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- Physical access – not the only answer
"When I was young I gained some minor amateur acting experience and a broad physical vocabulary, however a lack of confidence didn’t allow me to pursue an artistic career. A spinal injury at the age of 26 galvanised my motivation to explore territory that had previously filled me with dread.

After a spell in hospital, I contacted CandoCo and attended their summer school. I then got asked to join their education team, but didn’t make the grade at the performance auditions for the main company. The lack of other opportunities prompted me to form Frontline Dance over the next 3 years, starting with zero budget and developing into an up and coming dance company. Then came the opportunity to work for Blue Eyed Soul Dance Company.

Given a choice I would have liked to have gone to college earlier, pre accident or after accident, and pursued a more conventional study approach. I would have done this had an appropriate scheme been available, something that would have let me into the mainstream, with adaptations.

The biggest barrier I have faced is lack of funding for work placements. This was not helped by the sporadic nature of dance companies with their infrequent workloads. This led to problems in bridging the gap between benefits and professional arts employment. Consequently I was usually caught between the wrong side of Social Security Law and the right side of social morality, and frequently somewhere in between.

Do I consider myself fully trained? No, if I’m being perfectly honest with myself. Every new project requires a different set of skills and though not fully trained I believe my broad experience has allowed me the communication skills necessary to fulfil many roles and to get suitable advice where appropriate.

The barriers I face now are a lack of appropriate work placement training coupled with lack of experience both in the industry and the audiences appreciation of non able-bodied art forms. CandoCo pioneered the way to breaking this, however it is still an ‘us and them’ situation. You can work for this, this and this company however not that, those or them, since most choreographers work on the body perfect model, few are willing to take risks (although this is not to say that everyone should compromise their aesthetic to make it accessible to performers or the audience)."
How accessible is your school?

Under the Disability Discrimination Act if your building has a physical feature, for example ‘one arising from the design of a building or the approach or access to premises, which makes it difficult or impossible for disabled people to use the building’, then you must take reasonable steps to either:

- remove the feature
- alter it to prevent the effect
- provide reasonable means of avoiding the feature (i.e. another entrance)
- or provide a reasonable alternative for the disabled person.

Schools covered by SENDA must ‘to take reasonable steps to remove, alter or provide reasonable means of avoiding physical features that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use a service’ by 2005; Schools not covered by SENDA must comply by 2004 (see page 18). Schools based in inaccessible premises should be auditing their premises and determining what access improvements they can make - or ideally be planning to move into accessible ones.

There is still a widespread belief that access to venues is about wheelchair users and so is dependent on lifts and ramps yet only 4% of the 8.7 million disabled people in the UK use wheelchairs. People also think that improvements to accessibility can only be made at great expense, but many can be made for little or no cost.

The most effective way to begin looking at physical access considerations is to undergo a physical access audit, usually undertaken by a disability access auditor. To prepare for this, schools should be considering the following.

Spaces and places checklist
- have we had a recent access audit on building/facilities/offices?
- can disabled people park at or near our building?
- can disabled people easily get into our building?
- can disabled people get around our building?
- can disabled people get to all parts of our building?
- do our fire and safety procedures include provision for disabled people?
- do disabled people have access to all things that go on in our building?
- do we have a current list for action arising from our latest access audit?
- do we have a checklist of access requirements for spaces that we hire for events?
When did you last have an access audit?

Access Auditing is a process of looking primarily at the physical structure of buildings - either as they currently exist or as they are planned - and aims to create better spaces and events for everyone. It provides a structured way of addressing physical access rather than relying solely on informal conversations with disabled users. Disability Access Audits enable organisations to create a building and an environment that is more welcoming to all.

