

Basic DDA Accessible checklist

As the introduction states, this checklist is no substitute for a full access audit and is only intended to give you an initial idea of the scale of necessary physical adjustments.

Grounds or Public Common Areas

Even if the grounds around your premises are not practice-owned, you will need to ensure that there are no obstacles or impairments to people using sticks, crutches and wheelchairs and people with visual impairments.

- Is the pavement outside the premises free of potholes, uneven paving surfaces, etc? If not, you may need to get in touch with the local authority roads department to request repairs.
- Is all vegetation cut back from paths leading up to the entrance?
- Is the route to the building kept free of leaves, snow and ice?
- If the route is not level, is there a slip-resistant ramp with handrails available?
- Are all paths free of obstacles, such as litter bins?
- Are all signs clearly visible?
Lettering needs to be large to help people with visual impairments.
- Is external lighting good enough to help people find their way to the premises?
- If you have a parking area, is there a reserved, wider bay for disabled people?

Access to main entrance

- Do you have alternative access, or a ramp, for people in wheelchairs?
- If the main entrance is not level, or is inaccessible and hard to change in some other way, is there a rear or side entrance where level access is possible?
- Do the steps have a clearly visible handrail?
- Are the steps themselves clearly visible? Painting steps a different colour to the surrounding surfaces can make them easier for visually impaired people to see.
- Is the entrance well lit?
- Is there an accessible bell, or Entryphone system, for people to use if they are having difficulties getting in? This would be particularly desirable if access is not ideal.

We Provide Service Contracts, Maintenance and Repairs to Automatic Doors, Fire Escapes, Aluminium doors and Acoustic Movable Walls

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Doorways

- Is the door opening wide enough for all users?
- Wheelchair users generally need at least 750mm clear opening width (the space available between the door frame and the door in the open position).
- If doorways do not meet this specification, you may need to have the doorway widened if there is no alternative way in.
- Are door handles easy to grip and easy to reach for wheelchair users?
- Use an easy grip handle in a contrasting colour
- Is the door-handle low enough for a wheelchair user to reach easily? The recommended height is 1000 mm.
- Are entrance mats flush with the floor so that the surface is even? Avoid bristle matting – it can be difficult for wheelchair users
- If a door closer is fitted, does it have a delayed, or slow-action closure mechanism?

Getting around the premises

- Are there enough signs?
- Are signs simple, short and easy to read, and located at convenient levels for wheelchair users? Signs can be made clearer by using pictorial symbols and visual clues.
- Are aisles, corridors and areas near doors free of obstacles and wide enough for wheelchairs to manoeuvre?
- If there is a change of level, is there a platform lift available? If not, is there a permanent ramp that is wide enough for wheelchairs?
- Are internal steps, and other potential hazards, clearly marked and fitted with a handrail and ramp?
- Are all floor surfaces as level as possible, without the need for major adjustments? For example, are mats and joins between different floors, etc flush with the floor and each other?

Reception / Waiting areas

- Does your reception desk have an induction loop? This is an expensive adjustment but may be necessary, particularly at a glass counter.
- Is the reception area reasonably quiet and located away from any noisy machinery?
- Is seating suitable for people with mobility impairments?
- Is there waiting space for wheelchair user?
- Might it be possible to create a lowered section of the reception desk?
- If not, it would be advisable to provide some means of allowing wheelchair users to sign forms, etc, such as a lower writing shelf, or simply a clipboard. Staff could be encouraged to come out from behind high reception counters, when a wheelchair user approaches.
- Are people standing behind reception well-lit from the front, to make lip-reading easier?

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Toilets

Are the toilets accessible, both in terms of getting to and using them?

If there is sufficient space available, the toilet may need to be modified to full wheelchair accessible standards. You will need technical advice on this.

The following practical suggestions should also be helpful

- fit grabrails to help people with limited movement, balance or grip
- ensure floor surfaces are non-slip
- install outward opening doors
- avoid shiny ceramic tiles and floors, which may cause reflection and glare

Ease of communication with staff

Your premises should make it as easy as possible for disabled people to communicate with your staff. Staff should show awareness of the needs and sensitivities of people with hearing impairments.

For example, in situations where it is not reasonable to install an induction loop, staff should make the effort to communicate in other ways, such as exchanging written notes. Staff could be encouraged not to cover their mouths when speaking to patients in order to help people who lip-read. Allow extra time, and repeating back to the customer to check accuracy can also help, as even partially deaf people may lip-read.

Even if few physical adjustments can be made, the attitude and awareness of everyone who deals with patients is key. A clear willingness to anticipate needs and look for alternative solutions could go a long way to avoid any complaints or legal action against the practice. A disabled patient minded to make a complaint will only be encouraged to do so if they encounter unreasonable, indifferent or insensitive attitudes. Clearly, these problems can be ameliorated if your staff are aware of the Act and trained appropriately. Staff training in disability awareness is therefore advisable and demonstrates a clear commitment to take reasonable steps to comply with the Act.

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