

Ten Points for Planning an Accessible and Inclusive Heritage Event Advice from Liz Porter, Creative Landscapes Disability Adviser

1. Plan the event from beginning to end

Access is for everyone and should be thought about right at the beginning of planning and putting an event together

Make sure that you cost and book access support well in advance. This may not mean having to make big or costly changes, but it does mean thinking about what 'reasonable steps' you can take to improve access.

Many local authorities have an Access Officer or an Access Group who may be able to advise you on improving access to your event.

2. Think about who you want to come to the event

You probably aren't planning to exclude anybody from your event! But are you doing so inadvertently? Ask yourself:

- Is there good physical access into your event?
- Are deaf and disabled visitors assured of a genuine welcome?
- Can potential visitors find out about your events in a way that's useful to them?
- Are you willing to respond to the needs of diverse audiences?

3. What kind of event is it?

Think around your event. Can you use some creative ideas to make your event accessible to a wider range of people? Have a look at our Trail Blazing project for tips on making guided tours more accessible.

You can do a lot in 30 minutes and with £30.

4. How will people find out about your event?

Consider providing marketing materials in a range of formats and mediums:

- Use plain English, clear texts and fonts
- Be clear and open about how accessible your venue is.
- Seek advice to ensure you are using the right access symbols.

- Build up a good mailing list and make direct contact with local groups of deaf and disabled people.

5. How will people get to and around your event?

- It's useful to provide a simple map of the site that gives an idea of its size.
- Consider providing information about local public transport, including trains, buses and taxis, let people know how far they have to walk and how much it might cost
- Many areas have excellent community transport groups who may be able to provide transport to and from your event at a very reasonable cost.

6. Venue and site access

Seeking local advice will help you to understand how accessible your venue actually is. However, here are some questions to think about, particularly with wheelchair users and families with buggies:

- Do you have good level access,
- Could you provide ramps if necessary
- How many steps are there
- Is there enough seating
- Is the signage clear at different levels
- Do you need to improve the lighting at all
- How far will people have to walk on a trail, where are the stopping points
- Where are the nearest accessible toilets?
- Where is the nearest refreshments

7. Meeting and greeting visitors

All of us are different, but we all want to be treated with equal respect.

- Try not to make assumptions based on appearances,
- You may not always be able to tell whether a visitor is disabled, some people will have hidden impairments
- Welcome every visitor in the same way, offer help and assistance to everyone who comes to your event
- Consider providing your staff and volunteers with Disability Equality Training, so they have a broader understanding of the needs of deaf and disabled people

8. Low cost ideas

Access improvements for events need not be expensive. They can just take a bit of time and thought. Ideas include:

- Run object handling session
- Consider providing large print information sheets
- Photocopy photos as larger sizes
- Use your volunteers to offer additional assistance to visitors

- Create and Outreach Box and take your event out to people who can't get to your venue.
- Practice using props such as photos, materials, objects as part of your tours and trails. Let them become an integral part of what you do.

9. Gather feedback

Getting feedback from your visitors is the best way to find out how to improve your accessibility for a wide range of audiences.

- Ask visitors what one change would have made their visit easier for them.
- Talk with your local Access Group about what sort of events or visits they would like.

10. Remember you are not on your own. There is advice and support out there!