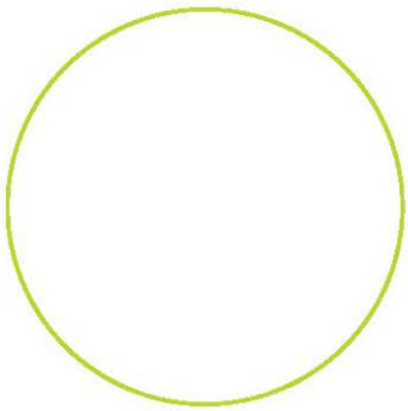


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Accessibility Guidelines for Leisure Centres



Introduction

In Ireland, people with disabilities make up 13% of the population (600,000 of 4.5 million people), but their participation in sport and physical activity is significantly lower than people without disabilities. Having a greater awareness of some of the challenges that people with disabilities face will help you to be more confident engaging with and supporting people with disabilities to lead an active and healthy lifestyle by taking part in regular sport and physical activity.

This resource is guided by the *Disability Act 2005*, *Equal Status Acts 2000-2012* and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (Article 30.5)*.

The introduction of the *Disability Act 2005* and *Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2012* has helped to progress the rights of people with disabilities in Ireland, but they still face many barriers in everyday life and taking part in sport and physical activity.

These two pieces of legislation to protect against discrimination towards people with disabilities in relation to provision of goods and services, education, employment and transport. The legislation also requires that 'reasonable accommodation' must be made to accommodate people with disabilities e.g. ramps, elevators, stair lifts etc.

Equal Status Acts 2000-2012

These acts protect people with a disability from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. For example, if a sports organisation, club, fitness/leisure centre or association treats a person unfavourably due to their disability.

It is required by law to make 'reasonable accommodation' for people with a disability who may be users, employees or volunteers. For example, this could include physical changes to the building, including ramps for wheelchair users, automatic entrance doors, lowered counters at reception areas, induction/hearing loops at reception areas and information in accessible formats, e.g. larger font/audio/braille.

'Reasonable accommodation' means providing specific treatment or facilities to make sure that people with a disability can avail of particular goods, services, housing, and so on. The following individuals and organisations must do all that is reasonable to meet the needs of a person with a disability:

- People and organisations selling goods or providing services;
- People and organisations selling or letting accommodation or providing accommodation;
- Schools, colleges and other educational institutions; and
- Clubs

Disability Act 2005

In short, the *Disability Act 2005* places a statutory obligation on public service providers to support access to services and facilities for people with disabilities. Under the Act, people with disabilities are entitled to:

- Have their health and educational needs assessed.
- Have individual service statements drawn up, setting out what services they should get.
- Access independent complaints and appeals procedures.
- Access public buildings and public service employment.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Article 30.5 states “With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States shall take appropriate measures:

- a. To encourage and promote the participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;
- b. To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organise, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources;
- c. To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues;
- d. To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system;
- e. To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organisation of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.”

Cara is delighted to bring you this resource on how to make your leisure centre more accessible and inclusive towards people with disabilities.

This resource will guide you through 8 key areas that need to be considered when making your leisure centre accessible and inclusive.

