

# Accessibility Guideline for Office Buildings and Public Services

DRAFT

# Forward

It is with great pleasure that the Ministry of Construction and Infrastructure is introducing the Accessibility measures through this guideline. The guideline is being initiated in response to the cabinet paper submitted by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, advocating the development and enforcement of policies to provide employment opportunities for People with Disabilities. On December 17th, 2023, the cabinet decided to amend regulations to enhance the accessibility of buildings, for the purpose of increasing accessibility in Office Buildings and Buildings where public services are provided. Although the guideline was initiated for a specific purpose, this guideline can be used to increase accessibility in all types of buildings.

Whilst existing regulations offer rights for People with Disabilities to access and use public buildings and spaces offering public services, there has been a notable absence of specific standards within planning and construction regulations. Hence, the Ministry of Construction and

Infrastructure has undertaken the task of drafting the Accessibility Guideline to establish minimum standards and provide practical solutions for enhancing accessibility buildings.

Accessible buildings and spaces, while currently minimal, play an essential role in our lives. They not only enhance usability for people with disabilities but also make buildings more accessible for all members of society. Improved accessibility not only increases the quality of life but also fosters independence and better interactions. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritize making existing buildings more accessible by aligning them with attainable standards.

Increasing accessibility is still in its initial stages in the Maldives and we have a way long to go before achieving acceptable level of accessibility in the built environment. However, with continued efforts of all stakeholders we hope to set up the regulatory requirements to attain the desired standards.

Sincerely,

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# Introduction

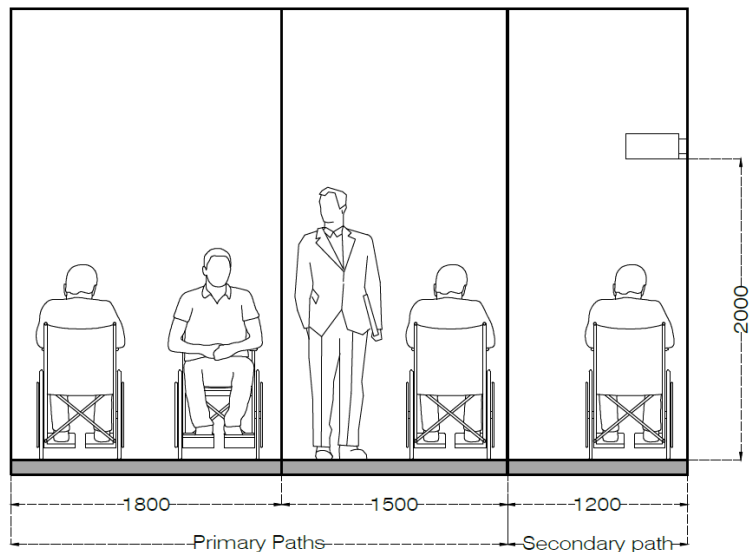
Accessibility refers to the ability to reach, enter, or use a service, place, devices and more. In the context of public buildings, it's crucial for the buildings to be accessible to people with all types of disabilities, such as those individuals who work and provide services at these buildings, as well as those who visit them for services. Public buildings are places such as offices, schools, health facilities, mosques, shops and more. Accessibility is vital for our society to function inclusively and ensure that everyone feels involved and valued.

This guideline is designed to establish both minimum and recommended accessibility standards. It is intended for use by owners, designers, consultants and contractors to assess existing public buildings, determine their accessibility status, and identify necessary changes to enhance accessibility. Additionally, this guideline will assist designers in creating more accessible designs for new buildings.

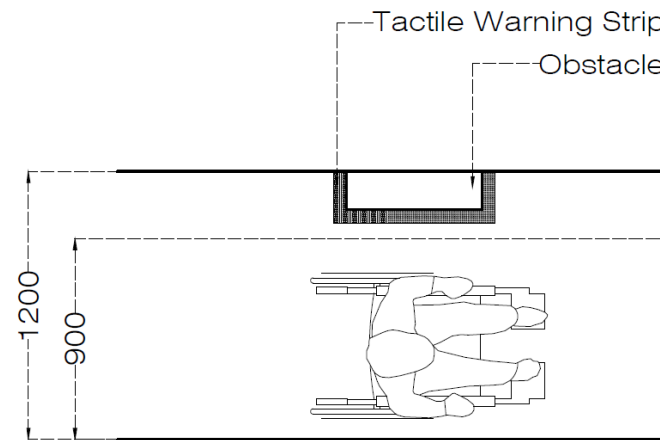
This guideline will comprehensively address 13 different aspects of accessibility. These include pathways, entrances, signage, doors, steps and stairs, ramps, handrails, elevators, reception and waiting rooms, toilets and restrooms, feeding rooms, workspaces and stations, and common spaces within buildings. Each aspect will be examined in detail to ensure thorough consideration of accessibility needs.

# 1. Pathways

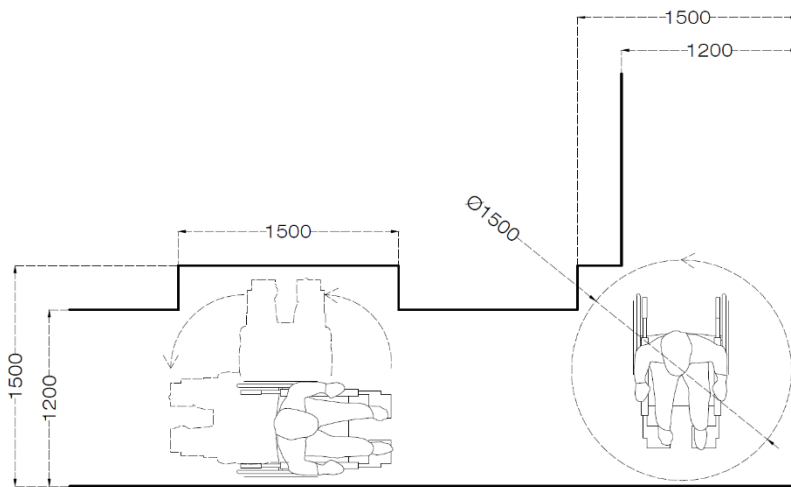
Pathways are the routes used for entering and navigating within a building. To ensure accessibility, it's important to keep all pathways free of obstacles. Primary paths should ideally be 1800 mm wide. However, if space is limited due to a small building footprint, primary paths can be a minimum of 1500mm wide. Secondary paths should be a minimum of 1200 mm wide. Both primary and secondary paths should have a clear height of 2000 mm from the floor with no obstructions.



Any overhanging or protruding obstacles along pathways should be marked with contrasting colors and tactile warnings extending 60mm around the obstruction. Ideally, obstacles should be removed. If removal isn't possible, pathway width can be temporarily reduced to a maximum of 900mm over short distances.



Wheelchair users need a clear area of 1500mm x 1500mm to complete a full turn comfortably. For wheelchair accessibility, it's important to ensure there's ample space for a full turn at corners. Additionally, it's recommended to provide turning spaces at different points along the path, especially if the path is lengthy.



