



Outdoor Inclusive Events Guide

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A reference document to help anyone planning a fully inclusive outdoor event or space. We hope you find it helpful and that this is a great opportunity for everyone to feel welcomed.



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1. Introduction

General Introduction:

Welcome to our comprehensive Outdoor Guide. We are trying to cover all scenarios some of which may not apply to your organisation or event.

Outdoor events and spaces in general vary tremendously in size and purpose. It is unlikely you will need to use every piece of information here, but all events or spaces whatever their size will benefit from some of the advice.

Use this information from the beginning of your planning process – access issues are best embedded at the beginning of your planning process rather than at the end. It's much more efficient, logical, and cost-effective to incorporate accessibility needs early on than trying to fix things later.

However positive your intentions and extensive your experience, you are unlikely to work out all the answers. Find your experts – local disabled groups. You don't need to re-invent the wheel, there is already a wealth of expertise and lived experience at your fingertips.

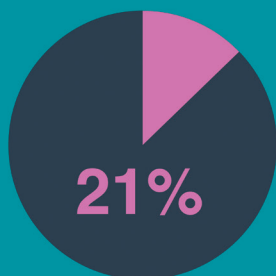
Accessible Calderdale Disability Access Forum is a local group with plenty of experience and insight. Follow Accessible Calderdale on social media

@AccessibleCalderdale to keep updated.

Disability in the UK

A Snapshot of Disability Statistics

14.1 Million Disabled People in the UK



21% of the Population Reports Having a Disability

49% Report Mobility Impairments



25% Report Mental Health Impairments



(Source: Family Resource Survey 2018/19)

2. Staff and Volunteers

Training:

Having a friendly attitude goes a long way. Knowledge about language and behaviour through training helps develop skills and confidence.

Customer Service:

Good customer service can make a big difference to people's overall impression of venues and events. Train your event staff beforehand and make sure they are easily recognisable in high visibility jackets or lanyards.

Accessible Champions:

If you have several members of staff and/or volunteers, you may consider appointing Disability Champions who take part in disability awareness training and then cascade it down to the rest of the staff and volunteers. They may take the lead on accessibility issues, promote disability needs, act as a contact person and may have their own lived experience of disability.

Accessible Calderdale's training programme has been tried and tested across Calderdale with great success. Do get in touch with us for more information.

Foster a culture of inclusion and respect:

Remember that disability doesn't only concern wheelchair-users, it's much broader than that. We include anyone with a disability, hidden disabilities, neuro-diverse, older people and families with buggies – they need venues and outdoor events that are going to be accessible to all. If you get it right for disabled people you get it right for everyone.

You will never be expected to be an expert on any of these areas, but training will help you tremendously and build your confidence.



Less than **8%** of disabilities require the use of a wheelchair.

Nearly **1 million** people are believed to have learning disability in England alone.



Approximately **2 million** people in the country are using hearing aids.

(Source: Disability Sports)

3. Promoting Your Event/Activities

Importance of Advance Publicity:

- Crucial for all events or activities, regardless of size.
- Most disabled people conduct more prior research before visiting a venue than non-disabled people.
- Information must be clear, accurate, and comprehensive across all mediums (website, leaflets, flyers, social media posts, etc.).

Organising Information:

- Organise information logically.
- Write text in Plain English.

Easy Read Versions:

- Consider creating an “Easy Read” version alongside your main version.
- Consists of simple text and standard images.
- Creates an inviting and easily understandable version of your main guide.

Use of Images and Icons:

- Use simple pictures and universally recognised icons to create interest.



Illustration of a young man in a wheelchair searching for information on a laptop.

Guidelines for Visually Impaired Users:

- Provide charts, flyers, text, and general information in accessible formats.
- Ensure compatibility with screen-readers, which translate text/chart into speech.
- If material isn't presented appropriately, screen-readers may not make sense of it.

Refer to specific advice from contacts at the end of the report.

