

TIPPERARY S.R. COUNTY COUNCIL

BUILDING CONTROL

SHEET NO. 3 - AUGUST, 1999

Access for Disabled People

Part M: Access for Disabled People of the Second Schedule to Building Regulations, 1997 requires that reasonable provision be made to enable independent access to public buildings for disabled people. There is widespread concern about the level of non-compliance by owners/architects/builders with this Part.

The main concerns are as follows:

- Lack of effective wheelchair access to some new hotels/restaurants/pubs.
- Access for people with disabilities to these types of buildings is often restricted to side or rear doors - or even to emergency exits.
- Inadequate toilet facilities i.e. doors too narrow for wheelchair access and/or egress and incorrectly placed fittings, e.g. support bars.
- Bedrooms (with bathrooms) designated for people with disabilities that, in practice, are not user friendly.
- Unsuitable fittings in new buildings for persons with sensory impairment.
- Inadequate provision of designated car parking spaces and inaccessible routes from car parks to entrances.
- Ironmongery on doors unsuitable for operation by people with disabilities.

- Inadequate internal door design e.g. lack of clear approaches, correctly placed glass panels, visual strips on glass panels or space to leading edge of doors.

For further technical information on these matters your attention is drawn to Technical Guidance Document M of the Building Regulations and the National Rehabilitation Board (N.R.B.) publication " Buildings For Everyone" (1998).

Owners/architects/designers/builders are encouraged to make themselves aware of the concept of "Universal Accessibility".

Your attention is drawn to the current revision of Part M of the Building Regulations, which incorporates proposals for making new dwellings visitable by people with disabilities. A consultation document has been issued by the Construction Section, of the Department of Environment & Local Government, Custom House, Dublin 1. It is intended that this revised version of Part M will apply from 1 July 2000.

Acknowledging the reality that there is no "Average Man" or "Normal Height", Universal Accessibility recognises, in one way or another whether in height, weight, strength, speed movement or dexterity, everyone is different and can experience problems or access to the Built Environment. These more specifically include people who are:

- Blind or partially sighted
- Deaf or hard of hearing
- Suffering from respiratory or coronary conditions
- Pregnant, elderly or very young
- Learning and/or reading impaired
- Temporarily impaired or injured.

Universal Design and Accessibility aspires to one environment usable by everyone. Dished kerbs with tactile indicators at road crossing and properly maintained footpaths facilitate people pushing baby buggies as well as people with wheelchairs, and are safe for those with visual impairments. Baths with handrails and slip resistant bases are safer for everyone, not just those who are unsteady on their feet. Accessible business premises facilitate not only the visitors with disabilities but also ensure that a staff member or owner may remain in employment in the event of a temporary or permanent impairment. Reduced mobility may not be due to disability or impairment, it can be experienced when carrying luggage, files or children.

This information sheet does not purport to be a comprehensive review of the Regulations or Technical Guidance Documents. Persons should always obtain professional advice for their specific situation. Tipperary S.R. County Council will not accept any liability arising out of reliance on any aspect of this information sheet.

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