Most audits are specifically tailored to individual organisations and may include looking at areas such as:

- **basic physical access** - doors, lighting, lifts, ramps, floor finishes, stairs...
- **decoration** - colours, contrasts, textures, visual mapping, coding...
- **fire escape/evacuation** - procedures, refuges, alarms, specific equipment...
- **sanitary facilities** - toilets, accessible toilet requirements, fixtures & fittings...
- **way finding** - signage, maps, guides, warning markers, information...
- **communication equipment** - phones, computers, tannoy/paging, loops...
- **refreshment/recreation facilities** – bars, cafes, kitchen areas, shops…
- **transport** – parking, drop-off points, public transport to site…

There are no specific funds for physical access improvements to enable all buildings to conform to the requirements of the DDA. Different authorities and charitable trusts have their own priorities and funding streams. A number of these are for improving access to educational buildings. ADAPT (www.adapttrust.co.uk) run bi-annual awards for access improvements with a cash prize to be spent on further access initiatives.

**Evolving duty**

It is important to remember that duties under the DDA are evolving. The act does not expect organisations to be able to suddenly improve all aspects of its access immediately but to take a long-term perspective and begin a process of gradual and incremental change. There is no such thing as ‘a fully accessible building’ – the access needs of individuals can clash. What provides access for one disabled person may produce a barrier for another. What is thought of as an appropriate access solution in 2003, may in 2013, seem hopelessly out of date and ineffectual.
National standards, contacts and publications

Access auditors
There is a national register of approved access consultants offering a database of appropriately qualified and experienced access consultants and auditors who have demonstrated their expertise in access matters to the satisfaction of the Register’s Admissions Panel. It can be found at www.nrac.org.uk
The register is held by the Centre for Accessible Environments (www.cae.org.uk) who can be found at Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY
Tel: 020 7234 0434 Minicom: 020 7357 8182 Fax: 020 7357 8183

Standards for physical accessibility

British Standard 8300: 2001
The British Standards Institute has published a new Code of Practice, BS 8300: 2001 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people (published in October 2001). The BS Code of Practice is designed to support the DDA and to provide designers, specifiers and service providers with guidance on what ‘reasonable’ adjustments may be required. This document addresses aspects of access including physical, sensory and technical access.

The new British Standard provides guidance on the design of domestic and non-domestic buildings and their approaches so that they are convenient and safe to use by disabled people. The recommendations are based on validated research and include findings from a specially commissioned DETR-funded research study; one of the largest ever undertaken, into the needs and abilities of disabled people. Although the primary aim of these recommendations is for application to new buildings, they can also be used as guidelines for assessing the accessibility and usability of existing buildings and, where practicable, as a basis for their improvement. The recommendations in BS 8300 include the following types of building:

• educational, cultural and scientific buildings, including: museums, art galleries, libraries and exhibition buildings
• refreshment, entertainment and recreation buildings, such as: cafés, restaurants, concert halls, theatres, cinemas, conference buildings and community buildings
• dwellings and other residential buildings, such as: hostels, residential clubs, university and college halls of residence

BS 8300 replaces BS 5619: 1978, Code of Practice for the design of housing for disabled people, and BS 5810: 1979, Code of Practice for access for the disabled to buildings.

Part M of the Building Regulations
The basic function of Building Regulations is the protection of public health and safety. The current Building Regulations 1991 set out a minimum standard which must be met with
regard to disabled access to buildings. The Approved Document M (Part M) 1992 Access and facilities for disabled persons (and its amendments) offers guidance on meeting the requirements of the current Building Regulations. Part M is currently being revised to reflect the new British Standard 8300. Although a valuable tool, Part M is not comprehensive and only provides guidance on access to facilities and not to all spaces. Arts Council England recommends that organisations build on Part M, and improve standards by providing an environment accessible to all attendees, participants, artists or employees; that is by achieving inclusive access and going beyond minimum standards.

Health and safety
The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and subsequent regulations require all organisations with five or more employees to prepare a written health and safety policy. The policy should include procedures to ensure the health and safety of employees, visitors, the public, and anyone affected by the organisation’s activities. It is important to remember that health and safety issues relating to disabled people may need to be specifically developed, and specialised advice may need to be sought from your local authority and other relevant organisations.