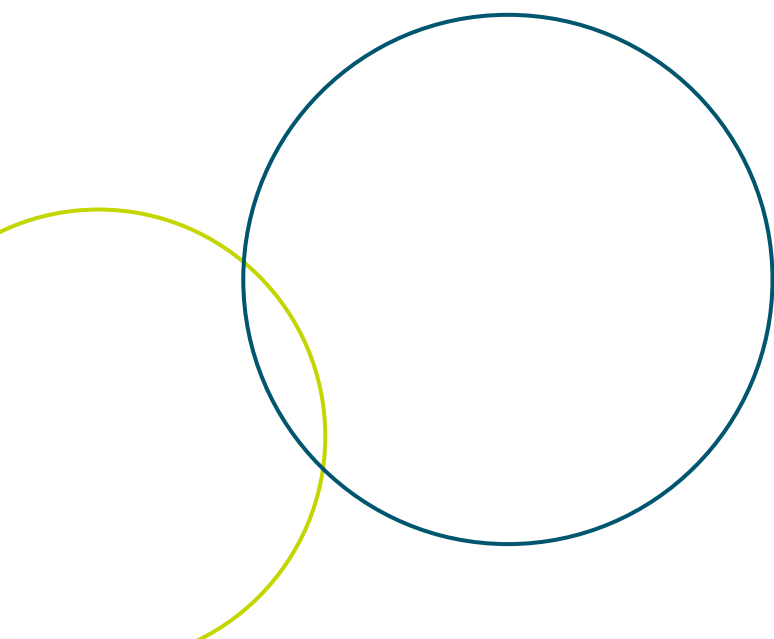
1. External environment
2. Egress and circulation of the internal building
3. Disability awareness and staff training
4. Gym environment and classes
5. Pool environment and classes
6. Toilets, changing and locker room areas
7. Marketing and promotion
8. Health and safety

Further accessibility and inclusion resources are available to download on the Cara website www.caracentre.ie

1. External environment

Your paths, walk ways, parking spaces, and entrance areas are the first area of your centre that an existing member or new member will see. It is important to make sure dangerous obstacles that could limit access to your leisure centre are removed. Obstacles that can be easily avoided or stepped around by an individual on foot can be an insurmountable barrier for a customer using a wheelchair or a cane. It is also very important that signage outside of your facility is clearly legible and spaces and entrances are clearly signposted.

	Yes	No
Are the disability car park spaces clearly marked and signposted?		
How many disability car park spaces are available? It is recommended that there should be one disability car parking space for every standard 25 spaces and a minimum of three disability car spaces for the next 25-50 spaces. A minimum of five disability car parking spaces should be allocated for every 50 – 100 spaces.		
Are the car parking spaces a minimum width of one and half times the standard car parking space and painted appropriately with a blue colour and white stencil?		
Are there appropriate tactile & dropped curbs on approach to the leisure centre?		
Is the route to the leisure centre clearly outlined and free of any obstacles or obstructions?		



2. Circulation of the internal building

Often leisure centre managers or owners think that they will incur huge costs in making their centre accessible and inclusive for all. On the contrary it only requires small changes that are inexpensive and easy to do that will make your centre more accessible and inclusive for all members.

	Yes	No
Is the main entrance to the leisure centre clearly signposted and accessible? If the accessible entrance is different to the main entrance this entrance should be signposted.		
Does the centre have a portable induction loop for individuals who are hard of hearing? Is there signage in place to indicate that the system is available?		
Is the signage throughout the centre consistent and clearly visible?		
Is the public-address system clear and audible in all parts of the centre?		
Is the public address system supplemented by visual information to accommodate people who are deaf or hard of hearing? Scrolling information bars, TV screens and information kiosks should be provided to assist in the delivery of public notices and information.		
Are lifts/platform lifts/wheelchair stair lifts available to enable vertical movement in a two storey or split level building?		
Does the colour scheme in the facility help differentiate between critical elements, for example the wall from the floor, doors from adjacent walls? The colour schemes of the walls, floors and fittings should provide sufficient contrast to make them distinguishable by people with a vision impairment.		
Are the handrails easy to grip? Are the handrails placed on both sides of the ramps? Are the handrails easily distinguishable from their backgrounds? Do the handrails have closed ends which turns back into a supporting wall or turns down indicating that the stairs has ended?		
Do all the lifts have audible and braille/raised instructions?		
Are all the fittings and fixtures e.g. light switches, door handles etc. accessible, at an appropriate height and easy to use?		
Are all point of contact desks at seated/wheelchair height? Are they clear from promotional material, foods or anything that would block the line of sight for a person who uses a wheelchair?		

3. Disability awareness and staff training

Disability awareness and staff training is an essential element of making your centre more accessible and inclusive. Provision of this training across all levels of the centre from management to front of house staff needs to be factored into operational planning. It will increase the knowledge and confidence of centre staff in this area which will lead to an enhanced customer service towards people with disabilities. Ongoing staff training is essential to ensure that the gym and pool is accessible and resourced with accessible equipment options. Staff training should include instruction on what accessible equipment and features are available, how to operate and maintain them, and any necessary safety considerations.

