



Working DDA Requirements into Refurbishment Projects

This article examines the advantages of building the requirements of the DDA into your building refurbishment projects at the earliest stage with obvious financial benefits.

The DDA

First introduced in 1995, the DDA aims to end discrimination against the less able (those with a "physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities").

The October 2004 amendment requires service providers to make reasonable adjustments to overcome physical features, which act as barrier to less able people who wish to access their services.

A service provider is anyone providing goods, facilities or services to the public, whether for a fee or not. This includes leisure centres, hotels and restaurants, banks, various local authority departments, and doctors' surgeries.

The DDA also applies to places of work, such as offices. It is effective to work DDA adjustments into refurbishment work. Indeed, many businesses and organisations refurbish premises in order to comply.

Physical features

The requirement for physical adjustments to a building varies significantly, as the definition of disability within the DDA is wide ranging. Physical features include:

- Anything on the premises arising from a building's design or construction
- Anything that obstructs the entry and exit of a building
- Fixtures, fittings, furniture, furnishings, materials or equipment
- Any other physical element or quality of land in the premises

If a physical feature exists that makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a less able person to make use of a service, service providers must make reasonable adjustments to either remove it, alter it so that it no longer has an effect, provide a means of avoiding it, or provide an alternative method of making the service available to the less able.



Introduction:

First published in the movemanskG newsletter *Liftoff*, this article discusses the advantages of looking at the requirements of the DDA before refurbishing an existing building.

This document is from the movemanskG knowledge library. It offers practical advice based upon many years experience installing and commissioning specialist lifts in commercial environments.

This advice is offered in good faith but should not be relied upon.

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What qualifies as a reasonable adjustment?

The DDA does not define what makes adjustments reasonable. It depends on the type of service provided, the size and resources of the service provider, the practicality and cost of an adjustment, the amount already spent on making adjustments, and the potential benefits to less able customers and employees.

Possible reasonable adjustments include:

- Widening doorways or remodelling access routes and entrances throughout a building
- Installing a platform lift or ramp to replace steps
- Installing induction loops for those with auditory problems
- Improving access to toilets or washing facilities
- Relocating switches, sockets, public telephones, shelving etc
- Providing dedicated car parking spaces

- Making improvements to lighting levels and signage
- Introducing contrasting colour schemes for the visually impaired
- Providing mechanically opening fire exit doors

Successful refurbishment

Working adjustments to improve access into refurbishment plans is cost effective and brings a range of benefits. Businesses and organisations can rest in the knowledge that they are DDA compliant, and less able people can access their services. Buildings that incorporate access features for the less able are easier to let and more in demand than those without. It may also increase the building's value.

Complying with the DDA does not have to be hard work. Planning refurbishments to incorporate access adjustments goes a long way to ensuring workplaces and public buildings are accessible to all.