Fire safety
It is essential that all public venues have strategies in place to ensure that the building can be successfully evacuated in case of fire. These strategies must satisfy current legislation and have the approval of the appropriate authorities. For example, the British Standard Code of Practice for means of escape by disabled people (BS: 5588, Part 8 and the new draft which will replace it BS: 9999, 2002) should be applied to the design and management of emergency procedures and facilities.

Access to heritage and listed buildings
Under guidance produced by English Heritage ‘Easy Access to Historic Properties’ (currently being rewritten) it is recognised that buildings should be accessible to everyone wherever practical. It encourages the owners or managers of historic properties to adopt access plans, which are consistent with the special architectural, historic or archaeological character of the property. Although the DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in connection with the provision of goods, facilities and services, the Act does not override existing legislation such as planning permission, or conservation/listed building status. However, this legislation should not be used as an excuse for discrimination, or for non-compliance with the spirit of arts and heritage access guidance.

Centre for Accessible Environments
The CAE is a key organisation dealing with the accessibility of the built environment. It is a charity which provides information on all aspects of physical access. As well as running an information service, it provides a range of publications and guidance resources and runs a consultancy service.
Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY
www.cae.org.uk  tel: 020 7357 8182  fax: 020 7357 8183  email: cae@globalnet.co.uk
**Physical access**

**ADAPT Trust (Access for Disabled People to Arts Premises Today)**
The ADAPT Trust run a number of national awards dedicated to improving arts access for disabled people. They also run conferences, seminars and events on access issues.
8 Hampton Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5JD
www.adapttrust.co.uk  tel: 0131 346 1991  fax: 0131 346 1999  email: adapt.trust@virgin.net

**JMU Access Partnership**
This is the trading arm of the RNIB and provides many useful workshops and resources around making buildings more accessible to visually impaired people.
224 Great Portland Street, London, W1N 6AA
www.rnib.org.uk/jmu  tel: 020 7391 2002  fax: 020 7387 7109  email: jmu@rnib.org.uk

**Useful publications**
Part M can be purchased through Her Majesty’s Stationary Office (HMSO)
tel: 0870 600 5522

Anyone can get hold of BS 8300:2001 *Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people* - Code of Practice (British Standards Institute, 31 October 2001, ISBN 0 580 38438 1). It costs £148 (£74 to BSI members) for a publication of 167 pages and is available as a written publication and on a cd rom.

**Accessible schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils**
Although aimed at statutory provision, this publication has a number of useful elements including a checklist for identifying barriers to access within educational environments. Available from Department for Education and Skills publications and the dfes website: www.dfes.gov.uk/sen. Details of Access for Disabled People to School Buildings, published 1999 (£14.95) and Inclusive School Design Bulletin 94 (2001, £19.95) can all be ordered from the same web address.
Also produced by the DFES are Asset Management Plans Guidance sections 1-6 published in 2000 and 2001 which can be accessed at:www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolbuildings.

**Sign Design Guide - a guide to inclusive signage**
produced by JMU and the Sign Design Society  tel: 01582 713 556
66 Derwent Road, Kinsbourne Green, Harpenden, Herts AL5 3NX

**Access to buildings**

Physical access to buildings is often the first aspect that people think about when considering the needs of disabled people. It is important to include all parts of ‘the journey’ - arriving at and leaving the building, eating, drinking and resting, toilet provision and access to all the services offered within the building – from performance based spaces, to technical and support services such as libraries and counselling spaces. The following detailed section includes information that may not be applicable to all schools, but should
be seen as indicating best practice. It is drawn from the Arts Council England publication which builds on the original ‘access checklists’ produced by the capital lottery department of the Arts Council. The full document can be downloaded from www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Arrival and circulation

Arriving
The ultimate aim of inclusive physical access is that the design and layout of premises should enable everybody to be able to enter a building, use the facilities and leave safely, independently and with ease. The approaches to a building are of equal importance. It is recommended that:

• 6% of all parking bays, plus any needed for disabled employees, are provided to an accessible standard

