



9.0 Assets

Managing Buildings - Day-to-Day Operations (1)

Overview

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Introduction

This information sheet is designed to give an overview of the main things that community building managers will need to consider with respect to running their building(s) on a day-to-day basis.

The information specifically covers the following:

- Accessibility
- Health and Safety
- Fire Safety
- Environment & sustainability

Some of these issues will be universally applicable to all organisations, but others will vary according to the particular services and activities provided.



Image: Empty room with colourful chairs.

Please note, the information provided here is intended to be an overview. Your organisation's board of trustees / directors should always have regard to their obligations as set out in their organisation's governing document and if there is cause for doubt you should take advice from the relevant bodies and / or qualified professionals, especially where risks are identified. At the end of this information sheet some of the key sources of more detailed further information are given.

Accessibility

Planning for 'inclusive access' to community buildings is at the very heart of the role of a community building manager – after all community buildings are by their very nature intended to be accessible by everyone in their community. However, consideration of accessibility should move beyond looking at just the physical access to a building and should also encompass the way in which your building is managed and how your staff and volunteers are trained.

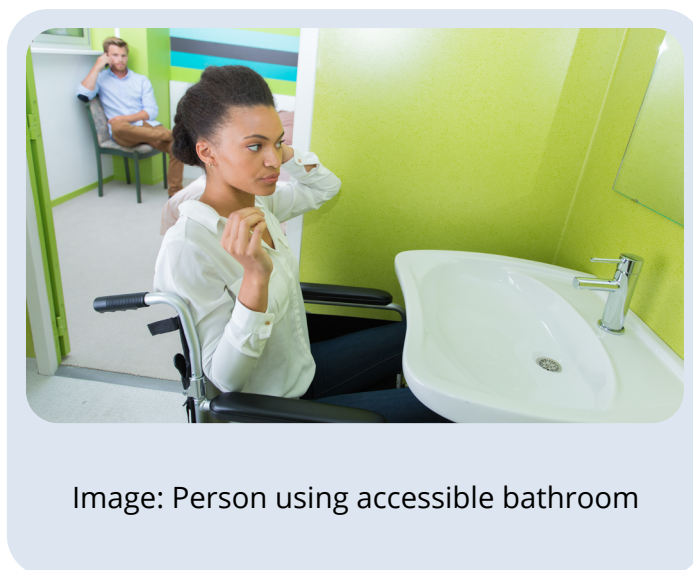


Image: Person using accessible bathroom

The **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995**, which has now been rolled up into the **Equalities Act (2010)**, makes it unlawful for anyone to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their disability. Under the Act management committees responsible for community buildings have a legal duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to their building(s) to ensure that a disabled person is not treated less favourably than anyone else.

Access Audits

A good starting point for building managers looking to comply with the Act is to undertake an 'Access Audit'. Undertaking a full audit can be a complex and time consuming process, one that is best left to a professional with the requisite knowledge and experience.

However, that is not to say that in lieu of a full audit being carried out, you cannot start to look at and address some of the key issues that are more obvious and relatively easy to deal with. There is plenty of literature and guidance on how to go about the process and some references to best practice are provided at the end of this Information Sheet.

When your organisation is reviewing (auditing) the accessibility of the services you provide you will need to consider how your building functions with respect to things like:

Physical accessibility issues:

- Arrival and parking. Landscape and street furniture. Routes to the entrance.
- Steps, ramps and other changes in level. Surfaces. Entrances and thresholds.
- Reception facilities and lobbies. Internal layout and circulation.
- Lifts, stairs, ramps and other level changes.
- Internal doors. Internal surfaces.
- Signage and wayfinding.
- Furniture.
- Services and facilities.
- WCs, changing rooms etc.
- Heating, lighting, ventilation and air conditioning. Acoustics.
- Emergency equipment and procedures. Exits and refuge areas.
- Maintenance.

