

**activity
alliance**

disability
inclusion
sport

Access for all

Creating accessible
places and spaces



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Introduction

Why does accessibility matter?

There are over 16 million disabled people in the UK. This is around a quarter (24%) of the population, and shows how important it is to make venues welcoming for everyone.

Sport England's Active Lives shows disabled people are **twice as likely to be inactive than non-disabled people**. Being active provides both physical and mental health benefits. However, many people face significant barriers to accessing both indoor and outdoor spaces. These barriers can be societal, financial, psychological and physical. By removing these barriers, we can ensure that more people can enjoy the positive impact of being active.

Whether you're a physical activity provider, venue owner, coach, event organiser, volunteer, parent, carer, or supporter, this resource will empower you with practical, cost-effective solutions to create accessible indoor and outdoor environments. Some permanent changes may be out of your control, but ensuring venues are accessible to everyone does not have to be costly or complicated. From creating accessible paths and clear signage to installing rest areas and adaptable equipment, this resource provides a range of ideas to make spaces more inclusive.

Please note: This resource is not for new buildings, major construction, or extensive refurbishment projects, or for those working in the built environment sector. For such initiatives, refer to the RIBA's Inclusive Design overlay and **Sport England's Accessible and Inclusive Sports Facilities (AISF) Resource 2024.**

Becoming more accessible

Activity Alliance follows the social model of disability. This model was developed by disabled people and states that people are disabled by attitudes and barriers in society and not their impairments. Therefore, by removing these barriers we can create more accessible spaces, promote equality and grant greater independence and choice. For more information, please see **Scope's explanation of the social model of disability.**

It is important to talk to disabled people and understand that everyone faces different barriers. No two individuals experience disability in the same way. Co-production actively involves disabled people in designing, delivering, and evaluating services that affect them. This approach ensures people's voices are heard and their needs are met.

Other aspects of a person's identity, such as age, race, faith, gender or socioeconomic status can also influence their experiences and create additional challenges. This 'intersectionality' helps us understand the multiple layers of discrimination faced by disabled people. Lived experience is key to understanding these barriers and finding the best ways to break them down. It is therefore important to co-produce solutions with people with different lived experiences and backgrounds. It is important to stay open and regularly invite feedback and learning.

When using this resource, we would encourage you to work closely with disabled people and a range of diverse partners to improve accessibility and inclusion. There are also professional resources you can refer to including the **National Register of Access Consultants** and Sport England's Accessible and Inclusive Sports Facilities guidance.

How to use this resource

Access for All offers practical and cost-effective solutions to create accessible indoor and outdoor environments for everyone. The guide is divided into five sections. It can be downloaded and read as a full guide, or you may find it easier to just download and read the section most relevant to you.

- Introduction
- An accessible welcome
- Accessible indoor spaces
- Accessible outdoor spaces
- Further support

At the end of each of the three main sections you will find a list of key actions to help you check the accessibility of your facility. There is also a list of organisations offering further information and support at the end of the resource.

We have also developed a user guide to help you navigate this resource. You can find this on the next page.

Sport England's Accessible and Inclusive Sports Facilities (AISF)

Sport England have produced a valuable resource which provides comprehensive technical information. It's called **Accessible and Inclusive Sports Facilities (AISF)**.

AISF is specifically written for planners, designers, building owners and operators to support the design and operation of safe, welcoming, accessible and inclusive sports and leisure facilities.

Access for all is intended as a good starting point for low cost, easy to implement solutions for community based and volunteer organisations. AISF and Access for all are designed to complement each other, and throughout this resource you will find references to specific parts of Sport England's AISF guidance that are relevant to the section you are reading. These references will be highlighted in bold blue text, like this: **AISF part H 3.3**.



User guide

Access for all



An accessible welcome



Understanding your offer

- Value lived experience
- What do people want to know?
- Onsite facilities, services and activity details
- Finding further information and support
- Promoting and advertising



Travel, transport and journey planning

- Arriving by walking and wheeling
- Arriving by cycle
- Arriving by public transport
- Arriving by vehicle

Accessible indoor spaces



Indoor spaces

- Corridors, lobbies and walkways
- Internal doors
- Lifts
- Internal stairs and ramps
- Glazing



Light, colour and sound

- Finishes
- Visual contrast
- Internal lighting
- Noise control



Rest, social, relaxation and refreshment areas

- Refreshments
- Quiet/restorative and sensory rooms
- Multi-faith facilities





Reception, meet and greet points

- Approach and entrance
- Entrance doors
- Internal signage
- Reception points
- Seating
- Promoting access information



Accessible outdoor spaces



Green and blue spaces

- Path width and length
- Softer ground
- Outside lighting
- External level changes
- Hazards
- Handrails
- Waterside
- Access and route information



Toilets and changing spaces

- Accessible toilets
- Ambulant accessible toilets
- All-gender toilets
- Changing Places toilets
- Shower and changing facilities
- Baby and toddler facilities



Emergency arrangements

- Evacuation
- Making GEEP and PEEP Plans
- First aid



External signage

- Signs and waymarkers
- Technology



Play, spectating and rest areas

- Play areas
- Viewing areas
- External seating and shelter
- Terraces and decking





An accessible welcome

Planning activities and journeys in advance is crucial for many disabled people. Help everyone to confidently take part and be active by offering clear and easy-to-understand information about accessibility.

Understanding your offer



Before you can promote your activity or venue's accessibility, you need to explore and understand what you already offer:

- What accessibility information do you currently have?
- Is this information up-to-date and relevant?
- Is there an opportunity to review and enhance it?

Disabled people and disability organisations are a valuable source of knowledge, lived experience and insight. Work with disabled people to create a clear and consistent approach to collecting and presenting information about accessibility. Mapping out what you can offer and, just as importantly, what you may not be able to offer, is an important start. This resource provides useful tips and links to lots of great access resources, audits and checklists, as well as professionals who can help.

Value lived experience

Co-designing and co-producing accessibility information with disabled people ensures it is relevant, useful, and based on lived experience. To create meaningful accessibility information, actively involve disabled people in the process from the beginning. By collaborating with a diverse range of people, groups, and organisations, you will gain valuable insights into different user needs. Continuous improvement is key, keep listening to disabled people and make changes to your information where needed. Focus on building real partnerships with disability groups to create mutual benefits by working together to develop inclusive solutions that will support everyone.

For further guidance on engaging with disabled people, refer to Activity Alliance's

Taking a person-centred approach resource, Effective engagement factsheets and see **AISF part G**.



What do people want to know?

When creating accessibility information, consider the entire journey a disabled person might take. This may start with journey planning, onsite facilities, services, and activity details, and where to find additional information and support. Stakeholder engagement will help with knowing what to include.

Onsite facilities, services and activity details

Think about the variety of accessible facilities and services you offer to ensure an inclusive and enjoyable experience for everyone. Use your accessibility information to tell people about:

- **Journey planning:** Accessible travel and transport information (see **Travel, transport and journey planning**). See **AISF part A 3.1** and **table A7**.
- **Toilet and changing facilities:** Location, gender allocation, mix and number of toilets, showers and changing areas, including accessible options, any Changing Places toilets with additional space and equipment such as hoists and adult changing tables. See **AISF part D**.
- **Dining and rest areas:** Places to get food and drink, quiet rooms for restorative use, and other spaces to rest and relax. Including options for specific dietary needs. See **AISF part C**.
- **Communication support:** Availability of fixed or portable hearing loops, British Sign Language (BSL) support, and other accessible information formats such as Easy Read, audio description or large print documents to aid communication. See **AISF parts C 6.5 and H 3.3**.
- **Assistance animals:** Whether assistance animals are allowed on site, availability of drinking water and designated areas for owners to toilet their assistance dog. See **AISF part B 5.10**.
- **Equipment hire:** Opportunities to hire cycles, e-bikes, mobility scooters, wheelchairs or adapted sports equipment.
- **Additional equipment:** Other offers such as availability of maps, fold out chairs, ear defenders, or provision of dog waste disposal bags.
- **Storage and charging:** Lockers, storage facilities, and publicly available charging points. See **AISF part D 2.4**.
- **Discounts:** Discounted rates and memberships for disabled people and their assistants.
- **Inclusive spaces and activities:** Dedicated or inclusive offers like accessible play areas, clearly marked accessible trails, quieter times, sensory walks, or specialist classes and activities.
- **Parking:** Include details of on site or nearby accessible parking, the number of spaces available, parking charges and ways to pay. See **AISF part B 2**.
- **Information points and contact information:** Is there a specific person or team that can support by providing further access information or discussing specific needs. Can this information be provided beforehand and signposted to when on site?
- **Emergency situations:** Highlight fire and emergency evacuation procedures. See **AISF part F**.