These need to be:
• reserved for disabled people
• near to your most accessible entrance
• at least 3.6m wide x 4.8m (ideally 6.0m) long and clearly marked out with access symbols and zone markings
• monitored and controlled to prevent abuse

If you have any automatic barriers or ticket dispensers with controls, these need to be:
• accessible via a solid, smooth and level surface
• at accessible heights (no higher than 1,200mm)
• set near dropped kerbs or with level access from the car park itself

Drop off points close to entrances are also critical. You need:
• a drop-off point for disabled people near to your most accessible entrance
• an accessible route from the drop-off point to your entrance free of obstacles
• clear sign posting to the entrance
• seating along the route, if there are long travel distances between the drop-off point and entrances

If you have a number of buildings within your complex, adequate parking for disabled drivers should be provided for each one.

Pathways should provide a safe and obvious route to the building. Changes in paving at changes of direction, and tactile paving at dropped kerbs are particularly helpful to visually impaired people. You need:

• a direct route from the nearest parking bays to your entrances
• this route to be level with dropped kerbs and tactile paving at crossings
• appropriate external lighting for all routes
• level and slip-resistant surfacing

Entrances
The main entrance to any building should be designed to be accessible to everyone. Automatic doors (not revolving doors) will assist most disabled people, including wheelchair users. If automatic doors are used they should remain open for sufficient time to enable a blind person, a person with slow mobility, or a slow-moving wheelchair to pass through. Main entrance doors need to:

• be at least 900mm wide (between door stops)
• have a level landing outside
• have a level threshold
• have door controls and handles that are easy to see and at a height which can be reached by wheelchair users (no higher than 1,000mm from floor level)
• have at least 300mm alongside the leading edge of all doors to enable wheelchair users to open the door
• have a warning strip or logos at eye level for safety, if fully glazed (two-tone manifestations are effective)

Where entrances are locked or unattended it is important to ensure access for all. You need to ensure that any bells or intercoms:

• are at a wheelchair accessible height (between 750mm and 1,000mm from floor level)
• are clearly labelled
• have a solution to provide access for deaf people (links to a CCTV, Minicom or video are useful for deaf visitors. Alternatively a cost-effective solution may simply be a buzzer with a sign indicating ‘press three times for attention’)

For some disabled people, it is useful to provide seating by entrances as people may wish to rest before entering a building. Lobbies need to be accessible too. You need to ensure that:

• the entrance lobby is large enough to enable wheelchair users to clear the outer door before opening the inner door
• lighting in the lobby is sufficient to help people adjust to changes in light between the outdoors and indoors

Circulation
In circulation spaces and along route ways it is important to ensure that the minimum access standards are maintained. These are to provide:

• a minimum width of 1,200mm on all corridors
• no obstructions such as furniture or fire extinguishers
• appropriate seating at frequent intervals throughout the building and at meeting points
If an internal door is on a closer or spring, this should be at a minimum pressure to allow for easy opening, and have a slow return to enable a disabled person to pass through safely. If floor springs and door-closing devices cannot be eased, an electronic or hydraulic closer should be considered. All new or refurbished doors should be fitted with frictionless (ball race) hinges and reduced force door closers, as appropriate. Doors need:

- a minimum width of 900mm (between door stops) when fully open. Double doors should have at least one door of this width
- to be marked with logos/safety strips at eye level
- to be fitted with vision panels to enable people to see and be seen, if on access routes
- to be fitted with lever type handles or ‘D’ pull handles at a height appropriate for a wheelchair user (1,000mm from floor level)
- to be light enough to be used by disabled people with limited mobility or strength

For all people, an intuitive and logical layout can be a useful aid to navigation.

