

ESSA

Event Supplier and
Services Association

The Accessible Exhibition Stand Handbook



A GUIDE FOR STAND DESIGNERS AND BUILDERS

Access for all

Your clients exhibit to promote their products and services, to raise their profile and to attract new customers. The key to maximising the stand's potential is to optimise both visitor flow and the ease with which information about your goods or services can be accessed.

We live in a bespoke environment. In simple terms, the world is constructed for people who can hear, see, touch and move around it with ease. For people with very broad range impairments, the environment itself is disabling. In designing and presenting an exhibition stand, it's important to consider whether the stand communicates effectively to all potential or existing customers.

Does the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the "DDA") apply to exhibition stands?

The DDA introduced a raft of new legislation aimed at ending the discrimination that many disabled people face in accessing goods and services. The DDA affects virtually everyone who provides goods, facilities and services to the general public whether paid for or not (referred to as "Service Providers").

From 1st October 2004, Service Providers have been obliged to remove, alter or avoid any physical features of premises which make it unreasonably difficult or impossible for disabled people to access the goods or services on offer. This obligation doesn't just apply to your permanent retail sites or showrooms. When presenting goods and services to the public at exhibitions, conferences or seminars, you are obliged to deliver equal access to your disabled customers.

This Handbook provides guidelines on how best to present and arrange the exhibition stand to ensure everybody can get access to the information and products promoted.

Does the stand communicate information to all potential or existing customers?

The DDA classes someone as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their day-to-day activities. In short, that's 10 million people in the UK – roughly one in six. In addition to customers who use wheelchairs or who have mobility impairments, there are millions of potential customers affected by some degree of hearing loss, learning disability, facial disfigurement, visual impairment, or conditions such as arthritis or incontinence to name but a few.

The most important barriers to access for disabled people arise from the physical features of buildings and from staff communication. In achieving inclusive access it is equally important to ensure that staff understand the needs of different customers, as it is to alter obvious physical barriers that restrict people's access. A common sense approach towards people's access needs combined with generally relatively minor physical adjustment can often dramatically improve access.

What is the business case for increasing the ease with which disabled people can access the stand?

It's important not to lose sight of the fact the DDA is focused on increasing disabled customers' access to goods and services. In simple terms, better access means more customers.

Approximately 10 million people in the UK are classed as disabled under the DDA, that's a sixth of the UK's population with an annual spending power of over £60bn. Some disabilities are more common in the older age groups, with almost 70% of disabled adults aged over 60. With nearly 75% of the Nation's wealth being held by the over 50s with an estimated annual income of £184bn, this is a market sector you can't afford to ignore. Don't forget about the kids either, over 360,000 children under 16 have one or more disabilities, representing 3% of all children under 16.

Accessible Stand Design

The environment impacts on different people in different ways. The following guidelines provide advice about how particular aspects of stand design can be made accessible to the broadest range of disabled people.

It is important to remember when considering these alterations to take account of health and safety legislation, which has primacy over the disability regulations.

Getting to the Stand

The routes and surfaces leading to the stand itself should be even, level and solid. While this may not be your responsibility, take care to ensure that carpets and flooring materials are well secured. Poor carpet seams or lifting corners can present a particular hazard to visually impaired people. Clearly demarcated areas in high contrast colours can help to improve visitors awareness of possible obstacles and hazards

The access routes to the stand should remain free from unnecessary obstacles, so keep products or marketing material within the stand area.

Listed below are the best practice widths for various access routes to the stand, which should be maintained up to a height of 2.1m above ground level:

<u>Nature of access route</u>	<u>Best practise widths</u>
Heavy use in both directions	1800mm
Moderate use with passing places	1500mm
Occasional use	1200mm
Minimum use	900mm

Passing places on extended access routes should be provided. Passing places should be 2m long by 1.8m wide and located within sight of another passing place, or at maximum distances of 50m.

Abrupt changes of level on the access route to the stand should be avoided and gradients should be 1:20 or less, with a cross fall of less than 1:50.

Any freestanding posts or columns on the access route to the stand should incorporate a contrasting colour band 150mm wide positioned 1500mm above ground level. This will assist visually impaired customers to identify the obstacle.

