



# **Accessible Facilities and Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act**

## **Guidance Notes for RFU Clubs**

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Information given in the shaded boxes is provided for general guidance based on the best practice recommendations of BS 8300:2001, 'Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of Practice'.

## 1. Preface

Disability is a part of everyday life, varying in degree, diversity and distribution, and will more than likely affect most people to a greater or lesser extent at some point in their lives. Some 20% of the UK population have a disability or impairment that is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA).

Funded by the government and Sport England, a key aim of the RFU Community Club Development Programme (CCDP) and equity programmes is to increase participation in rugby union among people with disabilities.

Accessible facilities may potentially attract more people into the game which, in turn, will bring benefit to clubs. Equally, the enhancement of facilities will be beneficial for all people who access the service and the facility.

The principal entrance should be accessible to disabled people



## 2. Introduction

At the RFU 2003 AGM, the newly elected RFU President, Robert Horner, announced his theme for the year as being inclusion.

The DDA 2004 is placing statutory obligations on clubs to promote access to their facilities. In the spirit of the President's theme, the RFU and RLF have produced these best practice guidance notes for our member clubs.

Clubs must be entirely responsible for their obligations under the Act. However, we hope that this note will point you in the right direction and reassure you. As long as you are proactive and responsible, you should not face major expenditure on modifications to your facilities in the short term.

Failure to respond to the Act may have implications for the club and its officers.

We wish to thank the Wooden Spoon Society for sponsoring this important piece of community work.



**Steve Farr**  
RFU Equity  
and Ethics Manager



**Peter Grace**  
RFU Council Member:  
Facilities

## 3. Legal framework

The DDA (Part III), effective from 1st October 2004, places obligations on those who provide goods, facilities and services to the public (service providers) to take reasonable steps to modify physical features of premises which currently make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use the service.

RFU club sports facilities, clubhouses, spectator stands, car parks, access routes and associated facilities should be available for the use of **every** potential user.

Statutory and current best practice guidance concerned with promoting accessible facilities include:

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Part III (coming into effect on 1st October 2004)
- The Building Regulations 2000: Approved Document M 2004 Edition (came into effect on 1st May 2004)
- BS 8300:2001, 'Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of Practice'
- RFU Facilities Development Strategy
- RFU Equity Policy and Equity Action Plan
- Sport England Equity Policy

The goods and services provisions of the DDA (Part III) do not apply to private clubs where "membership is a condition of participation and members have to comply with a genuine process of selection". **However, the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR) advises that this definition is unlikely to cover the majority of voluntary sports clubs**, particularly those who might hire their facilities to other agencies and those who have received funding from external agencies, e.g. Sport England. Legally, it may be difficult to prove that a club is not providing a service within the meaning of the Act.

## 4. RFU best practice

The RFU has an Equity Policy which encourages an inclusive approach at all levels of the game. Within the RFU President's commitment to inclusion, the DDA Part III has to be considered 'good practice' for all RFU member clubs, who should review their facilities in light of the forthcoming legal requirements. However, it also has to be recognised that all service providers may not have totally accessible facilities by October 2004. **In terms of the spirit of the law, clubs need to demonstrate that they have acknowledged the change in legislation**, perhaps through an internal audit of the facility, and be aware of any changes that need to be **"reasonably"** undertaken to ensure compliance.

High gloss finishes should be avoided on walls, ceilings, doors and floors

There is no definitive explanation of "reasonable". The law uses this phrase to give some flexibility and allow different solutions in different situations. The Code of Practice advises that "reasonable" may vary according to:

- The type of service provided
- The nature of the service provider and its size and resources
- The effect of the disability on the individual disabled person

Paths from disabled parking spaces should be level and of a firm, durable material

Some factors when considering what is reasonable are:

- Whether taking such measures would be effective in overcoming the difficulties that disabled people face in accessing the service and facility
- The extent to which it is practicable for the service provider to take the steps
- The full cost implications of making the adjustments
- The amount of disruption caused by taking the steps
- Money already spent on making the adjustments
- The availability of finance and other assistance

Information on facilities should be made available to users prior to arrival

## 5. Implications for clubs

Rugby clubs vary in size and resource and when considering any adjustments which may need to be reasonably made, this needs to be taken into account. For example, a small local club running two teams would not be expected to make the same provisions as a large club which is run commercially and is hiring its facilities out to the community.

