



# Inklusion Guide

A kickass guide to making  
literature events accessible  
for disabled people

**Large print edition**

# Accessible Versions of This Guide

This guide is available as:

- a PDF
- an online web version
- an Easy-Read format
- a Large Print format
- Braille
- audio version and BSL-translated video

You can find all of these on our website:

[www.inklusionguide.org](http://www.inklusionguide.org)

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# Foreword

Over the last decade, we found ourselves increasingly frustrated and burnt-out by the poor and inconsistent accessibility of literature events – so we decided to do something about it. In late 2019 we decided to put aside our creative practices from January 2021 in order to develop a free resource which demystified access, and which could be used by organisations and individuals alike.

When the pandemic hit, the world shifted completely online as we collectively went into lockdown. This period saw many organisations becoming aware they were reaching audiences they'd never considered before, and seeing some surprising gains.

**“Over 5,000 new writers joined Arvon at Home (our first ever online Arvon course), an increase of over 400% from pre-pandemic levels. We have also seen an increase in writers who identified as disabled from 13.1% in 2019 to 22.1% in 2021.”**

– Arvon

Many people were finally included where they'd been historically excluded.

For too long, the literature sector has been notoriously inaccessible to disabled and chronically ill people. Access is an afterthought with next to no budget and the onus is placed on disabled people to directly seek provisions themselves – an exhausting chain of constant chasing and self-advocacy.

**“Lockdown has been the first time I’ve actually felt included in society in a good while. Knowing that it’s possible to access the arts from home but now facing the notion that it will be taken away from us is a kick in the teeth.”**

– Mer Williams[1]

Access isn’t the responsibility of disabled people, it’s up to the industry to provide it.

When access is integrated, consistent, reliable and navigable across the industry, disabled people are made equally welcome to events as non-disabled people.

The spending power of the disabled population is considerable, and making your events accessible allows you to tap into that. There are more than 14 million disabled people in the UK – who have a combined spending power of £274 billion – and who are fiercely loyal to disabled-friendly organisations (*Purple Pound, 2021*)[2].

If your organisation wants to be the vanguard of accessibility, access should be an integrated, organic framework – the skeleton around which event provision is built, rather than a peripheral facet or last-minute add-on.

Good access should be the norm, not the exception. The *Inklusion Guide* is here to help with that.

In this guide you'll find:

- An access checklist for both authors and audiences, covering in-person, online, and hybrid events
- Provision spotlight boxes, giving more detail on access
- Personal experiences and advice from disabled authors
- Facts and statistics that support our recommendations
- A list of resources, which are available on the Inklusion website

It's important to us that individual disabled people (whether authors, people who work in publishing, or audience members) can use the guide for self-advocacy, taking the burden off them as they point event organisers our way.

Whilst we recognise that each organisation and event planner will have different needs and face different challenges, our aim is to show the best-practice provisions you can make which will ensure disabled people are included.

These changes will not come overnight and we ask that providers make consistent and persistent efforts to integrate access from the start of your planning.

We need to work together to create an environment where disabled people are not only welcome and supported, but an integral part of the publishing industry.

A significant part of a writer's income can come from doing events, but if they aren't accessible, organisations are hampering disabled people's ability to earn a living and have a valuable impact on the cultural landscape. Because non-disabled people have often talked for and over disabled people, and non-disabled authors have written about us (and been praised for it, no matter how clichéd and stigmatising the disability tropes), it's even more important to champion and platform disabled authors at your events.

By making your events accessible and available online and hybrid, you're not just upholding your legal responsibility, you're increasing book sales, and increasing attendance and ticket sales by reaching a wider, often international, audience.



We are all allies in access. It's only in collectivising and doing the work that our industry will be enriched by disabled voices and their stories.

## **Julie & Ever**

[www.inklusionguide.org](http://www.inklusionguide.org)

[www.instagram.com/inklusionguide](https://www.instagram.com/inklusionguide)

[www.twitter.com/inklusionguide](https://www.twitter.com/inklusionguide)

## **Ever Dundas**

Co-Founder. Disruptor.

Ever is a queer crip author based in Edinburgh, represented by Jenny Brown Associates. In 2017, her novel *Goblin* was shortlisted for the Edinburgh International Book Festival First Book Award and won the Saltire First Book of the Year Award. Her second novel, sci-fi thriller *HellSans* (longlisted for the British Science Fiction Association 2022 best novel award), has disability as a central theme and was published by Angry Robot in October 2022. Ever is in The List's 2022 Hot 100 and The Bookseller's 2022 Top 150 influential people in UK publishing.

[www.everdundas.com](http://www.everdundas.com)

[www.instagram.com/everdundas](https://www.instagram.com/everdundas)

[www.twitter.com/EverDundas](https://www.twitter.com/EverDundas)

“Since my debut came out in 2017, my experience as a disabled author and audience member has varied. Access is inconsistent, and it was difficult having to constantly advocate for myself, not knowing how that would be received. I don’t want fellow disabled people to go through this and feel excluded from culture. Good access practice should be the norm, not the rare exception, and I’m passionate about making this happen.”

– Ever

## **Julie Farrell**

Co-Founder. Disruptor.

Julie is a queer, disabled and autistic award-winning poet and author. Her poem ‘Ripples of Change’ won the Aurora Prize for Writing 2021, and her unpublished young-adult novel was shortlisted for the SCBWI Undiscovered Voices Anthology 2022, the Write Mentor Children’s Novel Award, and the Owned Voices Novel Award 2021. She is a trustee at Mslexia Magazine, a member of the UK Arts

Council Access Scheme Advisory Panel and a committee member of the UK Disability Network. Julie is one of The Bookseller's 2022 Top 150 influential people in UK publishing.

[www.juliefarrell.co.uk](http://www.juliefarrell.co.uk)

[www.instagram.com/juliefarrellauthor](https://www.instagram.com/juliefarrellauthor)

[www.twitter.com/Julie\\_Farrell\\_](https://www.twitter.com/Julie_Farrell_)

[juliefarrell.substack.com](http://juliefarrell.substack.com)

**“When I was planning events as a Marketing and Events Executive a few years ago, accessibility just wasn’t a priority in our event planning. I understand that people who aren’t disabled tend not to consider or prioritise access, and I set up Inklusion with Ever so that the literature sector in the UK would have a reliable resource. Over the past couple of years, I’ve witnessed innovation and a good deal of creativity from the smallest, most passionate organisations to make sure their events were accessible. What did we learn from them? If you build it, they will come. And the Inklusion Guide will help you build it.”**

– Julie

# A Note On Language

Disabled people use different terms to describe themselves and it's important that you respect an individual's chosen language, first and foremost.

Non-disabled people often aren't sure about what language to use and can worry about saying the wrong thing.

Firstly, non-disabled people shouldn't tell disabled people how to identify or tell them they're using the wrong language for their own community. Let disabled people speak for themselves.

Secondly, don't overcomplicate things by using euphemisms like 'differently abled'. 'Disabled' is not a dirty word – use it. Many disabled people are disabled and proud – it's usually only non-disabled people (and sometimes disabled people who have internalised society's rife ableism) who consider it to be negative or shameful.

Identity-first language (e.g. 'disabled person') is generally preferred to person-first language (e.g. 'person with a disability') by the disabled community, so identity-first language should be your default when referring to disabled people.

# Social Model

For simplicity, we use the word 'disabled' throughout. This encompasses a wide range of people, including those who are, for instance, deaf, neurodivergent or chronically ill. The definition of 'disabled' and the foundation of the guide is based on the social model of disability:

"The Social Model of Disability states that people have impairments but that the oppression, exclusion and discrimination people with impairments face, is not an inevitable consequence of having an impairment, but is caused instead by the way society is run and organised.

The Social Model of Disability holds that people with impairments are 'disabled' by the barriers operating in society that exclude and discriminate against them."  
*(Social Model of Disability, Inclusion London)*

## **More information:**

[www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/disability-in-london/social-model/the-social-model-of-disability-and-the-cultural-model-of-deafness](http://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/disability-in-london/social-model/the-social-model-of-disability-and-the-cultural-model-of-deafness)

However, it's important to note that some people with chronic illnesses, for instance, feel the Social Model doesn't fully encapsulate their experience, as their impairments (e.g. fatigue, chronic pain) mean that they would still be disabled regardless of barriers being removed.

# Use of 'Deaf'

Team Inklusion have had some feedback saying that many hearing-led organisations still use 'D/deaf', but Deaf-led organisations prefer 'Deaf' or 'deaf'. Reasons for this include:

Not everyone understands what 'D/deaf' means and interpretations can vary. 'D/deaf' can create unnecessary divisions between who is 'more' or 'really' deaf, and people who are deaf can still be part of Deaf culture. Also, the distinction depends on English capitalisation to define Deaf people who might not speak or read English.

For this reason, we have chosen to use 'deaf' throughout the guide.

# Access for Authors

This section details our recommended provisions for authors appearing at various types of events, across hybrid, online and in-person. While 'authors' is used throughout, these guidelines are applicable to all performers at events.

- **74%** of writers who are disabled or have a long-term health condition have a lack of income or expectation, compared to **67%** of non-disabled writers or who don't have a long-term health condition.

(Royal Society of Literature's 'A Room Of My Own' Report)[3]

- **Over 600,000** disabled people in the UK are self-employed.

(Freelancing and Self-Employment with a Disability, IPSE)[4]

# Provisions for General Events

(e.g. book launches, panels, festivals, conferences, and running workshops)

## All Event Formats

(in-person, online, and hybrid)

### Before and During Events:

- 1. Inclusive Programming:** Events shouldn't be all-male, straight, cis, white, middle class and non-disabled. Programming should include disabled authors and Chairs across all kinds of events (not just on the topic of disability, or topics relevant to disability).
- 2. 'Nothing About Us Without Us':** Events covering topics that affect disabled people should have disabled people speaking at them.
- 3. Advertising Events:** Give the author a chance to see and/or hear and edit the event description and advertising before publishing, to ensure the description is accurate and not ableist. Include relevant searchable terms such as 'Disability', 'Mental Health', 'Equality', 'Ableism' to help people find the event and check these categorisations are accurate with the author. If an author is disabled but their creative work isn't about that, 'disability' may not be



a suitable category. Check with the author if you are unsure. [Reference: Sandra Alland]

- 4. Fees:** All writers should be paid well, fairly, and in a timely manner for their time and energy. The process should be easy, and authors shouldn't have to chase for payment; this is especially important for disabled writers who may experience difficulties earning a living and higher costs due to disability. Additionally, are authors adequately compensated when the event is available either for a limited time or permanently? Are audience members paying to access it online? You should have a contract in place and ensure authors know what they've signed up to.

**“One thing is not being paid enough. I’m working class and I just feel like I’m not valued. People like myself, working class, disabled, we’re not represented.”**

– Bea Webster

**“Keywords, tags and categories for events are hugely important. If you have an event about disability and illness, simply using the tags ‘Health/Wellbeing’ isn’t good enough, as illness and disability can’t be collapsed into this category. This kind of erasure and emphasis on health and wellbeing is well known in the disabled and chronically ill community and is called ‘toxic wellness’. There is nothing wrong with being**

disabled or chronically ill.”

– Ever Dundas

“I have found that organisations are hesitant to mention the word ‘disability’ even when it’s a major theme in my work and something I’m specifically there to talk about.”

– Anon

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Spotlight

## **Intersectionality – Race and Disability**

“Disability narratives are overwhelmingly white, as are judging panels and arts organisations dealing with disability. I’ve been told that people don’t know how to market my book because I’m a disabled brown person and people can only think in terms of one box at a time. It doesn’t reflect society.”

– Khairani Barokka

“Adults with an impairment from Black or Black British ethnic backgrounds report the highest number of life areas (for example, education or leisure) in which participation is restricted, while adults from white ethnic backgrounds report the lowest.”

– Disability Facts & Figures, Papworth Trust, 2018[5]

**“The publishing industry concedes that it has a problem with a lack of diversity. Publishers recognise that writers of colour in particular have been historically excluded.”**

– Rethinking ‘Diversity’ in Publishing, Goldsmiths Press, 2020[6]

People who experience racism who are also disabled will not have the same experience of disability as white disabled people; the intersection of racism and ableism creates additional barriers.

Unfortunately, representation of people of the Global Majority in publishing is poor, and systemic racism in the industry needs to be addressed and dismantled. Words aren’t enough; we need action. We need to provide a safe space, allowing disabled people who experience racism to focus on their art and not have to expend precious energy fighting racism and ableism in the industry. It’s important to bear this in mind when programming events and implementing access; champion disabled people who experience racism and create events where their needs are met, where they are safe, and they are celebrated for their art.

The Spread the Word report ‘*Writing the Future: Black and Asian Writers and Publishers in the UK Market Place*’ (2015)[7] looked at people doing events at three major book festivals in the UK and found that just 100 (four per cent) [of authors] could be classified as people who

are Black Caribbean, Black African, South Asian or East Asian, and UK based. Discounting the 55 non-authors, the percentage is just two per cent. Hopefully things have improved since, but as the report *Rethinking 'Diversity' in Publishing* (2020)[6] states, the core audience for publishers is 'white and middle-class', and the whole industry is essentially set up to cater for this one audience.

It's also important to be aware that people of the Global Majority, women, LGBTQIA+ people, migrants and refugees, and working class disabled people will all be facing different barriers where their identities intersect. Building an industry and event provision where they are supported, championed and safe should be our collective goal.

