Event
Accessibility
Guide

With checklist

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SECTION 1: VENUE DESIGN & CROWD FLOW

1.1.1 Entry and Flow Management

- Use designated entry and exit points to manage crowd numbers safely.

- Offer staggered, priority, flexible or early access slots for disabled visitors to reduce queuing, avoid crowds and allow attendees to reach designated areas safely.

- Consider limiting ticket numbers overall.

- Consider providing separate, clearly signed accessible entrances.

1.1.2 Viewing and Performance Areas

- Designate accessible sectioned-off viewing areas with:

  - Space for wheelchair and mobility aid users to manoeuvre safely.

  - Reserved seats for disabled attendees and companions.

  - Room for assistance animals to lie down and rest.

- Consider undercover viewing areas for outdoor events to protect wheelchair/mobility scooter users and assistance dogs from the weather.

- Consider providing a large display screen in an alternative viewing area for people unable to navigate or remain in busy zones, but don't want to miss seeing the main events.

1.1.3 Layout

- Conduct an accessibility audit of the venue to address:

  - Narrow pathways

  - Step-only access

  - Uneven surfaces

  - Heavy doors that aren't propped open

  - Trip hazards

  - Potholes

  - Steep gradients

- Prioritise the maintenance and repair of pavements, pathways, and parking areas in the months leading up to the event.

- Mark any remaining hazards clearly with cones or signage until repairs can be completed.

- Consider alternative venues if the existing location has significant access limitations that cannot be reasonably adapted.

- Choose hard, level flooring where possible; avoid soft ground, grass, gravel, cobbles, loose bark, dusty ground, uneven pavements, or unstable surfaces. Use high-contrast markings to assist individuals with visual impairments if possible.

- Design layouts can include:

    o Wide, clear pedestrian walkways suitable for mobility aid users, carers walking alongside a disabled individual, assistance dogs and crowd movement.

    o Step-free routes (avoiding gradients if possible).

    o One-way systems in high-traffic or narrow areas to reduce congestion.

    o Clear signage showing key locations and accessible paths.

    o Consider using barriers, if applicable.

- Always design event layouts with accessibility in mind, avoiding clutter, tight spaces, step-free access, or unnecessary obstacles.

- Ensure step-free, accessible emergency exits are marked and kept unobstructed.

- Design simple, predictable layouts to reduce stress and confusion.

- Zone areas logically.

- Avoid placing stalls or signage that block dropped kerbs or force pedestrians into the road. Ensure there is sufficient space in front of stalls for easy manoeuvrability and prohibit stallholders from placing items or signs in front of their stalls that reduce walkway space, block the walkway for a wheelchair user, or create a trip hazard.

- Position stalls or stands along one side of a path only where possible to maximise walkway width.

- For indoor venues, ensure flooring is non-slip and free from sudden changes in height. Avoid rugs or cables that may pose trip hazards.

1.1.4 Quiet Zones

- Zone loud and busy areas (e.g. stages, food vendors) separately from quieter spaces.

- Clearly signpost quiet zones for rest and regulation. Ensure these areas are clearly marked on maps and physically accessible, located away from main noise and foot traffic.

1.1.5 Signage and Visual Aids

- Provide maps or visual guides showing:

    o Accessible entrances/exits.

    o Step-free and accessible routes (showing any gradients or uneven surfaces)

    o Quieter areas or designated quiet spaces.

    o Accessible toilets

    o Accessible parking

    o First aid and information points

- Use clear signage with large sans serif fonts, icons, and high-contrast colours at a wheelchair-viewable height, to support navigation and reduce congestion.

- Display signs encouraging attendees to be considerate, give extra space, and prioritise access for disabled individuals and wheelchair users.

- For indoor spaces, ensure signage is placed at wheelchair-viewable height and is well-lit without glare. Label key locations such as lifts, cloakrooms, toilets, food areas and staircases.

1.1.6 Staff and Volunteers

- Ask trained staff members or volunteers to guide attendees through busy or complex areas if required.

- Assign staff to assist in quiet zones and direct guests clearly and respectfully.

- Ask vendors not to block access routes, footpaths and ramps.

SECTION 2: SEATING AND TOILET ACCESSIBILITY

2.1.1 General Seating Availability

- Provide ample seating throughout the event site, not just in designated areas.

