Draft Code of Practice

on Accessible Public Buildings

This is an Easy to Read version of the

Draft Code of Practice

The Disability Act 2005

What is the Disability Act 2005?

The Disability Act is a law in Ireland.

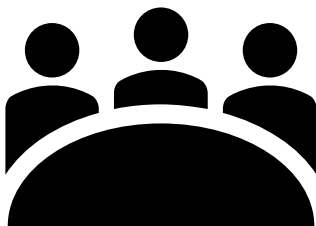Section 25 of the Act says that a public organisation must make sure its public buildings are accessible to people with disabilities.

What is a public building?

A building or part of a building that is used by the general public.

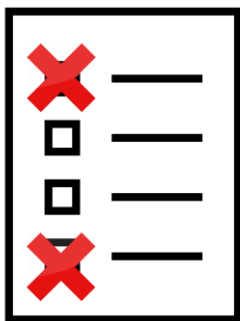A public organisation owns, manages, or uses this building for its services.

What is a public organisation?

Public organisations include government departments, county council offices, libraries, bus and train stations, welfare offices, Garda stations, courts.
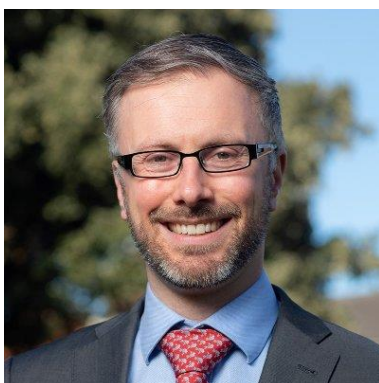
What is a Code of Practice?

A Code of Practice is a guide on the best way to do something.

This is a draft Code of Practice on Accessible Public Buildings.
A draft means there might be changes to the Code before it is finished.

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth asked the National Disability Authority to put this Code of Practice together.

It will guide public organisations on how to make their public buildings accessible to persons with disabilities.

What is a Code of Practice?

People with disabilities are of all ages, sizes, and abilities.

When a building is accessible, everyone can use it safely, comfortably, and as independently as possible.

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There are ten main parts to this Code of Practice. Each part says what public organisations must do to follow the law and make their buildings accessible.
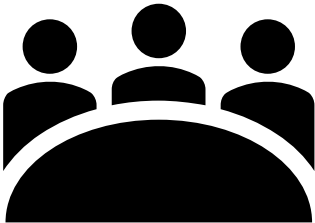
The NDA will check that public organisations are following this Code.

They will write a report on how well they are doing.

Who should use this Code of Practice?

- The heads of public organisations

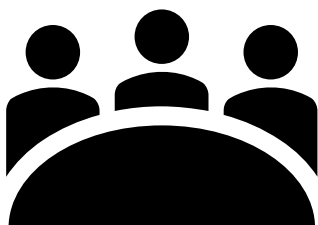- Managers and staff in public organisations

- Access Officers

- People that design, build, and manage public buildings.

Who will benefit from this Code of Practice?

- Public organisations

- The general public

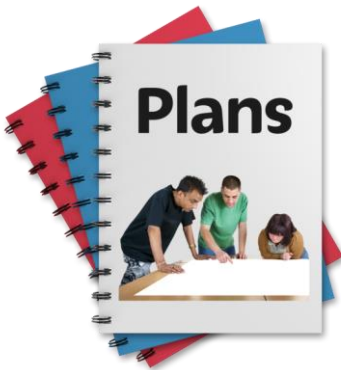- People with disabilities

- People working in public organisations, especially those with disabilities.

1. Planning for Access

Access should be very important to public organisations.

Making public buildings accessible should be part of the business, work, and customer service plans in an organisation.

Public organisations should keep working to improve access to public buildings.

Actions for public organisations

Have a work plan to make access better for everyone.

Carry out regular access checks on public buildings, and look at ways to change any barriers to access.

Talk with Disabled Person's Organisations when a building is being planned, designed, and built. Make sure all changes to a public building are reviewed by people with disabilities.

Make sure that all staff have disability awareness training.

2. Pre-visit information

The public organisation should give people information about access before they visit a building.

This information should be available in different ways.

This information is important so visitors can decide if the building is accessible to them.

They can plan and get ready for their visit.

Actions for public organisations

Give up to date information on their website about access in public buildings.

This information should cover all parts of a visit.

Give contact information for the Access Officer.

Have photos so that people with disabilities can judge if the building will be accessible to them.

Use social stories to support people to prepare for a visit.

3. Going into the building

This section looks at how a person gets into the public building.

This is an important part of any visit.

The entrance for the public should be accessible and welcoming to all visitors.

Visitors should be able to enter and exit the building independently.

Actions for public organisations

Design and manage the public entrance to the building so it is accessible to everyone.

Think about parking, steps, halls, and doors.

Make sure the way to the entrance is accessible.

Think about paths, ramps, lights, steps, handrails.

Make sure the entrance is in a safe place.
Think about roads, pedestrian crossings, cycle lanes, trees, bins, letterboxes.

Have the right signs and lighting so people can find their way to the building safely and easily.

4. Wayfinding

Wayfinding is how a person finds their way around a place, for example, signs or audio information.

This section looks at the information available in the public building to help people find their way around.

The Code of Practice says that public organisations must design and give accessible wayfinding information.

This information should be clear and should be kept up to date.

Actions for public organisations

Make sure the wayfinding system gives people the information they need to get around the building.

Give information in different ways and for different senses, for example, to see, touch, smell, hear.

Make sure information is placed where everyone can see it.

Think about the words, writing, colour, and symbols used on signs and other wayfinding information.