Finding further information and support

Help people easily reach out for support, enquiries, or feedback by clearly promoting your contact information and help points. It is good practice to give multiple contact points, for example your email address, phone number, website address and social media platforms. Talk to your staff about how confident they feel to assist visitors with different accessibility needs. If they need additional support or training, plan that as a team or individual development.

Promoting and advertising

A key part of being accessible is providing information in ways that everyone can receive, understand and use. Think about your communications policy:

- Who do you want to reach?
- What are their accessibility requirements?
- What communication channels do they use?
- What information can you provide before they visit and once they have arrived?

Accessible communication formats: Sharing information in various formats helps everyone get the information they need in the way that works best for them. Simple visual aids like maps, pictures, and video guides, along with clear signs and symbols, can make information easier to understand. Easy Read documents, audio guides, large print options, Makaton and British Sign Language (BSL) videos will meet different needs. Using inclusive imagery and language also helps everyone feel included and valued.

Easy Read



This is an Easy Read version of some hard information. It may not include all of the information but will tell you about the important parts.



This Easy Read information uses easier words and pictures. You may still want help to read it.



Some words are in **bold** - this means the writing is thicker and darker.



These are words that some people will find hard. When you see a bold word, we will explain it in the next sentence.



Blue and underlined words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

Communication channels: To share accessibility information effectively, be creative. Start with websites and social media, but also use printed materials like brochures, banners, newsletters, and posters. Integrating technology like apps and QR codes can help to link to more in-depth content. Explore local options and existing external services, like AccessAble, Euan's Guide, or WhatThreeWords, which can provide valuable accessibility information for disabled people. Lastly, word of mouth is key, so connect with local disabled people and disability organisations to spread the word. Don't forget to think about how you can promptly communicate any temporary changes too, like road closures or equipment breakdowns, to ensure everyone knows what to expect. See [AISF part H 3.3](#).

See Activity Alliance's [Inclusive marketing and communications guidance](#) for more support.

Travel, transport and journey planning



When planning activities, it is important to think about travel and transport options, as these can be a significant barrier for disabled people. Service providers have the power to break down these barriers. Providing information in advance will help people plan their journey and decide how best to travel. Take a person-centred approach, as not all disabled people require the same support. Think about how you can provide clear directions and options for different accessible routes that meet a variety of needs.

Arriving by walking and wheeling

Poorly planned or longer routes may increase journey time and cause fatigue, anxiety or physical discomfort and pain for some people.

Consider:

- **Accessible venue information:** Providing accessible information on how to get to the venue or activity location by walking or wheeling. This includes details on accessibility, level or step-free access, gradients (and over what distance), surfaces, cambers of paths and resting points.
- **Arrival routes:** Ensure routes are easy to follow and clearly signposted. Can you highlight distances and unique landmarks to help people navigate easily? See **External signage.**
- **Decision points:** Focus on making decision points clear, consider providing descriptions and images to illustrate information, in pre-arrival information and on site.

- **Sensory considerations:** Think about any sensory triggers, for example any busy roads or pedestrian areas. Advise alternative routes if possible.
- **Moving around routes:** Footpaths, pavements, and trails should be safe, lit, and well-maintained. For example, overhanging trees can pose an obstacle for people with visual impairments.
- **Storage:** Providing secure, under-cover storage for mobility scooters, all-terrain wheelchairs, and other mobility aids.



Arriving by cycle

Disabled people may cycle for leisure, exercise or active travel, with some people using their cycle as a mobility aid. Below are ways you can support disabled cyclists:

- **Accessible venue information:** Providing accessible information on how to arrive at the venue or activity location by cycling. It is useful to include information on step-free access, whether cycle paths are clearly marked, shared spaces or dedicated cycle lanes, surface type and condition, narrow sections, speed humps, large gradients, potholes, bollards, or control barriers and gates, and any other hazards.

- **Segregated routes:** To provide safe and enjoyable experiences, routes for cyclists and pedestrians should be segregated, where possible. They should be clearly identified with clear rules for all users being displayed.
- **Parking:** It is important that dedicated space for accessible cycle parking and storage facilities are advertised and available for non-standard or adapted bikes. This could include, all-terrain wheelchairs, cargo bikes, adapted trikes, E-bikes, hand cycles, tandems, mobility scooters and other mobility aids. See [AISF parts B 1 and B 2](#).
- **Storage:** Should be secure and undercover. Ensure you describe the facility's design, for example, hoop or wheel clamps, and what a user might need to provide themselves, such as a D lock or chain locks. Also let cyclists know whether these need to be pre-booked and the process for doing so. See [AISF part B 2.5](#).

If you cannot provide these facilities, can you provide a contact number and/or an email address to talk about individual needs and what solutions you can provide to accommodate them.

Find more advice in [Wheels for Wellbeing's Guide to Inclusive Cycling](#) and [AISF part B](#).



Arriving by public transport

Some disabled people will rely on public transport to make their journey. It is helpful to make people aware of:

- **Accessible transport:** Nearby accessible public transport links, including bus, rail, tube and tram stops. If you're unsure, contact local transport providers to clarify their accessibility information.
- **How to get there:** Include directions, distances and rest point information, and where possible, signpost to timetables and contact details so people can find out more.

Some spaces do not have good public transport links and information that describes this, and any alternative options is also useful. Where no feasible alternatives exist consider working with local authorities and other partners, such as those with accessible transport options, to work on solutions.

Arriving by vehicle

Disabled people may feel more confident travelling using their own vehicle or have adaptations to enable accessible or independent travel. People and groups may arrive by car, taxi, coach or minibus.

Think about:

- **Accessible venue information:** Upon arrival, where is the main destination, such as the main entrance, entry gate, changing rooms, outdoor pitches or waterside? Accessible parking bays should be located as close as possible to the intended destination, preferably within 50 metres.
- **Parking:** Promote accessible parking via clearly located and well-designed signs. Are these parking bays safe, convenient and on level ground? Accessible bays are wider than standard bays, measuring 3.6m x 4.8m compared to 2.4m x 4.8m, with additional

space at the front and rear of each bay. This extra room helps people safely exit the vehicle and provides easy access to other types of support, such as medical supplies, ramps, or a tail lift for wheelchair access. Typically, 6-8% of all spaces should be accessible, but you can find detailed information on the location, percentages, size, and layout of accessible bays for different facility types in **AISF table B 1**.

If you have no accessible parking facilities or need to provide more accessible parking, consider using existing standard-sized bays. Can they be combined and cordoned off with plastic bollards or tape to create additional or temporary accessible parking or designated drop-off points? Where flexible solutions are offered, make sure these are explained on websites and other forms of communication so people know what to expect upon arrival and if they need to pre-book.

It is good practice to prioritise parking for people who need it most, so make sure you have a policy for monitoring use and abuse of accessible parking spaces. Some organisations specify parking bays are for Blue Badge holders only, whilst others will allow people to park with temporary disabilities or those not recognised by the Blue Badge scheme, but who would benefit from an accessible space. Be mindful that not all disabilities are visible.



If your venue does not have its own parking facilities, find out where the nearest accessible and standard parking provision is and whether local taxi companies have accessible vehicles. Share this information with people in advance to help them plan their journey and decide how best to travel.

Note that accessible taxis, coaches, and minibuses will normally need a raised pavement with a kerb to achieve a safe ramp gradient. See **AISF part B 2.2** and **figure B 3**.

Reception, meet and greet points



Once someone arrives at your site, how do they know where to go? It is a great idea to have clear and obvious meet and greet points. This section offers guidance on using clear and accessible signage, accessible information and physical features to make these spaces inclusive and welcoming. See **AISF part C 2**.

