

Working Together For Equality

Accessibility in the Workplace

It is fundamental to people with disabilities that disability is recognised as an equality issue. Do not let yourself be a barrier to disability equality



MINISTRY OF EQUALITY

HM Government of Gibraltar

**“Gibraltar; everybody different,
everybody equal”**

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Note to readers:

The typeface, font (Arial 14) and left justification applied in this booklet has been used in order for the content to be legible to more readers. In addition, this booklet has been printed on matt paper in order to reduce reflective surfaces. This booklet is also available electronically.

Introduction

Developing and improving accessibility in the working environment is important, not just because it is the right thing to do, it helps to expand diversity and improve the recruitment, hire and retention of employees with disabilities.

Making your services, information, websites and premises more accessible to customers with disabilities ensures equal access to all.

This booklet sets out main pointers which will be of assistance to making your workplace inclusive to people with impairments.

Pre Arrival Information

Your office website should include not only the opening days, times and services provided but should also provide information on what the potential visitor to the premises can expect when they arrive, including if the premises are accessible. If there is more than one entrance, the location of the accessible entrance should be specified.

‘Accessible’ includes accessibility to and within the building where the office is located and within the actual office itself.

Details of the accessible route to the building should be provided, including the nearest Blue Badge parking bay/s and/or public parking area available, where lifts are located and nearest entrance to lift location(s).

The provision of accessible toilets may be a crucial requirement for people with disabilities (visible and non-visible) when visiting the office. This information should therefore be part of what is included on the office website.

If accessible toilets are available it is equally important to update the website when this facility is not available. This will permit potential visitors to make alternative arrangements. Faults within accessible toilets need to be repaired immediately.

Website

The internet is an increasingly important resource in many aspects of life: education, employment, government, commerce, health care, recreation, and

more. It is essential that the website is accessible in order to provide equal access and equal opportunity to people with disabilities.

Website accessibility means that the website's tools and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them. More specifically, people should:

- Perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the website.
- Contribute to the website.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) provides a full explanation of all principles and requirements in relation to websites.
(<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>)

WCAG 2.0 is an internationally recognised set of recommendations for improving web accessibility. It explains how to make digital services accessible to everyone, including users with impairments to their:

Sight - includes blind, partially sighted or colour blind people.

Hearing - includes people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Mobility/dexterity - includes those who find it difficult to use a mouse or keyboard.

Thinking and understanding – includes people with dyslexia, autism or learning difficulties.

Digital Display Information Screens

For the purposes of ensuring that digital information screens displays are useful to all visitors there are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration.

There is a need to ensure that displays are within sight of people of all heights or wheelchair users. In order for the screen to be visible, the user's line of sight should be unobstructed and the screen should be positioned at an angle so that the display can be clearly read by everyone. Visitors' disabilities and eye height ranges may have a direct impact on their ability to view and read the typeface, font and text size. Wheelchair users often have an eye height as low as 1.15m.

Check for glare on the screen from a range of positions. Anti-glare displays can help reduce the problem of reflected light. The physical design of the screen casing can also help by blocking light from reaching the screen.

To accommodate as many visitors as possible to read the displayed information, the scrolling text speed needs to be reasonably paced.

There should be a distinctive contrast between the display's background and the colour of the text.

Highly stylised typefaces and italics can be difficult for some people to read. Strong sans-serif font such as Arial are easier to read.

Bold type may be used but all capital letters in words should be avoided, similarly, underlining.

Left justification text is easier to read and words should be spaced evenly.

For ease of reading leave a space between paragraphs.

Avoid using colour shading, text over images and patterned backgrounds.

Accessibility to the Building where Office is Located

People with disabilities often plan their journeys meticulously to ensure that their access needs can be met. Therefore, every effort should be made to communicate up to date information.

Customers with impairments should ideally be able to enter the building by the same entrance as other customers.

Entrance

Features should be installed to make the entrance prominent, for example colour contrasting doors and/or door frames.

Entrances which are not obvious should be additionally highlighted with signage and lighting.

Consider floor marking colour scheme from entrance to reception area and different counters/ section within the office.

Signage

Signs that are clear and easy to read with sufficient colour contrast and an appropriate typeface and type size can be read more easily by many visually impaired people as well as non impaired.

Signs should also:

- Have a high contrast between text and sign background.
- Have a high contrast between the sign and the surface on which it is located (in the case of house style signs where the signboard colour is fixed it will be necessary to provide a contrasting border around the sign).
- Have a matt finish.
- Be well lit to ensure optimum legibility, without glare.
- Be positioned consistently, so people know where to find each type of information.

