

# Inclusive and Accessible Events

## A Guide for Event Organisers



World Wheelchair Curling Championships 2025 © Scottish Curling

# Inclusive and Accessible Events

## A Guide for Event Organisers

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. The value and importance of the accessible market</b>	<b>4</b>
It's not only about physical access	5
<b>3. What are my obligations under the Equality Act 2010?</b>	<b>7</b>
Accessibility and the Equality Act	8
What's 'reasonable' for my event?	8
<b>4. Practical steps towards improving accessibility</b>	<b>9</b>
Getting started	10
Accessibility and environmental sustainability	11
Programme planning	13
The venue	14
Physical access and accessibility features	14
Outdoor venues	16
Getting to the venue	17
Parking facilities	19
Accessible toilets and facilities	20
Welcoming assistance dogs	21
Signage	22
Catering	23
Welcoming people and accessibility training	25
Promoting your event	26
Communicating during the event	29
Professional communication support	31
Ticketing, registration and seat allocation	32





Credit: VisitScotland/Rob McDougall

Do you want to expand the audience for your event and enhance the event experience for attendees?

## 1. Introduction

### How will this guide help you?

This guide is for anyone involved in organising events, no matter the size, type, or location. Whether you're an individual, business, charity, voluntary organisation, or professional event organiser, and whether you're hosting a meeting, conference, gig, ceremony, fundraising event, or any other type of festival or event, this guide is for you.

It provides information on why accessibility and inclusion are important in event planning and development, along with practical tips, advice, and guidance to help you achieve better outcomes.

Scotland has a global reputation as one of the world's most welcoming and friendly nations. Creating inclusive events that are accessible

# Inclusive and Accessible Events

## A Guide for Event Organisers

to all is a priority theme in Scotland's National Events Strategy, [Scotland the Perfect Stage](#) (2024–2035). Our events should be accessible, safe and welcoming to all residents and visitors while representing the diversity of our people, places and cultural heritage. We encourage you to use this guide as a reference tool in your event planning to help you achieve your access and inclusion objectives.

### **This guide covers your legal obligations and key aspects to consider when planning your event including:**

- Providing advice on getting to the event venue
- Parking provision – requirements and best practice
- Event venues – accessibility considerations
- Event programming – how to make sure it is accessible
- How to ensure everyone feels welcome to your event
- Communications – how to make your marketing and information provision as accessible as possible.

## 2. The value and importance of the accessible market

Accessibility is often regarded as being mainly associated with disability. It's true to say that making your event accessible for disabled people would likely be beneficial alone, as:

- 1 in 4 people in the UK have a disability or impairment<sup>1</sup>
- The spending power of disabled people to the UK economy is £274 billion<sup>1</sup>
- The market represents a loyal customer base.

However, the accessible market is much broader than this and includes:

- families with young children
- older people
- people with temporary physical impairments or injuries (e.g. those on crutches)
- people with hearing or visual impairments
- people with specific dietary requirements
- individuals with learning disabilities; and many others.



In reality, everyone can benefit from adjustments that make attending events easier and more enjoyable. Enhancing accessibility not only helps those with specific access

requirements, or those in the ‘accessible market’, but also improves the overall experience for all attendees.

## It’s not only about physical access

There’s a common misconception that making events accessible is all about expensive modifications to venues and equipment to improve physical access, primarily for wheelchair users.

While physical access obviously plays a very important role in making events accessible, hosting an accessible event encompasses much more.



Credit: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam

Improving accessibility shouldn’t be seen as an ‘add-on’ or ‘special arrangement.’ Instead, it’s an opportunity to reach a broader audience and enhance the success of your event.

## Inclusive and Accessible Events

### A Guide for Event Organisers

The disability market also includes, for example, people with visual impairments, hearing impairments and learning disabilities, as well as any other conditions that have a substantial and long-term effect on a person's ability to carry out their normal day-to-day activities.

Therefore, hosting an accessible event involves considering a wide range of needs beyond just physical access.

In fact, it is estimated that 70-80% of disabled people have a hidden disability<sup>2</sup>, i.e. one that is not apparent from looking at the person.

There are many simple ways in which you can make your event more accessible in addition to improving physical access, changes in communication style, attitude, and simply making people feel welcome can have a significant impact.



