

The voice of the Voluntary Arts

Events checklist – disability and access

Providing opportunities for people with all types of abilities isn't simply about meeting legal requirements. It is about making decisions on all aspects of your activities that ensure as wide a range of people as possible are involved. This demonstrates that you have put some thought into the quality of people's experience and that you are interested in their wellbeing while they are with you. Measures put in place to help people with a range of different needs can – and often do – benefit everyone.

To attract visitors to your voluntary arts event, it is important that they feel that their needs are being considered and, wherever possible, met. The laws surrounding disability are designed simply to ensure you do this to the best of your ability. By being organised and taking the time to consider your events from an outside perspective, planning an accessible event need not be complicated or stressful. This briefing includes a simple checklist which we think covers the most important issues surrounding disability for voluntary arts events.

A. Things to consider

I. What publicity materials should we produce?

Publicising your event is essential in order to make people aware of what you are organising. Materials, such as booking forms, leaflets, posters, websites and emails, need to be accessible to everyone in order to raise the profile of your event and allow it to achieve its highest potential. If you include images of people, try to include people with a wide range of abilities. Also think about non-visual promotion, such as a slot on local radio, announcements at other events and podcasts.

Written material should always be available as plain text and also, when requested, in other formats such as different languages, font, large print, Braille and audiotape. The availability

of alternative formats should be documented clearly on all plain text publications. For more information about website and email accessibility, see *VAN Briefing 86 – Making your website for everyone available* from www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings.

You should include important information such as free places for assistants/companions, car parking facilities, access to the venue and toilet facilities in your publicity materials. Provide details of any arrangements for disabled people, including induction loops, surtitles or other such provision. If it is not possible to include all this in your publicity materials, indicate how and where this information can be found.

It is useful to ask on a booking form: 'What can we offer so you can attend and enjoy this event fully?' or 'Are there any individual requirements that we should know about, e.g. dietary, access?' This will allow the visitor to state any requirements, such as disability, dietary or anything else that they want to bring to your attention; information that will assist your planning of the event.

You may also want to investigate if you can use a booking service that offers minicom, internet and other accessible formats, and that works for people with a range of abilities who cannot easily get out to pick up tickets.

Many visually impaired people will benefit from receiving copies of any information intended to be given at the event beforehand. This gives them an opportunity to read the information in advance, enabling them to concentrate more fully on what is being said at the event itself. This can also be useful for anyone providing signing services for deaf people.

If you are planning on using special effects such as flash or strobe lighting at your event, you will ideally need to let people know beforehand – or ensure that there are notices displayed in the venue informing people as they go in.

It is very useful to have someone 'outside' the organisation to read over the relevant materials before publication – to ensure they are accessible and readable to those not 'in the know'. You could even work in partnership with disabled community groups to develop your programme and disseminate information about it.



2. What is the venue like?

Always consider accessibility for disabled visitors. This does not only mean physical access to the building for wheelchair users and disabled toilets, but covers many things, such as access to written and spoken information during the event. Disabled visitors should encounter the same standard of service as others.

It is important to plan the layout and design of your event to ensure that all visitors can safely and easily travel around it. Access routes must be free from unnecessary obstacles and flooring should be even, level and solid. A step of more than 13mm can present a barrier to some disabled people. In this case, a ramp needs to be incorporated into the flooring or a portable ramp made available.

Flooring should be slip resistant even when wet. Glossy finishes should be avoided as glare can cause hazards to partially sighted visitors, and carpets should be firm to prevent wheelchairs sinking in and well secured. Routes around the venue must be well lit; gravel or grass may need to be covered and stewards should be available to guide visitors and open any heavy doors, if necessary.

If possible, it may be worth avoiding fluorescent lighting if an indoor event will be fairly lengthy. Consider using uplighters or tungsten bulbs that are kinder on the eyes and aid concentration.

If you are hiring the venue, these are considerations you should be able to discuss with the venue owner/manager beforehand. Also try to consider broader access issues – is there public transport for those without private vehicles? Is the approach well lit and welcoming so that people are comfortable walking to it? Is the timing of the event conducive to good transport links and allowing assistants/companions to attend?

