ADDRESSING BARRIERS

This section covers 'barriers', including language barriers, communication barriers, and barriers which exclude disabled people. There are lots of simple and free or low cost ways to address barriers which might stop people from taking part.

6.1 Inclusive Language

In the heritage sector complex language can make it hard for some people to engage.

This tool has tips to make your communication more accessible and remove language barriers.

The word 'heritage'

Case Study

Throughout various conversations with community groups we began to see that the word 'heritage' was actually a barrier.
While most understood what we meant by 'history', heritage was often meaningless.

> We began to say 'spaces, places, and stories' instead of heritage, to try to convey everything we wanted groups to celebrate: architecture of all ages, outdoor spaces, community activities, traditions, songs, food.

> Ten EHD National Co-ordinators filled in a survey on the word 'heritage' – six said they use descriptive words (i.e. monument or cultural environment) to make it less abstract.

Tips

Making language inclusive

Use clear, simple language. To make sure nobody is excluded because of their literacy level, avoid using overly complex words and phrases.

✓ Try to write texts which suit people beginning to learn a language, people with visual impairments and people with cognitive and learning differences.

✓ Use short sentences and short paragraphs.
Check your writing with an online 'readability' test

✓ People beginning to learn a language, people with visual impairments and people with cognitive and learning differences often face barriers when trying to get information about events.

✓ Use images to help communicate the text's meaning.
Learn about the Easy Read format

Language around personal and group identity

✓ Respect the language people choose to refer to themselves.

✓ Try to be aware of language used in your context. For example, in the UK the word 'Queer' is treated as positive and used a lot in heritage contexts

✓ We talk about Queer communities and history, but would ask before calling an individual Queer.

✓ If in doubt, ask! For example: 'Would you prefer we refer to your group as ['elderly', 'older people' or something else]?'

6.2 Translation and interpretation

This tool covers basic etiquette and tips for working with translators and interpreters.

Tips

## Working with translators and interpreters

a) Understand the role of translators and interpreters.
The National Registers of Communication Professionals (UK) working with Deaf and Deafblind People have a **guide** on working with Sign Language interpreters.

b) In conversation, interact with the Deaf person or person who needs the content translated.
Make eye contact with them and respond to them, rather than the communications worker.

→ Give the interpreter or translator the texts and materials plenty of time before the event

→ Breaks are important – interpreting or watching an interpreter takes lots of energy

→ Seating is important, as people need to see the interpreter/translator and the facilitator clearly

→ Identify who is speaking, and face the people you are speaking to

→ Make sure people speak clearly, loud enough, and one at a time

→ If something said in a discussion is quiet or unclear, repeat it briefly for the interpreter/translator
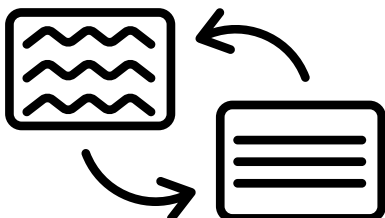
The language we use in the UK

In the UK we use English, although Scottish Gaelic and Welsh are also used in Scotland and Wales. There are, however, large communities within the UK whose first language is not English or who speak other languages at home.

During Scotland's Doors Open Days in 2019 we specifically wanted to reach out to the refugee/migrant community.

We met with the Refugee Survival Trust and the Scottish Refugee Council to ask what languages would be most relevant to their service users. Farsi was highlighted as important to many refugees in Glasgow.

We worked with refugees to translate and deliver tours of Glasgow City Chambers, the centre of local government in the city.

We also worked with the Sikorski Society to offer tours in Polish, as there is a significant settled migrant community of Poles in the city.

Our research found that other significant languages in Scotland include Urdu and Punjabi, though these tend to be spoken, rather than written, and we want to introduce more content in these languages in the future.

6.3 Disabling barriers

People sometimes think about disability only from the point of view of doctors, medical knowledge and diagnoses.
This is called the 'medical model' of disability.

If we focus only on medical points of view about disability, we miss the cultural and political sides. There is a rich history of disabled people's work, art, community, heritage and social action.

One key idea from disability communities is 'nothing about us without us' – which means work about disability should be led by or co-produced with disabled people.

It also means listening to disabled people about how 'disability' should be defined and what disability culture means.

Disability activists and scholars have created the 'social model' of disability to challenge the 'medical model'. The social model moves the focus from the individual disabled person to the whole society.

If a society is set up in a way that creates inequality and barriers, then people will of course be disabled.

What 'disability' means shifts over time and depends on the culture.
For example, we don't consider people who need glasses to be disabled, because glasses are quite easy to get now – but if glasses didn't exist they would face barriers in society.

Note: the 'social model' is the reason we say 'disabled people' not 'people with disabilities' in the UK. How do disability communities see disability in your country?