- Be fixed in such a way that neither the sign nor its supports become a hazard to visually impaired people.
- Use a clear unembellished (sans-serif) typeface, e.g. Helvetica or Arial.
- Use sentence case (not all capitals), even in headings.
- Headings could be a larger size and mildly emboldened not underlined.
- Use left aligned (not justified) text.
- Have letter heights that are large enough.

Making lifts accessible to blind and partially sighted

Even for blind people who can read braille, the labels are far from optimal. Under even the best of conditions it can take a long time to read, but when entering an elevator for the first time the blind person must be able to:

- Locate the button panel

- Locate and read a braille label on the panel
- Work out the layout of the buttons, locate the desired label
- Locate and press the corresponding button.

Clearly, this will take time and within that time, the chances are that the lift doors will have closed and it may well be on its way to another floor having been summoned from there and the blind person would be on his or her way to a floor other than the intended destination.

A momentary audible announcement in the lift will enable the blind or partially visually impaired to be aware of each storey reached. It is therefore important to ensure that lift voice chips are in working order and faults reported immediately.

Steps to Entrance

If there are steps at the entrance of the premises, consideration should be given to the provision of:

External ramps, internal ramps, portable ramp, alternative entrance with clear signage and an established management policy.

If access is impossible, then the provision of the service via alternative method should be established as a management policy.

Handrails

Handrails help people to use steps and ramps safely. Where steps and/or ramps lead up to front doors or to entrances to buildings, handrails should be provided. These handrails should have an easy grip with the support brackets not interfering with a person's hand being run along the rail. The handrail should contrast in colour and luminance with its background, with the ends designed so as not to catch clothing, and extend horizontally beyond the top and bottom. The same criteria applies to internal handrails.

External Ramps to Entrance

If access is via a ramp, the ramp gradient must be suitable for a person who uses a wheelchair. The ramp surface should be slip resistant even when wet and contrast visually with its landing and upstands.

Handrails also need to be available.

The landing at the top and bottom of the ramp should be clear of any door swings or other obstructions and with sufficient wheelchair manoeuvring space.

Accessible identification signage to identify the accessible entrance should be clearly signposted : 'Accessible Entrance'.

Entrance Steps

If the entrance is via steps there should be the provision of warning of steps. This may be by the provision of tactile warning or corduroy. Ideally, steps should be slip resistant and appropriate nosing should be included.

Handrails also need to be available.

Door Matting

So as to make the route easier for people with mobility and visual impairments and for people who use wheelchairs, ensure that door mattings are set into the mat well and not loose.

Heavy Doors

Opening heavy doors may pose a difficulty for people with reduced function of arms and hands. For example, people who use wheelchair or walking aids. Check if door closers may be adjusted so as to make access easier.

Glass Doors, Glazed Wall and Balustrade Screens

People with visual impairments may have difficulty in noticing glass. For the purposes of preventing accidents and confident navigation two colour manifestations which can be seen from all directions would greatly assist.

Toilets

The provision of accessible toilet facilities is a fundamental and crucial part of inclusive service delivery.

What is an Accessible Toilet?

An accessible toilet is designed to meet the majority of needs of independent wheelchair users and

people with mobility impairments, as well as the additional requirements of people with bowel and bladder conditions (such as colostomy bag users). It also helps people with other physical conditions such as impaired dexterity and grip, balance and other conditions where physical support from grab rails or the presence of an emergency alarm are helpful.

Who Needs an Accessible Toilet?

There are many reasons why an individual might have a need for an accessible toilet facility, including permanent disabilities (visible and non-visible), intermittent medical conditions and short-term impairments during recovery.

What is the Difference Between Accessible and Ambulant Accessible?

An accessible toilet is designed to accommodate different transfer preferences of wheelchair users and therefore requires more space than a standard or ambulant accessible toilet. In addition to a higher toilet pan and grab rails, it is fitted with shelves (for colostomy and general use) and a basin with lever or sensor taps. It has an emergency alarm facility for

assistance. A right hand transfer is the more common need but where more than one accessible toilet is provided, alternating transfer hands should be offered.

An ambulant accessible toilet is similar in size to a standard toilet facility or cubicle but it has a higher toilet pan, grab rails and usually an outward opening door. It will not accommodate a wheelchair user and has no facilities for colostomy bag users.

Key Management Recommendations on Accessible Toilets

The following recommendations should form part of an overall good office management policy:

Accessible toilets should never be used for miscellaneous storage.

Lighting that is triggered by movement can be dangerous in an accessible toilet, as the person with the disability may not have sufficient movement ability to trigger the lights if they go out.

Cleaning staff should have induction training to ensure they understand the need to keep transfer zones, cistern tops and shelves in accessible WCs clear at all times and never to tie up alarm pull cords.

Boxing in of pipes etc. and the addition of vanity units around basins can compromise important reach and spatial needs. Maintenance, refurbishment and decoration of toilet facilities should be scheduled in advance, at times to minimise inconvenience.

