

Appendix One

Access and Information Policy for Disabled People 2006

Introduction

Our Commitment to Access and Information

The Science Museum aims to remove or reduce physical, sensory, attitudinal or intellectual barriers to access, to ensure that all aspects of the Museum's galleries, exhibitions and activities are as accessible as possible for all disabled visitors.

Accessibility

The Science Museum recognises that people face a wide range of specific barriers when visiting museums, all of which prevent full enjoyment and participation and many of which result in these people never visiting museums. These barriers include:

- Physical barriers – the environment and the furnishings and objects within it
- Sensory barriers – how exhibitions are perceived and experienced and whether a multi-sensory experience is provided
- Attitudinal barriers – whether staff provide a flexible, welcoming environment that is inclusive of all people with disabilities
- Intellectual barriers – whether information is provided in a wide variety of formats, which are accessible to people with varying levels of understanding
- Perceptual barriers – whether the museum is perceived by individuals and organisations as catering for and representing disabled visitors equally.

The Science Museum comprehends fully its responsibility as a service provider and a public body to create a fully accessible environment and service for disabled visitors.

Why we need to be accessible?

Public Body

This includes the 1 in 6 people¹ in the UK who have a disability. Developing an accessible service benefits all visitors, many of whom do not consider themselves disabled, including older people.

Internal Strategic Statements

The Science Museum 'Museum of the Future' masterplan² and the Mission Statement³ all contain aims to increase access to all people including those with disabilities, they include:

- to deliver more of our objects to a broader range of audiences in more engaging ways;
- to enhance visitor access and facilities;
- to broaden our audience;
- to reach everyone at every level in today's Britain.

¹ Disability Rights Commission figure for those people who have rights under the DDA

² Science Museum 'Museum of the Future' brochure produced by the Science Museum in July 2003

³ Science Museum mission statement 2003 'In the 21st century what role should a museum play'

Where we are

Data available from the Visitor Profile⁴ shows that in 2005-2006 only 0.2% of our admissions visitors identified themselves as registered disabled⁵ compared with 18% of the UK population who are disabled⁶. This suggests that the museum is not attracting a disabled audience.

The Science Museum has made attempts to enhance disability awareness and access over the past 10 years however these have lacked cohesion and effectiveness in terms of systematic improvements. In order to address this issue a new post of Disability Awareness Co-coordinator (DAC) was established in January 2006 with a remit to advise on accessibility of the Museum's public galleries, facilities, services, websites and events.

Tasks completed to progress disabled access since January 2006 include:

- Completion of a Museum-wide audit to identify key areas for improvement;
- Collation of past access reviews, audits, recommendations to inform an up-to-date action plan;
- Formulation of a Museum-wide policy on disabled access;
- Formulation of a disability awareness training programme for staff;
- Provision of audience advocacy for disabled groups within exhibitions and projects e.g. Launch Pad, website redevelopment, Space gallery, Wellcome digitization;
- Provision of inter-departmental consultation to improve disabled services (e.g. Front of House services, orientation and information materials, Special Educational Needs Days).

Action Plan

In order to fulfill the Science Museum's accessibility mission statement, the museum must make significant changes across a range of departments in a systematic programme as laid out in the Access and Information Action Plan at the end of this document.

The action plan indicates 47 actions. They comprise of short-term aims which need to be addressed within the first year. Broad areas to be addressed in the medium and long-term are also indicated.

Medium term objectives_ - years 2- 3

Once basic standards of accessibility have been achieved in the first year, the Museum can begin to look at creative solutions for improving the quality of experience for disabled groups. This will include:

- Recruiting a standing panel of disabled users for consultation on key projects, and to review and develop successive years' action plans.
- Provide consultation service via the DAC to advise and support relevant departments to achieve completion of action points.

⁴ Science Museum Audience Profile Annual Report 1 April 2004 – 31 March 2005

⁵ It should be noted that the question currently used to identify people as disabled in the Museum's Visitor Profile is in the process of being reviewed to maximise reliability of data for this sensitive question.

