

Ensuring inclusion

A Good Practice Checklist
intended for people
planning and putting on
events or producing or
publishing information

Produced by the Disability Strand (W3)

Introduction

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) requires that disabled people should not be disadvantaged in accessing information or services. The act requires service providers to anticipate potential barriers and make reasonable adjustments to eliminate them.

Disabled people are significantly under-represented in higher education and are a priority group for Widening Participation (WP). It is particularly important that people working in the area of widening participation should not be disadvantaging disabled people. It is essential that we examine our current practices, review where they can be improved and take appropriate action.

The following document is a first attempt by the Disability Strand (W3) of the Aimhigher West Area Partnership (formerly the Western Partnership for Widening Participation – WP4WP) to inform its own practices and further to inform the work of the Aimhigher West Partnership as a whole.

Access

Access is most commonly understood to imply means of entry or way in and an Accessible Venue or Event is one that has few or no physical barriers at the means of entry. However, for many people, access is restricted by more than just physical barriers. Barriers can be cultural, economic, attitudinal, organisational or one or more of many others.

To ensure that the Aimhigher West Partnership is as inclusive as possible, this document contains practical checklists to assist us in making our WP work (e.g. meetings, events, printed information and electronic information) as accessible as possible. We recognise that the checklists are not exhaustive and we welcome feedback from colleagues. A feedback form is provided at the back of the document.

Disability

We have assumed the social model definition of disability, i.e. that the person is disabled by barriers imposed by society.

Language

We advise a person centred approach to language. For example, “disabled people” rather than “the disabled” and “Students with dyslexia” rather than “Dyslexics”.

Checklist for event planning (p3)

This checklist should assist us in making events and/or meetings as accessible as possible. The checklist appears on one page for ease of photocopying. More detailed, explanatory notes appear in the following pages.

Checklist for producing accessible information (p11)

This checklist should help us to produce accessible information material. Most of the material we produce is on computer and lends itself to reformatting or transcribing. Information material could include invitations, leaflets, handouts, prospectuses, evaluation forms and web pages.

Checklist for event or meeting planning

Venue

- Selecting an accessible venue
- Car parking
- Signs
- General layout
- Variety of seating
- Loop System and Public Address (PA)

Event Planning & Administration

- Timing
- Planning the programme
- Speakers and facilitators
- Sign Language interpreters
- Note takers
- Travel and care expenses
- Personal Assistants
- Hire of extra equipment
- ICT (accessible software etc)
- Stewards
- Access to First Aid/Medical support
- Guide dogs

Catering

- Catering/refreshment areas
- Dietary requirements e.g.
- Vegetarian
- Gluten free
- Tea, coffee, cold drinks/water
- Variety of cups
- Flexible straws
- Assistance available with serving

Information & Publicity

See also checklist for accessible information

- Programme, conference details
- Access information
- Publicity
- Taping and transcribing into Braille
- Map of venue
- Exhibition/Stalls

NB We should be careful not to offer anything that we are unable to provide.

Venue

Assessing access requirements for a closed meeting of invited participants should present few problems. Assessing access requirements for an open meeting requires more forward planning. The earlier we identify participants' needs, the better the chances of effectively meeting those needs.

As a general rule we should be aiming to make **all** events accessible to **everyone**. If we are scanning the list of participants to see if we need to make sure the toilet is accessible or there is a lift nearby then we are missing the point. Of course we need to acknowledge that we work in environments that are often less than ideal. However, if we embrace the anticipatory duty placed upon us by the DDA and SENDA and address these issues at the beginning of the planning stage it is more likely that our events will be genuinely accessible.

First then, select an **Accessible** venue, to allow all sections of the community to attend. Where possible, good practice should be to use venues that have been audited for access.