There is no better way to let staff, current members, and prospective members know that you are committed to accessibility and inclusion than to put it in writing. Create a disability inclusion policy and add an inclusion statement to your membership documents. Let members know that your centre supports an accessible and inclusive environment and that people of all abilities are welcome.

	Yes	No
A range of training workshops are available by Cara. The Inclusive Fitness Training workshop provided by Cara is specific to all those working in the fitness sector and is endorsed by REPS Ireland and Ireland Active. See www.caracentre.ie for more details.		
It is recommend that disability awareness training should be carried out on a regular basis and the centre should ensure that all new staff members are brought through the training within the first six months of employment.		
To ensure continuous improvement and learning it is recommended that internal disability awareness is carried out to update and refresh staff.		
It is recommended that a member of staff takes on the role of Disability Liaison Officer so that there is a point of contact for people with disabilities who may need further information and support. The role can also act to monitor training and updates relating to the area of disability within the centre.		
An internal access audit should be carried out every 6-12 months to allow for changes and different people using the centre. The audit should cover areas such as external environment, circulation of the building, disability awareness training, gym environment, pool environment, toilets, changing areas and locker rooms, marketing, health and safety.		
On the basis of the audit, the centre should have a written action plan to address disability concerns. Highlighting how access will be provided, maintained and improved for members and staff with disabilities.		

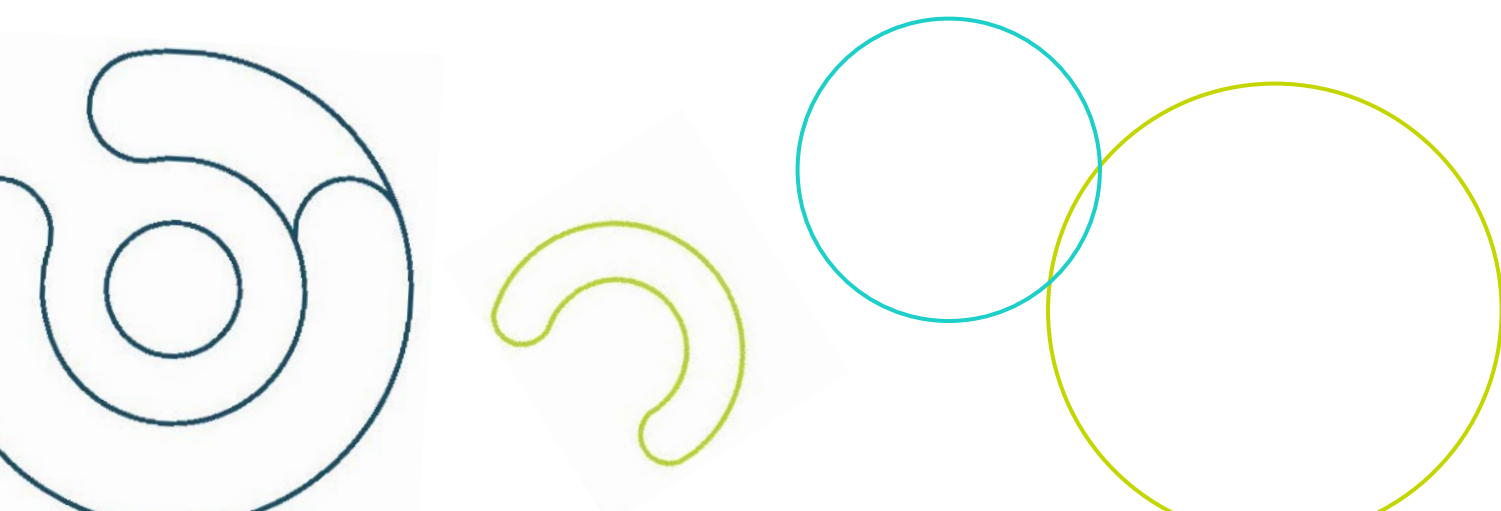
4. Gym environment and classes

All leisure centres should strive to provide an inclusive and accessible environment to all their members. This can be achieved by providing dual use equipment. Dual use equipment allows people with and without a disabilities to use the same piece of equipment for their workout. Both aerobic and resistance equipment should be accessible and should be sourced using the Inclusive Fitness Initiative accreditation list.