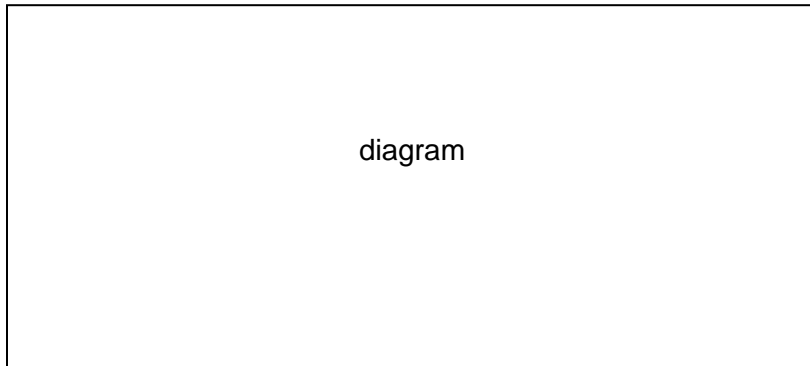
All pathways, spaces, and stairs should be adequately illuminated to ensure clear visibility of surroundings, including obstructions and signs.

If access control devices, such as swing gates and metal scanning gates, are installed within pathways, at least one pathway must have a minimum clear opening of 900mm and should be labelled indicating wheelchair accessibility. However, if existing devices do not meet this requirement and it is not feasible to change the system, then a secondary path should be provided to accommodate individuals using wheelchairs.

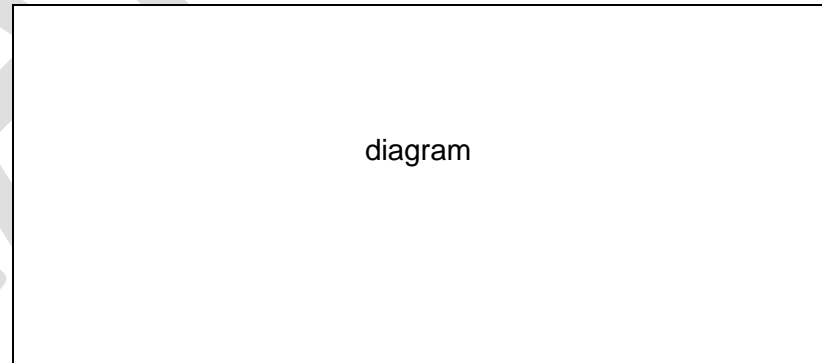
Pathway surfaces must meet specific criteria to ensure accessibility. They should be level, smooth, and non-slippery, with no uncovered manholes. Additionally, any level transition in the surface material should not exceed a vertical rise of 5 mm, and these edges should be rounded or beveled for safety.

All outdoor pathways must be shielded from rain and equipped with effective drainage systems to prevent flooding

Tactile paths play a crucial role in office and public buildings, assisting individuals in navigation and highlighting potential hazards. These paths fulfill various functions, including marking the beginning of staircases, elevators, ramps, and other potential dangers.



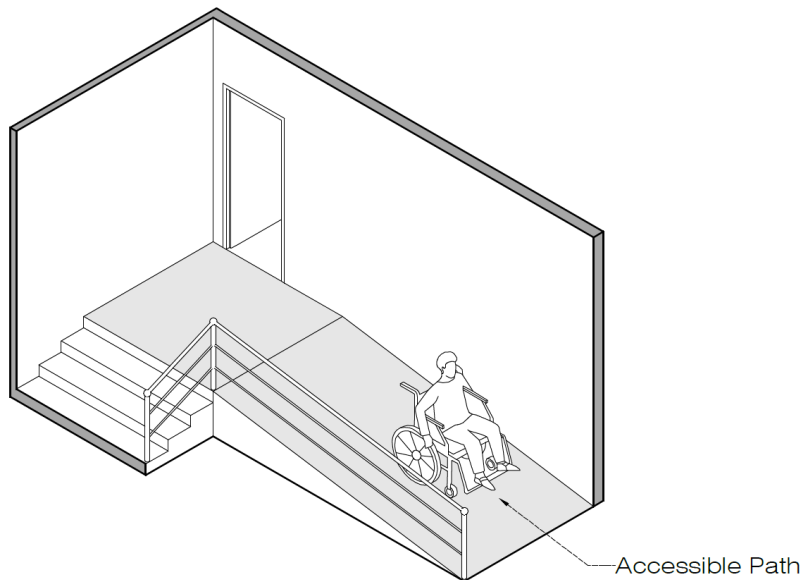
To ensure effectiveness, warning tactile strips should be a minimum of 300mm wide, covering the entire width of the path. Directional and positional tiles should also be 300mm wide, adhering to international standards. These strips should contrast with the surface they are applied to, with bright colors like yellow and red being preferred options. By adhering to these guidelines, tactile paths contribute to the safety and accessibility of building environments for all individuals.



They consist of three primary types of tiles: hazard, directional, and positional. Hazard tiles signal hazards such as staircases or platforms, while directional tiles guide individuals in their intended direction of travel. Positional tiles indicate changes in direction along the path.

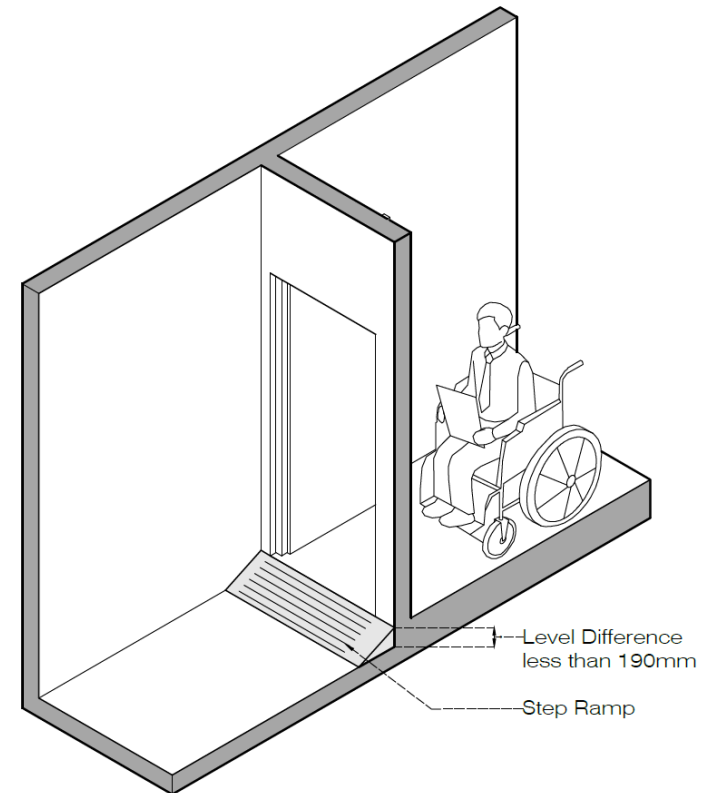
## 2. Entrance

At least one entrance to the building and spaces should be accessible for individuals with physical disabilities, which may require installing a ramp with the correct gradient. Preferably the accessible entrance should also be the main entrance. Refer to Chapter 6.



