

Implications for NASUWT Health and Safety Representatives

The NASUWT Health and Safety Representative should seek to ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out by the employer, which identify whether disabled teachers are more at risk regarding their health and safety at work than non-disabled staff. The NASUWT Health and Safety Representative should seek to ensure not only that Health and Safety Regulations and Codes of Practice are complied with, but also that disabled staff are consulted about their needs and requirements. The NASUWT Health and Safety Representative has a key role in consulting NASUWT disabled members and notifying the employer where improvements are required. However, it should not be assumed that any member is disabled.

Permission should be sought from an employee with a disability before any information regarding their disability is shared or disclosed to the employer or other staff.

Advice and support

For additional advice and support, contact your NASUWT Local Association or Northern Ireland Centre.

Contact details can be found:

- on the NASUWT website at www.nasuwt.org.uk;
- in the NASUWT diary or by phoning 028 9078 4480.

Further information

Further help and advice can be obtained from the NASUWT Health and Safety Representative, Local Association Secretary or Health and Safety Co-ordinator.

Further advice and guidance is available from the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI) and in the DENI publication *School Building Handbooks (Nursery, Primary and Secondary)*.

DENI: Tel: 028 9127 9279

Fax: 028 9127 9100

Typetalk: 18001 028 9127 9279

Website: www.deni.gov.uk

Further information available at: www.nidirect.gov.uk.

NASUWT

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NASUWT

The Teachers' Union
NORTHERN IRELAND

disability access

health&safety
at work

The largest teachers' union in Northern Ireland



This leaflet provides information relating to disability access issues in schools and colleges. There is a significant overlap between health and safety issues and issues of access for staff, pupils and parents/carers with disabilities.

Employers' responsibilities

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAW) requires all employers to provide a safe working environment for all employees. All employers must carry out a 'suitable and sufficient' assessment of the risks to the health and safety of employees whilst at work (including arrangements for emergency evacuation).

As part of this duty, the employer must identify any group of employees who are particularly at risk. This group will include employees with a disability. Having identified the risks, the employer must take steps to remove or reduce the risk. Both the assessment and the remedial measures must be recorded in writing.

Ensuring premises are accessible and safe

The following requirements are set out in the Workplace (Health and Safety) Regulations 1992 and in building regulations. These requirements would form part of the 'reasonable adjustments' under the Equality Act 2010, although the Acts do not specifically require substantial alterations to be made to buildings that are not already covered by other regulations.

Outside and around school buildings:

- pedestrian routes must be kept free of obstruction;
- all pathways need to be wide enough for wheelchairs;
- pathway surfaces should be slip resistant;
- shallow ramps should be provided at changes of level;
- steps and stairways need to be provided with handrails; and
- all bollards, bins, signposts and other items of street furniture need to be sited so as not to present a hazard.

Parking and moving to buildings:

- the route from the parking bay to the entrance needs to be level or ramped.

- a clearly marked parking space should be available for drivers/passengers with a disability as near as possible to the entrance; and
- disabled car parking bays need to be wide enough to allow access for wheelchairs (minimum requirements are available on the Department for Transport (DfT) website at www.dft.gov.uk).

Entrance to school/college buildings:

- the entrance should be easily identified and under cover;
- access to the building should be level, or if ramped, no more than 1:12 with a maximum sloping length of 5,000mm. A ramp with a gradient of less than 1:15 can be a maximum of 10,000mm in length and have a respite level every 10,000mm;
- the minimum width of ramps should be 1,200mm and handrails should be provided at both sides; and
- all doors should be easy to open and wide enough for access (800mm).

Inside the building:

- the corridors should be a minimum width of 1,200mm or preferably 1,500mm for wheelchair users;
- floor surfaces should be slip resistant;
- shallow ramps should be provided at changes of level;
- all steps and stairways should be provided with handrails on both sides and stairways wider than 1,800mm need a central handrail;
- door handles should be easy to hold (with preferably a lever action with a 25mm diameter) and operate at the correct height (1,000mm above floor level);
- multistorey buildings should have at least one lift that allows a person sitting in a wheelchair to operate the controls;
- internal doors must have a glazed vision panel and open both ways;
- the lift needs to be large enough for a wheelchair user and one other person; and

- the lift should serve all main areas;
- all amenities, such as toilets and telephones, should be clearly signposted and readily accessible.

Visual, audible and tactile aids:

- signs should be legible, well illuminated and available in a range of formats, including Braille, and situated at a convenient height;
- audible signals (e.g. alarms) should be linked to visual signals (flashing lights);
- for meetings, an induction loop system should be used to help those with a hearing impairment;
- light switches and other environmental controls should be within the reach of wheelchair users (i.e. no higher than 1,200mm and no less than 750mm);
- colour contrasts can be used to distinguish routes, stairs or parts of buildings, e.g. edging stairs or steps with white paint; and
- changes in floor texture can be used to warn the visually impaired of hazardous areas.

Emergency evacuation procedures:

- escape routes should be clearly signposted and colour coded;
- specific marshals should be appointed to assist those in their area who need help;
- firefighter lifts and chairs need to be available to assist with the escape of people with mobility problems;
- fire-safe lifts should be available for the evacuation of people with disabilities;
- stairways wider than 1,800mm should be divided into two, using a central handrail;
- fire doors should be fitted with stay-open devices that will automatically close the doors when the fire alarm operates; and
- a fire-protected area, provided on any floor where people with disabilities are working, to which they can move to await assistance for their evacuation from the building in the event of fire, is worthy of consideration.