Research<sup>3</sup> shows that the level of customer service and the availability of detailed access information is often seen as a greater priority than physical access for some in the accessible market.

Even if your venue and event can't be fully physically accessible or doesn't have the most accessible facilities, you can still enhance someone's experience by:

- Extending a warm welcome
- Providing useful information about your facilities and services
- Making some 'reasonable' adjustments, as laid out in this guide.

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Disability Studies

<sup>3</sup> Capability Scotland's Accessible Tourism Consultation Report commissioned by VS and Euan's Guide Access Survey

### 3. What are my obligations under the Equality Act 2010?

Please note that this section contains only a brief introduction to the Equality Act and how it applies to accessibility at events. It does not constitute legal advice. If you are in doubt about your responsibilities and rights under the Act or need more information or advice on any points raised, we recommend that you seek independent advice, for example from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) which produces specific guidance for different business sectors; or a solicitor. You can get help choosing a solicitor on the Law Society of Scotland website.

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in society as a whole because of their:

- Age
- Disability
- Having undergone, undergoing, or proposing to undergo gender reassignment
- Their marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy and maternity, or having a child
- Race (including colour, ethnic or national origin, and nationality)
- Religion or belief, or lack thereof
- Sex (or gender)
- Sexual orientation.

These are defined by the Act as ‘protected characteristics’.



## Inclusive and Accessible Events

### A Guide for Event Organisers

## Accessibility and the Equality Act

Under the Act, it's against the law to treat someone with a protected characteristic, for example a disability, less favourably than you would treat others. It's also against the law to have arrangements in place that put people with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage, unless these arrangements can be fully justified.

Importantly, the Equality Act also states that service providers must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people are not discriminated against. These adjustments relate to the way in which services are delivered, physical features of venues, etc.,

and the provision of additional equipment for a disabled person.

For example, if a feature of your venue or event puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled, you are required to take reasonable steps to remove the feature, change it, or provide a reasonable means of avoiding it.

In summary, service providers are required to think in advance about what changes might be necessary to ensure that disabled people can use their service, and plan ahead for these changes.

## What's 'reasonable' for my event?

What's reasonable for you and your event will depend on the size and nature of your organisation and the type of event that you're organising. You won't be required to do more than is reasonable for your event. What's more, many of the simple adjustments that you can make to improve accessibility are quite straightforward and relatively inexpensive.

The Equality Act 2010 tells us what service providers are required to do, by law. But accessibility is not just about compliance: at its core, it's about taking practical and creative steps to improve the access to, and enjoyment of, your event.





Credit: VisitScotland/Peter Dibdin

It's against the law to treat someone with a protected characteristic, for example a disability, less favourably than you would treat others.

## 4. Practical steps towards improving accessibility

To make your event more accessible, consider the following suggestions. The following ideas are not exhaustive but provide suggestions that demonstrate the principles of how accessibility can be improved. Remember:

- Not all suggestions will apply to every event, venue, or target audience.
- You might already have some arrangements in place.

- Suggestions range from relatively simple, low-cost adjustments to more substantial modifications, which may be more relevant to consider during venue redevelopment, new venue construction, or in the construction of temporary sites and structures.

Consider which of the suggestions would represent reasonable adjustments for your event.



## Inclusive and Accessible Events

### A Guide for Event Organisers

## Getting started

It's important to start considering accessibility early in your event planning. Treating accessibility as a core part of your planning process makes it easier, cheaper, and more effective than adding it as a 'bonus' or an 'add on'. This approach also prevents the need for potential costly retrospective changes. Additionally, the principles you establish for your first event can be easily applied to all your future events.

Why not also consider seeking advice from 'the experts' themselves. If you have an event planning group or committee, reach out to organisations representing disabled people or other protected groups and invite them to join the group or committee. Their input can help co-design your event. Alternatively, if you have a specific question, you could contact the organisations for direct advice.

Credit: SWPix



## Accessibility and environmental sustainability

Approach accessibility and sustainability together in a holistic way, recognising that unfortunately there may not always be solutions that are both accessible and environmentally friendly. For example, some disabled people might require the use of single use items, cars, or additional equipment.

### Key actions to prioritise:

- **Collaboration:** Ensure that you connect your environmental sustainability team with your access team and work through and find solutions together.
- **Engagement:** Involve disabled people throughout every step of your planning process and listen to their views and experiences to find the best solutions.

