An accessible welcome

Planning activities and journeys in advance is crucial for many disabled people. Help everyone to confidently take part and be active by offering clear and easy-to-understand information about accessibility.

Understanding your offer

Before you can promote your activity or venue's accessibility, you need to explore and understand what you already offer:

- What accessibility information do you currently have?

- Is this information up-to-date and relevant?

- Is there an opportunity to review and enhance it?

Disabled people and disability organisations are a valuable source of knowledge, lived experience and insight. Work with disabled people to create a clear and consistent approach to collecting and presenting information about accessibility. Mapping out what you can offer and, just as importantly, what you may not be able to offer, is an important start. This resource provides useful tips and links to lots of great access resources, audits and checklists, as well as professionals who can help.

Value lived experience

Co-designing and co-producing accessibility information with disabled people ensures it is relevant, useful, and based on lived experience. To create meaningful accessibility information, actively involve disabled people in the process from the beginning. By collaborating with a diverse range of people, groups, and organisations, you will gain valuable insights into different user needs. Continuous improvement is key, keep listening to disabled people and make changes to your information where needed. Focus on building real partnerships with disability groups to create mutual benefits by working together to develop inclusive solutions that will support everyone.

For further guidance on engaging with disabled people, refer to Activity Alliance's **Taking a person-centred approach resource, Effective engagement factsheets** and see **AISF part G**.

What do people want to know?

When creating accessibility information, consider the entire journey a disabled person might take. This may start with journey planning, onsite facilities, services, and activity details, and where to find additional information and support. Stakeholder engagement will help with knowing what to include.

Onsite facilities, services and activity details

Think about the variety of accessible facilities and services you offer to ensure an inclusive and enjoyable experience for everyone. Use your accessibility information to tell people about:

- **Journey planning:** Accessible travel and transport information (see **Travel, transport and journey planning**). See **AISF part A 3.1** and **table A7**.

- **Toilet and changing facilities:** Location, gender allocation, mix and number of toilets, showers and changing areas, including accessible options, any Changing Places toilets with additional space and equipment such as hoists and adult changing tables. See **AISF part D**.

- **Dining and rest areas:** Places to get food and drink, quiet rooms for restorative use, and other spaces to rest and relax. Including options for specific dietary needs. See **AISF part C**.

- **Communication support:** Availability of fixed or portable hearing loops, British Sign Language (BSL) support, and other accessible information formats such as Easy Read, audio description or large print documents to aid communication. See **AISF parts C 6.5 and H 3.3**.

- **Assistance animals:** Whether assistance animals are allowed on site, availability of drinking water and designated areas for owners to toilet their assistance dog. See **AISF part B 5.10**.

- **Equipment hire:** Opportunities to hire cycles, e-bikes, mobility scooters, wheelchairs or adapted sports equipment.

- **Additional equipment:** Other offers such as availability of maps, fold out chairs, ear defenders, or provision of dog waste disposal bags.

- **Storage and charging:** Lockers, storage facilities, and publicly available charging points. See **AISF part D 2.4**.

- **Discounts:** Discounted rates and memberships for disabled people and their assistants.

- **Inclusive spaces and activities:** Dedicated or inclusive offers like accessible play areas, clearly marked accessible trails, quieter times, sensory walks, or specialist classes and activities.

- **Parking:** Include details of on site or nearby accessible parking, the number of spaces available, parking charges and ways to pay. See **AISF part B 2**.

- **Information points and contact information:** Is there a specific person or team that can support by providing further access information or discussing specific needs. Can this information be provided beforehand and signposted to when on site?

- **Emergency situations:** Highlight fire and emergency evacuation procedures. See **AISF part F**.

Finding further information and support

Help people easily reach out for support, enquiries, or feedback by clearly promoting your contact information and help points. It is good practice to give multiple contact points, for example your email address, phone number, website address and social media platforms. Talk to your staff about how confident they feel to assist visitors with different accessibility needs. If they need additional support or training, plan that as a team or individual development.

Promoting and advertising

A key part of being accessible is providing information in ways that everyone can receive, understand and use. Think about your communications policy:

- Who do you want to reach?

- What are their accessibility requirements?

- What communication channels do they use?

- What information can you provide before they visit and once they have arrived?
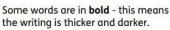
Accessible communication formats: Sharing information in various formats helps everyone get the information they need in the way that works best for them. Simple visual aids like maps, pictures, and video guides, along with clear signs and symbols, can make information easier to understand. Easy Read documents, audio guides, large print options, Makaton and British Sign Language (BSL) videos will meet different needs. Using inclusive imagery and language also helps everyone feel included and valued.