There will always be people with impairments, health conditions and differences, but we can and should work to create cultures and spaces without barriers.
'Barriers' are things which make it harder for some people to take part, and they include:
  - Stairs and other parts of the built environment like narrow doors
  - The absence of a way to communicate - for example if a d/Deaf person attends an event and there's no sign language interpreter or hearing loop
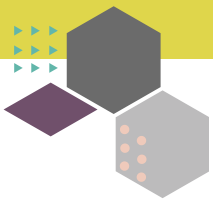
Neurodivergence and barriers

Autistic people and other people with differences in how they think have developed the concept of 'neurodivergence'.
This means people whose minds and thinking 'diverge' from (are different from) what is considered 'typical' in society.

Barriers neurodivergent people might face include bright lights, loud spaces, and information which is only shared aloud.

Expectations that people should move, think, feel and socialise the way neurotypical people do are barriers. Read this blog post or this academic text about relaxed arts events:
 - A relaxed environment: welcoming autistic audiences to arts events
- Enhancing relaxed performance: evaluating the Autism Arts Festival

Follow the tips and examples on the next page, for sharing access information before the event.
This helps people decide whether they can take part, and what barriers they might experience.

6.4 Sharing accessibility info

Sharing access information

Be as clear as possible about what you have done to make the event accessible.
Let people know what steps you can and cannot take to provide access, and **note any barriers they should be aware of.**
Just saying 'this event is/is not accessible' is not very helpful, as it doesn't give people the information they need about barriers.

You should share access information in person, in emails, on the event page and on social media.
How you phrase your access information will depend on your audience and the event.

Here are some examples to get you started:

This event has stair-free access and accessible toilets.
Because the event is a museum tour, we will be moving around for about 40 minutes.
The tour will be held in French.
Unfortunately, there is no hearing loop in the venue.
Please get in touch if you have questions and to let us know how we can make this event accessible to you.

This event will be held online using Zoom [include link to a how-to guide for Zoom]. There will be sign language interpretation in [BSL].
If you need a written copy before the event or need help using Zoom, please let us know!

10 steps to get into the venue. Single stall gender neutral toilets, but no wide access toilet.
Autism friendly, with low lighting and quiet spaces participants can use.
We will do our best to address any barriers which would stop you from taking part. Please email us about how we can support you to access this event.

Always remember to include information about how to get to the venue, including transport links, showing where parking and the venue entrance are. Include a map showing where the space is, and a room plan if available so people know what the space is like inside.

In the UK Euan's Guide website includes crowd created access guides to many venues, and it's good practice to include a link so people can find out more about the space.
How do you find out about and share access info in your country?
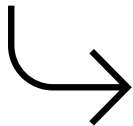
6.5 Event checklist: barriers and access

Feel free to print this tool to use it. It's been designed in black and white!

Sharing access information
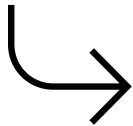
How it's written

Would it work for learning disabled and cognitively disabled people and for people beginning to learn your language?
Clear texts help people understand your message.

- **Clear and simple**
- **Avoids jargon, abbreviations and acronyms**
- **Uses short sentences and paragraphs, with bullet points if needed**

How it's formatted

Would it work for visually impaired people, learning disabled people and for people using screen reader software?

- [ ] 1.15-1.5 line spacing
- [ ] Left-aligned text and wide margins
- [ ] Text is set against a plain background, with high contrast between the font and the background. Use black text on a white background if you aren't sure, but you can learn more about designing for visually impaired people
- [ ] Plain formatting: no unnecessary italics, UPPER CASE or underlined text
- [ ] Sans-serif font like Arial, in a big enough size point (the equivalent of Ariel point 14)
- [ ] When using links, don't place the hyperlink on words like 'read more' or 'click here'. Instead use a unique and informative link name.
- [ ] Use properly structured headings, so people can navigate to different sections using a screen reader.
- [ ] Add alternative text ('Alt Text') to any digital images you use.

Document formats

- [ ] Think about the formats you use to share information with people before, during and after the event. Is the information only accessible to people with sight, hearing and technology?

- [ ] If you're sharing a document (like a volunteer pack, an informative poster or a video), you may need to create alternative formats.
For example, Deaf people may need a video to have captions or simultaneous sign language interpretation, and people using braille readers may need a document to be in Word not PDF format.

- [ ] If you're sharing a digital document, think about what technology and skills the people using it will need. Some people may need to be able to read or use the document offline – for example a Word document rather than an online survey.

- [ ] If you're sharing complex texts, or a lot of information, writing a 'plain language' copy and an 'Easy Read' copy will make it more accessible for some people. To learn more read this blog, and this Handbook from Learning Disability Wales.

- [ ] When sharing documents, think about how to make it as easy as possible. The more webpages, steps and kinds of software people need to use to take part or get information, the harder it can be.

Livestreams:
streaming tours and events can make them accessible to people who can't attend in person.
As people may not watch the full stream, think about using other formats to communicate the info they'll need when they join, including the timings and links to any resources. Depending on the content and length, you might include comfort breaks.

