

Policy Statement on Access to Buildings

Revised October 2016

Stoke on Trent City Council is committed to the creation of a city that is “fair, open and inclusive”.

We believe that disabled people in Britain “should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and be respected and included as members of society.”

In order to make this possible, barriers to inclusion, opportunities and choices must be removed. Inclusive access creates an opportunity for anyone regardless of age, disability, gender, race, ethnicity, faith, belief, sexual orientation and caring responsibilities or any other protected characteristic to participate fully and equally in an organisation’s work, activities or services.

Where possible we will adhere to the Commission of Equality and Human Rights principles of inclusive design (formerly Disability Rights Commission principles):

- Fair and equal access for all
- Allocation of appropriate space
- Ensuring ease of use, comprehension and understanding
- Ensuring that services can be used with the minimum of stress, physical strength and effort
- Achieving safe, comfortable and healthy environments

Poor access to the built environment actively discriminates against people in our community and inclusive design will therefore be promoted throughout the city council and encouraged within the private sector. This work will be undertaken through the work of the Access Officer.

Access will be incorporated through mainstream provision and not segregated or “special” arrangements.

We will achieve the highest possible standard of mainstream access by:

- Seeking a more comprehensive level of access provision than included in the Building Regulations.

- Using national best practice standards from acknowledged sources such as RNIB, JMU or CAE wherever possible and which may exceed the provisions of Building Regulations
- All Directorates within the city council will, as far as possible, adhere to these standards as the acceptable level of provision when new buildings are constructed or improvements made to existing buildings.
- The city council will ensure that access to its buildings is improved through a rolling programme of works, creating free and unobstructed access for all people.
- The city council has also developed inclusive design guidance for designers, architects and developers with Supplementary Planning Document Inclusive Design: Access for All. This document will help integrate the needs of all users of buildings, spaces and places from the outset of the planning process.
- The city council has developed a Management and Maintenance guide which seeks to ensure that we maintain standards of accessibility through proper management of our buildings.

Monitoring / performance indicators

The city council has adopted monitoring mechanisms to ensure its commitment and promises around accessibility are adhered to, which include access audits of all operational buildings and equality impact assessments.

There are also performance standards within the city council's Single Equality Scheme