Pavilion Labour Disabled Members' Branch

Accessibility guidelines for meetings and workshops

Key to discussing and championing disability struggles is "nothing about us without us" – as the Labour Party acknowledged when it adopted this as the foundation of its disability policies after 2015.

It is especially important that all meetings across our Labour Party, whether nationally or in our constituency ("Pavilion Labour" or the "CLP"), are accessible to all. All members of our Party should be concerned that everyone is able to participate fully in discussion, with a longstanding responsibility in national rules requiring officers to provide access to all activities.

This is found at Chapter 17, Clause 1 (2) (O) (i) in the 2020 rulebook: "Party meetings and events shall be conducted in a friendly and orderly manner and organised in such a way as to maximise participation from members. **No member shall be precluded from attendance because they cannot gain access to the meeting place for any reason**."

It does not fall to disabled people alone to ensure our equality. This approach embraces both the social model of disability and Labour's historic tenet of solidarity with oppressed groups.

Making your event accessible means removing all behavioural and social barriers so that all deaf and disabled people can participate fully, whether disabilities are physical, invisible, or however they manifest.

What is meant by accessible?

Access means gaining entry, whether to a physical room, an online meeting, receiving information in an accessible format or any other type of interaction.

When planning, the more thought put into different audience needs, the fewer barriers people are going to face. An accessible experience should promote equality and maximise independence - empowering all people to participate on an equal basis.

You cannot anticipate every access need. The key thing is to make the space feel safe so that people are comfortable and not afraid to disclose their personal access needs. This includes reassuring participants in advance that it is okay to take part in whatever way they can and then confirming this by your actions. It is no good paying lip service to accessibility but then failing to follow through. Provision is access; for

example, paper or large print documents, a hearing loop or subtitled options in a virtual setting.

Access needs change, particularly for people with fluctuating conditions. Access requirements should be confirmed for each event or participant and not assumed to be the same as previously or for another person.

If organising an event online

When running an online event, it is important to remember that people have a whole range of access needs. A few more common examples:

a) People living with mental distress may be able to join a meeting but only with the camera off or by contributing to the meeting via the chat function rather than speaking.

b) People with energy limiting chronic illness may join the meeting from a lying down position.

c) People with learning difficulties may not be able to read written messages or participate in the chat. This will also impact visually-impaired people if the platform does not integrate with an audio function.

d) Some people who are neurodivergent will find some platforms inaccessible and, in all platforms, some backgrounds or slides impossible to look at.

e) Hearing impaired people will require subtitling as an option, so platforms which do not offer subtitles are inaccessible to many deaf people.

Returning to our Party's basic tenet, "nothing about us without us", it is vital to request details of all access needs and to confirm these for later or repeat events. Discuss any difficulties fulfilling access needs in an open, non-confrontational manner with the disabled person, recognising that the individual disabled person is the expert on their own needs.

If organising an event in person

There follows a checklist of things to consider when organising and running your event:

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Some things to consider when organising an event in person:

a) Are you involving a diverse range of people in the planning process? This will ensure that a variety of needs are considered.

b) Is there a step free access to all areas including the toilets and eating areas? Is there a wide cubicle, disabled toilet?

c) Are ramps and corridors obstacle free?

d) Is there space to navigate scooters and wheelchairs in and around the building?

e) Will you need to find British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for your event?

f) Is there a quiet space for people to use?

g) Is there a single point of contact so people can ask questions about access via text, phone or email?

h) Some people require information in audio format, Braille, large print or in a specific document format; ie, whether pdf or not.

i) Give people as much notice as possible. Get publicity out early. People may need to book support or transport, plan childcare, transport routes, etc. (This is just best practice for everyone.)

j) Have you included access details? Transport – nearest step-free station, bus information, parking facilities. Venue – whether the venue is step-free, has an accessible lift and toilets. Event – whether there will be a BSL interpreter if not specifically requested, whether flash photography will be banned.

k) Is there clear signage at the venue?

l) Have the speakers been briefed about how to work with any BSL interpreters or those attending who may be using different formats such as Braille, lip speakers, palantypists?

m) Are handouts available in different formats?

n) Is there an inclusive space for wheelchair users so they can fully participate? Ideally there should be a choice of spaces (at the front, to one side and to the rear), so that wheelchair users have options and are not automatically stuck at the end of a row or the back of a room.

o) Is there a feedback process so you can improve the experience for disabled participants at future events?

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Addendum: Accessibility of documents and media

Equal access for disabled people includes ensuring that all documents and media the Party produces and circulates are accessible.

Minimum standard for documents

a) arial type, font size 12, but preferably 14.

b) either muted coloured backgrounds used with light (not white) text, or black text on a light (ie, vanilla, not white) coloured background.

c) Italics should never be used – this is a major issue for many people who are neurodiverse, as well as the partially-sighted

d) Underlining should be avoided for similar reasons as italics.

e) Highlight points by use of **bold fonts** or **different coloured text** – with adjustments if circulating to a colour blind person.

f) Keep watermarks in pale, transparent colours.

g) Avoid using any vivid or bright contrasting colours in text as this presents a major issue for neurodivergent people. A useful summary is found at https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/website/accessibility .

h) Avoid cluttered layout – spacing is key for neurodivergent people (eg, dyslexia, autism). If line numbers must be used, keep these in a pale, transparent grey, clearly faded from the main body of text.

i) paragraph spacing so that there are clear lines between each paragraph - creating a wall of text is a problem for neurodivergent people.

Large print copies of all documents should always be available, both for circulation and at meetings

Circulation of documents in advance of meetings is another important equalities measure allowing disabled and chronically sick members time to review documents.

More information about accessible formats:
https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/02/dos-and-donts-on-designing-for-accessibility/ .