) or the names of staff members working in the room.

3. Signs should be positioned at a height of no less than **122cm** and no more than **152.5cm** above the floor, on the latch side of the door.

4. For double doors, the sign should be placed on the right side, or can be mounted on the push side of the door, if needed.

Figure 6: Sign positioning

5. It is recommended that internal signs include tactile information through raised characters and braille. Raised characters should not have sharp or abrasive edges.

6. Clear directional signs should be provided in relevant locations in and around the building, such as at the entrance, in large rooms and halls, and in corridors.

7. Directional signs should indicate the location of rooms, toilets and other relevant areas in the building.

8. It is recommended that tactile paving is installed in all main circulation pathways connecting rooms, halls, ramps, stairs and other relevant areas of the building. The colour of the tactile paving should contrast with the colour of the floor.

For specific guidelines on tactile paving, see **www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-use-of-tactile-paving-surfaces**

9. It is recommended that visual wayfinding signs are installed on the floor or walls.

10. Handrails should be mounted on the walls along the main circulation paths. For guidance on handrails, see section 9.1: Handrails on stairs (page 63).

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General toilets

05

5.1 General toilets

1. Toilets should be separated by gender and clearly signed.

2. Toilets should have doors that can be locked from the inside, and released from the outside by authorised staff in case of emergency.
3. Toilet doors should be easy to use for people with limited strength or manual dexterity.
4. The floor surface should be well drained, waterproof, non-slippery and non-glare, and the toilets should be clear of any obstructions or hazards, both at ground level and at higher levels.
5. Sanitary bins should be provided.
6. Every toilet should have a functioning flush.
7. Washbasins with running water, soap, paper towels and hand sanitiser should be provided within toilet facilities.
8. The taps should be easy to use for people with limited strength or manual dexterity (for example, using a closed fist). Round taps should be avoided.
9. It is recommended that at least one washbasin is installed at a lower level with tap controls on one side, to increase accessibility for children and people with dwarfism.
10. If urinals are provided in the male toilet, at least one urinal should have a lower rim positioned at a maximum height of **43cm**, to improve accessibility for children and people with dwarfism.
11. The colour of toilets, urinals and washbasins should contrast with the background.
12. It is recommend that grab bars are installed near toilets, urinals and washbasins (see the information on handrails and grab bars in section 6: Accessible toilets, on page 46).
13. Consideration should be given to the relative number of male and female toilets in the building. It is recommended that the number of toilets for women should at least equal the total number of toilets and urinals for men.
14. It is recommended that at least one larger cubicle is installed in the general toilets. This can be useful for some ambulant people with disabilities, as well as parents with children.
15. There should be a functioning fire alarm installed in the toilet, with visual and audible signals.
16. Toilets should have sufficient natural or artificial light, good ventilation, and should be free from loud background noises. Flickering lights should be avoided.
17. Toilets should be clean, and should be free from strong smells.

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Accessible toilets

06

6.1 General accessibility

1. Accessible toilet facilities for people with disabilities, built according to the standards presented in this section, should be available on site.
   - Accessible toilets may be integrated within general toilet facilities. At least one accessible facility for men and one for women should be provided.
   - Accessible toilets may be separated from general toilets. These should be available for people of all genders to use, and should be located near the entrance and waiting areas.
   - In multi-storey buildings, at least one accessible toilet should be available on each floor.
2. Accessible toilets should be reached via accessible circulation paths with clear directional signs. See section 4: Circulation paths and internal wayfinding (page 37).
3. The accessible toilet should be clearly labelled with the international symbol of accessibility, alongside relevant written and tactile information. It is useful to incorporate a reminder that not all disabilities are visible.

4. The accessible toilet should have a sliding door or a door that opens outwards, to allow more space for a wheelchair to be manoeuvred inside. The door should not open inwards.
5. Toilets should have doors that can be locked from the inside, and released from the outside by staff in case of emergency.
6. Doors should be easy to use for people with limited strength or manual dexterity.
7. There should be a clear turning space of **150cm by 150cm** to ensure that a wheelchair user can go in and out, turn around, and use elements in the toilet.
8. Floor surfaces should be well drained, waterproof, non-slippery and non-glare.
9. The facilities should have sufficient natural or artificial light, good ventilation, and should be free from loud background noises. Flickering lights should be avoided.
10. The accessible toilet should be clean and free from strong smells.
11. The colour of key elements in the toilet should contrast with the background.

12. There should be a pull alarm system mounted on the ceiling and suspended at a height of **10cm** from the floor.
13. The emergency alarm system should be positioned near the toilet itself, easy to reach and easy to operate.
14. There should be a functioning fire alarm installed in the accessible toilet with visual and audible signals.

