

National Register Access Consultants

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Client guide

This guide has information about the background and principles of the National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC) and information on how to use the NRAC to identify an Access Consultant or Auditor.

Why clients should use the NRAC

Clients seeking reliable, informed access advice need to be able to do so with confidence. The NRAC provides details of accredited individuals, free of charge to clients. The NRAC comprises appropriately qualified and experienced access consultants and auditors who have demonstrated their expertise in access matters to the satisfaction of the NRAC Admissions Panel.

The NRAC enables clients quickly and easily to locate suitable consultants and provides a quality standard for those advising on the accessibility of the built environment for disabled people.

How and why the NRAC was established

A quality standard for access consultants and auditors did not exist prior to the launch of the NRAC. Poor advice provided by practitioners who do not possess the necessary skills or knowledge causes major problems for both clients and for reputable advisors. The Centre for Accessible Environments, an organisation that gives advice and information on accessibility for all users, took the initiative and established, in collaboration with the JMU Access Partnership, the National Register of Access Consultants.

The NRAC was launched by the Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities, Margaret Hodge MP, in December 1999. The initial project to establish the NRAC was funded through the then DETR and DfEE. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) continue to take a keen interest and have representatives at all Management Group meetings.

Clients can access the NRAC either through its web site www.nrac.org.uk or by contacting the NRAC directly on 020 7399 7417 or by email info@nrac.org.uk

Services for clients

The NRAC has two services that it offers free to clients. These are:

- a quality standard demonstrating skills/experience that can be checked by a client

- a means of locating consultants/auditors with the skills/experience that a client requires

The NRAC does not specifically recommend individual consultant/auditors to clients, or guarantee their work in any way. All Members have successfully completed the admissions procedures and satisfied the Admissions Panel that they fulfil the requirements as set out in the Information and application pack.

Quality standard

The NRAC Admissions Panel has carefully assessed all consultants and auditors before recommending them for membership of the NRAC. Once recommended for membership, Members agree to abide by the NRAC Code of Practice. This document is available on request.

Registration is not mandatory for anyone working as a consultant or as an auditor but registration provides clients with a means of checking the credentials of those they employ.

Clients should be aware that access auditors/consultants who are not registered may not possess the necessary skills to carry out access work and might not have professional indemnity insurance that covers access advice. All Members of the NRAC carry professional indemnity insurance. Clients should ensure that the level of insurance cover possessed by an access consultant/auditor is appropriate for each particular project.

If clients wish to establish whether an individual is a Member of the NRAC, they can either search the database on the website www.nrac.org.uk or contact the NRAC on 020 7399 7417.

Locating consultants/auditors

The NRAC assists clients, free of charge, to identify and locate Auditors and Consultants, suitable for their requirements, based on geographical locations, specialisations and areas of expertise of Members indicated on the online database on www.nrac.org.uk.

The NRAC Manager assists clients to use the search facility. It provides only the information which is on the online database and does not influence the choice of Members in any way.

Clients can use the search facility on the online Register database, or request these in print, or by email from the NRAC Manager info@nrac.org.uk, tel: 020 7399 7417.

Clients are encouraged to think issues through carefully in order to identify an NRAC Consultant or NRAC Auditor appropriate to their need. The NRAC does not select or recommend individual consultants to clients. The NRAC provides clients with a list of Members who have the qualifications and experience that meet the selected client criteria.

The services required, and therefore the consultants or auditors who will be suitable, will depend on a variety of factors. It will depend on the type of business that a client operates,

the type of building to be audited and the particular project that the client is undertaking. The reason for the access advice may be to meet their ongoing obligations under the Equality Act 2010 which superseded the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005, to implement company policy or be in response to user need.

All Members are registered on an individual basis. Organisations are not accredited.

How to use the NRAC

When selecting a consultant/auditor the following needs to be decided:

1. Is an Access Consultant or an Access Auditor required?

Clients must decide which type of Member is required. There are two categories of Membership: NRAC Consultants and NRAC Auditors.

NRAC Consultants are registered to undertake both problem-solving and problem-identifying work. The solutions to access issues that they are registered to provide may include technical advice where building structure or construction is involved.

NRAC Auditors are registered to undertake problem-identifying work and provide general advice on solutions.

The main distinction between auditors and consultants is that the Consultant Members have a more detailed level of construction knowledge. This is required when offering practical and feasible recommendations in relation to alterations to the physical features of a building. All NRAC Consultants are registered to undertake access auditing as well as access consultancy work.

2. What Auditor/Consultant specialisations are preferred?

To assist with the selection of the appropriate advisor a summary of each members' professional experience, qualifications and expertise is provided. Along with this each member has identified which geographical area they are able to work in

Accessing the National Register of Access Consultants

Once the Member type and specialisations have been decided, clients should either contact the NRAC Manager at info@nrac.org.uk or conduct their own search on the NRAC online Register database www.nrac.org.uk.

Log onto the NRAC web site, www.nrac.org.uk and use the Find a Member facility. Search for Members (Access Auditor or Access Consultant) by name, geographical area or keyword.

All NRAC Members have submitted a Professional Summary which includes their experience or expertise. The keywords used in these summaries are:

Building types and elements

Retail & banking	Places of worship
Hotels	Housing
Health	Offices
Education	Manufacturing/ industrial
Arts	Historic/listed buildings
Leisure	Countryside
Sports	Transport environments
Signage and way-finding	Military establishments
Tourism	Landscape architecture

Areas of expertise

Access Statements/ Access Plans	Training
Design appraisals	Website and communications
Policy and strategy work	Assistive technologies
Expert witness / Legal advice	Corporate portfolios
Design work	Risk Assessments
Landlord and Tenant Act	Urban Planning

This list is obviously not exhaustive.

Members have a duty not to misrepresent their expertise or experience when submitting information but this is a self-regulated process. Clients should assure themselves that Members have the required knowledge and experience for the type of work to be carried out.

Clients can then use the details provided to contact a Member directly to discuss/undertake the access work they require.

The NRAC Manager can be contacted directly should any queries or problems arise.