If there's a floor level gap between the entrance and the accessible path, it should be evened out using a ramp. For

level differences less than 190mm, step ramps can be employed to ensure accessibility at the entrance.



All entrances should connect to accessible pathways, as described in the chapter 1 with appropriate signage. Entrances and doors should be easily operated without excessive effort. Refer to chapter 4 for more details.

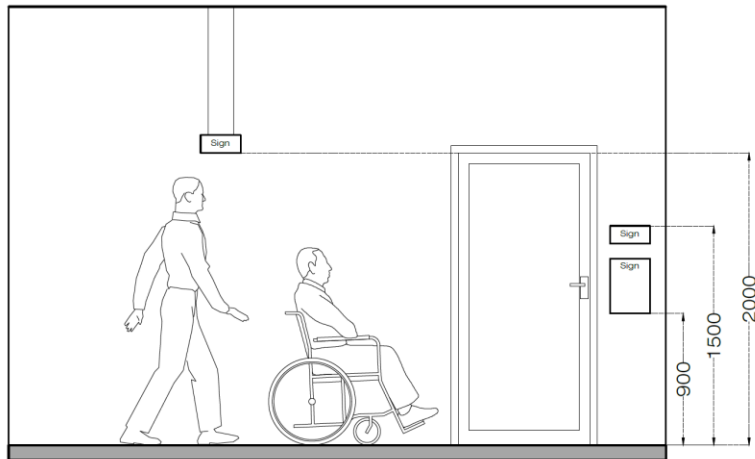


### 3. Signage

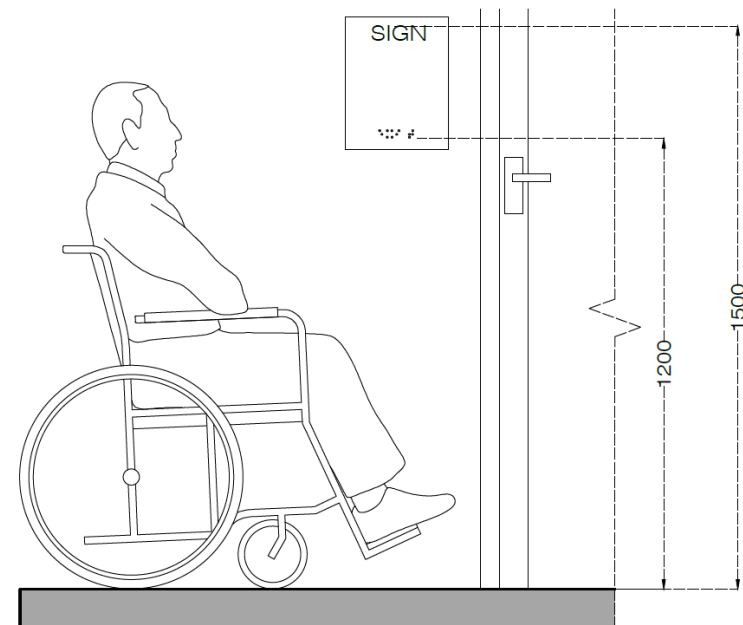
All accessible areas, entrances, features, and facilities must have clear signage with internationally recognized symbols. Directional signs should help people find specific locations from main areas.



Wall-mounted or freestanding signs should be positioned between 900mm to 1500mm from the floor. Hanging signs should be at 2000mm from floor level.



Ideally, signs should feature text at the top, symbols in the middle, and Braille at the bottom. Braille text should be placed between 1200 mm to 1500mm from the floor.



The text should be clear and legible, utilizing a simple sans-serif typeface with uniform stroke width and appropriate spacing between letters. Letters should be extruded from the sign by a minimum of 1 mm. The smallest text size

should be a minimum of 1.5 cm. Additionally, as the viewing distance increases, the height of the text should increase accordingly, as demonstrated in the table below. With the increase in height, the width of the text should also increase proportionally.

Text height cm	Viewing distance m
1.5 cm	Minimum
3 cm	3 m
10 cm	10 m
20 cm	20 m

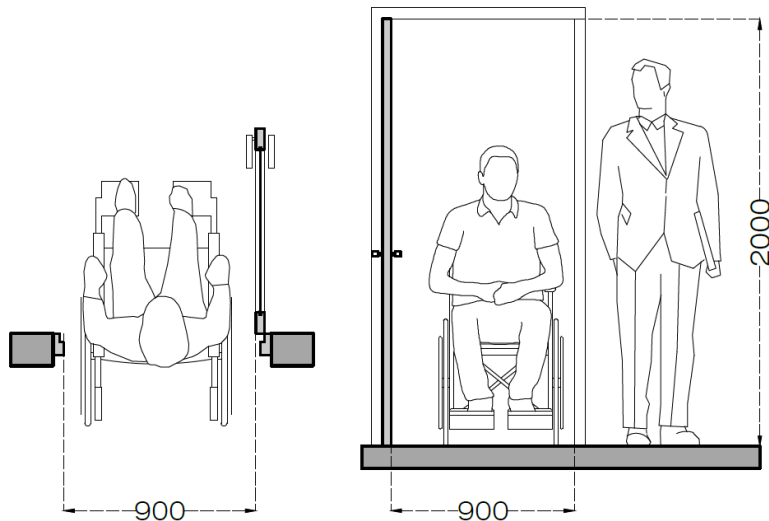
Signs should be made of non-reflective materials, and text/symbols should be clearly visible against the background.

Signage is crucial for various areas including toilets (both general and accessible), elevators, emergency doors, exits, stair landings for floor identification, emergency evacuation instructions, cautionary signs, and all rooms should be clearly labeled to indicate their purpose.

In case of an emergency requiring an exit, clear, illuminated signs should be strategically positioned to indicate escape routes. Potential danger zones should be distinctly marked with bright colors and slightly raised edges measuring 100mm. Additionally, emergency lights are vital in all pathways, common and waiting areas to illuminate the way in the event of a power outage.

