The Centre for Ethnic Health Research
national centre for tackling health inequalities

Guidance for Accessible and Inclusive Meetings and Events

The Approach

This guidance has been produced by the Centre for Ethnic Health Research to assist with the planning of events. The following are practical measures to be considered by the event organiser. They are measures that would serve to increase accessibility for all people attending, thus making events more inclusive. Central to consideration is the issue of 'reasonable adjustment' as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 [1].

The approach (both in preparation beforehand and during the event itself) should:

- Involve experts by experience from all relevant protected characteristic [2] communities and others.
- Instigate and maintain open and effective communication channels, ensuring that you make reasonable adjustments to enable all to be involved.
- Allocate sufficient time to ensure the meaningful involvement of staff and service users.
- Ensure that all staff involved are adequately/appropriately trained in equality matters.
- Be aware of the legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 [3] and other relevant legislation.
- Use the social model of disability [4] as your guide for thinking and acting.

[1] See http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/20 and https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/what-are-reasonable-adjustments
[2] See https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics
[3] See https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/equality-act-2010
[4] See https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability/ as an example.

- Produce and use a Safer Space Policy for all events [5]
- Make use of Plain English [6] and Easy-To-Read [7].
- Ensure that you are aware of visual disability good practice and use both appropriate text and background colours/colour combinations [8]. Also pay attention to effects used in Powerpoint presentations, for example keeping to a minimum effects such as 'fly in', 'bounce', 'spiral' and 'zoom'.
- Make sure you have left enough time in your event programme to allow for different people's support needs and that your Agenda is appropriately timed [9].
- Ask beforehand, all those attending what reasonable adjustments they need to enable them to access fully the facility and your event [10]. Make sure you've allowed yourself enough time to make any necessary arrangement.
- Consider having a Code of Conduct and Inclusion Statement for events

[5] See EDIS Safer Space Policy 2021 (edisgroup.org) as an example.
[6] See Plain English summaries | NIHR and/or How to write in plain English - Help - University of Kent as example guides. ARC West have also produced a useful quick guide to writing Plain English.
[7] See make-it-easy-easy-read.pdf (england.nhs.uk) and/or Slide 1 (learningdisabilityservice-leeds.nhs.uk) as example guides.
[8] Click on this useful guide to Colorblindness - Coloring for Colorblindness (davidmathlogic.com)
[9] This would include things such as translation, language and interpretation arrangements and sufficient number and length of breaks.
[10] This is particularly important in relation to people with disabilities. However other arrangements may also be relevant (e.g. food/refreshment requirements, including allergies).

Before the event

Planning/things to consider
Date of the event. Any potential/relevant date clashes e.g. half-term, religious festivals etc
Start and finish times, particularly during school term time, office hours, peak travel times
Would an evening or weekend event be more appropriate?
Filming the event for people unable to attend on the day
Costs for adjustments e.g. sign language interpreter, large print, translations, technology
Is overnight accommodation needed for speakers or delegates?
Ensure you have enough staff available to show delegates and speakers to their seats and provide assistance where required etc
Provision for live captioning/subtitling during events
Provision for carers/advocates to attend – is funding available for caring responsibility, travel costs etc?
Provision of Interpreters (including British Sign Language)
Ensuring provision of sufficient breaks and time on the agenda for movement around rooms etc

Before the event

Advertising the event & registrations
Advertise in a variety of formats, print, web, social media, posters, word of mouth, videos
Provide an alternative registration option (online, telephone, email)
Ask for dietary information from speakers and delegates
Ensure an equality/accessibility statement is included in the event information. This should be on both the registration form and any announcement or adverts Suggested wording: ***We aim to ensure that all people have equal access to events. If you require alternative formats or other reasonable adjustments, please contact …. so that arrangements can be made where possible.***
Provide venue information in a variety of formats Consider producing a pictorial guide to accessing the venue (example can be found here)
Ensure registration form asks about reasonable adjustments and/or consideration of other needs
Provide confirmation of booking including information on the adjustments or provision being made. E.g. confirmation of parking, ramps, interpreters etc
Provide contact details for the event organiser – email/phone number in case of queries and or to provide reassurance

Before the event

Event Venue /Facilities When considering a venue as a meeting/event location, make sure you cover the following to ensure that the building being used (and all its facilities) is accessible.
Is there provision of accessible and reserved parking spaces, including disabled (blue badge) parking? Could parking be reserved with the venue? If requested, other car parking spaces should be made available for people with other needs
Is the route from the parking to the venue without obstruction? Dropped kerbs, gravel paths etc. Could a map of the venue (including parking) be provided to delegates?
Is the venue accessible by other means of transport – train, foot, bicycle? The venue may be able to provide details of nearby bus routes, train stations, taxi companies etc.
The size of the venue/room e.g. whether it is able to accommodate all, whilst ensuring that the room and the layout will not be cluttered for the numbers of people expected. The space should be enough for people to move about easily and be able to accommodate wheelchairs, motorised scooters, people with walking aids and/or assistance/support dogs
If there are stairs to access the venue, ensure that there is a ramp or lift that wheelchair users are able to access independently. Ensure that an accessible route is clearly signposted