**"It's something that a lot of people of colour will be feeling: 'Am I just here as a box-ticking exercise?' Good intentions can be harmful if not properly thought through. That can be a similar experience to how disabled people feel, especially when requirements haven't been put in place to support them. There's also that fine line: wanting representation but not wanting to be put high up on a pedestal as if you're speaking for all BPOC or being the only one in the room."**

– Jeda Pearl

“I went to an event, and they booked interpreters without letting me know who they were, and this person used quite racist signs. I told them I didn’t like this interpreter because of that; I said I wanted to work with these specific interpreters, not this person. I really had to fight it. The organisers themselves were white. They didn’t understand this idea that I wanted a person of colour to interpret for me.”

– Bea Webster

“It really angers me when people ask why initiatives for racial justice are supposedly privileged above disabled people based on their assumptions that those people are able-bodied. But some people don’t want to disclose their disabilities and those Black or brown people, they’re more likely to be disabled. Racism and ableism are intimately intertwined in societal ways. It isn’t race versus disability.”

– Khairani Barokka

### **More information:**

For further commentary on this topic, the essay “Disability Justice, Race, and Rethinking Ableism” by Dr Khairani Barokka is available on the Inklusion blog: [www.inklusionguide.org/blog/disability-justice-race-and-rethinking-ableism](http://www.inklusionguide.org/blog/disability-justice-race-and-rethinking-ableism)

# Communication

There's no excuse for poor communication with authors in the lead up to an event and yet authors often find themselves chasing organisers for important information. Ensure your access provision is listed on your website and link to it when communicating with your authors. Don't make assumptions about an author's needs and ensure good communication to discuss things like booking their preferred BSL interpreters, how many interpreters are needed, and so on. Good communication is key.

Listen to the needs of disabled authors and meet them – make sure they can engage in the conversation; don't ask someone to sit in pain or discomfort, and don't ask them to talk about issues they want to avoid.

**1. Invitations:** Ensure you include all the information the author needs to make an informed decision about whether they can accept the invitation. Invitation emails should include access information and a link to your accessible web page that outlines your access provision. Invitation templates should cover all event details such as venue, date and time, length of event, pay, travel, accommodation and access info. If something is still to be confirmed, mention this; don't leave it out. Don't put the author in a position where they have to chase for information that should be in the original invitation.

If events are going to be available online either as a one-off livestream, online for a limited period or permanently, or both, ensure this is all explained, agreed upon, and confirmed with the author at the contracting stage. See [“Privacy” on page 53](#) for information on online events and authors’ choice.

- 2. Event Format:** Whether online, in-person, or hybrid, both authors and the audience should be informed that if they need to, they can move around, stretch, leave the event and return later. You could also look into making events more interactive than the usual format of authors being interviewed and doing a reading and include different elements like video reels or a short play. Be creative!
  
- 3. Event Length and Breaks:** In terms of event length, this is where access needs can clash. Some disabled authors can find it difficult to do half-day or full-day sessions and may find it easier if the event is broken up over several days. However, some disabled authors may find that they can do half or full days but would be unable to do several consecutive days. It’s important to bear this in mind and consult with authors on what is best for them. Ensure decent breaks are built in (and again, consult with authors on what suits).

[Reference: Jamie Hale, Jeda Pearl]

**4. Method of Communication:** Emails aren't accessible to some people. Find out in your initial communication what an author's preferred method of communication is (e.g. Zoom, phone calls, voice-notes, texts).

[Reference: Sandra Alland]

**5. Invitation and Covid Safety Information:** If you're asking authors to attend in-person events, outline your Covid safety measures. Even with measures in place, some disabled and chronically ill authors will not be safe and will only be able to attend online, so online provision is important. If you plan in advance (including budgeting) for having authors potentially joining events online, it should make implementing it easier. Consider the following:

- While at time of writing there is no longer a legal requirement for people to wear masks indoors or take Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs) before attending events, event organisers can be good allies to disabled people by asking participants and audience members to wear masks (if not exempt) and to take LFTs before attending. Recognise that for some masks can be an additional barrier.
- Event organisers could also provide some free LFTs at the event



- How these measures can be implemented: it could be an honour system or people could be requested to provide evidence of negative LFTs
- Have hand sanitiser readily available
- Make sure rooms are well ventilated

See [“In-Person Career Development Events: Covid Safety”](#) on page 70 for more information on Covid safety.

- 6. Options for Attending:** When sending an invitation, make it clear if there's the option for the author and audience to attend either online or in person. Essentially, is the event hybrid for both authors and the audience? If these aren't an option, state this so an author can make an informed choice without a lot of back and forth.
- 7. Access Requirements:** When inviting an author, always ask whether they have access requirements, and whether they have an access rider they would like to share.

**More information:**

See examples of Access Riders on our website at: [www.inklusionguide.org/resources#example-access-riders](http://www.inklusionguide.org/resources#example-access-riders)

Ensure:

- You have opened a dialogue where they can share requirements, but don't ask for details about their impairment or chronic illness – you need to know what they need, not what they have
- You offer an anonymous way for people – including audience members – to reach you to ask about access provisions. Some people may not want to reach out publicly or disclose their disability and may simply have questions that need answering
- You check what authors need and don't make assumptions. Assumptions lead to mistakes and it's the disabled person who bears the brunt
- You double check before the author's event whether or not access needs are fully implemented; if not, the author should be informed immediately and an alternative put in place (e.g. joining online), and if this isn't possible, the author should still be paid for their time
- You offer help in the form of staff or volunteers assisting authors without personal assistants or companions. Many disabled migrants do not have access to public funds, and offering this assistance should be doable without the need for authors to

disclose that they do not have access to public funds

[Reference: Maud Rowell, Bea Webster, Jamie Hale, Khairani Barokka, Elspeth Wilson]

**8. Website:** Your website should be accessible (check with your web designer). An 'Access' tab should be on the homepage in the main menu of your website; it shouldn't be buried under other headings. If you don't have a website or if access varies across your events (e.g. due to using multiple venues) access information should be on your event booking page. Your website and/or event page should clearly outline full access details (including what access isn't available, and what you're doing to make it available in future).

Navigation around your website should be intuitive:

- Use menu headings to help people find relevant information
- Blind and partially sighted people should have the ability to zoom in without any glitches and overlapping text
- People should also be able to highlight text (allowing those using screen readers to highlight what it reads to them, giving them control)

- Your site should have decent contrast for typeface and background colours, and the typeface should be sans serif
- Buttons should be large enough for people using alternative computer access methods to dwell on them and click them easily, and the page should be responsive to keyboard shortcuts

[Reference: Maud Rowell, Jamie Hale]

**9. Reminders for Participants:** A month or so in advance is a good time to start communicating with authors about the event. Follow up with regular reminders (at least every two weeks) and any new information; this is especially useful for neurodivergent authors.

[Reference: Elspeth Wilson]

**10. Author Meet-up with Chair:** Secure a Chair well in advance (we recommend inviting a disabled Chair if there are disabled authors). Make sure you:

- Give authors and the Chair a chance to communicate in advance (online or in-person meet-up) to get to know each other and confirm discussion points in advance, and offer questions in advance if authors need this (ideally, the Chair can organise this, but if they can't, have a member of staff available to assist with this).

- It also ensures everyone knows each other's access requirements (e.g. needing to refer to notes), so they can discuss what's needed during the event. People can get familiar with each other's pronouns and it allows blind or partially sighted people to get used to people's voices. Chairs should discuss with participants what they're happy to talk about and what they'd like to avoid – for example, a disabled person might not want to talk about disability if they're there to talk about their work, or someone may have PTSD or dissociation and need to avoid certain triggers.
- The Chair should ensure it's clear who's speaking by using participants' names when directing question.

See ["Ensure it's clear who's speaking" on page 93](#) for more information on this.

- We advise that the Chair inform the participants in advance (and remind them during the event intro) that they are invited to give a brief physical description of themselves at the start of an event if they want to do so. The Chair can also invite audience members who are asking questions to give a brief physical description.

Given the intention is to convey a sense of the person, these descriptions can be anything from

a list of physical descriptors to a more creative and entertaining way of describing oneself. (Some blind and partially sighted people find physical descriptions useful, while some say it privileges sight; however, it's useful for people, if they choose to, to be able to convey important information about themselves that could be otherwise missed, e.g. physical differences, and to prevent misgendering based on voice).

[Reference: Maud Rowell, Jamie Hale, Khairani Barokka, Elspeth Wilson, Jeda Pearl]

## **11. Tech-check:** Ensure participants are briefed on the tech:

- If online: what platform is being used?
- Guide participants on how to use its features
- Assist authors who are planning to do a presentation whether in-person or online
- If in-person do a mic check
- Ensure hearing loops are working
- Ensure participants know who will be meeting/greeting and facilitating them (online or in-person)

**12. British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters and Live Captioners:** Book them well in advance. It's very important to check with the author which BSL interpreters or captioners they prefer to work with.

See "Spotlight: BSL Interpreters" on page 32 and "Spotlight: Live Captioners" on page 35 for more information.

**13. Other Interpreters and Support:** Some deaf writers might require professional lipspeakers. DeafBlind writers might require someone experienced in DeafBlind communication, including things like Visual Frame Signing or Hands On Signing. Learning-disabled writers might have or require communication support workers. Don't assume that all access is covered because you've booked BSL interpreters; ask authors what they require and if there's someone they prefer to work with.

[Reference: Sandra Alland]

**"Disabled folk that don't write about their own trauma or marginalised identities are still often expected to talk about them. Take the lead from the person you're speaking with, what they're comfortable with, and even asking that in advance: gauge what they're comfortable talking about."**

– Jeda Pearl

“[The event organiser] sent me the questions and asked ‘is there anything that you don’t want to talk about’. I think it’s really important that I talk about disability if I want to, and I choose to, but I’m not just pigeonholed as the disabled author.”

– Penny Batchelor

“There are times when it’s appropriate to talk about a person’s disabilities at an event, but we’re always holding our breath in case it’s talked about in the wrong way, or very personal or prodding.”

– Khairani Barokka

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## Spotlight **British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters**

“I wish that you could have an hour beforehand, so myself and the interpreter could sit down, go through whatever the talk is, make sure the translation is spot on to what I actually want to say, so actually having prep time with the interpreter is really, really important, and the problem is there’s rarely money to cover that prep time, but that would be fantastic.”

– Bea Webster



- Check with the author what BSL interpreters they prefer to work with as many marginalised writers prefer to work with interpreters they have shared identities with
- Ensure that you have budgeted to pay BSL interpreters according to minimum union rates
- Always give interpreters materials from writers in advance such as any readings, and budget for extra prep time for translating specialised language. Pay for the interpreter(s) to have an advance meeting with the author so they can discuss the topic and any potential unfamiliar language that may come up
- Whether in-person, online, or hybrid, make sure you have an adequate set-up e.g. number of interpreters needed for the event, check where they're positioned for authors or the audience and if lighting is adequate so the interpreter is well-lit etc.
- It can depend on the nature of the event, but longer events and those where many deaf people are attending may require multiple interpreters. This enables interpreters to have breaks and ensure access for deaf people during their breaks
- Whether in-person, online, or hybrid, make sure you have an adequate set-up, e.g. interpreters must be well-lit, and visible both to the audience and the deaf

BSL-user(s) onstage. Some live set-ups with deaf authors might require interpreters in two different locations, for example one onstage for the audience and one in the front row for the deaf author(s) to see from the stage without having to turn around or crane their neck. Check how they appear on screen if online

- For international literary events, including online, with deaf and/or disabled people from multiple nationalities, there might need to be sign language interpreters who use sign language for different nationalities

[Reference: Bea Webster, Jamie Hale, Sandra Alland, Khairani Barokka]

**“One event was three hours long, and I told them they’ll need two, perhaps three interpreters. They agreed, but when I got there, they’d only booked one interpreter and they were unable to do the job on their own. There were four deaf people and we had to pull out in front of everybody. I think people thought it was our fault, and you just think about the effects on our reputation because they had not booked interpreters. That was their duty.”**

– Bea Webster

## **More information:**

See the “BSL Interpreters and Captioners” in the Resources section of our website: [www.inklusionguide.org/resources#bsl-interpreters-and-captioners](http://www.inklusionguide.org/resources#bsl-interpreters-and-captioners)

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## Spotlight **Live Captioners**

Book professionally trained live captioners well in advance and check if authors have a preference on who is used. A non-qualified fast typist should not be used to do this, as they are unlikely to be able to offer instant, verbatim captions.

Auto-captions are not a suitable substitute, especially as they are unable to correctly caption certain accents, dialects, names, and particular words. Some auto-caption apps are better than others, but they are often only available in English and there will still be mistakes. Hired captioners will be trained in transcribing accessible captions, and for recordings, hire consultants who use captions during the editing process.

Events should include a captioning screen that participants onstage can see without having to turn around or move from their place at a mic or table.

Provide prep materials to captioners in advance such as writers' pronouns, spellings of names, places and organisations, and readings which can be shown on a screen so live captioners don't need to caption these. It also means you can present the extract or poem as written (with particular line breaks and punctuation). Ensure you use a suitable typeface, colours, and contrast. Provide the captioners with core information in advance, such as: names of participants, titles of books and poems, or any potentially unfamiliar terminology you think might crop up.

We advise selecting translators and captioners who have arts and literary experience and reflect the same backgrounds as the participants, if possible. This helps provide a safe space and shared understanding.

If the session is longer, two captioners may be required to ensure that adequate breaks are possible. Encourage guests to talk at a reasonable pace where they can, and to pause while an interpreter or captioner is switching over. This should either be at planned times or requested by the captioners.

[Reference: Jeda Pearl, Jamie Hale, Khairani Barokka, Sandra Alland]

**"I can't express how frustrating it is to be at an event and see my and my co-guests' names misspelled in the live captioning. Or to read**

misgendering, and nonsensical words in place of LGBTQIA+ terminology. It makes it hard for me to follow the conversation. Give basic information to your live captioners in advance, including important vocabulary from featured writers. Don't use auto-captions, please. And hire captioners who know the communities they're writing for."