Travel and moving around the space

☐ There should at minimum be level or step-free access. The level access entrance should be equal to the main entrance (if they are not the same), i.e not a goods lift far away from the main entrance.

☐ There should be enough seating, in every space. There should be a choice of seating, including seats with arms and backs.

☐ Doors should be wide enough for someone using an electric wheelchair to use (82.3cm) and there should be clear paths through the building without obstacle. When setting up chairs make sure there is space to move.

☐ Are there handrails and bannisters in corridors and on stairs?

☐ There should be enough contrast between surfaces for visually impaired people to move about safely. For example, indoor steps should be painted a contrasting colour. See this blog post on making museums accessible to visitors with visual impairments.

☐ Braille and raised tactile texts where needed, including elevator buttons?

☐ Think about how people will get there. Are the transport links to get to the site accessible? How far is the walk or roll from the nearest transport links to the site? Is there parking, including spaces for disabled people to park close to the entrance?

Comfort and sensory access

☐ Heating should be adjustable if possible, as some people would be uncomfortable or unwell in environments which are too warm or cold.

☐ Lighting should also be adjustable, so you can find the right balance for the people who visit. For example, people with low vision may need brighter lights, and people with migraines may need dimmer lights.

☐ Sound should be clear and loud. Some visitors may need information to be shared loudly, others may be started by sudden noises.
Learn more about hearing access for events, including using hearing loops.

☐ Is there are least one gender neutral (unisex) wide access bathroom which wheelchair users can use near the other bathrooms?
The door should be wide enough for a wheelchair user to get through comfortably with space to turn.
There should be grab rails and transfer space. The sink and mirror should be at the right height for wheelchair users.
The bathroom should not be used for storage, and should have an emergency pull cord hanging all the way to the floor.
'Changing spaces' bathrooms are the most universally accessible bathrooms in the UK, but there aren't many of them.

☐ Lighting should also be adjustable, so you can find the right balance for the people who visit. For example, people with low vision may need brighter lights, and people with migraines may need dimmer lights.

☐ Consider visitors who need scent-free spaces – this scent-free toolkit from UCLA has information on scent free space policies.

☐ Have you thought about allergies and labelled food ingredients?

6.6 Addressing barriers and care needs

This tool has tips for addressing barriers experienced by disabled people and people with care responsibilities and needs.

Addressing disabling barriers

➤ Find out about people's access needs early on, and make a plan for event access.

➤ Be respectful and confidential.

➤ Barriers can arise at the last minute.
Accept that not everyone will share their access needs before the event, so you may need to respond to barriers during the event. It can help to have someone responsible for access on the day to help with any barriers which come up.

➤ Think and ask about the person, not their diagnosis. It's not necessary to learn medical information about people to understand and address the barriers they experience.

➤ Talk to the people affected by a barrier.
Individuals are the experts on their own lives, and often know what solutions would work best for them.

If they don't know a way around the barrier, do some research or ask others for ideas!

special
needs

Mobility

child
care

Have you thought about: Childcare?

1
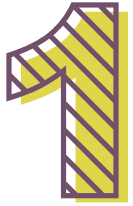
Provide and plan around childcare

Can you offer childcare or a crèche on the day?

This can help parents and carers of children take part. You can also consider what event timings might work best for people who need to arrange childcare.

2

Making events child-inclusive

Think about whether the event is suitable for infants and children. If it is, mention in your communications that it's family-friendly.

Can you include activities for children of different age groups? Meaningful activities might encourage children to engage with the site, entertain them, and provide chances to learn about heritage.

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3

Balancing access needs

Tours designed for the needs of families with young children may not meet every visitor's needs – for example, people sensitive to loud noises.

If you make it clear what the event will be like, people can decide whether it sounds right for them.

4

Spaces for breastfeeding and changing

Are there clearly signposted spaces available for parents to breastfeed or express milk, including private space?

Are there accessible facilities for changing babies?

Have you thought about: Personal assistance/care for the people who take part?

Some disabled people work with Personal Assistants (PAs) or carers to assist them with different tasks. For example, a PA might assist someone with personal care, using transport, accessing work and leisure, or addressing other barriers they experience. You might want to mention that PAs/carers are welcomed at your event.

1. Carers take part in different ways

Some PAs/carers are paid, and some are unpaid family members and friends—this might affect how they take part in an event.

Depending on the carer's responsibilities, they may stay with the disabled person and support them to take part throughout the event, or they may want to take part as a participant.

2. Don't assume carers will speak for the person they're with

Often when disabled people are with a PA/carer in public, people ignore the disabled person and just talk to their carer.

This is not respectful—most disabled people would prefer you talk directly to them!

Of course, if someone shows that you should talk to their PA/carer instead, follow their lead.

3. Seats for waiting

Some disabled people travel to events with a PA/carer, but prefer taking part alone.

It is good practice to have a waiting area for when this is the case.