Approach and entrance

Level or step free approach and entry is important but older buildings can be challenging. For small level changes over 15mm, (often found on older thresholds at entrances), this can be addressed with a fillet infill or a threshold ramp. A threshold ramp is a small ramp designed to bridge the small height difference between the floor and a doorway to enable someone who needs step free access to enter the building.

Larger level changes will require a portable or permanent ramp, with a maximum gradient of 1:12 for safe independent use. Aim for the gentlest gradient possible but think about who will transport and lay the ramp; lightweight and roll-up ramps will be easier for people to put in place.

When planning a new permanent ramp, see **AISF part B 5.4** and **figure B 7**.

Stairs and ramps benefit from handrails on both sides and extend around landings to provide continuous support and guidance. If gaps occur on steps or landings, consider adding a section of rail.

Handrail materials: Timber poles, such as those used for broom handles or curtain poles, have a suitable diameter for easy gripping and can be weather treated if used outdoors.

Top tip! Be sure to ask ramp suppliers for advice on choosing the most suitable ramp for your circumstances. Aim for a maximum 1:12 gradient, remember the bigger the second number, the gentler the gradient (a 1:10 gradient is too steep, and anything over 1:20 gradient is considered a slope and doesn't need handrails). A risk assessment should always be carried out when considering the moving and placement of temporary ramps.

Lighting external routes is important, especially where there are level changes. See [AISF part B 5.2](#).

Entrance doors

Entrances should look welcoming and be easy to identify. See [AISF part C 2.1](#). Entrance and exit doors should be wide and provide a step-free route. If not, think about using a portable ramp, another entrance or exit, or a short-term solution is to install a bell or intercom to allow people to ask for help.

Make sure there is clear signage and communication to inform people about it. Ensure the appearance of the entrance or exit is inclusive and welcoming; consider redecorating, using pictures and uplighters.

Heavy or revolving entrance doors can be problematic for disabled people or those pushing prams, pushchairs, buggies, or carrying sports equipment. Manual revolving doors can be physically challenging to use and judging when to enter automated revolving doors can also be difficult. Most revolving doors should have a side 'pass door' available. It is important to provide clear signage and keep this door unlocked during operating hours to ensure that everyone can use it. Refer to [AISF part C](#) for more details on entrance doors.

Internal signage

Help people easily find your meeting point or entrance, by using clear and simple signage, especially at key decision points along the route. Good inclusive signage within your reception points is important to help make disabled people aware of inclusive facilities and move around. Consider using easy-to-recognise symbols and ensuring the accessibility of any digitally displayed information. You can find guidance on inclusive sign design and wayfinding. See [External signage](#) and [AISF part E](#).



Reception points

Whether it is a formal reception desk or a makeshift check-in point in a church hall or on an external playing field, consider whether it meets the needs of all potential users.

A high-visibility meeting place or a distinct flag, parasol, or gazebo can serve as an easily identifiable location for one-off events. For recurring activities, consider installing permanent solutions such as signs or wayfinding trails at ground level. See [AISF part 2.7](#).

Consider your location carefully. For example, placing your reception area under the shade of a tree or parasol will help individuals with sight conditions or neurodivergence who may be affected by bright sunlight. Meeting points at the other side of a grass field could make access difficult for some people with mobility impairments.

A formal counter with a lower section or any standard height table (even a picnic table) will suffice for a less formal 'meet and greet' point. To meet the needs of both seated and standing users, place a low table next to your reception counter. If your reception desk is not directly in

line with the entrance or you only have a high-level reception counter, make sure people on reception are aware that they should come round the front to meet and greet visitors. New reception desks should meet the guidelines in [AISF part C 2.5](#).

Ensure that your information and literature are easily accessible to everyone. If your literature stands are tall (over 1.2m), consider placing some booklets on lower surfaces like a coffee table or window ledge, and replenishing them as needed.

There are several types of assistive listening systems that benefit people with hearing loss or hearing differences. This includes traditional induction loop systems, which are probably still the most common provision. Radio and infra-red systems are also worth considering for sports and activities that take place in various locations, as they are both wireless and can be moved from one area to another, including outdoor locations. For example, radio systems can receive a signal up to around 60 metres, which may be necessary for outdoor environments. In this setup, the activity facilitator wears a transmitter, and the individual wears a receiver.





Promoting access information

Providing disabled people with accessibility information about your venue or activity before they arrive will help with forward planning. But it's also important to ensure this information is displayed upon arrival to alleviate disabled people's fears about accessibility. Think about how and where you can promote your onsite facilities, services, and activity details (the list in **Onsite facilities** will help with this). Can you use your website, leaflets, posters, social media, and other marketing materials?

Promote your accessibility features and services, maintenance, or any interruptions in service, such as blocked routes or equipment breakdowns. Make information clear and concise, available in different formats, and provide multiple ways for people to contact you.

Activity Alliance's Inclusive Communications guidance can help you learn more about inclusive communication.

AISF part C Section 6 provides further information on assistive listening systems, including Wi-Fi systems and other communication technologies.

Even temporary reception points should have an induction loop system. This can be an inexpensive, battery-operated portable induction loop that requires no wiring. Remember to clearly display the symbol to let people know it's there.

Seating

Provide a variety of seating styles to accommodate different needs. Keep in mind that low sofas and high perch stools may not be suitable for everyone. It's best to have one or two tub chairs or upright dining-style chairs with good back and arm supports to cater to most needs in reception, spectating or socialising spaces. **See AISF part C 3.**



Key actions

We have reached the end of this section. Have a look through the list below and

☒ **check the boxes** that apply to your space. Note any areas for improvement.

Understanding your offer:

Have you involved disabled people in the planning and development of your activity, event and access information?

Have you taken time to learn and understand different impairments and potential barriers, ensuring a person-centred approach to all your visitors?

Travel, transport and journey planning:

Have you provided up to date transport options and clear accessible directions to activities?

Have you provided information in a variety of formats (large print, digital) and provided multiple options for people to contact you for further information?

Reception meet and greet points:

Is your reception area or welcome point clearly signposted, accessible and easy to navigate for all visitors?

Have you provided information about onsite facilities, including details on accessible ramps, lifts and toilet facilities?





Accessible indoor spaces

This section offers simple, straightforward solutions for improving accessibility in existing buildings and their surrounding areas. Building regulations ensure that facilities are accessible to everyone, regardless of disability, age or gender. The information below will help you navigate these requirements and avoid potential issues. See [AISF part C](#).

Indoor spaces



Corridors, lobbies and walkways

Fixed features like columns, corridors, and lobbies are hard to modify. However, you can help by keeping them free from clutter and clearly marking hazards to improve safety and allow space for wheelchair users to turn and manoeuvre.

Internal doors

Wider doors are helpful for everyone and essential for wheelchair users. Focus on clearance width rather than door size. Existing buildings may have door clearances as low as 750mm, which can be insufficient for wheelchair access, while an 850mm clearance is ideal for most situations.

The exception to this is where sports wheelchairs are used as these have angled wheels which make them wider. See [AISF part C 3.7](#) for details. If you have multiple doors, it can be helpful to have a foam board or cardboard strip cut to the minimum clearance width to check all doorways as you walk-through the building.



What can be done if your doors are too narrow?

- **Evaluate critical routes:** For a few doors, consider their importance and if they are on critical routes. Use alternative routes or doors where possible if internal door clearances are too narrow.
- **Open fire exits:** If internal door clearances are narrow, and there are no other options consider opening external fire exit doors to provide access from outside. These are likely to be wider and often have a double door set. Have umbrellas available for bad weather days when people are using these routes.
- **Booking arrangements:** When taking bookings, consider the group or participant needs when allocating space. If other rooms have wider doors, a priority booking system will enable people needing these to specifically request and reserve spaces.
- **Double door solutions:** Sometimes, both double doors can be opened to provide a wider opening. A double door set can be difficult for anyone using a wheelchair or crutches. If the door set are not fire doors, consider propping or wedging the doors in the open position. Eventually, the venue could replace the double set with one larger door and one smaller door.
- **Hinge adjustments:** Fit existing doors with new hinges to open beyond 90 degrees, which will maximize the clear opening width.

You can find out more about door widths in [AISF part C 3.7.2](#).