- Place seats at regular intervals, especially in large spaces.

- Consider hiring additional seating if options are limited.

2.1.2 Seated Dining and Food Accessibility

- Consider dietary requirements and sensory needs around food. Offer assistance discreetly if requested, such as cutting up food or opening packets. Some guests may have sensory sensitivities or digestive issues, so be mindful that a complex or unfamiliar menu may not be suitable for everyone. Avoid strong-smelling foods where possible.

- Provide food options that cater to a wide range of needs, including:

  - Allergies

  - Intolerances

  - Cultural and religious dietary restrictions

  - Sensory processing differences

  - Offer simple, plain alternatives alongside the main menu if possible.

- Ensure food labelling is comprehensive and consistent. Label all food items clearly on a menu, buffet or canape tray with symbols or text indicating gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian/vegan, and the presence of common allergens such as nuts, eggs, and soy.

- Consider discreetly colour-coding name cards or place settings for guests with allergies or dietary requirements. This enables catering staff to identify individuals easily and helps prevent errors. Brief staff on the colour system and train them to handle dietary accommodations with discretion and care. A corresponding master list or seating plan, with each guest's dietary requirements, should be kept in the kitchen or with the event coordinators.

- When accommodating guests who use mobility aids:

  - Ensure wheelchair users have enough space to manoeuvre in and out of their place at the table.

- Ask in advance whether the individual will remain in their wheelchair during the meal; if so, remove a chair ahead of time to make space.

- Provide sufficient room on either side when they are seated, and ensure nothing obstructs their legs, footrests, or movement beneath the table.

- Ensure the table is high enough to accommodate both manual and powered wheelchairs, including any joystick controls.

- Provide a clear, unobstructed route out of the room that does not rely on others moving or standing, especially if guests need to access the bathroom.

- Position wheelchair users so they are facing the stage or speakers, as they may not be able to turn to see what's happening easily (but ensure their wheelchairs will not be banged into by people walking past). Ensure that anyone with a visual impairment is seated close to the stage or focal point.

- If in doubt, ask disabled guests where they would prefer to sit and what setup works best for them.

- Support dignified and comfortable eating experiences. Be prepared to offer:
  - Cutlery adapted for grip (or allow individuals to bring their own)
  - Bowls instead of plates
  - Straws

  Where possible, designate support staff to assist discreetly if requested, without drawing attention.

2.1.3 Accessible Seating Features

- Offer a variety of seating options, including:
  - Chairs with back support and armrests
  - Upright chairs, benches, and cushioned seats

- Avoid low, unstable, or overly soft furniture, which may be difficult for some people to use.

- Ensure priority seating is available and clearly signposted for disabled attendees and their companions near:

- o Stages

- o Food vendors

- o Toilets

- o Exits

- o First Aid areas

- o Queues and waiting areas

2.1.4 Seating Layout and Inclusion

- Space seats to allow sufficient room for wheelchair users to sit alongside companions.

- Ensure there is enough room for wheelchair users to manoeuvre around seating easily and independently.

- Consider using foldable or stackable chairs and clearly signpost that they are available for public use.

- Use symbols and a large, high-contrast sans-serif font for signage.

- Ensure accessible seating areas have clear views of stages or attractions, and that wheelchair users aren't blocked by standing crowds.

2.1.5 Shelter and Comfort

- Where possible, provide covered seating areas for sun/rain protection (especially to keep powered wheelchair and mobility scooter users' equipment dry).

- For longer events, consider padded or cushioned seating options or allow attendees to bring their own chairs if more comfortable.

- Offer quiet, shaded seating areas away from noisy or high-traffic areas.

2.1.6 Toilet Availability and Placement

- Provide an adequate number of toilets, proportionate to event size and duration, including enough genuinely accessible toilets (bearing in mind that portable accessible toilets are often not big enough for powered wheelchairs). Therefore, if possible, provide larger accessible toilets situated inside.

- Place toilets in multiple, convenient locations, including near:

  - o Entrances and exits.

- Accessible seating

- Quiet zones

- Family or rest areas

- Where possible, avoid placing toilets on uneven, soft, or sloped ground. Use ground protection mats or trackway to create a stable, level surface where needed.

2.1.7 Accessible Toilets and Standards

- Ensure accessible toilets include:

  - Wider doors for wheelchair access

  - Grab rails and plenty of transfer space for powered wheelchairs (which require much more space than a manual wheelchair user does)

  - Room for a carer or assistant if needed.