The UK's Activity Alliances runs an accreditation programme called the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) for accessible gym equipment. <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/programmes/ifi-fitness-equipment>.

A list of Irish suppliers who provide the equipment listed on the above link is available on the Cara website www.caracentre.ie

	Yes	No
Does your centre provide both cardio and resistance dual use equipment? A factsheet on dual use equipment is available for download on the Cara website www.caracentre.ie		
All resistance and cardio equipment should have colour contrasted pedals, levers and buttons to make them highly visible to people with a vision impairment.		
All equipment that have a console should have raised buttons (bump on's) to assist a person with a vision impairment.		
The gym floor should have a clear layout and provide full access to all areas of the gym. A pathway should highlight the movement flow /directional flow of the gym. There should be clear and adequate spacing between machines.		
The gym desk, if present, should be at wheelchair height and be accessible to a person who uses a wheelchair.		
It is recommended that gym/programme cards are available in alternative formats such as large print, braille if appropriate, picture sequencing or USB.		

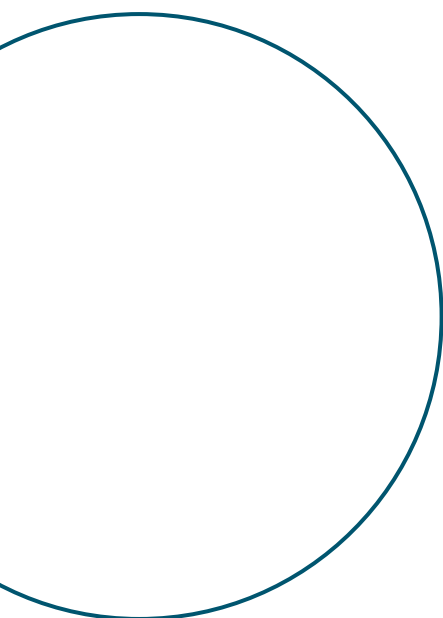


5. Pool environment and classes

Accessible pool features are required so that people with disabilities have access to the pool whenever the pool is open to others. For example, a pool hoists/lifts, flotation devices, accessible changing facilities, etc.

Ongoing staff training is essential to ensure that they know how to operate and maintain accessible equipment particularly pool hoists/lifts.

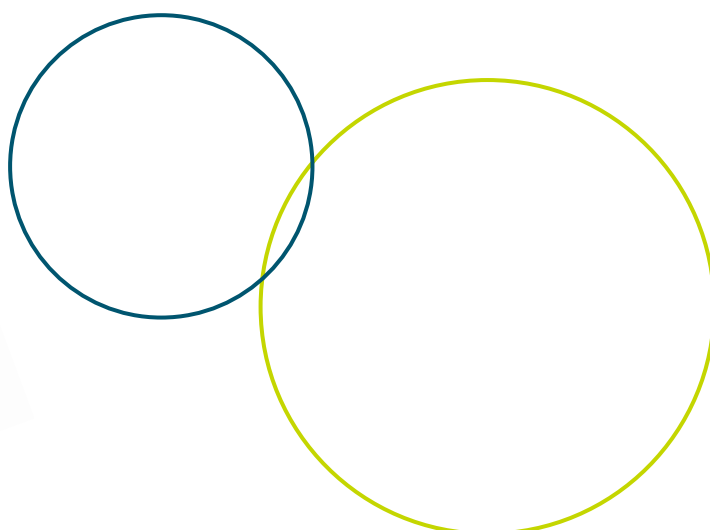
	Yes	No
Does the pool have a working pool hoist/lift available?		
Is the pool hoist visible on pool side?		
It is recommended that there should be a choice of access points to the pool which are accessible e.g. beach style (no steps) or sloped stepped access.		
The deep and shallow ends of the pool should be clearly and prominently marked.		
The immediate surround of the pool should be clearly and easily identifiable from the water's edge. Use of a coloured grating can provide a high contrast to a person with a vision impairment.		
Where possible the sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi should be accessible to everyone.		
A range of classes or activities in the pool should be accessible and available to people with disabilities.		
A mobile shower chair should be available on the pool side and in the changing rooms.		



