

G4 – ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES

Introduction

The purpose of this guidance note is to provide advice and guidance in the design of new tennis facilities and the enhancement of existing tennis facilities. It is advisable that this Guidance Note be read in conjunction with our other Guidance Notes in the series.

All new tennis facilities and extensions or refurbishment works to existing facilities should meet or exceed the standards set out in the current Building Regulations. The Building Regulations Part M 'Access and Facilities for Disabled People' was published in 1999 with a view to encompassing the key criteria of 'Access, Use, Sanitary Conveniences and Audience or Spectator Seating' when constructing new dwellings and other buildings such as new sports facilities. The new edition, 'Access to and Use of Buildings' 2004 is now available, a copy of which can be found at <http://www.odpm.gov.uk> by following the Building Regulations links.

NOTE: The recommendations and comments made in this document are intended for guidance purposes only and the document should not be considered to be a definitive statement applicable in all circumstances. All sites are different and therefore professional advice should be sought to determine suitable and practicable solutions. Information can be obtained from qualified and chartered professionals, such as architects and quantity surveyors. Always refer to Part M of the Building Regulations and BS8300 (Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice).

Disability Discrimination Act

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) aims to end the discrimination which many disabled people face. Part III of this Act gives disabled people rights of access to everyday services that others take for granted. Previous parts of the DDA already in force are:

- Definition of Disability (DDA Pt I) and
- Management, Operation and Employment (DDA Pt II)

The overriding aim of the Act is to achieve an inclusive management and design approach to the provision of facilities. Further information on the DDA and Parts I and II can be found at www.disability.gov.uk or obtain from the Disability Rights Commission (contact details at back of document).

Growth in wheelchair tennis

Wheelchair tennis started in humble surroundings on an American public court in May 1976. Over the last 28 years, wheelchair tennis has grown to such an extent that, in 1998, the IWTA was formed to represent wheelchair tennis governing bodies across the world and is governed by the ITF. Professional wheelchair players have as much as an active calendar as those on both the ATP and WTA tours. In 1986, the French Open had its first wheelchair event, followed in 1992 by wheelchair tennis becoming a full medal sport in the Paralympics in Barcelona. Further information on wheelchair tennis can be found at www.itfwheelchairtennis.com.

What is a Sports Wheelchair?

Rather than thinking of it as just a chair to move around in, it is more a piece of athletic equipment, offering the player specific mobility options or to help facilitate their game. As you can see from the diagrams below, the camber of the wheels on the sports chair are much wider than the day chair and can range up to 25°. This provides more mobility and a stable base for the player to

move around the court. Invariably, the base width of the sports chair (measured from the outside edge of the wheels) can reach up to 1200mm (diagonal critical measurement from front castor to back castor by the Anti-tip bar could be more) against that of 800mm for a day chair. Therefore, when building new or enhancing existing facilities, certain access issues, e.g. access onto the courts, corridors, will need to cater for the additional width of a sports wheelchair.

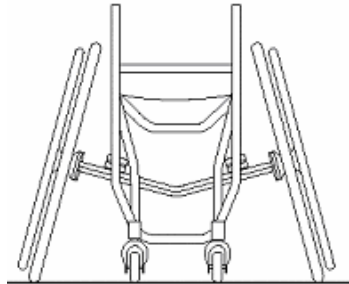
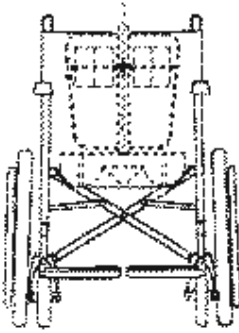


Diagram courtesy of Sport England

Design Principles - General

To have a 'fully accessible' centre means having more than sufficient door widths or the provision of ramps. In order for a facility to run efficiently and smoothly requires knowledgeable and appropriately trained staff. There are a wide range of disabilities which need to be taken into account when managing and designing a sports facility. These include mobility, visual, hearing and learning disabilities (see p3). Clubs should also take into consideration how the public, both players and spectators, can access the club.

Parking

- Disabled parking bays should be located close to the main entrance.
- A standard disabled parking bay is 3.6m wide. Alternatively you can have 2 standard bays at 2.4m wide plus 1.2m common access aisle.
- When designing new car parks, ensure that they are flat. Dropped kerbs should be provided in appropriate positions.
- Avoid speed ramps on the route from disabled parking bays to the facility entrance.

Access from car park to front door

- Disabled access should be clearly marked with symbols wherever possible to BS8300 standards.
- Access should be a clear, unobstructed route way with a firm, even surface that is non-slip.
- Consider a minimum footpath width of at least 1.5m, or 2m, to allow for the passing of wheelchairs, prams or pushchairs.
- Provide for both stepped and ramp access. Gradients should conform to Part M of the Building Regulations and BS8300.
- Automatic doors are preferred for main entrance access.

