

Eventbrite

UK Event Accessibility Guide 2017



An essential guide for event managers and venues on planning events, meetings, conferences, exhibitions & other activities in the UK that are fully inclusive and accessible.



The benefits of inclusiveness

“260 million registered disabled persons in the EU generating incomes in excess of €166 billion... this is not a market to be ignored.”

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/services/tourism/accessibility.htm>

“With approximately 38 million people with disabilities in the U.S., almost one in seven people are potential customers for businesses that are disability-friendly.”

2004 American Community Survey, U.S. Department of Justice, “Expanding Your Market: Customers with Disabilities.”

"A proportion of those 300 million plus disabled people across Europe are business owners, directors and or influencers on the decision making process, creating a largely untapped market of buyers with money to spend who can be attracted to your events...if only those events were accessible and inclusive for all."

Alan Broadbent, Managing Director at Disabled Accessible Travel

“The implementation of inclusiveness policies has seen a year on year growth in the number of event hosted buyers & attendees with disabilities, both temporary & permanent.”

Aurelie Cambon, Pacific World, (Official Transport Agency), IBTM World Executive Council Member

A legal requirement: UK equality act 2010

Whilst there is a strong business argument for inclusiveness, it's also important to note the prevalent legislation that all businesses have to adhere to in the United Kingdom, namely the UK Equality Act 2010.

The UK Equality Act 2010 defines disability as having a “*broad meaning; it is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities*”.

Substantial means more than minor or trivial. **Impairment** covers, for example, long-term medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes and fluctuating or progressive conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis. A **Mental** impairment includes mental health conditions, learning difficulties such as dyslexia and learning disabilities such as autism, etc.

How does the equality act 2010 affect event organisers?

In short, the Act states that ‘*Direct discrimination occurs where, because of disability, a person receives worse treatment than someone who does not have a disability. The Act is intended to stop people being denied a service, or receiving a worse service, because of prejudice.*

The effect is that all events, meetings, conferences, exhibitions, etc., within the UK

- *must be accessible and inclusive, and*
- *providers should take reasonable steps to find out whether someone is disabled*

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Where to begin, a brief overview

The key to an event being inclusive and accessible, is to ensure that being inclusive is integral to all stages of planning, from concept to completion.

This requires that everyone involved in an organisation are committed to inclusiveness and this starts with an organisation creating an Access Statement (Pantou offers [excellent guidance on the creation of access statements](#)) that provides direction for all within your organisation.

Planning is not restricted to physical access, as it also relates to access of materials such as pre-event publicity, web sites, telephones, ticketing, and on-site services such as catering, AVA facilities, etc.

It also includes information you supply to everyone involved in a project, including speakers, chairpersons, staff at a venue (are they trained in awareness of disability needs?), attendees, exhibitors, etc.

Another key element of the planning process is to recognise that disabilities are not always visible, and that many attendees arriving to an event may have hidden disabilities. Disabilities can also be either permanent or temporary. Since you may not know who will be attending your event, you must plan for permanent or reasonable adjustments that can be made to make the event accessible and inclusive for all participants.

Example

*Your keynote speaker arrives in a wheelchair after breaking a leg in a skiing accident, this is a **visible temporary disability**. With effective pre-planning, access to a stage or speaker's podium should not pose a difficulty; failing to provide suitable access would be embarrassing both for the speaker and the event organizer.*

Example

*You have prepared an excellent buffet, however some items have traces of nuts which could pose a serious health risk to those with severe allergic reactions to nuts, a **permanent hidden disability**. Have you labelled these foods appropriately?*

Plan to arrange meetings and events at accessible locations where people with disabilities can participate without assistance, or with minimal help, such as facilities near accessible transport options.

If an event is to be held over more than one day, evaluate the accessibility of hotel accommodation, local restaurants, tourist sites, etc., that participants may want to use or visit before, during, or after the period of the Event.