3. Can information at the venue be accessed by everyone?

Information and products should be displayed in a position and at a height that can be reached by everyone. If this is not possible, staff/volunteers/helpers should be available to assist visitors in obtaining the information they want.

If there is spoken information at your event, hearing induction loops help to cut out background noise which hearing aids would otherwise amplify. A hearing induction loop contains a microphone that picks up the spoken word from the speaker and transmits it to a hearing aid set in the 'T' position. The availability of the induction loop should be clearly signed. Alternatively, or additionally, deaf and hard of hearing people can be supported by Language Support Professionals (LSP). Sufficient lighting must also be provided to assist someone who is lip reading. If you are planning on showing a film at your event, it should be subtitled or audio described.

If visitors are required to write during your event, for example to fill out forms, ensure that someone is on hand should they need assistance.

A typical counter top is not generally accessible to wheelchair users. Therefore, a low-level section, along with a

clear 400mm horizontal depth must be provided. If this is not feasible, a lightweight clipboard or lap tray is an alternative.

4. Where will people sit?

Your venue should ideally offer a range of types of seating. If a seat is too low or too high, or has inappropriate arm rests or side supports, customers may experience discomfort. A variety of seating options enables visitors to choose the most comfortable option for them. If you can only provide one type of seating, another option is to inform people they can bring cushions or support aids to help them sit comfortably. Remember to keep aside seats for personal assistants/companions.

Seating arrangements must not obstruct access for wheelchair users. If possible, try to provide a variety of seating of different types and configurations to accommodate those with different mobility requirements. Check that there is clear and expedient access between the wheelchair seating spaces and disabled toilets.

Thought should be given to people's needs when designing the programme, with sufficient comfort breaks and opportunities to move around.

5. What will people eat?

If your event has self-service catering facilities, ensure that someone is available to assist disabled visitors with their choice of food and carrying trays to the eating area. In addition, ensure that there is plenty of room between tables for everyone, including wheelchair users, to move safely and easily.

It is not viable to provide catering arrangements for all possible dietary requirements. Therefore it is recommended that you advertise that food will be on offer at the event on publicity material sent out beforehand, and ask people to get in touch with any specific requirements. Allow enough time between receiving responses and finalising your catering arrangements, in order to cater to as many different needs as possible.

Accessibility symbols

To view and download twelve internationally recognised accessibility symbols for use on your publications and at your venue, visit the participation section of Running Your Group at www.voluntaryarts.org/ryg.

And finally...

It is important not to make assumptions about what a person's requirements will be based on their stated disability. Everyone has different needs unique to him or her, whether or not they are disabled. Explain what will be required of people attending your event, highlight any potential difficulties by all means, but allow the person to explain their own needs in their own words.

It may also be useful to have a range of people involved in planning the event that are representative of as wide a range of people as possible. This will help the event to be planned from a perspective other than your own. Remember also to work closely with the venue owners/managers at an early stage to ensure that any avoidable barriers to attendance are dealt with in good time.



B. The checklist

Use the following checklist (or a photocopy) to help ensure that you have considered the following issues in the run up to your event:

Publicity materials

	✓	X
Are written materials available in plain text and other languages?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can I produce other formats if requested?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the availability of these alternative formats clearly documented on plain text publications?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have I sent beforehand, or offered to send, copies of written information provided at the event to those that may need it, e.g. visually impaired people?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has information about facilities available at the venue (including facilities and arrangements for disabled people) been published?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have I asked about specific individual requirements on the booking form?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I am planning to use special effects, have I notified people beforehand and/or provided signage at the venue?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have I publicised whether I provide free places for personal assistants?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have I included the standard accessibility phrases and logos in my publicity material? (see Section C).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Venue

	✓	X
Are there adequate designated parking spaces (for blue badge holders) with the correct dimensions and markings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can all visitors safely and easily travel around the venue (firm surfaces for wheelchair users, avoiding deep gravel and grass)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are access routes free from unnecessary obstacles?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the flooring even, level and solid?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a ramp available for a step of more than 13mm?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is flooring slip-resistant and without a glossy finish?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are carpets/gravel/grass firm enough to prevent wheelchairs sinking in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are carpets well secured?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are routes around the venue well lit?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are staff/volunteers available to guide visitors if necessary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the parking well lit?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are accessible toilets provided?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there emergency procedures in place for evacuation/refuge of people with a range of abilities? Are staff/stewards briefed on these?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How heavy are the doors – do we need someone to assist with opening them?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the booking service I'm using (if relevant) offer different forms of access, e.g. minicom?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Information and products at the venue

