

DISABILITY ACCESS.

MAKING CHAMBERS ACCESSIBLE

The following are recommendations arising out of access assessments of two chambers by C. Wycliffe Noble of RADAR and comments by the Disability Subgroup of the Bar:

- Identify and reserve a parking bay close to chambers for use by disabled people. The bay should be at least 3.5 metres wide by 6 metres long and clearly marked.
- Ensure that there are dropped kerbs on any pavements between the parking bay and chambers. Use 'tac-tiles' or other pavement features to enable blind/partially sighted people to distinguish the pavement and the parking bay.
- Make sure that the main door is clearly marked so that it can easily be identified from the pavement by a visually impaired person and from the road by a taxi driver
- Provide call bell outside chambers' premises accessible to someone in a wheelchair or CCTV camera over entrance. If an entryphone/intercom is used, include a flashing light or other visual alert to indicate that call has been picked up and that door is unlocked – to ensure accessibility for deaf people who will not be able to use the intercom itself.
- External doors should have a minimum width of 800mm. Glass doors should have features enabling blind/partially sighted people to distinguish the door/doorway. The door closer should be set so that the effort to open the door from the outside or inside is about the same as the effort required to lift a 2 kilogram weight.

- Provide permanent or temporary ramped access, if necessary. Ramps should have a gradient between 1:12 and 1:20. In general all surfaces ought to be firm durable, non-slip with maximum undulations 3mm in 1000mm.
- Nosings of external steps to and from the pavement should be in a strong colour such as white or yellow
- Handrails should be provided where there are any steps and it is advisable that the handrails curve into the wall at either end. Handrails should not stop before the top or bottom step.
- The main Visitor Reception point should be well lit and have an induction loop. Any associated waiting area should include seating at ordinary chair height for those with limited mobility, and space for wheelchair users.
- Staff with main client and member contact responsibility should undertake disability awareness training.
- Pedestrian routes should be protected from hazards, and all traffic routes within chambers should be clear at all times.
- Steps and staircases must be well lit, preferably from the side in order to assist people with visual impairments. In addition the nosing strip of each step should be in a contrasting colour to the tread. Ideally, the risers should be of a different colour to the treads. A textured floor surface at the top and bottom of staircases will provide a tactile indication for visually impaired people. Stairways should have rails at heights of 800mm and 500mm on both sides running the entire length.

- Where lifts are provided they should be large enough to accommodate a power wheelchair. The internal dimensions should be a minimum of 1100mm x 1400mm and the control buttons to the lift between 900mm and 1200mm from the lift floor. The lift control buttons should be embossed in Braille or at least tactile. Ideally, lifts should have an audible floor indicator. All lifts should have an emergency telephone or button that is reachable by a person in a wheelchair. Any printed emergency procedures should be in large print and if possible also in Braille. The call operator for the emergency telephone should be trained to assist deaf people without vocal speech. There should be the provision of a mirror to allow wheelchair users to see behind.
- Any point of change of direction, vertically or horizontally, should be well lit and marked.
- The position of door security mechanisms (such as number pads and internal lock release buttons) should be marked in contrasting colours from the surrounds, the buttons large enough to be easily used, and (if numbers are used) the number 5 should have a tactile mark.
- Rooms should be well lit (but without glare) to assist people with a hearing impairment, and noise (such as noisy fans and other equipment) should be minimised or eliminated as this can create communication barriers for visually impaired people.
- Unisex WC's should meet the minimum standards for dimensions of 1500mm wide x 2000mm long. Do not use small or difficult to use locks, and try to ensure that at least one cubicle has wall mounted grab rails for support.

- Accessible conference room facilities should provide either an induction loop or infrared system for the hard of hearing. Tables and chairs should be in colours which contrast with the floor and walls, and there should be power points available preferably set in the floor. The exit door should be in a colour which contrasts with the surrounding walls.
- Key doors (such as those for toilets, Conference Rooms, Clerks Room, the way out and the Fire Exit) should be clearly marked with large pictograms or contrasting colours, so that they can be quickly and easily identified by visually impaired persons.
- Fire regulations should be amended to provide evacuation procedures for disabled staff or clients who may be within chambers, and comply with British Standards.
- Handrails and nosings on Fire Exit stairs should be treated as external or internal stairs (see above) so that visually impaired persons can exit independently leaving Fire Marshalls free to assist others
- Staff should be briefed to enquire whether any client has disability access needs, and, if any, to make reasonable adjustments for these.
- A public service website **www.cast.org** advises on how to make your website accessible to disabled people.
- Consider using textphone (minicom), Braille, enlarged print and tapes and ensuring that internal communications are in a suitable accessible format.