If an accessible toilet is out of order, it is extremely important to report the fault immediately practicable.

Accessibility within your premises

From Entrance to Reception and Desk/Area

Is the space between the entrance and reception desk clear of obstructions?

Is there signage that indicates the location of the reception?

Is the reception area well lit to enable people with hearing impairments to lip read easily?

Is the space under desks or counters free from clutter to enable people who use wheelchairs to get close enough to fill and/or sign forms?

Seating

Different types of seating should be provided so as to

cater to the various requirements of people with disabilities. There should be seating with and without armrests at different seat heights and seating area should be inclusive of space for people who use a wheelchair.

Accessible Reception and Service Counters

Service counters may be desks or counter spaces where people have face-to-face conversations with staff.

Accessible service counters need to cater for people who use mobility aids, such as wheelchairs. The area should be low enough to allow the person with a disability to interact with the person providing the service. There should also be enough room under the counter for the knees of a person sitting on a wheelchair and for people with disabilities who are partnered with an assistance dog may both comfortably access the counter.

Counter Induction Loops

Assistive listening devices are required for any environment where audible communication is integral

to the service. Hearing Loops are the preferred assistive listening system by most people who are have hearing impairments, as they are discreet and generate a hearing experience specific to the individual's needs (the user's hearing aid is set up to deliver the volume and frequency range personally required by each individual).

Be mindful that the magnetic field produced by a Counter Loop can 'spill' onto adjacent areas causing interference with other loops nearby. However, it is possible to install Counter Loops directly next to each other depending on the counter dimensions and field spill, a professional should calculate this.

A label notifying that an induction facility is installed and available should be clearly visible to customers.

Portable Induction Loops

A portable hearing induction loop system amplifies sound in a certain area for people who use hearing aids. Installing an induction loop system will help anyone with hearing aids pick up sound and greatly improve their quality of listening by reducing or cutting out background noise.

Public places may have an induction loop installed permanently, but, of course, there are times and places where an induction loop is needed, but not installed, that is where a portable induction loop will provide a service.

British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters

BSL involves a combination of hand signs and movements, lip patterns, facial expressions and shoulder movements. It has its own grammar and is structured in a completely different way to English.

Oral communication can be an important part of a service and, for some Deaf people the provision of BSL interpreters as part of a service is essential. For this reason, HM Government of Gibraltar (HMGoG) entered into an agreement with a company for the purposes of the provision of Language Service Professionals for Government Departments.

Deaf persons who require services such as BSL interpreters, Lip speakers, etc. should make a request to the relevant department. The department then completes the online booking form to make the request. There is a need to book with as much advance notice as possible to minimise non-availability.

This subscription could also be considered by large organisations. There are also various apps available that provide a similar function.

Written Communications/Forms

Printed materials can be a significant barrier for people who have visual impairments. Therefore, it is important to have alternative format options available, typically in the form of large print and an audio format whereby the person is able to access the information as and when required.

When possible, ask the recipient which format he/she prefers.

The original publication should nonetheless include information about alternative formats that are available.

Making Print Accessible

Simply making information available in written format may not be sufficient for a person who is partially sighted. Other factors need to be noted:

Fonts

Make body text 14 point or larger (as used in this booklet).

Use a strong sans-serif font such as Arial (as used in this booklet).

Avoid highly stylised or simulated handwriting and typefaces.

Typefaces are available in different weights. Avoid light options because there is less ink to provide the contrast between paper and text.

Avoid italics, which can make text difficult to read for some people.

Bold type can be used to emphasise particular text.

Avoid using all capital letters in words. The human eye reads by recognising the shapes of words and a word in all caps interferes with this recognition.

Other design characteristics

Numbers are more difficult to read than words.

Use a typeface that makes numerals distinct, or use words instead.

Line length should be about 60–70 characters and avoid underlining.

Align text to the left-hand margin and avoid right-justified text.

The space between lines should be at least 1.5 and twice the space between words.

Words should be evenly spaced.

Make sure there is a strong contrast between the text and the background.

Use plenty of white space around text and images and separate the different elements of the page.

Avoid using text over images or a patterned background.

Avoid using colour shading and screens that reduce the contrast between the text and background.

To accentuate particular pieces of text, use white space or boxes.

Leave a space between paragraphs for ease of reading.

Avoid fitting text surrounding an image, this means lines of text starting in different places around the image, these are difficult to find.

Paper

Use matt or satin paper rather than glossy paper.

Binding

Printed documents should open flat.

Inclusion of Accessibility Requirements as Part of Office Procurement of Goods and Services

It is always advisable to consider accessibility from the earliest stage when deciding to procure an item and/or service. When accessibility is considered too late in the process, it may not be possible to address fundamental barriers.



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