	✓	X
Are products and information displayed in a position and at a height that can be reached by everyone?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... or are staff/volunteers available to assist visitors in obtaining the information?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are hearing induction loops present and clearly signed?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... and/or, are Language Support Professionals available?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the lighting sufficient for lip readers?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are any films subtitled or audio described?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will visitors need to write during the event?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If so, have I considered disabled people and if they need assistance?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do tables have a clear 400mm horizontal depth to accommodate wheelchairs?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... or are lightweight clipboards or lap trays available?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are emergency evacuation instructions clearly visible and available in a range of formats?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Seating arrangements

	✓	X
Is a range of seating available?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do seating arrangements allow access for wheelchair users?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can wheelchair users move from their seats to the toilets with ease?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has seating been provided for personal assistants?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can people use alternative support aids if the seating is one-size-fits-all?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Catering arrangements

	✓	X
Have I advertised that food will be available on publicity material sent out beforehand and asked to be notified of any specific dietary requirements?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have I allowed enough time between receiving responses and finalising my catering arrangements?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If my event has self-catering facilities, are staff/volunteers available to assist disabled visitors?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has seating been reserved for disabled visitors?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there plenty of room between tables for all visitors to move safely and easily?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the caterer been asked to label different foods (e.g. meat, vegetarian) and ensure that these options are not served on the same platter?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Further Resources

Voluntary Arts publications

- **Admit All** (Voluntary Arts Ireland, 2007) – www.vaireland.org
- **Tear Up Your Tick Boxes** (Voluntary Arts Wales, 2006) – evaluation tool incorporating diversity – www.vaw.org.uk

Voluntary Arts briefings

These are available to download for free from www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings.

- 127x – **Understanding and creating accessible PDFs**
- 110 – **Whose Board? Whose Agenda? Including disabled and deaf people in your management committees**
- 86 – **Making your website for everyone**
- 67 – **Risk assessment for event organisers**
- 44 – **Disability Discrimination Act Part III**
- 10 – **Access**

Organisations

- **Disability Cultural Projects** – set up to further the cultural equality of Deaf and Disabled people in the UK and internationally – www.disabilityarts.info
- **Equality and Human Rights Commission** – the new all-embracing body for equality and human rights in the UK. Replaced the Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission and Equal Opportunities Commission in October 2007 – www.equalityhumanrights.com

- **Adapt NI** – a range of services to support arts organisations in Northern Ireland to improve accessibility, including, at certain times, a grant scheme for small-scale adaptations – www.adaptni.org
- **The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland** – this has taken over the functions previously exercised by the Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland, the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, the Fair Employment Commission and the Northern Ireland Disability Council – www.equalityni.org
- **National Disability Authority (RoI)** – the lead state agency on disability issues including accessibility – www.nda.ie
- **Equality Authority (RoI)** – established to promote and defend the anti-discrimination rights set out in the Employment Equality Acts and the Equal Status Acts on nine grounds, including disability – www.equality.ie
- **Disability Arts Wales** – works throughout Wales to promote equal opportunities in the arts for disabled people, providing training, information and advice – www.dacymru.com

Other publications

- **RNIB Clear Print Guidelines** (RNIB) – www.rnib.org.uk
- **Arts & Disability Directory** (online, NI & RoI) – www.artsanddisability.com

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Contact T: 029 20 395 395 E: info@voluntaryarts.org**

VOLUNTARY ARTS NETWORK



The Voluntary Arts Network, Ground floor, 121 Cathedral Road, Pontcanna, Cardiff CF11 9PH
T: 029 20 395 395 E: info@voluntaryarts.org W: www.voluntaryarts.org

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Registered office: 2nd Floor, 54 Manor Place, Edinburgh EH3 7EH.