Equally, any club which has received public funds to develop or improve facilities would be expected to ensure that it has made reasonable efforts to comply. **However, all clubs should be able to provide evidence that they are aware of the Act and have acknowledged this through an audit process.**

## 6. Typical physical adjustments to facilities

From 1st October 2004, physical adjustments to make facilities accessible for people with disabilities will need to be undertaken. The following points must be considered:

### • People with mobility impairments

One in 10 British adults have some form of mobility impairment, of which one in 100 use a wheelchair. Relevant issues are:

- Changes in level (high steps, steep ramps or unclimbable stairs)
- Inaccessible social, toilet and changing facilities
- Doorways and corridors that are too narrow
- Controls that are too high to reach
- Problems for ambulant persons with mobility impairments include uneven ground, walking on any kind of gradient and inadequate clearance for walking aids

The ideal ramp gradient is 1:20, with a minimum clear width of 1200mm

### • People with visual impairments

One in 50 people in the UK are affected by some form of visual impairment, of which 96% have some degree of residual sight. Relevant issues are:

- Lack of familiarity with the space around them
- Difficulty in locating themselves due to confusing design and layout
- Poor use of colour contrast, thus hampering location and comprehension
- Poor illumination - low levels, glare, confusing reflections
- Poor, non-accessible signage
- Poor acoustics that cause confusion and make it difficult to use sound as a navigational aid
- Hazards such as steps or other fixtures and fittings that project into circulation areas

### • People with hearing impairments

One in 10 British adults have some form of hearing impairment. Relevant issues are:

- Insufficient information resulting in restricted independence
- Too many hard surfaces leading to a noisy and confusing environment

### • People with learning disabilities

People with learning disabilities face similar challenges to visually impaired users. Many may also have mobility impairments.

Relevant issues are:

- Avoidance of complex signs and colour schemes that are difficult to understand
- The use of signage and lighting to define routeways and to make it clear which are public areas and which are private
- Ensuring staff are easily identifiable and have the skills and training to assist people to find their way around the facility

Text on signs should start with a capital letter and continue with small case letters

### Typical physical adjustments

The following are examples of typical physical adjustments to buildings to make them more accessible to all potential users:

- Construction of temporary or permanent ramps
- Installation of handrails
- Relocation of switches and sockets
- Alteration of door handles and taps
- Improvement of signage
- Provision of accessible toilets
- Improvement of lighting
- Use of contrasting colours on walls, floors and staircases
- Provision of lifts to access higher floors

**It must be noted that service providers will only be required to do what is reasonable in the circumstances.** Many physical adjustments to facilities will be relatively inexpensive.

One space should be provided within a block of seating for a guide dog to rest

Physical features affected by the DDA will include anything arising from the design or construction of a building, or from an approach to, exit from or access to a building. Physical features comprise of any fixtures, fittings, furniture, equipment or materials in or on the premises, whether temporary or permanent.

## 7. Alterations at the club - access audit

Undertaking an access audit will help to determine exactly what physical adjustments are necessary for the facilities in order for them to be accessible for people with disabilities and to ensure compliance with the DDA requirements.

The edges of steps should contrast in colour and luminance with the treads

Access consultants and auditors are trained to carry out site inspections and provide advice and guidance for DDA compliance. The National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC) maintains a database of individuals and organisations who are trained and registered as professional access consultants and auditors. RLF are one of a number of firms with experience as access consultants, providing a comprehensive service to a range of public and private sector clients. Details of the NRAC and other useful contacts can be found in section 9 of these guidance notes.

## 8. Common situations

Examples of some common situations relating to accessibility include:

### • Identifying and finding the premises

- Could there be clearer signs to direct people to the entrance of the building?
- Could there be clearer signs on the premises themselves to indicate what is in the building and also to identify the premises by street name and number, and telephone number?

Street furniture should be placed at or beyond the boundaries of an access route

### • Approaching the premises

- Could external lighting be improved to help people find their way to the premises?
- Could routes, path surfaces or the frontage to the premises be improved to make them more even, less slippery and free of obstacles? Some common problems are cracked or uneven paving slabs, rough surfaces, or sudden changes in level or direction. The latter of these problems, often characterised by steps leading up to the entrance of a building, can be remedied by installing a ramp, fitting a handrail on both sides of the steps, and/or by painting the edges of the steps in a contrasting colour.

Any obstruction which projects more than 100mm onto an access route should be protected

## 9. Further information and guidance

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) publish a guide providing useful information entitled "Making access to goods and services easier for disabled customers". In addition, many local authorities employ access officers, who visit premises and offer advice. Alternatively, the local council may be able to put you in touch with a local Disabled Access Group. A further source of advice may come from actually asking a person with a disability about what changes would benefit them.

### Statutory bodies and organisations

#### Centre for Accessible Environments

Tel: 020 7357 8182

Web: [www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)

#### Disability Rights Commission (DRC)

Tel: 08457 622 633

Web: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

#### National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC)

Tel: 020 7234 0434

Web: [www.nracc.org.uk](http://www.nracc.org.uk)

#### Sport England

Tel: 020 7273 1500

Web: [www.sportengland.org.uk](http://www.sportengland.org.uk)

### Publication sponsors

#### Wooden Spoon Society

Rugby's charity supporting disadvantaged children and young people throughout the UK and Ireland has raised over £8 million in recent years and has been involved in more than 150 projects. From teenage cancer units to hydrotherapy pools, cystic fibrosis and autism units to sensory playgrounds, Wooden Spoon has touched the lives of many young people and their families.

Tel: 01276 410180 Web: [www.woodenspoon.com](http://www.woodenspoon.com)

#### RFU

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#### RLF DDA Helpline

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