**Ramps**

Many people, including wheelchair users, will prefer to use a ramp rather than steps, and so the design needs to take account of its use as a principal and convenient means of access. Wherever possible ramps and steps, where needed, should be closely located. Ramps need to:

- be at a gradient of 1:12 or shallower, for existing ramps. (Although ramps of a gradient of 1 in 12 are considered acceptable under current Building Regulations, it is recognised that this gradient presents difficulties to disabled people)
- be at a maximum gradient of 1 in 15, for new ramps (ideally 1 in 20) with level resting places (1,500mm deep) every 5m
- incorporate a level landing length at the top and bottom of the ramp, 1,200mm long, clear of door swings
- have firm slip-resistant surfaces

Handrails for ramps need to:

- be at a height of 900mm (1,000mm at landings) on both sides running their entire length
- have an unobstructed minimum surface width of 1,200mm between handrails and kerbs
- extend by 300mm at the top and bottom of ramps to guide people safely to level ground
- have a maximum diameter of between 45 and 50mm for comfort

A change of floor finish or a triangular symbol on the route can signal the presence of the ramp, while the latter will also indicate the direction of the slope (point upwards). In areas where the installation of a ramp is impossible due to the situation of the building, a platform lift could be considered as an alternative.
**Stairs**

Some ambulant disabled people find steps easier to use than a ramp and therefore, wherever practical, it is best to provide both options. Stairs need to:

- be, where possible, at 90 degrees to the circulation route
- be slip-resistant
- have a tactile surface to indicate the beginning and end of the flight
- be well lit, preferably from the side
- have intermediate landings in long flights
- have the nosing strip of each step in a contrasting tone/colour to the tread (and ideally the risers should be of a different colour to the treads)

Handrails for stairs need to:

- be at a height of 900mm (1,000mm at landings) on both sides running their entire length to enable those with a weakness on one side to use them (handrails should be provided, however short the flight of steps may be)
- extend or turn down to indicate the beginning or end of the step's run
- have a maximum diameter of between 45 and 50mm
- include a central handrail where stairs are wider than 2m, in addition to side handrails

Single steps should be avoided as they are trip hazards. Some modern designs favour an open staircase by creating spaces between the treads, although these can be hazardous. The practice of using a transparent material such as glass to form the stair also presents a hazard. A corduroy floor surface at the top and bottom of the staircase will provide a tactile indication for visually impaired people. The profile of this tactile surface is set out in Part M2 of the Building Regulations.

**Lifts**

When installing a lift, it should be designed for independent use by a wheelchair user, enabling the user to enter and exit the lift in a forward position and to turn round inside the lift. It is not only wheelchair users who need to use lifts. Older people, less ambulant people, those with visual impairments and hidden impairments will all also use the lift in preference to stairs. The number and size of lifts should reflect the people capacity of the venue. Lifts need to be:

- a minimum of 1,400mm deep x 1,600mm wide (for new lifts). BS 8300: 2001 recommends 1,400mm deep x 2,000mm wide
- a minimum of 1,400mm deep x 1,100mm wide (for existing lifts)

Access features for lifts are many. You should have:

- lift control buttons and an emergency telephone/alarm button set at a suitable height (between 750mm and 1,200mm from the lift floor)
• an audio/voice announcement of doors closing and floors reached
• control buttons with tactile and Braille markings
• a mirror on the back wall to assist wheelchair users
• a flip-up seat in the lift car to support a wide range of disabled and older people, especially in the event of lift failure

Many lifts stop in the event of a fire. Ideally you should have:

• an emergency independent power supply that has been approved by a fire officer to enable the lift to be used in an emergency

If your lift has not been installed as an evacuation lift for disabled people you will need:

• refuge spaces (900mm x 1,400 mm) on each floor for the appropriate number of wheelchair users
• a means of communication to enable disabled people to make contact with the rescue services or staff from each lift and refuge point

If there are problems of access to overcome, a platform lift is a useful and economical means of making the different levels accessible. Stairlifts should only be used as a last resort. These should be of a design that can accommodate an electric wheelchair.

