

A GUIDE TO...
**EVENT
ACCESSIBILITY**



**Creating events that
everyone can enjoy**

WHY DOES ACCESSIBILITY MATTER?

Everyone should have an equal opportunity to be involved in your event.

Organising an event is a lot of work, so accessibility considerations often get left until the last minute, or even overlooked entirely. But making your event accessible shouldn't be an optional add-on – it's important to offer everyone an opportunity to participate if they want to.

Event accessibility is particularly important for people who are disabled and/or who have specific physical, sensory, or social communication support needs. Of course, not all disabilities are visible – and likewise, many support and access needs are invisible, too! The challenge a disability or support need presents can often depend on how accessible the environment is.

Improving accessibility means reducing the number of disabling barriers people have to face.

TYPES OF DISABLING BARRIERS



Physical barriers can be presented by buildings, places, and services that aren't accessible to people with limited mobility, including people who are using a wheelchair, for example: steps, uneven paths, or non-accessible toilets.

Logistical barriers are presented by limits or constraints on travel and transport options, and/or by services and events being available only at certain times or locations, for example: venues with no public transportation links.

Communication barriers can involve information not being displayed or presented in a suitable format, including for people using alternative communication methods such as sign language or digital screen readers.

Read on to find out how to reduce or remove the disabling barriers involved in your event...

MAKING YOUR EVENT ACCESSIBLE

Things to think about when choosing a venue and planning your event...

Whatever stage of planning you're at, there are plenty of things you can do to make your event more accessible so that it can be enjoyed by everyone who wants to get involved. Here we highlight some of the basics - and to help you find more detailed information about planning events with specific access requirements, we've included some links to online resources, too.

CHOOSING A VENUE THAT'S SUITABLE FOR EVERYONE

Does your venue have step-free access?

Step-free access means that your event is accessible by lifts or ramps - or a combination of both - so that people using wheelchairs, mobility aids, prams and pushchairs don't have to use escalators or stairs to come to your event. When you are hiring a venue, you can check in advance if it has step-free access.

Does your venue have accessible toilets?

Accessible toilets are designed to better accommodate people with physical disabilities. There are legal measurements and specifications that a toilet needs to meet in order to be called an accessible toilet. When hiring a venue, you can check in advance if it has an accessible toilet.

People with profound and multiple learning disabilities or with physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. These needs are met by Changing Places Toilets.



You can read more about Changing Places Toilets at www.changing-places.org

MAKING SURE EVERYONE EVERYONE CAN ENJOY YOUR EVENT

What travel and transport options are available?

In the Forest of Dean, where public transport facilities are scarce, making adjustments for people who do not have use of a car is important. You could consider adjustments such as:

- Planning your event near to a bus stop for a main bus route, and ensuring that your event timings co-ordinate with the bus timetable, so people can get there in good time.
- Using your social media or setting up a WhatsApp group to promote lift-sharing between people who are planning to come along to your event.
- Promoting local community transport such as Lydcare, Dial-a-ride, and The-Robin.

Do any of your guests need extra equipment or adjustments?



Not all of your guests may be able to hear or understand speech. Many D/deaf people (someone people describe themselves as “Deaf” with a capital “D” to express pride in their Deaf identity) use sign language to communicate. Consider providing a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter at public events, such as performances, for D/deaf guests.

Similarly, a hearing loop (sometimes called an audio induction loop) is a special type of sound system for use by people with hearing aids. The hearing loop provides a magnetic, wireless, signal that is picked up by the hearing aid. One way to make your event more accessible is to choose a venue with a hearing loop.

Some adults and children with sensory processing and communication differences, including autistic or other neurodivergent people and those with learning disabilities, can find public events and performances overwhelming.

You can create a more inclusive environment by adjusting sound and lighting, or by offering a separate ‘relaxed performance’ designed specifically for people who may not be able to sit quietly throughout a standard performance.



IF IN DOUBT, ASK!

Talk to people to find out what they need to access and enjoy your event.

As an event organiser it's not always possible to make every single accessibility adjustment with the limited money, time and resources you have available. And no-one expects you to!

The most important thing to remember is that everyone has different needs - so if you want to find out what people need to access and enjoy your event, you just need to ask them.

Whether it's in person, by phone, via email, or through social media, talk to the people coming to your event and ask what you can do to reduce or remove barriers to participation. If you know that lots of the people who would like to come along need step-free access due to their mobility, then make this your priority. If most people are travelling by bus, then your priority might be choosing a venue near a bus stop and scheduled around the bus timetable.

Finally, remember that everyone has different communication needs and preferences, so offer people options such as having information available in both audio and written form.

USEFUL LINKS AND FURTHER READING

- **[Engaging with disabled people: an event planning guide \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://equalityhumanrights.com)**
- **[Glossary of Disability - Related Terms \(careerswithdisabilities.com\)](https://careerswithdisabilities.com)**
- **[National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters \(nubsli.com\)](https://nubsli.com)**
- **[What is a learning disability? \(mencap.org.uk\)](https://mencap.org.uk)**
- **[What is a hearing loop? \(hearinglink.org\)](https://hearinglink.org)**
- **[Accessible environments to support autistic people and their families \(autism.org.uk\)](https://autism.org.uk)**



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