Wider accessibility issues:

- Accommodating the needs of staff members with disabilities.
- Customer service to ensure that your staff are welcoming and helpful.
- Ensuring all of your organisation's other policies address accessibility.
- Promoting and marketing your community service and facility in a way that is inclusive and designed to accommodate everyone.
- Incorporating accessibility is a key consideration in your purchasing decisions.
- Providing all information in accessible formats as required and ensuring adequate pre-visitor information is available.

Having undertaken an audit, or at least a review, of the accessibility of your building with the above in mind, you will undoubtedly have identified a significant number of issues and actions that you can take to address them. It may be beyond the capacity of your organisation to undertake all of the actions immediately, but you should be able to demonstrate that you have a clear plan in place with time-scales in order to meet with the spirit of the Act.

Also, assessing how far you go to make a '[reasonable adjustment](#)' is a judgement call that you will need to make for yourselves. There are a range of funding bodies that will look at supporting the more costly alterations you need to make and there are VAT concessions too on goods and services supplied to a charity for the purposes of improving the access of people with disabilities.

Extensions and New Build Projects

If your organisation is looking to extend your community building(s) or develop a new community facility then consideration of accessibility will additionally fall under the remit of Part M of the Building Regulations which requires buildings to be '[reasonably safe and convenient for disabled people](#)' with respect to physical access to the building, within it and in using its facilities.

Health and Safety

Building managers have a duty in law to comply with the provisions of two important pieces of legislation: **The Health and Safety at Work (HSW) Act** and **The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations**.

The Health and Safety at Work Act

The HSW Act will apply to your community building even if you have no paid staff, because it also covers others using an organisation's building and equipment, including members of the public, volunteers and committee members. Regulations under the **HSW Act** cover seven areas:

- The management of health and safety
- Health, safety and welfare in the workplace
- Display screens (for example computer screens)
- Personal protective equipment
- Provision and use of work equipment
- Manual handling (for example lifting)
- Fire precautions

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) produce a wide range of information covering your responsibilities under the **HSW Act** and you should refer to their literature for a more comprehensive overview than is possible here. Nevertheless, set out below is a brief summary of some of the main provisions that will be of relevance to managers of community buildings:

- You should carry out a 'risk assessment' exercise. The **HSE** has produced an information sheet '**Health and Safety Checklist for Village and Community Halls**' which provides an excellent starting point for this.
- The arrangements for health and safety should be regularly reviewed and put in writing if you have five or more employees.
- You should have appropriate procedures in place in the event of an emergency – including provision for disabled people as well as able-bodied.
- Your community building and its equipment must be kept in a good state of repair.
- Ventilation must be effective and suitable and a reasonable temperature must be maintained (in most cases this means a minimum temperature of 16°C) and there must be a thermometer on the premises.
- Lighting must be suitable and sufficient — with natural lighting wherever possible.

- Your premises must be kept clean and rubbish must not be allowed to accumulate.
- Your staff and volunteers must be able to get to and from their desks and move around their workrooms easily and safely. Any workstation (e.g. desk, chair, computer) must be suitable for both the user and their work.
- Floors must be suitable and safe; staircases must have handrails and guards (except if they would cause an obstruction). Measures must be taken to prevent anyone being injured by a falling object and any hazardous areas must be clearly indicated.
- It must be possible to open and close safely and easily clean windows, skylights and ventilators.
- Pedestrians should not be in danger from vehicles.
- There must be suitable, adequately ventilated and lit W.C.s
- Accessible drinking water and cups must be provided and clearly signed.
- Where appropriate, **personal protective equipment and clothing (PPE)** must be provided to protect staff and volunteers against health and safety risks and employers must take reasonable steps to ensure the **PPE** is used.
- Work equipment must be suitable for the purpose for which it is used and kept in good repair. A full maintenance record must be kept and full training must be given to users and their managers.
- Employers should, wherever possible, avoid the need for staff to undertake manual handling which involves a risk of injury.

First Aid

As the manager of a community building you are legally required to have some first aid provision but the level of cover can vary considerably. It is therefore advisable to have at least one (preferably two) trained first aiders in the building (or at least on call) where possible.