**Working spaces**
The working spaces available to schools will vary enormously. They may include studio spaces, workshop areas, performance areas, technical areas gallery/display spaces, retail areas and others. Each area will have its own specific requirements dictated by its usage. Across all areas however, you will need to ensure:

• that guide dogs and assistance dogs can be admitted to all relevant areas of the building (except for kitchen or food preparation areas)

**Studios and workshops**
Studios are very individual spaces. They are also often in very inaccessible places. Wheelchair access to some studio provision is essential, and a system needs to be in place to ensure that students who require it can use such provision. You need:

• some studio provision with lift, level or ramped access
• management systems and contracts to allow access to such spaces when required, for example altering timetabling processes
• portable additional access provisions such as heaters, lighting, soft furnishings
• knowledge of specialist equipment, or suppliers of specialist equipment, for specific needs
Workshops too need to be accessible – whether they are areas for specific internal activity (such as set/prop making) or areas where groups can become involved in practical activities. You need to have some that have:

- level or ramped access, or access via a lift
- accessible features such as sinks at low heights and adapted taps (if present)
- adjustable features such as height adjustable desks, tables and chairs (if present)
- features such as individually controllable lights, and heaters

**Performance spaces (including auditoria and lecture spaces)**

All performance spaces need to provide spaces for wheelchair users within the audience, but that is not the only access consideration to be met. To provide adequate access to a formal performance space, you should:

- provide a number of wheelchair spaces (minimum six places or 1% of capacity)
- ensure that these spaces for wheelchair users are fully integrated into all public seating areas and include adjacent companion seating
- ensure all sloping floors within an auditorium or lecture room contain level areas where wheelchair users can sit otherwise people are constantly looking up to view the stage or screen (as a last resort, blocks can be used to raise the front of chairs to create a level position)
- have identified ‘easy access seats’ on the end of aisles which can be used as transfer positions for those able to transfer out of their wheelchairs, for those with mobility impairments and to enable guide dogs to lie down next to their owner
- provide a nearby room set aside for the safe storage of wheelchairs and other equipment during a performance
- provide an induction loop or passive infrared system (PIR). (PIR systems transmit sound through an infrared light signal and can only be heard through receiver headsets)
- provide flare paths or tread lights to give adequate visual orientation
- provide adequate lighting levels when audiences are arriving and leaving
- provide large and clear seat and row numbers

**Technical areas**

Technical areas are often the most inaccessible spaces within buildings, but there is no reason why this should be so, particularly in new and refurbished buildings. You need to ensure that all areas are accessible, including:

- rehearsal rooms
- green rooms
- broadcasting/film/lighting/sound control rooms
- orchestra pit and understage areas
- fly/lighting galleries (a perimeter walkway of at least 1,000mm wide should be provided
with access by service lift of at least 1,000 x 1,000mm)
- equipment and scenery storage areas
- paint shops and wardrobe areas
- plant and technicians rooms
- kitchens and behind bars and counters

It is important to provide access to controls and equipment in spaces, not just the spaces themselves. Controls, such as alarm systems, heating controls and thermostats need to be at heights no more than 1,400mm.

**Galleries and display areas**
When designing gallery and display spaces it is important to allow enough room for everyone to have access. You need:

- enough room between displays to enable wheelchair users and blind people with escorts or guide dogs to move freely and get close to displays
- colour contrast between the edges of plinths/display cases and the floor/ walls
- exhibits displayed at a height suitable for wheelchair users to view comfortably (between 700mm and 1,500mm from gallery floor level)
- seating to be provided at frequent intervals where it will not impede circulation
- good lighting for exhibits and navigation
- labels and information panels that are clearly visible and legible, and at a suitable height to be read by wheelchair users

The layout of display furniture should also make it obvious, which, if any, is the preferred route. Clear signage, lighting and décor should further assist navigation.