Planning for inclusion

On-Site Inspections – the following sections provide guidance on areas to inspect for access for all

To ensure that you're using facilities with accessible environments, a pre-event onsite visit is essential to evaluate the physical environment of a venue (see below for more detailed information), *do not take the word of venue staff that the venue is accessible*, as they may have a different interpretation as to what 'accessible' means to yours.

Responsibility for access, including parking, lies with the event organiser and not the venue provide, because attendees are contracting with you, the organiser, to attend your event and not the venue; if a venue does not meet access requirements, and if the venue provider is not willing to make adjustments to their facility to meet access standards, look for an alternative venue!

TOP TIP

If you are an event venue provider it is in your interest, both from a business income and compliance perspective, to examine how to make your venue inclusive to all and make those changes.

“Accessibility is not only about observing legislation or being socially responsible, there are financial rewards to be gained from tapping into this huge market.”

Maurici Carbó Lisbona, Director, Smart Destination Consulting

Physical Environment – Barrier Free

External Access

Venues should offer designated parking areas 3.6m wide x 4.8m long (width 2.4m + 1.2m door opening and transfer to wheelchair space) for adapted vehicles, and these should be in close proximity to the entrance of the event and be barrier free as follows:

- Surfaces from the parking area to the entrance should be flat (maximum crossfall of 1:40) without significant inclines and a ground surface that is firm, even, smooth and not covered with loose laid materials such as gravel or shingle.
- Venue entry points should offer level or ramped entry access for attendees using wheelchairs or mobility scooters; and for those using stairs, handrails must be available.
- Where main entrances are not accessible and venues have a secondary entry point for the disabled, there should be a clearly signed route to follow to that access point.
- It is important to reduce the risks to people, particularly people with impaired sight, when approaching and passing around the perimeter of a building under all lighting conditions.
- Venue entry door widths for use by the general public should have a minimum of 775mm for an existing building, and 1000mm for a new building.

Internal Access

Door widths are an important access consideration for wheelchair users. The minimum effective clear width of a door for use by the general public is 750 mm for an existing building, but 800mm for a new building, and it is preferable where possible for entry doors to be automatic opening.

Once open, all doors to accessible entrances should be wide enough to allow unrestricted passage for a variety of users, including wheelchair users, people carrying luggage, people with assistance dogs, etc.

TOP TIP

Heavy doors and the direction they open can be barriers to access, so to check if there are any issues use this simple test: place a chair in front of a door and see if you can open it easily from a seated position, if you cannot then the door is considered to be a barrier and a reasonable adjustment or solution to access must be determined.

Reception & First Point of Contact for the Event

As the entrance area of an event is the first physical point of contact to an event, it's important to note that reception areas should be easily accessible and convenient to use.

It is not comfortable either for a wheelchair user, nor the person at the reception point, to engage in a registration process where a counter is full height (a barrier), and so a lowered counter option should be made available. This can be as simple an adjustment as using a table.

Note that glazed screens in front of a reception point, bright light sources or reflective wall surfaces, (such as glazed screens), located behind a reception point, could compromise the ability of a person with a hearing impairment to lip read or follow sign language.

It should be possible for information about the event to be easily obtained from a reception point, or gathered from notice boards and signs, in variable formats (more on formatting signs later in the Guide).

Halls, Theatres, Meeting Rooms & Break Out Rooms

Having observed due diligence as to how disabled attendees access the main area where an event is to take place, organisers need to turn their attention to access issues when extra meeting rooms or break-out facilities are to be used and which require attendees to move around a venue.

Corridors and passageways in a venue should be wide enough to allow people to pass others on an access route when carrying cases, using mobility equipment (e.g. crutches, wheelchairs), etc.

Peripheral items such as potted plants, floor standing lights, tables, etc. (fire extinguishers, fixed radiators excepted) are a potential barrier to access for the sight impaired and mobility challenged, so should be removed.

Wheelchair users should also have unrestricted access to rooms and spaces adjacent to the main event area, be able to pass other people and, where necessary, be able to turn through 180°, therefore break-out rooms should, where possible, be on the same floor as the main event.

