

## Reimagining Events

# Access and Inclusion

In consultation with Gig Buddies Belfast, a Black Box Project

### SUMMARY

A brief introduction to promoting accessibility and inclusion within the events industry to ensure your events are accessible for diverse and disabled audiences.

### KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Understanding social isolation and the barriers facing disabled audiences.
- Making reasonable adjustments to support inclusivity and accessibility.
- Identifying policies and initiatives for good practice.
- Understanding the importance of engaging with target audiences.
- Designing and delivering effective staff training to raise awareness of disability equity.

### CHECKLIST

#### 1. Your Attitude is Everything!

Treating people with respect and not making assumptions about their level of capability are the simplest but most important aspects of promoting inclusivity and accessibility.

- **Speak directly** to the person you're referencing. **Don't exclude** a person with disabilities and/or autism from the conversation if it's about them, especially if it's to speak to their personal assistant (PA) instead.
- Hand any **change back to the person who gave you the money** in the first place. By handing change back to a PA instead of the person, you are assuming they are not capable of being **financially independent** which is exclusionary and does not align with the spirit of accessibility.
- **Let people speak** without trying to finish their sentences. Speech impairments like stammering might cause people to take longer to say what they want — it is important to be respectful and know that they are **entitled to speak without interruption**.

#### 2. Take every opportunity to emphasise your event space's accessibility considerations:

- Ensure there is a dedicated Accessibility tab on the first page of your website so people can easily access the information they need.
- Including Accessibility Information in the **Ticket Confirmation email** can be a great reminder to people, especially in the few days before the event.
- Use appropriate signage around your event space to highlight the designated chill-out spaces/use of strobe lighting/hearing induction loops etc., which people can use if required.
- Create a short video walk-through of your venue. This will help people to plan their visit, identify any potential obstacles, and offset any anxieties. This is an affordable and efficient process as you can create the video on a mobile phone and upload it to your website and social medias.

#### 3. Recognise and understand that one size does not fit all:

Make provisions for alternative formats to support the various needs of diverse audiences:

- Closed captioning: used for social media, online videos.
- Easy-read versions of literature: using high contrast backgrounds, larger sans-serif fonts, and a mixture of text and images.
- A contact telephone number for event queries, especially for people who are not confident with the online option.

#### 4. Honesty is the best policy!

It is better for your audience to know about any accessibility limitations in advance to plan their night accordingly and make necessary arrangements to ensure their event experience is comfortable and enjoyable:

- **Is there an accessible toilet?** If not, let people know that an accessible toilet is not available but provide details of where the nearest one is and let people know this in advance. Get in touch with the people who run the space it's part of, explain the situation and get a written agreement if they agree to open it up to your audiences.

#### 5. Implement pricing policies to support diverse and disabled audiences to attend your events:

Offering a free PA ticket, preferably on a trust basis, makes events more accessible to people with disabilities, as they do not need to consider the additional financial pressure of buying a second ticket for an essential PA to accompany them.

Note: \* Personal Assistant Ticket is the preferred term instead of Carer's Ticket.

#### 6. Get involved with campaigns supporting inclusivity and accessibility:

Many campaigns and charity-led initiatives will offer disability equity training to staff. They will provide support and regular check-ins to ensure your organisation's level of accessibility remains consistent. Associations with established initiatives emphasise your organisation's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, building a good reputation with diverse and disabled audiences.

#### 7. Nothing About Us Without Us!

Engage with people with disabilities, particularly when creating new policies or programming specifically for disabled audiences:

- Reach out to disability-led charities for advice.
- Engage with and pay Disability Activists for their expertise.
- Create change based on what people actually need, listen to lived experience, and do your best to implement supportive change where possible.

#### 8. Know about reasonable adjustments and the appropriate ones to make for your event:

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), as amended in Northern Ireland, states that discrimination occurs when "there is a failure to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person".

- Reasonable adjustments are physical, environmental, policy or other changes that prevent or reduce the barriers faced by people with disabilities. The size and nature of your organisation and the type of service you provide will determine what is considered a "reasonable adjustment".
- Advice on how to make reasonable adjustments within your organisation is available from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and can be accessed online.

#### USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.blackboxbelfast.com/gig-buddies-belfast/>

<https://stayuplate.org>

<https://universityofatypical.org/>

<http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk/>

Sign up to Tourism NI industry news and events at <https://tourismni.com>

Keep abreast of Tourism NI Insights and Intelligence at <https://www.tourismni.com/industry-insights>

Check out TNI support resources including links to events-specific webinars at:

<https://www.tourismni.com/build-your-business/events-webinars>

Events Unit contact email: [EventsUnit@tourismni.com](mailto:EventsUnit@tourismni.com)