– Sandra Alland

### **More information:**

See the "BSL Interpreters and Captioners" in the Resources section of our website: [www.inklusionguide.org/resources#bsl-interpreters-and-captioners](http://www.inklusionguide.org/resources#bsl-interpreters-and-captioners)

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## **After Events**

- 1. Debrief:** After the event, allow authors, including Chairs if used, a chance to debrief and network, whether online or in-person. Note any access needs for this (e.g. a BSL interpreter). See "Specific Provisions for Author Networking Events" on page 60 for more on networking.
- 2. Feedback:** Ask for the author's feedback on your access provision and allow for this to be done anonymously where possible, for best data-capture. If

you've had authors decline an invitation due to format and access, ask them what it was that didn't suit their needs.

**“Asking for feedback and allowing it to be anonymous is the only way to get honest feedback on access provisions.”**

– Elspeth Wilson

## **In-Person Events**

### **Accommodation and Travel Provision**

Disabled people often need assistance with travel. Environmental barriers such as inaccessible transport and high travel costs can play a big role in the exclusion of disabled people. It's extremely important you pay for travel and accommodation (many disabled authors won't be able to do events if these expenses aren't covered). Travelling to event venues for both authors and audience should be reliable and easy, and it's for the good of the publishing industry to help make this happen.

#### **More information:**

See the “Transport For All” campaign in the Resources section of our website: [www.inklusionguide.org/resources#access-campaigns](http://www.inklusionguide.org/resources#access-campaigns)

**“By not meeting someone’s needs who is chronically pained, you’re literally causing pain.”**  
Khairani Barokka

- 1. Booking Accommodation:** Discuss well in advance what kind of accessible accommodation disabled authors need and book it promptly. Euan’s Guide ([www.euansguide.com](http://www.euansguide.com)) can provide you with information on accessible hotels and short-term let apartments.

[Reference: Jamie Hale, Elspeth Wilson]

- 2. Budgeting for Accommodation:** Ensure you budget for this in advance: people with energy-limiting conditions may need extra overnight accommodation, and some people may need to bring personal assistants or companions.
- 3. Travel:** Check whether there is accessible rail travel near the venue, as not all railway stations are accessible for wheelchair users, and rail access can be nationally inconsistent. Budget for a hire car and staff to drive, or for a taxi (potentially for quite a long journey for those who can’t travel by rail).

[Reference: Penny Batchelor, Jamie Hale]

**“Travel is a great barrier for me. I’ve had some terrible experiences in the past with trains and booking assistance that doesn’t turn up and being stranded. And there aren’t accessible loos on trains. The thing that would make life wonderful would be if they sent a taxi for me. That would be perfect because I could just rest in the back seat and not have to worry about it.”**

– Penny Batchelor

## **Hospitality, Venue Tour, and Tech Check Considerations**

It’s vital that the venue is regularly checked for accessibility issues so that authors can be alerted if their needs can’t be met prior to an event, and alternative arrangements can be made. Providing a walk-through video or an in-person walk-through, as well as a tech-check before the event will help to make disabled people feel comfortable and relaxed when it comes to their event. See [“Venue Considerations” on page 97](#) for additional details on this for audiences.

**“It’s helpful if it’s an in-person event to go to the space in advance. There are always steps, there are bright lights, there are lots of people, it’s confusing. Visiting a space beforehand and having a chance to explore and orient myself is really helpful.”**

– Maud Rowell



“Organisers have given me a hotel room that isn’t step-free in the past. The staff there said, ‘it’s not that many stairs’. It was late at night so I stayed, and in the morning, I was in so much pain, I literally couldn’t move.”

– Khairani Barokka

“One festival only had stage access using some rickety steps without a handrail and I thought, I can’t get on that stage. The whole format, as it’s been built, is to assume that nobody with walking difficulties or a wheelchair is going to speak.”

– Penny Batchelor

Papworth Trust’s 2018 report[5] shows the most commonly cited barriers to accessing buildings for disabled adults are:

**44%** Moving around the building (stairs, doors or narrow corridors)

**39%** A health condition, illness or disability

**23%** Inadequate lifts or escalators

**22%** Difficulty with approach areas due to lack of ramps/handrails

**21%** Parking problems

**17%** Bathroom facilities (location, layout, size)

**15%** Footpath design and surfaces

**14%** Difficulty with transport getting to the building

**13%** Lack of assistance

- 1. Welcome:** Welcome every author, ask if they have any needs, and make sure to escort them to the green room and show them around the venue (getting around a venue could be difficult for many reasons, not just mobility, and could cause needless distress).
- 2. Green Room:** Make sure authors know where this is. Have warm, ambient lighting, and comfortable places to sit. Plants and string lights make a place feel very welcome. Don't have any background music. Inform all authors if the route from the green room to the event venue is long and give them options if they need assistance to get there; you can't always tell if someone has mobility issues.
- 3. Wheelchair Access:** Every aspect of the venue being used for the event should be wheelchair accessible. If you are using a stage for any of the participants, ensure this is accessible, otherwise choose not to use the stage for anyone. Ensure dimensions of lifts and

doorways are available on your website, alongside any sharp corners or difficult turns.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

- 4. Accessible Toilets:** Ensure there are working accessible toilets near the event venue and green room and that authors know where they are. While Changing Places toilets (adapted toilets with adult-size changing bed and hoist: [www.changing-places.org](http://www.changing-places.org)) are rare, they should be automatically in place for larger events, and should be made available where requested at smaller events, where hire services such as Mobiloo exist ([www.mobiloo.org.uk](http://www.mobiloo.org.uk)).

[Reference: Jamie Hale, Elspeth Wilson]

- 5. Venue:** Prioritise using venues with ground-floor step-free access, and:
- Ensure the whole venue is wheelchair accessible
  - There are ground-level rooms with accessible toilets
  - Welcome all assistance dogs. However, bear in mind that some people have severe allergies to dogs, and spaces (especially small or poorly ventilated spaces) containing dogs might be inaccessible to them

[Reference: Khairani Barokka, Jamie Hale, Sandra Alland, Elspeth Wilson, Jeda Pearl]

- 6. Lifts:** When choosing a venue, prioritise using a ground-floor space. If you're using a venue with lifts, ensure the lifts are in working order and are big enough to hold a large electric wheelchair and have a high Safe Working Load (minimum 400kg, but above 450kg is recommended).
- You should discuss the risk of lift-breakdown with the venue and ascertain the alternative options: for example, buildings with a second lift channel are preferable
  - If the building has only one lift channel, ensure that you have considered a backup plan, so that if it is out of order, you know how to proceed
  - Have dimensions of lifts and doorways listed on the access information, that ramps are correctly angled, and ask for assessments of this, i.e. Euan's Guide

[Reference: Khairani Barokka, Jamie Hale, Sandra Alland]

- 7. Stage:** Give authors time to familiarise themselves with the venue space and stage:

- Stairs should have a handrail on one side if less than 1 metre wide, and on both sides if more than 1 metre wide
- If there is step-free access to the stage, inform the authors of this, and allow them to see this before the event
- Any ramps should have a gradient of no steeper than 1 in 12, or 1 in 8 over very short distances
- Ask if authors require certain kinds of seating, including chairs with backs, softer furnishings, a cushion, a stool to place their feet on, a sofa, etc.

[Reference: Jamie Hale, Penny Batchelor, Khairani Barokka, Elspeth Wilson]

**8. Soundcheck, Mic Use, Hearing Loop and Captioning**  
**Screen Check:** Regardless of the size of the venue and audience number, always use microphones and make sure everyone is speaking as clearly as possible and at an appropriate volume. Ensure to:

- Have a soundcheck
- Use clip-on lavalier mics, or mics on stands
- Be careful taking audience questions; you either need someone with a mic to go to them or the

author should begin their response by repeating the question, or the chairperson should repeat the question

- Check if an author is using a lower chair or sitting down instead of standing up and make sure staff adjust the mic accordingly
- Check the venue has a hearing loop or infrared technology
- Check if an author is deaf or hard of hearing, run-through with them in advance what tech support they need and make sure it's working
- Test captioning screens with any authors who will use them
- Ask the author(s) their colour, font and size preferences, where the tech exists

[Reference: Jamie Hale, Penny Batchelor, Sandra Alland, Khairani Barokka, Elspeth Wilson]

- 9. Assistance:** Make sure there is a person in the room who is on hand to assist if an author needs any support, such as adjustments to lighting and temperature, or access to more water.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

“At poetry or performance events it’s really important that performers are asked if they would like to stand or sit for their performance, and if they change their mind, it’s not a big deal to change at the last minute.”

– Elspeth Wilson

## Sensory Considerations

Managing the sensory input in a space is a crucial part of making it accessible to people with a wide range of experiences and impairments but can be challenging when two sets of needs contradict one another. Discuss the sensory experience of the space with authors and find out what they need, and what works for them.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

- 1. Lighting:** Ensuring the lighting meets everyone’s needs requires an open discussion. For some blind and partially sighted people, bright lighting is necessary, while for some people susceptible to migraines, or to autistic people, bright lighting is a significant trigger. Best practice is to:
  - Ensure that there is always a degree of house lighting for audience safety and to maintain a relaxed atmosphere

- Raise house lights when discussions with the audience are happening to facilitate authors being able to see the audience, but also ensure that audience members introduce themselves with a visual description
- Find out what lighting is available in the venue and communicate this to authors, while making it clear that you are prepared to hire appropriate alternative lighting if needed

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

**2. Sound:** Avoiding clapping, shouting and whistling can be useful to neurodivergent, disabled and deaf people who are negatively affected by loud noises. Event organisers/hosts can replace clapping with the sign language used by deaf people to express appreciation, similar to, and popularly referred to as 'jazz hands' (though the arms are vertical, not out to the sides like in jazz dancing).

It's important to know that silence makes it impossible for blind people to judge what the reception was. If you have chosen to eliminate clapping, suggest that the Chair visually describes "everyone in the room is doing enthusiastic jazz hands – they clearly agreed with that point".



Avoid having background or house music once people are in the space, as this may make it hard or impossible for deaf and hard of hearing people to communicate.

[Reference: Jamie Hale, Sandra Alland]

**3. Scent:** Scent can be overwhelming and painful for neurodivergent people or those with allergies or inflammatory diseases like MCAS, so consider asking authors and attendees not to wear scent and advertise that you have done so. Remember:

- Unless you intend to forbid entrance to anyone wearing scent on the day, you cannot advertise it as a scent-free space
- Some medical washes and skin products are unavoidably scented, and that some people use scents to mask the smell of incontinence or stoma bags

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

**4. Quiet/rest spaces:** Provide a quiet rest space – ideally one for audiences and one for authors. This should be separate from the green room and should be somewhere people can go to lie down or sit down privately. See [“Spotlight: Quiet Rooms” on page 51](#) for more information.

**5. BSL Interpreters and Captioners:** It's important to check if a deaf author needs a BSL interpreter, captioner, or other communication support for the book signing, post-event reception, or spending time at the festival and in the author's green room.

[Reference: Bea Webster]

**6. Book Signing Room:** To minimise background noise, provide a separate room for the book signing and only allow in a few people at a time; this helps those who are hard of hearing and some neurodivergent people. Provide a hearing loop at the signing desk/in the room.

[Reference: Penny Batchelor]

**“[The book signing room] was such a big room with not great acoustics and there were lots of people having little chats amongst themselves. My hearing aid still picks up background noise, so it was quite hard to tune out what other people were saying and focus on the person who was talking to me.”**

– Penny Batchelor

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## Spotlight **Quiet Rooms**

For many disabled people, a quiet space to lie down is essential for them to participate in events.

**“At a festival, conference day, or series of events or workshops, many disabled people would struggle to attend for a full day. If a quiet room was offered, it would mean the difference between being able to stay for a few hours or having to go home and missing out. Quiet room provision can mean disabled people have the kind of event experience non-disabled people take for granted.”**

– Julie Farrell

If possible, have a separate quiet room for authors and audience to prevent audiences seeing the shared space as an opportunity to talk with authors. Ensure you mention the quiet room provision in your invitation to authors.

[Reference: Jeda Pearl, Jamie Hale, Elspeth Wilson, Khairani Barokka]

Here are some tips for making a quiet room useful for people with various needs:

- 1.** Have a range of lighting: ideally providing the room with the main lights off, and low lighting, lamps, lava lamps, fairy-lights etc, while retaining the option to make the space brighter using the main lights if people need it.
- 2.** Provide camp beds, pillows, and blankets (some neurodivergent people can feel better if they can wrap a blanket around themselves).
- 3.** Provide comfortable chairs and cushions which can be moved to either be gathered or create individual nooks.
- 4.** Make yoga mats available for stretching and meditating.
- 5.** Provide ear defenders.
- 6.** Make stim toys available, including paper and pencils (drawing/scribbling can be a stim).
- 7.** Provide easy access to water.
- 8.** Have a charging station with appropriate wires (being able to charge noise-cancelling headphones and mobiles can be vital to disabled people).
- 9.** Use signs inside and outside saying 'no photography' and 'no unnecessary conversation, as this is not a social space'.

- 10.** Have good ventilation for pandemic safety.
- 11.** Have staff available to monitor the room.
- 12.** Ensure the quiet room is a short distance from accessible toilets.
- 13.** If possible, provide a space that people can enter and lock for privacy, for carrying out medical procedures such as medication, injections, blood glucose testing, ventilation and suctioning etc. Organisations shouldn't expect people to use the toilets for this, as it's unhygienic.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

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## Online Events

- 1. Privacy:** Authors may be comfortable having events livestreamed if it's not going to be available afterwards or will only be available for a short period, so give them options, such as watching back and giving timestamps for anything they want removed before the event is archived online (all video content should have accurate captions). If they don't want a video recording of the event, they may be happy with

a podcast format instead (which should always come with a transcript).

