

# Inclusive spaces



'Accessibility allows us to tap into everyone's potential.'

Debra Ruh, global disability inclusion strategist

## Physical space

Employers and businesses owners should think carefully about how their physical spaces can accommodate people with differing needs. This can include considering reasonable adjustments to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to facilities and services. Elements of the built environment such as entrances, signage, amenities, lighting and acoustics should all be considered when making modifications to support greater access for everyone.

At the start of a building project everyone involved in the design, construction, and management of buildings should consider accessibility.

This should be done in partnership with people with disabilities. Involving users in the design and decision-making processes will allow organisations to create more inclusive environments from the outset.

In the UK, the [Equality Act 2010](#) imposes specific accessibility duties on service providers and those involved in the construction, modification or refurbishment of buildings. Individuals with disabilities must not be treated less favourably and, where providing a service, businesses must take reasonable steps to remove or minimise any barriers that prevent or restrict access.

## Tools



Steelcase: [Blueprint for inclusive workplaces of the future](#)



National Register of Access Consultants: [Find a member](#)



RICS Journals: [How to enable accessible public realm – and why](#)



Modus: [Spatial equality: challenging 'default-male' design](#)



## Virtual space

Your organisation should take proactive steps to ensure that your digital platforms and services are accessible, inclusive and free from discriminatory practices.

This may include conducting accessibility audits, providing alternative formats for digital content, implementing robust policies against online harassment, and promoting diversity and inclusion in online spaces.

The protections set out in the Equality Act also extend to the digital environment, ensuring that individuals are not subjected to unfair treatment or discrimination on online platforms, websites and digital services.

## Website accessibility

The act requires service providers to ensure their websites and digital platforms are accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes making reasonable adjustments to enable people with visual impairments, hearing impairments, cognitive disabilities or other disabilities to access and navigate digital content.

## Online services and goods

The act prohibits service providers from discriminating against individuals based on protected characteristics when providing online services, selling goods or delivering digital products. This includes ensuring equal access and treatment for all individuals, regardless of their characteristics.

### Tools



The [Web content accessibility guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) are recommendations for making content accessible for people with disabilities. The site also includes guidelines for where content is viewed on devices other than desktops (e.g. mobiles) or accessed by a keyboard for users with visual impairments.

## Events for clients

Events are an integral part of the built environment, but as much as they can bring people together they can make people feel excluded.

- Form a planning committee that represents different backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. This ensures that various viewpoints are considered and incorporated into the event planning process.
- Ensure that the event agenda includes a diverse range of speakers and presenters. Incorporate a variety of perspectives and topics to create a well-rounded and inclusive programme.
- Encourage attendees to share their pronouns during registration or on name badges. Include pronouns in event materials and encourage presenters and organisers to use inclusive language and pronouns when addressing participants.
- Think about the practicalities: will people with caring responsibilities be able to join you? Is the location accessible? Is there parking nearby? Is there step-free access for the venue and for public transport?
- Use inclusive language and imagery for the event invitations, marketing materials and announcements. Make sure that the event information is clear, concise and available in multiple formats (e.g. printed, electronic and audio) to accommodate different needs.
- Take into account different dietary needs and preferences when planning meals and refreshments. Ask for dietary requirements in advance if you can and provide a variety of options, including vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free and halal or kosher choices. Clearly label food items with allergen information.
- Where alcohol is available at events ensure that non-alcoholic beverages and food are also provided.
- Ask if any attendees have access requirements ahead of the event. Provide language interpreters or captioning services for individuals with hearing impairments if requested. Use large print materials or assistive technologies for individuals with visual impairments and designate quiet spaces for individuals who may need a break or have sensory sensitivities.



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