⁶ Disability Rights Commission figure for those people who have rights under the DDA

- All new projects to be fully accessible to visitors and involve consultation with DAC and access audience panel.
- New signage and orientation system to be developed in consultation with DAC to increase disabled access.
- Museum to develop information policy to ensure all information is accessible to disabled visitors, in co-ordination with a museum wide information strategy. To help ensure all information is:
 - a) Produced in a variety of formats (e.g. Braille, C.D., large print)
 - b) Accessible to people at a variety of intellectual levels
 - c) Clear and consistent throughout the museum
 - d) Follows guidelines on accessible text (e.g. size, contrast)
 - e) Maximises use of new technology to reach range of disabled audiences.

Long term objectives – years 3-5

- Science Museum to be as accessible as possible to all visitors, by removing or reducing all barriers to access.
- Science Museum to be a leader in this field and continuing to pursue innovative ways of increasing access to the collections and science.

The Disability Awareness Co-coordinator will support the implementation of the policy and action plans by conducting the following activities:

- Recruit and run a standing panel of disabled users with the aim of:
 - a) Improving our existing knowledge about the needs, wants and expectations of this audience
 - b) Conducting formative and summative evaluation of key projects with this audience, thus ensuring that projects are accessible, relevant, interesting and educational for this audience
- Act as an Audience Advocate for disabled visitors on key projects so that their needs are considered from the project start.
- Provide advice to ensure services are appropriate for disabled users (e.g. front-of house, information and orientation materials).
- Co-ordinate Special Educational Needs Days so that they are conducted to a high standard that meets the needs of SEN groups.
- Plan and help deliver Disability Awareness training in a rolling programme for Science Museum staff.
- Build contacts with Disability groups and individual experts to ensure the Museum is matching best practice in the field and to raise the profile of initiatives for disabled audiences.
- Monitor the Museum's compliance with DDA legal requirements, and make recommendations to achieve this.
- Build a library of disability practice in the field and raise the Museum's profile through conferences, professional networking and publication of research and initiatives.

Measuring success

Various elements of the Disability Access Policy and initiatives will be assessed to ensure they are successful against objectives. This process will be co-ordinated by the DAC. Some of the questions to be considered will include:

- Are actions being completed to programme and to a high standard?
- Are services, information, and facilities being provided that are of a high standard and meet disabled visitors needs?
- Are project teams considering the needs of disabled audiences and implementing DAC recommendations so that products are successful for this audience?
- Do staff attending the Disability Awareness training show improved confidence in understanding and supporting a disabled audiences?
- Is the Museum provision improving in the context of best practice within the field?
- Is the Museum progressing towards meeting DDA legal requirements?

Methodologies for evaluating the above issues will include:

- 'Mystery shopping' assessment by disability professionals;
- Summative evaluation of projects with disabled users;
- Peer review by disability access experts;
- Regular audit against target actions by DAC;
- Evaluation of training outcomes by DAC;
- Research with disabled panel to assess the needs, wants, expectations of this group;
- Monitoring of progress on actions by SMT sponsor and DAC.

Short term objectives – year one.

Target Area	Goal	PRIORITY
Information	Museum Maps produced in large print (x 100, per month, free)	High
	Warning information about areas that could cause distress, including sudden loud noises (Time Measurement & Secret Life of the Home) and variable lighting (Welcome Wing) places on maps	High
	Museum Guides produced in large print (x150, cost as other guides)	Medium
	Museum maps produced in raised formats with accompanying audio description (x 30 available to borrow)	Low

Target Area	Goal	PRIORITY
	<p>Current site to be maintained to ensure accurate disability information content, including aids and services</p> <p>Downloadable large print information (maps and guides) provided on website</p> <p>Web redevelopment to be fully accessible and provide services to disabled visitors using SOGG (to include full evaluation)</p>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p>
Additional Aids	<p>Induction loops installed, maintained and marked with labels in main show spaces in LP and main ticket and information desks (already in place in Imax, lecture theatre, Things Gallery & Dana but without labels)</p> <p>Portable induction loops available for tours and temporary shows to include training of staff in use (x4)</p> <p>Frontline staff to carry notebooks and pens to aid communication</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>
Additional Services	<p>Concessionary pricing (plus free enabler/support person) to fee-paying galleries, IMAX and simulators. Information placed on website and in museum guides</p> <p>Personal guides available to provide support to visitors when booked in advance</p> <p>Design and delivery of touch tours weekly (staff trained specifically in area by DAC)</p> <p>BSL interpreted tours provided monthly</p>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p>

