



University of
Sheffield



Centre for
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Critical
Disability
Studies



Accessibility Guide for university led events

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Introduction

This guide has been designed to help organisers enhance access to and participation in university-led events. Conferences, workshops, talks and showcases are an integral part of university life. However, such events continue to perpetuate systems of oppression and exclusion, causing real harm to the most marginalised people in society. This is often because organisers have failed to deeply consider issues of access when preparing for and then delivering their event(s). All organisers have a responsibility to identify and address harmful processes and practices, each and every time they seek to put on an event. It does not matter whether the event is small-scale or large-scale, unidirectional or interactive, online or in-person. There is an inherent duty of care to ensure that **all** potential and actual audience members feel as safe and comfortable as possible.

There is also a legal obligation to make events accessible. [The Equality Act 2010](#) stipulates that it is unlawful to discriminate against anyone because of a protected characteristic, which include race, sexual orientation, religion and disability. It makes clear that public bodies have to consider all individuals when conducting day-to-day operations, shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees. The Equality Act 2010 also requires public bodies to consciously consider ways to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

In order to comply with The Equality Act 2010, we need to ensure that our events are accessible to all. This is the responsibility of institutions and organisers, not audiences. Too often, the default approach to accessibility is to wait for individual audience members to declare a need or ask for an accommodation. This not only places an additional burden on those who are already having to navigate structural and interpersonal barriers, it also proves ineffective. People who face barriers to access may be reluctant to come forward because they feel exposed and unsafe, have not been formally diagnosed with an access need (or identify with one), or feel bad for causing extra work for organisers. It is exactly this perception of accessibility as ‘additional labour’ that we are problematising in this guide.

We encourage a proactive approach to accessibility. Rather than expecting those with accessibility needs to highlight problems, we believe organisers should take the lead and start preparing for accessibility from the very beginning of event planning. This guide has been designed to support organisers in this process.

Framework

We adopt an equitable approach to accessibility. It is important to make clear the distinction between equity and equality when it comes to accessibility measures. Equality means that everyone is given the same access to support, resources and opportunity. Equity ensures that each individual or group is given whatever level of support, resources and opportunity is required to ensure an equal [outcome](#). By advocating for an equitable approach to accessibility, we are encouraging organisers to adapt and respond to the particular needs of distinct individuals or groups. In the context of event organisation, this not only means thinking about physical access to buildings (though this is important), it also means thinking about project team roles, budgets, venue facilities, safeguarding, catering, communications, promotional materials, and much more besides.

We insist that issues around accessibility are not caused by the individuals or groups who have accessibility needs. Instead, they are established and enforced by social systems and structures. As such, we adopt what is called a [social model of disability](#), as defined by academic and activist Professor Michael Oliver. In our view, people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. It is only by dismantling these barriers completely that we truly achieve access for all. Dismantling barriers is considered social [justice](#) work, or sometimes long equity work, and should be the ultimate aim for all organisers and institutions invested in accessibility.

This guide goes beyond simply thinking about disability as the sole point of focus for accessibility interventions. To comprehensively address accessibility we need to consider the various ways in which disability, race, class, gender, sexuality and faith (as both identities and systems of power) converge to compound [oppression](#). This is often understood as taking an intersectional approach, a term initially coined by Professor [Kimberlé Crenshaw](#). We do not claim to have covered all intersections in this guide. While we have endeavoured to consider intersectionality in its broadest sense, we have focused particularly on disability and race. This is primarily because it reflects the individual experience and expertise of the authors. Our aim is to build on this first iteration of the guide and develop more comprehensive versions in the future.

How To Use This Guide

In order to help organisers, this guide is designed to mirror the process of setting up an event. There are consequently three key sections: Before The Event, During the Event, and After the Event. We then round off the guide with some final thoughts and reflections. However, accessibility is complicated and there are no quick fixes. As such, this guide should not be treated like a checklist that, if followed correctly, will result in an entirely accessible event. The information we present here is neither exhaustive or final. No guide could ever adequately provide information on how to handle every accessibility need. What we offer instead is a range of principles and prompts that encourage self-reflection and critical thinking around equitable accessibility measures.

Using this guide should form part of a broader commitment to continual learning and development. You will **never** get everything right. Understanding and enhancing accessibility is an iterative process that improves over time. It does not require you to be an expert, but it does require you to critically reflect on your work, to be open to getting things wrong, to invite constructive feedback and to commit to learning from past mistakes.