Ensure:

- The venue has either ramped, level or lift access to all meeting areas
- All door widths are at least 860mm (34 inches) wide.
- Public transport is within an appropriate distance
- Car parking is available (preferably on site), and that designated car parking close to the entrances can be arranged for blue badge car drivers (within 50m). Access from the car park to the entrance door must be level or have dropped kerbs. Ensure the car parking area is well lit with a firm, level surface. Avoid routes over loose gravel etc.
- Clear signage to lifts or ramped access if needed
- The venue has toilets that are suitable for use by wheelchair users. Bear in mind that a toilet with a wide door isn't necessarily accessible. Support rails, easy turn taps, alarm, and accessible soap and drying facilities are also important. (See appendix 5)

- All other amenities which may be used by meeting participants can be accessed and used by disabled people.
- Check for loose carpets, trip hazards, possible obstructions
- **N.B. The facilities at the venue will determine who will be able to participate.** If in doubt about the suitability of the venue we should consider consulting disabled people.

Signs

- Ensure that any signs are clear, preferably dark lettering on light background. Ensure lettering is mix of upper and lower-case and large print.
- Keep signs at a level at which they can be read by people using wheelchairs (1400-1700mm or 55-67inches).
- Provide picture signs where possible - Use universally recognised signs e.g. white wheelchair on blue background or symbol advertising availability of induction loop.



Fig 1. example of a universally recognised sign illustrating availability of induction loop

- Where appropriate use tactile signs.

General Layout

- Ensure access and egress routes are free of clutter. Check fire exits (and evacuation routes for wheelchairs)
- Ensure sight/hearing lines to speakers is clear (e.g. for lip readers)
- Try to keep rooms for workshops etc close by and, where possible, on same level

Seating

- Allow appropriate space for wheelchair users (not necessarily all together in “disabled” area)
- Allow space in gangways and between rows for wheelchairs
- Make sure sign language users/lip readers have relevant reserved spaces
- Provide a variety of seating if possible

Loop system and Public Address (PA)

- Check availability of induction loop or arrange hire and installation. Make sure someone knows how it works and that appropriate signs indicate availability. **Check that it works.** If you are using other electronic equipment make sure it doesn't cause interference.
- Check PA works and that acoustics don't distort sound.
- Make sure all microphones work (use roving microphones where possible).

Event Planning and Administration

Timing

- When planning an event, consider time implications of participants' needs. e.g. starting events early in the morning may be difficult for people relying on support workers or carers.

Programme

- Plan content and format with participants in mind
- If using interpreters – ensure timing allows for them to carry out work effectively
- Include sufficient breaks – using only sight or hearing for example can be very tiring. Remember BSL interpreters and note takers can only work for limited periods.
- Arrange for speakers notes to be made available in advance and in alternative formats where possible
- In general discussions, ensure everyone recognises needs of all participants

Speakers (or guest presenters) and facilitators

- Make sure all speakers are fully informed about the event including possible needs of participants (e.g. whether the speaker will have to use a microphone, making sure presentations are in accessible format).
- Make sure the speaker is able to work with BSL interpreter if necessary.
- Recognise that some speakers may themselves need to speak through an interpreter or need assistance

Sign Language Interpreters

- Book interpreters as far in advance as possible (if the event is longer than two hours you will need more than one)
- Ensure space is reserved for interpreters.
- Consult deaf participants for best position and lighting for interpreters.

Note Takers

- Do you need note takers? Do you need manual note takers, laptop computer note takers or other? If you aren't sure, ask participants beforehand.

Travel and Care expenses

- Some disabled people are unable to use public transport and may need special taxis. Remember to include financial provision for travel expenses and make it clear that this is available. Where possible, reimburse expenses at time of event in cash. Ask participants in advance to bring receipts.
- Consider reimbursing care costs to ensure inclusiveness.

Personal Assistants (PAs) or Enablers

- Disabled people may need assistance with, for example, toileting, eating, getting into taxis. Make sure PAs are provided if necessary.
- Ensure PAs are competent for task.
- Make sure Personal Assistants are booked in advance and briefed on their expected duties.
- Use specifically dedicated PAs. Don't expect people to be participants and act as PAs. Disabled people shouldn't have to wait until other participants are free.
- If there is only one PA for the event, ensure they are easily identifiable.
- Check with participant whether they have a preference for male or female PA.