**Retail areas, bars and cafes**
Retail areas should enable all disabled people access and also be designed to enable disabled staff to work in these locations. You need to ensure:

- all counters (i.e. information point, bar, food serveries, retail counters) have a section which is approximately 760mm from the floor with a 700mm high, 500mm deep knee recess to enable wheelchair users to approach
- a cross-counter induction loop is fitted in noisy areas
- aisles in the shop areas/cafeterias are wide enough to enable wheelchair users and parents/carers with double buggies to pass through with ease
- areas are provided where wheelchair users can turn around to avoid travelling in one direction down lengthy aisles
- large and clear pricing
For bars and cafes you need:

- large print menus, and other alternative formats if possible
- some adapted equipment – beakers, bowls, cutlery and straws readily available

**Backstage and staff facilities**

All areas used by staff and students should be accessible to disabled people (including wheelchair users). When developing existing buildings, schools should consider how they would maximise access to all areas.

Provision should be made for easy access to the stage from backstage/dressing room areas, and from the auditorium, on the assumption that some performers and speakers will be disabled. Providing the following can enable access:

- accessible routes to enter the stage by both stage left and stage right
- a level backstage crossover route from stage left to stage right
- a direct route that could be used by a wheelchair user from the stage to the auditorium
- a direct route suitable for a wheelchair user from backstage to front of house
- dressing room areas incorporating accessible toilets, shower and changing facilities
- some form of sensory or visual indicators available to alert deaf performers to curtain calls (this could be through using video links, vibrating pagers or SMS text messaging on mobile phones)

**Toilet and rest facilities**

**Toilets**

Accessible toilets need to be designed to address the requirements of people with a variety of impairments. It should be noted that people with continence problems are now covered under the DDA and it is important that toilet facilities are provided in all buildings. Where space is restricted, rather than trying to squeeze in both disabled and non-disabled facilities, an accessible cubicle could be provided for use by everyone. The support of personal assistants should also be considered. You need accessible toilets which:

- are fully equipped for use by disabled people in both public and employee areas
- meet the minimum Part M3 of the Building Regulations, standard dimensions of 1,500mm x 2,000mm long. (Cubicles with more generous proportions are easier to use, particularly by those with large models of electric wheelchair. It should be noted that BS 8300: 2001 recommends an increased cubicle length of 2,200mm. The peninsular layout shown in Part M3 of the Building Regulations should be avoided as this is only suitable for hospitals and care homes)

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1 A standard accessible toilet compartment should now measure 1,500mm x 2,200mm long. However, when additional equipment is added, such as a baby change, changing bench, hoist, sanitary bin or any specialist fittings (and larger sized sanitary ware), these dimensions should be increased accordingly.
• are easy to locate and clearly signposted
• are designed to enable personal assistants of either sex to enter
• have outward opening doors (if inward opening doors are fitted they must have lift off or
two-way hinges, for emergency access)
• have a baby/child changing facility available to a parent of either sex at a suitable height
for use by wheelchair users (if in a public area)
• open onto a private area or toilet washroom
• have an emergency assistance alarm fitted (including a visual fire alarm if required)

Within male and female toilet blocks designed for use by ambulant disabled people and
non-disabled people, you need some cubicles with:

• suitable grab rails
• an outward opening door
• sufficient dimensions (800mm wide x 1,500mm deep)

It is important that accessible toilets do not open immediately onto a public area as this
can be hazardous to visually impaired people, and can cause embarrassment should the
door need to be opened to provide assistance to the user. In larger buildings left and right-
hand toilet transfer positions should be allowed for.

If other facilities are provided – such as baby-changing facilities, showers or first aid –
access needs to be provided to both the space and the equipment.

Rest areas and first-aid rooms
In some schools, private rest areas are now provided. These have a variety of usages – to
enable someone a private space to inject insulin if required, a quiet space to calm down if
having a panic attack, a space to rest if you are affected by fatigue. If provided, these spaces
should afford privacy but not be overtly ‘medical’. You need to:
• consider if provision of a rest area is appropriate

Signage and navigation
The ability to navigate independently around a building is dependent upon the basic
building layout, the signage provided and the navigational features supplied.

