

# Appendix A Making Tribunals Accessible to Disabled People – a survey

We conducted a survey of the tribunals under our supervision in order to evaluate and report on their current state of readiness to comply with the requirements of the access to goods and services provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, which come fully into force in October 2004. The information shown below is based on the responses we received from tribunal systems, which we hope will be useful not just for those interested in the work of the tribunals but also for tribunal users themselves.

## *Appeals Service*

- ◆ All permanent premises are accessible. The only venue without an accessible toilet is due to be vacated in August 2004. Information and maps for all premises include access instructions and details of parking facilities. Induction loops, either fitted or portable, are available for all premises, including those hired by the day. All major permanent sites display effective designs for signage where permissible. A review of all accommodation (including daily hire venues) is undertaken annually.
- ◆ Information leaflets include advice on the services provided, such as TYPETALK, Textphone and Language Line, and all leaflets are available in Braille and audio formats. The pre-hearing inquiry form invites appellants to specify any special requirements they may have (e.g. parking, wheelchair ramps, special travel arrangements).
- ◆ Procedures can be adapted to enable appellants to attend a hearing. Any necessary costs incurred (e.g. travel, taxis, parking fees, overnight accommodation, childcare and loss of earnings) may be reimbursed. If an appellant cannot leave home a domiciliary visit can be arranged.
- ◆ All staff received diversity awareness training in 2002/03. More comprehensive training has been provided to Equal Opportunities Liaison Officers. Judicial training was formalised in 2000/01 with Equal Treatment Training delivered to all panel members in partnership with the Ionann training organisation. Training for front line staff in dealing with vulnerable groups is also taking place.
- ◆ Tribunal User Groups have been established for each venue and meet half yearly or quarterly according to local needs. The National Customer Representative Liaison Forum includes representatives from RNIB, RNID and Citizen's Advice. Feedback from users is collected through customer surveys and complaints from users.

## *Asylum Support Adjudicators*

- ◆ All premises are fully accessible, including all hearing rooms. Lifts are available for wheelchair access to each floor and adapted toilets are situated on the ground and second floors. Car parking can be arranged with prior notice. Induction loops are fitted in all hearing rooms.
- ◆ Leaflets provide information on access for disabled people and the facilities available in the hearing centre. A subtitled information video explains the appeal process to appellants in their own language. Leaflets are not available in Braille.
- ◆ Appellants' travel costs are met by the National Asylum Support Service to facilitate attendance at hearings. Any other extra costs incurred may also be met. Appellants are invited to specify any special requirements before the hearing date.

- ◆ All staff, including adjudicators and support staff, have received in-house equality and diversity training at annual training events. In addition, support staff have attended diversity workshops and adjudicators have attended externally provided training courses on equality of access.
- ◆ A user group, open to anyone who wishes to attend, meets 3 times a year. A complaints procedure is in operation, including feedback cards in pictorial format.

#### *Care Standards Tribunal*

- ◆ All premises are fully accessible. There is a 'lesser abled' lift to the first floor and a toilet suitable for wheelchair users. Induction loops are available in hearing rooms. There are no reserved parking facilities, but parking meters are available outside the building.
- ◆ Hearing and administrative procedures are sufficiently flexible to take account of appellants' special needs and reasonable adjustments can be made where required.
- ◆ Information about the facilities available is provided in an information sheet sent out to parties attending a hearing, and is also available on the website. Consideration is being given to producing guidance in alternative formats (e.g. in Braille). There is access to interpreter services on request and induction loops in hearing rooms.
- ◆ Disability issues have been covered generally in training. Administrative staff have all attended training on diversity as part of the sponsoring department's 'valuing diversity' training programmes.
- ◆ Meetings have been held recently with organisations with an interest in the tribunal's work.

#### *Copyright Tribunal*

- ◆ A small specialist tribunal which sits, on average, once a year. Uses Patent Office hearing rooms which have recently been converted and

are fully wheelchair accessible. An adapted toilet is located by the hearing rooms. Special arrangements for car parking can be made. Induction loops are installed. All rooms have undergone an accessibility audit.

