

Accessible Meeting and Venue Checklist

2017




Produced by the Equality and Diversity
Team

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To obtain a copy in an alternative language or format,
please contact the Equality and Diversity Team on
01934 634989

Your three key questions




Do you
know your
audience?

Are they professionals
in a specific field or a
group of residents
from a
local community?



What style
of meeting
do you
want?

Boardroom, seminar or
an informal
discussion?



What
venue
would you
like to use?

Council space, The
Hive, or a local café?

The stages explained

Do you know your audience?

Right at the outset you must ask anyone you're going to invite if they have any access requirements. Give examples of what this might include such as; accessible parking or an interpreter.

You must check if a disabled participant, (member of staff or external visitor), needs to be provided with assistance in the event of a fire, etc. Follow up any requests and check that the venue or location you eventually pick does not result in any other requirements.

At this point think of the Deal Breakers that fit the type of meeting and venue you're going to have. If someone needs lift access, will there be an appropriate means of escape for them? Do they need assistance and who will provide it?



Example: Statement about access needs

Here's a suggestion for the sort of text to include.

Try and give a person's name, always use a phone number and also offer an email address, but never give just an email address.

If you have any specific access requirements to be enable you to attend and join in the meeting please contact John Smith on 01934 12 3456, or by email on, (John Smith's email address).

These could include a BSL interpreter, an accessible parking bay or meeting papers in large print or as an audio file.

What style of meeting?

Your style of meeting should be tailored to your subject and the people you are meeting.

Residents and community groups by nature are more informal and so if appropriate a café location might work well for just a small number of people. In contrast, a committee may be confidential, formal and require a layout that allows for discussion and the sharing of information using papers or audio-visual equipment.

Often, it's better to meet people in the environment that they are most comfortable in and are perhaps are more used to.



Example: choosing the place to meet

Every month a group of Deaf people meet at the “Coffee No 1” High Street cafe for a chat and a chance to catch up on news and issues that affect the Deaf community. Deaf people can often feel physically isolated with so many barriers to communication around them and it offers an opportunity to overcome this.

It's a public space and the group is supported by the café and they reserve a table for them. The café is physically accessible and has sufficient space to enable Deaf people to communicate easily and comfortably. Local organisations have started to use the group to consult on projects around the area or to get feedback on services and Deaf people's requirements. They know the meetings will be accessible and that the group welcome a chance to be involved.

In this instance Deaf people don't need the formal setting of a meeting room, papers, etc., since they communicate visually and primarily need somewhere to physically get together.

Email [Liz Watkins](#) for more information.

The local Dementia Action Alliance have a similar style meeting at the Weston Premier Inn. Email [Hayley Pope](#) for more information.

What venue would you like to use?

Once you know your participants' needs you can then either; revise your anticipated venue or e-meeting booking, or move to putting in place the reasonable adjustments to your meeting.

A key issue at this stage will be the physical accessibility of either your venue or e-meeting software. Are there any auxiliary aids or equipment you may need and that need to be booked? For example, a portable induction loop, an interpreter or additional staff to help assist people during the meeting. For example, to meet and guide visually impaired people into the venue.

Some reasonable adjustments at external venues will require you to check the venue management procedures to ensure a disabled person's requirements can be met. Asking about these in advance will help when you make a booking enquiry and decide your list of tasks for your meeting.

Example: holding a public meeting

A company are consulting with the local community about construction proposals. They book a local hall, but they don't know who will be attending as its going to be an open meeting.

They ensure the venue is fully accessible and provided with an induction loop. They give priority seating to people with hearing impairments at the front and publicise to the community that they will book interpreters for languages other than English and for Deaf people requiring British Sign Language if notified ten days in advance.

Copies of leaflets and handouts are made available in large print and alternative formats offered where requested

Example: a local authority Council meeting

A meeting of the Full Council is a formal event with the way its run clearly set out in the council Standing Orders. It has to ensure though that disabled people have access to the meeting. Anyone unable to use the public gallery can sit on the ground floor to one side and papers are made available in alternative formats where the Democratic Services team are notified in time.

Alternative formats are provided to the public within the timeframe available for the publication of documents. Where council staff are aware of disabled people who are interested in a report they could start the alternative format process as soon as a report is signed off to ensure they receive it in time.

What are Deal Breakers?

These are the things you must do if a disabled person is attending your meeting.

You must cancel your meeting if you cannot do any one of them.

Failure to do so would be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. This applies to council staff as well as external participants.

Not providing some requirements, such as a safe means of escape in the event of a fire or other emergency, is dangerous. Therefore, your meeting must not go ahead.

Example 1: a deal breaker

Deal breakers can be more than just if access provision is or isn't made. The Equality Act focuses on the standard of service offered to disabled people. It must be comparable to that offered to an able person in the same situation.

For example, six disabled people all need a lift to attend a meeting on the first floor of an office. They are advised there is a lift, but it is small, and though compliant with guidance, would only take one person at a time. This would be an unacceptable low standard of access due to the disabled participants having to queue up to wait for the lift when able people were not delayed.

The meeting would need to be held somewhere else or cancelled.