Font Usage:

- Use simple typing fonts.
 - › Avoid complex fonts such as old-fashioned English.
 - › Avoid italics and fonts with thick and thin strokes.
 - › Avoid fonts reaching below the line.
- Fonts should be easily readable by people with visual impairments and screen readers.
- Font size should be as large as practical.
 - › Avoid small font sizes that maximise text but reduce legibility.
 - › Refer to links at the end of the report for specific advice.

Colour Usage:

- Avoid unnecessary colour contrasts.
 - › Some coloured lettering can be lost under poor lighting conditions.
 - › Black lettering on a white background is the standard.
- Blue lettering on a yellow background is advocated by many visually impaired readers.
 - › Other combinations can provide too little or too much contrast for easy reading.
- For website pages:
 - › Offer a choice of font sizes and colour combinations for text/background.
 - › Make these options available at the push of a button.



Illustration of a person typing on a laptop with various icons floating in the air.

Text Over Images:

- Avoid printing sections of text over extended images, however faint.
- This distraction makes the text hard to read for many people.

Review for Accessibility:

Finally, look over your material to make sure it doesn't use too many contrasting colours, complicated fonts etc as many people who are neuro-divergent as well as those with a visual impairment will find those distracting.

It is always a good idea to go back to your local disability group for them to check over the content before it goes to print.

4. Information on Site



QR Codes:

- Provide lots of information easily accessible on a smartphone.
- Ensure QR codes are accessible to all potential users.
- Consider users who may be seated or unable to move easily to see past a crowd.
- Basic information can be written on an external sign with a QR code for more detailed information.

Hard Copy Maps:

- Essential for disabled and older people who may not have a mobile phone.
- Provide a wealth of information quickly.
- Follow basic principles:
 - › Do not over-complicate.
 - › Avoid using too many contrasting colours.
 - › Use simple text and fonts.
 - › Do not place text over complex parts of the map.
- Try to simplify where appropriate.

Identifying Points of Interest:

- Clearly mark important locations:
 - › Entrances
 - › Stage
 - › Toilets
 - › Food outlets
 - › Medical point
 - › Viewpoints
 - › Paths
 - › Steps
 - › Electrical charging points
 - › First aid
 - › Quiet areas
- Indicate the presence of steps on a route.
- Show sections with gradients, either in text or by colour code.
- Provide distances rather than estimated times between points.



Illustration of a visually impaired person with a guide dog walking outdoors.

Map Creation:

- Allow sufficient time to create a clear and accessible map.
- Have the map checked by your local access group.
- Ensure the map looks simple, clear, and accessible, with enough information to show careful planning.
- Avoid making it a last-minute job.

5. Tickets

Booking Accessible Facilities:

People may need to book accessible facilities in advance – accessible parking space, access to the Viewing Platform, free ticket for an essential companion. In that case, you may require proof of disability. Take care how you approach this – it can be annoying and distressing for many people to constantly have to prove that they are disabled enough to qualify for these facilities.

6. Toilets

For many disabled people this is the most important factor when arranging a trip out to an event or activity. There needs to be clear information so people can plan accordingly.

Depending on the size of the wheelchair some disabled portable versions of toilet cubicles may not be large enough.

We recommend that if people are to be on our site for some time that there should be access to accessible toilet facilities.

If this is not possible, there are portable versions of toilet cubicles available, including accessible toilet pods large enough for wheelchair use.

Ideally, you could also provide a version of a Changing Places toilet in the form of a Mobiloo, so absolutely every visitor is catered for. Mobiloo toilets can be hired out from www.mobiloo.org.uk

If you are unable to rent a mobiloo it is important to have information available and on the website where the nearest accessible toilets are so people can plan the day accordingly.

<https://www.changing-places.org/pages/view/mobile-and-modular-options>

The accessible toilets should be sensibly located, on level ground and have easy path access to them. They are often found alongside a Viewing platform.



Illustration of two Mobiloos behind a building.

7. Site Signage and Information Boards

Use all the information as listed for Publicity above:

Use widely understood symbols rather than inventing your own.

This is so important and can save disabled people from wondering around pointlessly and can be really tiring.