Heavy doors are a major challenge for many disabled people. Measure door opening forces with a simple Newton measure. A manual door should have no more than 30 Newtons force to open from the closed position to 30 degrees and 22.5 Newtons beyond that. Many doors, especially those with self-closing devices (required on fire doors and many entrance doors in exposed weather conditions), are too heavy.

See [AISF part C 3.7.5](#) for further information on door closers.

Adjustments may include:

- Many self-closing devices can be adjusted (usually with a simple turn of a screwdriver), so it may be possible to reduce the heaviness of the door in this way.
- Changing a door closer to one with a sliding CAM action can result in a lower opening force.
- Have someone ready and able to open the door when needed.
- Where the door is definitely not a fire door (check with your fire professional), such as a toilet door, the closer could simply be removed.
- Prop or wedge the door open during the event/opening hours (if it is not a fire door). A door closer can be fitted with a 'stand open arm' to a non-fire or security door, so that the door will remain open at a pre-set angle until it is closed manually, this is helpful on outer doors.
- The style of the door handle can also make opening a door more challenging; for example, handles that require a strong grip and hand action, such as doorknobs, should be changed for lever action. See [AISF part C 3.7.6](#).



Lifts

Lifts are essential for many people requiring step-free access to different floor levels but are only likely to be available in larger venues. A lift is a major investment and will be disruptive to install, but it should be considered when opportunities arise. See [AISF part C 3.8](#).

There are some easy improvements that can be made to existing lifts, which include:

- **Handrail:** Add a handrail if there's not already one there.
- **Mirror:** Install a top-half mirror in the rear of the lift car for wheelchair users to see when reversing out. This also helps people with hearing impairments as they can see who enters the lift with them. If a full-height mirror exists, add opaque film to the bottom half to prevent visually impaired people mistaking the mirror for an opening.
- **Wheelchair access:** Your lift car may be too small for some wheelchairs. Providing a small, lightweight wheelchair that fits the lift car may allow some wheelchair users to use the lift whilst their own wheelchair is transported separately to the next level or stored safely.
- **Control panels:** If control panels within a lift car lack any tactile information, add both visual and tactile information using inexpensive self-adhesive embossed vinyl layover signs or Braille tape.



- **Floor covering:** If the lift car floor is black or very dark in colour, cover it with lighter, slip-resistant vinyl, carpet, or a flat dust mat to avoid the appearance of an empty shaft.
- **Communication:** In the event of a lift breakdown or servicing, notify users via clear notices at reception, on social media, and via your website to prevent people making wasted trips. Some facilities find that creating an app user group can help give timely notifications to people of any temporary changes in accessibility like this.

Internal stairs and ramps

Stairs and ramps should have handrails on both sides where possible, continuing around landings. Where avoidable gaps occur on stairways or landings, it may be possible to add a section of rail. Timber poles from any DIY store, like those used for broom handles or curtain poles, have an ideal diameter for gripping. This is especially important where steps are irregular in shape or height, such as tapered steps and small half landings. All steps should be assessed for safe use – contrasting step edges and handrails are key safety features that should be provided. See [AISF part C 3.5](#).

A fillet infill or a threshold ramp can be used where there are level changes over 15mm, which are often found on older entrance thresholds. A threshold ramp is a small ramp designed to bridge the small height difference between the floor and a doorway to enable someone who needs step-free access to enter the building. Larger level changes will require a portable or permanent ramp, with a maximum gradient of 1:12 for safe independent use. Refer to [AISF part C 3.2](#) and [3.2](#) for more guidance.

Glazing

Sometimes buildings have full height glazed walls or glass doors, making them difficult to identify. All full height glazing that is not protected by furniture, should have manifestation or markings across a minimum of two bands (preferably 3). If there are no markings on the glass use notices or posters to make it stand out. You can advertise your sessions or promote special offers while improving safety and visibility for users. See **AISF part C 7.5**.



Light, colour and sound



Finishes

The interior finishes of a building can make a big difference to how welcoming a space feels as you enter and can affect the comfort levels of users. For example, spaces with lots of hard surfaces can become quite noisy especially when there are lots of people or activities happening.

- Introducing softer surfaces can help – use materials that will absorb sound such as cushions, blankets or upholstered furniture.
- Having non-reflective, muted colour schemes on large areas such as walls and floors can be helpful in creating a calm and comfortable environment. See **AISF part C 7.2.2**.
- Floor finishes can create many challenges but using appropriate slip resistance and avoiding strong patterns are the most important. See **AISF part C 7.3**.

How building features affect the senses is an important consideration which can be improved in a number of ways. For further information, see **AISF part A 2.2.8 and parts C 5.6, 7.2.2, 7.2.3**, which includes content on neurodiversity and sensory considerations, and separate guidance is available on dementia-friendly activities.

Visual contrast

Many people benefit from visual contrast when moving around. When surface finishes and features have a tonal contrast from one another, they are easier to identify. Improving contrast is very easy. See [AISF part C 7.2.1](#).

Flooring is often mid to dark coloured (rarely white). Most walls, other than feature walls, are likely to be light-coloured, which achieves satisfactory contrast in most buildings without any special effort.

- Doors (and/or their frames) can easily be repainted in a darker shade if they do not contrast with the walls.
- Columns can be painted in a different colour, or tonal bands added at ground and eye level (typically at an average eyeline of 1500mm).
- Tables that blend with floors can have contrasting tablecloths or mats added, and soft seating that blends with carpets can have some cushions added in a contrasting colour to increase visibility.

Ensure strong contrast on smaller features such as signs, door handles, grab rails, and step edges.

Top tip! Take a black and white photograph to easily assess tonal differences and ensure adequate contrast. See [AISF part C 7.2.1](#).

Internal lighting

Lighting is a key consideration in creating a comfortable environment that people can use with ease. People with hearing loss need adequate lighting to lip-read and people with visual impairments rely on good lighting to maximise their ability to see finer detail.

Bright, flickering lighting can be difficult for people who are visually hypersensitive.

[AISF part C 8.4](#).

- **Brightness and colour temperature:** Warmer lighting can be beneficial, but be mindful of spaces with specific brightness requirements, such as activity areas or reading and other near vision activities. Consider the colour temperature of lights (e.g. warm to cool), brightness (measured in lux) and user feedback when replacing lamps and bulbs.
- **Adjustable lighting:** If lights are dimmable, or the colour temperature can be changed, brightness and tone of lighting can be adapted for different activities or user requirements. This can create a very different feel to a space, which can be used for a wide variety of activities. Where it is the intention for visitors to adjust the lighting, clear directions will be needed.
- **Lighting position:** Lamps and overhead lighting should be positioned to provide indirect rather than direct lighting as this is more comfortable. Where the angle of a lamp can be altered, care should be taken to ensure it is not pointing in a direction that will dazzle or cause discomfort.
- **Maintenance:** Regularly clean light fittings, blinds, and windows to ensure maximum light efficiency from your existing fittings.

Noise control

Ensuring good acoustics in areas where communication takes place, such as reception and meeting rooms, is crucial. If a space has excessive echo, consider adding soft materials to improve sound quality. Effective options include adding soft materials such as carpets, soft seating, curtains or fabric screens.

See [AISF part C 7.1](#).

Rest, social, relaxation and refreshment areas



Refreshments

Refreshment areas, like reception waiting areas, should be accessible to everyone:

- **Seating:** Provide a mix of seating styles, including options with and without arm supports. Keep aisles between tables clear. See [AISF part C 5.1 to 5.3](#).
- **Table contrast:** Use tablecloths if tables don't contrast well with their surroundings.
- **Serving counters:** Ideally, counters should be 850mm high for both seated and standing use. Offer table service for items that are difficult or hazardous to carry, like hot drinks. See [AISF part C 5.4](#).
- **Food and drink:** Include finger foods, and use plain crockery that contrasts with tables or table covers. Offer a mix of cups with and without handles and provide straws for use. See [AISF part H 3.8.8](#).
- **Menus:** Display menus in large print and easy-to-read formats. See [AISF parts C 5.4 and H 3.8.8](#).
- **Vending machines:** Ensure accessibility by providing assistance if needed, especially if the coin slot or the dispenser is too high or low. Braille tape can be considered for selection panels, or self-adhesive labels called bump-ons, available in an assortment of colours and textures. Some machines have audio and/or Braille, it may be possible to exchange your vending machine with one of these options. See [AISF 5.5](#).