### Areas which need careful consideration:

- Litter and other items left on the ground present trip hazards for visually impaired people and people with mobility impairments, and items can get stuck in the wheels of a wheelchair or pram or pushchair. Keep all areas as clean and tidy

as possible and ensure there is a designated clear route in/out.

- Ensure that your waste and recycling plans consider the need for single use or disposable items which are a medical necessity for some disabled people.
- Ensure viewing platforms have appropriate recycling bins to avoid issues with litter. You also want to avoid creating a situation where family, friends, personal assistants, support workers or companions must leave for long periods of time.
- Electrical aids like mobility scooters and some medical equipment for people with complex requirements require constant power. Think about where you can offer access to power where it's needed.
- There is a lack of accessible compost toilets available in the UK and they may not be suitable for use by people at high risk of infection.

### What you can do differently:

- Make sure all viewing platforms and accessible camping areas have recycling facilities which are clearly signposted and close by.





Credit: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam

- When working on your plans to reduce your energy use, factor in constant power for medical equipment and mobility equipment at different times of day.
- Provide a range of toilet options and [Changing Places](#) units so that people can be in sanitised environments if required.
- Share your plans for accessible provisions, e.g. compost toilets, to support market demand.
- Connect with other local events, venues and festivals to share ideas and resources, potentially creating a local access shared equipment store.
- Connect with membership organisations and as a collective, find ways to increase the supply of sustainable, accessible equipment and facilities.

For more information about balancing your sustainability goals with accessibility requirements, please see [No Climate Action Without Us](#).

This new sustainability toolkit aims to support the UK's events industry to implement practical solutions that tackle both climate change and accessibility and was created as part of a unique collaboration between [Attitude is Everything](#), [Julie's Bicycle](#) and [A Greener Future](#).

## Programme planning

Thinking about accessibility when planning the programme for your event can be just as important as providing accessible facilities.

### **Here are some top tips:**

#### **Timings:**

- Avoid early starts to accommodate people with care arrangements, young children, other responsibilities, or those using public transport. Consider starting after 10am.
- Allow time between sessions or performances for people with limited mobility to move across the site or venue.
- Schedule regular comfort breaks and ensure there's enough time to use the facilities, especially if the accessible toilet is any distance away. Breaks also help those who have difficulty sitting or concentrating for long periods.

#### **Arrival and Queuing:**

- Extend or stagger arrival times to prevent long queues.
- Use both audio and visual notifications for announcements, or find alternative ways to manage queues, as some people may have difficulty hearing or reading information.

#### **Communication Support:**

- If you have hired communication support professionals (e.g. sign language interpreters), include extended breaks and regular changeovers. Consult with them about their requirements and plan accordingly. Read the section on professional communication support on page 31 for more details.

## Inclusive and Accessible Events

### A Guide for Event Organisers

## The venue

Finding the right venue for your event can take time and effort, but it's worthwhile getting it right. A thorough search can prevent disruptions, save money, and make your event more accessible for everyone.



## Physical access and accessibility features

### Room accessibility:

- Choose rooms with level entry or lift access.
- Ensure doors are wide enough for wheelchairs, and lifts are large enough to accommodate a wheelchair user and a personal assistant. If doors and lifts are wide enough, this also benefits families and people using prams or pushchairs, assistance dogs, or other mobility aids.

### Space and layout:

- Provide sufficient space for mobility aids and assistance dogs in your layout. Gates or doorways should be at least 80cm wide and access points, corridors,

and passages should be at least 120cm wide, with a 150cm diameter rotating area (for people to turn around in).

- Ensure furniture can be rearranged if additional space is needed.

### Seating options:

- Offer a range of chairs and seating options, some with arms and some without, to accommodate different needs. For example, wheelchair users may prefer chairs without arms for easier transfer.
- Provide a few chairs in areas where it's expected most people will be standing, for those who need to sit.



### **Reception area and information points:**

- Consider a lowered counter for easy access during sign-in and registration and at key points like your box office, information and accreditation points. If not possible, think about other options – e.g. provide a clipboard or lap tray for people to use if they wish.