Display any information accessibly as relates to height, language and so on.

Make sure information boards can be reached from the paths.

Consider the angle at which boards are displayed so seated visitors can easily read them. This involves physical aspects of height but also reflections off the surface.

Example of Symbols:

- Wheelchair accessible
- Hearing loop
- Assistance dogs welcome

8. Getting There

Methods of Getting There:

Consider all methods of getting there. Give clear public transport details, including:

- Nearest stations
- Accessible routes
- Available services
- How far is it to walk, and how difficult is the route?
- Is the route easy for wheelchair users? Are there dropped kerbs, busy roads to cross, steep gradients?

9. Parking

The importance of parking:

Parking is one of the first things that disabled people think about when planning to go to an event. If any parking is provided, there should be an allocation for Blue Badge holders. For large car parks, guidance suggests an absolute minimum of 6% to be devoted to disability, but even in a tiny car park, there should be at least one space.

Location and Surface:

- Designated space(s) should be located on level ground to help with transfers, wheelchair rolling, basic balance, etc.
- Spaces should be as close to the site entrance as possible.
- The ground surface should be solid if possible – tarmac, bonded resin, etc. The surface should be in good condition to avoid causing slips and trips.
- Loose materials such as gravel and shale will make progress very difficult for wheelchair users or those on crutches or with visual impairments.
- Grass, while sometimes inevitable, can be rough and difficult to cross, especially when wet. In some cases, a wire grid can be laid over the grass to provide a level surface.



Illustration of a disabled parking bay with a clear area on three sides

Marking and Signage:

- Parking spaces should be marked out properly using the guidance at the end to provide adequate transfer space.
- A disabled person in their car may need space on either side of the vehicle and/or the rear. This cannot be left to chance.
- A large car park may be avoided by a disabled person if there are no markings. Another driver may park too close, restricting access for the disabled person to re-enter their vehicle.
- As an absolute minimum, designated spaces can be marked as simple rectangles, wider than typical spaces, incorporating transfer space into the width.
- In some circumstances, parking might be end-to-end (e.g., along a road). This can be difficult for disabled drivers, especially if side transfer means getting out onto grass or into the road, or if access to the rear of the vehicle is necessary for wheelchair use. Parking behind too closely can make re-entering the vehicle impossible.

Accessibility and Clear Directions:

- Ensure the designated spaces are signed both on the ground with the standard symbol and also higher up on a wall, hedge, or pole.
- Erect clear signs directing visitors to the car park and within the car park itself, guiding them to attractions.

For more information on parking, see the links at the end of this report.



Illustration of a Disabled Parking Sign

10. Entrances

Entrance Signage:

Erect appropriate signs directing you towards the entrance(s) and at the entrance itself. Entrances should be step-free and wide enough to accommodate all wheelchair widths – at least 1.2m.*

Entrance Accessibility:

If there is an entrance recommended for disabled visitors (e.g., wheelchair users), clearly sign this and ensure its presence is known in all pre-visit information.

Entrance Ground Surface:

- The ground surface at the entrance is critical due to high footfall. Decent grass coverage can become muddy quickly.
- Take appropriate action, such as using boarding, plastic sheeting, etc., to maintain a stable surface.

Special Considerations for Large Events:

Consider a separate line for disabled people, children, and families with buggies. This can be helpful as it may be distressing for neuro-divergent children to be in queues.



Illustration of a crowd of people queuing for an event.

11. Paths

The quality of paths is crucial. Paths should ideally be 1.2m wide to accommodate wheelchair users, visually impaired individuals with guide dogs, buggy pushers, and others.

Path Surface Types:

- Paths can include tarmac, flagstones, brick, bonded or unbonded resin, gravel, grass, or plain earth.
- A solid, hard surface is best.
- Loose grit and gravel can be extremely difficult or even impossible for wheelchairs to cross, depending on the material type and depth.

Check for trip hazards such as broken tarmac, loose stones, root growth, twigs, and branches, and remove or repair these quickly.

