

## **Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency**

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### **ACCESS FOR ALL**

Thinking about how you might provide access for everyone to your event or building is the first step in ensuring that more people can enjoy using facilities, which most people take for granted.

#### **1. Definitions**

Disabled people are people with a physical, hearing, or sight impairment that affects their mobility or their use of buildings.

Ambulant disabled people are disabled people who are able to walk, but who may depend on prostheses (artificial limbs), orthoses (calipers), sticks, crutches or walking aids.

Wheelchair users are disabled people who depend on a wheelchair for mobility.

#### **2. Buildings**

Think about the experience of using the building from the outside to the inside from the point of view of each of the three groups above. Most disabled people would like to use building and other facilities with the same independence as people without disability. Think about how you would encourage disabled people to enjoy what you provide, without them having to involve someone else in helping them get around or understand what is happening.

#### **The main areas to look at when planning for access for all**

- Car Parking - need to be 3.4metres wide and created of hard flat material.
- Entrance paths - are they all on one level with ramps provided where required?
- Front entrance doors and internal doors – check their width and how easy they are to open.
- Stairs and general access to upper levels – think about handrails, lifts, or chair lifts.
- Toilets – you should provide a toilet for disabled use.
- Shower and changing areas – think about who will use them and how.
- Check the height of electrical and other switches and public telephone. You should also ensure that the telephone has a “T” switch for those with hearing difficulties.
- Check the heights of counters and desks.
- Look at floor levels – the more everything is on one level without steps up or down the better the building will be for people with disabilities.

- Look at floor and wall surfaces – changes in floor surfaces between one area and another can help people with partial vision. Similarly, using contrasting colours on the walls can help people with partial vision see where one area ends and another begins.
- Check lighting and acoustics - well-lit areas are essential for both lip-reading and to aid partial vision. Certain surfaces absorb sound better than others making it easier for people to distinguish one sound from another. Induction loop or infrared systems help people make the most of their hearing aids. Audible indicators, in lifts for example, help blind and partially sighted people understand where they are.
- Check your fire and emergency alarms and procedures. For example, you should think about visual alarms for the deaf.
- Any signs and information – are they visible and easy for everyone to understand?
- Any equipment that you have should be usable by anyone, regardless of their ability or mobility. For example, televisions should have teletext or ceefax for subtitling.

### **3. Events**

Consideration about access at events may vary depending on whether the event is inside or outside. However, most, if not all of the points listed above apply equally to outdoor events as indoor. An outdoor event is often held in a temporary venue, such as a field. In this case, you need to think about how the addition of the weather will affect a disabled person's access to events. For example, will your paths, which are flat and hard when dry, turn into soft mud in heavy rain.

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