- If possible, provide Changing Places toilets for individuals with complex needs, or mention where the closest public Changing Places toilet is situated.

- Offer gender-neutral and family toilets to accommodate a wider range of users.

- Use scent-free hand soap, and avoid air fresheners to support those with allergies, migraines, neurological conditions, or sensory needs (30% of the population cannot tolerate scent).

- Ensure bins don't block wheelchair users' turning circles, and ensure toilet paper can be safely reached from the toilet.

- Signpost where to collect a RADAR key from if the accessible toilet requires one.

2.1.8 Signage and Information

- Clearly signpost all toilets (especially signs near main events) using:

  - Large, sans serif, high-contrast text

  - Pictorial icons and arrows

  - Consistent visual design across signs

  - If possible, include Braille signage on the accessible toilet door

- Ensure accessible toilets are:

  - Marked on printed and digital maps.

o Listed on websites, social media, and booking confirmation pages.

o Known to all staff and volunteers, who can confidently direct attendees

2.1.9 Maintenance and Cleanliness

- Prioritise regular cleaning and restocking of all toilet facilities to ensure they are well-maintained.

- Assign staff members to monitor for:

    o Broken locks

    o Wet or unclean floors

    o Missing toilet paper or hand soap.

    o Faulty handrails

    o Faulty/flickering lighting

- Act quickly to fix any faults or replenish supplies.

- Encourage guests to report any problems at help points.

SECTION 3: MOBILITY ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

3.1.1 Surface Conditions and Maintenance

- Conduct thorough site assessments in advance to identify and address:

    o Uneven ground

    o Potholes

    o Trip hazards

- Repair or maintain pavements, paths, and parking areas in the lead-up to the event.

- Where needed, use temporary flooring (e.g. rubber mats, trackway) over:

    o Grass

    o Gravel

    o Cobbled or soft terrain

- Clearly mark any unavoidable hazards with cones or signs until fixed.

3.1.2 Step-Free and Accessible Routes

- Ensure step-free access throughout the venue, including:

  - Entrances and exits.

  - Stages and seating areas

  - Toilets and food vendors

  - Double-check that all dropped kerbs are not blocked.

- Ensure event infrastructure, such as cables, is safely secured and does not pose trip hazards.

- If a route leads to steps, mark this clearly, and provide an alternative level-access route for mobility aid users.

  - Avoid steep slopes.

  - Install ramps with a recommended gradient of at least 1:12. Where appropriate, provide handrails, particularly on longer or permanent ramps.

  - Ensure ramps are wide enough for wheelchair users. Temporary ramps over single steps may not require handrails, but should still be stable, securely positioned, and non-slip.

3.1.3 Navigation and Layout

- Keep routes wide and clutter-free to allow safe passage for:

  - Wheelchairs

  - Mobility scooters

  - Assistance dogs

- Install directional signage at key points along accessible routes, especially where attendees may need to choose a direction.

- Display accessible routes on maps, both printed and digital.

- Ensure dropped kerbs remain unobstructed and avoid placing stalls or signs in front of them.

- Keep stall fronts flush with kerbs or pavements (rather than leaving a gap of a metre between a kerb and stall front) to ensure wheelchair users can view the stalls safely.

- Leave occasional gaps between stalls, clearly marked, to allow mobility aid users to get through to the other side safely.

3.1.4 On-Site Transport Options

- Designate and clearly signpost drop-off zones close to main entrances for people with limited mobility.

- Consider providing:

    o Shuttle services, or golf buggies.

    o Wheelchair or scooter loan schemes

- Ensure any equipment for hire is:

    o Safe, fully charged and regularly maintained.

    o Easy to pre-book or request on-site

3.1.5 Parking and External Access

- Provide (and increase) the accessible parking spaces as close as possible to the event entrance.

- Create temporary accessible parking areas if the permanent ones are insufficient.

- Ensure accessible parking areas:

    o Are firm, level, and well-lit.

    o Have clear signage to direct vehicles to the spots and ensure they are close to dropped kerbs.

- Avoid placing accessible parking on grass or slopes.

- Consider allowing attendees to pre-book accessible parking where possible to avoid uncertainty.

- Have staff members available in car parks to offer guidance or assistance on arrival.