The Process Behind The Guide

The development of this guide has been funded by the University of Sheffield's "Research Cultures Fund" which seeks to enhance research practice within higher education. Its content and design was developed through three online workshops, attended by researchers and professionals working in the field(s) of race, accessibility and/or public engagement.

During the first workshop, attendees were invited to reflect on and discuss accessibility issues they had encountered previously in university-led events. This informed the second workshop, with attendees exchanging ideas on how best to address the key issues identified. In the final workshop, attendees worked in pairs and then as one large group to write up the different sections featured in the guide.

In putting this guide together we have tried to model good practice when it comes to accessible working. Not only did we ensure people with lived experience and expertise on the topics being discussed were involved in the work, we also designed activities that met the preferences of attendees. It is important to note that we did not always get this right. Initially, there were some planned activities that were experienced as exclusionary and uncomfortable by one or two attendees. This prompted discussion about our different approaches to working and learning, which were then taken on board when planning activities for subsequent workshops. We share this insight to reinforce the principles of reflection and development advocated by this guide.

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The subtitles for the film
are very helpful.

English is difficult when
it's too fast for me to hear.

Yes, I like subtitles so we can talk
and watch at the same time.

I am glad we can sit together!
Other places don't always have
flexible seating that you can move.



Before the Event

Project Team

It is essential to make sure you build enough capacity and knowledge in your project team to manage accessibility requirements for each event. The most effective way of doing this is to establish a distinct Accessibility Committee, which is responsible for identifying, organising and reviewing all accessibility interventions. Members of this committee should include people who are sufficiently informed about accessibility. This may require hiring external consultants and/or training existing staff members. It is also recommended that organisers ensure a skilled facilitator is in place to manage the event's activities. And at least one staff member should be assigned to the role of managing accessibility issues that emerge during the event.

All project team members should work together to establish the principles, or non-negotiables, underpinning your event. This will provide the framework for planning and delivering the event itself. For example, you may have decided that you will only book venues that provide wheelchair access or gender neutral toilets. Or you will have implemented a strict trans-inclusive policy when it comes to promoting and running events for women. As a starting point, we suggest committing to the principle of continued reflection on accessibility practices and formally building this into your schedule. This allows the project team to anticipate issues, learn from mistakes, and improve accessibility provision. If an Accessibility Committee team has been assembled, they can help to identify other key points for consideration.

In addition to the core project team, it is important to think about who else should participate in the early planning stage of an event. For example, it can be useful to include British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters at this stage, as they will offer an informed perspective on the type of venue and event layout that allows them to work effectively. It should be noted that it can be challenging to sign on race-related and other sensitive issues. It requires a particular expertise and lived experience amongst BSL interpreters. So consider the diversity and skillset of signers when inviting them to join event planning. We recommend [Interpreters of Colour](#) as a good starting point when seeking racially diverse, professional, and critical interpreters.

Budget

Perhaps the greatest barrier to organising an accessible event is the budget. Ideally, the institution that you are working for should commit to covering any accessibility costs that emerge for an event. Or at least ringfence a significant amount of their annual budget for accessibility costs. Anything less than this indicates a lack of genuine commitment to equitable access. It once again places the burden on those who require accessibility needs, making them feel guilty for diminishing an event by taking up funds that would otherwise be spent on presenter fees, materials, refreshments, entertainment, etc.

We strongly encourage organisers to advocate for an institutional policy that commits to paying any accessibility costs. However, we realise this will not be the working reality for many who are reading through this guide. At the very least, organisers must ensure that accessibility measures are a priority area when establishing a budget for an event. It is hard to recommend what percentage of the budget should be allocated for accessibility, as it will change depending on the context of the event in question. But an overarching principle would be to make sure there is enough money to ensure that all audience members have the same quality of experience. It

is better to scale back an event than to over stretch and compromise one audience member's experience of that event. To reiterate an important point, any need to scale back exposes an institutional fault. If your institution commits to covering all accessibility costs then scaling back will not be necessary.

