



Writing good accessibility information

A guide to making your
work, campaigning and
communities accessible
for disabled people

Written by Ellen Murray

*Part of **Making Your Activism Accessible***

This booklet is part of a series of resources called **Making Your Activism Accessible**, which aims to help activists, campaigners and community organisers make their venues, ethos and practice more accessible, both specifically to disabled people, and more generally.

★ You can find more resources in this series at
ellenmurray.co.uk/accessible

This resource was produced with the support of many people backing the writer on Patreon. See the Acknowledgements section for more information.



Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 2017 Ellen Murray.
Some rights reserved.

If you regularly use physical space to organise, provide support, or work from, it's important to make those venues accessible to disabled people. This section discusses some of the best ways to do this, both in the short term and longer term.

Accessibility information

One of the best ways to make your venues, events and activism more accessible is to list publicly-available access information. When disabled people are considering going along to an event or getting involved in activism, often we will look for information about the location and transport to see if we can safely get there, get inside and comfortably take part.

When there isn't accessibility information listed, it tends to mean that access hasn't been seriously considered, which leads to disabled people opting out of getting involved. There is a risk involved in spending the energy to go along just to be excluded by a flight of stairs or an uncomfortable sensory environment, so being upfront with information is important.



If your communities and venues have an underrepresentation of disabled people, it likely means there is some form of inaccessibility in place. However, if you know your venues and locations are accessible, it is likely because people don't *know* that they're accessible. This is, in itself, an access barrier.

Access information should include details on physical and sensory accessibility, as well as details about transport, costs, and schedules where possible.

- ★ Putting access information online is free and has great social benefits – it has material benefits to disabled people's lives.

It doesn't matter whether you own venues or not – you should ask venue owners to provide good access information. When booking venues, having this as a condition of hire can be useful.

Your contact information

Even with the best possible accessibility information, it's likely that some disabled people will need additional information from you.

- ✓ List contact information publicly for people to get in touch to request further information or adjustments.
- ❗ Lots of disabled people can't use phones. Provide both telephone and email contact details, as well as telephone operating hours.

When people approach you to request adjustments or accommodations for their disability, believe them.

- ✓ Many disabilities are invisible, and you should never require proof of benefits, diagnosis, or other private information.

Put accessibility ahead of ego when writing accessibility information.

- ✓ If part of your venue, facilities or work is inaccessible, mention this. It's important for disabled people to be able to make informed decisions about their involvement, and honest information about inaccessibility is crucial for this.

Making your access information accessible

Your accessibility information should itself be accessible – easy to find, and easy to read.

- ✓ On websites and online event listings, it's useful to link to a permanent web page of your accessibility information, and to make it prominently displayed every time events or venues are advertised.
- ✓ On posters and offline materials, advertising a short and easy-to-read web link is best, as well as a short summary of access information if possible.

Example

This event is being held at the **Bigtown Community Centre**, 23 Main Street, Bigtown, AB1 2CD.



Directions & accessibility:
ouractivismgroup.org/access

The language used in accessibility information should be simple, clear and unambiguous, and should not rely on technical or medical language. Your information should be suitable for novices and experts alike.

- ✓ Clear language helps people with learning/intellectual disabilities, Blind and visually impaired people, and people who are not fluent in the language.
- ✓ Use graphics to explain concepts and information if possible.
- ✓ If possible, group different themes of accessibility information together, so that people looking for specific

information (step-free access, sensory environments etc) can find it without reading the whole thing.

- ❗ Make sure websites listing your accessibility information are themselves accessible, meaning that they follow up-to-date web accessibility standards.

Avoid describing your work or venues as “fully accessible”.

- ✓ In almost all cases, it's impossible to make venues accessible for all disabled people, and it looks poor to disabled people looking for useful information.
- ✓ In any case, “fully accessible” usually means step-free venues with a larger toilet, which for most disabled people is not the most important thing.
- ✓ Instead, list the specific ways your locations and events are accessible, and inaccessible.
- ✓ It's better to list inaccessible facilities instead of omitting information about them. If a venue is step-free but doesn't have an accessible toilet, mention this, as it's important information for people who need those facilities.
- ✓ Listing the ways your work is inaccessible won't put more disabled people off, but it will help demonstrate to those you're working with that things need to change.