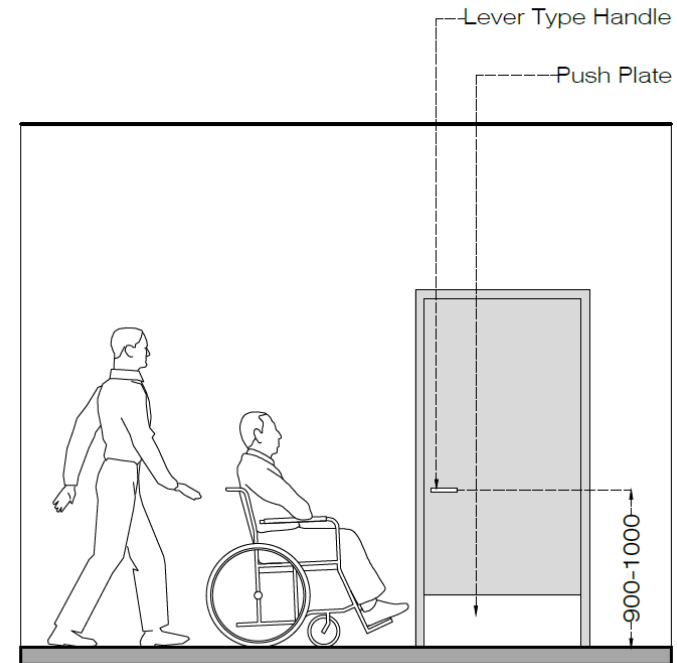
## 4. Doors

Accessible doors should be designed to open with a single motion, easily by one person. For individuals with disabilities, automatic or power-operated doors are preferred. In such instances, the activator system should either be automatic or positioned within easy reach.



The minimum clear width of doors should be 900mm, with a height of 2000mm. Swing clear hinged doors can be utilized

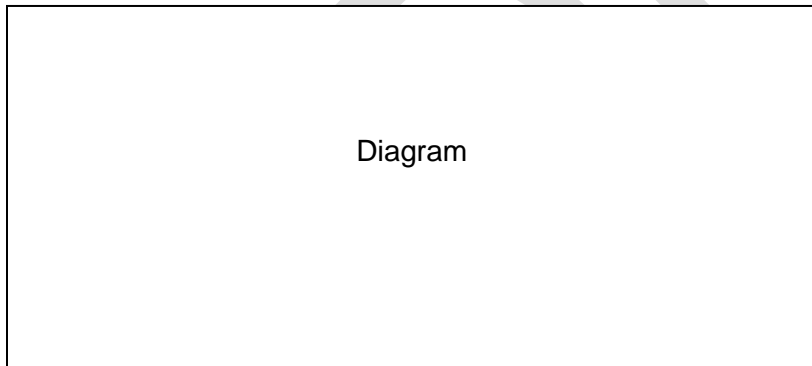
to slightly increase the door opening. A door opening of 850 mm may suffice if the access is direct and the door remains open by itself.



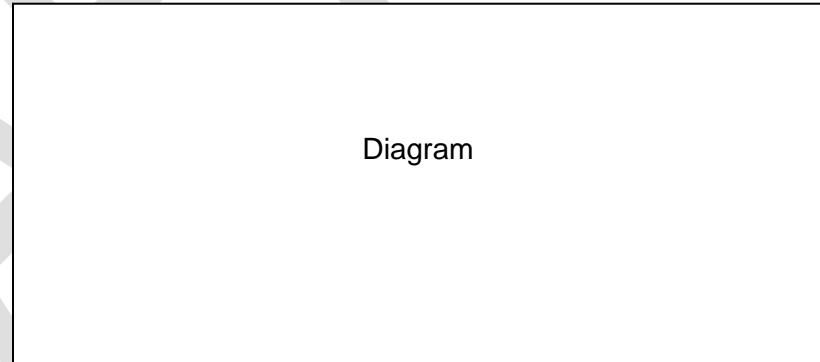
Doors should be easy to open, with handles positioned between 900mm to 1000mm from the floor. Lever-type handles, push plates and pull handles are recommended over circular knobs. Heavy, difficult-to-open doors should be replaced with lighter and easier-to-handle alternatives.

Doors or door frames should be clearly distinguishable from their surroundings. Therefore, door frames and doors should be in a contrasting material or color to the adjoining walls. Level transition in the surface material should not exceed a vertical rise of 5 mm, and these edges should be rounded or beveled for safety.

To ensure easy access to doors, sufficient space in front of them is crucial. For doors placed in front of the direction of the path, a typical swing push door should have a clear space of 1200mm in depth, matching the width of the door. If a latch is installed on this door, an additional 300mm wide clear space should be provided adjacent to the side where the handle is located.

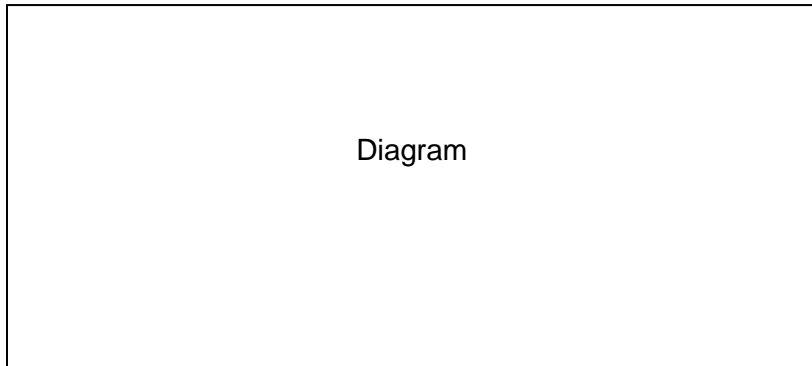


For a typical swing pull door in the direction of travel, there should be a clear space of 1200mm in depth, again matching the width of the door. Additionally, there should be an extra 450mm wide clear space on the side where the door handle is situated. This ensures that individuals in wheelchairs can easily access the handle without any obstruction.



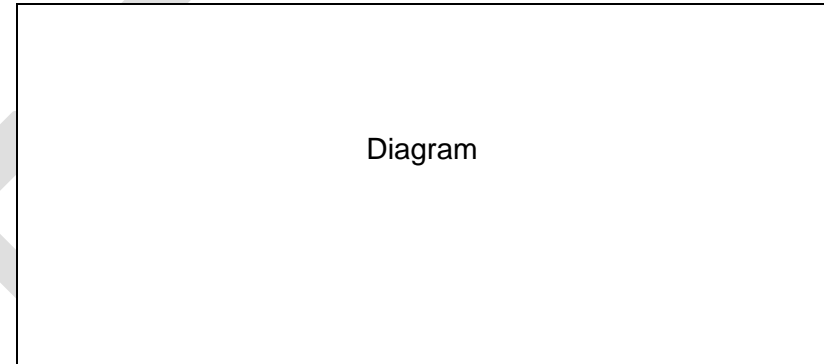
If the door is positioned to the side of the path's direction of travel and operates as a push door with the handle situated at the far end of the direction of travel, there should be a minimum clear space of 1200mm wide and as deep as the width of the door in front of the door, along with an additional 500mm deep of clear space from the door frame

placed at the far end of the direction of travel. If the handle is located at the near end of the direction of travel, the clear space should still be a minimum of 1200mm wide and as deep as the width of the door in front, with an additional 500mm of clear space in front of the door frame placed at the near end of the direction of travel.



If the door is positioned to the side of the path's direction of travel and functions as a pull door with the handle located at the far side of the direction of travel, there should be a clear space in front of the door that is 1200mm wide and as deep as the width of the door. Additionally, there should be extra space extending from the far end of the directional

travel, measuring 1065mm deep, which can be reduced to 900mm if the clear space is widened to 1500mm.