Extra equipment

- Make sure needs are identified in advance for:-
 - loop system,
 - wheelchairs,
 - portable ramp,
 - electronic note taking and display
 - roving microphones etc

ICT

- If using any computer equipment, ensure it is accessible to all participants (voice recognition software, predictive typing, large screens, alternative mouse etc).

Stewards

- Do you need extra people to act as stewards?

First Aid

- As with any event, make sure you know how to access first aid. If someone has specific medical needs, make sure you know about these. Be aware of hidden disabilities (e.g. propensity to fits, allergic reactions)

Guide dogs

- Is there fresh water available?
- In the case of longer events – think about toileting the dogs
- If in doubt – check with owners

Catering

Make sure food is “accessible”. e.g. Finger buffet with mouth sized pieces.

Refreshment areas

- Ensure adequate room under tables to accommodate wheelchairs
- Where possible use moveable tables and chairs

Dietary requirements

- Make sure you ask about specific requirements beforehand
- Cater for vegetarians, vegans, gluten free or other diets. If meat is available keep in separate areas or dishes.
- Buffet food should be clearly labelled.

Drinks

- Make sure there is plenty of water or drinks (include de-caffeinated coffee, herbal teas and sugar alternatives)
- Ensure a variety of cups are available as well as straws.

Assistance

- Make sure assistance is available for those that need it.

Information and publicity

- Ask for as much information as you can in pre-event publicity.
FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED
- Include equalities statement. See model – **Appendix 1**
- Offer information in other formats (be sure to know where you can get it first). Circulate to target audiences in appropriate formats
- Circulate publicity where it is likely to find target audience – (use community radio, disability organisations and networks etc)
- Make all publicity information as clear as possible. See **Checklist for producing accessible information (p11)** for details.
- Provide clear maps and directions (including parking and public transport)

Access

- Ensure that participants are informed of access details and what requirements are catered for (e.g. induction loop, reserved parking bays, travelling expenses).
- Offer an opportunity to add additional requirements.

Checklist for producing accessible information

For printed material

- Sans serif typeface (Arial, Universe)
- 14pt minimum font size
- Keep text left justified
- Avoid underlining
- Maximum contrast (black or dark blue on white, cream or yellow)
- Offer optional different coloured paper for people with dyslexia
- Avoid bright red and green
- Keep text areas free of graphics or background pictures
- Restrict use of upper case letters (capitals)
- Ensure images include people with disabilities

Where appropriate, make information available as

- Audio tape
- Braille
- Sign language video tape
- Large print (ask required size)
- Electronic format (disk or email)
- Plain English with symbols

N.B. Make sure you know where to get transcription

Web design

Rather than list extensive guidelines for website accessibility, it is assumed that anyone constructing websites has enough technical know-how to visit the websites listed below. If in doubt, get it checked by a disabled person.

- Checklist for website access

<http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/full-checklist.html>

- Had web site checked with Bobby or other check tool

<http://bobby.watchfire.com/bobby/html/en/index.jsp>

More detailed information can be found by following the link below to the RNIB web-site

<http://www.rnib.org.uk>

Model Booking Form

Aimhigher West (“This organisation”) is working towards being fully inclusive. We try to ensure that all our events take place in accessible locations. To help us provide a better service, please let us know if you require additional facilities or support or any other specific requirements by completing the form below. We will do our utmost to meet your requirements and will contact you in advance to discuss the details.

Requirement	Details
Physical access/accessible parking	
Language – eg BSL interpreter or note taker.	
Audio – eg induction loop	
Alternative formats – eg Braille, large print, electronic format. Handouts in advance or note taking service.	
Dietary	
Personal Assistant – are you bringing one or do you need one?	
Advice on Accessible Transport including assistance with additional or alternative transport costs.	
Other relevant information or specific needs.	
For more information please contact :	