- **Assistance animals:** Identify designated, enclosed areas for owners to toilet their assistance dog. Areas should be safe, free from glass and other dangers and have appropriate disposal bins and cleaning provisions. Include any areas the dog can access drinking water. See [AISF part B 5.10](#) and the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) offer further guidance.
- For rural routes it is helpful to provide highly visible dog bins. It can be helpful for these to be positioned at key decision points near wayfinding markers or signs and near to any general waste bins where provided.

See [AISF part C 5](#) for details of furniture for social and amenity spaces.



Quiet/restorative and sensory rooms

For individuals experiencing anxiety, sensory overload or mental health conditions, small adaptable spaces for quiet or restorative practices may be beneficial. These rooms should offer privacy and the ability to adjust the environment to suit personal needs, providing a place to pause and reset.

For detailed guidance on creating these spaces, refer to [AISF part H 3.8.6](#).

Multi-faith facilities

There are no established design standards or regulations at the current time, so if you are providing spaces for prayer, it's essential to involve disabled people in the design process, which may include specific wash facilities and the orientation of toilets. You can find guidance on faith rooms and associated facilities for ritual washing in [AISF part D 2.12 and part H 3.8.7](#).

Toilets and changing spaces



Toilet facilities should be available at the start of an activity, trail or experience, and every building should have at least one accessible toilet large enough, and correctly laid out, for disabled people including wheelchair users.

The AISF standards should be followed wherever possible when adding new toilets. Details for the design of new accessible and ambulant accessible toilets are given in [AISF parts D 2.3.6 and 2.3.7](#). Changing Places Toilets for assisted use are detailed in [AISF part D 3.8](#).

Accessible toilets

Accessible toilets are sometimes called wheelchair accessible toilets. This reassures wheelchair users that these facilities are large enough, but designed to accommodate a wide range of disabled people, including people with non-visible impairments.

Knowing where your nearest accessible toilet is and what it can offer is important. For existing facilities that may not meet current standards:

- **Facility information:** Clearly communicate the toilet's features, such as left or right-hand transfer, on websites or in responses to enquiries.
- **Space:** If the room is a little too narrow (under 1.5m), consider repositioning the toilet pan closer to the wall to improve the transfer zone. (e.g. repositioning the pan 400mm from centreline of the pan to the wall rather than 500mm).
- **Length:** If the cubicle is too short (less than 2.2m), removing any entrance lobby may create more space.
- **Under-sized facilities:** If the space is significantly undersized, consider extending or providing an alternative facility, but always keep a facility in use as it will still be beneficial for disabled people who are non-wheelchair users.
- **Toilet position:** The corner toilet layout allows hands to be washed and dried before transferring back into a wheelchair. Ensure that the space between the basin and pan is adequate for this. Use wall-fixed soap dispensers above the basin where it won't spill onto the floor and place a hand towel dispenser near the pan. If the distance between the basin and the toilet pan is too large, provide hand cleansing gel, use self-adhesive pads to provide a dispenser near the pan until this can be addressed.
- **Pan height:** Aim for a higher pan (480mm rim height). If this isn't possible, use a raised seat. Note that the hinges on these raised seats take considerable strain during use and are inclined to move more than a conventional seat. They should therefore be regularly checked.
- **Visual contrast:** Sometimes the toilet facility has poor visual contrast between finishes, for example, white grab rails, white walls and white sanitary ware. Improve contrast by adding coloured bands around walls or using contrasting vinyl on grab rails. The toilet seat can be changed to another colour to highlight the position of the pan; however, darker seats can disguise any soiling, so generally, a light colour is preferred. If the toilet seat has a lid, it must be changed for one without.

- **Grab rails and fittings:** Ensure grab rails and backrests are robust, within reach, and properly fixed. The horizontal rail at the side of the pan is most important, and the drop-down rail, in particular, should be checked to see if it is suitably weight-bearing, so don't be afraid to lean on it heavily to test it.
- **Emergency alarms:** Install emergency pull cord alarms in accessible toilets and showers. If this is not under your control, consider temporary solutions like wireless doorbells or personal alarms. Even in remote locations, such as rural area, remote monitoring arrangements are possible. A call point should sound somewhere permanently manned on or offsite so that someone can raise the alert.
- **Accessibility:** Avoid keeping accessible toilets locked unless absolutely necessary. Keeping an accessible toilet locked (even with a Radar key – a National Key Scheme (NKS) key that opens accessible toilets) is acceptable in only the most exceptional circumstances, such as a regularly abused/ vandalised facility in a remote location. Keep accessible toilets available to all users, including those with non-visible disabilities.





Ambulant accessible toilets

Ambulant accessible toilets, which are designed for people with physical impairments who are not wheelchair users should also be provided. Provide at least one cubicle with grab rails and a higher pan in standard toilets when possible. Using tap turners could help make twist operated taps usable for people with dexterity impairments.

All-gender toilets

An all-gender, sometimes called unisex, facility is self-contained with a basin and is a welcomed facility for many circumstances where using the male or female toilets is not practical or comfortable. This may include people with young children, someone supporting an adult of the opposite sex, or anyone who identifies as non-binary. Older buildings may only have male and female toilets plus a unisex accessible toilet for disabled people. This means that when someone requires an all-gender toilet, they must use the accessible one. When an opportunity arises, an alternative all-gender facility should be provided to avoid disabled people potentially having to wait longer.

For more information, refer to the detailed guidelines in [AISF part D](#).

Changing Places toilets

A Changing Places toilet is a specialised facility designed for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets. These toilets offer dignity, comfort, and hygiene for people with complex needs. They are much larger than an average wheelchair accessible toilet, with a minimum area of 12 square metres. The space has an overhead hoist and changing bed, toilet and basin, and room for up to two personal assistants. If you have a Changing Places toilet, remember to register it on the Changing Places website so people can find it. See [Changing Places](#) and [AISF part D 3.8](#).



Shower and changing facilities

Easy improvements to existing facilities may include adding some chairs where no seating is provided, providing anti-slip matting where flooring is not slip resistant, and installing wall-fixed vertical grab rails in showers.

- A free-standing shower stool may help if a flip-down seat is not available in a shower or changing area.
- Shower heads can be too high for some users. Extending the shower pole can allow it to be lowered to accommodate a handheld shower spray.
- Visual contrast can be improved easily with shower curtains, anti-slip mats, and manifestation or markings applied to clear shower screens.
- Remember that portable/removable toilet seat raisers, freestanding grab rails to go around a toilet, shower stools, shower wheelchairs, and other aids for toilets and washrooms are readily available and allow a space to be adjusted to meet a range of different user needs.

AISF part D 2.1 and 2.2 for details on designing changing and shower facilities and **AISF part D 4** for examples of different configurations for a variety of facility types.

Baby and toddler facilities

Having a sturdy child's step is helpful to give greater independence and help parents who are unable to lift their young child. A smaller inner toilet seat is helpful in making a child feel safe on an adult sized pan, but this can also be provided as a separate seat that is placed on top of the usual seat before use.

See **AISF part D 2.7** for options of how to create a baby changing facility. If there is no space, a baby changing table could be provided in one or more toilets and this should be in reach of a basin for safety reasons. Where a dedicated facility is not possible, a drop-down baby change table could potentially be added within an accessible toilet, if carefully managed, alongside other standard toilet and change units. It is important that disabled people do not experience longer waiting times to access the accessible toilet as a result.

For privacy when breastfeeding, facility managers can improvise to create a quiet corner or room as requested.

Having a highchair available can be helpful to a disabled parent or grandparent who is unable to hold their child still for any length of time or if the facility has little spare space for a pram/pushchair. Harness straps should be provided to ensure the child cannot slip down.



Emergency arrangements



Evacuation

Creating an inclusive experience means considering not just how people engage in an activity, but also how they enter, move around, and exit a building or environment. Emergency evacuation from any space or building is a particularly important consideration for people who may need assistance. This is more likely to be the case in a building of more than one storey, but complex single level buildings and some external spaces may also have some challenges for some people. See [AISF part F](#) for design considerations and [AISF part H 3.5](#) for key management actions.