The important thing is to consult with authors well in advance (at the contracting stage) about whether they are comfortable with having their event available online, and don't ask for reasons.

[Reference: Helen Sedgwick, Jamie Hale]

- 2. Hosting Platforms:** Different online platforms have various pros and cons in terms of accessibility. Deaf consultants we spoke with had different preferences – some prefer Zoom for the ability to pin BSL interpreters and others prefer GoogleMeet which gives more control over captions (in Zoom, it's the host who enables captions). Enable captions at the beginning of all events and meetings as standard practice would remove this barrier, though we still advise using a live captioner.

Be flexible with which platform you use. Find out the disabled author's preference and if access needs clash, you may need to reach a compromise.

If the preference isn't possible, find out what you need to do to make it as accessible to them as you can. It's worth noting that you can use multiple platforms at once with software like XSplit.

[Reference: Bea Webster, Meg Strahle, Jamie Hale]

- 3. Format and Cameras:** Event format and whether cameras are on or off can be an instance where access needs clash. Some people may need to have their cameras off (and they shouldn't have to justify this), but this can be difficult for those who need to lipread. Someone who has their camera on, such as the Chair, may be able to repeat the comment/question, however, this repetition could make the event longer or allow less time for further discussion. This is a case where participants will need to discuss the format in advance and work out a way forward that suits.

If you have any experience of dealing with such instances of clashing access needs, please get in touch, as we can include it in an updated version of the guide.

[Reference: Maud Rowell, Jamie Hale, Elspeth Wilson, Khairani Barokka]

- 4. BSL Interpreters:** During the tech check (see below), explain how BSL interpreters' profiles can best be highlighted, such as 'pinning' them in Zoom. If using break-out rooms, you will likely need to book more than two interpreters so that deaf people still have access. Always check these details with the author(s) and interpreter(s).

[Reference: Sandra Alland, Bea Webster]

- 5. Live Captioners:** Delays in captions appearing can be even greater online, so remind guests not to speak too quickly or over each other.

Discourage typing in the chatbox while someone is speaking or signing, as this can be distracting or missed by those following captions. Allow focused moments for chatbox-related commentary to be experienced by everyone.

Alternatively, set Zoom up so all chat goes to the host, who can then repeat it at the right moment; this allows people who are not comfortable speaking verbally to contribute while also managing the flow of contributions.

[Reference: Sandra Alland, Jamie Hale]

- 6. Tech Check-In:** Have a tech run-through of the event, ideally 1–2 weeks in advance, and make sure authors know how to use programmes for workshops and webinars. Ensure people know how to pin BSL interpreters and ensure closed captions are working. Pay authors for their time doing the tech check-in.

[Reference: Sandra Alland, Elspeth Wilson]



- 7. Tech Support:** Have tech support on-hand during the event and inform authors the kind of support they can expect and how to access it if they need it during the event.
- 8. Debrief/Networking:** It can be quite abrupt for online participants when events just end. Check in advance if participants would like a few minutes afterwards for a debrief and networking. Make sure to book extra time with BSL interpreters and captioners, otherwise deaf and neurodivergent writers won't be enabled to participate.

[Reference: Penny Batchelor, Sandra Alland]

## Hybrid Events

(in-person and online)

**“We’ve recently learned, blessedly and incontrovertibly, just how exclusionary in-person events are, whether for logistical, financial, or other reasons. The pandemic-led switch to online events opened the publishing world to me almost beyond recognition, and it will both break my heart and harm my career if that progress is reversed.”**

– Lorraine Wilson[8]

Beyond the pandemic, there will still be many disabled authors and audience members who can't attend events in person (as well as many non-disabled people). Hybrid events for both authors and audience are essential, a core part of what makes events accessible, otherwise many authors and audience members will be excluded, and the industry will be poorer as a result. However, it's important to note that online and hybrid are not an excuse to not have good in-person access in place. Some authors who can attend in person don't want to do events that aren't hybrid out of solidarity with fellow authors and audience members who need this access, which is an important and valuable position to take.

Many of the above checklist points which related to online provision are also relevant to hybrid, and below are some additional things to consider. This section is primarily about supporting authors doing hybrid events; there's further information on hybrid provision in the "Audience" section on page 114.

### **More information:**

CRIPtic Arts and Spread the Word have put together a fantastic guide for putting on hybrid events:

[www.spreadtheword.org.uk/being-hybrid-a-cheap-and-easy-guide-to-hybrid-events-for-the-literature-sector](http://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/being-hybrid-a-cheap-and-easy-guide-to-hybrid-events-for-the-literature-sector)

- 1. Chair:** If some authors are there in person and some joining online, ensure the Chair includes both the

in-person panel members and the online participants equally.

- 2. Staff:** It's best to have more than one member of staff responsible for both the in-person and online event provision; effective delivery means both in-person panel members and online participants feel equally supported.
- 3. Debrief/Networking:** If some participants appeared online and others in-person, the debrief could be arranged for a later date when everyone can be together.

[Reference: Penny Batchelor]

**"I think there's a real risk that events will say 'we don't have wheelchair access, but it's available as hybrid. We haven't got captions or interpreters, but if you attend on Zoom, we've got automatic captions'. This excludes deaf and disabled people from the in-person experience of events, reducing access, rather than improving it."**

– Jamie Hale

# Specific Provisions for Author Networking Events

(e.g. receptions and parties)

It doesn't make sense to ensure disabled authors are included in your programmed events only to close the door on them when it comes to networking events and parties. It's imperative that disabled authors are equally included in the opportunity to meet others, build relationships, meet collaborators, and to celebrate the work of their peers, otherwise their career will suffer.

## In-Person Networking Events

**"I would like to network, socialise and meet people, but there's no interpreters, no access. Yes, all the keynotes, the speeches are covered, but the networking isn't, because the interpreter needs a break. So, I've just stopped going to those kinds of events."**

– Bea Webster

- 1. Seating:** Provide adequate seating at reception venues for those who can't stand for long (and an option for disabled attendees to reserve seats). Have footstools for those who require them.

- 2. Wheelchair Access:** Ensure the layout of seats and tables allows space for a wheelchair user to get around. If there is a drinks table or buffet, ensure there is someone there who can pass things to, or carry things for, people who can't do this for themselves.
- 3. Accessible Toilets:** Ensure there are working accessible toilets in the venue, preferably near the reception room.
- 4. Sensory:** Don't have any background music – this can be a significant access barrier for some deaf and hard of hearing people. Have soft, warm lighting. Provide a nearby quiet break-out space.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

- 5. Catering:** Many networking events encourage alcohol consumption with a predominant offering of a range of alcoholic beverages and only one soft-drink option. Organisers should ensure to offer a balanced range. Consider putting on some alcohol-free receptions/networking events.

If offering food, have a range of gluten-free and vegan options, and check with attendees in advance if they have any allergies. Don't serve nuts.

Make sure serving tables are at a height suitable for wheelchair users and ask your caterers to provide

some glasses and mugs with a handle and have plastic straws available.

## Online Networking Events

“I find networking online so much easier than in person. If I’m in a room with lots of people, it’s quite difficult to hear, and because I’m in a wheelchair and I’m so low down, it’s really hard to just go up to somebody and say hi.”

– Penny Batchelor

- 1. Chair/Facilitator:** Provide a Chair/facilitator to ensure people have adequate space to talk and introduce themselves, whether via the chat box or speaking, and assist in bringing more introverted people into the conversation. See “Author Meet-up with Chair” on page 28 for more information on chairing.
- 2. BSL Interpreters and Live Captioners:** Provide BSL interpreters and live captioners, as required, with an option to request anonymously. If there’s no captioner, auto-captions should always be enabled as standard. However, as mentioned, auto-captions do not provide proper access. See “Spotlight: Live Captioners” on page 35 for more information.

# Specific Provisions for Career Development Events

(e.g. workshops, courses, fellowships, writing retreats, residencies, prize ceremonies)

Many disabled authors are ruled out from applying and participating in workshops, courses, residencies, fellowships, writing retreats, or even entering a prize, because of inaccessibility. If access information is not clearly and openly provided, disabled authors are likely to conclude that the event is not accessible, and they aren't welcome. This means they are excluded from the opportunity itself, funds (if it comes with a stipend), socialising and networking, and the chance to put the opportunity on their CV, which could have potentially opened more doors. This further marginalises disabled writers.

Many of the checklist points in the previous sections will also apply here, so make sure to take them into account, but there are a few extra things to consider, and the points below will help ensure your opportunities are more accessible.

**“I generally don't apply for or attend workshops, retreats and residencies, because of lack of access, lack of affordability, lack of LGBTQIA+ safety, and lack of understanding of disability**

justice. Applications themselves usually involve inaccessible forms, fees and/or panel interviews, making it impossible.”

– Sandra Alland

“I don’t really do mornings because of my health. I’m so tired, and I don’t usually sleep well because of pain. That means mornings are out, so any day courses, even if I manage to be up and get there on time, I wouldn’t have the stamina to stay the whole day.”

– Penny Batchelor

## All Formats of Career Development Events

(in-person, online, and hybrid)

- 1. Forms and Interviews:** Your application process should be accessible, simple, easy to understand, quick to fill out, and available in different accessible formats. Offer assistance to fill out applications or cover the cost of an author using assistance from someone they are used to being supported by. If there’s an interview process, ensure it’s accessible, can be carried out online, and is flexible in terms of length and built-in breaks. Offer questions in advance, and options to video-submit answers instead of attending



live. Ask yourself if an interview is totally necessary.

[Reference: Sandra Alland, Jamie Hale]

- 2. Workshop and Course Delivery:** If you're running a workshop or course and advertising it as 'intensive', does it need to be intensive? This will make many disabled people feel unwelcome, particularly those with energy impairments.

Some disabled people will be unable to attend half or full day courses or workshops. Some might find it easier to attend for a shorter amount of time over several days.

However, this could also be inaccessible to some disabled people, and involves commitment and travel over a long period. Consider offering both formats.

Another possible workaround is to have a full day course or workshops but pre-record significant chunks of content and allow people to watch those at times that work for them and schedule the live content carefully (e.g. for the morning have a recorded reading, then a lunch break, then in the afternoon a live panel and discussion, then a break, a second recorded reading, and a post-reading discussion.

This means that people only need to attend the live panel and two live discussions, and get a long break

mid-afternoon, but that they can compress everything into one day if it's better for them). If offering this format, it's imperative you have a quiet room or other appropriate spaces for participants and authors running workshops to lie down and rest.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

- 3. Breaks:** Ensure regular breaks are built into any online workshop or course, let people know the timings for these in advance, and provide a quiet space for people to lie down. Discuss this with disabled participants to make sure breaks are adequate.

[Reference: Elspeth Wilson]

- 4. Information and Advertising:** In the information you provide about the opportunity, make it clear what you can offer disabled people (including being flexible about needs). Shout about being accessible when you're advertising on social media. As mentioned earlier in the guide, make sure your advertising materials are accessible.

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## Spotlight

# Bursaries and Grants

**“We have to give up our privacy all the time just to survive.”**

– Khairani Barokka

Bursaries and grants are a key way disabled people access opportunities. Household means testing or proof of benefits or income is not an appropriate measure for disabled people because:

- a)** Disabled people may face significantly higher living costs than non-disabled people. (“Disabled people spend an average of £550 a month on costs related to their disability.” – *Facts, Figures and Disability in the UK*, Papworth Trust, 2018)[5].
- b)** Means-tested benefits are withdrawn from disabled people based on partner income, forcing disabled people to be dependent on the income of their non-disabled partner (this is a significant risk factor for disabled people experiencing domestic control and abuse; insisting on household means testing for grants and bursaries can compound this because they will be reliant on their partner or spouse to contribute to or pay the fee).

Alternative ways of managing means-tested grants to ensure that they are given to people who can't participate without them might include an honour system, allowing people to apply for partial grants, or a recommended contribution based on disposable income after housing, bills, and other necessities have been covered. This can also be mitigated with solidarity pricing encouraging people with a higher disposable income to contribute to the fund to cover the cost of people with a lower income attending.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

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## **In-Person Career Development Events**

Much can and should be done to ensure disabled people are welcome to attend residencies, retreats and workshops: from securing accessible venues, to setting aside a dedicated access fund, to providing accommodation and supportive technology.

- 1. Location:** Some disabled people may not be able to travel to do a residency, writing retreat, or fellowship. Even if these have traditionally taken place in a particular location, be flexible about this. Work with the disabled author to find a residency venue that is closer to them. Alternatively, have the option available

for the residency to take place online. See “Online Career Development Events” on page 74 for more information.

**2. Venue:** Prioritise using venues with ground-floor step-free access, and:

- Ensure the whole venue is wheelchair accessible
- There are ground-level rooms with accessible toilets
- There is more than one working lift (with a safe working weight limit at a minimum of 400kg) for upstairs parts of the venue
- All staff members know where accessible toilets are and can direct disabled authors to them
- Have dimensions of lifts and doorways listed on the access information, that ramps are correctly angled, and ask for assessments of this, i.e. Euan’s Guide
- If the venue doesn’t have a Changing Places facility (adapted toileting for people who cannot transfer from wheelchair to toilet without a hoist, or who need incontinence supplies changed on a flat surface) or alternative (e.g. access to a hotel room with hoist and adapted bathroom), be prepared to hire one if required

- Provide hearing loops, ensuring these are modern and functional. Have adjustable lighting which is able to be both dimmed and warm as well as bright
- Welcome all assistance dogs. However, bear in mind that some people have severe allergies to dogs, and spaces (especially small or poorly ventilated spaces) containing dogs might be inaccessible to them

[Reference: Khairani Barokka, Jamie Hale, Sandra Alland, Elspeth Wilson, Jeda Pearl]

**3. Covid Safety:** While there is no longer a legal requirement for people to wear masks indoors or take LFTs before attending events, event organisers can be good allies to disabled people by having Covid safety measures in place. As mentioned earlier, some disabled people may not be able to attend events in-person if these safety measures aren't in place.