Easy Read

This is an Easy Read version of some hard information. It may not include all of the information but will tell you about the important parts.

This Easy Read information uses easier words and pictures. You may still want help to read it.

Some words are in **bold** - this means the writing is thicker and darker.

These are words that some people will find hard. When you see a bold word, we will explain it in the next sentence.

Blue and underlined words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

Communication channels: To share accessibility information effectively, be creative. Start with websites and social media, but also use printed materials like brochures, banners, newsletters, and posters. Integrating technology like apps and QR codes can help to link to more in-depth content. Explore local options and existing external services, like AccessAble, Euan's Guide, or WhatThreeWords, which can provide valuable accessibility information for disabled people. Lastly, word of mouth is key, so connect with local disabled people and disability organisations to spread the word. Don't forget to think about how you can promptly communicate any temporary changes too, like road closures or equipment breakdowns, to ensure everyone knows what to expect. See **AISF part H 3.3**.

See Activity Alliance's **Inclusive marketing and communications guidance** for more support.

Travel, transport and journey planning

When planning activities, it is important to think about travel and transport options, as these can be a significant barrier for disabled people. Service providers have the power to break down these barriers. Providing information in advance will help people plan their journey and decide how best to travel. Take a person-centred approach, as not all disabled people require the same support. Think about how you can provide clear directions and options for different accessible routes that meet a variety of needs.

Arriving by walking and wheeling

Poorly planned or longer routes may increase journey time and cause fatigue, anxiety or physical discomfort and pain for some people.

Consider:

- **Accessible venue information:** Providing accessible information on how to get to the venue or activity location by walking or wheeling. This includes details on accessibility, level or step-free access, gradients (and over what distance), surfaces, cambers of paths and resting points.

- **Arrival routes:** Ensure routes are easy to follow and clearly signposted. Can you highlight distances and unique landmarks to help people navigate easily? See **External signage.**

- **Decision points:** Focus on making decision points clear, consider providing descriptions and images to illustrate information, in pre-arrival information and on site.

- **Sensory considerations:** Think about any sensory triggers, for example any busy roads or pedestrian areas. Advise alternative routes if possible.

- **Moving around routes:** Footpaths, pavements, and trails should be safe, lit, and well-maintained. For example, overhanging trees can pose an obstacle for people with visual impairments.

- **Storage:** Providing secure, under-cover storage for mobility scooters, all-terrain wheelchairs, and other mobility aids.

Arriving by cycle

Disabled people may cycle for leisure, exercise or active travel, with some people using their cycle as a mobility aid. Below are ways you can support disabled cyclists:

- **Accessible venue information:** Providing accessible information on how to arrive at the venue or activity location by cycling. It is useful to include information on step-free access, whether cycle paths are clearly marked, shared spaces or dedicated cycle lanes, surface type and condition, narrow sections, speed humps, large gradients, potholes, bollards, or control barriers and gates, and any other hazards.

- **Segregated routes:** To provide safe and enjoyable experiences, routes for cyclists and pedestrians should be segregated, where possible. They should be clearly identified with clear rules for all users being displayed.

- **Parking:** It is important that dedicated space for accessible cycle parking and storage facilities are advertised and available for non-standard or adapted bikes. This could include, all-terrain wheelchairs, cargo bikes, adapted trikes, E-bikes, hand cycles, tandems, mobility scooters and other mobility aids. See **AISF parts B 1** and **B 2**.

- **Storage:** Should be secure and undercover. Ensure you describe the facility's design, for example, hoop or wheel clamps, and what a user might need to provide themselves, such as a D lock or chain locks. Also let cyclists know whether these need to be pre-booked and the process for doing so. See **AISF part B 2.5**.

If you cannot provide these facilities, can you provide a contact number and/or an email address to talk about individual needs and what solutions you can provide to accommodate them.

Find more advice in **Wheels for Wellbeing's Guide to Inclusive Cycling** and **AISF part B**.

Arriving by public transport

Some disabled people will rely on public transport to make their journey. It is helpful to make people aware of:

- **Accessible transport:** Nearby accessible public transport links, including bus, rail, tube and tram stops. If you're unsure, contact local transport providers to clarify their accessibility information.

