

Access audit at Guild Hall, Walkden

Conducted on 23rd February 2015

Access 2 all Areas representatives: Andy Roberts; Marion; Burt Shepherd; Lillian Jenson; Roy Jenson

Introduction: Access 2 All Areas were invited to conduct an audit at the Guild Hall, Walkden

Roy has mobility difficulties and uses a wheelchair and Burt is registered blind.

Parking

Access to the Guild Hall is off Guild Avenue. There is one disabled parking bay situated at the main entrance to the Guild Hall. When we visited there was a car parked in the disabled bay which was difficult to negotiate for wheelchair users as it obscured the dropped kerb.

Entrance



Dropped kerb



The Keep Clear area of parking was occupied by a vehicle when we visited which made wheelchair access to the main entrance more difficult as the dropped kerb could not be accessed.

Main Hall



The main hall was spacious and didn't pose any problem for wheelchair users. The surface was smooth and the room was well lit. We were told by staff that the whole of the premises benefited from a loop system for the hard of hearing.



Access through the corridors was relatively easy to negotiate as they were wide enough even for larger wheelchairs. The door handles were within reach of unassisted wheelchair users. The floor was smooth although it could be improved for those with a visual impairment if it were to be a brighter colour.



The only improvement that we considered would be useful was fitting automatic sensor doors.

Meeting room



The meeting room was again a good height for wheelchair users and posed no difficulty in terms of access.

Smaller hall



The Smaller Hall was again accessible but one of the door handles to exit the hall was too high for an unassisted wheelchair user to reach. However, as the room was intended for young children we understood that the door handle was positioned there so children couldn't leave the room of their own accord.

Disable toilet

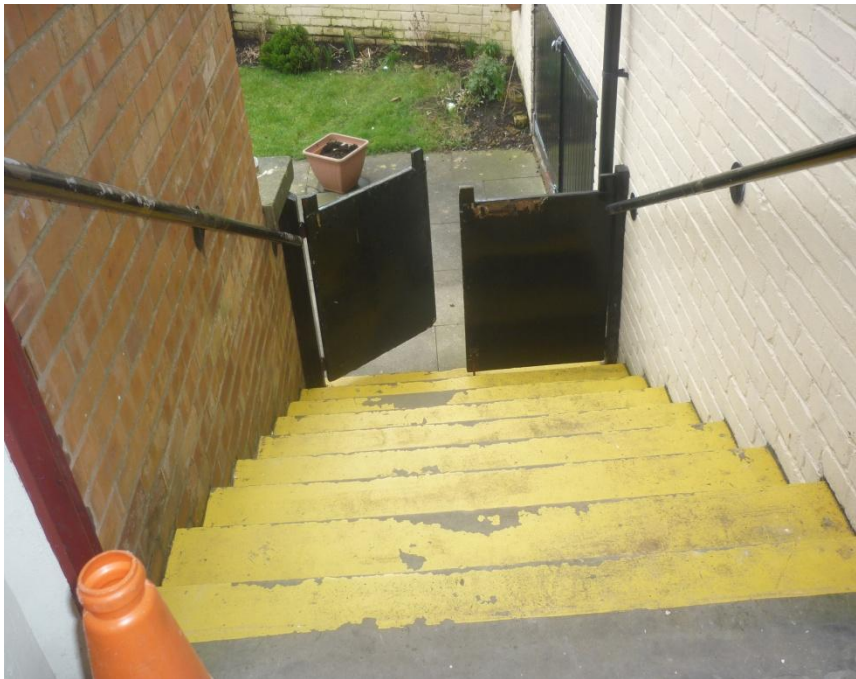


The disabled toilet was well equipped and Roy was able to access the facility without any problem.

Fire exit



Entrance to the fire exit



Steep steps

The fire exit was very problematic. The only means of exiting were down a steep flight of steps. In the event of a fire anyone with mobility issues would be in real difficulty. Even if someone were to get down the steep steps there were other steps to get down to reach the road at the back of the building.



Further step



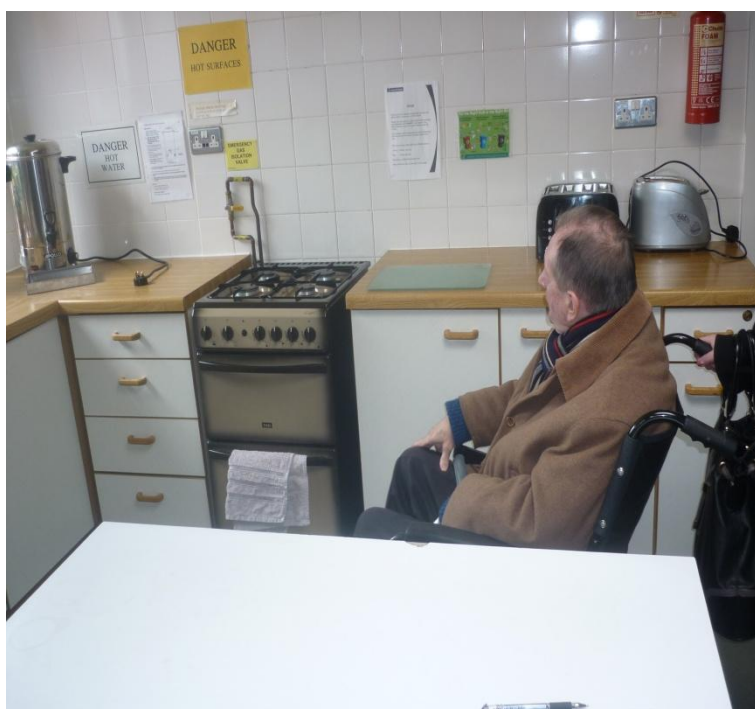
Step to access cobbled road at the rear of the building

We considered other alternatives to the existing fire exit as we thought that it would be impossible to replace the steps with a ramp because of the steep and narrow steps. We therefore went back to the main Hall. The Hall looks out to a grassed area used by the children. However this is not currently accessible from the Hall as there is no door. There is also a (Approximately) four foot drop from the Hall to the grassed are.



Grassed area

Kitchen



The kitchen was a good size and fully accessible. Appliances could also be reached by wheelchair users.

Recommendations

The Guild Hall is a valuable community asset. In the main it is accessible and inclusive. The major problem is the fire exit which is completely unsuitable for anyone with mobility issues or those people in a wheelchair. It poses a threat to life in the event of a fire.

Specific recommendations

1. The fire exit needs to be completely redesigned. This does not comply with the requirements of the Equality Act. We felt that the best (and most viable) alternative would be to re-site the fire exit to the main hall. This would still present some difficulties as there is no current means of exit. If a door and ramp could be installed (To the grassed area) this would mitigate the risk and provide wheelchair users with an exit if the front entrance were to be inaccessible due to fire.
2. The corridor floor surfaces could be painted in bright colours to assist those with a visual impairment.
3. Parking at the front of the building is extremely limited and there is only one disabled space. If this space is occupied it means access to the dropped kerb is very difficult. We would recommend that the disabled parking space be re-located to the right or the left of the current bay.
4. Consideration be given to fitting automatic sensor doors,