Be aware that some surfaces, like flagstones or wood (on bridges or boardwalks), can become very slippery when wet if not treated appropriately. Hard earthen paths that are reasonable to wheel over when dry can become muddy obstacles when wet. If rutted mud is allowed to dry, the ruts can then become a trip hazard in themselves.

Grass paths can look comfortably flat from a distance but are often very uneven at ground level. Wet grass adds another level of difficulty for many disabled users, such as those with mobility or visual issues.

Boardwalks and Artificial Surfaces:

- Boardwalks can be very useful if constructed well.
- For heavily used locations with no proper paths, artificial surfaces like various types of plastic rolls or interlocking plastic surfaces can be used.
- More permanent solutions could involve setting a wire grid base into the path, allowing grass to grow while maintaining a solid level.

There should be rest points along any long stretch of pathway. This could be a bench, but could be as simple as a horizontal pole or plank to act as a perching point.

There should be something every 50m at least. For long, narrow stretches, consider passing points sufficient for a wheelchair user to pass a buggy or similar. If stepping off the actual path is necessary, ensure there is no hidden “step” due to a level change.

12. Gradients

There may be gradients in any outdoor location. In the built environment, guidance requires 1:20 max for a manual wheelchair user moving without help. Steeper gradients should be removed if possible or avoided in some way. A long, fairly level walk can be ruined by even a short (but steep gradient) if there is no way of avoiding it.

- Give appropriate warnings on your website, maps etc.
- Consider offering help and having a couple of extra volunteers at hand.

13. Steps

If steps are inevitable, try to offer a ramped alternative.

Step Specifications:

- The steps themselves should be of equal height and should be appropriately nosed, so as to be clearly visible when both ascending and descending. The top and bottom steps are most important in this regard, particularly when descending, where the bottom step should clearly contrast with the ground colouration.
- The steps should be railed on both sides.

14. Ramps

Ramps for Accessibility: Ensuring Clear Pathways for Wheelchair Users and Individuals with Mobility Challenges, Promoting Safe and Convenient Navigation

Ramp Specifications:

- Ramps should be no steeper than 1:20 unless space makes this impossible to achieve. If steeper, warn people and offer help.
- Ramps should be railed on both sides at two heights (see guidance).
- Long ramps should have a level resting space every 10m, long enough for a wheelchair user to stop there safely.

15. Viewing Platforms

These are often provided to help disabled visitors see a performance clearly, whether seated in a wheelchair or balanced on crutches, unable to stand safely for long periods etc.

Please Remember:

- Have extra volunteers available to make sure that those using the ramp feel welcomed and informed on the event itself.
- Make sure that there is enough space for everyone, and that there are extra seats available for carers or support staff.
- Make sure that there space is still there if the person leaves the platform and is returning.
- Ensure there is clear access to the platform (usually ramped). Ensure the ramp is not too steep.
- Consider providing a temporary accessible toilet close to the platform ramp.



Illustration of a young person in a wheelchair watching a concert from a viewing platform.

16. Calm Places

In a very busy, noisy environment, with lots of people moving around, some organisations provide a calm area. This is often located alongside the Viewing platform or a special tent. No specific apparatus is needed in here, just quiet space and some seating.

Calm spaces information:

- It's presence and location should be publicised.
- It should be manned by a volunteer, ideally someone with knowledge in this area – significance of sunflower lanyards etc.

You can read about Hidden Disabilities here :- <https://shorturl.at/aLABc>

17. Seating

Providing inclusive seating solutions involves more than just placement. By offering diverse options, ensuring comfort, and considering accessibility, seating areas can accommodate the needs of all users effectively and thoughtfully.

Seating Variety for Performance Venues:

- Offer seats with and without arms.
- Consider plus-size visitors' comfort.
- Place wheelchair or mobility scooter spaces to the side to avoid obstruction.

Seating Options in Park Environments:

- Simple bench with back and arms suits various preferences.
- Some users require arm support for sitting or rising.
- Others may prefer no arms due to angle preference or mobility limitations.
- Backrest preferences vary among users.