### **Induction loop:**

- If the venue has an induction loop (a sound system that helps people with hearing aids), it should be regularly tested.
- Clearly signpost the induction loop, and ensure staff know how to use it. If there isn't a permanent loop, consider hiring one.

### **Lighting:**

- Ensure the event space is well-lit but not too bright. Distribute light evenly and minimise reflections, shadows, and glare to assist people with visual impairments.

### **Colour contrast:**

- Use good colour contrast to help people with visual impairments

distinguish between walls, floors, and doors and find their way around the building. Apply stickers to full glass doors or windows as a simple, low-cost adjustment.

### **Communication tools:**

- Have a notepad and pen available for anyone who prefers to write instead of speaking.
- Provide a magnifying glass to help people read any printed material at your event.

### **Staff assistance:**

- Provide accessibility training for all front-line staff and volunteers. Have staff available to guide people around the event space or within the venue. Ensure they are knowledgeable about your accessibility features and services.

Deaf Action have some top tips and training that can help you improve communication and customer service for deaf people, including courses on British Sign Language and deaf awareness. Find out more at [Deaf Action's website](#).

## **Inclusive and Accessible Events**

### **A Guide for Event Organisers**

## Outdoor venues

### **Supplier consultation:**

- Discuss your audience needs with the supplier of any temporary demountable structures and other relevant equipment. They may already have systems with ramped access points or other accessibility features which should be used where possible.

### **Viewing platforms:**

- Consider including viewing platforms for better accessibility. When designing accessible viewing platforms, best practice includes providing ample space for wheelchair manoeuvring, dedicated wheelchair positions with clear sightlines and consideration for personal assistants, designated seating with and without armrests, appropriate gradient ramps for access and clear signage. It is also advisable to position at least one accessible toilet by each viewing platform, preferably within the barriered area.

### **Ground conditions:**

- Plan the layout of your event to avoid gravel, bark, or sloping surfaces where you can. If unavoidable, be prepared and provide an alternative route.

### **Event communications:**

- Provide detailed information about the site's accessibility features, including parking, entrances, toilet and seating arrangements. Include information about any challenging ground conditions and recommended routes in your event communication.

By addressing these aspects, you can enhance the accessibility and overall experience of your event and make it a more inclusive space for all participants and attendees.

## Getting to the venue

You should aim to provide as much information as you can about how to get to and from the event venue. Consider the following:

- Add a link to [Scotrail's Accessible travel page](#) which contains information on their passenger assist service to assist disabled customers and anyone who needs extra help.
- Include a link to [National Rail's Accessible Train Travel](#) and Facilities page which helps people with specific access requirements find additional information about accessibility at specific stations and includes an interactive Accessibility Map.
- Add a link to the [Accessible Travel Hub](#), hosted by Disability Equality Scotland. This site provides useful information on accessible travel in Scotland.
- Add a link to [Thistle Assistance](#) – a great initiative to help travellers feel more comfortable when using public transport. Thistle Assistance offer both a card and an app which can help people access additional support in an easy and subtle way.
- Include links to local bus providers' accessibility information online and/or provide contact details for local companies that offer accessible taxis or minicabs, as relevant for your event. For example, if your event takes place in or around Glasgow or Aberdeen you could link to [First Buses Accessibility Information](#). Events in and around Edinburgh could link to [Lothian Buses Accessibility Information](#). Look for similar pages on the websites of local providers in your area.
- Remember, disabled people might require additional equipment which means that they need to drive and park close to the site. Consider offering reserved spaces closest to the venue for blue badge holders. You could also consider offering accessible shuttle options to take people from the car park to the event site itself.
- Make sure that any transport initiatives aimed at improving accessibility are not prohibitively expensive, as this can put some disabled people at a disadvantage.



## **Inclusive and Accessible Events**

### **A Guide for Event Organisers**

#### **Additional steps you might take include:**

- Finding out whether your nearest train/bus stations or platforms have step-free access (i.e. ramps, lifts, or level access, meaning that people don't have to use stairs or escalators to move between the street and the station or platform).
- Whether local buses are 'low floor' buses.
- Whether and where assistance must be booked in advance.
- If there are only a small number of accessible taxis available in the area, consider contacting companies in advance to make them aware of your event and that a number of disabled people will be attending. Give details if you have them.
- Ask local transport providers whether they offer assistance in making bookings (for example, text telephone numbers, which allow communication by text, for people who are deaf or who have a hearing impairment) and make this information known to your attendees.
- Work with local authorities and councils to implement accessible public transport routes which better serve your venues and events.
- Discuss with suppliers how accessible transport options can be used and offered as standard. It can be useful to connect with other events and festivals in your area to collectively drive demand for better and more accessible options, i.e. electrified accessible buggies, shuttles, and coach services in your area.

