

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) was enacted to prevent discrimination in the areas of employment, provision of goods, services and facilities, the selling or letting of land and property, education and transport. The DDA applies to the whole of the UK but not the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man. The act came into force in 1996 however further sections came into force in October 2004, requiring any service that is being offered to be equally available to both disabled and non-disabled people.

While the act is not directed at buildings, it has led to a major re-evaluation of the design and management of new and existing buildings and environments to make them inclusive to everyone. Service providers, which include shops, libraries, restaurants, pubs, clubs, gyms, cinemas, theatres, swimming pools, hotels, hospitals, banks and small businesses are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' either to their premises or the way they provide services. Those who fail to comply could face civil proceedings.

Discrimination can occur if, without justification, a service provider:

- ▶ Refuses to provide a service
- ▶ Provides a service to a lesser standard
- ▶ Provide a service on inferior terms
- ▶ Fail to provide the service by a reasonable alternative means



The Carlton Park Centre and Village Hall (left) is a good example of a recently completed building that is accessible. Access was considered at an early stage in the design and has resulted in a building that is 'accessible for all'. It has easily accessed parking, level access to the entrance, wide doors and corridors and accessible toilet facilities.

Apart from the risk of a civil claim, and the resulting adverse publicity, there is another strong case for complying with the act. A recent estimate puts the collective spending power of the UK's 8.6m disabled people at more than £ 50bn a year. Many improvements for people with a disability will benefit other customers, including their friends, families, parents with push chairs, people carrying heavy shopping and some older able-bodied people.

For more information on the requirements of the Act contact Malcolm Robson on 01909 533195.