Discuss these with the authors attending to ensure that they are stringent enough to make the authors feel secure in the venue, while also recognising that masks can provide an access barrier.

A possible template:

“We provide lateral flow tests and ask everyone to take one daily before entering the venue, registering the result\*. We ask everyone who is able to wear a mask, and we provide a range of surgical, surgical with transparent panel, and FFP3 masks. Where there are conflicts of needs (e.g. people who lipread or sign and need to see the faces of the people they’re speaking to, or where people cannot wear masks) we will discuss this with people as needed to create an environment that feels as secure as possible, respecting both that not everyone can wear a mask, and that not everyone can be in closed spaces with people who are not wearing masks.”

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

#### **4. Overnight Residential Stay:**

- Ensure that there is an emergency contact available both by call and by text if required outside event hours and attendees have clear guidance on when and how to reach this contact
- Ensure emergency evacuation processes are made clear, including personal emergency evacuation plans, how wheelchair users should evacuate if upstairs, the responsibilities of staff in supporting evacuation, and alarm facilities

for deaf attendees such as flashing fire alarms and vibrating pillow pads linked to the fire alarm system

- Where possible ensure people have access to other emergency information, such as 24-hour accessible taxi firms, the location of hospitals and urgent care centres, and out of hours pharmacies. If there is no 24-hour accessible transport and you have attendees who would not be able to use standard transport, have an alternative plan for if they need something urgently at night (e.g. painkillers from a local pharmacy).

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

- 5. Travel:** Some disabled people may be able to travel to these types of events, but require extra assistance to do so; work with them to meet their needs, and where they face extra costs, be prepared to support them in meeting those. Budget for the possibility of needing to provide hire cars or a taxi for people who can't travel by train.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

- 6. Personal Assistance:** People may require a companion or personal assistant to accompany them (or for people who have 24-hour care needs, they may require two or more personal assistants). They may acquire costs for residential events that



they would not face in their day-to-day lives – e.g. the additional cost to pay a personal assistant who has travelled with them for the extra hours they are working. If they face additional costs, budget to cover those costs where required.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

- 7. Accommodation:** Disabled people may need personal assistants or companions to stay with them, so factor this in when budgeting for accommodation. If the author needs accessible accommodation, work with them to ensure they get what's required – this may include needing to hire equipment such as commode chairs and hoists. Euan's Guide provides information on accessible accommodation.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

**“I find that a lot of writing residencies are in very beautiful places, but they are very remote and inaccessible if you don't drive and there's not much public transport. That can be a massive barrier to loads of people and they don't address that, they don't mention things like this when they advertise. They haven't even thought that there might be people for whom that might be the case. That's really emotionally exhausting to constantly feel like you've been forgotten by everyone.”**

– Maud Rowell

“I did a Cove Park residency, and they were really on it in terms of supporting me. They would give me a lift with my shopping down to the pod I was staying in and asked what else they could do to help me.”

– Jeda Pearl

## Online Career Development Events

- 1. Online Option:** If your event usually takes place in a particular location, have the option for it take place online (or to take place twice: once in-person and once online, so you’re able to reach different audiences). Plan for this and provide appropriate support to facilitate this, including any tech and equipment assistance.

See [“Testimonial: Helen Sedgwick on the Dr Gavin Wallace Fellowship 2021”](#) on page 78.

- 2. Participants:** If it’s a course or workshop, you can give participants the option to join with their video off and allow them to interact in a way that suits them, such as via the chat function, if preferred. However, this is where access needs can clash: if someone is lip-reading and people have videos off, this will exclude them. It’s important to discuss everyone’s needs in advance and accommodate where possible.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

**3. Make Online Accessible:** Online may not be accessible for various reasons; work with the disabled author to make online accessible for them. Ringfence funds for this, making it clear this is part of the fellowship, retreat, or residency. For instance, if someone has chronic pain and joint issues, include funds for equipment such as keyboards with wrist supports, which will allow them to effectively deliver their project without suffering for it.

If you run a significant number of residencies or similar, consider having an adaptive technology bursary able to cover the cost of, or contribute to the cost of, more expensive adaptive technology, such as:

- A mouth-controlled mouse
- High quality dictation software
- An eye-gaze controlled keyboard

Such things can be the difference between someone being able to continue writing, and them not.

Consider also providing information on ways people can make online accessible at a low cost.

[Reference: Helen Sedgwick, Jamie Hale]

“Some institutions will pay less if you’re teaching online and often they won’t have a good set-up where you can see all the students. So, it’s important in a teaching set-up that there’s good equipment and a tech-check.”

– Khairani Barokka

## Hybrid Career Development Events

(in-person and online)

- 1. Workshops and Courses:** While some organisations we spoke with stated they find delivering workshops either online or in-person works better, with the right equipment it may be possible to effectively deliver workshops and courses simultaneously in-person and online.

We spoke to author Claire Askew ([www.claireaskew.com](http://www.claireaskew.com)), who was able to deliver a hybrid workshop because it took place at a venue that had already invested in the tech and tech support. There was a big screen in the room where the online participants appeared, and the venue had a 360-degree conference webcam which could ‘look’ at whoever was speaking:

“This meant we were able to sit in a circle, log onto Zoom, and the webcam did the work: it sat in the

middle, and turned to face each person as they spoke, so the folks joining in from home could see their fellow participants as if they too were in the room. It was amazing and very intuitive!”

It’s worth looking into investing in this technology or partnering with venues that already have the tech and tech support built in.

- 2. Residency, Retreat, or Fellowship:** A disabled author may not be able to do a full residence, retreat, or fellowship in-person, but could do part of it in-person and part of it online. Be flexible and work with them to deliver it in a way that suits their needs.
- 3. Prize Ceremony Attendance:** Some prizes stipulate in their Terms and Conditions that the person entering must be able to attend the prize ceremony if they’re longlisted, shortlisted, or win. All Ts & Cs need to be updated to clearly state physical attendance is not mandatory, and there will be a means for an entrant to attend online (including assisting the entrant to join online if they don’t have a means to do so themselves – e.g. facilitating assistance at a local library or via a local literary organisation).

[Reference: Anna Biggs]

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Spotlight

## **Testimonial: Helen Sedgwick on the Dr Gavin Wallace Fellowship 2021**

The digital Dr Gavin Wallace Fellowship 2021 was a fully online fellowship with Creative Scotland. It was made digital in response to the pandemic and the ongoing lockdowns, and this made it accessible to me in a way that other fellowships had not been.

The fellowship is usually based in a physical place and is designed around in-person interaction between the fellow and the arts venue. For me, a combination of being chronically ill and living in the Highlands (and having childcare responsibilities) meant that any in-person fellowship that required regular travel would be inaccessible.

The fact that I could do the fellowship online without leaving home, in the hours and with the structure that allows me to manage my pain levels and balance my work with my healthcare needs, made it accessible where other fellowships are not.

The fellowship came with professional development funding and because of the emphasis on accessibility, I was able to use part of that funding to make my home

and digital set-up more accessible, helping me manage my chronic pain. It would be amazing if, instead of a ring-fenced budget for 'travel and accommodation', that money was offered to people so they could make being online more accessible through equipment and training.

**“Having a fellowship focussed on accessibility has been life-changing for me.”**

– Helen Sedgwick

I was able to have training to help with online events and digital performance, including online voice coaching, confidence building for online speaking, practice online interviews, even breathing exercises and discussions around how to manage and communicate accessibility needs for online events.

Creative Scotland listened, which is so vital, rather than thinking that moving online was an easy accessibility 'fix'. Overall, I would say having a fellowship focussed on accessibility has been life-changing for me. The fellowship being online was what made it viable for me in the first place, but the practical and financial support with both equipment and training will have the long-term benefit of making online events of all kinds, and my own writing career, more accessible to me.

There's an acknowledgement, too, or perhaps a sense of validity that comes with a fellowship focussed on accessibility – what I needed to make my own career

accessible to me was both legitimised and provided by the fellowship in a way that has transformed my work and my own thinking.

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# Access for Audiences

## Provisions for General Events

(e.g. book launches, panels, festivals, conferences)

“In the UK, it is thought that some seven million people of working age [are disabled], which all adds up to an awful lot of spending power.”

– BBC Business, 2017[9]

**£2 billion** Businesses lose approximately £2 billion a month by ignoring the needs of disabled people.

**1 in 5** More than 1 in 5 potential UK consumers have a disability.

**73%** of potential disabled customers experience barriers on more than a quarter of websites they visited.

**£274 billion** The spending power of disabled people and their household continues to increase and is currently (2020) estimated to be worth £274 billion per year to UK business.

From the Purple Pound, 2021[2]

It's pretty simple: by being accessible, you will achieve an increase in your audience outreach and engagement.

You're also increasing the demand for books by disabled authors which in turn supports disabled authors to create more books, and you're contributing to a wider conversation around disability and inclusion. You are an active facilitator of positive change!

**"I do feel nervous or have some trepidation about going to events as a disabled person just because I know that there are almost always gaps in access. I feel like people just don't give it enough thought. That can be a real emotional burden for disabled people, and I definitely think it will be discouraging people from going to events."**

– Maud Rowell

**"There's a fundamental failing: the pressure is placed on disabled people to outline their requirements, when the Equality Act puts the anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments onto the event, the building, the space, rather than on the disabled person to ask. The obligation is for the event organisers to say what they can and can't do."**

– Jamie Hale

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## Spotlight

# Accessible Advertising

Disabled people's first contact with the event may be through advertising, and you can win or lose potential disabled participants or audiences here.

**“When I’m leading workshops or doing a talk, and no deaf people come, I wonder, why is that? And you look at the marketing and it’s just that they’re not spreading the word. It’s not advertised to the deaf community to know what is out there. Use deaf people, pay them to promote the event. I’m more likely to go to an event if I see it being advertised by a deaf person rather than an interpreter advertising it, it just makes it more attractive to me.”**

– Bea Webster

- 1. Audio and Video Promo:** Ensure these have captions, are translated into BSL (preferably by deaf authors), and videos are audio-described or have an accompanying written description. Avoid flashing and strobing images and loud music or sounds. Pay everyone who is doing advertising work for their time.

[Reference: Bea Webster, Jamie Hale]

**2. Images and GIFs:** When you use images or GIFs on social media, make sure you use alt text to describe them. You don't need to describe every single detail; keep it succinct, getting across the core aspects of the image. You can also be creative, bring some flair and personality to the description, and humour if appropriate.

At time of writing, Twitter was testing a new auto-reminder functionality for Alt Text. In the meantime, you can follow @AltTxtReminder (<https://twitter.com/alttxtreminder>) on Twitter and they will automatically remind you every time you post an image without alt text (you can then add an image description in a tweet below).

**3. Hashtags and Twitter Name:** Capitalise the first letter of each word within a hashtag, so screen readers don't read it as one big, jumbled word (this also makes it easier for everyone to read). This should also be done with your twitter name.

**4. Emojis:** Don't use too many emojis in a post; a screen reader reads out what every single emoji is, which can get wearing, especially when someone uses the same emoji several times in a row or separates words with the clapping hands emoji. A small number of emojis (around three) is fine.

**5. Accessible Design:** Provide a range of different advertising materials catering to different access needs such as:

- Easy Read
  - Large print
  - Sans serif typeface
  - Colour palettes that are high contrast are good for people who are colour-blind, blind, and/or partially sighted
  - Succinct materials that are visually clean and spacious
- 

## **Before Events**

**1. Venue:** If you're booking/partnering with an external venue, ensure they meet your accessibility standards (use this guide as a checklist). Send them an access questionnaire, visit the venue yourself and hire a disabled consultant to check the venue; don't contract with a venue if they don't meet your accessibility standards.

**2. Access Officer:** Have a dedicated Access Officer, preferably a disabled person. Key responsibilities might include:

- Being the key access contact, working with all the different teams in an organisation, as well as external stakeholders, customers, and authors to provide good access
- Ensuring the venue is accessible, and that online and hybrid access is in place
- For large organisations, they should be in a senior role and be part of high-level decision-making
- They must have appropriate qualifications, experience, and/or expertise in assessing event access – being disabled doesn't automatically give someone the knowledge and skills to be an access officer

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

**3. Programme:** Have an easy-to-navigate programme that's clear and uncluttered, using colours suitable for those who are colour-blind, with a dyslexia- and blind-friendly sans serif typeface. Ensure it's screen-reader-friendly, for example:

- Have clear heading and subheading levels (using heading tools such as ‘heading 1’, ‘heading 2’, etc.), making it easy to navigate the document and jump between headings
- Identify groups of items (e.g. list of events) as lists, again helping navigation
- Ensure form fields are properly labelled with a logical tab order

These are only a small handful of items that contribute to making your programme or other documents screen-reader-friendly; speak with your designer to ensure your document is fully useable by screen-readers.

Offer various accessible versions, such as:

- British Sign Language (BSL) video
- Braille
- Large Print
- Audio

**4. Website:** As mentioned in the “Author” section on page 27, your website should be accessible (check with your web designer). A link to an ‘Access’ page should

be included in the main menu of your website (in the main navigation menu) or on your event booking platform. This should clearly outline full access details (including what isn't available, and what you're doing to make it available in future).

- 5. Event Listing:** When advertising individual events, include access information on the event listing. People shouldn't have to go digging or enquiring about this basic information.