## Parking facilities

- If your venue doesn't have a car park, check for accessible on-street parking or nearby car park facilities.
- Provide details about the distance (use distance measurements instead of "walking time") and ground conditions of the route from these facilities to the venue (e.g. slopes, road crossings etc.)
- You could also investigate providing an accessible shuttle service. These are transport shuttle services that are equipped to handle wheelchairs and other mobility aids. These shuttles can transport attendees from key locations, such as hotels or public transport stops, to the event venue.
- Accessible parking spaces should be on firm, level ground rather than on gravel or on sloping surfaces.
- Have staff on hand to provide assistance from the car park to the venue entrance, especially if the car park isn't level or if there are other aspects that may make the route difficult to navigate.
- Maintain a 1.2 metre clearance between adjacent accessible parking spaces to allow sufficient space for people to enter and exit their cars from the side.
- Maintain a 1.2 metre clearance at the end of each accessible parking space to allow access to the boot and operation of hoists.
- Ensure that accessible spaces are monitored to prevent misuse.
- If moving from the car park to a pavement is necessary, ensure there is a dropped kerb for easy access. If not, you could look to provide a temporary ramp.

If your venue has a car park, consider these steps:

- Reserve spaces close to the entrance for accessible parking.
- Ensure the car park is well signposted and accessible spaces are easily identifiable.

## Inclusive and Accessible Events

### A Guide for Event Organisers

## Accessible toilets and facilities

### Accessible toilets:

- Ensure the venue has at least one designated accessible toilet.
- Keep these toilets clean and tidy to maintain their accessibility; they shouldn't be used for storage for cleaning materials or anything else.

### Signposting:

- Clearly signpost accessible toilets.
- Make sure staff are on hand and can accurately direct people to these facilities.



### Baby changing facilities:

- Ensure you have adequate baby changing facilities that can meet the needs of your anticipated audience.

### Mobile Changing Places Toilet (CPT):

- Consider offering a [mobile CPT](#) for those with complex care needs. These facilities help make events accessible for everyone and are equipped with an adult-sized changing bench and ceiling hoist. These facilities can also be helpful for others who find standard accessible toilets inadequate.

For further guidance and standards on accessible toilets, [Changing Places toilets](#), and baby-changing facilities, refer to pages 286-296 of [The Scottish Government's Non-domestic Technical Handbook](#) (April 2024).





Credit: VisitScotland/Peter Dibdin

## Welcoming assistance dogs

Assistance dogs help people with various needs, including visual and hearing impairments, epilepsy, diabetes, and limited mobility. Under the Equality Act, it's unlawful to state that assistance dogs are not welcome at your event. Here are some simple adjustments to make your event more welcoming for people with assistance dogs:

- Offer bowls of water for assistance dogs.

- Designate a spending (toilet) area for assistance dogs.
- Consider having volunteers available to walk the assistance dogs during breaks and lunchtimes, if needed.

For further guidance go to [Assistance dogs: A guide for businesses and service providers](#) available from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

## **Inclusive and Accessible Events**

### **A Guide for Event Organisers**

## Signage

Ensure the venue's facilities are clearly signposted. For example, provide signage to:

- Accessible parking spaces
- Reception area
- Accessible toilets
- Baby changing facilities
- First aid / welfare
- Dog spending areas
- Induction loops
- Information or assistance points
- Any other facilities your venue offers.

### **Tips for good signage:**

#### **Visibility:**

- Place signs where they can be easily seen by everyone, including wheelchair users and children.

#### **Font and size:**

- Use large lettering (minimum 16 point) and a sans serif font like Arial or Calibri for easy reading. These fonts are designed to be legible and easily understood by a wide range of people, including those with visual impairments or cognitive conditions.

#### **Lettering and symbols:**

- Writing in all capitals is generally not recommended for accessibility. All-caps text can be harder to read for many people and can be visually overwhelming.
- Including symbols alongside text on signage can greatly enhance accessibility. Choose universally recognised symbols that are easy to understand.