If the handle is situated at the near end of the door, toward the direction of travel, there should still be a clear space in front of the door that is 1200mm wide and as deep as the width of the door. Furthermore, an additional space should extend toward the path of travel from the door frame placed at the near end of the path of travel, measuring at least 600mm.

When two doors are aligned in front of each other in a corridor or walkway, there should be a clear space of 1200mm wide in front of them without any obstruction. Additionally, no door should open into this space, ensuring unimpeded access and passage through the corridor or walkway.



diagram

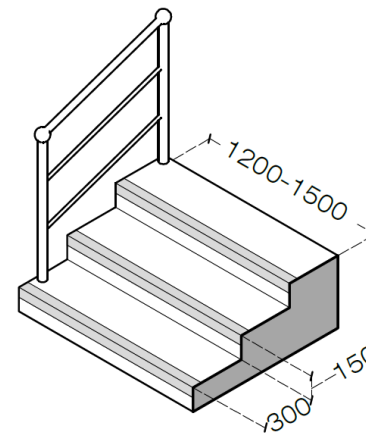
## 5.Steps and stairs

When designing for accessibility, it's important to minimize level differences in spaces to ensure comfort for disabled individuals. Where this is not possible, level differences should be addressed using ramps and elevators for accessibility.

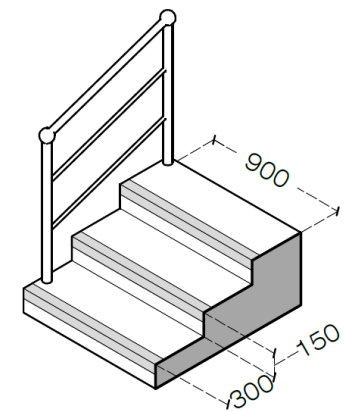
When designing stairs, circular stairs and stepped landings should be avoided as they are not considered accessible staircases.

The recommended size for a primary stair width is a clear 1500mm. If electing to go for a size narrower than 1500mm, to be considered accessible, the stairs should have a minimum clear width of 1200mm. A secondary staircase can be deemed accessible if it has a minimum width of 900mm. In both cases, the riser height should be 150mm, and the depth of each step (going) should be 300mm. Additionally, all steps of the staircase should be uniform in height from the beginning to the end.

Intermediate landings should be provided if the stair covers a vertical difference of 2500mm. The length of the landing should be at least 1200mm, extending along the full width of the stair.

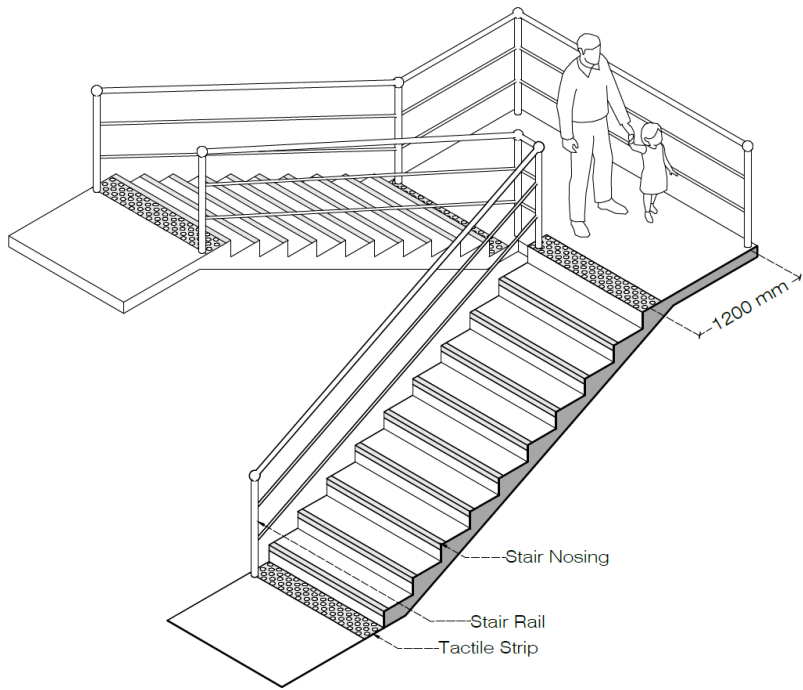


Primary Stair



Secondary Stair

For safety, clear and visible nosing should be provided on all steps, along with tactile markings. This can be achieved by installing tactile marking strips at the top and bottom of stairs and ramps, using colors that contrast with the surrounding floors.

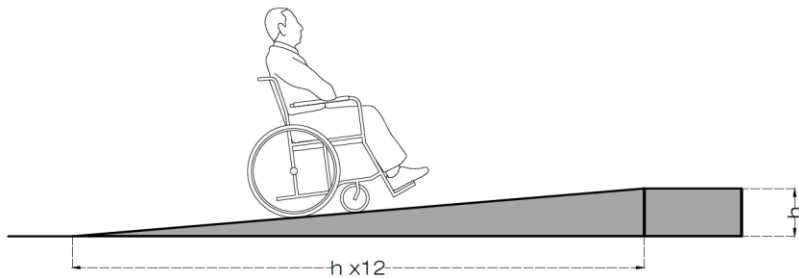


Handrails need to be installed on both sides of steps and stairs. If the width of the existing stairs is less than 1200 mm, then railings can be installed on only one side of the stairs. However, the other side should be adequately secured to prevent falls. For more details regarding handrails, please refer to Chapter 7.



## 6.Ramps

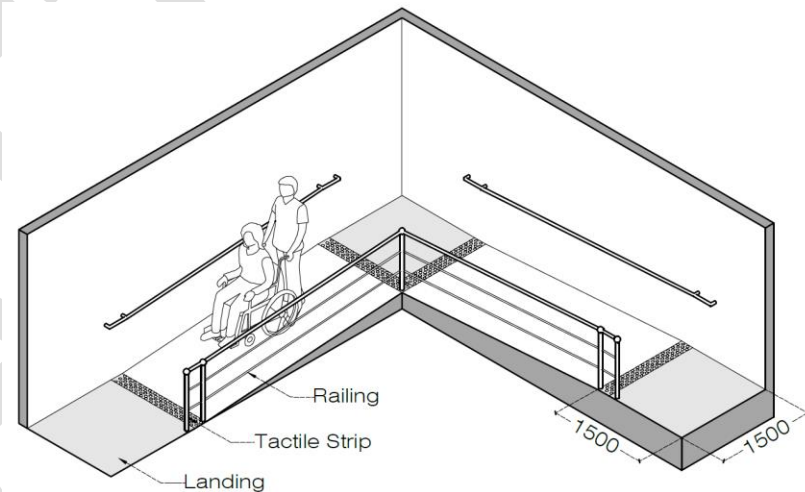
Minimum clear width of ramp should be 900mm. The minimum recommended slope of the ramp is 1:12 the maximum length of ramp differs with its slope. Refer to the table below



Minimum Ramp slope : 1: 12

Maximum Slope	Maximum Length (m)
1:20	-
1:16	8 m
1:14	5 m
1:12	2 m

Ramps should include landings for resting, maneuvering, and preventing excessive speed. Landings should be provided every 10 meters, at every change of direction, and at the top and bottom of each ramp.



