

## What is the Equalities (formerly Disabilities Discrimination) Act?

The Equalities Act is part of Building Regulations but warrants emphasis as it makes it unlawful to discriminate against people through employment. It does this primarily by aiming to make the workplace and public spaces more accessible to impaired persons.

## Who is affected by this Act?

Since October 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 the Equalities Act encompasses all companies, service providers and employers. Every organization is now required, by law, to make their services accessible to all and to eliminate discrimination in the field of employment for disabled people.

## What could these changes mean for me?

The Act calls for “reasonable adjustments” to be made. This could mean something as simple as providing adequate seating for someone who may find it difficult to stand or queue for a length of time.

Equally access for a wheelchair user is more involved and could mean a lower service counter top and ramped entrance is required, along with suitable toilet and rest facilities.

All organizations and public bodies should write an Access Statement to determine their facility’s ability to meet the requirements of impaired and disabled visitors and staff.

## How can I make my workplace more compliant?

- Provide suitable, wider parking spaces, close to the entrance of the building.
- Ensure unhindered access to the building for wheelchair users by way of ramped access and, where possible, automatic door opening mechanisms.
- Widen narrow doorways to allow both partially impaired and wheelchair users easy movement throughout the building.
- Install a lowered reception counter section, lowered kitchen workspaces and desk tops with adjustable heights.
- Provide induction loops to aid communication for persons with impaired hearing.
- Ensure your building has both fully compliant disabled toilet facilities and additional, complimentary, ambulant toilet facilities.
- Raise power sockets and data points from skirting level and drop switches and controls down in height to provide for easy use by wheelchair bound and impaired persons.
- Ensure that lifts are fully compliant with accessible controls, fold away seats and audible instructions.
- Include contrasting colour decorations throughout your building to give definition to risks for visually impaired persons.
- Install fixtures and fittings, including door mechanisms, which are usable even with reduced dexterity.

As a partner of the Local Authority Building Control scheme, Office Changes Ltd has the experience and knowledge to correctly advise on all workplace equality matters, incorporating them into the designs/layouts so that approval is secured quickly and effectively.

If you wish to have your current office assessed for Equality Act compliance please do not hesitate to contact us.