#### **Contrast:**

- Ensure there is high contrast between text and symbols with the background colour to ensure they are easily visible.

#### **Braille and tactile elements:**

- Consider adding Braille or raised lettering, positioned at an appropriate height for easy access, so that your signage can be read by touch.

## Catering

When planning catering provision for your event, you should emphasise a commitment to flexibility and inclusion in your approach.

### **Here are some considerations:**

#### **Water Points:**

- Ensure water stations are accessible for wheelchair users and children. Consider aspects such as height and tap design.
- Place water points near accessible camping facilities and viewing platforms.
- Keep the area around water points dry to prevent muddy conditions.

#### **Dietary Needs:**

- Offer a variety of options, such as gluten-free, dairy-free, low-sugar, vegetarian, and vegan.
- If appropriate for your event, collect dietary requirements during event registration.
- Even if you aren't providing full catering, offering fruit and water or low sugar beverages as an alternative alongside tea, coffee

and biscuits during a break is likely to be helpful for example, for people who are diabetic or gluten intolerant.

- Allow attendees to bring their own food if necessary, in order that they can ensure their own needs are met.

#### **Food Service:**

- Have staff assist with selecting and carrying food.
- Provide tables and chairs, even if most people will be standing. Ensure tables are an appropriate height to be accessible for all and have a range of seating options available.

#### **Food Labelling and Pricing:**

- Clearly label different food options with key ingredients and allergens.
- If you work with food vendors as stallholders at your event, ensure they offer a range of options at different price points, with affordable options on offer. And ensure that they display their prices clearly.



## Inclusive and Accessible Events

### A Guide for Event Organisers

#### Cutlery and Crockery:

- Offer a range of cutlery and crockery, including mugs with handles and special grip cutlery.
- Offer condiments and milk in dishes or jugs instead of small packets or sachets which can be difficult to use – this is also more environmentally friendly.
- Provide bendable drinking straws for those who need them for medical reasons.

Scotland has a world-famous natural larder of amazing food and drink. Find out more about incorporating more Scottish produce at your event at [Scotland Food and Drink's website](#).

Credit: VisitScotland/Rob McDougall



## Welcoming people and accessibility training

To make your event more accessible, consider having your staff complete disability awareness and/or equality and diversity training. This training helps event staff understand and support people with access requirements have a more enjoyable experience at your event.

Investing in training is beneficial. A survey showed that 77% of disabled people and their friends and family believe venues can improve accessibility through staff training. Additionally, 72% are more likely to visit new places if they feel welcomed by staff.<sup>4</sup>

As part of your pre-event briefing, ensure your staff are aware of who is attending the event and what their requirements are. Brief staff on the accessible features of the venue. Ensure they know who is responsible for various support measures during the event.

Deaf Action:

- Deaf Action offer a [range of communication and interpretation support services](#).
- They can also provide [information and advice on equipment](#) and adaptations for deaf customers.

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB):

- The RNIB offer [training and other advice services to help businesses become accessible for people with sight loss](#).

## Inclusive and Accessible Events

### A Guide for Event Organisers

## Promoting your event

### **Access information:**

Research and consultation has consistently shown that a key priority for disabled people when attending an event is that accurate information is available prior to the event<sup>5</sup>. For example, if part of your event is outdoors with steep or gravel paths, this information helps those with mobility requirements decide if they can attend, and what equipment or support they might need if they do.

Providing accessibility information in advance will mean that those who are interested in attending your event won't have to proactively contact you with the details of their access requirements in the first instance. From the information you provide, people will be able to get a first impression of the accessibility of your event and can then contact you if they require more information. Making access information available in advance will also allow people a greater degree of spontaneity

when deciding whether or not to attend your event. Consultation with disabled people has found that having to plan far in advance puts many people off attending events or visiting new places where they are unsure of accessibility.

### **Tips to enhance access communication:**

Make accessibility information easy to find and interpret:

- Include a dedicated accessibility section on your website with details about accessibility features and services.
- Use distance measurements instead of “walking time” as this can make planning difficult for some.
- Ensure the information is relevant, clear, honest, and up-to-date.
- Take the opportunity to communicate how you can be flexible and accommodating and whether staff have completed disability awareness training.