- ◆ No special advice is issued on services available to disabled people, but could be produced upon request.
- ◆ Procedures are sufficiently flexible to adapt to particular needs, and dates and times of hearings could be fixed to suit individual requirements.
- ◆ No diversity training has taken place. There are no formal user groups.

#### *Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panels*

- ◆ All permanent premises in London and Glasgow are fully accessible with adapted toilets, induction loops and car parking facilities. Rented hearing venues are also required to be accessible and to have suitable adaptations.
- ◆ Alternative formats for written communication are not available. Interpreters and signers are provided upon request. Appellants can make contact via the CICAP website.
- ◆ Listing is carried out in accordance with the needs of users.
- ◆ Training for panel members is ongoing and diversity issues are part of the core training requirement. All administrative staff have received diversity and equality training.
- ◆ A user group meets annually and a customer survey is carried out annually. Disability issues will form part of the next customer survey.

#### *Employment Tribunal*

- ◆ Accessibility Audit Reviews are conducted each year by external consultants. All permanent premises are fully accessible, with the exception of those in Dundee and Brighton, which are due to be vacated within the next three years.

Not all premises have car parking facilities, but where they are available, priority is given to disabled visitors. All premises have induction loops. Current industry techniques have been utilised to improve premises for people with visual impairment, using contrasts in colours of carpets to indicate door openings, contrasting skirting and door surround colours and increased corridor widths. Consideration is always given to accessibility when hiring alternative hearing accommodation.

- ◆ Leaflets include advice on the services provided, such as Typetalk, and how to obtain copies of all information booklets, which are available in alternative formats on request. Information is also available on the website. Guidance is provided for users who are deaf or hard of hearing. Copies of application forms are available in large print.
- ◆ Disabled users are encouraged to make any requests for adjustments as early as possible to ensure that necessary arrangements can be made. Each request is considered on its merits. If a party to an appeal requires the assistance of a helper because of a medical condition expenses or reasonable costs will be reimbursed.
- ◆ A disability awareness course is available for all staff. All customer service officers attend an Induction Workshop that explains the types of adjustments that could be made and how to make the necessary arrangements.
- ◆ Each tribunal region has a user group, including representatives from the Disability Rights Commission. An annual survey of users is carried out and the information obtained is used to improve services.

#### *Family Health Services Appeal Authority*

- ◆ Where there is a need to use external venue providers, public sector premises are utilised as far as possible as they are required to be DDA compliant. The FHSAA is seeking to establish arrangements with other tribunals for use of

their premises and has reached agreement with the Care Standards Tribunal, which is compliant. In order to establish a northern base, a trial has commenced using the FHSAA's own premises which have undergone an accessibility audit.

- ◆ The FHSAA's tribunal suite is on the ground floor which has ramped access and toilet facilities for wheelchair users. By prior arrangement, parking facilities may be made available on the premises although local council facilities are available nearby. Portable induction loops are hired where necessary for all venues. Whilst not rendering premises non-compliant, the accessibility audit was helpful in identifying points for future consideration such as contrasts in colours and tone of decor to assist people with visual impairment.
- ◆ Resources have been made available to facilitate any other special needs raised by parties attending. Leaflets invite parties to inform the tribunal if they have any special needs or if those needs are not met. Information would be made available in other formats upon request.
- ◆ All staff and Chairs have received diversity training.
- ◆ There are user groups, which may raise issues although there is no specific representative of or for disabled people.

#### *Immigration Adjudicators*

- ◆ Most premises have undergone a disability audit and have access for wheelchair users, adapted toilets, car parking and assistance for people with hearing impairment. Any satellite courts used are fully accessible, and where not, this is brought to the appellant's attention in the notice of hearing.
- ◆ Leaflets include information regarding wheelchair access, induction loops and a disability helpline number (including minicom number). Leaflets are not routinely provided in Braille or large print.

- ◆ Tribunals are flexible in their listing arrangements and have regard to the needs of disabled users.
- ◆ All staff and adjudicators have received diversity and equality training.
- ◆ Each tribunal has an active user group. Customer surveys are conducted on a regular basis. Customers are randomly selected to complete questionnaires asking for feedback on the facilities.