Setting Bench Height and Placement:

- Follow standard height guidance for optimal comfort.
- Ensure the bench remains level regardless of terrain.
- Slight deviations from standard height are acceptable, prioritising comfort.
- Place benches on solid, level ground, with ample space for wheelchair users beside them.
- Colour-contrast bench legs with the ground for visibility and safety.

Pathway Considerations:

- Set benches back from paths to avoid obstruction.
- Construct paths leading to benches placed away from existing paths.

18. Picnic Tables

These should be placed on a level, solid base. The base should be large enough for a wheelchair user to sit on when at the table.

If placed on grass, there should be a path to the table from the nearest path.

The standard rectangular design is accessible as long as the table end extends slightly further than the fixed side benches. The wheelchair user then sits comfortably at the end.

The round designs are generally not accessible as there is usually no room between the fixed benches for a wheelchair user to reach the table.

19. Lighting

The best sources of light are high as on a lamp post, throwing light downwards, which doesn't inconvenience anyone. Lower lights at eye level, or lower still, but shining upwards are very difficult to cope with for many people who will be dazzled or rendered temporarily blind.

- Try to avoid strong spotlights, try to spread the light.
- Never have "uplighting". To highlight a path, have marker posts with lights in them directed downward. Similarly, for a bench, have lights below the seat directed downward.
- Never be tempted to have spotlights set in the ground shining upwards.

20. Stalls

Stalls will vary tremendously in style and purpose, but try to make any displays of stock, signage and accessible to people who may be seated, of short stature, or visually impaired. It is about seeing things through a disability lens and being aware that all needs are unique.

When doing the organising beforehand find tables with low surfaces, no unnecessarily high counters, highly visible staff and easily accessible means of payment. Some people prefer cash not card.

21. Roaming Theatre

In a production of this kind bear in mind the needs of any disabled person who may wish to follow the performance.

A wheelchair user may need help over certain surfaces and may need to be at the front. Routes should be checked beforehand. Short cuts might be employed and so on.

Visually or hearing impaired visitors should be at the front. A BSL interpreter might be needed for bigger productions.

All these considerations will become more complicated if entry into a building is part of the production.



Illustration of outdoor theatre. The performers are dressed in costumes.

22. Transport

Events spread over a large site, or located away from the town centre, might employ relevant forms of transport to get people there eg a vintage bus to a period themed fair, a tractor pulling a truck to a “petting” farm and so on.

Accessible Transport:

Try to get accessible forms of these vehicles - tractor trailers can have lift access for example. If not possible, as in the case of a genuine vintage bus, then have accessible alternatives at hand.

23. Changing Weather

A sudden change in the weather is always possible and can have devastating consequences when dry earth and grass become muddy. People slip, wheelchairs become bogged down, so help may be required.

Be aware of what help might be needed.

24. Guidance

An excellent basic guide to use here is - Design for Access 2 which can be downloaded from here:-

https://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/5366/design_for_access_2

This is a user-friendly version of Building Regs as they relate to disabled people. It was written by Manchester Council in collaboration with local disability groups.

It is invaluable on heights, widths, dimensions of designated parking spaces, signage, paths, steps, seating, toilets and much more.

Other organisations involved in access and events include:

Attitude is Everything - Improving access together

<https://attitudeiseverything.org.uk/>

<http://www.euansguide.com/campaigns/promoting-accessible-events/>

For more information contact the Accessible Calderdale and Visits Unlimited team on 07908624549 or email katie@visitsunlimited.org.uk to discuss any aspects of this Guide.

Finally, you can't do everything for everyone but people will appreciate it if they can see you have tried your hardest and have gone the extra mile.

Have a great event

25. Useful Links

This is a useful link to the Mencap website with information about the Accessible Information Standard:-

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard>

This is a useful link to the NICE website with information about online accessibility for websites:-

<https://www.nice.org.uk/accessibility>

For more information on our work take a look at www.visitsunlimited.org.uk or drop us an email on katie@visitsunlimited.org.uk and find out more how we can help with your training and access audit services.

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