- **How to get there:** Include directions, distances and rest point information, and where possible, signpost to timetables and contact details so people can find out more.

Some spaces do not have good public transport links and information that describes this, and any alternative options is also useful. Where no feasible alternatives exist consider working with local authorities and other partners, such as those with accessible transport options, to work on solutions.

Arriving by vehicle

Disabled people may feel more confident travelling using their own vehicle or have adaptations to enable accessible or independent travel. People and groups may arrive by car, taxi, coach or minibus.

Think about:

- **Accessible venue information:** Upon arrival, where is the main destination, such as the main entrance, entry gate, changing rooms, outdoor pitches or waterside? Accessible parking bays should be located as close as possible to the intended destination, preferably within 50 metres.

- **Parking:** Promote accessible parking via clearly located and well-designed signs. Are these parking bays safe, convenient and on level ground? Accessible bays are wider than standard bays, measuring 3.6m x 4.8m compared to 2.4m x 4.8m, with additional

space at the front and rear of each bay. This extra room helps people safely exit the vehicle and provides easy access to other types of support, such as medical supplies, ramps, or a tail lift for wheelchair access. Typically, 6-8% of all spaces should be accessible, but you can find detailed information on the location, percentages, size, and layout of accessible bays for different facility types in **AISF table B 1**.

If you have no accessible parking facilities or need to provide more accessible parking, consider using existing standard-sized bays. Can they be combined and cordoned off with plastic bollards or tape to create additional or temporary accessible parking or designated drop-off points? Where flexible solutions are offered, make sure these are explained on websites and other forms of communication so people know what to expect upon arrival and if they need to pre-book.

It is good practice to prioritise parking for people who need it most, so make sure you have a policy for monitoring use and abuse of accessible parking spaces. Some organisations specify parking bays are for Blue Badge holders only, whilst others will allow people to park with temporary disabilities or those not recognised by the Blue Badge scheme, but who would benefit from an accessible space. Be mindful that not all disabilities are visible.

If your venue does not have its own parking facilities, find out where the nearest accessible and standard parking provision is and whether local taxi companies have accessible vehicles. Share this information with people in advance to help them plan their journey and decide how best to travel.

Note that accessible taxis, coaches, and minibuses will normally need a raised pavement with a kerb to achieve a safe ramp gradient. See **AISF part B 2.2** and **figure B 3**.

Reception, meet and greet points

Once someone arrives at your site, how do they know where to go? It is a great idea to have clear and obvious meet and greet points. This section offers guidance on using clear and accessible signage, accessible information and physical features to make these spaces inclusive and welcoming. See **AISF part C 2**.

Approach and entrance

Level or step free approach and entry is important but older buildings can be challenging. For small level changes over 15mm, (often found on older thresholds at entrances), this can be addressed with a fillet infill or a threshold ramp. A threshold ramp is a small ramp designed to bridge the small height difference between the floor and a doorway to enable someone who needs step free access to enter the building.

Larger level changes will require a portable or permanent ramp, with a maximum gradient of 1:12 for safe independent use. Aim for the gentlest gradient possible but think about who will transport and lay the ramp; lightweight and roll-up ramps will be easier for people to put in place.

When planning a new permanent ramp, see **AISF part B 5.4 and figure B 7**.

Stairs and ramps benefit from handrails on both sides and extend around landings to provide continuous support and guidance. If gaps occur on steps or landings, consider adding a section of rail.

Handrail materials: Timber poles, such as those used for broom handles or curtain poles, have a suitable diameter for easy gripping and can be weather treated if used outdoors.

> **Top tip!** Be sure to ask ramp suppliers for advice on choosing the most suitable ramp for your circumstances. Aim for a maximum 1:12 gradient, remember the bigger the second number, the gentler the gradient (a 1:10 gradient is too steep, and anything over 1:20 gradient is considered a slope and doesn't need handrails). A risk assessment should always be carried out when considering the moving and placement of temporary ramps.

Lighting external routes is important, especially where there are level changes. See **AISF part B 5.2**.

Entrance doors

Entrances should look welcoming and be easy to identify. See **AISF part C 2.1**. Entrance and exit doors should be wide and provide a step-free route. If not, think about using a portable ramp, another entrance or exit, or a short-term solution is to install a bell or intercom to allow people to ask for help.

Make sure there is clear signage and communication to inform people about it. Ensure the appearance of the entrance or exit is inclusive and welcoming; consider redecorating, using pictures and uplighters.