5 Capability Scotland's Accessible Tourism Consultation Report commissioned by VisitScotland and Euan's Guide Access Survey 2022

- Include photographs of key areas like entrances, parking, toilets, and event spaces. Images can be more accessible for those with learning disabilities or non-native speakers.
- Follow guidelines for accessible web design to help people with learning disabilities, colour blindness, or those using assistive technology. Visit the [RNIB website](#) for guidance and tools for digital accessibility.
- You can download a helpful checklist of key accessibility features you may wish to highlight from our [Business Support Hub](#).

### **Detailed Accessibility Guide:**

- You could consider commissioning a provider like [AccessAble](#) to create a Detailed Access Guide for your event. This would include a detailed description and photographs of the event venue and the facilities and services that you will be offering. For further information on this service and costs, go to [VisitScotland's Accessibility Guide Portal](#).

### **Inclusive imagery and film:**

- Use relevant images of a diverse range of people including those with access needs in your promotional material. Avoid tokenistic images and integrate representation into your overall design.
- Subtitle promotional videos and consider sign language interpretation or audio descriptions for people with visual impairments.

### **Inclusive language:**

- Inclusive language is about using words and phrases that respect and acknowledge all people, regardless of their background or identity.
- Use disability-inclusive terms like “disabled person or disabled people,” “wheelchair users,” and “accessible toilet.” Avoid terms like “the disabled” or “wheelchair bound.”





Credit: Anna Gault

- Also look to use gender-neutral, age-inclusive and culturally inclusive terms where relevant.
- Visit the [UK Government website](#) for advice on inclusive language.

### **Contact options:**

- Provide multiple contact methods (phone, webchat, social media, email, postal address) for accessibility enquiries and for people to ask questions about your event. Keep a log of these enquiries to identify themes, information gaps and FAQs.

Remember, you may be asked by people attending your event for advice about accessible accommodation options or attractions nearby. Therefore, it may be helpful to find out about and prepare information on these in advance. Visit the [VisitScotland website](#) and the [AccessAble website](#) for information on accessible accommodation and attractions.

## Communicating during the event

As well as considering accessibility when promoting your event, you can also make some important and useful adjustments to communication style and format during the event itself.

To make your event more accessible, consider the following:

### **Written communications:**

Make all written materials (promotional materials, forms, agendas, programmes, handouts) as accessible as possible:

- Use clear, simple text with short sentences, simple punctuation and no jargon. Include a glossary if needed.
- Use sans serif fonts like Arial, Calibri, or Verdana. Avoid ornate and serif fonts which can be difficult to read.
- Use [large print](#) (at least 16 point).
- Ensure high contrast between text and background. Avoid yellow font and reverse type.
- Don't rely solely on font changes or changes to font size and/or colour to highlight important information.
- Avoid large sections of block capitals, italics, or underlining which can make text difficult to read. Use bold and italics sparingly.
- Justify text to the left.
- Avoid breaking words with hyphens at the end of lines.
- Break text into short chunks with plenty of white space around them.
- Use bullet points and fact boxes to make the main points clearly.
- Provide a clear contents list and section headings.
- Use images or illustrations to support text, ensuring they don't interrupt the flow. These can be helpful for readers with dyslexia or learning disabilities to follow the information in the text.
- Don't place text over images.
- Allow space between text and images and embed descriptions for screen readers.
- Make documents available in both PDF and Word formats.
- Circulate written information in advance so attendees can prepare.

## **Inclusive and Accessible Events**

### **A Guide for Event Organisers**

For speeches or speaker notes, consider circulating details in advance and using automatic live captioning for larger events.

#### **Information in alternative formats:**

If you are able to, promote that you are happy to provide alternative formats (such as Braille, audio or Easy Read) upon advance request so these materials can be produced and delivered in time for your event.

Braille documents typically require at least two weeks to produce. Easy Read is a way of presenting information in short, clear sentences accompanied by representative images or illustrations. It is generally designed for people with learning disabilities, but can also be useful for other audiences, including older people, or people whose first language is not English.

There are a number of organisations that produce Easy Read, and these offer a range of services, from producing formal booklets/programmes, to producing accessible minutes and agendas. The UK Government website has a wealth of [information on accessible communications](#) available that can provide further guidance and support in this area.

