

Winton House Access Report 17.06.2014

Stoke-on-Trent Area Network for Disability STAND was asked to look at access issues at Winton House following a complaint by one of our members.

Signage

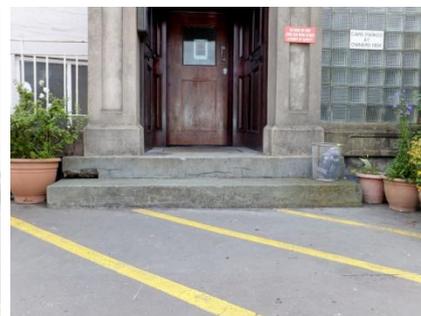
We arrived at 11.00 am on Tuesday 17th June 2014 in one vehicle and our immediate impression was lack of signage indicating where to park or where to go. As we were travelling very slowly, looking for a car park, we saw a man in a high vis jacket and asked him. It turned out that he was the car park attendant for the building and he could not have been more helpful. Without this person anyone visiting this building would have been at a great disadvantage and for a disabled person travelling independently, it would have been impossible.

Parking

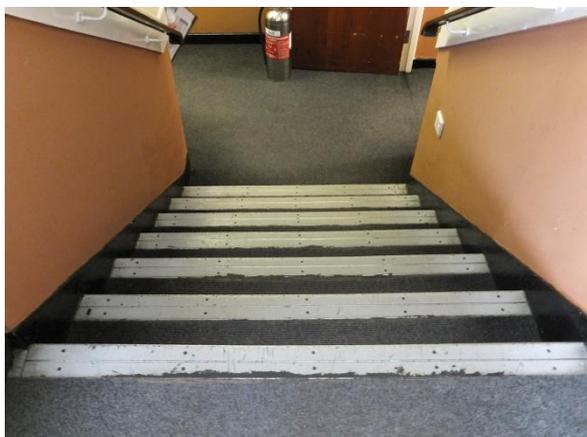
STAND originally objected to the planning application 55670 for Capita to use this building because they were only designating one disabled bay for dedicated, disabled visitors' parking. When we visited there was NO dedicated, disabled parking. There were two parking spaces on the top car park, for staff.



However none of the spaces on this car park would be suitable for disabled people as there are steps to both of the access doors.



There are also stairs once inside the building making it totally inaccessible to anyone with mobility problems, breathing difficulties or a heart condition.



There is also a very steep slope down from this car park to street level which also renders it useless to most disabled people.

The car park on the lower level was also inadequate for disabled car parking due to the gradient and the distance from the rooms used for assessment.

We were at a loss to find out where the dedicated, disabled bay, defined in the planning application,

was located as we could not see any safe, sensible place for it to be located.

The on road parking, ie. not dedicated, was in a one hour limit zone and begs the question as to whether this would be enough time for the travel and from and for the assessment itself or whether these spaces would be available. People with blue badges could park on the single yellow line, but would risk causing an

obstruction. Some people going for an assessment would not yet have a blue badge, but are disabled so where would they park if the small one hour zone was full?

Access to Winton House from the road.



The disabled access door had been pointed out to us by the very efficient car park attendant. There was a small sign which indicated that was where we were supposed to enter.

The journey to the assessment rooms was far in excess of the 20 metres and probably more than the 50 metres. There was no help button to get someone to open doors or bring a wheelchair. There were 5 sets of heavy, doors to go through which would cause considerable problems for someone with upper body problems or limited mobility, meaning

that they have to use a stick, crutches or frame as they would find it difficult to balance while trying to open and hold these heavy doors. Some of these doors open inwards, making it even more difficult. A person trying to use a wheelchair independently would catch their hands on the door frame as the self propel through the single doors and how do they self propel and hold two, heavy, doors open?

Another safety issue is the state of the pavement outside the door at this point. If a wheelchair user caught their wheel in this hole it could tip them out and cause some more problems. It also causes a significant danger to visually impaired people.



Access problems for visually impaired visitors inside Winton House.

Radiators in the corridor, which stick out from the walls are painted the same colour as the walls, this causes a hazard for visually impaired as they follow the walls for direction. There is little visual difference between the colour of the walls and the doors making it difficult to distinguish.

Access problems for hearing impaired visitors

No signage saying a loop system was available. Hearing aid users would also need to know if it is a portable or room loop that is provided as if it is a portable, they need it to be placed between them and the assessor as they this type has limited range and many times it is not in the right place for best use portable loop would also need to be placed on the reception desk.

If it is a room loop the above does not apply, but this may need to have more volume control and set to the individual hearing loss. One volume does NOT suit all.

Do staff have training on how to use the loop system?

Do they know what benefit a loop system can have for a hearing aid user when it is used properly?

Positives

The receptionist and the car park attendant were both very helpful and approachable which is always important.

The reception room was clean bright and had a range of seats available.

Negatives

This building is NOT easy for a disabled person to access.

- a) Signage is far from clear.
- b) Lack of designated, dedicated parking means that clients can never be sure of finding a parking space and if they do they face the uncertainty of how long their appointment will take or if they will be fined for causing an obstruction. Stress causes a considerable health risks for some people.
- c) There is a safety issue cause by the hole in the pavement outside the disabled entrance.
- d) There should be a help button by the disabled entrance.
- e) The distance from the disabled entrance to the assessment rooms will cause problems for many people.
- f) The journey along the corridor is problematic in terms of the heavy doors, visual similarities in colour.
- g) Questions about the loop system.

Conclusion

This building is not fit for the purpose of carrying out PIP assessments.