These landings should have a minimum of 1500mm x 1500mm clear floor space so that people in wheelchairs can fully turn. It's important not to place any door openings toward the landing, and to ensure that the door swing is clear from the landing area.

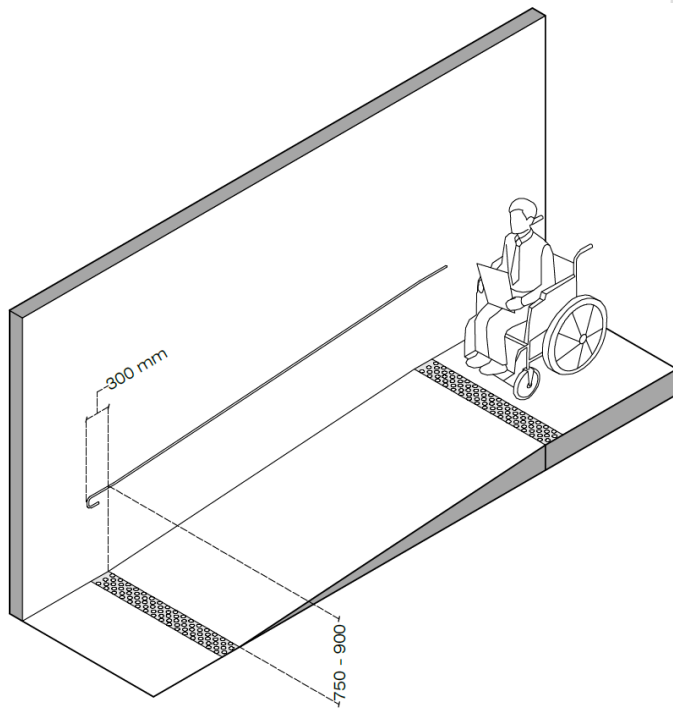
Ramps should be constructed with hard, non-slip surfaces, avoiding the use of carpets. Colored textural indicators should be placed to alert visually impaired individuals to the presence of the ramp. Handrails must be provided on all ramps, as detailed in Chapter 7.

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## 7. Hand rails

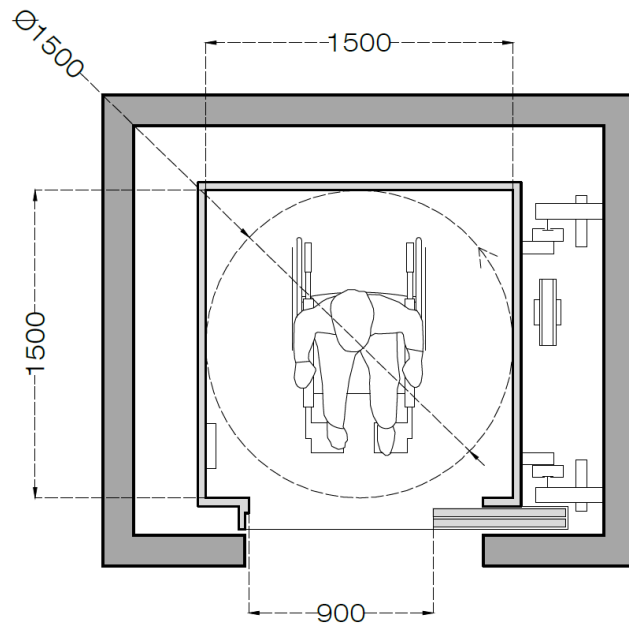
Handrails are essential for safety when using ramps and stairs. When designing new handrails, handrails should be positioned between 750mm to 900mm above the floor or stair nosing for adults and extend at least 300mm beyond the first and last step. Handrails should have a recommended diameter of 40mm for easy gripping.

For wall-mounted rails, a clearance of 45mm from the adjacent wall is required. Tactile strips should be placed at the beginning and end of handrails to assist people with visual impairments. To improve visibility, handrails should be in a color that contrasts with their surroundings.



## 8. Elevators

Elevators must be accessible to people with various disabilities, marked with symbols, and accompanied by directional signage visible from the building entrance.

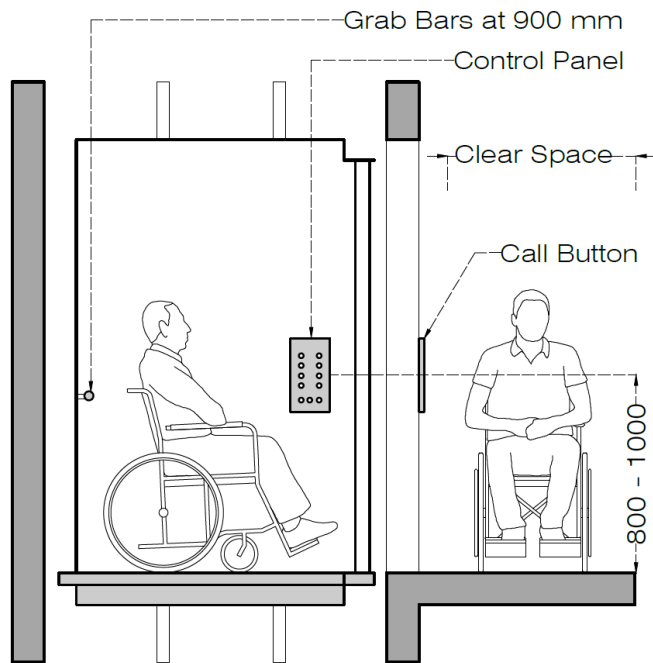


The recommended minimum size for elevators should be 1500mm wide by 1500mm deep clear, with a preference for 10-passenger lifts to accommodate wheelchair maneuverability. However, in existing buildings, elevators

having minimum of 950mm by 1250mm dimensions clear can be considered accessible.

It is recommended that elevator doors have a minimum clear opening of 900mm. However, in existing buildings, an 800mm clear opening can be considered accessible. These elevator doors should close at a safe speed to avoid crashing into people passing through them. Therefore, it is recommended for elevator doors to have sufficient numbers of sensors to prevent doors from closing during egress and ingress. Elevator door should be a contrasting color from the adjacent wall and be level with the floor surface at each level. The gap between the elevator door and the building floor should not exceed 12mm.

Outside the elevator, the call button should have a clear floor space for wheel chairs with no obstructions, placed between 800mm to 1000mm high. Inside the elevator, the control panel should have a clear floor space for wheel chairs with no obstructions, and the buttons should have raised letters in braille and sharp contrast from the background for people with visual impairments.