Consider the whole lifespan of the event when establishing a budget. We have already mentioned recruiting and paying experts to help with the early planning stages of an event. Looking ahead to the event itself, consider costs for things like free registration, BSL interpretation, live captioning, travel and childcare bursaries, and enablers. It is also worth budgeting for reflection time after an event, so that the core project team can work with experts and audiences to determine how to improve accessibility measures going forward. An accessibility committee can provide guidance when establishing costs for these specific accessibility measures.

Once a budget has been set and money allocated to the various accessibility measures, it is important to pay people up front. Do not make people wait for support. Bursaries should be paid in advance, rather than leaving people to work through the (inaccessible!) bureaucracy of expense forms. If presenters or performers need to be paid via invoices then make sure to provide administrative support and guidance for working through university payment processes. These take a long time to go through and it is not unusual for people to give up through anxiety or frustration, rather than persevere with the process.

Event Logistics

Barriers to access pervade all elements of an event. Below we provide some essential considerations when planning different event logistics.

- **Platform**
Consider how in-person, remote and hybrid platforms all impact accessibility in distinctive ways.
- **Timings**
Consider peak travel times, day-light hours, working hours, care duties, clashes with prayer times or other cultural/religious commitments. Provide frequent breaks.
- **Language**
Sessions do not always have to be in English. Provide captioning for online events (either live or retrospectively on recordings) and a BSL interpreter as standard practice.
- **Style**
Allow blended forms of working and consider different learning styles as standard. Do not depend on writing activities, or make it mandatory for people to write in front of others (either in person or remotely).
- **Recording**
Consider the impact of photographing/video capturing an event. Ask speakers what they are comfortable with and provide an option for participants to opt-out of this. Livecast public events once it has finished. Record online sessions where possible.

- **Support**

Ensure an accessibility contact is on hand during the event to attend to any issues or questions that emerge. Provide lanyards with emergency numbers. Consider travel and childcare bursaries to support the attendance of people facing financial barriers.

- **Refreshments**

Consider dietary requirements (including halal, vegan, gluten free, etc.) and ask participants about their preferences in advance of an event (i.e. during registration).

That room where I could feed my daughter and take her out when she cried was such a lifesaver.

There was somewhere clean to go and pray with a midday break.

My partner could join online while looking after the other children at home.



Venue Accessibility Audit

Selecting the right venue is vital for a successful event. And there are many things to consider in regards to accessibility. We have created a venue accessibility audit to help with this process. But in an effort to avoid tick boxing exercises, this audit contains prompts rather than a prescriptive list, to get you thinking more critically about venue choice:

- **Location.** Where is your venue located? Is it in a central area, near public transport links, and/or provide parking? Are there any contextual factors that might deter particular communities or groups from attending (e.g. negative associations with the location or religious, political or colonial links to the building)? Will you need to provide travel information, maps, or bursaries to address any barriers that exist with the venue location?
- **Architecture.** Does the venue provide step-free access? Are doors and other entrances wide enough for all attendees? Are lifts available for activities above ground level? Are there heavy doors on route to specific rooms? Is there a blueprint of the venue space that can be made available to participants, so they can determine for themselves whether the building caters to their accessibility needs?
- **Atmosphere.** Have you considered the different sensory features of the event, such as acoustics, lighting, seat and table layouts? Is the venue flexible enough for you to make changes to meet different audience needs, such as moving furniture or dimming lights?
- **Facilities.** Does the venue have gender neutral toilets, prayer rooms or quiet spaces, a creche or children play area?
- **Signposting.** Are there clear warning signs within the venue that highlight protocol during emergency situations (e.g. fire alarms?) Are all essential spaces related to the event clearly marked out (e.g. entrances/exits, activity rooms, bathrooms, prayer rooms, refreshment areas)?
- **COVID-19.** What protective measures are provided to combat the spread of COVID-19? Does the venue provide antibacterial gel and face masks? Is it possible to use social distancing layouts?

In order to determine the answer to these questions (and others) it is important to be in dialogue with the venue management team as soon as possible. It is also advisable that you scope out the venue in advance of the event, at least once, to identify any potential accessibility related concerns or issues. Once this information has been gathered, it should then be relayed to those who have signed up to attend the event.

