

Helping more tenants with accessibility needs find the right home

We often hear from wheelchair users looking for their next home that they need more information to help decide if a rental property is suitably accessible.

There is currently a list of accessibility fields available to use, known as 'sub features', that you can tick when uploading listings, though currently only 1% of listings make use of these.

Our ambition, with your help, is to create more consistency in listings, and introduce relevant filters in the future, to help more tenants find accessible homes. This guide is the first step.



Using Key Terminology & Phrases

We've worked with a panel of experts to create a list of factual key phrases, and guidance on when to use them in property descriptions, to help provide more information for tenants in a wheelchair.

It is also stated where existing sub features can be used to provide even more information to use in the future.

Unsure about sub-features?

If you're not sure what sub-features are, or it doesn't look like you currently have them, you can contact your software provider

1 "Step free access to property"

- When to use: ■ When there is completely step free access to the main entrance of a property, enabling a wheelchair user to enter without further assistance
- If there is a single step up to the front door, this should be noted in the property description, using the phrase 'Single step access to property', as for some wheelchair users, a single step might be achievable. However, it should not be described as 'step free access to property'

2 "Wheelchair accessible parking"

- When to use: ■ When there is designated wheelchair accessible parking near the property, which is defined by the Blue Badge system

3 "Level access throughout property"

- When to use: ■ When the kitchen, bedrooms and bathroom are all on level access with the main entrance to the property
- Accessibility sub feature to also use: "Level Access"

4 "Wet room within property"

- When to use: ■ When there is a designated wet room – a waterproof bathroom with a shower area level with the floor, often a must-have feature for a wheelchair user
- Accessibility sub feature to also use: "Wet Room"

5 "Step free access into garden"

- When to use: ■ When there is completely step free access to the garden of the property, if it has one

Dos & Don'ts

Do

- Use these key words in the property description, rather than an alternative free text field
- Use the full phrase in listings, to help gather accurate information
- Ask the landlord questions if it is not known whether a property has these features

Don't

- Paraphrase or change the wording of these phrases – e.g. do not use 'the property has step free access' instead of 'step free access into property'
- Use phrases like 'might be' or 'potential for there to be' before the key words
- Include features you are unsure of



What else can I consider including?

There are wider observations and information that can be provided about a property to help a tenant in a wheelchair. It is also stated where existing sub features might also be relevant to provide more information.

1

Floorplans can be an extremely helpful tool for a tenant to understand the property layout and make a judgement on whether it is right for them

Accessibility Sub-Feature that could be relevant: "Lift Access"

2

Video Tours of the building give a wheelchair user a sense of what it would be like to live in a property and either discount or pursue the right property

3

Clear pictures showing entry to the property and any step-free access

4

Clear pictures inside the property, which also show its practical layout

Accessibility Sub-Feature that could be relevant: "Wide Doorways"

5

The access route from the parking area to the entrance. This includes any hazards which could prevent a wheelchair user navigating safely between them, and the gradient and surface textures of the route

Accessibility Sub-Feature that could be relevant: "Ramped Access"

There is also a field where you can include the floor that the property is on in listings;

1. 'Basement'

2. 'Ground Floor'

3. '1st Floor'

4. '2nd Floor'

5. Higher than 2nd floor
(no lift)

6. Higher than 2nd floor
(with lift)

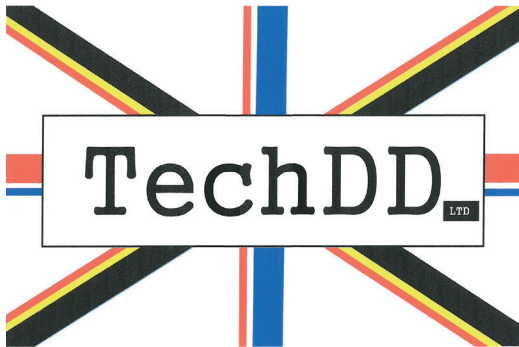
7. Top floor

While knowing what floor the property is on does not automatically mean it is accessible to a wheelchair user, it can still be a valuable piece of information for the tenant to know. We'd encourage you to use this field alongside the key phrases in property descriptions.

We'd like to thank the following experts for their help compiling this guide:



Guy Harris is the founder of AccessiblePRS, which is dedicated to helping increase the supply of accessible wheelchair housing in the UK. Guy has spent over 20 years in the property industry, and as both a wheelchair user and a property expert, understands the challenges that those using a wheelchair have to overcome to find the right rental property.



Adrian Tagg is an Associate Professor at the University of Reading (UoR), and has over 20 years of experience as a practitioner. He is currently the lead for Building Surveying at the UoR as well as the founder of Tech DD Ltd. Adrian's research interests include technical due diligence, commercial surveying and accessibility in the built environment.



Ian Streets is the founder of About Access, and member of The National Register of Access Consultants. About Access is an Accessibility Consultancy, providing a wide range of services designed to help companies and other organisations to ensure their premises are accessible.

What else can I do?

Guy Harris, Director of AccessiblePRS has recently developed the AccessiblePRS Letting Scheme, and bespoke training, designed to give agents the expertise and detailed advice on collecting the right information for tenants with accessibility needs.

Guy's training gives agents an understanding of the search process through the eyes of a disabled renter and shows them what practical actions they can take to help.

To learn more about the Accessible Letting Scheme: <https://accessibleprs.co.uk/accessible-letting-scheme>

To learn more or organise training with AccessiblePRS: <https://accessibleprs.co.uk/accessible-letting-training>

We really hope you'll join us in this first step in helping to improve the frustration that many tenants experience when they're looking for their next home.

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