



Making it easy to access:

- homes
- buildings
- outside spaces?

Access means something that is easy for disabled people to get into and use. Such as ramps to get into a building.

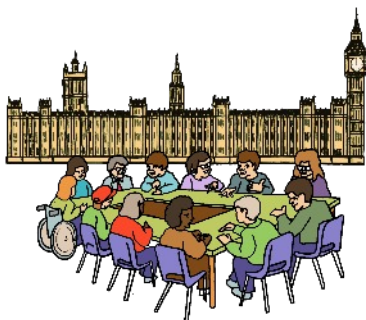
Outside spaces means places like parks, streets and open areas.



This is an easy read version of **Building for Equality: Disability and the Built Environment, HC631 - the Women and Equalities Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2016-17.**

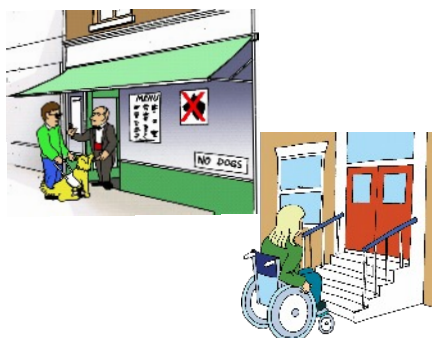
What is in this paper?

Page



Who are we?

1



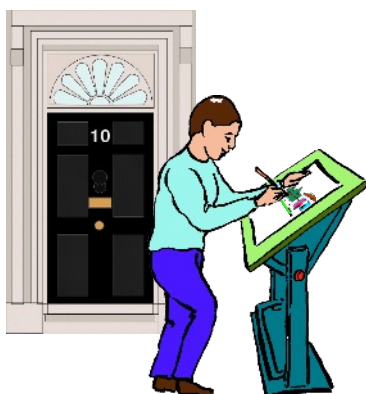
What is this paper about?

5



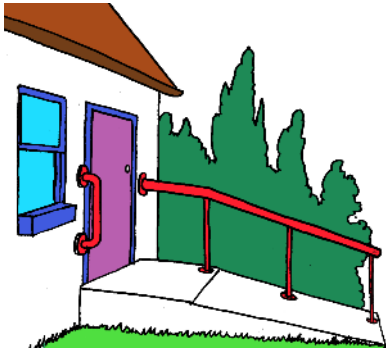
1. The government needs to show how it is making things better

9



2. National and Local plans for homes, buildings and outside spaces

11



3. Homes

14



4. Public buildings and places

16



5. Shared spaces

18



6. Conclusion

20



Who are we?

We are the Women and Equalities Committee at the House of Commons in Parliament.



Parliament has groups or committees to look at things the Government is doing.



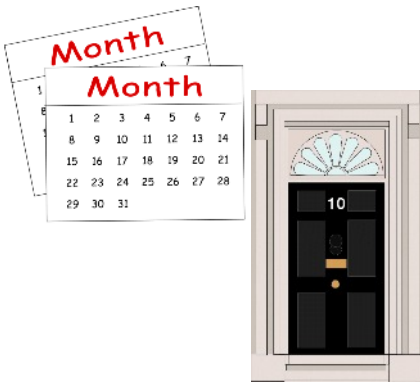
They use what they find out to check if things are working well or help change things or make them better.



Sometimes a Committee will do an **inquiry** to find out how things are working in a specific area.



After an **inquiry**, a Committee will usually publish a report, which explains what people said and what the Committee wants the Government to do.



The Government has to tell the Committee what it plans to do to change things or make them better. This usually takes about two months, but this time might take a bit longer.



The Women and Equalities Committee finds out if people are being treated fairly and equally because of:



1. how old they are



2. disability



3. changed sex



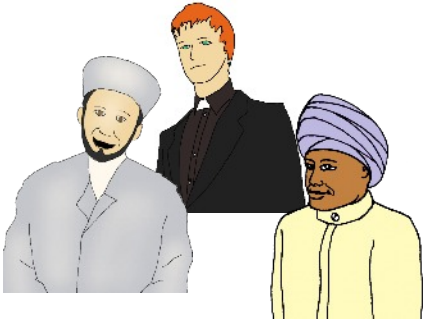
4. marriage or civil partnership



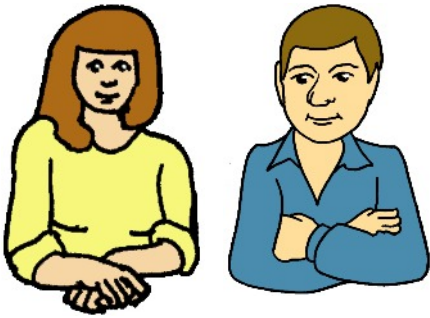
5. having a baby



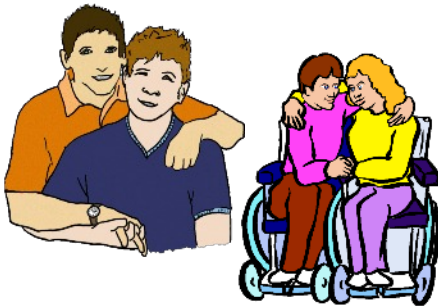
6. race



7. religion or belief

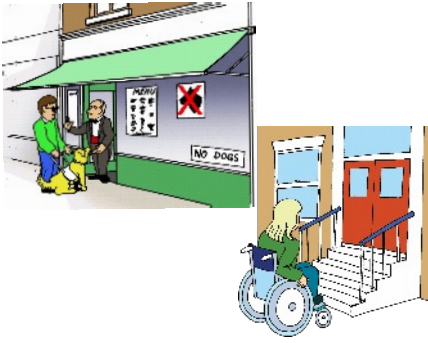


8. sex



9. gay, lesbian or bisexual people.

What is this paper about?



Disabled people cannot do everything they want because places are not easy to access. These places include:



- work places



- council offices



- banks and shops



- homes



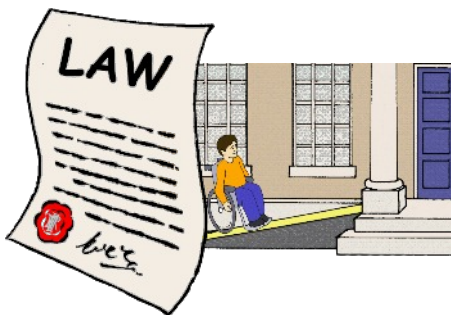
- streets and other public places.



This affects their quality of life and makes them less equal to others.

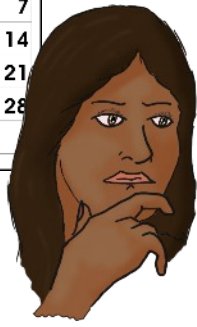


This affects all of us. Most of us have friends or family who are disabled. Or we ourselves may become disabled as we grow older.



The law says that new places need to be easy to access. Employers and companies need to change things so that it is easy to access for disabled people. But this does not seem to be happening which is wrong.

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Last year we asked how easy it is to access different places. Many people told us what they think including:



- disabled people



- builders



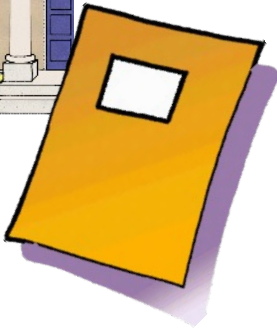
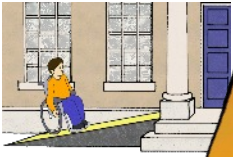
- lawyers



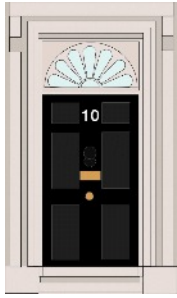
- local authorities



- people who plan new buildings and streets.



This report says what needs to be done to make everywhere easy to access.