Access within facility

- Entrance doors should have a clear width of at least 1200mm. This is to accommodate sports wheelchairs.
- The threshold should not be above the floor surface and attention should be given to mat wells and gratings, as these may impede movement/wheelchair mobility.
- Ramped access within centres is advisable.
- Consider incorporating a low level reception desk or a bar hatch system in the Reception area.



- Reduce the strength of door closers. Lighter doors also benefit young children and the elderly.
- Public telephones should be accessible to people with disabilities/in wheelchairs.
- Consideration should be given to access onto the indoor and outdoor courts. This should incorporate suitable access from the clubhouse and for wheelchairs.

On-court player accessibility – considerations (non-exhaustive)

- Secure area for the storage of wheelchairs (both standard and sports).
- Is there adequate space between court net posts for sports wheelchair access?
- Is the length of the runbacks long enough? Recommended dimension is 6.40m.
- Is there enough room between courts for a sports wheelchair?
- Is there enough access around the court to allow players to change ends easily?
- Do floodlighting columns cause additional restrictions on movement?

Mobility

Problems that may be encountered by wheelchair and semi-ambulant users are:

- Inaccessible toilet and changing facilities;
- Corridors and doorways that are too narrow or obstructed;
- Changes in level i.e. steep ramps, kerbs.

Visual

Problems that may be encountered are:

- Poor use of colour contrast which could hinder location and comprehension;
- Poor illumination due to low level lighting, glare and reflection;
- Poor signage – consider incorporating Braille;
- Poor written information.

Hearing

Problems that may be encountered are:

- Hard surfaces which could lead to a confusing and noisy environment;
- Insufficient information which results in restricted independence;
- Poor staff communication.

Learning

People with learning disabilities may have a combination of other impairments such as mobility or visual. It is therefore recommended that as well as the above points, you should consider the following:

- Avoid too many colour schemes and clever signs which could cause confusion;
- Use signage, layout and lighting of the building to clearly identify routes and public areas;
- Trained staff that is easily recognisable.

WC and changing facilities

- Please refer to Part M of the Building Regulations and BS8300 for guidance.
- Provision of changing facilities should cater for both the individual/independent user and small groups during public sessions. Ideally a separate disabled WC should be incorporated.
- Consider the proximity of the changing areas to the activities within the building. Storage areas for items such as wheelchairs, etc., are a useful addition.

NOTE: The above is intended for general guidance purposes only and it is recommend that you refer to Building Regulations Part M and BS8300 for further guidance.

Design Principles - Existing Facilities

- In addition to the signage of designated areas for disabled people (e.g. car parking spaces, entrances, disabled toilets, etc.) care should be taken to provide clear signage using recognised BS8300 standard symbols to facilities such as lifts, fire exits, changing rooms and the main activity and social areas within the tennis facility.
- It is advisable to undertake an access audit to determine the current accessibility situation at the club (refer to FAQ section for further information).

Design Principles - New Facilities

- Please refer to Part M of the Building Regulations and BS8300 for guidance.
- New facilities (particularly indoor centres) may have a number of wheelchair users visiting at any one time. It may, therefore, be necessary to design for 'passing bays' positioned at strategic points, i.e. at the back of each court or on narrow access paths. This would enable the players to pass with ease. Also, designing open plan areas into the facility assists with access issues.
- Showers, toilets and cubicles (if provided) should allow for easy transfer from a wheelchair. There should not be any step up or down into the shower compartment. Shower heads, soap dispensers, etc., should all be located within easy reach when seated (approx. 1.3m).
- New facility projects should have an ongoing accessibility appraisal undertaken throughout the process.
- Court surfaces – refer to guidance notes on court surfaces. The order of preference of court surfaces for a wheelchair player is: acrylic, macadam, clay, textile, grass, artificial grass.

Wheelchair spectators (indoor centres)

- Please refer to Part M of the Building Regulations and BS8300 for general guidance.
- Spectator seating should incorporate a slightly higher main handrail with a clear viewing panel below.

Emergency exit routes and procedures (indoor centres, ITIs, etc.)

- The incorporation of suitable emergency exits/routes including lifts and stairs is advised. Note that wheelchair stair lifts are not suitable as a means of escape in an emergency situation. Please refer to Part M of the Building Regulations and BS8300 for further guidance.
- Alarm systems tend to be audible and rarely incorporate a visual system. Consideration should therefore be given when incorporating an alarm to whether or not it is suitable for the visually and/or hearing impaired.

Your FAQs answered

What is the DDA?