[Reference: Jeda Pearl, Sandra Alland, Elspeth Wilson, Khairani Barokka]

- 6. Tickets and Registrations:** If you're using a registration platform for people to buy tickets/sign up for events, make sure it's accessible, easy to use, and works with screen-readers. This also applies if ticket registration is through your own website. You should also do the following:

- When booking tickets, ensure there's a box for an attendee to inform you of any access needs they have, connecting this to your access statement to make it clear what's in place, what can be put in place on request, and what isn't in place.
- Make it easy for a disabled attendee to book free tickets for personal assistants or companions (they shouldn't have to phone to do this; phoning isn't



accessible to many, and there shouldn't be an extra step involved). Some people will require two personal assistants or companions with them or will need people to swap over during the day.

- Offer concession tickets at a manageable price, with no requirement of proof. Or, where possible, offer Pay What You Can (PWYC). See 'Spotlight: Ticket Pricing' on page 107 for more information.

[Reference: Penny Batchelor, Jamie Hale, Elspeth Wilson, Jeda Pearl]

**7. Advertising:** Make your advertising as accessible to as wide an audience as possible. See "Spotlight: Accessible Advertising" on page 83 for more information.

**8. Target Audience:** Reach out to a disabled audience through various networks: ask disability charities, influencers, activists and networks to share with their audiences. Don't expect them to just come to you, as many find out about suitable events through their disability networks.

### **More information:**

For a list of networks etc, see the Resources section of our website: [www.inklusionguide.org/resources#disability-organisations-and-networks](http://www.inklusionguide.org/resources#disability-organisations-and-networks)

Disabled people have been side-lined and maligned in this industry for years; it may take time for you to gain their trust. Be patient and take the time to build that relationship.

If you're unable to afford BSL and captions across all events, take a targeted approach and find out what events deaf people would like to be BSL interpreted and captioned.

[Reference: Bea Webster]

**“Access information isn’t always on the event listing. There’s maybe a general access page on their website, but it’s more generalised about the event as a whole if it’s a festival, for example. But on each individual event, there’s not always detailed information, and that would be useful.”**

– Jeda Pearl

**“If you encourage deaf and disabled people to attend and put in the access provisions they require, then over time you will be able to increase that attendance – but you have to build it before people can come.”**

– Jamie Hale

**“I hate it when you can’t book online, when they say, ‘oh if you’re disabled and you’ve got access needs, ring up.’ When you can’t book a wheelchair**

ticket or there's no box where you can say, 'this is what I need'. Then you're stuck, being in their office hours and waiting for them to pick up. And it's harder for me; I can do it, but it's harder for me hearing on the phone and I actually feel different, and I shouldn't have to feel different."

– Penny Batchelor

## During Events

**1. British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreter:** For many deaf people, BSL is their first language, so relying solely on captions isn't best practice (see BSL spotlight box in the "Author" section on page 35 for more info). When booking an interpreter:

- Ensure they are the best interpreter for the content of the event; get recommendations from deaf people. Poetry translation or science talks, for example, are not something all interpreters can do
- Because there are regional differences in BSL, it's also worth checking if the interpreter you hire is familiar with the BSL dialect the deaf audience may use

[Reference: Bea Webster, Sandra Alland]

- 2. Captions:** Provide a trained live captioner. Ensure that the typed captions appear on a large screen that's visible throughout the room, and/or online via a remote captioning link or the CC button on software like Zoom. Auto-captions are not a suitable substitute.

Another advantage of this is that after the event, you may have a transcript of what was said during the sessions. But if you require a transcript from your captioner, or will be publishing this, please discuss it with the captioner in advance.

[Reference: Jamie Hale, Sandra Alland]

- 3. Hearing Loop or Infrared System:** Provide a hearing loop or infrared system in your venue. Make sure this is well advertised, that equipment is working, and that staff know how to use it and can assist audience members. If people use a personal hearing loop device such as the Roger Select, allow them to place it near the speaker or microphone as required.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

- 4. Event Length and Comfort Breaks:** If it's a long event, build in breaks. If it's especially long, as well as building in breaks, explore whether some content could be delivered digitally in advance, to shorten the individual days without adding in extra days.

**5. Ensure It's Clear Who's Speaking:** This is useful for blind and partially sighted authors and audience, and there are two ways of doing this:

- The first is to have the Chair say the name of the person they're directing a question to
- The second is to have the Chair and panel introduce themselves and whenever they talk again to say their name

The second option is best practice, but this is where access needs can clash: panel members who are neurodivergent or have cognitive difficulties may forget to say their name or remember to do so but lose track of what they were going to say.

To ensure the event works for all, it's best to discuss in advance what suits everyone. Ensure the Chair understands why this is important, so that if people forget or if the panel decide on the first option, the Chair can assist by thanking the person by name after they've made their point, and then direct the next question at someone by name.

[Reference: Maud Rowell, Elspeth Wilson]

**6. Chairs:** Ensure that Chairs include the online audience in the dialogue, referring to them throughout the event, and relaying any after-event networking or

book sale information, and thanking them for attending.

- 7. Content Warnings:** It's important that Chairs and authors consider mentioning content warnings as some topics can trigger PTSD symptoms including panic, flashbacks, and dissociation. Recovery from such symptoms can take days and the situation itself can be physically painful and harmful for the individual (i.e. if someone dissociates, they might become non-verbal and have trouble communicating their situation and needs.)

**“It’s empowering to give people the choice to engage or not with certain material.”**

– Elspeth Wilson

- 8. Presentations:** If an author is giving a presentation with slides, ensure they know they need to read out everything on the slides, and give a description of any important visuals, including graphs. This means blind and partially sighted audience members and fellow panellists don't need to worry they're missing out on important content.

[Reference: Maud Rowell]

# In-Person Events

## Before Events

- 1. Accessibility Site Check:** Hire disabled consultants to do an access check of your venue site.

### **More information:**

See the Resources section of our website for a list of some consultants: [www.inklusionguide.org/resources#access-consultants-and-training-providers](http://www.inklusionguide.org/resources#access-consultants-and-training-providers)

It's vital to let audience members know in advance if you will not be meeting their access needs, and what steps you will take to mitigate that in future. If an audience member can no longer attend due to lack of access provision, ensure they are reimbursed for tickets.

- 2. Venue Map:** Ensure the map is clear and uncluttered, using colours suitable for those who are colour-blind, with a dyslexia- and blind-friendly sans serif typeface, and high contrast. This isn't the place for marketing – keep it functional.
- 3. Video Walk-Through:** So that disabled people know what to expect in advance of their visit, it's good practice to have a video on your website which shows

a walk-through of what to expect on site. This should have an audio description, captions that can be turned on or off, and a BSL interpreter.

- 4. Travel, Parking, and Accommodation:** On your website, provide audience members with all the details they need about travel, public transport, disabled parking (if there's no disabled parking onsite, is there any nearby? Is there a drop-off point at the main entrance?), and nearby accessible overnight accommodation.
  
- 5. Queues and Seat Reservations:** Some disabled people, whether you perceive them as disabled or not, may not be able to stand in queues. You can address this by:
  - Ensuring there's a means to get in touch to let you know this in advance or note on your website that they should tell a member of staff when they arrive
  - Providing seating in the queuing area as standard. Also, by providing a reserved seat for them in the venue (allowing them to go in early) and checking if there's a particular seat they need (e.g. at the front, on the end of a row, or near an exit)
  - Understand that some people may not be able to wait in a noisy area; take them to a quiet space for



them to wait before the event and/or allow them to enter the venue early

- Have ear defenders available
- Putting reserved seating spaces in place for wheelchair users, for people using captions or BSL interpreters, and for people who cannot climb stairs, need to be at the end of the row, at the front, or near the exit – it should be easy to register for this
- Reserving seats in the areas best suited to view captions, if it isn't possible to provide captions that can be seen clearly throughout the entire venue, and be sure to highlight this repeatedly in pre-booking and upon audience arrival

[Reference: Sandra Alland, Jamie Hale]

## **Venue Considerations**

**“Finding the entrance is a really big thing for me. If I can't find the door that makes me feel awful... if it's just been poorly lit or signposted, that makes me feel helpless and that's not a nice feeling.”**

– Maud Rowell

“I avoid events that require the use of a lift in order to attend with step-free access. I’m anxious they’ll be/go out of service, have long waits, or be full of maskless people. Or my friends’ wheelchairs won’t fit. Some lifts require a staff member to assist you, which involves extra faff. It feels awkward to have to find a person to escort you every time you need the toilet or exit. Plus, for a lot of folk lifts cause anxiety full-stop.”

– Sandra Alland

“I went to a festival last year and I found the screen in the courtyard to be a massive sensory overload, there was so much noise and light, and I think things like that get missed on access documents and aren’t all that clear on maps.”

– Elspeth Wilson

- 1. Welcome and Entrance:** Ensure the entrance is clutter-free, clear, and easy to spot by having good lighting, large signs, and bright colours (this is especially useful for blind and partially sighted people. Blindness is a spectrum; very few blind people see nothing and will likely have some light perception). Even better is to have a staff member at the entrance to greet people (which can be useful for those with cognitive difficulties as well as people who are blind and is generally more welcoming for everyone).

[Reference: Maud Rowell]

- 2. Reception, Staff, and Info Points:** Set up a reception desk (at a height that is suitable for wheelchair users) at your main entrance, which should have programmes, maps, and access leaflets (outlining basic access provision and where to find things like the quiet room, ear defenders, etc.).

Provide info points (at a height suitable for wheelchair users) throughout the venue. Have accessibility-trained staff ideally on every floor/throughout the venue, but definitely in the main traffic areas, and front-of-house. Have staff available to guide people through the venue, if required.

- 3. Venue Flow:** Ensure the venue is clutter-free and easy to navigate for those using wheelchairs or mobility scooters, or for those who are blind, partially sighted, or have cognitive difficulties.
- 4. Signs and Maps:** Make sure that your signs are in the appropriate location, high-contrast and easy to read and understand. The map must be easy to read, visually minimal, consider colour-blindness, and be in a blind-and dyslexia-friendly typeface.
- 5. Assistance Dogs:** Ensure it's clear on your website, and via signs at the venue entrance and around the venue, that assistance dogs are welcome.

**6. Wheelchair Access, Hire, and Lockup:** All areas of the venue should be wheelchair accessible, and as best practice:

- The wheelchair entrance of the venue should be the main entrance (not round the back or the side)
- If you have seating areas throughout the venue, ensure there's space for wheelchairs. You can hire Euan's Guide ([www.euansguide.com](http://www.euansguide.com)) to assess whether your venue is wheelchair friendly
- Provide wheelchairs for people who may find them useful for getting round the venue
- Provide somewhere people can safely lock up wheelchairs or mobility scooters as some people may use them to get to the venue, but don't need them when they've arrived
- Have dimensions of lifts and doorways (including entrances to toilets and catering areas) listed on your website access information under your 'mobility' section

**7. Lifts:** When choosing a venue for your event(s), prioritise ground-floor spaces, to avoid any of the potential pitfalls mentioned below, and give authors who need step-free access peace of mind. Please also consider:

- If you are using a venue with lifts, it's extremely important to ensure the lifts are in working order on the run-up to your event and first thing on the day of the event
- If you're hiring a venue, check with the venue staff that lifts are all working or visit yourself to ensure this – if you are using a venue without working lifts, this will prevent some disabled people attending, or force disabled people to use stairs when this could worsen their underlying condition
- If the lift breaks on the day, ensure all attendees are informed in advance including via social media, that you refund attendees who cannot attend, and that you have an alternative plan (e.g. streaming or hybrid provision)

[Reference: Khairani Barokka, Jamie Hale, Sandra Alland]

**8. Accessible Toilets:** There should be accessible toilets throughout the venue that are easy to get to and near event rooms:

- Ensure they are all regularly cleaned, not used for storage, in working order, have proper grab rails and other adaptations, and are not situated in gendered toilets

- If someone requires a Changing Places toilet ([www.changing-places.org](http://www.changing-places.org)) be prepared to hire or provide one. Changing Places toilets should automatically be in place for larger events
- If a person is ambulatory, don't assume they can access toilets via stairs; ensure there's toilets accessible via a lift or on the same floor as the event
- Have free sanitary products available
- Ensure that there are both gendered and gender-neutral toilets but clarify that people should use the toilet they feel is most appropriate for them

[Reference: Jamie Hale, Khairani Barokka]

**9. Quiet Room(s):** Have a well-advertised, well-signposted quiet room available for audience members (separate from author quiet room provision). Provide information about it and its location on your website, and have the Chair mention it, along with other access provision, at the start of events.

See [“Spotlight: Quiet Rooms” on page 51](#) for more information.

**10. Catering:** Make sure the catering teams are fully aware of the venue layout in order to assist attendees asking directions. All catering should:

- Cater to various dietary requirements (such as vegan, gluten-free, allergies), including providing multiple choices in daily menus, clearly stating allergy info and clarifying the level of cross-contamination risks, and with full ingredients lists available
- Consider having a nut-free event/festival and advertise this
- Ensure catering vans and cafe counters are at a height suitable for wheelchair users and ask your caterers to provide some glasses and mugs with a handle and have plastic straws available

**11. Emergency Evacuation Procedure:** Have an emergency evacuation procedure in place for disabled attendees.

## **During Events**

**1. Scent-free:** People with allergies, mast-cell dysfunction or sensory issues can end up very ill from scents. Request in advance that authors and audience members don't wear scent and note in your

advertising that people are told not to wear scents (however, unless you intend to forbid entrance to anyone wearing scent on the day, do not advertise it as a scent-free space).