6.2 Toilet

1. The toilet should be positioned in the corner of the room.
2. The centre line of the toilet should be positioned no more than **50cm** from the side wall.
3. There should be a clear space of at least **90cm** on the open side of the toilet.
4. The toilet seat should be at a maximum height of **48cm**.
5. The following equipment should be easy to operate and should be positioned near the toilet, at a maximum height of **110cm** above the floor:
   a. toilet paper dispenser
   b. flush control (if hand operated)
   c. detachable bidet shower head.
6. A sanitary bin should be located near the toilet.
7. The toilet should have a grab bar measuring **60cm** long on the side wall, located no more than **25cm** from the rear wall and at a maximum height of **68cm**. There should also be a moveable U-grab bar on the open side of the toilet, and a grab bar on the rear wall.

6.3 Washbasins

1. A washbasin, soap, paper towel dispenser and hand sanitiser should be provided near the toilet, at a maximum height of **110cm** from the floor.
2. The rim of the washbasin should be no more than **74cm** from the floor.
3. There should be a knee space underneath the washbasin.
4. The taps should be easy to use for people with limited strength or manual dexterity (for example, using a closed fist). Round taps should not be used.

5. It is recommended that tap controls are installed on one side of the washbasin, to increase accessibility for people with dwarfism and children with disabilities.
6. Vertical grab bars should be mounted around the washbasin.
7. A mirror can be mounted above the washbasin, with the lower edge no higher than **60cm** from the floor.

Figure 7: Accessible toilet, overhead view

Figure 8: Accessible toilet, side view

SD: Soap dispenser
PT: Paper towel dispenser
TP: Toilet paper dispenser
HS: Hand sanitiser dispenser

Accessible showers

07

7.1 General accessibility

1. If showers are provided in the building for use by visitors and staff, at least one accessible shower should also be available. This could be a standalone accessible shower, or could be incorporated within an accessible toilet.
2. The accessible shower room should be reached via an accessible path.
3. The accessible shower room should be provided for people of all genders to use, unless separate accessible facilities are provided for men and women.
4. There should be clear directional signs to the room.
5. The room should be clearly labelled with the international symbol of accessibility and relevant written information.

6. The accessible shower room should have a sliding door or a door that opens outwards, to allow more space for a wheelchair to be manoeuvred inside. The door of the accessible shower should not open inwards.
7. Doors should be lockable from the inside, and should be able to be released from the outside by staff in case of emergency.
8. The shower room should be at least **200cm** by **220cm** in size, with a clear turning space of **150cm** by **150cm** to enable a wheelchair user to go in, out, turn around, and get close to the shower compartment.
9. Floor surfaces should be well drained, waterproof, non-slippery and non-glare, and the shower room should be clear of any obstructions or hazards at ground and higher level.
10. The accessible shower should have sufficient natural or artificial light, good ventilation, and should be free from loud background noises. Flickering lights should be avoided.
11. The accessible shower should be clean and free from strong smells.

7.2 Shower compartment

1. The shower compartment should have inside dimensions of at least **120cm** by **120cm**.

2. There should be a folding seat at a maximum height of **48cm**, with a back rest. The centre line of the seat should be positioned no more than **50cm** from the side wall.

3. A folding grab bar should be positioned on the open side of the shower seat, at a distance of **82cm** from the side wall, and at a maximum height of **68cm**. A second folding grab bar should be positioned in front of the shower seat at a distance of **90cm** from the rear wall. A third grab bar should be fixed on the wall on the side of the seat.

4. A shower curtain should be able to be used from the shower seat. It should turn and close the entire shower compartment.

5. A fixed shower head should be positioned at a distance of **50cm** from the rear wall.

6. A detachable shower head should be positioned at a maximum height of **110cm**, and at a distance of **50cm** from the rear wall.

7. Shower controls should be located on the wall on side of the seat, at a maximum height of **100cm**, and at a distance of **50cm** from the rear wall.

8. The shower controls should be easy to use for people with limited strength or manual dexterity (for example, using a closed fist). Lever controls are more accessible than round controls.

9. There should be a pull alarm system mounted on the ceiling and suspended at a height of **10cm** from the floor.

10. The emergency alarm system should be positioned inside the shower compartment. It should be easy to reach and easy to operate.

11. A shelf should be provided for toiletries, and should be accessible from a wheelchair and from the shower seat.

12. A towel rail should be positioned outside the shower compartment.

Figure 9: Accessible shower, overhead view

Figure 10: Accessible shower, side view

Lifts and wheelchair platform stairlifts

08

8.1 Lifts and wheelchair platform stairlifts

1. Multi-storey buildings should have accessible passenger lifts.
2. For existing buildings, and in exceptional circumstances where a lift cannot be installed, a wheelchair platform stairlift can be installed.

