**Accessibility Checklist for Polling Stations**

The following list is a general guide to help returning officers with some of the issues that should be considered in planning for and checking the accessibility of polling stations. It does not constitute a legal interpretation of any statutory provision.

Buildings in which polling stations operate on a polling day should be compliant with Technical Guidance Document M - Access and Use 2022[[1]](#footnote-1), as required under Section 25 of the Disability Act 2005.

|  | **Yes** | **No** | **If no, action to be taken** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Is there directional signage to the polling station along all approach routes and at the entrance? |  |  |  |
| Is there designated accessible car parking for disabled people near the main pedestrian entrance to the polling station and is it clearly marked? |  |  |  |
| Are the pedestrian routes to the building free of hazards? Are they free of obstructions such as bins, outward-opening doors or windows or overhanging trees or bushes? |  |  |  |
| Are access routes to the polling station of sufficient width and is the entrance to the building of sufficient width? Is the clear opening of the door at the entrance to the building and all internal doors in use on polling day at least 800mm width? |  |  |  |
| Is the entrance route to the building sufficiently well-lit, particularly during early morning or late evenings for the time of the year that the election will be held? |  |  |  |
| [[2]](#footnote-2)  Is the approach to the entrance level? If not, is a ramp with landings and handrails and a slip-resistant smooth surface provided, with a maximum gradient no steeper than 1:20? |  |  |  |
| Can the main doors be fully opened during the poll and be fully fastened? |  |  |  |
| Are routes from the entrance to the polling rooms slip-free, well illuminated, hazard free and even? |  |  |  |
| Is there enough internal circulation space to allow a wheelchair user to move freely from the entrance area to the polling room and get their ballot paper, complete their vote and put the vote into the ballot box? |  |  |  |
| Are ballot boxes placed at a stable position with the opening reachable by a wheelchair user (approx 800-1000 mm off the ground)? |  |  |  |
| Are passageways/corridors wide enough for wheelchair users? Ideally, passageways/corridors should be at least 1.8m wide to enable two wheelchair users to pass and turn. Passageways that are narrower than 1.8m wide should have passing spaces of 1.8m x 1.8m at junctions, ends of corridors and not more than 20m apart to allow wheelchair users to turn in the opposite direction and to pass one another.. Where a corridor is predominantly less than 1.8m wide, passing places should be provided. Passing places should be at least 2m long and 1.8m wide, and positioned within sight of another, or at intervals not exceeding 20m, whichever is the closer. Passing places also serve as turning areas, which are useful at corridor junctions, at the top of ramps and at the end of passageways. They enable wheelchair users and parents with strollers to turn and return along a corridor and generally improve access for all building users. |  |  |  |
| Are the rooms being used for voting located on the ground floor? |  |  |  |
| Are the floors of the voting rooms clear of potential hazards (e.g., storage boxes)? |  |  |  |
| Is there suitable seating – clear of the access route – to facilitate people who may need to sit? |  |  |  |
| Do the voting rooms have a loop system installed (to assist persons with a hearing impairment)? If so, is there a sign informing voters of this (e.g., ear symbol with a T)?[[3]](#footnote-3). If not, consider using a portable induction loop system. |  |  |  |
| Do staff know how to operate the loop system? |  |  |  |
| Is a low-height polling booth provided to facilitate voters who use wheelchairs or who are short of stature? The width of the booth should be 850mm and ideally 900mm, depending on the availability of space, and the height of the writing surface should be between 700mm and 750mm. |  |  |  |
| Are all polling booths well lit? |  |  |  |
| Are there Ballot Paper Templates available for those voters who may require them on the polling day? |  |  |  |
| If the Ballot Paper Template can’t be used in the polling booth, due to its size, is there a cordoned off table where a voter can use the Ballot Paper Template in private? |  |  |  |
| Are notices/ballot papers displayed in large print as required by law? |  |  |  |
| Is the route between the entrance, registration desk and low-height booth as short as possible, level and hazard-free? |  |  |  |
| Have polling station staff received disability equality training in order to assist voters with disabilities? |  |  |  |
| Is there a system in place to communicate to disabled people that assistance is available, if required? |  |  |  |
| Is there an emergency evacuation plan? Does it cover assistance to disabled people in evacuating the building?[[4]](#footnote-4) Are those responsible for evacuation aware of the different needs of disabled people? |  |  |  |
| Are emergency exits clearly marked and can persons with reduced mobility use the emergency exits? |  |  |  |

**Useful Sources**

The National Disability Authority’s publication *Building for Everyone – a Universal Design Approach* provides detailed guidance on making buildings accessible, and access routes to them: <https://universaldesign.ie/built-environment/building-for-everyone-2>

National Disability Authority and the Dept of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform 2023: Customer Communications Toolkit for Services to the Public – A Universal Design Approach

https://universaldesign.ie/communications-digital/customer-communications-toolkit-a-universal-design-approach

Irish Wheelchair Association’s Best Practice Access Guidelines *Designing Accessible Environments* <https://www.iwa.ie/access-guidelines/best-practice-access-guidelines-4/>

The National Disability Authority’s 2010 publication *Safe Evacuation for All* is aimed at ensuring the speedy and safe evacuation of public buildings by people with disabilities, particularly in the event of an emergency: https://nda.ie/publications/safe-evacuation-for-all

1. https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/78e67-technical-guidance-document-m-access-and-use/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Booklet 2 – Entrances and Horizontal Circulation of the NDA’s **Building for Everyone – a Universal Design Approach** for more detailed specificationshttps://universaldesign.ie/built-environment/building-for-everyone-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Building for Everyone Booklet 4 - Internal Environments and Services https://universaldesign.ie/built-environment/building-for-everyone-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. NDA (2010) Safe Evacuation for All https://nda.ie/publications/safe-evacuation-for-all [↑](#footnote-ref-4)