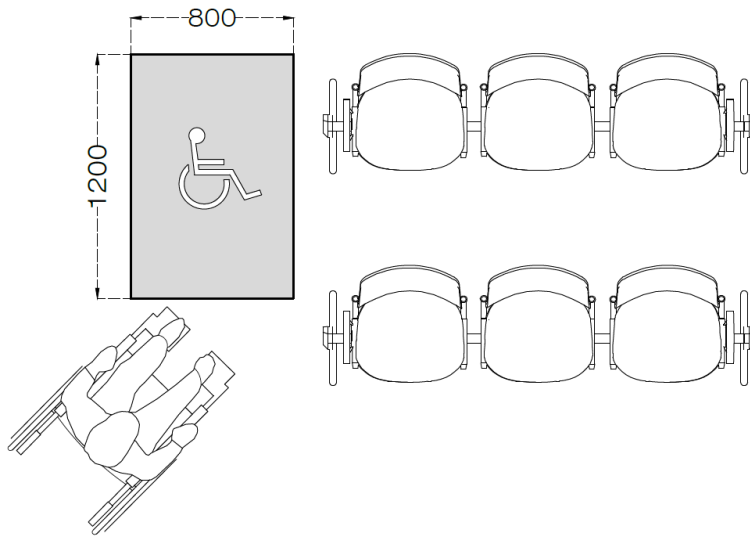
when the door is opened or closed for entry and exit. The announcement system should be clear and audible. If the existing elevator does not have a voice announcement system but has the capacity for one to be installed, it should be installed or activated to ensure accessibility.

It is recommended to install grab bars at a height of 900mm from the floor, ideally on both sides and at the rear of the elevator. If it's not feasible to place grab bars on all three sides, then they should be installed on at least the rear side of the elevator.

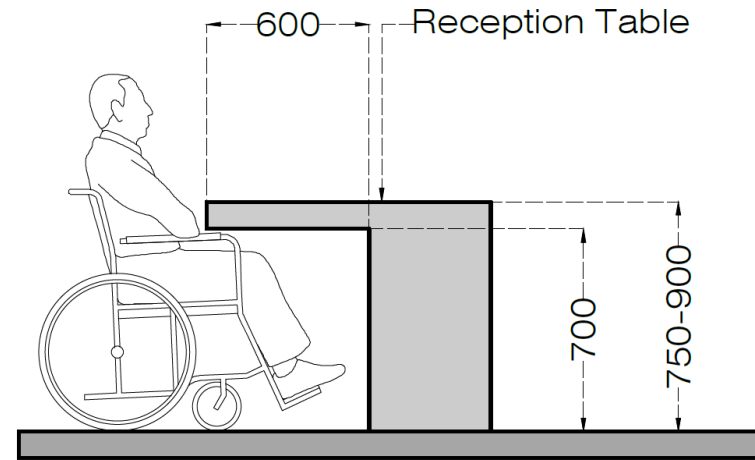
The elevator should be equipped with both a voice announcement system and a visual display to indicate floor levels. The voice announcement system should announce

## 9. Reception and waiting areas

Reception and waiting areas must provide ample space for wheelchair users, with adjoining areas of at least 1200mm next to benches or seats reserved for them.



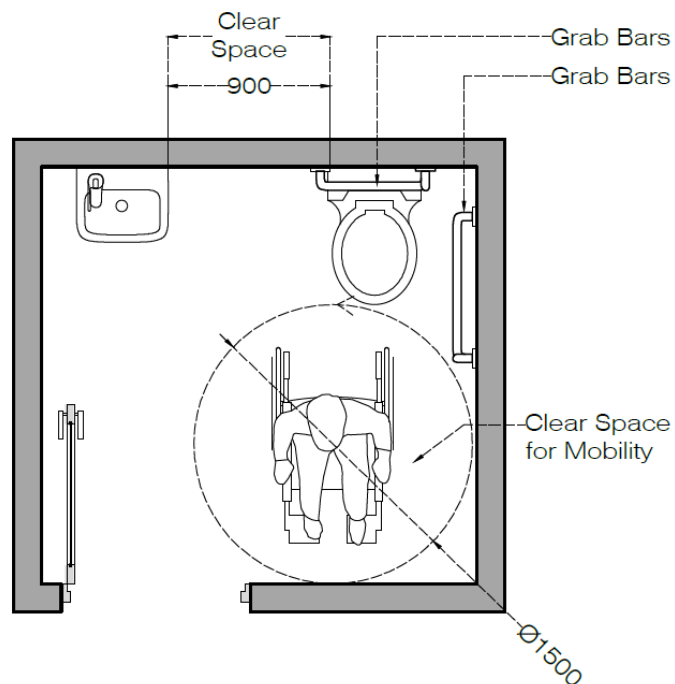
depth of 400 - 600mm. This ensures easy access to counter services for individuals using wheelchairs.



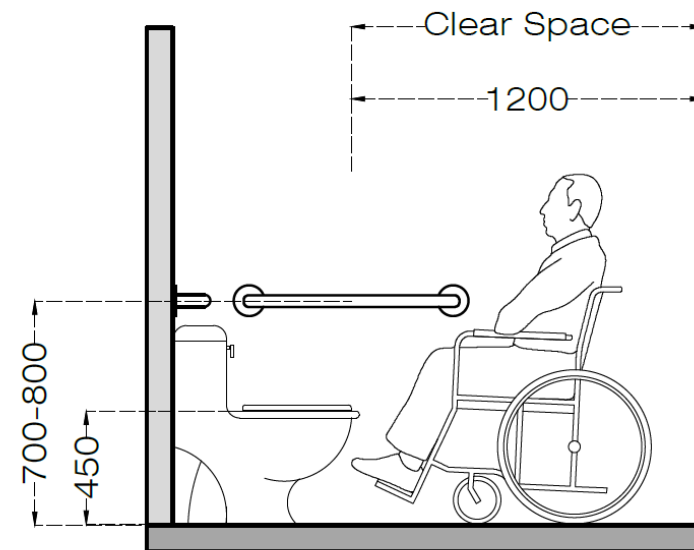
At least one receptionist table should be specifically designed for wheelchair users to approach, with tabletops positioned at either 750mm or 900mm from the floor and offering knee space at a height of at least 700mm and a

## 10. Toilets and rest room.

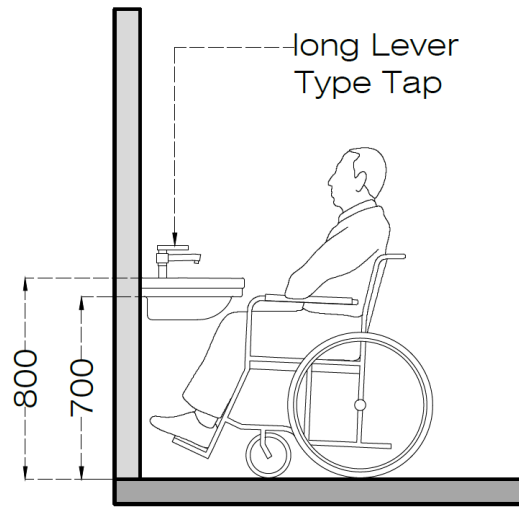
At least 01 unsex restroom should be available in a public space and accessible to wheelchair users. The interior clear space of the toilet should be a minimum of 1500mm x 1500mm. There should be at least 900mm of clear space next to one side of the toilet and 1200mm of clear space in front.