Sharing and Receiving Information

It is important to relay information about accessibility measures to audiences as early as possible. Ideally, this will be included in promotional materials and registration forms. Information might include:

- Date, time, location and cost of event
- Intended audience(s)
- Event schedule, including detail on activities and breaks
- Travel information (including links to public transport, maps and where possible images of the venue)
- Accessibility measures being provided (BSL interpretation, live captioning, etc.)
- Wheelchair access and other information about navigating the venue
- Available facilities (gender neutral toilets, prayer rooms, childcare)
- Available bursaries
- Principles of engagement
- Contact information for project organisers and/or staff member responsible for accessibility
- Dress code. There can be class and cultural anxiety around this so make clear that participants are free to decide what they wear to an event.

Providing this information allows audiences to make informed, autonomous decisions about whether they will be comfortable at the event. It also allows them to sufficiently prepare themselves for it. As already stated, it is important to be proactive and implement accessibility measures without being asked to do so. However we cannot anticipate every need, so it is also important to invite audiences to request any additional measures they might require. Create a friendly, open and comfortable space for audiences to provide further thoughts on your accessibility provision and try to respond to any issues that are raised. This work can be assigned to the team member responsible for accessibility on the day. You may want to explain why these accommodations are being made in outgoing communications. Not everyone is starting from the same place and may not understand the importance of this.

Remember that once you have assembled all the necessary information and decided on a suitable platform to share it, maintain accessibility by using alt text for images, dyslexia friendly fonts, subtitled videos, and generally a mixture of visual and audio media to suit different preferences. This principle extends to marketing and promotion materials as well.

It is just as important to communicate accessibility information to guest speakers and performers. Consider organising both a pre- and post-meeting so you can properly cover this with them. Make sure speakers and performers are aware of event timings, how long they are expected to present or perform for, the expected audience size and demographic, and technological support available. Offer guidance and support for presenters to work in an accessible manner as well. For example, you may want to suggest formats for presenting information. Having worked hard to ensure a range of accessibility measures have been implemented, it would be disappointing for this to be undermined by a presenter using

an inaccessible colour scheme on their powerpoint presentation, or audio visuals that are disorientating and/or trigger seizures. It is also a good idea to set deadlines for participants to submit any resources they will be using on the day. This allows you to share them with audiences in advance, who may prefer to process materials before the event itself, or have an individual copy on the day. Some BSL interpreters also require presentation scripts and materials to prepare for their work (weeks in advance) so this needs to be factored in as well.

Once an event is finished, it is common for organisers to issue evaluation forms for audience feedback. These forms rarely ask explicit questions about accessibility. Create a space where audiences can provide feedback on this provision.

Dissemination

Access to what was presented as part of an event should not be limited to synchronous attendance, that is, attending an event live (either in person or online). Asynchronous access should be also enabled, meaning that an attendee could revisit the talks and activities of an event. Asynchronous access can be achieved by event recordings and event reports.

Recording an event comes with a range of ethical issues e.g. informed consent gained before the event, but it is beyond the scope of this guide. For guidelines on accessible, online events, platforms that can be used, and how to record, we recommend Dr Kirsty Liddiard's guide. Similar attention should be paid to the accessibility of written reports e.g. easy-to-read versions, written descriptions of visual images etc.

Another aspect that needs to be considered is 'where' such outputs become available. For instance, are they 'published' online e.g. on a website, on YouTube, and, if so, is a subscription required? Are they emailed only to attendees? It is not always appropriate to make outputs available to members of the public, as there can be sensitive information, a lack of explicit consent or intellectual property rights to negotiate. However, there should still be a general commitment to making outputs freely available to members of the public and making them easy to find and engage with.

Sign Up Forms

When making contact with potential audiences, it is important not to reproduce the very harms we are seeking to combat. This is often a risk with standardised forms that are used when inviting people to register for an event. For example, institutions are increasingly seeking to capture data about the diversity of their audiences. This is not inherently a bad thing, as it can be a useful mechanism for identifying groups that are not currently being engaged. However, it often means that prospective participants are required to both disclose personal information about their social identities and then try and fit these complex identities into rigid boxes. For people from marginalised backgrounds, disclosing information about disability, race, sexuality, faith and other identities can feel unsafe and have negative consequences. Participants should be given options whether they would like to disclose personal information and also to self-define as they like. This includes a space to provide preferred terms, such as gender pronouns. If other forms of registration are being considered, then it is important to think about how confidentiality will be assured. Do not make it mandatory for people to share identities within a group setting,

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and provide an option for people to share this information privately if needed. When information has been shared with event organisers, it is essential that [GDPR](#) and confidentiality is maintained at all times.