1. The government needs to show how it is making things better



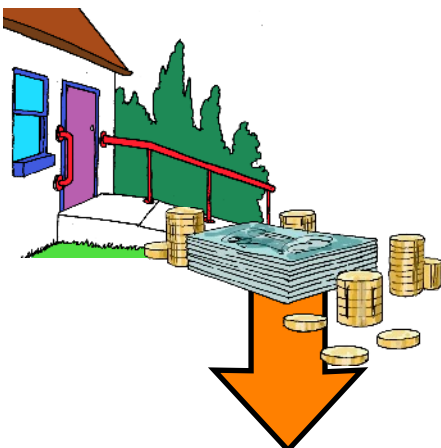
The government needs to write a new plan on making buildings and outside spaces easy to access. The government must show how to do it well themselves by:



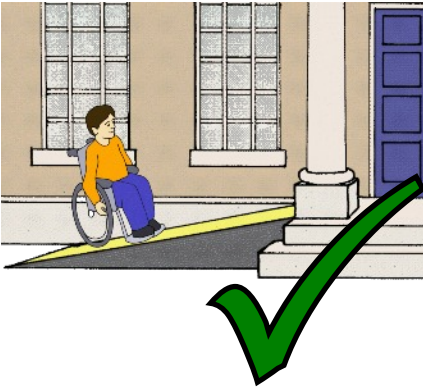
- making buildings used by the government easy to access



- when they buy anything make sure it is easy for disabled people to use. This can be anything from a new building to the signs used to tell people where things are. They need to ask questions that show the importance of places being easy to access.



- offering less tax for making building easy to access buildings



- saying that easy to access is a must do, not something that is nice to do. New advice must go to local authorities saying what they need to do.



The Department for communities and local government need to be in charge of writing the new plan.

2. National and Local plans for homes, buildings and outside spaces



The Government tells local authorities what they should put in their local plans for homes, buildings and public spaces. People who want to put up buildings have to do what these plans say, or the local authority can stop them.



We do not think that these plans always think enough about what disabled people need.



We think that local authorities should be told to think about things like where 'blue badge' parking spaces are and if disabled people will be able to use the places where new shops are put.



The Planning Inspectorate can make sure that a local authority thinks about what disabled people need when they make these plans. We don't think that it always does that, even though the law says they should.



The Equality and Human Rights Commission needs to check that the Planning Inspectorate is doing what the law says.



The check will take a while to happen. So the government needs to remind the Planning Inspectorate not to forget disabled people when it decides if local plans are good enough.



Local authorities can use their plans to make sure that people who make plans for new buildings think about what disabled people need.

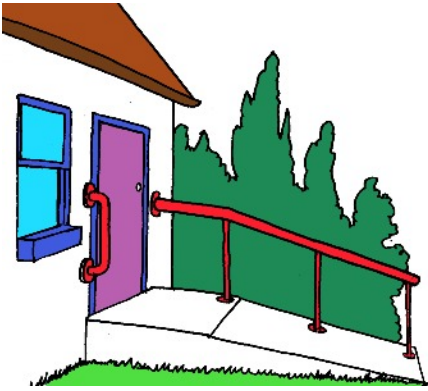


That includes things like if there is good lighting, signs that help people know where they are going, or if the doors are wide enough.



We think they should be doing this better. They should tell people that they can't build things unless they have thought about what disabled people need.

3. Homes



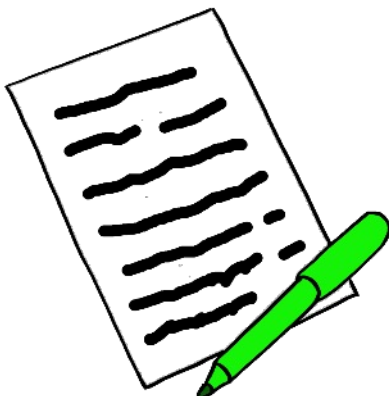
One of the things that disabled people need is homes that are easy to access and the Government is already planning to tell local authorities how to do this better in their plans.



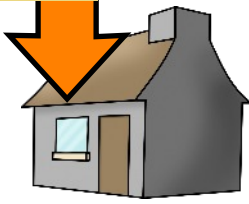
Local authorities may have written their plan already. The government must check the plans to make sure that local authorities have thought enough about how to make sure there are plenty of easy to access homes.



The rules for building new homes that are easy to access are not good enough.



There is a list of what makes a home really easy to access including parking spaces and bathrooms. This list used to be called Lifetime Homes, but is now called 'category 2'. The government needs to make this the least builders must do so that all new homes are easy to access.



Some buildings are changed from offices or places to store things into new homes



Some of these are hard to make easy to access but not all of them.



The government needs to expect all changes to be made easy to access. Builders will need good reasons to show why that cannot be done.