Heavy or revolving entrance doors can be problematic for disabled people or those pushing prams, pushchairs, buggies, or carrying sports equipment. Manual revolving doors can be physically challenging to use and judging when to enter automated revolving doors can also be difficult. Most revolving doors should have a side 'pass door' available. It is important to provide clear signage and keep this door unlocked during operating hours to ensure that everyone can use it. Refer to **AISF part C** for more details on entrance doors.

Internal signage

Help people easily find your meeting point or entrance, by using clear and simple signage, especially at key decision points along the route. Good inclusive signage within your reception points is important to help make disabled people aware of inclusive facilities and move around. Consider using easy-to-recognise symbols and ensuring the accessibility of any digitally displayed information. You can find guidance on inclusive sign design and wayfinding. See **External signage** and **AISF part E**.

Reception points

Whether it is a formal reception desk or a makeshift check-in point in a church hall or on an external playing field, consider whether it meets the needs of all potential users.

A high-visibility meeting place or a distinct flag, parasol, or gazebo can serve as an easily identifiable location for one-off events. For recurring activities, consider installing permanent solutions such as signs or wayfinding trails at ground level. See **AISF part 2.7**.

Consider your location carefully. For example, placing your reception area under the shade of a tree or parasol will help individuals with sight conditions or neurodivergence who may be affected by bright sunlight. Meeting points at the other side of a grass field could make access difficult for some people with mobility impairments.

A formal counter with a lower section or any standard height table (even a picnic table) will suffice for a less formal 'meet and greet' point. To meet the needs of both seated and standing users, place a low table next to your reception counter. If your reception desk is not directly in line with the entrance or you only have a high-level reception counter, make sure people on reception are aware that they should come round the front to meet and greet visitors. New reception desks should meet the guidelines in **AISF part C 2.5**.

Ensure that your information and literature are easily accessible to everyone. If your literature stands are tall (over 1.2m), consider placing some booklets on lower surfaces like a coffee table or window ledge, and replenishing them as needed.

There are several types of assistive listening systems that benefit people with hearing loss or hearing differences. This includes traditional induction loop systems, which are probably still the most common provision. Radio and infra-red systems are also worth considering for sports and activities that take place in various locations, as they are both wireless and can be moved from one area to another, including outdoor locations. For example, radio systems can receive a signal up to around 60 metres, which may be necessary for outdoor environments. In this setup, the activity facilitator wears a transmitter, and the individual wears a receiver.

Promoting access information

Providing disabled people with accessibility information about your venue or activity before they arrive will help with forward planning. But it's also important to ensure this information is displayed upon arrival to alleviate disabled people's fears about accessibility. Think about how and where you can promote your onsite facilities, services, and activity details (the list in **Onsite facilities** will help with this). Can you use your website, leaflets, posters, social media, and other marketing materials?

Promote your accessibility features and services, maintenance, or any interruptions in service, such as blocked routes or equipment breakdowns. Make information clear and concise, available in different formats, and provide multiple ways for people to contact you. **Activity Alliance's Inclusive Communications guidance** can help you learn more about inclusive communication.

AISF part C Section 6 provides further information on assistive listening systems, including Wi-Fi systems and other communication technologies.

Even temporary reception points should have an induction loop system. This can be an inexpensive, battery-operated portable induction loop that requires no wiring. Remember to clearly display the symbol to let people know it's there.

Seating

Provide a variety of seating styles to accommodate different needs. Keep in mind that low sofas and high perch stools may not be suitable for everyone. It's best to have one or two tub chairs or upright dining-style chairs with good back and arm supports to cater to most needs in reception, spectating or socialising spaces. **See AISF part C 3**.

Key actions

We have reached the end of this section. Have a look through the list below and ☑ **check the boxes** that apply to your space. Note any areas for improvement.

Understanding your offer:

Have you involved disabled people in the planning and development of your activity, event and access information?

Have you taken time to learn and understand different impairments and potential barriers, ensuring a person-centred approach to all your visitors?

Travel, transport and journey planning:

Have you provided up to date transport options and clear accessible directions to activities?

Have you provided information in a variety of formats (large print, digital) and provided multiple options for people to contact you for further information?

Reception meet and greet points:

Is your reception area or welcome point clearly signposted, accessible and easy to navigate for all visitors?

Have you provided information about onsite facilities, including details on accessible ramps, lifts and toilet facilities?