

## **Organising Accessible Events**

Issues that need attention to detail include planning, access to and in the venue, accessibility of event and inclusive participation

### **The Law:**

Service providers have a duty under the Disability Discrimination Act: not to treat disabled people less favourably than non-disabled people, and make reasonable adjustments to your services and premises so that disabled people can access them.

Public Bodies (like the council and health authority) have additional duties relevant to arranging events, including: Encourage participation by disabled people in public life

Take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment will mean that the event will be an inclusive event. Thinking inclusively means thinking about everybody each time you plan a feature of your event such as publicity or the venue. This means thinking about attendees, staff, chairs, speakers, guests, performers and exhibitors any of whom may be disabled people themselves. It means making sure that there are no disabling barriers built into your event. It's not about making reasonable adjustments on the day it's about getting it right at the planning stage.

### **Venues**

You should start by looking at your possible venues – have you done an access audit of the venues? (You can use an Access Auditor from the Central Beds Access Group to carry out an access audits checklist). It is best to visit the venue to check for access and remember you need also to consider how people get to the building: As not all disabled people have their own transport ensure it's on an accessible bus route, there a level access and has crossing/dropped kerbs. Ensure there is disabled parking as close to the door as possible and there is a drop-off point close to the entrance door. If transport is an issue, is there a budget for taxis for disabled people to get them to and from the venue, and a system for them to claim back this expense on the day? Is it easy to find your way to event, ensure it is well signposted and there is someone trained in disability awareness to meet and greet people who can't see/read the signs? Ensure that you use a variety of media to publicise your event, so that you are reaching disabled citizens, word of mouth, leaflets and newsletters (large print accessible format) and taped information. The talking newspaper (weekly news) for those with visual impairment will often advertise events providing is advertised well in advance, Websites and posters targeting places where disabled people go such as day centres, libraries, shops and organisations etc. Make sure you tell people about the access in the publicity.

### **Planning – the event**

Do people need tickets? How do they get them, is the ticket office accessible (can you get to it by accessible transport)

Do people need to fill in a form – what alternatives have you supplied?

Find out the information and communication needs of interested parties before the event, does anyone need a sign language interpreter/note-taker/lip speaker – do you know where to get one? Have you made sure this is budgeted for?

Have you involved disabled people in the planning of the event? This is often a good idea, as they will be able to highlight problem areas that need to be addressed.

Make sure the seating arrangements are accessible and there space at the end of rows/front for people with assistance dogs and wheelchairs? (Ensure water is made available for the dogs?)

Is there plenty of space for people with ambulant and other impairments?

Is there space reserved near the front for people with hearing impairments?  
Is there a hearing loop at the venue, have you let participants (and staff) know about it?  
Has provision been made for people to bring their own assistants or carers?  
Make sure speakers are briefed on how to present accessibly, work with sign language interpreters etc  
Ensure the lighting okay for visually impaired people?  
Is there a quiet room?  
Is there a smoking area outside?

### **Conducting the event**

Have you made sure all information, reports, papers etc are available before the day of the event and in the right format?  
Are all speakers, chairs etc informed of need to face forward when they speak, and use Plain English?  
Make sure that when the lights are dimmed for videos, you are not giving information that needs to be seen by hearing impaired people (you can't lip read or see sign if the lighting is low)  
Are there plenty of breaks designed into the timetable?  
Is there a host to help people with drinks/refreshments?  
If there are video or screen presentations – are they subtitled – does the presenter know he must face the audience, and describe any visual materials in his presentation  
Are all the staff disability aware, do they know their responsibilities regarding assisting disabled participants – do named people have responsibilities for assisting with evacuation of disabled participants and presenters?  
In the introduction have you ensured that you don't just point to the toilets, evacuation area etc, but describe how to get there.  
Make sure the staffs understand that if things go wrong, or aren't working, the best person to ask for how to get thing on track is the disabled person.  
Make sure the event is well staffed, and the staffs are easy to identify.  
Make sure there is plenty of circulation space.  
If you are expecting people to work in groups, make sure there is a quiet area (or room) for people with hearing impairments to do this.  
If there is food, are there assistants to help with getting it?  
Is coffee/tea easy to use (milk and coffee in fiddly individual cartons is difficult for a lot of people)?  
Is there suitable cutlery as well as standard?  
Are straws available?  
Afterwards  
Find out what worked and didn't work for disabled people  
Plan improvements for the next event