Making GEEP and PEEP plans

Generic/General Emergency Evacuation Plans (GEEPs) and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) are for anyone requiring assistance or support to evacuate in an emergency. These plans will vary depending upon the environment and user requirements. This could be a short-term need, such as during pregnancy or recovering from an illness or surgery, or for a longer-term impairment or disability. A key part of many plans will be to identify people who are willing to be an evacuation assistant or buddy to support or assist, including from a designated temporary waiting area (refuge) to a place of relative safety (usually outside).

It can be difficult to tailor emergency arrangements around individual needs if people are taking part for short periods or not on a regular basis. However, it is possible to consider likely scenarios, user needs and plan ahead for different types of emergencies, such as fire, flood, chemicals or anti-social behaviour. These types of plans are sometimes referred

to as GEEPs and outline how individuals may be supported or assisted. People with assistive evacuation requirements will find it reassuring to know what the arrangements are from the outset. This information can be shared with participants and visitors either upon request or on arrival. Consider displaying information in reception areas or printed on the back of visitor passes.

For staff and others who regularly use a venue, developing a bespoke evacuation plan is best. PEEPs are an effective way of planning for anyone who cannot evacuate independently. Assumptions should not be made about what people can and cannot do, it is always best to ask everyone if they have any individual requirements.

You can find information on how to develop these plans in [AISF part F 3.4](#) and [table F 2](#).



First aid

First aid kits and defibrillators should be accessible and easy to locate. Think about where your first aid points are located and whether everyone can access these. Ensure you know and communicate their locations and regularly check they are well stocked. Whilst buildings are likely to have formal first aid facilities or kits in place, some outdoor environments may not. It's worth finding out about the nearest defibrillators and taking basic first aid supplies with you.

Key actions

We have reached the end of this section. Have a look through the list below and

☒ **check the boxes** that apply to your space. Note any areas for improvement.

Light, colour and sound:

Have you ensured acoustics and lighting accommodate various sensory needs?

Are indoor areas safe for everyone?

Remember to mark hazards such as stairs or glazing to avoid accidents.

Rest, social, relaxation and refreshment areas:

Are public areas clear of obstructions and wheelchair accessible?

Remember to provide quiet spaces too.

Have you provided a range of food options that cater to various dietary requirements?

Ensure you also include provisions and amenities for assistance animals.

Toilets and changing spaces:

Have you provided a variety of toilet and changing options for people using your facilities?

Including accessible and all gender options and facilities for families with young children?

Emergency arrangements:

Are emergency procedures clearly displayed in all public areas and do all visitors know of where to find them?

Are your emergency procedures accessible and inclusive for all, including people requiring assistance or support?



Accessible outdoor spaces

Outdoor areas consist of green spaces such as forests, trails, playgrounds, parks, historical buildings and grounds, woodlands, and nature reserves as well as blue spaces like lakes, rivers, and canals.

These environments support mental wellbeing and significantly enhance psychological health, reduce stress and promote physical activity, but can also present accessibility barriers to disabled people. The information below aims to address how the natural environment can be adapted to make it easier for disabled people to move around outside by providing information and practical solutions.

Top tip! Engaging disabled people early and throughout the process ensures the diverse needs of your audiences are met.

Green and blue spaces



Path width and length

Routes should be suitable for everyone and ideally a minimum of 1.5 metres (preferably 1.8m) wide. If the route to your activity or venue is not wide enough for wheelchair users and other pedestrians you could consider using another route, or some short-term solutions until it can be widened.

- **Temporary pathways:** Use timber planks or roll-out firm matting at the same level but to one side of an existing path or separately. Avoid coir or coconut matting as it is difficult for wheels and wears unevenly; use flat pile weather-resistant mats instead.
- **Path length:** If the route is very long, use two roll-out runners managed by two people (one placing ahead as the other is used).
- **Gates:** Ensure gates provide access for a variety of mobility devices. Aim for a minimum width of 1000mm, preferably 1200mm. Open-structure gates are beneficial for visibility unless security requires otherwise. See [AISF part B 5.6](#).



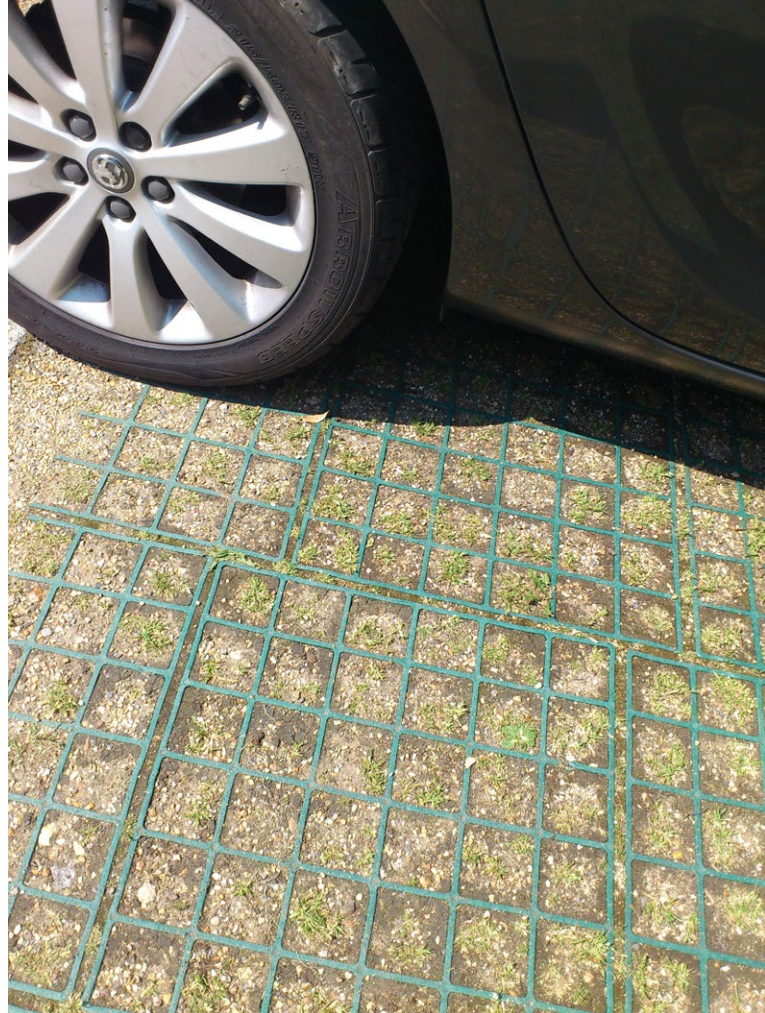
For establishing new routes, **AISF part B** offers guidance on widths, surface finishes, and other considerations for pathways. For nature trails, consult the **Sensory Trust's Outdoor Accessibility Guidance 2023**.

For many people, a short circular route promoted as 'easy access' for beginners will give confidence before exploring further. This is particularly true for people who struggle with orientation, or who are visually impaired, giving the assurance that you will finish the walk at the place where you started without any complex wayfinding. Good sight lines can also be reassuring for anyone concerned about personal safety or risk of trips or falls etc, when walking alone. Such routes should be less challenging with gentle gradients and suitable for people pushing buggies or wheelchairs, or using a self-propelled wheelchair.

Softer ground

Where ground surfaces are soft and formal access routes are unsuitable, such as across a field or on a canoe trail or leading to water, consider these support measures:

- **Temporary access solutions:** For temporary access across unstable surfaces like grass, shingle or gravel, lay down lightweight polyethylene matting or interlocking boards. These types of mats, often used at festivals and field events, are easy to install and can be bought or rented.
- **Grass mesh or honeycomb structures:** Use rubber grass mesh or concrete honeycomb structures, which allow grass to grow through while preventing the ground from sinking under wheelchairs or vehicles. Note: These measures are not suitable for fields where sports activity takes place due to the hazard posed to players wearing footwear with studs or spikes.



Outside lighting

At times, supplementary lighting is welcomed to help people safely negotiate any level changes or trip hazards or to feel comfortable outside.

Adding some sensor lighting around entrances and routes from car parking should be easy to organise and it is a cost-effective security measure as well as improving safety for everyone. There is a huge array of LED external lighting that can be solar or battery powered so there is no need to wait for an electrician. When considering longer-term lighting solutions, see **AISF part B 5.2**.

