

The Chiltern Lift Company *Limited*

ALL TYPES OF LIFT INSTALLATIONS, SERVICING AND REPAIRS

8 FURLONG ROAD, BOURNE END, BUCKS, SL8 5DG

Tel: 01628 529247 Fax: 01628 810821 Email: enquiries@chilternlifts.co.uk

Equality Act (formally DDA)

What is the Equality Act?

Equality legislation has been in place in the UK since the 1970s. Over time the laws have become more complex as our understanding of what is meant by equality has become more sophisticated.

As of the 1st October 2010 the Equality Act replaces the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), or DDA, and is a vital piece of legislation to consider when specifying products for buildings.

Where does the Equality Act apply?

The Equality Act applies to all service providers and those providing goods and facilities in Great Britain. This includes, for example, those running leisure centre facilities or providing public buildings such as libraries or shopping centres. It applies to all services, whether or not a charge is made for them.

What has changed between DDA and the Equality Act?

Previously, adjustments to premises and to policies, practices and procedures had to be made by service providers only where it would otherwise be 'impossible or unreasonably difficult' for a disabled person to use the service. Now, under the new Equality Act, adjustments must be made where disabled people experience a 'substantial disadvantage'. This means that service providers may have to make more adjustments. Also, it was previously possible for a service provider to legally justify failing to provide a reasonable adjustment in certain circumstances. Now, the only question is whether the adjustment is a reasonable one to make.

What changes are required?

Service providers are required to make changes, where needed, to improve services for disabled customers or potential customers. There is a legal requirement to make reasonable changes to the way things are done (such as changing a policy), to the built environment (such as making changes to the structure of a building to improve access) and to provide auxiliary aids and services (such as providing information in an accessible format, an induction loop for customers with hearing aids, special computer software or additional staff support when using a service).

Reasonable changes are required wherever disabled customers or potential customers would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled people. Service providers cannot charge disabled customers for reasonable adjustments.

What is reasonable will depend on all the circumstances, including the cost of an adjustment, the potential benefit it might bring to other customers (ramps and automatic doors benefit customers with small children or heavy luggage, for example), the resources an organisation has and how practical the changes are.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that service providers think ahead and take steps to address barriers that impede disabled people. In doing this, it is a good idea to consider the range of disabilities that your actual or potential service users might have. You should not wait until a disabled person experiences difficulties using a service, as this may make it too late to make the necessary adjustment.

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Directors: R. Festorazzi, S.R. Festorazzi
Registered in England No: 1090333
Registered Office: As above

The Equality Act enables reasonable provision to be made so that a person who is disabled, is a wheelchair user, has impairment of hearing or has impairment of sight may have access into and within any storey of a building.

The Equality Act service we offer

We offer a comprehensive survey and consultation service detailing the requirements of the Equality Act and how they relate to specific lift installations. We advise on what works are required to achieve compliance with Equality Act Regulations. We provide full refurbishment and modernisation services in accordance with the Equality Act. Please contact us to take your first steps to compliance.

BS8300:2001 – Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people: Code of Practice

The needs of disabled people are firmly in the minds of all of us involved in the construction industry. Part M of the Building Regulations, and the Equality Act (formerly Disability Discrimination Act (1995)) ensures we remain focused on disabled people's needs.

The introduction of BS8300:2001 gathered all the relevant standards under one 'umbrella' to ensure that every aspect of disability is taken into account in building design. As lift installers and service engineers we, at Chiltern Lifts, are focusing our attention to lifts and related products.

8.4 Lifts

Lifts are an essential amenity for disabled people in multi-storey buildings. Lifts may be conventional passenger lifts, platform lifts or stair lifts.

Traditionally passenger lifts have been installed in multi-storey buildings.

However, since the introduction of the DDA and now the Equality Act, and the requirement to provide access for all, the use of platform lifts has helped meet the requirements for disabled access. In exceptional circumstances a chair lift may be included in a public building, but only if it constitutes the only means of travelling over two floors.

8.4.1 Provision of lifts

A conventional passenger lift should be the preferred option to provide comprehensive access for all users to levels in a building. However, in existing buildings where access to such a lift is not possible, a platform lift should be provided as an alternative option. If neither of the other types of lift can be installed a chair lift could be chosen as the final option for existing public buildings.

It is imperative that lifts are installed 'fit for purpose'. A responsible advisor should help you look at the current and likely future uses of the building and the short and long-term costs of installing the optimum lift to meet everyone's needs. An example of this would be a school that can meet the needs of one disabled pupil by having all the services they need to access on the ground floor. As the school becomes more popular, the number of pupils with special needs grows and the services can no longer be restricted to one floor. In this case a vertical platform lift would solve an immediate problem, but within months of installation the head teacher wishes a passenger lift had been installed to meet all their current and future requirements.

Once the correct lift for the purpose has been chosen, the detail of how a range of disabled people might use the lift needs to be carefully addressed.

8.4.2 & 8.4.3 Access to lifts

In the past the needs of many disabled people have been overlooked and life has been made unnecessarily difficult. BS8300 makes us all more aware of ways in which building

design can be 'inclusive' in a very considered way. The standard looks at every aspect of approaching, using and exiting lifts with every type of disability considered.

Signage, both when entering and exiting the lift. All visual indicators and lift call buttons need to be visible and usable by passengers in both standing or seated positions.

Lighting needs to enhance accessibility and the lighting itself needs to ensure people with visual impairment are catered for.

Audible Announcements within the lift car and on landings are required for both visually and audibly impaired people.

Call buttons should have symbols in relief to enable Tactile Reading.

Car floors and ramps should feature slip-resistant materials to reduce the risk of falling.

Areas of glass in the lift should be easily identifiable to those with impaired vision.

Handrails may need to be provided for ambulant disabled people, these may be particularly needed on landing areas at the foot or head of a ramp.

Emergency communication systems

Passenger lifts should be fitted with an emergency communication system that should incorporate an induction coupler for the benefit of those using hearing aids. A visual indicator should also be incorporated to confirm that an emergency call has been received.

Vertical platform lifts should be fitted with audible alarm.

Inclined platform lifts (a suitable inclined stairwell lift for use with a wheelchair) should also be fitted with an audible alarm.

Chair lifts in a public building should, ideally, be positioned within the view of a reception area and fitted with an alarm, in case a user gets into difficulties.

If a platform stair lift or chair lift is fitted in a building with a single stairway it must not reduce the width of that stairway beyond the minimum width for pedestrian escape.

If you require further information regarding the Equality Act 2010 please contact our expert staff on 01628 527414.

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Directory: M:\Alan\NewWebsite
Template: C:\Documents and Settings\User\Application
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot
Title: Equality Act (formally DDA)
Subject:
Author: Staff Use
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 10/11/2011 16:03:00
Change Number: 2
Last Saved On: 10/11/2011 16:20:00
Last Saved By: Staff Use
Total Editing Time: 7 Minutes
Last Printed On: 10/11/2011 16:23:00
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 3
Number of Words: 1,261 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 7,190 (approx.)