6. Toilets, changing and locker room areas

All toilets, changing and locker rooms areas must be designed so that people with disabilities can use them. This does not necessitate expensive design features but it does require attention to detail and layout. Ideally centres should provide at least one individual unisex accessible changing room complete with shower and toilet. This enables assistance to be given by someone of either sex.

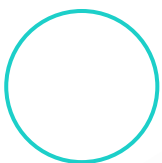
	Yes	No
It is recommended that there should be individual accessible changing cubicles, as well as accessible toilets with the appropriate signage. Ideally the individual accessible changing cubicles should be located close to and appropriately to the gym and the pool areas.		
All accessible changing rooms/facilities should have an emergency alarm cord or emergency button.		
It is recommended that the alarm should sound at reception.		
The flushing mechanism for the toilet should be easy to operate – fist operated (spatula lever or pull cord).		
Handrails should be available in all of the accessible changing facilities to allow ease of movement.		
It is recommended that permanent shower chairs (flip down) are available in the main shower area. Mobile shower chairs should also be made available.		
It is recommended that an accessible changing bench is available in the accessible changing cubicles.		
A number of the mirrors and hairdryers should be at an appropriate height for people who use a wheelchair.		
Accessible changing lockers should be available in the changing areas or cubicles. They should be clearly identifiable and marked.		



7. Marketing and promotion

There is no better way to let your members and any potential new members know that you are accessible and inclusive than to promote your centre's information. It is extremely important to promote what's happening in your centre, what equipment you have, the programmes you are running and anything else that shows that your centre is accessible to people with disabilities. By promoting your information in a number of different formats and by using positive images of people with disabilities you are ensuring that you are letting everyone know that you are providing a welcoming environment for all to use. Of course, the best thing you can do to make your centre more inclusive is provide exceptional customer service. Treat everyone that comes through your doors with courtesy and respect. Smile, be welcoming, listen, and be willing to adapt.