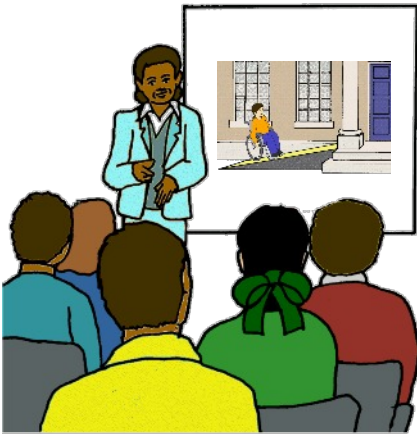


Local authorities may not need many easy to access homes now. But that will change as some people get older and others have accidents or illnesses. So we need more easy to access homes built now. That means there will be a real choice when people need them.

4. Public buildings and places



A lot more can be done to make everywhere easy to access. The Olympics in 2012 showed how easy to access can be done really well.



There is new training for people who plan and draw buildings and open spaces. This will show them how to make everywhere easy to access.



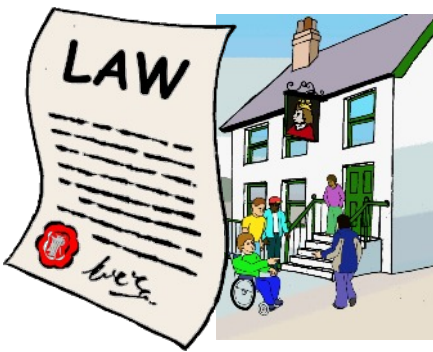
We think the government must pay towards this training.



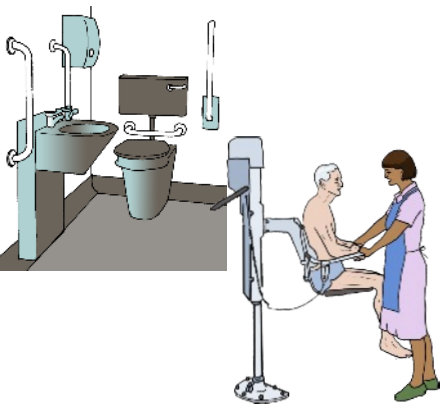
Some of the rules for buildings are out of date. We do not think they do enough to make buildings like workplaces and public buildings easy to access for everyone.



The Government should change these rules, called '**Building Regulations**' to make sure that new buildings are easy to access.



We also think that the law for allowing pubs and clubs should be changed to make easy to access as important as stopping noise.



Changing Places toilets are for disabled people not able to walk easily and older people. Changing Places Toilets have a hoist, a changing bench and a non-slip floor.



These toilets must be in all large buildings that are open to the public. Such as shopping centres, cinemas, bus and train stations.

5. Shared spaces



Some streets are called shared spaces. This is when there are no kerbs, fences or crossings. People, cars and bicycles all use the same space in the street.



Disabled people do not feel safe in these shared spaces. These spaces are stopping disabled people going to the places that use them. This is wrong.



The government needs to stop new shared spaces. Then write new rules that take what disabled people need into account. The new rules must include having crossings and kerbs.



Disabled people must be included in planning any more shared spaces. These spaces must be done in the same way all over the country. This will make it easier for disabled people to learn how to use them.



Where local authorities have shared spaces they need to work with disabled people to make them safe.



The government needs to write advice for disabled people on how to complain about shared spaces.

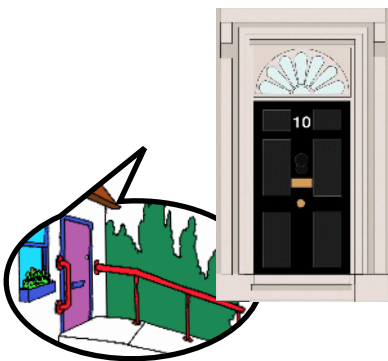
6. Conclusion



Many people answered our questions about easy to access places. Disabled people were the most important in helping us to think about this.



Some places are very good at working with disabled people on making things easy to access. Many places only ask disabled people after they have decided what to do. The government needs to work with disabled people to write good advice on doing this well.



The Government is doing some good things to make homes, buildings and outside places easy to access, but not enough.



If the Government does everything that this report says it should do to change things or make them better, then disabled people will have a better quality of life and be more equal to others.

Credits



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