- Consider implementing traffic calming measures and reducing vehicle speeds near and on the event site.

3.1.6 Signage and Communication

- Mark accessible routes, parking, entrances and exits clearly using:

- o Large, high-contrast signs
- o Symbols or icons (including directional arrows)
- Share transport and route details in advance:
  - o On event websites, maps, and booking confirmations.
  - o Include walking distances and any slopes or gradients

3.1.7 Public Transport, Travel Support and Bicycles

- Publicise accessible public transport options in advance, including:
  - o The nearest bus stops that can be accessed via a step-free route.
  - o Taxi services that can transport powered wheelchairs.
- Work with transport providers to ensure availability before and after the event.
- Provide contact info or links to book accessible taxi or minibus services.
- Include information on the walking distance and route from public transport stops to entrances (ensuring to factor in that the route is step-free and accessible).
- Put up signs to encourage cyclists not to ride through crowded areas during events.

3.1.8 Staff and Volunteer Support

- Ensure staff are briefed on supporting disabled attendees and are at key points to offer help. Advise them to:
  - o Provide respectful assistance to attendees with disabilities.
  - o Guide guests through busy or uneven areas.
  - o Know the location of accessible parking and routes.

SECTION 4: SENSORY AND COGNITIVE ACCESSIBILITY

4.1.1 Quiet and Sensory-Friendly Spaces

- Provide clearly designated quiet zones or sensory-friendly areas, where individuals can retreat if they are overwhelmed, with:

- o Calm lighting while still being sufficient for safe navigation (no harsh glare or flashing lights)

  - o Minimal noise

  - o Scent-free environments

  - o Low stimulation

  - o Seating and water

- Avoid locating quiet areas near:

  - o Performance zones

  - o Food vendors

  - o Walkways with high foot traffic

- Clearly signpost these spaces and include them on all event maps.

4.1.2 Early Access and Flexible Arrival

- Allow individuals with sensory, anxiety, or cognitive conditions to:

  - o Enter the event 30 minutes early to acclimatise before it becomes crowded and noisy.

  - o Use flexible ticketing options to avoid peak times.

  - o Ensure staff members or volunteers are aware of early access times and who may qualify for them (bear in mind that not every disability is visible).

4.1.3 Noise Management and Zoning

- Be mindful of the impact of noise levels on some disabled people. Zone the event to separate noisy areas (e.g. stages, DJs, live acts) from quieter features (e.g. seating, information points, quiet spaces).

- Provide information about expected noise levels via websites, booking platforms, event leaflets and maps (or when high volume performances will occur).

- Avoid unexpected loud sounds (e.g. fireworks, cannons, smoke bursts) unless:

  - o Attendees are given a 10-minute verbal and visual warning.

  - o These areas are clearly marked on maps and signage.

- Do not use strobes or flashing lights.

4.1.4 Supportive Measures and Tools

- Offer items such as:
    - Earplugs or noise-cancelling headphones (for free or loan)
    - Sensory maps, showing:
        - Noisy zones
        - Designated quiet spaces.
        - Calm viewing areas
- Provide visual schedules to help people prepare for what's happening and when.

4.1.5 Communication and Signage

- Use plain English and pictorial signage to reduce confusion and anxiety.
- Avoid overwhelming visuals, no flashing content, or cluttered signs.
- Include Easy Read formats and icons wherever possible.

4.1.6 Staff and Volunteer Awareness

- Train all front-facing staff to:
    - Recognise signs of sensory overload or distress.
    - Respond with patience and use supportive and reassuring communication.
    - Speak calmly and clearly.
    - Offer quiet support or space without pressure.
- Ask staff and volunteers to avoid wearing scents, especially those stationed in quiet or support zones.
- Encourage all vendors and performers to be calm, considerate, and inclusive.

4.1.7 On-the-Day Help

- Provide a designated support contact who can be contacted if someone becomes overwhelmed and needs help leaving a crowd.

- Consider using lanyards, badges or optional identifiers (e.g. Hidden Disabilities Sunflower) to help staff members identify those who may need:

  - Extra time

  - Queue skipping

  - Quiet exits

- Allow attendees to request support ahead of time and arrange for a meeting point or escort at arrival.