The DDA stands for the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Its aim is to introduce an approach intending to end discrimination against disabled people. The employment section (Part II) came into effect in December 1996. The phasing in of the sections relating to service providers began in October 1999, with the final phase being introduced in October 2004.

What is the definition of a 'disabled person'?

The DDA defines disability as a 'physical, sensory or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal daily activities'. This now extends to people with cancer, HIV, elderly and mums to be.



Who is a Service Provider?

A service provider is anyone who provides a service to the public, i.e. leisure and sports centres/clubs, libraries, shops, theatres, etc.

How will it affect me?

If you are a service provider, you will be expected to take reasonable steps to adjust physical features that make it difficult or impossible for disabled people to utilise a service. Compliance in making reasonable adjustments represents a 'best practice' policy for ensuring good quality staff and customer relations. There is no enforcement agency. Individuals can take legal action if they feel they are being discriminated against.

What is a 'reasonable' adjustment?

There is no one particular answer to this. This phrase is used by the law to provide some level of flexibility and allow alternative solutions in different situations. The term 'reasonable' varies according to: type of service, nature of service provider and its size and resources and the effect of disability on an individual person. Factors to consider include: financial costs of making adjustments, amount of disruption caused by taking these steps and whether or not taking certain steps would be effective in overcoming difficulties that disabled people face in gaining access.

I don't need to do anything else as my facility already meets with Part M of the Building Regulations

If your facility complies with Part M of the Building Regulations then you are already part of the way there. However these regulations only define the minimum statutory requirements for people with mobility, visual and hearing impairment. Part M is limited in the provision of scope for accessible sports facilities. It is recommended that you review the Sport England guidance note 'Access for Disabled People' which is downloadable from its website and BS8300 (which should be available at your local reference library or through a qualified and chartered professional such as an architect or quantity surveyor). You may also find it useful to obtain a copy of Sport England's 'Access Audit Sheets', also available for download from their website.

How can I find out whether I need to alter any part of the facilities?

If you are considering building a new facility or undertaking work at an existing facility, whether it is maintenance, an extension or alterations, it is advisable to undertake an access audit to identify the existing access situation. Sport England has produced a document entitled 'Access for Disabled People: Audit Sheets' which provides a starting reference point for any tennis provider. The audit sheets should be completed in conjunction with the Sport England guidance note 'Access for Disabled People'. However, if you would prefer an Access Consultant to undertake the audit on your behalf, then it is advisable to contact someone who has knowledge in this specific area i.e. a chartered architect or quantity surveyor, and to determine what is included in this review. Information on Access Consultants can be obtained from the National Register of Access Consultants at www.nrac.org.uk.

When does the DDA Pt III come into effect?

Part III of the DDA comes into effect on 1 October 2004. Service providers are being advised now of the change in regulations in order that they can identify any problems and therefore prepare for any alterations/adjustments that need to be modified before this date.

Where can I get training for coaching people with disabilities?

There is a course available for tennis coaches highlighting awareness regarding coaching people with a disability. Further information on this, and an application form, can be obtained from the British Tennis Foundation, www.britishtennisfoundation.org.uk.



Other Sources of Reading:

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – Disability Unit

Website: <http://www.disability.gov.uk>

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

Building Regulations, Part M 'Access to and Use of Buildings' 2004 edition

Website: <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/>

Sport England

- Access for Disabled People (Guidance Note) and Audit Sheets
- Information Note for Sports Clubs, July 04 – (weblink below)

Weblink: http://www.sportengland.org/index/get_resources/disability_discrimination_legislation.htm

Website: <http://www.sportengland.org>

Sources of Reference:

Access 2 Go

PO Box 445
Portsmouth, PO4 0US

Email: access2go@access2go.co.uk

Website: www.access2go.co.uk

DDA Leisure Directory

(c/o Stable Publishing Ltd)

Tel: 020 8288 1080

Fax: 020 8288 1099

Email: dda@stablepublishing.co.uk

Disability Rights Commission

Freepost, Mid 02164
Stratford upon Avon
Warwickshire, CV37 9BR

Tel: 08457 622633

Textphone: 08457 622644

Fax: 08457 778878

Email: enquiry@drc-gb.org

Website: www.drc-gb.org

DWP – Disability Unit

Level 6, Adelphi building
John Adams Street
London, WC2N 6HT

Website: www.disability.gov.uk

Email: enquiry-disability@dwpgsi.gov.uk

National Register of Access

Consultants (also Centre for Accessible Environments)
Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY

Tel: 020 7234 0434

Minicom: 020 7357 8182

Fax: 020 7357 8183

Email: info@nrac.org.uk

Email: info@cae.org.uk

Website: www.nrac.org.uk

Website: www.cae.org.uk

OPDM (prev. DTLR)

Website: <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/>

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