In order to help people with visual impairments to appreciate the size of a space they have entered, or to find their way around, there should be a visual contrast between the wall and the ceiling, and between the wall and the floor. Such attention to surface finishes should be coupled with good natural and artificial lighting design.

Good acoustic design within meeting rooms and halls should be present to achieve an acoustic environment that is neither too reverberant, nor too absorbent, in order that announcements and conversations can be heard clearly by all present.

Making modifications to the physical environment, such as rearranging furniture, removing non-essential peripheral items, and adding a permanent or temporary installation of an induction loop for the hearing impaired, are all regarded as acceptable reasonable adjustments to create a barrier-free environment.

FACILITIES IN BUILDINGS OTHER THAN DWELLINGS



Provision of wheelchair space in audience seating
(Seating Minimum provision of capacity spaces for wheelchairs)

Permanent

Up to 600: 1% of total seating capacity (rounded up)

Over 600 but less than 10,000: 1% of total seating capacity (rounded up)

Removable

Up to 600: Remainder to make a total of 6

Over 600 but less than 10,000: Additional provision, if desired

Note:

For seating capacities of 10,000 or more, guidance is given in 'Accessible stadia: a good practice guide to the design of facilities to meet the needs of disabled spectators and other users'.

TOP TIP

Detailed information regarding layout of venues to meet legal standards can be [found here](#).

Lift Access to Other Floors in a Venue

The UK minimum dimensions for lift access to accommodate wheelchair users are as follows:

- 1100mm wide and 1400mm deep;
- where lifts are of a size that does not allow a wheelchair user to turn around within the lift, a mirror is provided in the lift to enable a wheelchair user to see the space behind the wheelchair;
- power-operated horizontal sliding doors should provide a minimum entry clear width of at least 800mm into a lift.

Lighting in a lift should minimize glare, reflection, confusing shadows or pools of light and dark, as these may cause problems for people with visual impairments.

All users, including wheelchair users, should be able to reach and use controls both to call and direct a lift, and floor numbers should have braille on the call buttons.

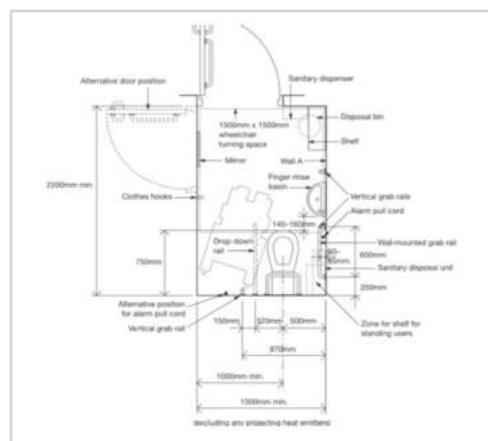
TOP TIP

Detailed information regarding access to buildings can be found at [here](#), and the information should form part of pre-event risk assessment procedures.

Bathrooms

Toilet accommodation needs to be suitable, not only for disabled people, but for all people who use the building.

For disabled people, suitable toilet accommodation may take the form of a specially designed cubicle in separate-sex toilet washrooms, or a self-contained unisex toilet. For wheelchair users in particular, a self-contained unisex toilet is always the preferred option since, if necessary, a partner or carer of a different sex can enter to give assistance.



"Wheelchair users should be able to approach, transfer to and use the sanitary facilities provided within a building. This requires the provision of a wheelchair-accessible unisex toilet.

The relationship of the WC to the finger rinse basin and other accessories should allow a person to wash and dry hands while seated on the WC. The space provided for maneuvering should enable wheelchair users to adopt various transfer techniques that allow independent or assisted use.

It is important that the transfer space alongside the WC is kept clear to the back wall. When transferring to and from their wheelchair, some people need horizontal support rails. The rail on the open side is a drop-down rail, but on the wall side, it can be a wall-mounted grab rail (which is thought to give a more rigid handhold) set at a greater distance than normal from the wall or, alternatively, a second drop-down rail in addition to the wall-mounted grab rail where the grab rail is spaced at the minimum distance from the wall and therefore does not give the same degree of support."

