



Building Control Service Customer information

No 14

Disability Discrimination Act 1985

On the 1st October 2004, the final stage of the Disability Discrimination Act came into force. This makes it unlawful for employers and people who provide services, goods and facilities to the public to discriminate against people who have a disability by not making 'reasonable adjustments' to the premises from which the goods, services or facilities are available.

It is important to recognise that not all disabilities are obvious. The Act includes any person who has mobility or sensory impairment, learning or mental health disabilities, severe facial disfigurements and certain other conditions.

If a disabled person feels that they have been wrongly excluded from the provision of goods, services or facilities, or the letting or selling of land or property, they will be able to take legal action, through the courts, to seek damages for any financial loss they have suffered and for any injury to their feelings.

Even though Approved Document M to the Building Regulations has been identified as the standard against which accessibility for disabled people will be judged, the Council does not have an enforcement role under the Disability Discrimination Act.

This is not new legislation; since 2 December 1996 it has been unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably for a reason related to their disability and, since 1 October 1999, service providers have been required to make 'reasonable adjustments', such as providing extra help or making changes to the way they provide services.

Further information is available from the Disabled Rights Commission Help Line: -

Telephone	08457 622 633 (8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday)
Fax	08457 788 878
Text phone	08457 622 644
E-mail	ddaahelp@stra.sitel.co.uk
Website address	www.drc-gb.org
Post:	DRC Help line, FREEPOST MID02164, Stratford upon Avon, CV37 9BR

NB The requirements for Building Regulations consent still apply for any physical changes to buildings. However, subject to certain criteria, the application may be exempt from the payment of fees.

Physical Features

The Disability Discrimination Act talks in terms of changes to the 'physical features' of buildings. These are any features arising from the design or construction of a building and any fixtures, fittings, furnishings and equipment on the premises. This could include paths, entrances, exits, entry systems, car parking, public phones, changing rooms, service counters, doors, toilets, stairs, shelves, waiting areas, signage, floor and wall coverings. This list is not intended to be exhaustive; simply to serve as an indicator of the variety of features that can present barriers for which solutions may need to be found. Employers and owners of buildings will need to anticipate the types of problems that may arise, so that when a disabled person requests a service, reasonable steps have already been taken to overcome any access issues.

How to contact us

For further information on this subject, or for more specific advice on any matter, please contact us at: -

West Dorset Building Control Service, West Dorset District Council, Stratton

House, 58-60 High West Street, Dorchester, DT1 1UZ.

Telephone: 01305 252254 Fax: 01305 252377

E-mail: build.control@westdorset-dc.gov.uk



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