The use of energy saving LED external lighting on movement sensors with slow transitioning is helpful on primary routes, and the use of warmer colour temperatures will be less intrusive to surrounding wildlife.

External level changes

Paths and walkways should be level or gently sloping, avoiding any step changes. While step free is essential for wheelchair users, gradients may not be ideal for others. For example, disabled people with arthritis or joint conditions often find walking on sloping or ramped surfaces painful. If space allows, offer both ramps and steps to overcome a level change. There are many inexpensive smartphone apps that will measure gradients if you're not sure how steep an area is. On rural routes, you may need to find an alternative route or provide warning signs. See [AISF part B figure B 6](#).

Make your external steps easier to use by:

- **Contrasting step edges:** Make steps safer by painting or applying visually contrasting, slip-resistant tape (e.g. yellow or white) to the front edge of each step.
- **Adding tactile warning surfaces:** If there is no tactile corduroy warning paving at the top and bottom of external steps, consider adding contrasting self adhesive anti slip tape to alert people with visual impairments. See [AISF part B](#) for further guidance.
- **Adjusting open tread staircases:** Add timber across the back of open tread steps to prevent the foot from being placed too far forward when going upstairs. This is not necessary for steps only used to descend such as external fire escape stairs from upper levels.

See [AISF part B 5.5](#) for design of external steps. See [AISF part F](#) for guidance on fire and emergency evacuation.

Hazards

- **Dips and holes:** Temporarily fill any dips with suitable materials like post concrete or cold-lay macadam, which are ideal for small repairs.
- **Gratings or grids:** Ensure gratings or grids have no large holes to avoid entrapment of heels and canes. If necessary, cover or highlight these risks so people can avoid them.
- **Waterside routes:** Extra care is needed to address the risk of slipping and flooded surfaces at the water's edge. Consider options for safe water access, to allow activities such as swimming or canoeing and the use of specialised equipment.
- **Weather conditions:** Plan for wet weather, puddles and temporary flooding by noting where they form and setting up temporary diversions or bridges. Provide opportunities to avoid strong sunlight and glare; for example, trees, canopies, pagodas, parasols, and small gazebos can help.
- **Weather erosion:** Natural erosion can cause hazards such as flooding or collapsing banks. Be mindful of changing weather conditions around these areas and plan accordingly.
- **Other hazards:** Check for other hazards regularly. For example, overhanging trees may obstruct someone with a visual impairment or unenclosed livestock could pose a risk.



Handrails

Where possible, it's good to follow the guidance for internal stairs and ramps from the section on **Approach and entrance**, but in many rural areas, such structures aren't always practical. Instead, subtle interventions may be needed to help users. Steps cut into a riverbank can provide some assistance, but offering tethered items like a strong grip handle or a securely fixed rope can be helpful, especially where railings or guardrails aren't available. These simple solutions can improve safety and accessibility in more natural settings. Handrails are crucial for irregular steps or small landings where the risk of falling is higher. Any securely fixed handrail is better than none. See **AISF part B 5.6**.

Waterside

For accessing the waterside, consider all parts of the trail or route as set out in **Accessible outdoor spaces**. **Think about potential start and finish points**, including all possible positions for viewing, as well as slipways, launch/landing stages for entry and exit points for paddlers and swimmers. People may be carrying or pulling craft and equipment, so an easy route is especially important.

- **Accessing rough terrain:** Some people will own or hire an all-terrain wheelchair for accessing rough terrain, others may choose to use a beach wheelchair. Beach wheelchairs are designed to make challenging terrains such as beaches and sand dunes more accessible. Both options could be available for loan or hire on arrival. There are a large range of all-terrain wheelchairs available so involve disabled people and seek specialist advice when needed.



- **Sloped access:** It is important to have easy access to get into and out of the water. This includes to supervise or help someone swimming or using equipment. Where possible, it is better to provide steps cut into the bank or a ladder at a 45-degree angle rather than upright, to make it easier for people to climb, especially for older people and people with a range of physical impairments. Adding easy grip handrails to any slope or ramp is a key safety consideration.
- **Hoists:** A removable hoist could also be provided to assist with transfers for those who need extra support.
- **Slipways, platforms and landing stages:** If using timber slipways, make sure the slats run opposite to the direction of travel to avoid wheels getting trapped as the gaps may widen over time. A wider platform, at least 2 metres in width, will allow wheelchair users to pull alongside for easier transfers to kayaks or other crafts. Landing stages that are designed to give access to both sides of the craft are also helpful in enabling easier assistance. Platforms over the water should include edge barriers for safety and be slip-resistant. Options include metal or recycled plastic materials, but if using timber, it will need regular treatment to prevent algae buildup, or rubber matting can be used on top to prevent the surface from becoming too slippery.

- **Changing water levels:** Where water levels may change, as they do with beaches, harbours, rivers and estuaries, the tidal variation needs to be considered from the start. Displaying and communicating these variations helps users plan their arrival and departure when water levels are safest. In some cases, a floating pontoon might be needed to accommodate changing levels. As this can impact on the angle of the pontoon or landing stage, it is important to inform users so that they are not caught out by a steep gradient during their visit.
- **Lighting:** It can also be useful to have solar lighting available, especially if people are using the facilities around dusk or returning later than expected. This is particularly important where surfaces might be slippery and where wet feet and hands could affect stability and grip, helping to prevent accidents in low light.

When organising water activities it is important to consider the comfort and safety of everyone involved, particularly young children, older adults, and people with certain medical conditions or disabilities.

- **Seating:** For places where people will be for long periods, such as for fishing or spectating, it is helpful to provide a firm surface and some seating with back and arm supports.
- **Hot and cold temperatures:** It's also important to think about hot weather and how to reduce risks of sunstroke or sunburn. Choosing locations that offer natural shade from trees, or bringing temporary canopies, can help protect participants from strong sunshine and overheating. Cold water temperatures cannot be controlled in rural settings so consideration should be given to keeping warm after activities. Options, like foil blankets, towels, and robes, can make a big difference. It's also helpful to think about finding places where people can shelter after leaving the water.

- **Secure storage:** Having secure localised storage where groups can keep towels and robes is useful for when leaving the water.
- **Toilets:** The proximity of toilets to water activities is important. These need to be reliable, properly equipped, and easily accessible to local amenities. If there are no appropriate facilities nearby, setting up accessible compostable toilets near the water can make a big difference in whether someone feels comfortable participating or not.

For more information on accessible blue spaces see **British Canoeing – Delivering a paddle trail, design guidance.**



Access and route information

A short circular route provides assurance that you'll finish where you started without complex navigation, offering confidence for further exploration. Good sight lines are reassuring for personal safety. These routes could be less challenging and suitable for buggies, wheelchairs, or self-propelled wheelchairs. For longer routes, provide key route information such as distance, gradients, rest opportunities, surface material type, and whether dogs are permitted. For examples of accessible route maps, see the [Canal and River Trust's Accessibility Map](#). You could also offer guidance in advance on essential items for participants to bring, such as protective clothing, basic first aid supplies, and foil blankets or leg covers for wheelchair users on exposed routes. The Disabled Ramblers Association offers many helpful tips at [Disabled Ramblers](#).

External signage



Signs and waymarkers

Clear and accessible signage is helpful for everyone. The way in which information is relayed is important, as not everyone is able to read a variety of text sizes and formats. This section covers simple ideas to create good inclusive signage.

- **Landmarks and signs:** Look for landmarks and signs that will help people navigate the journey easily and reassure people that they are heading in the right direction. This can be particularly true for rural green and blue spaces, where signs may be less frequent. Regularly check and maintain signs, as foliage or damage can obscure them.