Example 2 – a deal breaker

A business is undergoing a re-organisation and the consultants supporting the company are based some distance away. Apart from monthly meetings they recommend video conferencing and webinars to keep up to date.

However, the company states they have a member of staff who needs to be involved who cannot access the video conferencing software and some of the documents online due to the inaccessible software.

The company therefore opt to have face to face meetings and the disabled consultant is given desk space in their office to work on the re-organisation. This would be considered a reasonable adjustment. Such adjustments may well incur a cost but this doesn't mean they are unacceptable or unreasonable.

Setting up a physical meeting

Deal Breakers – the things you must do

ISSUE	WHAT TO DO
Travel to a physical venue	<p>Provide designated car parking spaces as close to the entrance as you are can. If there aren't any you'll need to create some temporary ones.</p> <p>Offer people the bus and train access and timetable information (Check the format they want it in). You may need to offer transport if public transport is inaccessible.</p>
Route to a venue and the entrance	<p>There must be a level or ramped path up to the entrance and a ramp to overcome any steps at the entrance. Any doors used by your participants must have a clear opening width of at least 800mm. Identify any entrances with automated doors. You may need to provide assistance with manual doors.</p>
If your meeting is to be on the first or a higher floor	<p>Not only is a lift needed, but it must be suitable for the participants needs. Remember, not all wheelchairs are the same size. What about sensory impaired people? Is the lift or stairlift suitable for them?</p> <p>Check, is anyone coming by scooter?</p> <p>If the alternative is a stairlift you need to make sure you know how to use it. Are there are any particular operating instructions, or a weight or size restriction?</p>
Fire escape	<p>Take the time to check this issue thoroughly. You need to be able to pass on to participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which exits must be used• Who will provide support to disabled participants and where they should meet.• Whoever runs the building should provide this information. It's not normally your job to plan for this eventuality or to physically evacuate anyone.
Accessible toilets	<p>Locate the unisex toilet for disabled people and check if it's properly fitted out for use by disabled people.</p>

Setting up e-meetings

Deal Breakers – the things you must do

ISSUE	WHAT TO DO
Check software and any hardware meets everyone's needs.	<p>Is the IT software compatible with any assistive software participants' use?</p> <p>Check if disabled participants will bring assistive software with them.</p> <p>Put in place support to operate video conferencing equipment.</p> <p>Does anyone have difficulty in operating a phone, using a keyboard or other equipment?</p>
Webinars	<p>Are webinar instructions suitable for the disabled people present?</p> <p>Can time be built into the session for anyone who needs additional support?</p>
British Sign Language and other languages	<p>Do any disabled participants communicate using BSL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How will the interpreter participate in the video conferencing?○ Do you need subtitles for any streamed content?

Planning your meeting

Publicity and printed material

All you need to know is in the council's [Accessible Information Guide 2014. \(It's got its own Checklist\)](#). You need to be ready to respond to requests and to provide alternative formats such as large print or audio files.

Assistance

Not every building is accessible to everyone so it's reasonable to have to provide assistance for people who face barriers accessing the meeting venue. (It could be in the car park, at the lift or to open doors).

Plan your meeting schedule to allow time to provide assistance. Do you need other people with you?

Signage

Are there clear signs showing the way to the accessible entrance, the meeting room(s) and toilets etc.? If not, you will need get some printed ones made up in advance.

Communication aids

Hearing impaired people may need an induction loop in the meeting room. Check the venue has one or book out a portable system from the Equality and Diversity Team.

Deaf people have different needs so you may need a suitably qualified Interpreter. You must arrange to book British Sign Language Interpreters as soon as possible, but probably at least ten working days before the meeting.

At your venue

Suitable seating layouts

Check there is adequate room between rows. Be prepared to make spaces for wheelchair users or assistance dogs in the room(s) by removing seats etc.

Identify people with specific seating needs; e.g. lip readers must be near and in line of sight of your speaker(s). Deaf people must be able to see interpreters.

Visual aids

Remind speakers or the chair of the meeting of the need to provide clear precise spoken commentary for visual displays e.g. PowerPoint presentations. Offer to provide presentations in advance to Deaf people to look at with an interpreter. Also provide visually impaired people with a plain text version to read through in advance.

Conduct of meetings

The Chair and Facilitators must be aware of how they can include people with learning or sensory impairments in the meeting.

Breaks

The timing of breaks must allow Facilitators and Interpreters to rest and mobility impaired people time to visit toilets, etc.

There's always next time

If you agree to meet again or stay in contact you could record people's access needs. Check the details and get their consent to hold the information.

Background technical information

Guidance on what standards need to be used for doors, lifts or ramps as well guidance on digital accessibility is available on [TheAccessOfficer website](#)

Simply search for the subject you are unsure about.

Equality Act 2010 guidance

Detailed information is available at the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) website.

North Somerset Equality and Diversity Team

We are able to provide advice on running meetings, accessible and effective consultation as well as detailed advice on the suitability of premises.

Please call either 01934 63 4989 or 6342 or email; Anthony.rylands@n-somerset.gov.uk or Louise.roberts@n-somerset.gov.uk