8.2 Lifts

1. The entrance of the lift should have a clear opening width of at least **90cm**.
2. In front of the lift, there should be an unobstructed manoeuvring space of **150cm** by **150cm**.
3. The internal space of the lift should have minimal clear width of **110cm** and minimal clear depth of **140cm**.
4. If the lift is smaller than these minimum dimensions and does not allow wheelchair users to turn around, a mirror should be mounted on the rear wall of the lift to enable wheelchair users to see the space behind them when leaving.
5. Lift controls inside and outside the lift should be located at a height of between **90cm** and **110cm**, and at least **40cm** from any side wall.
6. The colour of the lift and of lift controls should contrast with the background.
7. Control buttons should have raised tactile characters to improve accessibility for people with visual impairments.
8. At least one handrail should be provided inside the lift, at a height of **90cm**. It should not obstruct lift controls.
9. The lift should have sufficient natural or artificial light and good ventilation, and should be free from loud background noises. Flickering lights should be avoided.
10. Floor surfaces should be flat, firm, non-slippery and non-glare.
11. A suitable emergency communication system should be installed in the lift.
12. Lift door systems should be designed to allow sufficient time for people to enter or leave the lift without coming into contact with closing doors, and should be fitted with re-opening activators.
13. The lift should provide audible information to people using or waiting for the lift, indicating the arrival and departure of the lift, and the floor it has reached.
14. A fixed or folding seat should be provided within the lift.

Figure 11: Lift positioning and measurements

8.3 Wheelchair platform stairlifts

1. Wheelchair platform stairlifts should enable wheelchair users to move independently up and down stairs in buildings where passenger lifts are not available and cannot be installed.
2. There should be instructions in place to tell wheelchair users how to safely use the platform, combining written and visual information. These should be clearly visible on the platform.
3. The platform should be folded when in the parked or stationary position.
4. The platform should have minimum clear dimensions of **80cm** by **125cm**.
5. Folding safety bars should be provided around the perimeter of the platform.
6. The speed of the platform should not exceed **15cm per second**.
7. The platform should be operated through continuous pressure on the controls. The controls should be easy to use for people with limited strength or manual dexterity.

Steps and stairs

09

9.1 Steps and stairs

1. All steps or stairs should have uniform closed vertical risers. The height of the risers should be between **10cm** and **18cm**. Open risers should not be used.

2. All steps should have uniform horizontal treads. The depth of the treads should be between **28cm** and **42.5cm**.

3. The steps or stairs should be at least **120cm** wide.

4. If steps have nosing at the edge of each tread, it should be less than **2.5cm**.

Figure 12: Step tread nosing

5. Step edges should be of a contrasting colour and be made from anti-slip material.

Figure 13: Step height and depth

6. The landing at the top and bottom of the stairs should measure at least **120cm** by **120cm**. The landing should be clear of any door swings or other obstructions.

7. Tactile warning blocks should be installed at the landing of each flight of stairs (top and bottom).

8. All stairs should have handrails. For guidance, see section 9.2: Handrails on stairs (page 63).

9.2 Handrails on stairs

1. Stairs should have a double-height handrail on both sides, at a height of **60cm** and **90cm**.

2. Handrails should extend **30cm** horizontally past the ends of the stairs.

Figure 14: Handrail height and position

3. The colour of the handrails should contrast with the background.

4. The diameter of the handrails should be between **3.2cm** and **5cm**.

Figure 15: Handrail cross-section

5. If the handrail is near a wall, there should be a minimum distance of **5cm** between the handrail and the wall.

Figure 16: Handrail wall clearance

6. If the stairs are more than **300cm** wide, a handrail should be installed in the centre.

7. If stairs have space underneath, the vertical clearance should be at least **203cm**.

Figure 17: Vertical clearance and guardrail height underneath stairs

8. Where the vertical clearance is less than **203cm**, guardrails or other barriers should be installed to prevent people walking underneath. The leading edge of the guardrail or barrier should be positioned at least **68.5cm** above the floor.

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Ramps

10

10.1 Ramps

1. All spaces in and around the built environment should be independently accessible to wheelchair users. If an area is accessed via steps or stairs, alternative access via a ramp or lift should also be provided. For information on lifts, see section 8: Lifts and wheelchair platform stairlifts (page 58).
2. Some people who can walk but have restricted mobility may find using a ramp more difficult than using stairs. Adverse weather conditions may also make external and internal ramps more dangerous. It is therefore recommended that both a ramp and stairs are provided.
3. Gradients of ramps should be as shallow as possible. Steep ramps create difficulties and are potentially dangerous for some wheelchair users, who may not have sufficient strength to propel themselves up a slope or to slow down or stop when going down a slope.
4. The recommended gradient for ramps is **1:20**. For short ramps up to **200cm**, the maximum gradient is **1:12**.