Disclosure requirements and timelines

Some access requirements, like booking sign language interpreters and hiring ramps etc will require time to organise, so attendees may need to make requests ahead of time. It's important that where this is the case, that deadlines are clearly listed.

You should limit the amount of personal or medical information that disabled people should have to disclose to get access to adjustments, and you should not gatekeep access to

accommodations. Believe disabled people, and treat any information disclosed to you as strictly private and confidential.

- ❗ Remember, many countries (including all EU countries and the USA) have data protection legislation which requires personal information be treated carefully. Activists are required to follow these laws.

Getting there

The most accessible venue and events can be impossible to reach if the immediate surroundings present barriers or don't have public transport access.

If there are local bus, tram or train services serving your location, providing information about these is preferred, as well as information on whether the services are accessible.

An ideal streetscape should have step-free kerbs, disabled (*Blue Badge* or local equivalent) parking and cycle parking stands nearby, pavements free of parked vehicles, and high contrast road markings.

Getting inside

Your venue should be easily identified and the way in should be well signed.

- ✓ If step-free access is through a secondary entrance, this should be clearly signposted.
- ✓ If step-free access is through the main entrance but requires a manual ramp, provide an obvious and easy way to call this without requiring prior booking. This can be done with a wireless doorbell and sign explaining how to call for assistance.

Entrance doors should ideally be automatic or power-assisted, with a clear button to activate them. If not, or if doors need to be

locked, a doorbell/intercom should be clearly mounted at an accessible height.

- ❓ Can a wheelchair user or short-statured person reach the doorbell or intercom? Do staff know some disabled might not be visible on an intercom camera and aren't pranking you?

Doors and floors should be suitable for mobility aid users. Some electric wheelchairs can weigh over 200kg without a passenger, and chairs can be 65cm wide.

- ❓ Are there any small steps or lips on doorframes? Are doors very heavy? Is there a steep slope or ramp up to the entrance just before the door?

Assistance animals

Some disabled people use assistance animals, like guide dogs and other trained service animals.

- ✓ Make it clear that assistance animals are welcome
- ✓ Provide a suitable place for animal owners to sit with their animals
- ✓ Provide fresh drinking water for assistance animals

Attendants / carers

Some disabled people use attendants or carers to assist them with personal care when out and about.

- ✓ Make it clear that, for events which aren't free, that carers are welcome at no additional cost
- ✓ Don't require proof of benefits, carer details or medical information to gatekeep this
- ✓ Don't plan to stuff a venue to its fire capacity, as some disabled people may need to bring along carers, who must be provided access

- ❓ Are your bathrooms big enough for someone who needs a carer to assist them? If not, clearly list the nearest *Changing Places* (or local equivalent) bathrooms to your location

Seating

Most disabled people aren't wheelchair users, and won't have a handy seat along with them

- ❓ Do you have ample seating so disabled people don't have to stand in agony?
- ✓ If seating is limited, clearly mark priority seating for disabled people.
- ✓ Remember, some people's disabilities are invisible but they will still need seats.
- ✓ Proactively encourage those that don't need seats to give them to those that do, being careful not to pressure people with invisible disabilities. It's useful to mention this generally at the beginning of events during housekeeping announcements.

Quiet spaces

Having a quiet room or designated area where light and sound are low benefits lots of disabled people.

- ✓ Many people need to rest, nap, sit in peace, be alone, stim, or administer medication or other treatment during events. Is this available at your location?
- ✓ Quiet spaces also help parents or guardians whose children need respite from loud noise or crowds.
- ❓ Can attendees safely and comfortably lie down and rest for as long as they need?

Facilities

Accessible bathrooms should be provided.

- ❓ Are toilets and changing facilities suitable for wheelchair users and carers to fit in and safely manoeuvre within?
- ✓ If you don't have toilets suitable for wheelchair users, clearly signpost where the nearest public ones are, including opening hours if not open 24 hours.
- ❓ Are toilets gender segregated or gender neutral?