SECTION 5: SIGNAGE, COMMUNICATION AND D/deaf ACCESS

5.1.1. Accessible Signage and Directions

- Use large, high-contrast, weather-resistant signs:

  - Using sans-serif fonts

  - Clear, simple language

  - Visible from a distance

  - At a height where wheelchair users can see them.

  - Pictorial icons (e.g. toilets, quiet areas, assistance dogs, step-free access)

- Avoid:

  - Busy backgrounds

  - Overly technical terms

  - Cluttered or confusing layouts

- Also position signage at key decision points (and use directional arrows), such as:

  - Entrances and exits.

  - Accessible toilets

  - Stage and seating areas

  - Food areas and quiet spaces

  - Pathway junctions

  - Information points

- First Aid

- Viewing platforms

- Step-free routes

- Lifts

- Assistance dog relief areas

- Ensure signs are securely fixed.

5.1.2 Event Maps and Route Information

- Provide accessible maps, both in print and digital formats, showing:

    - Step-free routes

    - Accessible toilets

    - Quiet spaces

    - Viewing areas

    - Dog relief zones

    - First aid points

    - Accessible emergency exits

- Include icons, colour-coded zones, or landmarks to aid navigation.

- Ensure maps are available in:

    - Large print

    - Easy Read

    - Screen-reader-friendly documents.

- Ensure they are available via websites, apps, or email.

- In indoor venues, label entrances/exits, lifts, staircases, cloakrooms, toilets and meeting rooms using consistent, high-contrast signage.

5.1.3 D/deaf Awareness and Support

- Where possible, provide British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for:

    - Talks

    - Stage performances

    - Announcements (where possible)

- Offer live captions or subtitles on:

  - Big screens

  - Personal devices

  - Pre-recorded video content

- Consider visual announcements (e.g. digital screens) alongside spoken messages.

- If requested, make transcripts available for performances post-event.

5.1.4 Assistive Technology

- Install hearing/induction loops in:

  - Presentation and performance areas

  - Info points or help desks.

- Promote their availability in advance and on-site.

- Encourage speakers and staff to:

  - Use microphones.

  - Face the audience when speaking.

  - Avoid covering their mouths.

  - Avoid background noise where possible when speaking to enhance clarity.

5.1.5 Staff Awareness and Communication Aids

- Train all event staff and volunteers in deaf awareness, including how to:

  - Speak clearly and directly to the person and avoid turning away.

  - Use written communication or gestures if needed.

  - Be patient and give time for people to respond.

- Provide alternative communication methods at help points, such as:

  - Pen and paper

  - Tablets or phones with speech-to-text apps

  - Visual communication boards

5.1.6 Advance Communication

- Ensure clear, inclusive communication in event materials:

  o Use plain English and offer materials in alternative formats on request, such as large print, braille, or digital copies.

  o Offer translations into languages commonly spoken locally.

  o Promote access provisions early, across:

    ▪ Websites

    ▪ Social media

    ▪ Printed flyers

    ▪ Booking confirmations

SECTION 6: INCLUSIVE PLANNING AND PRE-EVENT INFORMATION

6.1.1 Involving Disabled People in Planning

- Involve disabled people from the start of event planning to help identify:

  o Access barriers

  o Sensory or mobility needs

  o Safety concerns

- Appoint an Accessibility Coordinator to oversee inclusion and respond to queries or concerns before and during the event.

- Consider holding events in the daytime rather than the evening to improve accessibility for individuals who may struggle attending late events.

6.1.2 Pre-Event Information

- Provide clear and detailed information in advance, using inclusive language, including:

  o Accessible routes, entrances, and emergency exits

  o Where ramps and lifts are located, including lift dimensions if entry points or interiors are narrow.

  o Toilet and seating arrangements, including whether accessible toilets require a RADAR key.

- o Assistance dog areas and medical spaces.

- o BSL availability, hearing loops, quiet zones, and sensory maps.

- o Accessible parking and drop-off points.

- o What assistance will be available on-site.

- Share this information via:

  - o Event websites

  - o Booking systems

  - o Social media

  - o Flyers and brochures

6.1.3 Accessible Formats and Languages

- Offer materials in a range of accessible formats, including:

  - o Large print

  - o Easy Read

  - o High Contrast

  - o Braille

  - o Audio

  - o BSL video or captions

- Translate key information, such as access details, safety guidance, and signage, into the most spoken community languages.