If you would like more information about preparing for an event, then please see the following guide produced by [SIG Access](#).

I came because there was enough information that I could weigh up how difficult it would be for me in terms of wayfinding.

There were clear directions for how to get to the venue, and someone was at reception who I could ask where to sit.



During The Event

Most accessibility measures should have been planned and implemented before the event takes place. However, the complexity and variety of accessibility needs means it will be impossible to anticipate every scenario beforehand. Organisers therefore need to remain attentive and responsive during an event. We have identified some key principles to help with this.

Coordination

In planning for the event you will have established a team that is large enough to manage incoming requests and informed enough to adequately address them. Ideally this will include a dedicated team member who is directly responsible for accessibility issues. On the day of the event it is important to remind the team of the different accessibility measures that have been implemented, as well as the strategy for managing any further requests that come during the event itself. This means that when guests start arriving and things start moving quickly, team members are well placed to respond to any accessibility issues that emerge in a calm and confident manner. Not only does this ensure the team feels equipped to manage accessibility, it also breeds confidence in the audience. It can be uncomfortable and discouraging to watch a project team member visibly panic when an issue is raised, resulting in the individual feeling guilty about causing problems and minimising the issue they have raised.

Building Trust

While careful and considered planning is fundamental to facilitating an accessible event, it is impossible to anticipate every need. Attendees need to feel comfortable enough in the space to express any further accessibility requirements that they might have. This means it is important to build trust between organisers and audiences.

A significant step towards building trust is to make clear that you are committed to accessibility and open to responding to people's needs. Some of this can be achieved before the event takes place. For example, by sending out accessibility information to attendees when they sign up for an event, and inviting them to request additional support before the event takes place. However, this work should continue during the event itself. Clear signposting is an important first step. For example,

- Use signs to mark out spaces such as gender neutral toilets, prayer rooms, lifts, and entrances and exits.
- Make sure food is clearly labelled in relation to dietary requirements.
- Allow time in your welcome and introduction to identify the project team member(s) who is responsible for addressing any questions or concerns around accessibility.
- In the online space, signage can be used to highlight the different functions of the particular platform being used (e.g. comment box, captioning, breakout rooms).

It is important to outline some principles of engagement for audience members when first introducing your event. This provides guidance for how people should conduct themselves throughout the event and ensures that people can be held to account if they fail to adhere to

the set principles. Some principles might revolve around issues like: confidentiality, self-care, zero tolerance for discriminatory behaviour, power dynamics and abuses of power, prioritising accessibility. Principles of engagement informs audiences what your values are and helps build confidence and trust that you will respond positively to an accessibility need if it is brought to your attention. Depending on the context of the event, you might want to make time for audience members to help co-produce principles of engagement. This ensures that you establish something like a social contract that you are both invested in upholding together.

Managing Conflict and Reducing Harm

Not all conflict is bad. Tackling significant social issues often requires difficult conversations, and differing opinions, and it can be counterproductive to encourage conciliation. This is in fact a strategy institutions employ to evade scrutiny and uphold harmful barriers. Sometimes conflict arises when somebody draws attention to a harm that they have experienced or identified in the space. This can actually be vital for organisers who might have otherwise missed the issue themselves. It can also be a point of learning for everyone in attendance. So managing conflict does not always mean shutting things down. However, it is important to have strategies in place for dealing with conflicts and to be clear with the project team who is responsible for enacting these strategies. For example, difficult conversations require trained and experienced facilitators who can provide a steer on what is acceptable behaviour (or not) and attend to the different power dynamics in operation. It can be necessary for facilitators to prevent those who wield most power from taking over a conversation, while providing support and encouragement to those who wield the least.

If conflict intensifies and is deemed to be harmful, an escalation of efforts might be required. The entire project team needs to be clear what an escalation looks like. This might mean asking someone to leave the group or perhaps the space entirely. It might mean accompanying someone to a quiet space and discussing the issue with them privately. Not all responses need to be punitive and in fact this should be a last resort.