Target Area	Goal	PRIORITY
Physical environment	Install lifts to mezzanines in shipping and flight and renew space lift	High
	Change lighting in Space, Flight, Health Matters, 4 th floor & 5 th floor to sufficient level	High
	Improve visibility on Wellcome Wing stairs, maintain lights and add further spotlights to increase visibility. Consider use of contrasting materials to further highlight step nosings	Medium
	Reduce pressure of front doors, doors to stairways & gallery doors to 30 newtons or hold open (total 30 doors)	High
	All ramps and changes in flooring heights to be highlighted, hazard tape can be used when appropriate (i.e. Schools' Entrance & Launchpad)	High
	Loose mats in entrances and Garden to be replaced with permanent mats	High
	Flooring should not be polished to a highly reflective finish	Low
Benches located at bottom of stairs in Energy Hall obstruct the path from the stairs into the gallery and need to be relocated	High	

Target Area	Goal	PRIORITY
Signage	<p>All gallery/area closures to be clearly identified and alternative routes given with signage (included in temporary signage scheme)</p> <p>Lifts to be clearly signed and identifiable, together with a clear floor number sign (included in temporary signage scheme)</p> <p>Stairs and lifts to have clear information at each level about which floors they access (included in temporary signage scheme)</p> <p>Toilet signs to be changed from 'Disabled' to 'Accessible' to clarify usage</p> <p>VINs to be updated to include accurate accessibility information (i.e. aids, environment of galleries, types of exhibits)</p>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>
Emergency Egress	<p>Evaluation to be conducted of emergency information formats and evacuation plan to ensure consideration of people with disabilities (including those who are deaf and have visual impairments)</p>	<p>High</p>
Training	<p>Attendance at basic Disability Equality Training to be compulsory for all staff and rolled out over 2 years</p> <p>Advanced disability training to be compulsory for frontline staff within 1 year</p>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p>
Major exhibitions/ websites/ events	<p>All new gallery/project programmes to include regular consultation with DAC and include sign-off on access by DAC at key prototype stages</p> <p>All new galleries/websites/events to be developed in accordance to relevant guidance provided by DAC</p> <p>All new galleries/projects to have Access Statements to include aims, strategy, process and outcomes for developing access</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>low</p>

Target Area	Goal	PRIORITY
Events/Shows	Shows/events to introduce visual interpretation and BSL or subtitles to slides and main content	High
	Specific shows to be developed to cater for various needs	Medium
	Introduction of tactile graphics to support shows/events for people with visual impairments	Medium
	Evaluation of SEN days to be conducted and recommended changes implemented	High
Content	Collections to develop a strategy to increase content relating to the disabled community	Medium
IMAX	Further investigation into the potential of the introduction of subtitles or BSL to films	Low
Sponsorship	Sponsorship to set strategy for fundraising for accessibility within the next 3 years (see section 3.5)	Medium
	Sponsorship to include access in all funding bids to demonstrate museums focus and increase funds for developing access	Medium
Marketing & PR	Marketing to set a strategy for promoting the Museum and its services to disabled people and organizations, to include materials in alternative formats	Medium
Advertising	Advertising to set a strategy for developing advertising materials in alternative formats including Braille, audio and large print	Medium
	Advertising materials to include images of disabled people to demonstrate an inclusive museum	Low
Senior Management	Disability access aims to be incorporated into Exco/trustee agenda and cascaded down to all departments policies and objectives	High
	Objectives reviewed at Exco/trustee level and imbedded in strategic documents including PI, targets and masterplan	High