

# Services

The services you use, where they are situated in the space, and the methods by which they are delivered, depend on the kind of site or institution you are, the location of the learning space, the range of activities you want to offer, and the number of visitors to be catered for. Health & safety regulations cover the installation of services generally and for learning spaces. However, there is more to consider than the basic rules.

One factor is to provide services in environmentally benign ways. This includes arrangements for energy, water and waste.

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*John Rhymer, Director, Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, Worcestershire*

The heritage status of a site, and the kind of artefacts on display or stored, also influences the type, use and location of services. Our case studies show that workable compromises can be reached between the need to protect buildings (particularly historic buildings) or displays, and the need to ensure that a learning space is properly equipped. For example, Bolton Museum & Art Gallery located its learning space within a gallery but installed stopcocks under the sinks to turn off the water and keep the cupboards locked when not in use. The Women's Library has a passively controlled environment system rather than air-conditioning, which as an additional benefit reduces heating costs as well as environmental damage by 80%.

General issues to consider include:

- Activities going on in the space
- Number of people involved in sessions
- Best locations for each service
- Convenience in relation to other fittings, furniture and equipment
- Health & safety

- Number and size of each service point, e.g. sinks, power points, lights
- Types of energy sources and methods of installation
- Potential to adjust, extend and relocate
- Cost and ease of maintenance

Consider also:

## Water

- The need for hot and cold water
- Precautions to avoid flooding

## Electricity

- The equipment needing electricity
- Where to locate power points, e.g. floor, worktop and/or ceiling level, and flexible points to be moved around the space

## Lighting

- The balance between natural and artificial lighting
- The impact of natural light on the space, such as location, extent, dimensions and type of glazing, potential glare, and the need for blinds
- The type of lighting you need, such as ceiling lights, table lamps, directional lighting, and dimming options
- The need for effective blackout facilities

## Sinks

According to our survey, two-thirds of respondents said that provision of sinks is poor or no more than adequate. This remains a serious problem, and one that could easily be avoided – if only architects, contractors and project teams acted on the stated requirements of those who run learning spaces. Always research the size, type and number of sinks you need, where to locate them and the heights at which you want them. Ensure that the plumbing system can cope with the disposal of the waste products your activities will create. Our case-study sites have identified that standard drain fittings are not robust enough to deal with paints, sand and similar materials; these need a wide-bore drain and filters.

## Temperature control & ventilation

The temperature and ventilation of a learning space are determined by such factors as the number of external walls, extent and type of glazing, ceiling height, and the type and location of heating systems installed. A further consideration is whether the materials or equipment used for activities in the space produce dust, fumes or heat. This includes ICT equipment, which can increase the temperature in an enclosed space. Some sites, such as archives and museums, have special requirements because of the artefacts on display or in storage.

DFES regulations set out minimum requirements for temperature and ventilation control in schools, and these should be applied to learning spaces in other settings. For example, a classroom should maintain a minimum temperature of 18°C (64.4°F).

Location can be a significant factor. For example, underground spaces seem to be popular with some architects and directors but are often reported to feel oppressive, airless, and enervating.

Consider the following:

- The impact of both natural and artificial lighting on the space
- The heating system to be installed in the space, especially its efficiency and ease of control
- Activities requiring ventilation to control dust, heat or fumes
- The benefits of access to fresh air, and whether you want to be able to open windows
- Whether windows require blinds – both to cut out glare and to enable the use of TV/AV equipment

## Toilets

The key issues about toilets are:

- Where they are sited. Can they be exclusively for those using the learning space, thereby addressing child protection issues?
- How they are fitted-out. Can they be wholly or partly designed and fitted-out specifically for children?

- How many to install. Will they be used regularly through the day or only for a short span of time? Will they cope with the short periods of heavy use, e.g. 40 children in the space of a 15-minute break?

Cost will determine some of the answers. Few sites say they can afford, in terms of cost and space, toilet facilities exclusively for children, although this was obviously a priority at Eureka! The Museum for Children in Halifax, which has frequently won 'Loo of the Year' awards. Some sites have them exclusively for everyone using the self-contained education centre. Bagshaw Museum has had to make the toilet facilities accessible to all Museum visitors, and has installed CCTV as a child protection measure.

Fittings can be a mix of adult and child level, or accessible to both – such as a single trough urinal for males, rather than individual stalls. The main concerns are that the facilities should be well designed, robust, readily accessible, easy and inexpensive to maintain, child-friendly and safe. There should always be accessible toilets for users with a physical disability.

## Acoustics

What you can do in a space can be limited by the quality of sound-proofing and acoustics. Some sites build both into the design and fitting-out; others accept a certain level of sound leakage, organising sessions so that a noisy activity does not clash with a quiet one next door; and some enjoy the 'inevitable' hub-bub of a lively and successful learning space.

Sound quality is vital, so consider:

- Shape and size of the space, including ceiling height
- Materials used in construction or fitting-out, e.g. glass walls
- Furnishings and equipment in the space
- Number of people who work in the space
- Type and variety of activities they will do
- Intrusion of noise from elsewhere in the site or outside it

Always test the effectiveness of sound-proofing or acoustic fittings or design.



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