- **Directional arrows and distances:** In addition to giving advance information about the journey (see [Journey planning](#)) frequent directional arrows and distance markers (in miles or kilometres not walking time) should be placed along trails. Signs should be placed at decision points where a choice of routes is available and repeated along longer routes to show people are heading the right way.
- **Gradients:** Supply information on any steep or uneven gradients and offer alternative routes if possible.
- **Temporary signage:** Temporary signs could be used when organising a one-off event. Ensure you follow the same guidelines as permanent signage and use inclusive formats and size, including symbols and arrows, when required.
- **Font size, tactile, background:** For the majority of people BLOCK CAPITALS are harder to read, especially for people with dyslexia or visual impairments as there is no shape to the word. Start a sentence with an uppercase letter and then use lowercase. Use plain text such as Arial or Calibri.
- **Colour and shape:** Colour can be a useful aid in helping people remember their way. Utilise colour and shape for directional cues, combining them to aid navigation. Some people are unable to accurately tell the difference between some colours, but by combining colour and shape you can still provide directional cues for everyone.
- **Colour contrast:** Use of icons to support different communication needs. Ensure consistency of their design..
- **Sign height:** Ensure signs are positioned at an appropriate height for visibility and readability for both pedestrians and wheelchair users.

For more information on inclusive signage, see [AISF part E](#).

In addition to considering formal signage, waymarkers such as posts with colour coding are common features in walking trails. These are often damaged or removed over time or become faded, so they need routine inspection and replacement. Metal discs often prove more robust on rural areas, rather than just painted markings, and can be more reliable.

Where there is no map display board readily available, consider adding some matt laminated simple maps at key decision points, with 'you are here' markers.



Technology

Technology is increasingly being used for wayfinding and orientation, from online compass apps, to locational tags such as What3Words – these applications are really helpful to aid independence and as a safeguarding measure on rural walks where getting lost is a possibility. QR codes can also be easily added along trails to provide more information about a location, whether it's details on geographical features, elevation, or even safety warnings, like areas that are prone to flooding.

Creating an app group can be a great way for users to share updates about a trail or route, like notifying others about a fallen tree or a blocked entrance. It helps keep everyone informed about any changes or issues that might affect their experience

Play, spectating and rest areas



This section offers ideas to improve disabled people's experiences as spectators and in outside rest areas with family or friends. It also aims to ensure disabled children have the opportunity to be active in play areas.

Play areas

All children love to play. It is a key element of learning and developing physical and cognitive skills. If you have areas where it is safe for children to play away from vehicles, it is easy to add a variety of features for them to explore. This does not need to be a formal enclosed area with accessible play equipment, although these are recommended and welcomed wherever possible. It could be the introduction of a few paving slabs suitable for hopscotch, some stepping stones, a large log/fallen tree, a grassed slope, and/or sensory planting for imaginative play and exploration. Paving slabs made from recycled rubber make a safe alternative within formal play areas which should be step free with a variety of reach heights for interacting with nature.

See [AISF part B 5.11](#).

Sense's Sensory Walks document provides great advice on using your senses to connect with your surroundings whilst being active. Read more on accessible play facilities in [AISF part B 7](#) and [resources at PiPa Play](#).





Viewing areas

Some disabled people may find spectator or viewing areas difficult. Sight lines are often designed around average eye level and not someone who may, for example, sit very low in a wheelchair. Ensure viewing areas, including sports stands, nature hides, or observation points, have clear sight lines for both seated and standing users.

Here is how you can improve accessibility:

- **Removable seating:** When thinking about inclusive seating, removable seating from tiered banks of spectator areas can help to accommodate wheelchair users.
- **Provide the best view:** Where is the best view of the court, field or activity? For example, is there a higher bank that can be reached to provide good sight lines from a wheelchair, and can wheelchair access be made possible?
- **Raised seat heights:** Can anything be provided to raise the seat height? For example a firm cushion or a raised platform with ramps at one or both ends?
- **Spectator area:** Can seating be provided close to the activity for people who cannot stand for long? Could spectators be encouraged to bring their own seating? Is there an area with a firmer surface where this is possible without sinking into the ground when the ground is wet?
- **Offer inclusive commentary:** Provide verbal descriptions for those unable to see the activity.
- **Inclusive display:** Can you project information onto a TV or digital display? Use large numerals or boards to show scores for individuals with hearing loss.
- **Floodlights:** Use on external activity areas. They will enable everyone to play beyond daylight hours and will particularly benefit older people and people with visual impairments.

See **AISF part B 5.6** for stepped seating dimensions.



External seating and shelter

Disabled people may require rest points on a route, whilst spectating or pausing between taking part in activities. Provide seating along routes and at events for both rest and spectating. Consider:

- **Versatile seating:** Use existing landscape features. For example, low walling around flower beds can make useful ad-hoc seats, and features such as boulders or steps. Ensure surfaces are not too high or low, but be mindful that higher ledges such as walls or railings can offer an opportunity to lean or perch against.
- **Provide seating:** Provide chairs or benches with arm and back support for greater comfort, especially for people who cannot stand for long periods or sit on the ground.
- **Personal seating:** Encourage people to bring personal seating if practical to do so. Sturdy but lightweight, foldable chairs with arm and back support are ideal.

Top tip! Inform people in advance about seating options, specifying whether seats are covered or uncovered. This is especially important for those who need rest and cannot sit on the ground, and it helps everyone prepare for varying weather conditions or seasons.

For design of external seating, see [AISF part B 5.7.1](#).

Terraces and decking

If you have external areas with timber decking, these can become very slippery in wet weather particularly from algae growth and will need regular treatment to prevent this. The use of rubber matting on top of decking can be a useful temporary solution. See [AISF part B 5.3](#).

Key actions

We have reached the end of this section. Have a look through the list below and ☒ **check the boxes** that apply to your space. Note any areas for improvement.

Green and blue spaces:

Have you provided accessible arrival information about the facilities at your locations for visitors who arrive by walking, wheeling or cycling?

Have you identified all-weather routes with adequate lighting and clearly marked hazards?

External signage:

Is your signage clear, easy to read and understand?

Have you tested routes to ensure they are easy to navigate, and informed visitors of any helpful technology that may support them?

Play, spectating and rest areas:

Have you provided rest points or shelter? These are really useful along walking routes or in any spectating areas to ensure comfort and accessibility.

Are your play areas accessible, inclusive and easy to find?



Further support

Here is a list of links to other charities and organisations that you may find useful. They all provide information to help make spaces more accessible:

Alzheimer's Society

The Dementia-friendly Sport and Physical Activity Guide details how providers can become dementia-friendly.

Canal and River Trust

Canal and River Trust's Accessibility Map.

Canoe Foundation

New guidance on paddle trails to help paddlers design adventures on water.

Disabled Ramblers

For information on mobility scooters and wheelchair hire for outside events, see the Disabled Ramblers guidance on how to make the countryside more accessible.

Disability Sport Northern Ireland

Our partners in Northern Ireland have developed accessible outdoors and place design guidance.

Forestry England

Access information includes the rental of trampers, accessible trails, accessible play areas, accessible cycling, sensory walks, and changing places and facilities.

Guide Dogs

A document with insight from blind and vision-impaired people into the current street design and transport infrastructure.

National Disability Sports Organisations

Provide advice, support and opportunities for people of all ages with specific impairments.

National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs)

These organisations have their own sport's guidance. More information and a list of NGBs can be found on the Sport England website.

Natural England

The why, what and how of good green infrastructure. Guidance on national standards for green infrastructure quantity and quality.

Paddle UK

Introduction to paddle trails and delivering a paddle trail are useful resources from Paddle UK.

PiPa Play

A social enterprise with the aim of improving inclusive play facilities for children and families across the UK.

Sense

Sense have partnered with Ordnance Survey to help you find sensory walking routes, as well as developed resources to support you to use your senses to connect with nature.

Sensory Trust

Help to create accessible and engaging nature experiences.

Sport England

A guide to dementia-friendly sport and activity.

Sport England Active Design

Active Design sets out how the design of our environments can help people to lead more physically active and healthy lives - it's about helping to create 'active environments'.

Sporting Memories

You may wish to include items in your club or run sessions which support people in reconnecting with memories, the Sporting Memories website offers a range of support with this.

BSI (PAS 6463 document)

Offer a free document to support the design of the built environment to be more inclusive for a neurodiverse society.

This Girl Can

This Girl Can has launched 'Let's Get Out There'. It's a campaign to show that natural environments, from urban parks and canals, to coastal paths and forests, are for all women – so join them in promoting the benefits of getting active outdoors.



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This document is also available in Word format. Please contact us if you need more support. Published in June 2025.

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