- Use icons, diagrams, and clear visuals to support individuals who benefit from visual information.

6.1.4 Booking and Access Requests

- Ensure the ticketing process:

  - o Has a straightforward way to request access needs (e.g. step-free entry, assistance, BSL)

  - o Offers flexible or early entry options.

- Allows free or discounted tickets for personal assistants or carers.

- Avoid "timed entry only" if it could disadvantage people with health or mobility issues.

- Consider recognising the Access card scheme, which shows vendors the extra requirements a disabled individual has (such as needing a +1 ticket, being unable to queue and so on).

6.1.5 Contact and Communication Channels

- Provide a dedicated phone number, SMS, and email address for accessibility enquiries and reasonable adjustment requests in advance.

- Display this contact info on:
    o Booking confirmations
    o Flyers
    o Websites and social media posts

- Offer multiple ways to communicate, such as:
    o Email
    o Phone or text.
    o Web contact forms

6.1.5 On-the-Day Coordination

- Clearly signpost information and assistance points so disabled people can get help if required.

- Ensure staff and volunteers:
    o Know where to direct people for help.
    o Understand what provisions are available.
    o Are trained in disability awareness and know how to assist respectfully.

- Consider assigning a designated accessibility lead or support at the event who attendees and other staff can approach for advice or assistance.

SECTION 7: ADDITIONAL INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

7.1.1 Assistance Animals

- Clearly mark "Assistance Dogs Welcome" on event materials.

- Provide:

    o Water bowls in shaded or quiet areas

    o Signage to indicate dog-friendly relief areas.

    o Biodegradable poo bags at these locations

7.1.2 Personal Assistants & Carers

- Offer free or discounted tickets for carers and personal assistants and clearly advertise this in all materials.

- Ensure the booking system accommodates plus-ones without added complexity or delays.

- Allow flexible entry times for disabled individuals and their support companions.

- Consider allowing disabled individuals to swap their ticket date on the day (if there is availability) due to their fluctuating health needs.

7.1.3 Medical and Wellbeing Needs

- Provide a private area for:

    o People to take medication, inhalers, and injections.

    o Medical treatment

    o Rest or sensory regulation.

- In indoor venues, ensure this area is accessible and has an easily opening door or automatic entry if possible.

- Permit attendees to bring:

    o Medical supplies, mobility aids, and sensory aids

    o Their own food and drink if needed for medical or disability-related reasons. Ensure guests using feeding tubes or medical nutrition are welcomed and accommodated in cafés and food areas.

- Ensure disabled people's needs are included in emergency evacuation plans.

7.1.4 Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme

- Offer Sunflower lanyards at the event (e.g. from the Information Point).

- Train staff to:

  - Recognise the lanyard.

  - Use the approach: "Offer help, but don't insist."

- Include a short note and logo in printed and digital materials, explaining that the scheme is recognised.

7.1.5 Weather Considerations (Outdoor Events)

- Provide:

  - Sheltered or shaded areas for rest, especially for people using powered wheelchairs or other electrical mobility aids.

  - Non-slip flooring or matting, especially in key zones (e.g. walkways, toilets)

- Make sure all critical routes remain accessible in poor weather.

7.1.6. Visual Story

- If it is a regular event, consider a simple visual story, providing photographs of what an individual will expect, along with straightforward descriptions next to each picture.

7.1.7 Staff & Volunteer Training

- Train all staff and volunteers in:

  - Disability and sensory awareness

  - Deaf and dementia-friendly communication

  - How to offer respectful support without assumptions

- Ensure staff know how to escalate access issues or respond to requests for help.

7.1.8 Digital Accessibility (including for Online or Hybrid Events)

- Ensure websites and online content meet WCAG accessibility standards, including:

  - Keyboard navigation

  - Screen reader compatibility.

  - High colour contrast

- Provide:

  - Captions, transcripts, and BSL for videos

  - Static images (avoid flashing or fast-moving content).

7.1.9 Post-Event Feedback

- Collect feedback specifically from disabled attendees using:

  - Online surveys (QR code at exits and inside accessible toilet doors)

  - Large-print versions

  - Paper formats at info points

- Ask about the accessibility experience, not just the event itself.

- Share a public summary of what changes or improvements are planned as a result.