Layout
A logical and intuitive building layout is often hard to create in refurbished buildings, but
very possible for any new build. You need to ensure:

• clear architectural distinctions between public and staff areas
• opportunities to ‘see into’ some key public areas before you enter them (information
  points, cafés and other retail clear routes between key elements within the building)
• a variety of seating in a number of different locations
• plenty of circulation space in all areas
Signage
Signage is key to enabling independent access. If people can tell where they are going, they do not need to ask! You need to ensure that:

- the content of signs and information is written concisely and in Plain English
- rules for clear print are followed (contrast between text and background colours, large enough text and easy-to-read fonts)
- simple illustrations or pictograms and symbols should be incorporated whenever possible, for instance to signpost refreshment and toilet areas\(^2\)
- all directional signs to and within the premises incorporate directional arrows
- any colour coding in relation to orientation should be echoed in the signage
- signs are well lit with their own source of light

Remember, it is just as important to guide people away from a facility, such as toilets, back to the main circulation area, as it is to signpost the way to it.

Orientation
There are a number of aids that can be used to support independent navigation. You need to consider providing:

- a large and clear floor plan sited near all entrances that shows the site layout and orientates the individual within it (wall mounted or on lectern-style bases)
- a variety of floor plans, in plain line, raised tactile and Braille versions, indicating the layout and features (linked to the floor plan and colour coding, if provided)
- an access guide for the school giving very detailed access information on all areas
- an audio guide

Lighting and decor
Lighting and decor is important for navigation. Visually impaired people rely on being able to distinguish between the walls, floors, ceilings and doors, and between backgrounds and furniture and fittings in the foreground in order to orientate around a space. People with learning disabilities often find colour coding of areas a useful aid to orientation too.

In relation to lighting, you need to:

- ensure that lighting is suitable, for instance, that there are blinds and filters to control glare; matt finishes to combat reflection; and individual task lighting in areas for close

\(^2\) BS 8300: 2001 indicates that universally recognised symbols should be used to replace text, as an essential aid for people with learning difficulties. Where other types of pictograms and symbols are used these should be supplemented by text, and not used in isolation. The BS provides some examples. Further information on public information symbols can be found in BS 6034 and the RNIB publication Building Sight.
study to enable the user to control the intensity and direction of a light source
• avoid violent transitions in lighting levels

In relation to décor you need to:

• consider using colour as a means of assisting orientation, for instance, using one colour for the floor surface to denote areas of public circulation
• consider using changes of floor finish in a similar way as colour
• provide adequate contrast between doors, walls, floors and ceilings, and between furniture and the background against which it will be viewed
• distinguish between trims such as coving, skirting boards, architrave, dado and handrails, door handles, finger and kick plates by use of colour, tonal and textural contrast
• ensure that vertical door edges in particular are strongly contrasted against the walls and remainder of the door
• ensure that free-standing objects and furniture are sufficiently differentiated to the floor and wall surfaces and other backgrounds
• ensure that sanitary ware contrasts against the wall colour and tiling

It should be noted that a significant proportion of the male population (over 10% compared to women at 0.1%) has difficulty in distinguishing red/green or blue/yellow. People with the visual impairment retinitis pigmentosa also have difficulty reading red displays. Furthermore, red is associated with warning notices. If used for other information visually impaired people in particular may fail to notice important signs. It may be wise to avoid using such colours and combinations liberally.

Full glass doors and full height, large areas of glazing can present particular access barriers for some disabled people. You need to:
• provide logos or safety markings at eye level (approximately 1,500mm from floor level for adults) and ideally at two heights to include the eye level of wheelchair users and children of approximately 1,200mm to make them visible).

Physical access – not the only answer
Good physical access is important, but it is not the only answer. If a D&DA provider does not yet have good physical access it does not mean that they cannot work with disabled people. As can be seen from other sections of this publication, disabled people vary considerably in their needs and requirements. Many have no physical access needs at all.

More important than physical access is a genuine commitment to inclusion. In repeated surveys, disabled people identify the negative attitudes held by others as a larger barrier for them than poor physical access.