

Incorporating accessibility and Universal Design at the Central Bank of Ireland to ensure the built environment and services are accessible to all

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Ireland**

Universal Design in the built environment



Organisation background



The Central Bank of Ireland (the Bank) primary objectives are set out in Irish legislation and include:

- Contributing to the formulation of Eurosystem monetary policy.
- Mandating domestic and European legislation to contribute to financial stability in Ireland and at euro area and EU levels.
- As the regulator of financial service providers and markets in Ireland, the Bank has to ensure that the best interests of consumers are protected.
- Ensuring that regulated firms are financially sound and safely managed.



Banc Ceannais na hÉireann
Central Bank of Ireland

Eurosystem



<https://www.centralbank.ie/about/role-of-the-central-bank>



Challenges

We recognized that our staff and visitors may have had difficulty accessing our buildings, services and the information that we provide.

- Existing facilities were built to old standards.
- The needs of employees and visitors needed to be considered more routinely.
- Staff awareness of Universal Design could be improved.





Opportunities

We recognised that there were a number of opportunities to improve accessibility:

- An **Access Officer** was appointed to help improve accessibility and awareness.
- “**Fusion**” **Programme** to design and move to new headquarters.
- **Senior management** were committed to making changes in where and how we worked.
- **Bank staff** welcomed any improvements in Universal Design and accessibility.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility** – creation of a more inclusive building and organisation.



Innovation (1 of 3)



We recognised that Universal Design needed to be addressed under three headings:

- Strategic policies and action plan – Services accessibility.
- Design, build and fit-out – Inclusive building and services.
- Operations - Events, training, facilities management.

The big question – How to address?

We did this by....



Innovation (2 of 3)



- Engaging an independent Universal Design Consultant.
- Incorporating Universal Design from early stages of the project (e.g. Universal Design Reports were prepared).
- Training all project managers in Universal Design principles to help inform more decisions.
- Involving staff members with disabilities throughout the design and construction process (e.g. focus groups).
- Ongoing reviews of different design elements throughout the construction phase to ensure good practice and Universal Design requirements were met.



Innovation (3 of 3)



- Imbedding Universal Design into the procurement process e.g. furniture, workstations and IT equipment.
- Creating awareness raising videos, Disability Awareness Training, Departmental workshops, staff meetings.
- Including Universal Design elements in Induction Manuals (e.g. Public Transport, key universal design facilities).





Impact (1 of 2)

- Significant Universal Design improvements to office design through:
 - Accessible parking and set-down areas.
 - Reception desks with split-level counters and hearing enhancement.
 - Waiting and collaboration areas to accommodate diverse users.
 - Floor and door design providing visual and tactile contrast, vision panels, easy operation and generous width.
 - Large “smart” lifts with good signage, clear controls, light floor finishes, contrasting handrails and half-height mirrors.



Impact (2 of 2)



- **Improved awareness** amongst staff and the public.
- Prompted the establishment of **BankAbility network**.
- On-going commitment to improve accessibility and Universal Design **across all services**.
- **National recognition**.
- Positive feedback from staff on usability of the new offices – **“The building at North Wall Quay has removed all of the barriers to accessibility and usability, I can now navigate my workplace fully independently.”**



The Next Steps



- Access Policy and Universal Design/Accessibility Action Plan.
- Consultation with end users to make additional accessibility improvements as we “live” in the new offices.
- Additional Staff Training.
- BankAbility network.
- Early engagement with Project Teams procuring equipment or developing services and websites.
- Monitoring, reporting and continuously improving accessibility and Universal Design.