First aid boxes must only contain items that a first aider is trained to use, and should not contain any medication (for example aspirin or paracetamol). Ensure someone has responsibility for keeping the first aid box stocked (keep a list on the box detailing what it should contain).



Remember

Ensure that all users know where the first aid box is kept and, if there are trained first aiders, who they are and how to contact them.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations

The Regulations impose a duty on the managers of community buildings to assess whether there are any hazardous substances or risks present in the workplace and, if there are, to deal with them safely.

You must ensure that no one is exposed to any hazardous substances that are present on your premises or, where this is not possible, that the exposure is controlled.

Fire Safety

Fire Safety in community buildings is covered by the **Fire Safety Order 2005**.

Under the Order the management committee of your building(s) is responsible for carrying out its own fire safety risk assessment, which might be checked for compliance by your local Fire and Rescue Service along with your premises.

The risk assessment needs to be undertaken by one or more '**Competent Persons**' as appointed by your '**Responsible Person**' - which for a community building will be its management committee.

A detailed guide for the competent persons in conducting a Fire Safety Risk Assessment for your building is referenced at the end of this Information Sheet.



Image: Colourful fire hoses.

The appointed competent person(s) then needs to:

- Ensure that the building and necessary fire protection equipment is maintained in an efficient state and in good working order and if the need arises, repaired by a competent person and in accordance with any manufacturers' instructions
- Make sure that the whole committee are consulted and informed with regard to fire safety matters, in particular; provide appropriate instruction in the use of equipment, ensure the committee are aware of any risks identified and the measures taken to reduce the risk, ensure the committee are aware of any proposals for improving fire precautions the presence of dangerous substances and the risk to users of the premises, the agreed system for contacting the emergency services and evacuating the building if necessary, ensure that the committee co-operate with each other to keep the building safe from fire and its effects and do not do anything that places themselves, other people or the building at risk.

Hirers should be instructed in fire procedures and the use of the equipment. **The Management Committee** have a responsibility to ensure that hirers are aware of these procedures and that they appoint a person to take responsibility at the event. It is good practice to include this in your **Hiring Agreement** and ensure hirers sign a copy and return it to the committee.

Environment and Sustainability

Making improvements to the environmental performance of the services and facilities you offer at your community buildings, not only helps to reduce your environmental footprint and hence your organisation's impact on the environment, but it can save your organisation money too – significantly so in some circumstances.

If you've not already got going on this then the starting point is to conduct a '[Sustainability Healthcheck](#)' – a simple review of where you currently stand with respect to a range of factors concerned with the environment & sustainability. Bringing in a professional to do this may help, but for the most part the issues that you will be dealing with warrant a common-sense approach and will not always require specialist knowledge.

Below are listed the main things you should look at together with some useful tips to get you started:

- **Energy use** – Get to grips with how much energy you are using by regularly reading your meters or getting smart meters fitted. Look at patterns of energy use (daily / weekly / seasonally) and identify areas where savings can be made. Install and make good use of energy controls – room thermostats and / or thermostatic radiator valves. Programme heating times on your boiler and set the temperature of your hot water to no more (or less) than 60°C. Replace old light fittings and other energy using appliances with energy efficient models. Above all else, encourage all of your staff, volunteers and customers to '[turn down and switch off](#)'.
- **Renewable energy sources** - there could be potential for; on-site, small-scale renewable generation e.g. [solar-thermal or solar PV with battery storage, or possibly the incorporation of a biomass boiler](#). It is recommended, however, that a detailed feasibility assessment is commissioned that includes: an appraisal of the site and the opportunities it affords, an assessment of specific technologies, a financial analysis for each viable technology based on capital cost estimates and potential return. The Welsh Government's Local Energy service might be a good starting point.
- **Water use** – Regularly read your water meter and check your system for leaks. Consider fitting water saving devices to water taps, toilets, urinals, showers etc. Encourage all of your staff, volunteers and customers to '[conserve water](#)' whenever they can. Know where your drains discharge and prevent anyone from tipping anything down the sink or drain that might be harmful / toxic.

