Disability guidance for events

University of Bristol

This document aims to set out useful guidance to those planning recruitment events in the University of Bristol and provide briefing guidance for those working at the events. It should not be used in place of a full risk assessment and should be updated to reflect changes in policy or experiences learned from. To suggest changes to this guidance, please contact postgraduate-recruitment@bristol.ac.uk.

This document combines recommendations from a range of sources, including the Equality Act 2010 Code of Practice, which states that we have a duty to make reasonable adjustments:

- Where a provision, criterion or practice puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled, to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.
- Where a physical feature puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled to avoid that disadvantage or adopt a reasonable alternative method of providing the service or exercising the function.
- Where not providing an auxiliary aid puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled, to provide that auxiliary aid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the duty to make reasonable adjustments apply even if the service provider does not know that the person is disabled?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because this is a duty to disabled people at large, it applies regardless of whether the service provider knows that a particular person is disabled or whether it currently has disabled customers, members etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When disabled customers request services, the service provider must already have taken all reasonable steps to ensure that they can be served.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all. This is the gold standard in accessibility; to design an event that enables all to enjoy it equally, without requests for additional support. This is not always possible, but it is preferable for someone to enjoy an event without having to identify themselves as requiring additional support.

Venue selection

With the above principle of Universal Design in mind, venues should be selected on the basis of accessibility, offering visitors step-free access that does not involve considerable delays, excessively long routes or the requirement for self-identification, unless no alternative is possible. Visual presentations should be clear, with space available at the front for those with visual impairments, and preferably at the front for those in wheelchairs.

Venue preparation

Make signposting a priority, and in particular signposting routes for differently abled people – at a height where the signs can be read from a wheelchair, and preferably in a different colour so that routes can be followed with ease.
Trial all routes to make sure that they are easy and clear and note what signs will be required. If there's room for confusion or difficulty with routes in terms of knowing which way to go, having to open doors unassisted or traversing rough surfaces, note this and find ways of mitigating the risk to visitors.

If hearing loops are installed, make sure this is clear. If an interpreter will be present, likewise. Imagine navigating the day as a differently abled person and what elements of the venue/setup might put you at a disadvantage.

**Booking**

Always ask your bookers whether they or their guests have access requirements and what those are, but do not assume that you know for sure what someone's needs might be – they might not have informed you of the details, or they may have become less/differently able since booking.

A limited number of car parking spaces are available to book at the Hawthorns, which can be arranged at http://www.bristol.ac.uk/transportplan/car-parking/precinct/visitor-parking.html. If visitors highlight a need to access such parking and it is convenient for your event, liaise directly with the registrant and ensure all details of such arrangements are clear.

If you are unsure of what support a registrant may need for their disability, or you are unsure whether we are able to provide it, please consult your manager and/or contact Disability Services to clarify: disability-services@bristol.ac.uk or +44 (0)117 331 0444.

**Pre-event guidance**

Make sure accessibility information is clear in your event information, and where possible provide detailed accessibility information that people can refer to and plan their trip, including the following:

- **Parking**
  - Proximity
  - Reserved spaces for differently abled people
  - Drop off points at venues
- **Public transport links**
  - How far a walk does this include, and is the journey flat?
- **Access to the building/s**
  - Is there level entry?
  - Is there a ramp?
    - If so, how steep is it?
  - Is there a separate entrance for differently abled people or wheelchair users?
  - Is the door electronically assisted?
- **Access within the building**
  - Is there a lift?
  - Is the venue on the ground floor?
  - Will doors to the event open wide enough for wheelchair access?
  - Are the doors electronically assisted or can a member of staff be available to open if needed?
  - Are routes easy to follow, and are they easy to get through?
- **Hearing access**
  - Do staff have British Sign Language (BDL) training?
• Is there a hearing loop at reception and in the room in which the event is taking place?
  • Will there be BSL interpreters present or live captioning available?

• Visual access
  • Can you provide easy-to-read copies of the information or handouts?
  • Is your signage easy to read?

• Toilets
  • Are there toilets adapted for differently abled people in the building?
  • Are they clearly signposted?
  • Are there such toilets close to the room/s that the event is taking place in?
  • Are the toilets right-hand or left-hand transfer? (see below)

• Safe space
  • Will there be a separate room close to the room/s the event is in for guests to use if they need a quiet space?

• Service animals
  • Are guide dogs, hearing dogs and other service animals welcome in the venue?