#### *Immigration Appeal Tribunal*

- ◆ All premises for hearings are accessible.
- ◆ Information and advice leaflets include information on services for disabled people. Information would be provided in alternative formats if required.
- ◆ Induction loops are available and interpreters can be provided if required.
- ◆ Administrative staff will respond positively to requests from disabled appellants. All tribunal members and administrative staff have received diversity training.
- ◆ Feedback from customers is collected via customer comment cards.

#### *Immigration Services Tribunal*

- ◆ New premises are fully accessible, with adapted toilet facilities.
- ◆ Leaflets make no specific reference to services for disabled people.
- ◆ Hearing dates are fixed to suit the needs of the parties.
- ◆ All judicial staff have received diversity training.
- ◆ There is no formal feedback procedure.

#### *Lands Tribunal*

- ◆ Moved to fully accessible premises in May 2004. Leaflets are not available in alternative formats, but would be produced upon request.
- ◆ Reasonable costs associated with attending a hearing would be reimbursed on application

and there is flexibility in arranging hearing dates to suit individual needs.

- ◆ Auxiliary aids and services can be made available in premises within the Tribunals group.
- ◆ Judicial staff have not received diversity training. All administrative staff have attended a mandatory diversity awareness course, although the course did not include specific training on disability issues.
- ◆ There are user groups, but not including any representation from disabled people or their representative groups. Customer satisfaction survey forms are regularly issued.

#### *Mental Health Review Tribunal*

- ◆ Hearings are held where the patient is detained, so there is no choice of venue. Guidelines have been issued to hospitals setting out basic requirements for hearing accommodation. Every effort is made to ensure that disabled witnesses are accommodated, subject to NHS premises.
- ◆ A website is being developed which will provide an additional means of communication.
- ◆ Hearing procedures are sufficiently flexible to meet particular needs.
- ◆ Availability of auxiliary aids and services depends on what is available in the hospital where the hearing takes place.
- ◆ Judicial and administrative staff have received diversity training.
- ◆ The MHRT National Liaison Group includes an element of user representation.

#### *National Parking Adjudication Service*

- ◆ All hired premises have undergone an accessibility audit. All premises are wheelchair accessible. Not all venues have adapted toilets. Hearing centre supervisors have access to portable hearing induction loops. A further accessibility audit took place in March 2004.

- ◆ Notice of Appeal forms contain guidance for appellants with disabilities. The Service Charter confirms the commitment to providing access and assistance to disabled people. Information leaflets are not available in alternative formats.
- ◆ On-line lodgement of appeals will be introduced from mid-2004 and appellants will be able to track progress of their cases on-line.
- ◆ Listing procedures are sufficiently flexible to take account of special needs.
- ◆ All staff, including tribunal Chairs, have received diversity training.
- ◆ A user group, including representatives from the Mobility and Inclusion Unit and the Disabled Drivers Association, meets twice a year. Feedback from users is routinely collected, and a systematic survey of users, covering disability issues, will be conducted in 2004.

#### *Parking and Traffic Appeals Service*

- ◆ Existing premises are accessible. The hearing centre has wheelchair access and an accessible toilet. There is a ramp to the main entrance and a lift to the hearing room. Car parking facilities are not available but can be arranged on request.
- ◆ Requests for information in alternative formats are dealt with on an individual basis.
- ◆ There is a minicom for enquiries and users can communicate via the website.
- ◆ Listing procedures are sufficiently flexible to take account of special needs.
- ◆ Requests for auxiliary aids and services will be dealt with on an individual basis.
- ◆ All tribunal staff have received in-house equality and diversity training. Training requirements for front-line staff are kept under review.
- ◆ A user survey was carried out in 2003, as a result of which satellite hearing centres are being sought in outer London.