- 2. Seating:** This should be spacious with plenty of leg room, chairs that fully support the spine, and comfortable. Comfortable seating makes a huge difference to many disabled people, including those with chronic pain. You should also:
  - Identify if this kind of seating isn't available across the board and work with the venue to provide some comfortable seating that disabled people can reserve
  - Have footrests available
  - Think about the position of reserved seating and be flexible about where disabled people may need to sit (e.g. at the front to see captions if not visible from all areas of the room, or on the end of rows for anxiety or ease of exit, etc.)
- 3. Captions:** Provide live-captioners. Please always:
  - Ensure the caption screen is easy to see for every audience member (e.g. not on the floor), and not too bright or high contrast so as not to overwhelm



those with sensory issues (lifting house lights a little can aid with this)

- Use a sans serif font large enough to see from the back of the room; standard for good visibility is yellow on a black background

[Reference: Sandra Alland]

**4. Lighting:** Bright lights, including backdrops and screens, can be painful for many people with sensory issues. Please consider:

- Tone, intensity, positioning, contrast with surroundings, and ambience
- Blue-white light in particular can be a problem, so try to stick with warm lights while ensuring the lighting is bright enough to be safe for blind and partially sighted people, who may require brighter or dimmer lights than usual

**5. Noise:** Sudden bursts of noise may make events inaccessible for some people. We recommend asking the audience to applaud in British Sign Language (similar to 'jazz hands') to keep noise levels stable. We'd suggest this for all events, but especially for a disability-themed event with disabled participants, or when requested by participants or audience members. See "Sound" on page 48 for more information.

[Reference: Jamie Hale, Sandra Alland]

**6. Microphones:** Regardless of the size of the venue and audience number, always use microphones, and remember:

- If an author or audience member says they don't need a mic, insist they use it – people who are hard of hearing shouldn't have to struggle to hear the participant, or audience questions
- If an audience member can't hold the mic, have staff on hand to hold it for them
- Ensure that there are ways of the microphone reaching everyone speaking
- If someone is uncomfortable using a microphone, suggest that they speak without, and that the Chair will repeat their question or comment using the mic for the full audience

[Reference: Penny Batchelor, Jamie Hale]

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## Spotlight **Ticket Pricing**

Authors and staff need to be paid fairly for their work and be able to earn a living, so ticket pricing should reflect this. However, this shouldn't be at the expense of people who face socio-economic barriers and can't afford full-price or even concession-rate tickets, and they shouldn't have to provide proof to access concession rates.

Disabled people are stigmatised, scapegoated, constantly under surveillance, and repeatedly forced to prove their needs; having to provide proof for concessionary tickets is yet another barrier that shuts us out of culture. The benefits system is punitive and difficult to access, so some disabled people may try to get by on freelance work and/or support from family but could be earning less than minimum wage. Not requiring proof shows that you understand this and will make disabled people feel welcome.

**“When I’ve not been on benefits, I don’t feel I have the right to be taking a concession ticket, so you’re in a bit of an in-between zone of not being able to fully afford ticketed events that are say £8 and up, that often you’ve got to pick and choose what you do. Since the pandemic I’ve seen more sliding**

scale tickets in operation, which has been really good.”

– Jeda Pearl

“Being asked to prove that you’re disabled, that can be soul destroying, just being interrogated, and you get the sense that people think you’re faking it. Austerity hasn’t helped in terms of stoking fear about people being benefit scroungers and faking disabilities, when that’s very rarely the case.”

– Maud Rowell

“With pricing, events may feel that they cannot afford a ‘Pay What You Can’ model (currently in place at the Battersea Arts Centre), but this can be modified to encourage people with more disposable income to pay over what the cost price for tickets would be, to subsidise the project. Similarly, events might indicate that they cannot afford to give out a free Personal Assistant or carer ticket, when in practice this will be a small population requiring these. Where events genuinely believe that this will be unfeasible, they should engage with authors and potential attendees to establish a formal and affordable approach to this.”

– Jamie Hale

- 1. Transparency, Worth, and Ticket Pricing:** The general public doesn't necessarily understand the amount of work that goes into putting on an event, whether it's in-person or online. The answer to this is to be transparent: include information in your programme and on online event pages that outline the core elements that have gone into providing the event and make it clear that you pay authors fairly for their time. This will help the audience understand the worth of what they're paying for, encouraging those who can pay full price to do so, or to pay more if there's an option to donate, sponsor a ticket, or put money in a bursary pot.
- 2. Best Practice for Ticket Pricing:** Concession tickets are often still expensive; offer them at a more affordable rate, and don't require proof to access them. Or, where possible, offer Pay What You Can (PWYC) – not just for online events but in-person and hybrid, too.
- 3. Sponsor A Ticket/Pay It Forward:** Set up a button on your ticket purchasing page, where people can sponsor a ticket for someone facing socio-economic barriers.
- 4. Tickets for Personal Assistants or Companions:** Provide a free ticket for a personal assistant or companion and make this easy to book. If people have questions or need additional support (e.g. two personal assistants) it should be easy for them to

telephone, email, or fill out a simple online form. Ensure there are a few different ways for them to contact you about this, not just one of these.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

For further information on how to fund PWYC tickets and other provisions, see [“How To Fund Access Provision” on page 118.](#)

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## Online Events

Many organisations we spoke to talked about the positives of online events, such as: reaching a wider – often international – audience (with some reaching thousands, while in person they used to only reach a handful); flexibility with dates and times as venues don't need to be booked; cheaper outlay as there's no venue hire, catering, or other equipment needed. There are many positives to online event provision and disabled people will continue to need this well beyond the pandemic; don't leave us behind.

- 1. Live Captioner:** Provide live-captioners (not auto-captions). Please:

- Ensure you have enough captioners for events that are long and/or have breakout rooms
- Remember closed captions can be enabled in Zoom and other software, and/or captioners can provide a link to a separate captioning window
- Consider that the latter tends to have less time delay but can be difficult on smaller devices because of multiple windows. The same captioner can provide both options for your event

[Reference: Sandra Alland, Jamie Hale]

**2. Video Recording:** You can livestream an event, then make it available online afterwards, or pre-record and post online. Remember:

- If you are doing this, it needs to be correctly captioned throughout
- Having a recording available gives disabled people the chance to watch it in their own time, at their own pace, which can be hugely beneficial for various reasons

**Key provision:**

The ideal provision is hybrid, as the downside of just doing a pre-record is that people will miss out on the

immediacy and buzz of a live event and won't have the opportunity to ask questions

**3. Transcript:** Have a transcript available after the event or alongside the event if you're posting a pre-record; let audience members know in advance that this will be available and where to access it.

**4. IT Helpdesk:** Some organisations have mentioned the challenge of helping audience members with simple IT/internet problems. If possible, have staff available to assist with any IT-related problems audience members may be having accessing an event. Provide a helpline phone number, a chat function, an FAQ on your website, and an email address.

**5. Book Signing:** Provide online book signings. For example, early in the pandemic, Edinburgh International Book Festival offered online signing sessions, where an audience member could chat to an author for a few minutes on Zoom as they signed their book, which was then sent out to them. This might encourage online audience members to buy books via the festival/bookshop website.



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## Spotlight **Digital Poverty**

Due to socio-economic barriers, some people may not have access to the internet, laptops, or other equipment that would help them easily access online events. They also might not have the skills to be able to use the equipment or access the internet.

Short-term solutions such as lending equipment (and offering tech support) can be useful (but ensure you know who has what and why they need it), however it's not necessarily a long-term solution. Team Inklusion recommends that organisations in the publishing industry team up with each other, as well as organisations such as NGOs and charities, to tackle this problem and give people digital access.

In this modern world, digital access is not a luxury, but a necessity; as well as accessing culture it's how we do banking, apply for benefits and access various services. It's important we don't leave people behind. Having digital access helps establish communities beyond geographical location, and for many disabled people who can't leave their house or local area, it's how we forge our own community, keeping us from being isolated.

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# Hybrid Events

(in-person and online)

**“It was an exciting time to reassess and reinvent and welcome a new audience to the hybrid experience who may not have been able to access events before.”**

– Edinburgh International Book Festival

There are various ways to provide hybrid events where both authors and audience members can appear either in-person or online. Some organisations understand the importance of hybrid events and have invested accordingly. Others have said audience members prefer the in-person experience so they're pivoting back to that; we'd highlight that this isn't the case for all audience members and catering only to in-person events marginalises many people (not just those who are disabled) who can't attend in person. It's essential that event organisers provide online and hybrid delivery. Being flexible is important, especially as at the time of writing we're still in the middle of a pandemic.

We've had mixed responses from organisations we spoke to about hybrid provision, with some saying they don't have the funds, tech, or staff resources to provide it, and others saying it doesn't necessarily need to be high-tech and expensive. Some organisations we spoke to have been able to offer hybrid simply and cheaply (e.g. a

participant couldn't attend in person due to Covid, so she joined via her phone, which was very successful).

This can have various access implications: you may be able to provide hybrid events simply and cheaply, but is the quality good and can you also provide live-captions and BSL? However, we'd argue that a simply implemented hybrid event is better than no hybrid.

CRIPtic Arts and Spread the Word have put together a fantastic guide for putting on hybrid events: [www.spreadtheword.org.uk/being-hybrid-a-cheap-and-easy-guide-to-hybrid-events-for-the-literature-sector](http://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/being-hybrid-a-cheap-and-easy-guide-to-hybrid-events-for-the-literature-sector)

It's worth speaking to other organisations about how they've delivered hybrid events, and contact organisations such as CRIPtic Arts ([cripticarts.org](http://cripticarts.org)) for an access consultation with a focus on hybrid tips. Also, from the beginning of event planning, ringfence funds so you can put on a hybrid event as accessibly and effectively as possible.

Many of the checklist points related to online provision ([on page 110-112](#)) are relevant to hybrid; below are some additional things to consider.

- 1. Share Knowledge:** Team Inklusion recommends talking to other event organisers in the industry and sharing hybrid and online tips with each other. Showing initiative and sharing creative strategy helps

the industry to develop as a whole, and many of the organisations we spoke with would be happy to discuss hybrid provision with other organisations.

One organisation advised: “Partner with other organisations; share best practice and hardware/software and other resources. If your budget is small, programme less but deeper.” You can also attend other events and monitor best practice.

- 2. Support Staff:** Invest in staff, giving them time and training to upskill in tech and effective hybrid provision. Allow staff time to network with other organisations to discuss hybrid and hire a disabled access consultant to get tips on hybrid provision, including doing it simply and cheaply.

### **More information:**

See the Resources section of our website for a list of some disabled consultants: [www.inklusionguide.org/resources#access-consultants-and-training-providers](http://www.inklusionguide.org/resources#access-consultants-and-training-providers)

Have enough staff available to deliver a hybrid event effectively (don't put the onus on one staff member to focus on in-person audience and author care, tech, any slides or props, book sales, refreshments, health and safety, as well as the online provision).

- 3. BSL Interpreters:** While logistically it may be easier to have a BSL interpreter filmed separately for hybrid events, they should ideally be in the room where the event is taking place; you can have a fixed camera on the BSL interpreter enabling them to be on the stream easily.
  
- 4. Tech:** You don't necessarily need to invest in expensive tech to deliver effective hybrid events, although it may help. As mentioned above, talk to other event organisers about the tech they use and investigate what would be most useful. You can also find out more about tech via the Keep Festivals Hybrid campaign:

[www.reddoorpress.co.uk/pages/keep-festivals-hybrid](http://www.reddoorpress.co.uk/pages/keep-festivals-hybrid)

# How To Fund Access Provision

**“The main reason organisers cite for not providing access is money, but there always seems to be cash for a venue, catering, technicians, publicists, travel, advertising, and of course booze.”**

– Sandra Alland

Event organisers have stated that the primary challenge to providing good access is money. Big or small, hundreds of employees or just a handful – everyone says money is a problem.

However, this shouldn't be an excuse for poor accessibility; event organisers must work to integrate good access. One way of providing better access is by offering fewer events of a higher quality. And as we've stated throughout the guide, there are various things that can help with budgeting for access, from partnering with a venue and sharing costs; partnering with other organisations to share tips, tech, and other in-kind support; looking at how you sell tickets, being transparent about where the money goes, giving people the option to donate a ticket or put money in an access fund and ringfencing access funds when applying for funding or approaching sponsors. If you're a big publisher, it's your

corporate responsibility to put your money where your mouth is and create an ongoing access funding pot for event organisers throughout the industry.

Most of all, building in an access plan and budget from the very beginning will save money, and if your events are accessible and welcoming to disabled people, you'll be attracting the Purple Pound (the spending power of disabled households estimated at £274bn annually as of 2021)[2]. You need to have a long-term strategy and not expect results overnight. Keep the dialogue on access constant and fluid.

This checklist offers creative ideas on how to generate funds to provide access, but the main message is: collectivise. Now is the time to be flexible and to adapt to the changes brought by the pandemic and ask, what can I do next? Embrace the change, adapt, and creatively innovate to find solutions and new avenues of generating revenue, and use those funds to become a beacon of excellent access for all.

- 1. Venue Partnership:** If you're partnering with a venue, you might be able to split the access costs and utilise the venue's tech and tech support.
- 2. Sponsor A Ticket/Pay It Forward:** As mentioned in the 'tickets' section, you can set up a button on your ticket purchasing page, where people can sponsor a ticket for someone facing socio-economic barriers.

- 3. Access Provision Pot or Bursary Pot:** You can also fund free tickets and other access provision by having an Access Provision Pot on your website, where people can donate money which you put towards access provision such as PWYC, BSL interpreters, live captioning, etc. Provide details of what the money goes towards and why it's important, so sponsors understand why this is needed.
- 4. Book Sales and Transparency:** If you offer book sales via your event/festival, ensure it's clear to event attendees that buying through your site helps the author and helps you continue to run events. As mentioned above, you can offer online signings where readers can purchase the book and online signing as a bundle and have a few minutes online chat with their favourite author.
- 5. Large Publishers Sponsoring Access:** Ask large publishers to contribute funds towards making events accessible – not just for their own authors but for your organisation. Better access for all is more impactful than better access for one. Remind potential partner publishers/sponsors that they are welcoming an increase in their audience outreach and engagement by supporting better access.
- 6. Partnerships:** Use international outreach to your advantage: consider partnering with other organisations in different territories. If you host a



festival in the UK, why not ask a festival in a different country to advertise your online programme and return the favour? Partner with other organisations throughout the UK to share tips, tech, recommend accessible venues to work with, and other in-kind support. Learn from each other, establish networks and collectives, trouble-shoot, and sponsor smaller organisations with limited funding. Collectivise to enrich and bolster the industry for the benefit of everyone.

