



Excellence through Accessibility Award 2007

Three Mayo County Council sites, Áras an Chontae, Ballina Library and Westport Leisure Centre achieved the Quality level in the Excellence through Accessibility Awards 2007.

As an indication of its commitment to accessibility Mayo County Council entered three sites for the Excellence through Accessibility Award - Áras an Chontae, Ballina library and Westport Leisure Centre and we are delighted to announce that all three sites attained the Quality Award from the National Disability Authority.

The *Quality* level is an exceptional achievement and demonstrates that Mayo County Council has addressed accessibility for users with disabilities across a very wide range of areas and services. It also shows that the organisation has many procedures, policies and facilities in place that accommodate users with disabilities. These procedures, policies and facilities are being improved on a continuous basis.

Universal accessibility is very important to Mayo County Council as it will aid everyone to use our services and the buildings to the maximum. In the past, for many people with disabilities, an inaccessible environment has restricted their ability to participate as full citizens in Irish society. Mayo County Council is committed to changing this.

In 2006, the inaugural year of the Excellence through Accessibility Award, four bodies throughout Ireland were successful and now display an ETA symbol to

demonstrate their commitment to accessibility. We, Mayo County Council and the Library Service will now be able to display this symbol to demonstrate our commitment as well.

Ballina Public Library, one of this year's recipients, is located in the centre of Ballina and serves a population of 25,000 within its locality. Opening hours are 10am-8pm Tuesday and Wednesdays, 10am-5pm Thursday and Fridays and 10am-4pm on Saturdays. The events programme includes community group visits, author visits, seminars, lectures, performances, book launches, exhibitions, workshops and training days. Ballina Public Library is committed to providing the best possible service to residents and visitors alike.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to improve accessibility to buildings, resources and services. A process of consultation with local disability groups and a survey of people with disabilities in the town improved the service delivery in Ballina library. Reasonable accommodation brings additional benefits to Ballina library, in that it improves access for everyone and emphasizes a quality customer service approach.

Participation in the assessment provided many benefits for the Ballina Library Staff. We have a better understanding of dealing with people with all types of disability, not just physical disability, but also sensory, communicative and intellectual disability. Because of our involvement in the award process, our customer service provision has greatly improved.

Despite the many positive measures taken and the privilege of receiving the Quality level in the Award, Mayo County Council recognizes that more can always be done to deliver an even better service to people of Mayo. We always encourage you, the members of the public to make suggestions as to how we in Mayo County Council can do more "to improve the quality of life for people living in Mayo and enhance the attractiveness of the County as a place to live in, work, enjoy and invest".