

English Federation of Disability Sport Sports Clubs and The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act requires sports clubs and providers to make reasonable adjustments to services so that everyone has access and there is no exemption for private clubs any more.

Sports clubs have an on-going anticipatory duty to meet the reasonable needs of disabled people. It is not a case of doing something once you know a need exists. You must plan changes in anticipation that someone already needs it or will do soon. Examples include:

1. Providing large print information on fixtures or fire evacuation procedures, having a portable induction loop available for communication with hearing aid wearers etc.
2. Most “access improvements” directly benefit non-disabled people too, so the rewards are high in terms of benefits to members. Highlighting step nosings and providing handrails on both sides of the steps help everyone to use them safely and ramps that facilitate easy access when using wheelchairs, pushchairs or wheeled deliveries or sports equipment.
3. Making ‘reasonable’ adjustments to the way things are done – such as changing practices, policies or procedures where disabled people would be at a ‘substantial disadvantage’ e.g. amend a ‘no dogs’ policy to allow an exception for assistance dogs.

What is Reasonable?

The Equality Act is not prescriptive about building adjustments. Deciding what is reasonable for your sports club will vary to some extent depending upon the:

- a) type and size of buildings/land and degree of control
- b) resources you have available
- c) types of events and sports activities undertaken

Whilst new buildings and refurbishments are captured by Building Regulations, existing buildings may not have been subject to the same standards. It may be that you can not achieve a high standard of access – nevertheless, you must make the best of what you have.

Do not forget that you do not have to provide full accessibility to ancillary areas such as storage and plant rooms or offices. Focus on the areas where your activities take place, where members and supporters arrive, enter the building, play their sport and changing/washing facilities rather than ancillary areas that they will not need to use.

Making changes to your provision will benefit members as well as people on trials or taster sessions, receiving coaching, competing and spectating, as well as supporters such as family and friends.

Access audits

There is no legal requirement to audit premises but it is a very useful way of assessing how inclusive your club is.

Access audits vary in scope and complexity. An access audit undertaken by a professional access auditor or consultant, for example, will be based on rigorous technical standards and is likely to give prioritised recommendations for physical and management adjustments together with budgetary indicators in a formal report. As anyone can call themselves an access auditor, it is worthwhile considering how they are qualified to advise. The national body of access professionals who have been panel assessed and accredited members with appropriate qualifications, experience and insurance to ensure your auditor is up to the job. The National Register of Access Consultants have a freely accessible database of consultants located throughout the UK see <http://www.nrac.org.uk>.

If you are not in a position to engage a professional, you may need to think about auditing yourself. Don't be put off by the technical standards out there, a basic checklist such as the one provided in the appendices will help you to identify the primary issues. Do not forget to involve other people if you can. They will offer a fresh pair of eyes. Make sure you include some of your disabled members or spectators – they will be able to offer an invaluable personal perspective.

For more information on EFDS and the support we can give you, visit our website www.efds.co.uk