SECTION 8: MEETING, CONFERENCE & INDOOR EVENT ACCESSIBILITY

8.1.1 Environment & Venue Setup

- Avoid glare, make sure lights aren't shining in attendees' faces, and avoid using moving lights or harsh overhead lighting. Use natural lighting whenever possible, and offer dimmable options for attendees with sensory sensitivities.

- Maintain good ventilation and air quality. Keep the area scent-free.

- Provide consistent temperature control (e.g. portable fans or heaters), particularly in older venues without modern HVAC systems.

- Avoid loud background music.

- Ensure flooring is non-slip and transitions (e.g. door thresholds or carpet edges) are level and clearly marked.

8.1.2 Navigation and Room Access

- Ensure all doors are wide enough for wheelchair users, are propped open, can be operated automatically, or opened with minimal force.

- Clearly mark where lifts, accessible toilets, and emergency exits are. Use high-contrast signage.

- Leave ample space between furniture, allowing for wheelchair or mobility aid users to navigate independently.

- Provide step-free access to all areas, including ramps onto stages.

8.1.3 Seating, Layout and Participation

- Avoid tightly packed rows or fixed seating where possible.

- Allow space at tables for wheelchair users to join group discussions.

- Place priority seating near the front for individuals with visual or hearing impairments or for people using mobility aids.

- Wheelchair users may prefer to sit at the end of a row with a seat removed so that they can manoeuvre into their space more easily. Ensure there is ample room behind them to do so, and consider removing a chair from the row behind to allow them to reverse their wheelchair confidently.

- Use microphones consistently, even in small rooms, to ensure everyone is audible.

- Install induction/hearing loops in main meeting and break-out rooms where possible.

8.1.4 Presentation Accessibility

- Ensure all presentation materials use high-contrast text, large fonts, and simple visuals.

- Avoid flashing content or auto-playing videos. Provide text alternatives or descriptions.

- Offer materials in accessible formats (e.g. large print, digital screen-reader-friendly documents, and printed handouts).

- Caption and/or transcribe all video or multimedia content shown.

- Share presentation slides with attendees who are visually impaired in advance, where possible.

8.1.5 Speaker and Panel Support

- Provide height-adjustable lecterns and accessible routes to the stage or front.

- Brief speakers to use inclusive communication (e.g. plain language, describing visuals, and facing the audience when speaking).

- Allow speakers or panellists with disabilities to submit adjustments or requirements in advance.

- Provide accessible seating and water for speakers.

8.1.6 Breakouts, Networking and Workshops

- Ensure small-group spaces are not overcrowded and allow wheelchair access.

- Use portable microphones or amplification tools during group reporting back or discussions.

- Offer remote participation options wherever possible.

- Provide quiet spaces near main meeting areas for attendees who may become overwhelmed.

8.1.7 Communication and Interaction

- Allow attendees to ask questions in multiple ways e.g. live, on paper, or via digital chat tools.

- Offer BSL interpreters and/or speech-to-text captions for Q&As or presentations.

- Encourage use of name badges with pronouns and offer printed agendas or visual schedules.

- Ensure staff or volunteers are trained to support indoor-specific access issues, such as guiding attendees in large venues, holding open heavy doors that can't be propped open, or operating lifts.

8.1.8 Emergency Planning

- Provide clear evacuation routes for wheelchair users and people with mobility or sensory needs.

- Ensure emergency plans consider upper floors and include refuge areas where needed.

- Brief all staff on evacuation procedures, including assisting individuals with disabilities.

Inclusion Starts with Visibility

Make access features prominent, proactive, and easy to find, not hidden or treated as an afterthought. When disabled attendees know what's available, they're more likely to feel welcome and confident attending.

SECTION 9: STAFF TRAINING – QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

9.1.1 Disability Awareness before the Event

- This Disability Awareness PDF by Dr Deborah Lawson can be downloaded and shared with volunteers and staff members ahead of the event: https://deborah-lawson.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/disability-awareness.-a-brief-overview.-by-deborah-lawson.pdf

9.1.2 Your Role

- Be welcoming, visible and approachable. You're a key point of support for guests with access needs.

- If you're unsure about anything, refer questions to the nearest senior staff member.

- If a disabled person seems agitated or distressed, they may be overwhelmed. Offer calm reassurance and guide them to a quiet space if needed.

9.1.3 Inclusive Language & Behaviour

Use clear, respectful communication. Small changes make a big difference:

- Say: "How can I help?" instead of "What's wrong?"