• Event format
  • Will guests be required to move around during the event?
  • Is participation required?
  • Is there anyone there to help people where needed? (e.g. a personal assistant for the duration of the event)
  • Will there be breaks at regular intervals during the event?
  • If you are holding an interactive event, but wish to reassure guests they’re not required to participate, state this in pre-event information

• Speakers
  • Is the stage/speaker area accessible?
  • Are any microphones/lecterns height adjustable?
  • Are speakers asked if they require audio-visual aids?
  • Are speakers informed of reasonable adjustments that may be required (for example, taking a break at a suitable juncture if a sign language interpreter is present)

• Consider additional accessibility tools
  • Live captioning
  • BSL translators
Publications

It is important to consider in planning your event good practice for print (for example, the availability of large-print materials should they be required) as well as use of Plain English. Some participants may have a sensory impairment which may make accessing text itself difficult. Equally however, some of your audience could have a cognitive difference such as dyslexia or an Autistic Spectrum Condition which impacts upon processing speeds; hence the amount, pace and flow of text is equally important to think about.

During the event

It is crucial that event staff, including students, are briefed in how to approach, converse with and assist differently abled visitors.

Providing reasonable accommodation to a visitor with a disability is often very simple. It may mean taking a bit of extra time to communicate with an individual or to direct them to the appropriate place. While there is no exhaustive list of what could be considered a reasonable accommodation, possible scenarios include:

• Taking a visitor with a hearing disability to a quiet place to ask you a question
• Notifying maintenance that a visitor cannot get to an exhibit because of a broken elevator
• Helping a person get to their desired location

Below are some other points to cover in staff briefings – though not exhaustive, they will help to prevent some common errors.

• You may not ask a guest at an event what their disability is. Ask if/how you can assist them.
• If you see a person using a guide dog or cane, announce your presence immediately so they know where you are.
• Never offer to help someone down stairs if they are waiting for a lift – even if the lift is broken. Always call security for assistance.
• Do not touch anyone (or their equipment, including wheelchair) without their permission.
• If someone requests your assistance to walk, stand alongside them and allow them to use your arm or shoulder for support.
• If someone requires a helper to speak or for any other reason, look at the person and not the helper. This can be difficult, but if you get it wrong, apologise and correct it.
• If someone requires a little more time to be able to move to a location, make sure they are not left behind (e.g. from a group activity).
• Never talk differently to someone who is differently able – even if their behaviour, speech or physicality is unusual to you.
• If someone has difficulty speaking and you are unable to understand, apologise for your lack of comprehension and ask them to repeat themselves. Do not pretend to understand. If necessary, move to a quiet spot or ask them to write it down, if appropriate.
• Not all disabilities are visible – be sensitive and aware, do not tell people which facilities they should be using or that they do not need something they have requested.
• Do not ever treat any visitor as if they are asking too much by requesting things to be done in a way that enables them to access the event.
• Do not ask for proof that an animal is a service animal – they are not always uniformed.
• Do not pet or feed service animals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do say</th>
<th>Don't say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A person with a disability</strong></td>
<td>A cripple, handicapped, special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>She uses a wheelchair</strong></td>
<td>She is confined to a wheelchair/is wheelchair bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>He has a cognitive disability</strong></td>
<td>He is mentally retarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>She has a learning disability</strong></td>
<td>She is learning disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>He has autism</strong></td>
<td>He is autistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>She has a brain injury</strong></td>
<td>She is brain damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>He has a psychiatric disability</strong></td>
<td>He is crazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A person who is blind/deaf</strong></td>
<td>A blind/deaf person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation**

When evaluating the event, make sure that any comments from visitors relating to accessibility or their experience of the event in general are noted and acted upon. How will any issues be prevented in future? What can we learn?

If this guidance can be updated as the result of an evaluation or event experience, please inform the Postgraduate Recruitment Team: postgraduate-recruitment@bristol.ac.uk.

**Contacts**

For BSL interpreters, Disability Services use Signing Works or Sign Solutions as they are both local agencies:

[https://www.signingworks.co.uk/](https://www.signingworks.co.uk/)
[https://www.signsolutions.uk.com/](https://www.signsolutions.uk.com/)

For other types of support such as notetakers or personal assistants please contact the Disability Services support team, who will be your point of liaison with Randstad.

disability-services@bristol.ac.uk or +44 (0)117 331 0444