Source: The Building Regulations 2010 Access To and Use of Buildings, p49/50
To comply with this advice, installations are inexpensive and complete Dock M Packs are available from sources such as <http://www.disabledtoilets.co.uk/Toilets.htm>

Inclusive Audience Facilities

Sometimes it may be necessary to offer particular aids or equipment to help attendees access or engage in an activity. The Equality Act 2010 calls these **auxiliary aids** and **services**. The following are some of the key areas for event organisers to consider:

- Wheelchair users should be provided with spaces which they can get into easily, and which offer them a clear view of a presentation or event. As many wheelchair users travel with a companion, consideration should be given to providing a choice of sitting next to their seated companion, and ditto for those attending with assistance dogs.
- Attendees with mobility or sensory impairments should be seated in areas that facilitate lip reading, and signers should be engaged to assist at presentations.
- Promote a scent-free environment by providing advance notice to presenters and participants to refrain from using perfumes, colognes and strong scented toiletries. This simple procedure is beneficial to those attending with allergies (hidden disabilities).
- Few venues give consideration to attendees of large stature, therefore the provision of

TOP TIP

Copies of speeches, presentations etc., should be made available for the sight impaired in large print format or braille, or recorded to pen drives. Moving images/video should have captioning as this is of benefit to the hearing impaired.

Few venues give consideration to attendees of large stature, therefore the provision of extra legroom would be welcome, with the extra effect of these spaces possibly being available to wheelchair users.

Hidden disabilities mean that the use of lighting and sound has to be carefully thought out to avoid causing inadvertent stress, or even medical emergency, in the case of attendees with epilepsy where strobe or flashing lights can cause the onset of fits, migraines, etc.

For those using hearing devices to pick up amplified sound from an induction loop, excessive volume via speakers can cause anything from mild to serious pain and even long lasting discomfort.

TOP TIP

You don't have to avoid using strobe lights, etc. but it's advisable to make people aware after receiving their application forms that some 'special' effects will be used at an event.

Dimming of lights causes problems for those who have a sight impairment, and for the hearing impaired may make lip reading impossible. The kind of reasonable adjustment that could be made to reduce lighting without dimming could be as simple as closing curtains and keeping on a number of room lights.

When opening up to Q&A, it's important to offer the facility of a microphone as this helps the hearing impaired to participate. It's also beneficial to all delegates as often it's difficult to understand what someone is saying if they are situated at some distance from someone.



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Pre-Event: Communicating with potential attendees

Does a Website Have to Be Accessible to All?

The answer is YES without question!

TOP TIP

Check your website with these [FREE](#) website accessibility testing tools

It's rare to find a business without a website, but how many know that legally their sites should be accessible to disabled users?

Not only is there an ethical and commercial justification for this as outlined at the beginning of this guide, but also a legal reason: if your website does not meet certain design standards, you could be sued for discrimination.

Website Accessibility is not just about the disabled

Badly designed websites may present barriers to access (which means you lose sales), so **accessible websites** are about giving people unhindered access to a website from various enabled devices such as laptops; mobile phones; etc. It's also about giving access to disabled users who use adaptive devices.

TOP TIP

Websites should reflect Universal Design Principles from concept to publication.

Visually-impaired internet users may use screen readers to translate contents of web pages using speech synthesizers or Braille displays. The user will struggle to understand web pages if, for example, images are displayed on the page without a text alternative.

NB! Visual impairment describes a wide range of problems, including those who are registered blind, those who are colour blind, or those who suffer from tunnel vision or cataracts.

TOP TIP

In HTML, alt attributes should be added to all image tags.

Websites: the Equality Act 2010 & Event Providers

The UK Equality and Human Rights Commission has published a Code of Practice which came into force on 6 April 2011. The Code explicitly states that websites are included under the ambit of the Equality Act 2010 for the provision of services.

Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on service providers to make "reasonable adjustments" to enable disabled persons access their services.

The Code notes that the *"the duty to make reasonable adjustments requires service providers to take positive steps to ensure that disabled people can access services. This goes beyond simply avoiding discrimination. It requires service providers to anticipate the needs of potential disabled customers for reasonable adjustments."*

The duty on an event organiser with a website that is not accessible to the disabled, is to take "reasonable" steps to make that website accessible.

What is a reasonable adjustment?

The Code suggests that *"factors which might be taken into account include: the service provider's financial and other resources; the amount of resources already spent on making adjustments; and the extent of any disruption which taking the steps would cause the service provider."*

Tickets, bookings, reservations

Legislation requires equal access to the purchase of entry tickets for the disabled as for the non-disabled. This requires on the part of event organisers to put into effect reasonable adjustments when offering entry tickets (free or otherwise) pre-event.

Information can be offered in hard copy format (large print options), online (website needs to meet W3C standards so that speech readers or braille printouts of information can be utilised), by telephone or fax.

If using an agency to sell tickets, make reservations etc. you have a duty to ensure that they also comply with access legislation.

When making sales you need to have a policy that reflects that some disabled delegates may have an assistant with them (carers), and you should be clear if entry for those carers will be free or at a reduced rate.

As part of the registration process it is in order to ask participants if they need specialist assistance which could include;

- Sign interpreters
- Attendant carers
- Note takers
- Real time captioning
- Audio systems (hearing loop)
- Dietary requirements
- Any other requirements

TOP TIP – more information is never too much!

Highlighting what event adjustments are already in place when replying to requests from the disabled is invaluable to enable those person to assess if they can access the event.

Detail if sign language interpreters, deaf-blind communicators will be on site; that large font text information is available throughout the event, and give a description of any physical features that may impede access.

For example, if a chair lift is in place but requires people to transfer from a wheelchair, you should let people know this.

TOP TIP

The award winning **Dublin Convention Centre** provides superb [advance event information](#) online for the disabled, which could be used as a template by event organisers everywhere.

Disabled people can also be invited to highlight what further requirements they may have at the pre-event registration phase. If it's possible to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate requests, you will be complying with your judiciary obligations (and winning businesses at the same time).

Transport to an event

If the event organiser is offering transport services such as airport transfers, these services should include adapted transportation fitted with ramps or hydraulic lifts (max. lift capacity 330kg); wheel tie-downs and personal safety belts.

Accommodation

If the event organiser is offering accommodation services, these must include accommodation offering adapted rooms with roll-in showers and facilities suitable also for the hearing and sight impaired.

TOP TIP

As hotels and accommodation providers rarely promote they have adapted rooms available, it is recommended to visit <https://www.accomable.com> or <http://www.disabledgo.com> for comprehensive information on access-assessed accommodation in the UK.

Awareness training

Having ensured that you've met all the compliance issues of pre-event ticket sales, reservations, access etc. it would be a shame for all of that to not be supported by the team working during an event. There is no substitute for training, and it need not be complicated and detailed to the “nth” degree, as no-one requires the team to be experts about the world of the disabled.

Basic training should include how to address the disabled, such as talking with a person in a wheelchair and not always to the pusher/carer if there is one, or how to attract the attention of a sight or hearing impaired person. Small issues, but important for the disabled person.

Staff need to know about what reasonable adjustments may be required, such as laying out tables and chairs in a way that permits wheelchair access.

Staff should be made aware of how emergency evacuation procedures apply to disabled delegates.

Chairpersons, speakers and presenters also need to be aware of the requirements of disabled people in the audience before the event, and that their presentations are required to be accessible to all attendees/delegates participating at the event.

