



**COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF
DEVON**

helping communities help themselves

Floor surfaces are important to all building users. Careful choice of surfaces can help with orientation, ease of passage, acoustics and safety.

General:

- Hard surfaces can cause sound reverberation and increase the background noise levels, which can cause difficulties for people with hearing impairments. A mixture of hard and soft surfaces should be used.
- A combination of colour, tonal and textural contrasts helps people with sight impairments to distinguish between surfaces and objects placed on them – such as switches on walls, litter bins on floors, doors in walls.
- Tonal contrast is more important than colour contrast. Some colours which appear to be different can be tonally similar under certain lighting conditions, particularly for people who have difficulty distinguishing colours. A simple way to check tonal contrast of colours is to place the colours on a sheet of paper and photocopy it in black and white. The tonal contrast will be compared for you!
- Textured surfaces are important in providing information to people with sight impairments. Simple models of floor layout can be really helpful in orientation around a building.

Floors:

- Floor surfaces should be firm and non directional to allow easy passage for wheelchair users.
- Carpets should have a shallow pile; avoid coir matting, deep pile or excessively grooved carpet.
- Junctions between different flooring materials should be carefully detailed so as not to create an obstacle or tripping hazard.
- Textured flooring can be used to warn of hazards or impart directional information.
- Floor surfaces should be slip resistant; people using mobility aids (e.g. sticks or crutches) are particularly vulnerable (see BS 8300 Annex C: Slip potential characteristics of tread and floor finishes).
- Floor areas which are likely to become wet (e.g. entrance lobby, toilets, bath/shower rooms, kitchen), should have non slip surfaces. Entrance mats can be helpful if they are firmly fixed, flush and not coir.



- Glossy floors cause reflection and glare which can cause difficulties; they can also give the impression of being wet and slippery, which may inhibit some users.
- Overall, avoid floor surfaces which are slippery when wet; bright and boldly patterned flooring can be confusing for some users.

Walls:

- Wall coverings should be plain, (not busy or distracting) as they can cause difficulties to wayfinding and those needing to lip read; glossy walls cause reflection and glare.
- Textured walls (fine rather than rough) can help alert people to essential facilities like toilets and lifts; as long as there is a 'key' is given in advance (say at reception or in the lobby).