#### *Pensions Ombudsman*

- ◆ Premises used are accessible, with wheelchair access. Parking can be provided. There are no special provisions for visual or hearing impaired users. Interpreters will be provided if needed.
- ◆ Correspondence in braille would receive a response in braille.
- ◆ Staff have received equal opportunities training.
- ◆ Hearing and administrative procedures are sufficiently flexible to meet appellants' special needs.
- ◆ Auxiliary aids and services would be provided if requested and particular needs met in the most appropriate way.
- ◆ A user group includes representatives of those who have regular dealings with the office. None of the regular users includes a disabled user or any of their representative organisations.

#### *The Planning Inspectorate*

- ◆ Premises for hearings are fully accessible.
- ◆ Appeal forms include guidance for people needing any document in large print, Braille or translated into another language. In some cases video recordings have been provided as part of the evidence. No requests have been made to date for a minicom or text phone service.
- ◆ Hearing and administrative procedures are sufficiently flexible to meet special needs and sitting times are negotiated to take account of special requirements.
- ◆ Inspectors and administrative staff have received diversity training. The Inspectors' handbook is being updated to reflect the new legislation.
- ◆ Consultants gather feedback from users on a yearly basis – the next such survey will include specific issues relating to disabled people.

### *Residential Property Tribunal Service*

- ◆ All premises have undergone a DDA compliance audit and are fully accessible. A checklist for ad-hoc premises has been produced for staff to use when booking venues to ensure compliance. There are no parking facilities at the London office.
- ◆ Information and advice leaflets concentrate on helping people decide whether they can ask for a hearing. If a hearing is requested parties are asked if they have any special needs. At present written information is not available in alternative formats, other than via the website.
- ◆ No appellants are reimbursed the costs of attending a hearing. Hearings are fixed to meet users' needs, including holding them in the user's home if necessary. Staff have been briefed to respond positively to requests from disabled users.
- ◆ Contact can be made via e-mail and through the website. Fixed or portable induction loops can be provided. A video for users is being commissioned to explain tribunal procedures.
- ◆ Chairs and members have received diversity training as part of their induction. Administrative staff attend diversity training arranged by the sponsoring department.
- ◆ A user group meets, but does not include any representation of or for disabled people. Regular customer surveys are undertaken, where concerns about all aspects of service can be aired.

### *Social Security and Child Support Commissioners*

- ◆ An accessibility audit has been carried out and hearing premises are now fully compliant. There is wheelchair access and adapted toilets. There is no provision for parking at Harp House or assistance for those with visual impairment. An induction loop is being installed. Ad hoc hearings take place at either Crown or County Court venues, which are compliant.

- ◆ Leaflets include advice about accommodating the special needs of those with disabilities. Large print copies of leaflets are available. Requests are dealt with on an individual basis. Interpreters are provided on request.
- ◆ Users can make contact via e-mail and the website. Minicom facilities are available at the administrative centre in Newspaper House.
- ◆ All appellants have their travel expenses refunded, including the expenses of companions for those who cannot travel alone.
- ◆ All staff and Commissioners have received in-house equality and diversity training. Specific requests are referred to managers.
- ◆ User groups meet regularly, including representatives from various disability groups including RNIB and RNID. Feedback is routinely collected from users.

### *Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal*

- ◆ The Tribunal is moving to fully accessible premises in mid-May 2004. All hearings outside London are booked through an agency that has been given detailed guidelines relating to accessibility requirements.
- ◆ Attendance forms and the guidance that accompanies them have designated sections that enquire about any special requirements. Leaflets are available on request in Braille, large print or on audio tape. Interpreters are provided if needed.
- ◆ Users can make contact with the tribunal via fax, the internet and BT's 'Typetalk' service. A minicom will be installed in the new premises. Hearing rooms have induction loops.
- ◆ Hearings are arranged in consultation with the parties. Travel expenses are paid, including any additional expenses incurred because of a disability or other special needs.
- ◆ Chairs, members and clerks receive regular training on all aspects of equal opportunities.

- ◆ User groups include representatives of those who have dealings with the Tribunal, where concerns about all aspects of the service can be aired.