Suggested guidelines to issue to speakers and presenters:

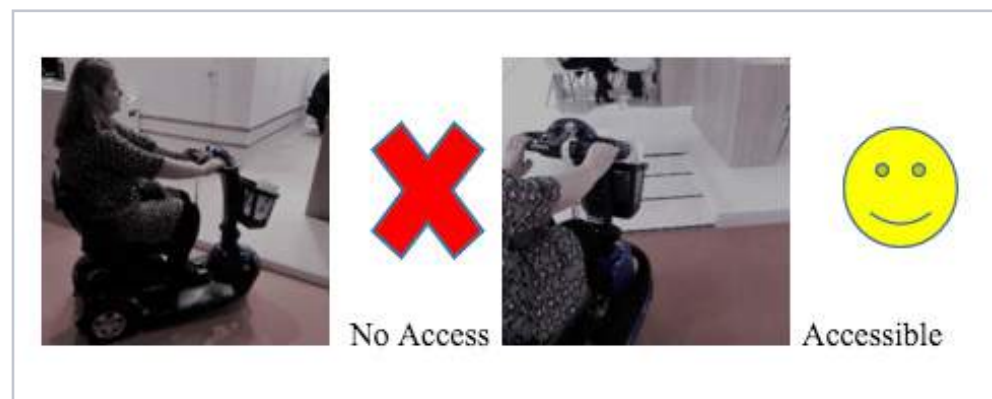
- Turning away from the audience causes a visual barrier and should be avoided.
- When using audio-visuals on a large screen, do not turn to the screen as this causes a visual barrier, if necessary presenters should use cue cards.
- When using tools such as PowerPoint, copies should be made available in digital format on-line (Slideshare for instance), for simultaneous access or hard copies in standard and large print; for long presentations, recordings may be made in real time and uploaded to the event website for later download by attendees.
- Speaking clearly at a regular pace with a modulated speech pattern is ideal, and when using a microphone, do not put it too close to the mouth, as this muffles the voice, causing a barrier for the hearing impaired.
- If a presentation such as a break-out session is to be participative, this should be indicated on event material sent to attendees, indicating whether or not there will be any writing or reading activities during the session. This enables those with visual, learning, or motor disabilities to be prepared to participate fully in these activities.
- Unless there is a proprietary reason against those with visual or hearing impairments recording presentations, permission should be given ahead of an event, so that participants can prepare equipment at their disposal for recording.

Exhibition Stands

Earlier in this Guide, the term Universal Design was referred to, and there's no better example as to how the principles of Universal Design can be applied, than the design of exhibition stand bases (the format of stand design remains with renters of each area).

To comply with inclusive access requirements, each base should have as a minimum one ramp to facilitate access for wheelchair and mobility scooter users, plus ramps make access for the ambulatory disabled person much easier.

From another perspective, ramps also facilitate access for all. As an example, consider carrying boxes of heavy brochures and sales literature onto a stand - the placement of a ramp makes this so much easier and lowers risk of personal injury.



Event Management, on site

Catering

The provision of catering at events poses some interesting challenges for organisers, but not ones that cannot be overcome if employing reasonable adjustments. Here are some basic guidelines:

Allow sufficient floor area for people with disabilities to access tables. Rearranging table layouts to allow for free movement of wheelchairs and mobility scooters is a simple yet effective solution to permit access.

Provide standard glasses as an alternative to long stemmed for those people with limited hand mobility, additionally the availability of straws are welcomed by those who are unable to, or have difficulty in drinking directly from glasses or cups.

Tables, if covered, should have material that does not extend onto the floor space as this causes a potential hazard for users of wheelchairs, walking sticks, crutches, or walkers.

Where a buffet is offered, have catering staff assist those who cannot access the buffet fully, by plating the desired fare and taking plates to where the disabled person is seated.

