

## **Making Meetings Accessible**

We have a duty to ensure that all people have access to council meetings, conferences and seminars. Access can mean many things. Access is not only about physical access to buildings for wheelchair users but also includes things like access to information in different formats, transport to the event and an awareness of cultural differences. It is important not to assume that you know what another person's needs are, even if they are a work colleague. Always ask about people's access needs, preferably using a reply slip on the invitation to the meeting.

This checklist serves as a reminder of what should be in place for a meeting to be inclusive and accessible. The suggestions below are not exhaustive. Some things are expected as standard, other things should be available on request and some items on the checklist may not be applicable to your meeting – it will depend on the type of meeting being held.

### **Booking a venue:**

#### Venue access

- Entrance access - can delegates with mobility needs use the same entrance as other delegates independently?
- Accessible toilets – are they close to the meeting or function rooms and are there enough? Are there nappy changing facilities?
- Access – are there easily accessible lifts? Is there easy access to refreshments? Is the venue accessible using public transport? Are there assistance dog toileting facilities
- Are venue staff fully aware of the Equality Act and accessibility issues? Has the venue had an accessibility audit?
- Directions – is the venue easy to find and are there clear maps available?

#### Car parking

- Accessible designated spaces – are they within 50m of entrance for people with mobility needs? Can people reserve accessible parking places?
- Accessible route – is the car park to venue route fully accessible with no obstructions?

### **Choosing a date and time**

#### Planning the programme

- Time – are allowances made for people with mobility needs who may need added time to move between rooms and sessions?
- Family commitments – are allowances made for parents to fit in with school times?
- Religious holidays – are allowances made for cultural and religious commitments? Check religious/ cultural calendar.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/> Holding meetings in places where alcohol is served may prevent some people from being able to attend.
- Rest breaks – are allowances made for rest breaks for interpreters and support workers?

- Personal needs breaks – do any delegates have a special requirement for frequent refreshment breaks, medical breaks, rest breaks or prayer breaks?
- Timing – is the timing of the event going to be a barrier for some of the people you are inviting to attend?

## **Costs to consider**

- Support arrangements – is there a budget for any additional equipment or support needs?
- Travel costs – is there a budget for assisted travel?
- Speaker requirements – have any particular access needs of the speaker been checked and budgeted for?
- Equipment - have presenter and delegate requirements been considered in advance and budgeted for? For example, equipment that may need budget consideration:
  - Loop systems – check other equipment does not cause interference.
  - Public address system.
  - Roving microphones.
  - Portable ramps - for accessing entrances and staging.
  - Height adjustable lecterns.
  - Electrical sockets and extension leads plus safety covering
  - Projector screen for speech-to-text

## **Event details**

### **Information**

- Venue – are accessibility details publicised to inform participants early so they can make necessary arrangements? Directions – are maps clear and do they include access routes into buildings?
- Format – Information should be available in alternative formats. Delegates should be told how they can contact the organisers in a variety of different ways eg online, telephone, text phone and email? Please see Accessible Information guidelines.
- Individual requirements – are there opportunities to request any specific requirements? This should always be done in full consultation with the delegate, as they will be fully aware of their own requirements, for example:
  - personal support
  - access requirements
  - dietary requirements
  - special requirements based on cultural or religious beliefs
  - a note taker
  - British Sign Language interpreter
  - documents in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, or provided in electronic form.

### **Personal assistants and support workers**

- Consider the needs of Interpreters and Language Service Professionals. (LSPs) consult interpreters in advance to discuss positioning, lighting, breaks and any equipment requirements

- If using British Sign Language interpreters you may need to book more than one as frequent breaks are required. There is a shortage of BSL interpreters so book well in advance. For guidance on working with interpreters see Accessible Information Guidelines.
- Enablers - have arrangements been made for additional assistants to be available? Do not expect other delegates to act as enablers.
- Assistance dogs may need extra facilities.

## Signage

- Clarity - are signs printed in dark lettering on light background? Use large print, sans serif font with initial capitals and lower-case text, avoid block capitals.
- Height – are signs at a height which can also be read by wheelchair users (1400-1700mm or 55-67inches)?

## Registration

- Is registration process accessible? Arrange to meet support workers and delegates who require assistance to check arrangements

## Seating

- Reserve seating – does the support worker need to be seated next to a disabled person or in another location?
- Choice – is there a choice of seating design (with or without arm rests) or seating location (sufficient space in gangways and between rows for wheelchair navigation, guiding blind delegates) - for all workrooms and catering facilities? .

## Food and drink

- Does the menu reflect the diversity of the target audience, are specific dietary dishes placed on separate platters and well labelled, is a range of food available to accommodate vegetarians or people with allergies and is it well labelled and separated from meat or other dishes?
- Respect – are foods well separated to avoid cross contamination with respect to religious requirements
- Assistance – is assistance available to carry food and drink?
- Comfortable – is there adequate room under dining tables to accommodate wheelchairs?

## Emergency evacuation

Evacuation arrangements should be made clear to all delegates at the start of the meeting. It is particularly important that emergency arrangements for disabled delegates are considered.

- Are there visual alarms for people with a hearing impairment?
- Check the evacuation routes for wheelchair users or people with reduced mobility as these may be different.

- Consider evacuation if arranging meetings on higher floors as lifts may be turned off in an emergency. (in some cases lifts may be fire protected and be able to be used in an emergency) How will disabled people get out? It is no longer permissible to leave disabled people to be rescued by the Fire Service, there need to be systems in place to ensure disabled people can be evacuated from the building.

Accessible Information Guidelines [Click here to read a copy of the guidance.](#)