- 7. Applying to Funding Bodies:** When applying for funding, outline the best practice access provision that you want to provide and ringfence the money needed for this in your budget. Discuss with your funding body what they'd like to see in your application in terms of access plans and budget.

**“Corporate Social Responsibility is more than a tick-box exercise or a tokenistic mentoring programme – it’s a moral duty to enrich the industry as a whole, and to uplift those voices which are marginalised and suppressed. We must look at our internal practices, who we hire, what stories we look for and the processes by which we seek writing and ask what more we can do to be inclusive. Good events access is just one small step in a chain of steps towards true equality for disabled people and disabled writers.”**

– Julie Farrell

# Employ Disabled Staff

There's a motto in the disabled community: 'nothing about us without us' – and for good reason. You can't implement good access provisions if you don't engage with and understand disabled people's experiences and needs.

It will also make disabled people wary of your organisation if you don't have any disabled staff. It's a legal right for disabled people to be supported in employment so there's no excuse to not have a diverse team that reflects society.

## **From the Diversity Survey of the Publishers Workforce, 2021[10]:**

**13%** of respondents said they were disabled or had a chronic illness in 2021

**20%** of the UK working age population are disabled

**33%** have a chronic illness (ONS 2021 Annual Population Survey)

## From Access Denied, 2021[11]:

**36.1%** of disabled publishing employees have found a publishing industry or work event inaccessible

**40%** of disabled publishing job seekers have found a publishing industry event inaccessible

**“The arts are for everyone, so arts jobs should be for everyone too. It is crucially important for employees of literary organisations to reflect the UK population, including disabled people, so they have a better understanding of the audiences they serve. In most cases, access issues don’t stem from people actively wanting to exclude disabled people, but instead come from organisers not realising certain access needs exist. Not every disabled person will understand the needs of every other disabled person but having diverse voices in every decision-making room will ensure different perspectives are taken into account.”**

– Cat Mitchell

- 1. Employ Disabled Staff:** It’s imperative that you employ disabled staff. Listen to their experience and recommendations. However, it’s important to note that disabled staff are not experts on disability, and

it shouldn't be assumed that they are or that they should be expected to do an access role on top of their own work.

- 2. Support:** Make sure they're supported and that you accommodate their access needs. Advertise clearly that you are actively seeking disabled employees and that you will meet their needs.

[Reference: Jamie Hale]

- 3. Flexible Working And Working From Home (WFH):** Facilitate flexible working hours and give the option for staff to work from home (which also means you're not tied by geography). In the report *'Beyond Lockdown – Does working from home work for you?'* a quarter of those surveyed preferred working from home, and more than half prefer the control over their environment (e.g. temperature, natural light and fewer interruptions). Those with invisible illnesses and/or mental health struggles were among those keen for WFH to be offered as an option by all employers in the future.
- 4. A Dedicated Access Officer:** Have a dedicated Access Officer who can liaise across teams to ensure consistent communication and provisions. Make sure their needs are met and actively seek and encourage disabled people for this role. They must have appropriate qualifications, experience, and/or

expertise in assessing event access – being disabled doesn't automatically give someone the knowledge and skills to be an access officer.

- 5. Train Staff On Disability And Accessibility:** Training staff at every level on this is incredibly important. Having an understanding of access and disability justice at the heart of your organisation will make a huge difference.
- 6. Access Consultants:** Hire access consultants, whether it's for a one-off assessment or ongoing consultations.

**“We would highly recommend employing an access consultant who is themselves a disabled person. Our access consultant works 10 hours a month for us and has propelled our organisation forwards considerably in terms of increasing access.”**

– Arvon

Some good training providers and access consultants are listed in the Resources section of our website:

[www.inklusionguide.org/resources#access-consultants-and-training-providers](http://www.inklusionguide.org/resources#access-consultants-and-training-providers)

# Disclaimer and Feedback

## Disclaimer

While research provided a firm foundation for the guide, and while we are well-versed in various access needs, and approach our work by thinking of all areas of access, there might be some nuance we miss. We endeavour to be as comprehensive as possible, but it's still important for organisations to seek regular input and feedback from individual disabled people, whether audience members or authors. It's also important to seek accessibility training and consultations from various providers.

This note is intended to provide a helpful summary. It is for information only and does not constitute legal advice on any issues contained in the document. If you require further information on your legal obligations, you should consult a solicitor.

Organisations and individuals are welcome to create a link to the electronic version of this document on our website, providing that (i) the destination of the link correctly acknowledges Inklusion; and (ii) if we request at any time that you take down any link to the document or our website, you will take it down immediately.

Where appropriate we have provided hyperlinked text to website links in this document. Such links and websites are operated by third parties, and we take no responsibility for, and give no warranties or guarantees, in respect of those sites or their content.

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## **Feedback**

Providing we're able to secure funding, Team Inklusion will be updating the Inklusion Guide in two years' time, so if there's anything we didn't get right, or haven't covered in the guide, please get in touch.

If you have any experience of dealing with instances of clashing access needs, and have advice on how to resolve these clashes, please get in touch, as we can include it in an updated version of the guide.

Also, if you're an individual or organisation who has found the guide useful and it has made a practical difference, we'd love to hear about it! Please email us: [hello@inklusionguide.org](mailto:hello@inklusionguide.org)

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## **From Julie**

My deepest thanks and gratitude go to Ever. Never did I expect to cross such an exhausting, elevating and illuminating bridge with you into the unknown of a brave new world, and I couldn't have asked for a better partner in crime. You're the Yin to my Yang. Thank you for dreaming big with me.

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## **From Ever**

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Thanks to Cinn for his support, web and graphic design assistance, for designing such a fantastic logo for Team Inklusion, and for building the web version of the guide. Thanks also to Stephen for his input and advice.

## **Let's not go back to normal!**

[www.inklusionguide.org](http://www.inklusionguide.org)

[www.instagram.com/inklusionguide](https://www.instagram.com/inklusionguide)

[www.twitter.com/inklusionguide](https://www.twitter.com/inklusionguide)

## Disabled Consultants

### **Sandra Alland**

Writer, editor and interdisciplinary artist.

Sandra creates multimedia literature with integrated access. Recent works: zine 'Sore Loser... on queer disabled grief' (with Etzali Hernández; Disability Arts Online); and essay 'Writing from the Groin: How Non-disabled CisHet Monied White People Lock Themselves into Mediocrity' (Birds of Paradise). San co-edited Stairs and Whispers: D/deaf and Disabled Poets Write Back (Alland, Barokka, Sluman; Nine Arches).

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## **Khairani Barokka**

Writer, artist, editor.

Khairani is a Minang-Javanese writer, artist and editor from Jakarta, based in London, whose work is presented widely internationally. She is Editor of Modern Poetry in Translation, co-editor of Stairs and Whispers (Nine Arches), and her latest book is Ultimatum Orangutan (Nine Arches), shortlisted for the Barbellion Prize.

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## **Penny Batchelor**

Author.

Penny writes psychological thrillers with secrets, lies and lots of twists! Her debut My Perfect Sister was longlisted for The Guardian's Not The Booker Prize 2020 and her second is Her New Best Friend. She is co-founder of the Thriller Women blog [www.thrillerwomen.co.uk](http://www.thrillerwomen.co.uk) and a columnist for The Bookseller.

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## **Jen Campbell**

Bestselling author and award-winning poet.

Jen has written ten books for adults and children; her most recent titles include *The Sister Who Ate Her Brothers*, and *The Girl Aquarium*. She is also a disability advocate and reviews books in print, online and on the radio.

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## **Jamie Hale**

CRIPtic Arts Founder.

Jamie Hale is a multidisciplinary artist and the founder and Artistic Director of CRIPtic Arts. Jamie created CRIPtic Arts to improve access for deaf and disabled people across the industry through research, training and upskilling, while also offering development and showcasing opportunities.

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## **Jeda Pearl**

Scottish–Jamaican writer and artist.

Jeda's work often traverses the 'in-between,' exploring belonging, disability, secrecy and survival. She's been published/commissioned by Black Lives Matter Mural Trail, New Writing Scotland, Not Going Back to Normal, Tapsalteerie, Shoreline of Infinity, Rhubaba, Collective and Peepal Tree Press.

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## **Maud Rowell**

Freelance journalist and writer based in London.

Maud read Japanese at the University of Cambridge, before training in journalism. Since going blind aged 19 while travelling in South Korea, she's made it her mission to educate and inform others about the realities of sight loss. She also loves to travel, and is a keen amateur painter, film photographer and mixed media artist.

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## **Helen Sedgwick**

Author.

Helen Sedgwick is an author of literary fiction, science fiction and crime. Her novels include *The Comet Seekers*, *The Growing Season* and *The Burrowhead Mysteries* trilogy, and she was awarded the Dr Gavin Wallace Fellowship in 2021.

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## **Bea Webster**

Actress, theatre-maker, aspiring playwright and access consultant.

Bea graduated with BA Performance in British Sign Language and English at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. She was a Best Actress nominee in The Stage Debut Award 2019 for her role of Katrin in *Mother Courage and Her Children*.

Bea believes in supporting deaf people and has done work to promote BSL in the theatre world, and to raise

awareness in how theatre industries can work with deaf professionals.

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## **Elsbeth Wilson**

Scottish writer and poet.

Her work has been shortlisted for the Canongate Nan Shepherd prize and Penguin's Write Now editorial programme, and she is currently working on her poetry collection. Her work has been published in The Moth, Poetry Wales and Channel magazine.

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## **Researcher**

### **Cat Mitchell**

Lecturer in Publishing and the Programme Leader for the Creative Writing and Publishing BA at the University of Derby.

Cat Mitchell previously worked in the publishing industry, including four years at Penguin Random House. She is currently researching disability in publishing, and in 2021 published the Access Denied report, which investigated barriers for disabled job seekers and employees in the industry.

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# Glossary

**Ableism:** For the purpose of this guide, we use 'ableism' as a catch-all term that can mean both discrimination in favour of non-disabled people and discrimination against disabled people.

However, it's important to note that for some people there's a distinction between 'ableism' and 'disablism', where ableism means: 'discrimination in favour of non-disabled people', and disablism means: 'discrimination against disabled people.'

**Autistic:** Autistic people's brains work differently to those commonly described as 'neurotypical' or 'NT' (people who are not neurodivergent) or 'allistic' (not autistic). Because the world is built for allistic people, autistic people can sometimes struggle with things like communication and over-stimulating environments. Some feel that no two people's brains work the same across a spectrum of neurotype, and this label simply provides a useful term for certain common traits.

**BSL:** British Sign Language

**Chronic Illness:** Defined broadly as illness that lasts one year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities or daily living or both.

**Global Majority:** Black, indigenous, and people of colour represent over 80% of the world's population. This wording highlights the inaccuracy of the often-used term 'minority' and can be empowering. 'Global Majority' decentres whiteness, making it clear that white people are not the majority, and encompasses a wider range of people than 'Black people and People of Colour'. We have also used 'People who experience racism' for similar reasons. (We made this decision through a discussion with our disabled consultants who are people of the Global Majority).

**Jazz Hands:** Jazz Hands is the term often applied to applauding in sign language, which is used by deaf people to express appreciation (though the arms are vertical, not out to the sides like in jazz dancing).

**MCAS:** Mast Cell Activation Syndrome is a condition in which the mast cells in your body release too much of a substance that causes allergy symptoms. It can be triggered by things such as fragrances and food particles and can have painful symptoms or lead to anaphylaxis.

**Neurodivergent:** Neurodivergent (ND) means anyone who isn't neurotypical and can include: autism, dyscalculia, dyslexia, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), people with brain injuries, and people who are mentally ill.



**Stim:** Stim is short for 'self-stimulation', which usually involves repetitive movements that soothe, such as hand-flapping. Stim toys can be used, such as fidget-spinners or clickers.

# The Future of Inklusion

We've spent over two years creating and fostering support for Inklusion; raising £33,050 from 22 sponsors, to deliver this guide for the benefit of publishers, literature organisations and individuals alike. We've proven that people want better access and that organisations are willing to provide it by listening to the disabled community. This is just the beginning for Inklusion.

Julie will be continuing to champion further industry change from the Inklusion platform, and aims to partner with various organisations and activists moving forward, to create meaningful support and empowerment for disabled writers.

Over the next two years, her priority will be collating feedback on the guide to include in the 2025 review. Our researcher, Cat Mitchell, will be continuing her partnership with us; in assessing the impact of the guide on publishers, and the steps they are taking to make their events and practices accessible to disabled employees, speakers and audiences. Julie will continue to collate feedback from literary organisations, as well as offer venue assessments, programme feedback, Q&A sessions, and consultations.

Wider issues Julie hopes to tackle moving forward include fair pay for authors, author support, and dedicated funded retreats and mentorships.

We want to be responsive to what people are asking for and to keep the essential work of Inklusion going. But this work cannot be done without financial support.

Julie will be applying for funding for this permanent role as Co-Founder and project manager, a process which will take three months, and we need to raise £4,800 to pay for this work.

If you can sponsor us, or partner with us, please get in touch: [hello@inklusionguide.org](mailto:hello@inklusionguide.org)

Let's not go back to normal!

**Julie and Ever**

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