Consider using smartphone apps and other new wayfinding technologies as they become available.
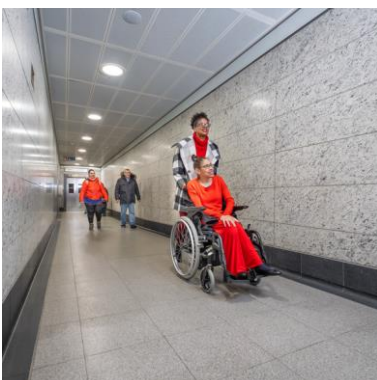
5. Moving around the building

It is important that all visitors can move around easily and safely when they are inside a building.

Visitors should be able to independently get to where they want to go.

This section looks at how people move in and around on a particular floor or level, and how people move up and down in the building.

All ways to move from one part of the building to another must be accessible.

Actions for public organisations

Make sure public areas such as reception areas, waiting areas, halls, corridors, lifts, and stairways are accessible.

Think about the supports that people may need to get around a building, for example, space for wheelchairs, seats to rest on, wide doors, handrails.

Have accessible lifts in all buildings that have more than one floor.

Make sure that equipment, machines, storage containers, furniture, and bins do not block ways around the building.

6. Inside the building

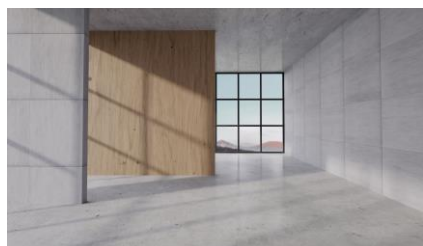The environment inside the building can help people to get around independently.

It is important that the inside of the building is safe, comfortable, and enjoyable for everyone to use.

The inside of the building must be designed and managed so it can be accessible to all.

Actions for public organisations

Think about lighting, walls, floors, and colours in a public building.

For example, walls should be painted in plain colours and floors should not be slippery.

Use systems that support people to hear, such as induction loops, at reception desks and waiting areas.

Think about sound in the building.
Make sure that everyone can hear or see public announcements.

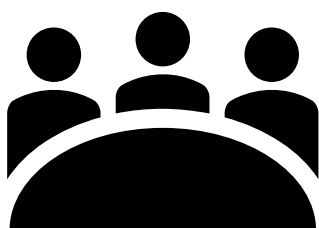Have a quiet space for people that need a break or space for a meeting.

7. Facilities

Facilities are the things inside a building that you might use, for example, toilets or a café.

These facilities should be designed and managed to be accessible to people with disabilities.

The public organisation is responsible for making sure that all facilities in their public building are accessible.

They must do this even when the service is given by another company, for example, a café.

Actions for public organisations

Make sure there are enough accessible toilets around the building.

Make sure these toilets are of a high standard.

Have a Changing Places toilet.

This is an accessible bathroom space with a toilet, hoist, basin, and adult-sized changing bench.

Make sure all cafes, canteens, and restaurants are accessible.
Make sure there is enough space for everyone to move easily in these facilities.

Make sure all equipment for the public to use is accessible, for example, switches or controls.

8. Programmes, meetings, exhibitions and events

Members of the public may be invited to come to programmes, meetings, exhibitions or events inside the public building.

Some programmes, meetings, exhibitions, or events are open to all members of the public.

The Code says that these must be accessible to everyone.

Any staff that organise or manage programmes, meetings, exhibitions, or events should know about this Code of Practice.

Actions for public organisations

Talk about access with people with disabilities and Access Officers when planning programmes, meetings, exhibitions, and events.

Have the right seating and handrails to support people with sitting and standing.

Make sure that people using wheelchairs have good viewing spaces, and can sit with their friends.

Make sure that the people giving presentations know how to make them accessible.

9. Getting out of the building in an emergency

Public organisations must make sure that all visitors can get out of their buildings safely in an emergency.

There must be a plan in place which thinks about the different needs that people have.

There must be trained staff to support persons with disabilities in an emergency and get them to a safe place.
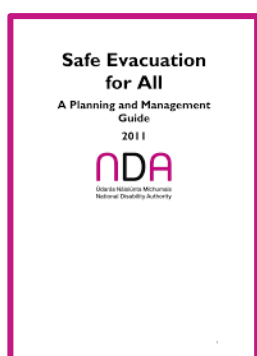

The public organisation must make sure that all their public buildings follow the laws on fire safety.

Actions for public organisations

Look at the needs of people with disabilities in an emergency.

Talk to people with disabilities about the best ways to get out of the building and to a safe place.

Follow the guide called 'Safe Evacuation for All' on the NDA website.

Have the right fire alarms to alert people that are Deaf or hard of hearing, for example, alarms with flashing lights.

Have lifts that can be used in emergency situations.

10. Managing and looking after the building

Public buildings should be looked after and managed well.

All public buildings should get the care and attention they need to be accessible to the public.

Public organisations should have access as part of their policies and management plans for the building.

They should make sure that broken equipment can be fixed quickly, for example, lifts.
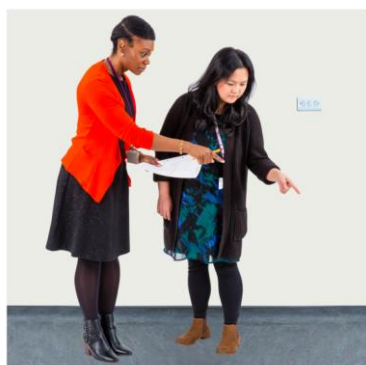
Actions for public organisations

Say clearly on their website how people can make a complaint if a public building is not accessible.

Listen to complaints and collect feedback from people with disabilities about access in the building.

Involve Access Officers in the management of buildings.

Check the building regularly to make sure it is accessible.

This Easy to Read report is from the National Disability Authority.

Ace Communication helped to put together this report.

Experts by Experience helped with this information.