In order to assist visually impaired customers who use a means of cane detection, place a kerb or solid barrier beneath obstacles which are fixed to a wall above the floor in an access route. This should be implemented for obstacles where there is more than 300mm between the floor and the bottom of the obstacle and the obstacle projects more than 100mm into an access route.

Getting onto the Stand

Ideally the approach to the stand should be entirely flat and level. A vertical 'lip' or 'upstand' of more than 13mm will present a barrier to some disabled people.

Enabling people to get onto the stand easily is key. If the stand design requires a raised floor section, consider incorporating a ramp into the flooring or provide a portable ramp which can be deployed when required. An alternative could be to have multiple floor areas of the stand and to make credible attempts to deliver the services to an area of the stand, which does not require a platform.

Where you are incorporating a ramp onto or within the Stand, consider the following:

- Ramps should have a gradient or slope no steeper than 1:12, their ideal gradient is 1:20.
- A wheelchair will need a minimum clear ramp width of 1000mm. This should be measured at the narrowest part of the ramp, typically between the two sets of handrails.
- Try to provide a zone at the beginning and end of the ramp of at least 1sqm in which to enable the wheelchair user to turn their chair around to negotiate the stand.
- A handrail could be incorporated on both sides of a ramp. Visually impaired visitors use handrails for guidance while those with mobility impairments rely on handrails for support. Accordingly, handrails should extend for 300mm beyond the bottom and top of a ramp. Providing handrails on both sides of a ramp ensures that people with limited strength in one side of their body can rely on the handrails when using the ramp.

- Visual clues to identify a ramp should be used to alert partially sighted visitors to their presence. The use of identity strips in high contrast or high visibility tape is most advisable indicating the direction of ascent.
- Alternatively alert people to the presence of the trip hazard by placing planting, foliage or some other physical item such as a handrail corner, around the hazard.
- If you are incorporating larger ramps in your Stand, a combination of sloped gradients or 'flights' and horizontal landing sections is required. Landing sections provide an opportunity to rest between flights when ascending a ramp and to control the speed of descent. It is also advisable to build in corners and not to have a continuous straight line run to prevent a build up of excessive speed on a descent.
- The following table and diagrams identify the maximum gradient that should be adopted for the 'going' or horizontal distance covered by a ramp together with an indication as to how the flights and horizontal landing sections should be incorporated. The steeper the gradient, the shorter the appropriate distance of the flight;

<u>Going or distance of a flight</u>	<u>Maximum gradient</u>
10m	1:20
5m	1:15
Not exceeding 2m	1:12

- If unable to incorporate a permanent ramp to a raised Stand, consider making a portable ramp available to overcome the step.
- Portable ramps must be deployed by a trained member of staff and removed after use. Staff will also require training to give assistance to disabled people who need help in using the ramp.
- The maximum gradients for the use of a portable ramp is 1:6, with the preferable gradient being less than 1:10.
- Portable ramps can be specified in a variety of lengths but should have unobstructed 750mm wide walkway. Ramps should also have a load bearing capacity in excess of 300kg with adequate side sections to ensure that a wheelchair will not run.
- Ensure there is a minimum of 1.2m square spaces available at the top and bottom of the ramp to ensure that a wheelchair can approach the ramp with ease.

- Clear signage is required confirming the availability of a portable ramp.
- It's important to integrate a colour contrasting nosing on all steps which are visible on both the front and top face of a step. This will ensure the step is visible for ascent or descent. As important is to make the handrail highly visible for partially sighted people to find easily.

If you plan to incorporate steps within a stand, consideration must be given to the provision of handrails of the same configuration as those used for ramps. Stairs to access second storeys of a stand have complex regulations regarding their construction and minimum safety standards. All such regulations take precedence over any DDA consideration but this should not prevent designers from trying to consider alternative methods of access for second storey stands. Whatever the decision it is imperative that all such considerations are discussed with the client to ensure that they are aware of the DDA issue and the importance of trying to make provision to overcome these barriers both from the designer and the procurer of the stand. ***Designers may wish to consider indemnity clauses to identify that these issues have been raised with their client by the designers to overcome any future reparation issues.***

Moving around the Stand and accessing information

It is important to try and display information and products in a position and at a height that can be reached by everyone and to ensure that people can move about the Stand with ease. Where it's impossible to follow the guidance below, ensure that staff on the Stand are prepared to be proactive in assisting people to reach the information they want.