- **Wastes** – Employ the three ‘R’s’ - ‘**Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**’ - to every one of your activities and services. In the office look to cut down where you can by printing less and going paper free where possible.
 - Where you need to print a document use the double-sided function on your printer and reuse scrap paper where you can.
 - Eliminate single use plastics.
 - Where wastes do arise ensure your staff, volunteers and customers have the opportunity to recycle them by providing bins for segregation.
 - Arrange for all your recyclables and ‘**black bag**’ wastes to be disposed of by a licenced waste carrier. Ensure any potentially hazardous wastes. e.g. **used batteries, fluorescent light tubes, old paint are disposed of separately and in line with guidance provided by your licenced waste carrier.**
- **Purchases** – Implement a ‘**green purchasing**’ policy for all office consumables and buy recycled paper. If you have a café, shop local for supplies and where available buy organic and Fairtrade foodstuffs. Substitute any harsh chemicals you might currently use for cleaning for more environmentally friendly versions. Work towards sourcing all your raw materials from 100% natural and ethical sources.
- **Travel** – If you operate ‘**company**’ vehicles from your buildings ensure your staff and volunteers are carrying out route-planning to avoid unnecessary journeys and encourage them to drive with fuel efficiency (as well as safety!) in mind. Carry out regular maintenance checks on your vehicles – critically keeping a weekly check on tyre pressures. Encourage staff, volunteers and customers to take public transport, car share, walk or ride a bicycle to and from your building where it is practical to do so.

The only significant legislation that building managers need to be aware of is in respect of compliance with **The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011**, which requires all organisations that produce waste to ensure that they dispose of them via a **Licenced Waste Carrier** – this may be the local authority via its ‘**business waste**’ service or a private waste contractor.

Management control of all of the above is crucial. A good idea is to nominate somebody – a member of staff or volunteer - to become the ‘**Green Champion**’ for the organisation. Somebody that can help drive the ‘**continual improvement**’ that is at the heart of good practice in environmental management.

If you then want to take it a step further, there are several accredited environmental management systems that you might look at, although for the most part your own in-house measures will be sufficient. That said, you should ensure that your organisation has a written '[Environment and Sustainability Policy](#)' that sets out what you are doing to prevent pollution, minimise your impact on the environment and comply with legal obligations.

Green issues can also be the platform for engaging people. People are vastly more aware of the issues these days and as a result are much more likely to participate in a well-designed green campaign – there are plenty of good ideas on the internet to look at for inspiration – so give saving money whilst saving the planet a good go!!

Further Information

Accessibility

Way to Go Toolkit

Disability Wales

www.disabilitywales.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/WAY-TO-GO-Toolkit-E-with-links.pdf

Resources

Disability Wales

<http://www.disabilitywales.org/resources/>

Building Regulations Part M

Welsh Government

<https://gov.wales/building-regulations-guidance-part-m-access-and-use-buildings>

Health and Safety

Health and Safety Checklist for Village and Community Halls

Health and Safety Executive

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/assets/docs/village-hall.pdf>

Example Risk Assessment for a Village Hall

Health and Safety Executive

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/pdf/villagehall.pdf>

Fire Safety

Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Small and Medium Places of Assembly

UK Government

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-small-and-medium-places-of-assembly>

Further Information

Environment and Sustainability

Information and Resources

Centre for Alternative Technology

<https://www.cat.org.uk/info-resources/>

Resources

Centre of Sustainable Energy

<https://www.cse.org.uk/resources>

Resources

The Carbon Trust

<https://www.carbontrust.com/resources>

Acknowledgement:

Some of the guidance above has been extracted and abridged for use from:

'Managing Your Community Building' by Community Matters and Peter Hudson (2000)



Cefnogi Trydydd
Sector **Cymru**

Third Sector
Support **Wales**

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales.

It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

For further information contact
<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/>

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.