One way to manage conflict and reduce harm is to carry out a risk assessment. Organisers need to run through “what if” scenarios, discuss how they can mitigate against identified harms, and decide how they will act if they occur. Standard preventive measures include: informed consent, beneficence, counselling referral, and sharing of whistleblowing/grievance processes. One aspect of an event that is often inadequately risk assessed, is breakout activity. Breakout spaces are largely used to create more interactive events that engage audiences. However, they can sometimes do more harm than good and become a high point for negative conflict. This is particularly the case when people are expected to take part in activities or asked to share lived experience without safeguards being put in place. It can cause real damage to individuals. So there should always be safeguards put in place for these breakouts and they should be monitored by the project team.

Considering Activities

Whatever activities you decide to put on as part of an event, it is always advisable to send details about what audiences can expect ahead of the event. This minimises feelings of anxiety or discomfort that can emerge when suddenly faced with a difficult activity. It also enables audiences to make an autonomous decision about whether they still would like to participate in the event. When considering activities for an event it is important to think about the different

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ways people prefer to learn and interact. Ice-breaking activities are a good example, as they are often considered ideal for introductions, but it also takes for granted that people are happy to participate in them, with those who do not being constructed as a 'problem'. It is important to schedule in regular breaks between activities, especially if taking place online. The regularity and length of break will need to be determined on a case by case basis, and ideally through consultation with participants.

The barstools are so good for
when I need a rest but still
want to socialise.

They have non alcoholic drinks
which is great for me, I've been
sober nearly 5 years.



After the Event

An event does not reach its end once talks or presentations are over. Organisers need to consider the accessibility of post-event activities(e.g. social gatherings) and dissemination of event outputs.

It is quite common for presenters and attendees to gather somewhere after an event to continue the discussions that took place during an event and for further networking. Such gatherings occur often on an ad-hoc basis, meaning that a space might be decided there and then. However, such decisions usually result in the exclusion of attendees from specific backgrounds. For instance, an inaccessible pub excludes both disabled people e.g. wheelchair users, and people from religious backgrounds for whom spaces that are serving alcohol are prohibited. Another factor that might prevent certain attendees from participating in such gatherings is timing. Some attendees might be required to commute back to where they had travelled from, while others might have run out of energy due to the duration of an event.

Social gatherings have clear personal and professional benefits. So rather than leaving such decisions to the last minute, organisers need to plan them in advance.

For instance, organisers should be able to identify accessible ‘social’ spaces that could host gatherings during their venue audit. Alternatively, such gatherings could be integrated into the actual event, meaning that an hour after the closing of an event could be devoted for networking purposes for attendees who wish and have the capacity to stay longer. This would also mean that the participants of an event do not need to move elsewhere.

Evaluation/Feedback

When organisers of events engage in the evaluation of an event, they often seek feedback from the attendees. Such feedback is often reduced to quantitative forms (e.g. short questionnaires) which attendees can fill in. Here we propose that different types and ways of gaining feedback should be considered.

Quantitative feedback is useful in measuring certain aspects of an event, but qualitative feedback should also be part of any evaluation. Qualitative feedback enables attendees to articulate their experiences of an event in their own words (rather than numbers) and elaborate on aspects that the quantitative feedback could not capture. Of course, any evaluation/feedback forms should be accessible to all attendees, including, for instance, easy-to-read forms.

Formal feedback forms should be shared either during an event(e.g. feedback forms are distributed just before the end of an event) or after an event (e.g. emailing the feedback form). And more ‘informal’ forms of feedback should also be considered as well. For example, providing attendees with post-it-notes where they can write their comments on the event and/or on an online platform e.g. padlet, jamboard.

Attendees often do not get to witness the impact their feedback might have had for future events. Not only should attendees be thanked for their feedback, but reaching out to them or making visible how their feedback was enacted in future events should be(come) a common practice.

Lastly, if any attendees are invited to elaborate further on their feedback or act in a ‘consulting’ role for future events, their labour should be paid.

Reflexivity

A final point for organisers following the completion of an event is to reflect further on the accessibility of the event. In particular, time should be dedicated to understanding when/where things went wrong, learning and taking this learning forward, and having experts with lived experience who can be involved in planning.

As it has already been pointed out, accessibility is not a tick-box exercise. It is also not something static. Accessibility requires constant un/learning and the questioning of individual privileges and structural barriers. This cannot be achieved without constant reflection.

The relaxed etiquette means I can be here and still look after my kids, I don't have to choose one or the other.

The sound guy asked if the music was too loud and turned it down, I'm glad because I would have just left - it was getting too intense for me.