#### **Video and film:**

As was outlined above for videos about your event, consider arranging for videos that are used during your event to be made as accessible as possible by having them subtitled. You can also consider sign language interpretation, transcripts, and/or audio descriptions.



## Professional communication support

If relevant to and reasonable for your event, you could consider hiring the services of communication support professionals. Communication support encompasses a wide range of services, including:

- BSL Interpreters: support communication between deaf sign language users and hearing people. They can also interpret performances and speeches for audiences.
- Lipspeakers: support people who are deaf who communicate by lipreading and speech. Lipspeakers repeat what is said without using their voice, in a way that it is easy for people to read their lips.
- Note Takers: provide notes for those who can't take their own, for example because they are lipreading. They may do this manually or electronically via a laptop which is linked to the attendee's screen.
- Speech to Text Reporters/ Palantypists: type up a verbatim account of what is being said, which appears on a large screen or laptop screen in real time.

If you can offer the option of hired communication support, be sure to include this as an option as part of your ticket booking or event registration process in order to gauge the level of demand from your audience and determine whether it will be necessary to book someone for the event.

Many disabled people's organisations offer advice on how to book communication support or offer a communication support service themselves. For example, the Deaf Action website has specific advice and support on hiring communication and interpretation support services for deaf people. Visit the [Deaf Action website](#) for advice on hiring communication and interpretation services.



## **Inclusive and Accessible Events**

### **A Guide for Event Organisers**

## **Ticketing, registration and seat allocation**

If tickets are being sold or distributed for your event, consider whether you, or the ticket agency that you are using, can make reasonable adjustments to your booking system to ensure that the process is accessible.

### **Ticketing**

- Ensure your booking system is accessible. Offer multiple booking methods: online, by phone and by post if preferred.
- Consider what arrangements can be put in place for personal assistants, support workers, or carers. Offering free or reduced admission for essential companions is a good place to start.
- Provide a range of ticket options and pricing, including free, pay-what-you-can, early-bird discounts, VIP options, group or family passes, and student and young person or OAP discounts.

### **Booking/registration forms**

- Include options for attendees to specify additional requirements, such as:
  - Accessible parking
  - Dietary needs
  - Access requirements
  - Communication support requirements (where you can support these)
  - Care arrangements
  - Requests for information in alternative formats.
- Allow attendees to request access to information (e.g. programmes or handouts) before the event. This helps those using assistive technology or with learning disabilities to prepare.
- Utilise the booking process to inform attendees about available accessible facilities, like hearing loops or British Sign Language interpreters.



Credit: VisitScotland/Stewart Attwood

## Seat allocation

- Designate accessible seating areas for wheelchair users, families with young children, or people with limited mobility.
- Offer specially designed accessible seating options or flexible seating arrangements which allow you to create space for wheelchairs or assistance dogs if needed.
- Ensure clear views for people who require professional communication support (i.e. people who lipread), especially during presentations.
- If possible, allow wheelchair users early access to the venue so they have ample time and space to find their seat.

If you require any further information on how to responsibly grow your tourism or events business, please look at our [Business Support Hub](#).

The Business Support Hub is a dedicated digital platform that gives tourism and events businesses access to free tailored advice, resources and opportunities on important topics like sustainability, managing your digital channels and working with partners. You can also contact the Business Enquiry and Support team on the [Contact Us](#) page, who are here to answer any additional questions you might have.

Further tailored advice for events and festivals can be found at:  
[support.visitscotland.org/events](https://support.visitscotland.org/events)

If you have any comments, feedback or additions to this guide that you would like us to include, please get in touch with us.

You can email us at: [business.support@visitscotland.com](mailto:business.support@visitscotland.com)

Or call us on: 0131 472 2222

Or write to us at:  
VisitScotland  
Waverley Court  
4 East Market Street  
Edinburgh  
EH8 8BG

The Inclusive and Accessible Events guide was first published May 2016 by VisitScotland with funding support from Scottish Government. The guide was reviewed and updated in March 2025.

The information in this publication is given in good faith and every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy at the time of publishing. VisitScotland does not accept liability for any errors, omissions or misleading statements, or for any loss, damage, disappointment or inconvenience caused as a result of reliance on this information. VisitScotland is not responsible for the content of external websites or organisations which are referred to in this publication.