Before the event

Event Venue /Facilities (Continued)
Consider what layout of the room would be more user friendly to the audience
Ensure corridors, stairwells and lifts are clear of obstacles and accessible to all
Provision of seats with arm-rests and/or back supports and tables/desks appropriate and accessible for wheelchair users
Is there a hearing/induction loop system in good working order?
Ensure that there are accessible toilets (with an alarm system), baby changing facilities, gender neutral toilets and that there is clear signposting
A system of lighting that ensures a consistent distribution of light, neither too bright nor too dark and without glare or flickering
Provision of an additional quiet room. Consideration of the need to also have a prayer room or breastfeeding room
Ensure that speakers are visible to all and that all speakers are able to access any lectern being used

Before the event

Food and Drink When considering refreshments for a meeting/event, make sure you cover the following;
Caterers are aware of dietary needs and allergies in advance
foods are clearly labelled and separated e.g. halal, vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free etc
Be aware that some people may be fasting. Share information on the location of the quiet space away from the catering
Consider the provision of eating aids e.g. straws, lidded beakers, adaptive cutlery
Ensure eating areas are fully accessible, that the food can be accessed or provide assistance
Ensure that provision is made for people with assistance/support dogs

On The Day

Emergency Procedures
Ensure that you have a venue Evacuation Plan. In addition, those people with Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) should be encouraged to share necessary information on their requirements with event organisers ahead of the event. Identify staff to assist in evacuation. Is a fire drill scheduled during the event?
Ensure that there is a trained first aider and mental health first aider available during the event

On The Day

Arrive early to meet with venue staff and address any concerns or queries you may have
Ensure that there are staff on hand for meet and greet arrangements
Make sure your registration desks are clearly signposted
Provide microphones and roving microphones
Ensure clear signposting to all rooms and facilities
As soon as possible, check that lifts and any automatic doors are working
Have sufficient staff/volunteers available (including people trained in disability equality, first aiders and mental health first aiders) for personal contact and assistance at any time
Include a single point of emergency contact. Ensure that emergency evacuations procedures are communicated to those who may require assistance
If using name badges, have different options available. Not everyone can manage using a pin or a clip. Lanyards are preferable

On The Day

Have available at least one large print version and one easy read version of any schedules or other necessary handouts.
Promote pronoun stickers if people wish to use them. Ask speakers to introduce themselves using their pronouns
Reduce background noise as much as possible
Promote Twitter hashtags
Include an option for a question to be asked through a member of staff or via social media, if, for whatever reason, someone is reluctant to ask directly
Ask facilitators/speakers to repeat any questions asked from the audience if necessary, so that everyone has heard what is being asked as well as the response
Make provision for everyone to have their say/be heard in the course of the event and in appropriate and tailored feedback procedures

On The Day

Presentations and other materials
Presentations should use a font of at least 18pt
Printed documents should use a minimum font of 14
Provide a printed copy of the information displayed on screen
Ask speakers to read large sections of text displayed on screen and refer to all items and images that are shown
Use jargon free language. Make use of Plain English and easy to read
Ensure all key terms are explained and consider a glossary
Avoid block capitals
Use high contrast colour schemes
Use inclusive and diverse imagery
Make effective and thorough use of social media on the day
Ask facilitators/speakers to repeat any questions asked from the audience if necessary, so that everyone has heard what is being asked as well as the response
Include an option for a question to be asked through a member of staff or via social media, if, for whatever reason, someone is reluctant to ask directly

After the Event

Upon completion of your event
Consider using a feedback system that is accessible in a variety of formats including how things could be improved for future events
Provide alternative sources of event information such as slide decks, videos of presentations (if applicable), handouts

Other Considerations

Other issues to consider that relate to physical and mental health conditions that may affect inclusion or interaction (this list is not exhaustive and is to be used to generate consideration of issues that may have an impact on your audience and event).

Promote acceptance of the following:

- Anxiety relating to asking questions
- Autistic behaviours
- Avoidance of eye contact
- Different or impaired conversational skills
- Distractibility
- Echolalia (repetition of speech)
- Fidgeting/moving about
- Periodic Leg Movements
- Perseveration/obsessiveness
- Repetitive movements or behaviours

Ask people not to remark on things that others may need. For example, mechanisms to reduce sensory issues (tinted glasses, ear plugs/defenders and headphones etc.)

Ensure that you do everything you can to facilitate lip reading (speechreading). This may mean not wearing dangling earrings and zigzag patterned ties, not using loud graphic prints, trimming back moustaches, avoiding glossy lipstick, not talking with your hands over your mouth or not facing the audience.

Consider introducing and promoting 'silent clapping' i.e. replacing the traditional clap with a wave of the hands. The sound of many people clapping together can be uncomfortable or painful to some autistic people and clapping may be difficult for some people with disabilities.

Consider asking all speakers to describe audibly each image used and to use personal descriptions of themselves (white, middle-aged man with a beard, wearing a blue top) before presenting

Final Thoughts

This document (including enclosures and references) is made available for advice and guidance purposes only. It is intended to provide general, informal information rather than a list of comprehensive specific legal stipulations such as those under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation. We would always encourage people to consult such legal documents for more specific matters and to ensure legal compliance. The authors assume no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions.

Sources

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