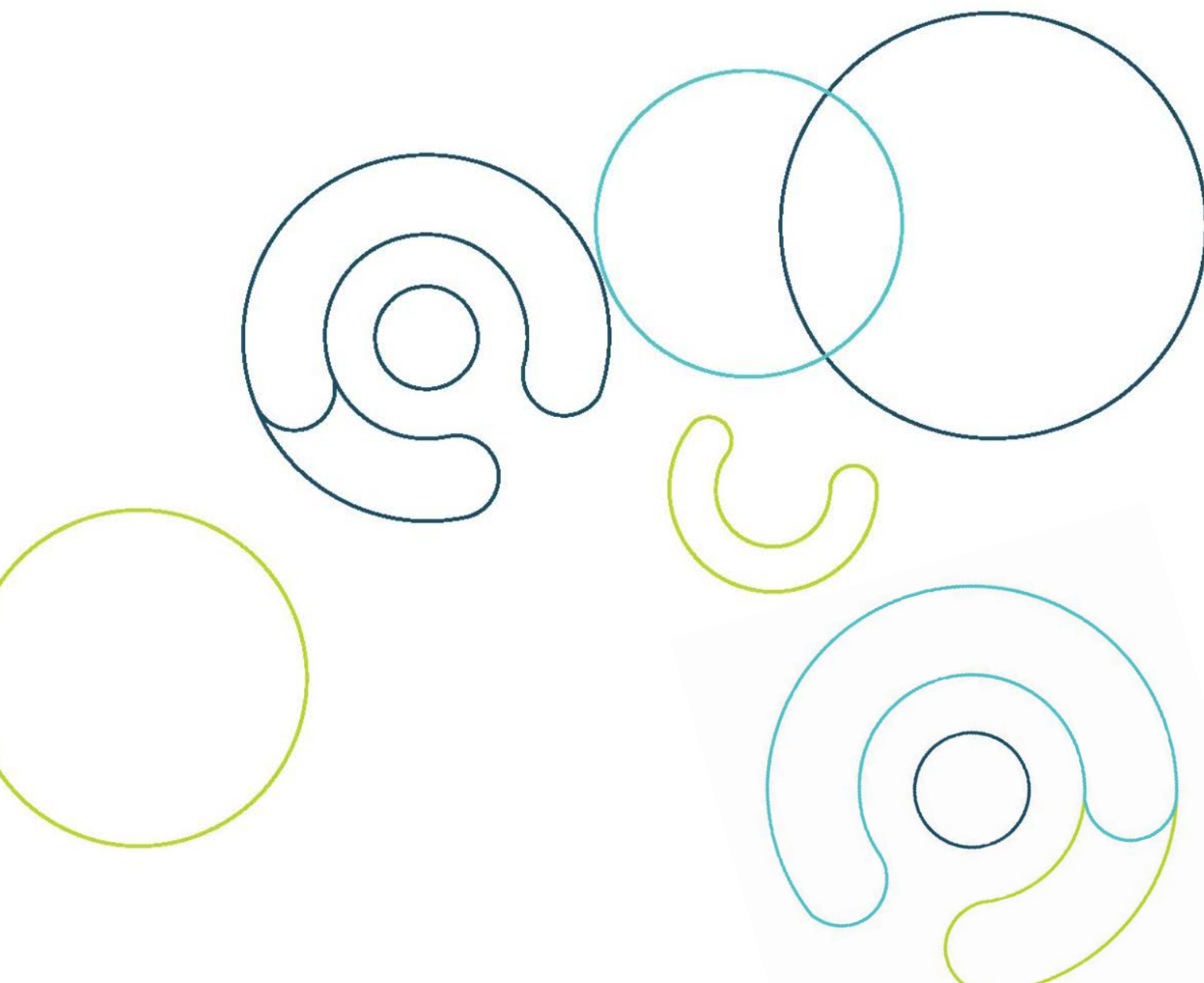
	Yes	No
Does your centre distribute and promote information relating to disability, inclusion, accessibility for your centre e.g. flyers, website, social media, radio, print media?		
Does your centre have an accessible website with relevant information about the centre and programmes that are specific to people with disabilities?		
All promotional information should depict positive images of people with disabilities in order to attract that target audience.		
Is there an appropriate means whereby people with disabilities can provide feedback to the centre? The centre should provide options for people with disabilities to provide feedback by online feedback systems, text system, and feedback forms in large print.		
Does the centre provide any promotional materials in alternative formats e.g. larger print, braille, USB stick, email?		



8. Health and safety

Ensuring the safety of your members within your centre is paramount. It is essential that emergency operation procedures are developed to ensure that in the event of an emergency all staff are aware of how to support people with disabilities.

	Yes	No
The centre should have an Emergency Operation Procedure (EOP) that is specific to people with disabilities. The EOP should detail how certain types of disabilities should be evacuated from the building. An understanding of how to use the fire evacuation chair should be documented as a procedure.		
If the centre is a multi-storey building a fire evacuation chair should be present and situated at an appropriate refuge point.		
If the centre is a multi-storey building, a clearly identifiable disability refuge point should exist in the event of an emergency.		
The centre's alarm system should be installed as both audio and visual (flashing light).		





About Cara

Cara is a national organisation which provides a collaborative and partnership platform throughout Ireland to impact on enhancing sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities. With the support of Sport Ireland, National Governing Bodies of Sport, and Local Sports Partnerships, we provide information, training, support, and advocate for the rights of people with disabilities to access sport and physical activity so that they can lead an active and healthy lifestyle within their local community.

For further information about Cara please visit www.caracentre.ie or contact us at info@caracentre.ie.

This resource was funded by