- The circulation areas between stand displays or products should ideally be between 1200mm and 1000mm wide.
- To assist customers who use wheelchairs or who are of short stature, place goods and products between a height of 650mm and 1060mm.
- Information should ideally be displayed at a height between 900mm and 1200mm.

Writing Surfaces

The typical height of a counter top is between 1000 and 1200mm from the floor. As shown below, this provides very poor access to the writing surface for a range of disabled people.

- If customers fill in forms or pay for products using a counter on the Stand, provide a low-level counter section at a height of 760mm. This assists both wheelchair users and people of short stature to write if needed.
- Ensure there is a clear 400mm horizontal depth under the low-level counter section and a gently raised edge to the counter to assist picking up objects like coins or paperwork.
- If a low-level counter section is not feasible, consider providing a lightweight clipboard or lap tray for customers to write on.
- Ensure sufficient lighting at the service counter to assist someone who is lip reading. Avoid placing lighting behind staff members, which silhouettes their face.

Seating

The position and design of individual chairs and seating arrangements can have an impact on access.

- Ideally differing size, shape and type of seating should be available. If a seat is too low or too high or if there are inappropriate armrests or side supports, customers may experience discomfort. If you provide a variety of seating, customers can choose the most comfortable.
- The seating arrangement of blue chairs shown on the left below obstructs access for wheelchair users both in using the table, sitting beside someone at the table and in circulation around the seating area. By contrast, seating on the right has a varied pattern and seating type to accommodate those with differing mobility requirements.

Flooring surfaces

No single floor finish is universally suitable for all disabled people. Many types of finish can be used, including carpets, timber, stone, or rubber depending on the proposed use. The following guidance highlights the key issues:

- Flooring should be slip-resistant even when wet
- Glossy, highly glazed finishes, which create glare, can prove a hazard to partially sighted visitors.
- Carpets should give a firm surface to allow wheelchair passage without sinking in, therefore excessive use of underlay, as is the custom in the USA is to be avoided if at all possible.
- Ensure that the junction of flooring materials does not create a trip hazard.
- Complex patterns can cause confusion, though an element of simple floor colour change can assist giving directional information, such as the slope of a ramp.
- Where there is a change of texture or colour, the joint must be flush.
- Contrasting floor textures can also help partially sighted or blind people to identify different areas of the stand by the feel of the differences underfoot.

Information and Signage

The way information is presented can impact significantly on the ease with which people can access it.

- Avoid signs becoming an obstruction. Overhanging and projecting signs must be positioned high enough to avoid causing an obstruction – 2300mm to the underside is the recommended dimension.
- Information is easier to understand if grouped together logically. Several small groups of messages are easier to read than one large list. Too many messages on a sign should also be avoided as should random groupings of information.
- Glare from lighting can create major discomfort. The most common causes are indirect glare from signage with a high gloss finish or direct glare from an internally illuminated sign.
- To minimise glare use materials with a matt or satin finish. Avoid placing suspended signs against a light source such as overhead light fittings and avoid positioning signs directly onto glazing panels.
- Localised lighting of the signs may be necessary, but internally illuminated signs are not recommended. If possible, all light sources should be concealed or shaded.
- Provide clear colour contrast between the text and signage background by avoiding similar shades of brown on red or blue on mauve. Colours can appear different under various light sources so to avoid ineffective colour contrasts, select colours under the lighting typically used on your Stand.
- The combination of upper and lower case text is much easier to read than large blocks of upper case text. Where possible, avoid using complex calligraphy and gothic style fonts. Equally, avoid underlining large blocks of text.
- If in doubt about the above a full list of guidelines regarding font sizes and style for easy accessibility is available from the RNIB.

Alternative formats and Auxiliary Aides

There are a number of relatively small adjustments you can make which have a major impact on access for people with sensory impairments such as vision and hearing.

- Hearing Induction Loops help to cut out background noise which hearing aids would otherwise amplify. The device is an important aid in noisy or busy environments. A hearing induction loop contains a microphone which picks up the spoken word from your staff and transmits it as an electronic signal to a hearing aid set in the 'T' position.
- The availability of the induction loop should be clearly signed.