Access for D/deaf, hard of hearing and sound-sensitive people

It's important that resources, screenings and talks etc are accessible to D/deaf, hard of hearing and sound-sensitive people. Some considerations are:

- ❓ Do you have loud ambient noises in your venue? Also consider medium-term temporary issues, like nearby construction work.
- ❓ Do you use subtitles / Closed Captioning on your screenings and video materials?
- ❓ Do you have a hearing loop system installed? If not, do you have access to a portable one you can use?
- ❓ Do you know how to book sign language interpreters? Do you know interpreters who are competent in the language around your area of activism?
- ❗ When people request a sign language interpreter or ask you to help book one, are you sure you're booking the right interpreter? There are many different sign languages!
- ✓ Make it clear that interpreters are welcome at no additional cost

Access for Blind, visually impaired and light-sensitive people

Many people who have visual impairments or hypersensitivity need specific adjustments made to provide comfortable access. You should consider:

- ❓ Is your venue well-lit with flicker-free lights?
- ❓ Is your signage, door markings and exits etc high contrast and easy to find?
- ❓ Do you have large print, Braille or audio described versions of your resources?
- ❓ Do screenings and video resources have audio description available?
- ❓ If you have quiet spaces, is the lighting there calmer and dimmer to allow recovery from overstimulation?

Access for Autistic, mentally ill and otherwise neurodivergent people

Autistic, mentally ill and otherwise neurodivergent people are often overlooked in efforts to make work accessible, and in access information generally. You should consider issues such as:

- ❓ Do you have flickering lighting or loud ambient noise?
- ❓ Do you have quiet spaces available?
- ❓ Do you have stim toys or sensory tools available for anyone to use?
- ❓ Is it clear that people who use augmented or alternative communication devices, like iPads and letter boards, are welcome to be involved?
- ❓ Are you posting an agenda or schedule in advance to help with anxiety?
- ❓ Are you using content notes or trigger warnings for potentially upsetting themes and content?



Food and drink

There are many specific and less-common access barriers which some disabled people will encounter, which is why it's important that you are contactable for more information.

However, some additional considerations are:

- ❓ Can people bring their own food and drinks? Lots of disabled people have dietary intolerances or alternative forms of taking nutrition, and need to bring their own. Lots more have anxiety around food they don't have control over or haven't prepared.
- ❓ Can people provide dietary requirements information in good time?
- ❓ Is there going to be alcohol present, and if so, are soft drinks available as an alternative? Lots of people don't or can't drink alcohol due to health, religious or personal reasons, and alcohol can be triggering for some people.

Other access information

Some additional considerations that some disabled people may have are:

- ❓ Do you have charging points for phones, communication devices or wheelchairs etc?
- ❓ Is your building often very cold or very warm?

Hopefully you now have a better idea of the kind of information that is useful for disabled people wanting to get involved. For a live example of this in action, check out the Belfast Trans Resource Centre's access page, which is written by this guide's author: [***belfasttrans.org.uk/access***](https://belfasttrans.org.uk/access)

Signage & wayfinding

If you have a venue with multiple rooms, it's a very good idea to use clear signage throughout buildings, to help disabled people find their way about, particularly Blind and visually impaired people, and people with learning/intellectual disabilities.



You should signpost the following:

- ✓ Emergency exits
- ✓ Toilets and changing facilities
- ✓ Kitchens and places to get drinking water
- ✓ Places to sit
- ✓ Quiet spaces
- ✓ Stairs and lifts/elevators
- ✓ Accessible facilities, entrances or routes, where they differ from primary or main ones.

Signage should be clearly worded, with few words. Sans-serif, large-type font should be used, with a high contrast with the background sign material. Graphic symbols or pictographs should accompany signs, and should be intuitive and based on international standards where possible.

Notes

Who made this possible

This resource was produced with the generous direct support of my Patrons, including:

Naomhán O'Connor

Verity Allan

Jen McKernon

Jack Brown

Beth Oliver

Sara Houston

Donal Kelly

Leo Lardie

Paige Owens

Leonard Grant

Prinx Variety

Mina Tolu

Ghostbird

John Brennan

Anna Clarke

Zoe Belshaw

Amy Clifton

David

Siún Carden

Rowan Burns

Bree Mae

Leisha

Hugh Griffiths

Philippa Martin

Michelle James

Danni Brennand

Rebekah McCabe

GemBot

quarridors

Weeble Wilson

James

Sebastian Watts

Ellayn Hodgson

Sarah Creighton

Theo Glover

Will Jordan

Heidi Pun

Jay Prebble

Ikaheishi

If you'd like to support more resources like this, please consider chipping in on Patreon, or sharing this booklet around:

 **BECOME A PATRON**

patreon.com/ellenfromnowon