#### *Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales*

- ◆ The Tribunal moved to fully accessible accommodation in February 2004. When renting accommodation for hearings all venues are inspected for accessibility by either the Secretary to the Tribunal or the Appeals Team Leader.
- ◆ Leaflets include advice on the services provided. Braille and recorded information or interpreters are provided upon request. A sub-titled video is also issued to users.
- ◆ Users can make contact via the Tribunal's website.
- ◆ Hearing and administrative procedures are sufficiently flexible to meet appellants' special needs and early indication of any special requirements is encouraged. Hearings are fixed in consultation with both parties.
- ◆ All staff have received in-house equality and diversity training and further sessions are planned. The Disability Rights Commission has given a presentation to all panel members.
- ◆ There are four regional user groups, which include representation from the Disability Rights Commission and other voluntary groups. A system for collecting feedback from users is being developed.

#### *Traffic Commissioners*

- ◆ Accessibility audits were undertaken at all 6 regional Traffic Area offices, which comply fully with the DDA. Venues which are hired for hearings also comply. Induction loops are available upon request.
- ◆ Leaflets include advice on the services provided, including information relevant to disabled people. Information is provided in alternative formats if requested.

- ◆ Users can make contact via fax, e-mail, mail or telephone.
- ◆ Attendees are invited to indicate if they have any special needs and staff would respond positively to requests for assistance. Every effort is made to provide any necessary auxiliary aids and services.
- ◆ All Traffic Commissioners and Deputy Traffic Commissioners have received equality and diversity training. All staff have attended "Managing Diversity" workshops.
- ◆ There is no formal user group, but the Traffic Area officers welcome feedback from users.

#### *Valuation Tribunal Service*

- ◆ The whole tribunal estate is undergoing a DDA compliance audit. Each Tribunal is also carrying out an audit of external venues. An implementation plan has been agreed and the Valuation Tribunal Service is currently in the process of taking all reasonable steps to ensure compliance across the whole of the VTS estate (24 offices). Some offices have induction loop systems installed and others have access to mobile systems upon request.
- ◆ All advice leaflets include a section "What if I have extra needs". All publications can be provided in large print, Braille and audiotape.
- ◆ Users can contact the tribunal via the Internet and e-mail.
- ◆ Hearing and administrative procedures are sufficiently flexible to meet any special needs. Hearings can be arranged at an appellant's home where travel would be difficult.
- ◆ All members and staff have received training in diversity issues, including race and disability issues.
- ◆ There is no user group. A customer survey is undertaken bi-annually and feedback is used to monitor effectiveness and address any failures.

## The survey questions

### *Accommodation*

1. If your tribunal has permanent premises for hearings, have they undergone an accessibility audit? Are all your hearing premises now fully accessible?
2. If your tribunal rents or hires accommodation for hearings on an ad-hoc basis what steps have been taken to ensure that the premises you use are fully accessible?

### *Information*

3. Do the tribunal's information and advice leaflets include advice on the particular services the tribunal can provide for disabled people, and invite appellants to specify their special needs at an early stage?
4. Is written information available to disabled people in alternative formats?

### *Communication*

5. Does the tribunal offer alternative means of communicating with tribunal staff (e.g. via minicom, textphone, or via the Internet etc.)?

### *Reasonable Adjustments*

6. Are the tribunal's hearing and administrative procedures sufficiently flexible and adaptable to meet appellants' special needs – e.g. would appellants be reimbursed the extra costs incurred as a consequence of their disability in attending a hearing or can hearings dates and times be fixed to suit an individual's special requirements?

7. Are the tribunal's administrative staff, particularly tribunal clerks, familiar with the types of adjustments which it might be reasonable to provide and how to respond positively to requests from disabled appellants?

### *Auxiliary Aids and Services*

8. What auxiliary aids or services (e.g. access to interpreters, information on audiotape, induction loop systems etc.) can be made available to disabled users?

### *Training*

9. Have tribunal Chairs and members received diversity training, including aspects relating specifically to disability issues?
10. Have front-line administrative staff received training in diversity, including the practical aspects of dealing with disabled people?

### *Taking the views of disabled people*

11. Does the tribunal have a user group, including representatives of and for disabled people, who have regular dealings with the tribunal?
12. Does the tribunal collect feedback from its users on aspects of the tribunal process, including feedback on disability related issues.