

Additional information

This guide is subject to reviews and updates, and from time to time supplementary pages will be sent to you to be included in the folder in this section.

Emergency and evacuation procedures

Venue organisers and managers are responsible for the safety of all staff, visitors and members of the public within their buildings. It is essential that strategies are in place to ensure that the building can be successfully evacuated in case of fire or other emergencies. These strategies must satisfy current legislation and have the approval of the appropriate authorities. Consideration of evacuation of disabled people should form part of the venue's risk assessment procedures.

Procedures must be written down, rehearsed and revised at regular intervals. A basic easy to read information sheet should be readily available for whoever is on duty.

The assessment and procedures should cover:

- communicating to disabled audience members / artists / staff / visitors
- alarm signals, both audible and visual and vibration devices
- audible public address messages
- alarm points (ideally 950mm above floor level with a hammer to break glass)
- reuniting blind people with guide dogs where necessary
- returning wheelchairs to wheelchair transfer patrons where necessary (see below)
- safe escape routes from the building, (this could be from your office / rehearsal room / workshop / performance venue / gallery or a venue you visit)
- accessibility of fire doors
- emergency exits
- use of lifts (see below)
- refuge points (see below)
- provision of evacuation equipment (for example evacuation chairs) and the training of staff in how to use the equipment
- emergency lighting
- signage to refuge areas and to exits
- accessible provision of fire extinguishers and blankets
- designated assembly points
- how and where to obtain additional help, particularly in non traditional performance venues
- staffing (see below)
- training (see below)

- personal emergency evacuation plans for disabled employees (covering their prime location and any sublocations, awareness of procedures, emergency alarms (hearing / seeing and triggering), assistance, getting out of all appropriate exits)
- the reporting of any emergencies
- the monitoring of the success of the evacuation and any points to learn

Wheelchair transfer patrons

Staff should ensure that people who transfer to a venue seat have their wheelchairs accommodated next to them so that it is possible to get out quickly in an emergency. Wheelchairs should only be taken away if there is insufficient room for the wheelchair to be kept beside the user.

Use of lifts

Many lifts stop or cannot be used in the event of a fire. Ideally you should have an emergency independent power supply that has been approved by a fire officer.

The lift should be of the correct dimensions, with Braille / tactile buttons, a voice announcer, two-way communication and a visual / audible reassurance that an alarm call has been answered. A flip-up seat in the lift car is helpful for a wide range of disabled and older people, especially in the event of lift failure.

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.

Refuge points

If your lift has not been installed as an evacuation lift for disabled people you will need refuge spaces (at least 1,100mm x 1,400mm) on each floor for the appropriate number of wheelchair users and a means of communication between the people using the refuge space and the rescue services or staff. Have fold down or evacuation seats at the refuges for people with mobility difficulties who are not wheelchair users. Ensure that there is

emergency lighting in the refuge places and that the doors to the refuge points have approved smoke seals and automatic closers.

Staffing

There needs to be sufficient numbers of nominated competent trained personnel to manage a successful evacuation.

The event organisers or building managers need to consider the number of people trained in assisting with the evacuation of disabled people required to be on duty at any one time.

Clear roles and lines of responsibility for dealing with any emergency incident and bringing the situation under control need to be communicated to all staff.

Training

The management needs to plan frequent drills and training in evacuation for disabled people; and to include regular briefings at induction or during housekeeping for meetings, as a training session may not be scheduled in time to deal with an emergency or drill.

Nominated staff should have training in manual handling, crowd control and first aid.

It is essential that knowledge is passed on where there is a high turnover of staff and there are many casual staff and volunteers.

If you have disabled arts practitioners working within your building, (including writers' groups, youth theatre, workshop participants and so on) do you explain emergency and evacuation procedures to them on their first visit?

Particular areas of concern when planning your evacuation strategy include:

- stairways
- slopes
- dead ends
- points where two routes converge
- uneven or slippery flooring, steps or ground

Building a relationship with your local fire officer is always a positive move. Many fire authorities now have access / disability officers who can offer advice in developing your evacuation strategy. Licensing restrictions, such as the number of wheelchair users allowed, can be challenged and amended for one-off projects and events where more than the specified numbers are likely to seek access. This should be discussed with your fire officer and a contingency evacuation procedure drawn up.

Further reading:

Disability access: a good practice guide for the arts

www.artscouncil.org.uk

British Standard Code of Practice BS: 9999, BS5588 part 8, BS8300: 2001 - Section 7.3.2 - Fire doors (see section between note 2 and note 3 especially)

www.bsi-global.com

Health and safety executive publications

www.hse.gov.uk

Additional organisations and websites

Key national organisations

The Access Association

Walsall MBC

Civic Centre

Darwell Street

Walsall WS1 1TP

Phone: 01922 652010

www.accessassociation.co.uk

The Access Association aims to improve access and facilities for disabled people. The association was formed in response to the need to network and support professionals, whose primary responsibility was to promote and facilitate accessible environments and services for all, including people with disabilities.

Access Committee for England (ACE)

Now the RADAR Access Advisory Committee (RAAC)

RADAR

12 City Forum

250 City Road

London EC1V 8AF

Phone: 020 7250 3222

www.radar.org.uk

RADAR's vision is of a society where human difference is routinely anticipated, expertly accommodated and positively celebrated. Our mission is to promote change by empowering disabled people to achieve their rights and expectations; and by influencing the way that disabled people are viewed as members of society.

Action for Blind People

14-16 Verney Road

London SE16 3DZ

Phone: 020 7635 4800

www.afbp.org

Action for Blind People enables blind and partially sighted people to transform their lives through work, housing, leisure and support. We offer a wide range of services to visually impaired people, their families, advocates, professionals and the general public.

National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC)
Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London SE1 2NY
Phone: 020 7234 0434
www.nrac.org.uk

National Federation of the Blind
Sir John Wilson House
215 Kirkgate
Wakefield WF1 1JG
Phone: 01924 291313
www.nfbuk.org

As an organisation of people who are blind or partially sighted we are uniquely qualified to campaign for better service provision and an enhanced quality of life for all blind and partially sighted people.

Additional websites

To contact disabled artists:
www.the-arthouse.org.uk

For information on accessible galleries:
www.goodgalleryguide.com

For information about sign language interpreted events:

Music and the Deaf
www.matd.org.uk

Association of Sign Language Interpreters
www.asli.org.uk/

The Royal Association for Deaf People
www.royaldeaf.org.uk

For information about access for deaf people:

Vee Limited
www.vee-limited.demon.co.uk

For information about lip-speakers:

www.lipspeaking.co.uk

For diaries of assisted (accessible) performances:

www.theatreaccess.co.uk

www.tmauk.org

Amendments

With reference to steps on pages 81 and 89:

Stairs are most accessible when the nosing strip of each step is in a contrasting tone / colour to the tread (and ideally the risers should be of a different colour to the treads).

With reference to doors on page 90:

Doors need a minimum width of 1,100mm (between door stops) when fully open. Double doors should have at least one door of this width.

