

Access Statement guidance and training

Cymorth	Planning
Cynllunio	Aid
Cymru	Wales



What did we set out to do ?

A well designed development allows for inclusive access into and around places and buildings so that everyone can use them. Since mid-2009 most planning applications have needed a Design and Access Statement. These explain how the design process has evolved, including how access issues have been considered and resolved.

Local access groups work to ensure buildings and public spaces are accessible to all, including those with disabilities. Although reliant on volunteers and with very limited resources, they often comment on planning applications and can offer valuable technical expertise.

Planning Aid Wales secured funding from the Welsh Government in 2009 to prepare an accessible guidance publication



Wales Access Groups and Disability Fora

Equal Access for All
Hygyrchedd Cyfartal i Bawb

promoting inclusive access in new development proposals. The guidance would be aimed at a variety of different audiences - developers, local authority members and planning officers, as well as local access groups.

It would supplement an array of specialist guidance which was already available for those preparing or commenting on Design and Access Statements.



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Helping communities engage with planning

How did we do it ?

With project partners the Wales Access Groups and Disability Fora, we assembled a broad project team including representatives of access groups, Disability Wales and the Design Commission for Wales, along with local authority planners, access officers and expert volunteers drawn from our network.

We commissioned research to identify examples of good practice and areas for improvement, and collated items for a checklist of access and design issues which together contribute to achieving inclusive access.

To reflect the diversity of the target audiences and their different perspectives on the planning process, we developed the content and format of the guidance sequentially and iteratively. This involved inviting members of the project team to comment on the content, terminology and design at each stage of preparation, and then taking the comments received to develop an improved version.

Mid way through the process we facilitated a focus group meeting to bring all project partners together to trial and further develop the guidance.

This iterative and inclusive process of developing guidance was time-intensive but necessary to ensure the final version was user-friendly, attractive, informative and genuinely accessible.

The guidance document was published in February 2011 and has been distributed to local planning authorities, access groups and other interested parties.

As a spin-off from this work, we were commissioned by Disability Wales in early 2010 to design and deliver a participative training module as part of the Way to Go project, which aims to build the capacity of access groups in Wales. Delivery of the training has developed our understanding of the issues faced by access groups seeking to engage with planning, and the training module has been extremely well received.

What difference has it made ?

This project has:

- ▶ produced a concise, easy-to-read and attractive guidance document promoting inclusive access in new developments
- ▶ trialled an innovative, participative approach to developing guidance aimed at a variety of different target audiences
- ▶ given planners working in local authorities a quick reference guide to understanding and achieving inclusive access
- ▶ given developers a resource to improve the accessibility of new development proposals
- ▶ built the capacity of access groups to engage more effectively with planning
- ▶ encouraged collaborative working between Planning Aid Wales, access groups, access officers, local planning authorities and Disability Wales
- ▶ developed our understanding and expertise, allowing us to better advise developers and members of the public through the Helpline service