To calculate the gradient (see figure 18):

- Measure the length along the bottom of the ramp in cm (a).
- Measure the height in cm (b).
- Divide the length by the height (a ÷ b).
- If the answer is 20 or higher, then the gradient meets the standards.
- If the answer is less than 20, then the gradient does not meet the standards and is too steep.

For example:

- a = 570cm
- b = 25cm
- 570 ÷ 25 = 22.8 (higher than 20)
- The gradient meets the standards.

Figure 18: Ramp gradient

5. The ramp should be at least **120cm** wide.

6. At the top, bottom and resting points of the ramp, there should be a level area of **150cm** by **150cm** to enable a wheelchair user to turn. The space should be clear of any swing doors or other obstructions.

7. Tactile warning blocks should be installed at the landing of each flight of stairs (top and bottom).

8. If the ramp is longer than **600cm**, it should feature a resting point measuring at least **150cm** by **150cm**.

9. If there is a change of direction, a landing measuring at least **150cm** by **150cm** should be provided.

10. All ramps should have handrails. For guidance on handrails, see section 10.2: Handrails on ramps (page 70).

Figure 19: Ramp landing areas

10.2 Handrails on ramps

1. Ramps should have a double-height handrail on both sides at a height of **60cm** and **90cm**.

2. There should be a clear space of at least **120cm** between handrails.

3. If the ramp is not between two walls, it should have an edge protection (such as a small kerb or bar) at least **5cm** tall.

Figure 20: Handrail height

4. The colour of the handrail should contrast with the background.

5. The diameter of the handrails should be between **3.2cm** and **5cm**.

Figure 21: Handrail cross-section

6. If the handrail is near a wall, there should be a minimum distance of **5cm** between the handrail and the wall.

Figure 22: Handrail wall clearance

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Doors

11

11.1 Doors

1. Doors should have a clear opening width of at least **80cm**.
2. For double doors, at least one of the doors should have a clear opening width of at least **80cm**.
3. Entrance doors and doors of accessible toilets and showers should have a clear opening width of at least **90cm**.
4. There should be unobstructed space of at least **30cm** on the pull side of the door, between the internal edge of the door frame on the opening side and the perpendicular wall, to allow sufficient space for a wheelchair user to manoeuvre and open the door (see figure 23). The height of the door should be at least **203cm**.
5. If the door has a threshold (raised surface), it should not be higher than **1.6cm**.
6. There should be sufficient manoeuvring space around the door. A wheelchair user must be able to comfortably manoeuvre to open and close the door, pass through the door and turn around.
7. Doormats should be level with the floor surface and secured to the floor at all edges.
8. The colour of the door and the door frame should contrast with the surrounding wall.
9. If the door is transparent, it should be marked with red bands or stickers at multiple eye levels.

Figure 23: Door measurements

11.2 Manual doors

1. Doors should not be too heavy and must swing easily.
2. Operable parts (such as handles) should be between **90cm** and **110cm** above the floor. They should be able to be used with a closed fist, and should not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist. Round knobs should be avoided.

Figure 24: Examples of accessible handles

3. If the door closes independently, it should have a sufficiently slow closing speed. From the open position of **70 degrees**, the door should move to the closed position in at least **1.5 seconds**.

4. Corridor doors should have kick plates at the bottom.

5. Visual information should be included to explain how to use the door.

6. If the door is a swing door, the glazing panel should be two thirds of the width of the door. The glazing should be located at least **20cm** from the floor, and should be between **50cm** and **120cm** high.

7. Revolving doors are not considered to be accessible. If there is a revolving door, an accessible door (manual or automatic) should be positioned next to the revolving door.

11.3 Powered doors

1. Powered doors should have a sufficiently long opening interval (at least **5 seconds** is recommended) to allow everyone, including people who cannot react quickly, to safely operate and use the door.
2. Powered doors can be activated automatically, using sensors; or manually, using controls or buttons.
3. The manual control, such as a push button, should be located at a height of between **90cm** and **110cm**. It should be easy to use for people with limited strength or manual dexterity (for example, using a closed fist).

4. The manual control should be located **140cm** from the edge of the open door, so the person activating the control does not need to move to avoid contact with the opening door.
5. The colour of the manual control should contrast with the background.
6. An audible signal should be used to indicate when the door is opening or closing.
7. The powered door should incorporate a safety stop mechanism that is activated if the door starts to close when a person is passing through.
8. The powered door should be manually operable in case of power failure.

Fire alarms and escape routes

12

12.1 Fire alarms and escape routes

1. In case of fire or other emergency, exit doors must be wheelchair accessible and clearly marked.

2. A functioning fire alarm should be installed, incorporating both visual and audible signals.

3. Safe refuge points should be provided on all upper floors. These should be clearly signed and easily identifiable.

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