Toilet seats should be positioned at a height of 450mm - 500mm, with grab bars located at a height of 700mm - 800mm next to the toilet. These grab bars should be rounded with a diameter of 40mm - 45mm, and wall-mounted grab bars should have a knuckle space of 45mm. They must be sturdy enough to support the weight of a person. Additionally Muslim showers should be placed next to right side of the toilet seat at toilets. Doors used to access should follow the guidelines stated in chapter 04.



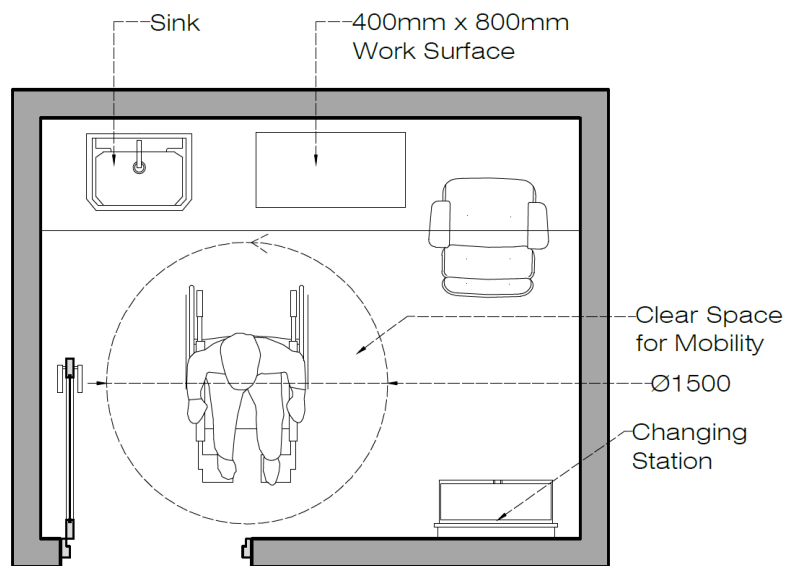
Washbasins should be placed at a height of 800mm from the floor and should provide sufficient knee space for wheelchair users, typically 700mm high with 600mm of knee space. All taps in the restrooms should be long lever-type or sensor taps for easy operation.





## 11. Feeding room

Where applicable feeding rooms should be provided near waiting areas. These rooms should have a clear 1500mm x 1500mm floor space for people in wheelchairs to maneuver. These rooms should be private and door should be lockable. Prefer locks that show that the room is occupied when locked.



Choose a task chair with easy-to-clean fabric, adjustable features (seat, back, armrests, lumbar support, tension,

height), and casters for mobility. Consider adding a more comfortable chair for breastfeeding mothers.

Provide a 450mm x 800mm laminate or solid work surface at desk height, easily cleanable, for pump and bottles. Clear knee space beneath. Electrical outlets above for pump and accessories.

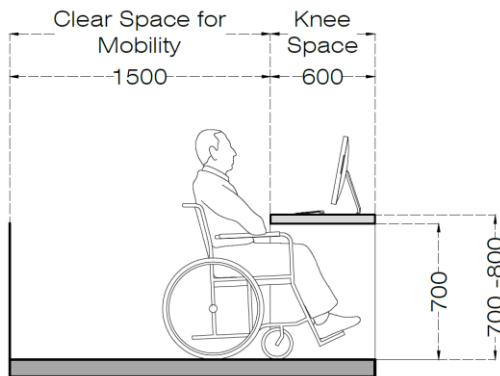
If there's ample space in the feeding room, it's advisable to incorporate a fixed changing station. In cases of limited space, collapsible changing stations can be considered. Go for changing stations constructed from easy-to-clean materials like polyethylene or stainless steel, which are resistant to bacteria.

Provide a deep sink with a goose neck or kitchen-type faucet for washing bottles and pump parts. Ideally, place the sink next to the work area and include a nearby towel dispenser.

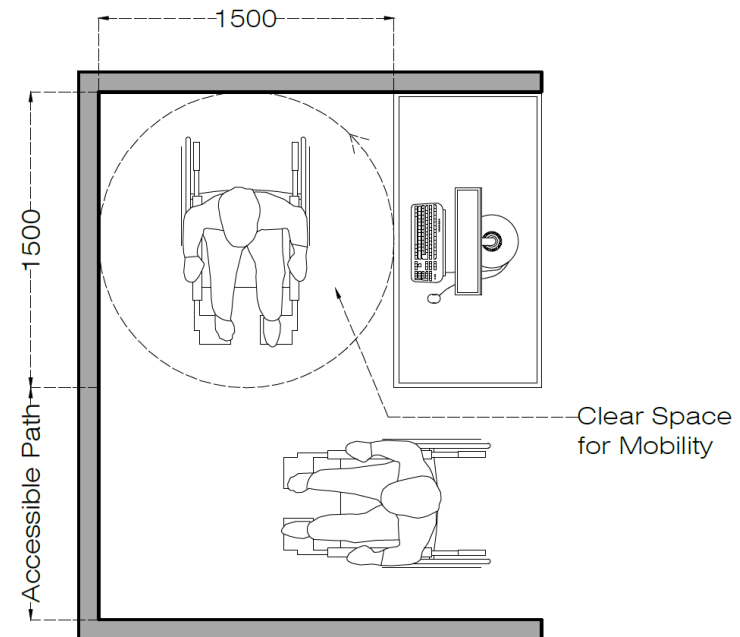
## 12. Work space, station

To fully accommodate employees with disabilities, their workspace must be accessible. Firstly, there should be an accessible pathway from the main entrance of the building to the workstation. Refer to chapter 01 for accessible paths.

It is recommended that the workstation height should be adjustable, ideally with adjustable tables. This adjustment positively impacts posture, enhances reach, and boosts comfort. Alternatively, if adjustable tables are unavailable, the table surface height should be between 700mm and 850mm from the floor, with a knee space of 700 mm high and 600mm deep.



Sufficient space for mobility is crucial. When individuals in wheelchairs use the workspace, there should be ample room within the workstation to park the wheelchair and fully rotate within the space. Therefore, a minimum of 1500mm x 1500mm of clear floor area is needed for them.



### 13. Common spaces in workplace

To ensure a good work environment for people with disabilities, it's essential to provide access to common spaces such as work areas, meeting rooms, pantries and managerial staff cabins. Connecting these spaces with accessible pathways is crucial for their full accommodation. These pathways should have adequate clearance for comfortable use, as detailed in Chapter 01.

Furniture in these spaces, including tables, should be comfortable and offer clear knee space for easy access and use. Additionally, sufficient clear space must be provided for wheelchair users to access these areas, as outlined in Chapter 12. Furthermore, clear space of 1500mm by 1500mm should be provided near area designated for wheelchair users to maneuver.

