

A correctly developed access statement will provide an opportunity for everyone involved with the management (and procurement and design where appropriate) of buildings to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring accessibility to the buildings and the services they provide or the employment opportunities they create.

The form of an access statement and the level of detail it will contain will vary according to the size, nature and complexity of the building or premises. Access statements should be seen as location specific, although there will be some elements common to most.

The access statement should be a 'live' document. For a new development, or extension or alteration of existing premises, the statement will record and explain decisions on accessibility associated with the planning, design and ongoing management stages of the project. It will also be a convenient vehicle to explain how particular design decisions, or particular constraints of existing premises, that do not follow published best practice still try to meet obligations of 'reasonable provision'.

By developing a document which passes to those who will undertake the long term management of the premises, the access statement process will assist in ensuring that the evolving duty placed on service providers and employers under the DDA can be better addressed.

Content

An access statement should contain:

- A statement of the policy and approach to access with particular reference to inclusion of disabled people.
- A description of how sources of information on accessibility and technical issues have been, and will be, followed.
- Details of any consultation undertaken or planned with diverse user groups and what effect the comments have had.
- Details of any professional advice followed.
- An explanation of specific issues affecting access.
- Details of measures taken to deal with those issues, particularly if they deviate from recognised good practice.
- Details of management and maintenance policies for features which enhance accessibility (e.g. lighting, visual contrast, door closing devices).
- A plan of the premises showing horizontal and vertical travel routes into and around the building, and location of car parks, public transport and the like.
- Where good practice is not being followed, an explanation of why not, the effect on users of the premises, and the measures to be taken to lessen the impact.

Building work

Stage 1 - Strategic access statement

At the project brief stage of any new development, or extension or alteration of existing premises, an access statement should be produced. At this stage, it should contain:

- The level to which access is considered in the management processes of the developer.
- An overview of the relevant legislation.
- What guidance will be followed.
- How accessibility issues will be addressed at the design, construction and ongoing management stages of the development.

Stage 2 - Access statement for planning

This next stage should include and build on the Stage 1 access statement. It should develop issues raised earlier and might include:

- Details of the size, scale and potential uses included in the development.
- Details of siting of buildings, gradients of site, possible conflict between people and cars, cycles and the like.
- What access issues have been considered.
- More detailed information about the guidance which has been used in arriving at the proposed design.
- Details of any consultation undertaken, the responses, and what effect they have had on the design.
- Information about any professional advice taken.
- The availability of public and other transport links.
- Details of the accessibility of those links.
- Details of the information, training and communication strategies for the development.

Stage 3 - Access Statement at the Detailed Design Stage

Stage 3 will build on the previous two stages and will deal with most of the same issues in much greater detail. Where the previous stages may have dealt with issues of principle, this stage will identify the more detailed nature of the design.

It should describe in detail which guidance and legislative standards have been adopted as the basis for design decisions. These may include, for example, references to clauses in Approved Document M, BS 8300, the Sign Design Guide, DRC Codes of Practice, and relevant other sections of Buildings Regulations, such as Part B (Fire Safety) and Part K (Protection from falling, collision and impact).

At this stage it is important to demonstrate the scope and quality of the guidance chosen. In some cases, such as with the Approved Document M or BS 8300, the quality and scope will be obvious. For some other guidance sources adopted, a brief resume of the guidance should also be given.

It is important to fully explore those design issues which deviate from the details published in established guidance as good or best practice. The statement should explain the reasons why the proposal deviates from guidance and the design team's justification that the resultant accessibility standard will be as good as, or better than, the guidance.

In alterations to existing buildings, the statement should identify any areas in which the ability to meet minimum levels of accessibility is restricted. Details should be given of what solutions will be put in place to lessen the impact for disabled people. These may include managerial and procedural solutions as well as physical ones.

It would be helpful to include Access Statements from suppliers of services and equipment demonstrating their strategic aims and objectives for the accessibility of

their products or installations for the project (for example, the provision of audible and visual fire alarm systems).

An outline should be provided of the accessibility issues which will need to be addressed by managers and decision makers in the post construction phases.

Stage 4 - The Occupancy Access Statement.

This access statement will draw on all of the previous statements and will demonstrate the commitment to the ongoing maintenance of measures which have been introduced in the original design to enhance accessibility.

Issues covered might include:

- Policies to ensure the appropriate maintenance of internal and external environments such as pedestrian routes.
- An acknowledgement of those areas that were introduced into the original design to improve, or create, accessibility and for which on-going management and maintenance will be required. These might include, for example, the need to ensure ongoing colour and luminance contrast in future changes in colour scheming, the need to maintain lighting levels, ongoing appraisal of information to potential users, and staff training.
- Details of a suitable management approach to the ongoing maintenance of essential facilities such as lifts, stair lifts, induction loops etc., and evidence of the management practices and policies that have been put in place to ensure appropriate prioritisation of repairs and maintenance.

This guide is produced by the Access Officers of Brighton & Hove City Council, Eastbourne BC, Hastings BC, Lewes DC, Rother DC and Wealden DC