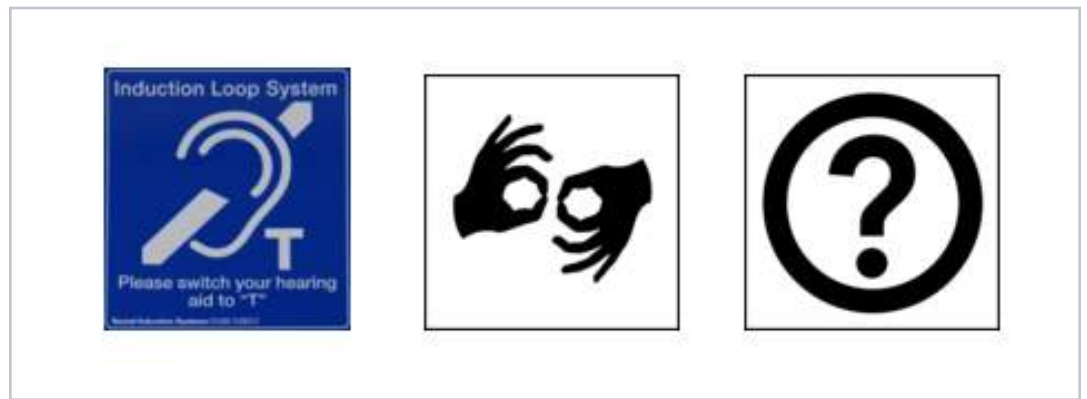
Bars and serving areas should have a lowered area for service to wheelchair users.

TOP TIP

Although written to comply with the DDA Act, which was superseded by the Equality Act 2010, [this material issued by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland](#) provides excellent guidance on access and reasonable adjustments that can be made in all types of catering situations.

Signage

There are many EASY READ signs that are available to assist the disabled to access and move freely around events. Three are shown below, indicating (from left to right), induction loop available for the hearing impaired; signing available; information point.



TOP TIP

In the UK the organisation Disabled Go have produced an excellent [guide to Access Icons](#).

In general, signage should meet the following criteria:

Offer text in a large font (14pt minimum)

- Be printed BLACK against a WHITE background (note that when producing information for a website or pdf to download that white text against colour cannot be read when a computer screen has the colour option turned off, and ranges from hard to impossible to read by people with vision impairments).
- Have no ACRONYMS
- Offer EASY READ symbols (examples would be the universal signs for men's or women's toilets, directional arrows to different areas of the venue, and the symbols shown above for induction loop etc.).

For persons with hidden disabilities such as dyslexia, the EASY READ system allows for easy understanding of presentations, directional information, and also is very useful for everyone if used on display stands at exhibitions.

Service animals

All event staff should be aware that service animals are allowed to enter event sites, owners appreciate efforts made to provide watering and exercise areas for their animals.

In summary

What better way to end a Guide than to highlight the personal experience of Tatiana Baranchuk, Head of MICE WORLD department, BLUE CHIP, based in Kiev (bluechip.ua).

“In 2015 I’d planned to attend IBTM World in Barcelona which entailed a lot of meetings and moving from one meeting place to another on the Show floor.

One week before IBTM World I injured my leg, making walking difficult and it would not have been possible to attend IBTM without assistance. I contacted IBTM organizers and they offered to me the free use of a mobility scooter, making it possible to attend the event, and also to make all of my programmed meetings.

Before my accident I didn’t think a lot about the difficulties that disabled people face daily so I would like to thank those people who enable disabled people to attend Events such as IBTM World!”

This Guide is not intended as a legal document, and all event organisers are recommended to familiarise themselves with relevant UK/EU legislation relating to events and the benefits of carrying out Risk Assessments.

Eventbrite

About the author

Alan Broadbent is consultant to some of the world's major travel providers and is himself disabled. He is a passionate advocate for improving leisure, business and travel services for the disabled, elderly and others requiring improved access.

About Eventbrite

Eventbrite enables people all over the world to plan, promote, and sell out any event. Since its inception in 2006, Eventbrite has processed over 200 million tickets and helped organisers sell over £1.8 billion worth of tickets to events in 187 countries.

The online ticketing platform makes it easy for anyone to discover events, and to share the events they are attending with the people they know. Eventbrite provides a professional, simple way to manage and promote events to help you reach your business goals.

Learn more at www.eventbrite.co.uk or call 0800 652 4993.