One of the facilitators made a transphobic comment, but I brought it up to the wellbeing person during the break and they were so willing to deal with it.



Concluding Thoughts/ Final Reflections

This guide is far from an exhaustive list on how to ‘do accessibility’, as this would oppose our understanding of accessibility in the first place. Accessibility in this guide is discussed as a political matter, a disability justice issue, an ethical responsibility, a dynamic rather than static process, which requires constant reflection. In this final section, we re-consider why accessibility matters (and to whom), how access can and should be co-produced, and the relationship between apology and access.

EDI and Accessibility Matters

Institutions, including Higher Education ones, have started paying more attention to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) matters, with the establishment of relevant teams and committees. Accessibility is fundamentally an EDI matter.

This turn to EDI has led institutions to reflect on their colonial underpinnings, the systemic and systematic exclusion and lack of sense of belonging of disabled and racialised black researchers, for instance. Institutions are now opening themselves up to scrutiny (to an extent) and they are expected to do better.

However, EDI has also been discussed as another ‘[buzzword](#)’ that has been appropriated by institutions). In particular, a ‘health equity tourism’ approach is adopted by bureaucrats, who (pretend to) work on issues of equity whilst excluding the members of the communities they are supposed to be working for.

Our approach aligns with the one proposed by [Professor Dan Goodley and Dr Kirsty Liddiard](#), who argue that

Real transformations of our research cultures can only ever be enacted when these community members are driving these changes: truly informing the work and priorities of university leaders.

We propose that for this to be achieved, access needs to be co-produced with community members. [Co-production](#) ‘aims to put principles of empowerment into practice, working “with” communities and offering communities greater control over the research process’. Such an approach is taken by [DisOrdinary Architecture](#), whose work we would encourage you to engage with. This is similar to the approach that was taken for the production of this guide.

Accountability, Apology & Access

We would like to close this accessibility guide by considering how ‘apology’ is often used as a means of absolving organisers’ from their responsibilities for perpetuating inaccessible events and what a ‘genuine’ apology looks like.

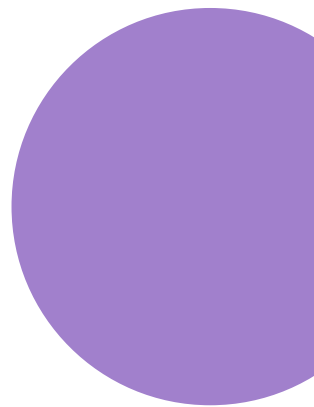
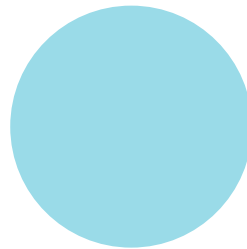
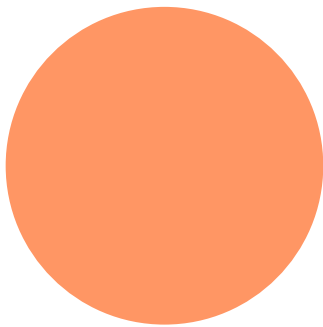
When accessibility is an afterthought, meaning that events are not designed from scratch to be accessible, resulting in inaccessible or partly accessible events, complaints arise. For instance, questions around accessibility are often directed to the contact person of an event, who might reply to the potential attendee of an event with an apology for not having considered that aspect

of accessibility: “I am sorry, but we did not consider x, y, z”. If the attendee rejects the apology and calls out the institution that will be hosting the event as exclusionary, then it is likely that they will be constructed as the ‘problem’ for calling out the problem, that is, the lack of accessibility. Apology then is weaponised against those constructed as ‘problems’ as a means of silencing them, as if an apology resolves the problem of inaccessibility.

Nevertheless, we do not wish to completely dismiss the role of an apology. However, our understanding and framing of an apology and accountability draws on Mia Mingus’ work. For [Mingus](#), apologies are political and cannot be separated from accountability. To only apologise is not enough. Apology comes with accountability, and accountability needs to be followed by action and reparations. As [Mingus](#) states,

True accountability is not only apologizing, understanding the impacts your actions have caused on yourself and others, making amends or reparations to the harmed parties; but most importantly, true accountability is changing your behavior so that the harm, violence, abuse does not happen again.

A re-framing of how we apologise to each other then should be a key feature in discussions of accessibility.



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