- Speak directly to the person, not their companion or interpreter.

- Thank people for raising issues: "Thanks for letting us know, we'll get that sorted."

- Give people time to respond; don't rush or finish their sentence.

- Never assume. Many disabilities aren't visible.

9.1.4 Key Accessible Locations

- Ensure you are familiar with where key areas are, such as:

- Wheelchair/accessible viewing areas, accessible toilets, designated quiet spaces, and an assistance dog relief area (with water bowls available).

9.1.5 Be Ready To:

- Keep walkways & kerbs clear – politely ask vendors to move stock and stalls away from drop kerbs.

- Prevent stalls from blocking access, especially walkways, near toilets, the stage, and seating.

- Direct people to toilets, quiet spaces, accessible seating, or help points.

- Respect Sunflower Lanyards. These may signal a need for extra time, space, queue-skipping, or support.

- Never touch a wheelchair, assistance dog, or mobility aid unless invited.

- Offer help, but don't assume or insist. Let the guest guide the interaction.

- Support anyone distressed by calmly offering to guide them out of a crowded area.

- Check that a warning has gone out before any loud/strobe performance.

- Monitor accessible seating and make sure it's clearly marked and not obstructed.

- If someone is struggling to see (e.g. who uses a wheelchair), offer discreet help to find a better spot or guide them to the wheelchair viewing area if applicable.

- Check accessible toilets hourly to ensure they are well stocked with non-scented soap, toilet paper, and the floors are dry, clean, and clear.

9.1.6 In an Emergency

- Know your step-free evacuation routes

- Be prepared to assist anyone needing extra support during an evacuation. Use calm, clear communication.

- Know who the senior point of contact is.

SECTION 10: INCLUSIVE EVENT QUICK CHECKLIST

10.1.1 Before the Event

- Involve disabled people in planning.
- Conduct a full accessibility audit (accessible routes, toilets, signage, floor surfaces)
- Provide detailed access information on websites, flyers, and booking confirmations.
- Include step-free routes, accessible toilets, parking, and quiet zones on maps.
- Ensure genuinely accessible toilets are available for powered wheelchair users.
- Offer booking options for carers/PAs, early entry, and access requests.
- Publicise accessible transport options and accessible parking close to the venue.
- Ensure timed admissions don't disadvantage people with fluctuating needs.
- Provide information in accessible formats (Easy Read, large print, Braille, BSL, audio)
- Consider the specific needs of indoor venues, such as lighting, ventilation, acoustics, and room layout.

10.1.2 Venue Setup

- Ensure wide, clutter-free, step-free pedestrian routes.
- Signpost toilets, quiet spaces, exits, and first aid points.
- Provide accessible toilets with enough transfer space, room for a carer, scent-free soap, no air fresheners, and offer a Changing Places facility if possible.
- Position accessible parking bays near the entrance, on firm level ground with drop kerbs.
- Offer varied seating options, including a designated wheelchair/disabled viewing area.
- Set up quiet/sensory-friendly areas away from noise or crowds, with calm lighting and minimal distractions (especially in indoor spaces).
- Avoid scented products in indoor/outdoor areas.

10.1.3 Staff & Volunteers

- Train all staff in disability, sensory, and D/deaf awareness
- Assign accessibility leads at key points.
- Encourage inclusive and welcoming language (e.g. "How can I help?")
- Recognise Sunflower lanyards and Access Cards
- Know how to support individuals in distress or with access needs.
- Be familiar with evacuation plans and step-free emergency exits.
- Train staff on indoor-specific considerations, such as operating lifts, managing acoustic feedback, and guiding within large buildings.

10.1.4 During the Event

- Provide early or flexible access for disabled attendees.
- Offer live captions, BSL, or visual announcements where needed.
- Keep walkways, kerbs, and toilet access points clear.
- Check accessible toilets hourly for cleanliness and supplies.
- Respond quickly to accessibility issues.
- Offer sensory supports (e.g. earplugs, maps, and sensory-friendly areas)

- Ensure indoor presentation content is accessible (e.g. use microphones, captions, large print materials, BSL).

10.1.5 After the Event

- Collect feedback from disabled attendees.
- Use accessible survey formats (QR codes, large print, paper)
- Share improvements or changes based on feedback.