

EngineeringUK Inclusive & Accessible Events Guide

This document is a guide to help you organise an inclusive and accessible event. It covers a number of different areas but not all will be relevant to all events.

When organising an event please use this document as a 'sense-check' or 'shopping list', applying as many of the adaptations and considerations as are relevant to your event.

Selecting a panel

At EngineeringUK we aim to improve the diversity of the engineering sector. When selecting a panel please strive to represent the diversity of the UK population rather than the current diversity of the engineering sector.

When choosing your panel follow these steps:

- 1) set your goals and ask yourself what mixture of people would be appropriate. EngineeringUK aims to make engineering more diverse so we should have diverse panels.
- 2) remember that diversity isn't always visible. If so, consider using a brief biography about each panellist and/or including some information in an introduction (if the panellists are comfortable with this).
- 3) consider diversity both in terms of a panellist's route into engineering and their current position within an organisation. Look beyond seniority and invite young panellists who will bring fresh insights and challenge our thinking.
- 4) set some written diversity criteria that can be shared with any companies/organisations you are approaching.
- 5) when recruiting panellists, don't be afraid to reach out to new connections, Professional Engineering Institutions or use some of the excellent organisations with diverse networks e.g. Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), Women's Engineering Society (WES), Royal Academy of Engineering, Equal Engineers, Association for BME Engineers). You can also ask existing networks to recommend new people or share the invite with their networks.
- 6) remember that being the 'diverse face' of an organisation can be tiring so don't take it personally if your opportunity is turned down.
- 7) if there is budget available, offer to pay for time or at least cover expenses
- 8) if you are unsure about the pronunciation of a name, ask the person in question and, if necessary, provide a phonetic spelling for anyone who will be introducing them.
- 9) consider whether the date you set for the event is compatible with panellists and attendees' religious observance dates. [You can find calendars with key dates online.](#)
- 10) if you are asked to speak on a panel, please ask about the other panellists and check whether you will be joining a homogeneous group with similar views and experiences to you. If so, politely discuss the diversity of the panel with the organiser and whether you are the best person to attend.

Sourcing a venue

When sourcing a venue, accessibility should be considered.

- is the venue easily accessed by public transport?
- is there ample parking including parking for blue badge holders?
- going the extra mile and sharing details of any wheelchair friendly local taxi companies will make a huge difference to any wheelchair users attending.
- is access all on one level? If not, is there ramp or lift access?
- is the venue able to provide access information for people with disabilities? If not, would they be happy to produce some with support from EngineeringUK?
- does the venue have a policy for assistance dogs? Are they able to provide water bowls? Is there an appropriate outdoor space nearby?
- have you discussed who is going to produce signage, where it will go and who is responsible for putting it out?
- is the venue able to provide a map which highlights ramps, powered doors, accessible toilets etc?
- is furniture fixed? If fixed, is there space for a wheelchair user to move between? If not fixed, can enough furniture be cleared to allow plenty of access routes?
- if providing catering, is the venue able to cater for different dietary needs?
- if there is a stage, is there access for wheelchair users or those with a physical impairment?
- toilets can make or break an event. Is there an accessible toilet that is easily accessed from the room that is being used? Are there gender neutral toilets?
- is there a quiet room available for any participants who may need to take a break? Remember, a separate room can have multiple uses - prayer, breastfeeding/pumping, as a quiet space for those with sensory sensitivities. You may need to have more than one room available.
- make sure you have a conversation with the venue about risk assessments and fire capacities for wheelchair users, so you know whether this changes your maximum number of participants.
- if hosting an event abroad, have you considered whether the country is LGBTQ+ friendly? Whether there are certain restrictions for women?
- have you considered live streaming for those who are unable to attend in person?

Marketing/invitations

Whether advertising online or reaching out to specific networks, make sure the information is accessible.

- is the web page accessible - can people change the font, its size and contrast? Can the background colour be changed?
- is the web page compatible with text to speech software? Have you included 'alt text'?
- do any videos have subtitles or transcripts?
- is there clear information about accessibility for your event? It doesn't have to be front page for the event but should be easy to find. The venue should be able to provide access information for those with disabilities.
- is it clear that you are happy to discuss any access needs or specific requirements?
- if images have been posted on social media has an [alt text caption](#) been included?

- if sending out information by word document or PDF is there a large text version available for those with visual impairments, if requested?

Ticketing/pre-event registration

Whether ticketed or not, pre-registration is recommended as it is an ideal way to capture information about your participants. Consider asking participants about:

- any access needs/special requirements (e.g. wheelchair access, BSL interpreter, subtitles, a seat near the front etc)
- dietary requirements
- pronouns (these can be displayed on name badges or separate stickers and can be pre-printed or made by participants on arrival)
- communication preferences (some events have started using a traffic light system on name badges/stickers. Green = I'm happy to talk, please feel free to approach me, Orange = Happy to talk if we already know each other, Red = I'd prefer not to be approached)

If the event is open to the public but ticketed have you considered:

- different price points based on certain criteria (e.g. FSM, apprentices)
- allocating free tickets for certain communities/networks/groups
- whether carers can attend for free & what sort of ID they require

Pre & post communication

Ensure pre & post comms are clear and concise, providing enough information without overwhelming your delegates. Following the guidance outlined above in the 'Marketing/Invitations' section is a good starting point.

You may want to consider sharing any PPTs, presentations and/or transcripts in advance and providing a mechanism for delegates to submit questions pre-event too.

Sending any additional notes or resources post-event, such as the transcribed Q&As, may also be useful for delegates. This could be done as part of a post-event survey to capture delegate feedback.

On-site registration

The first impression given at an event can set the tone for the rest of the day.

- when delegates arrive on site, ensure there is an obvious registration point with staff clearly visible.
- if there are any delegates with additional requirements, ensure staff are aware of this so they are ready to help
- if providing name badges/pronoun stickers/communication stickers, consider how this is being managed so delegates can be supported to find theirs if needed.
- consider your queue management system - if guests are likely to have to queue is there seating nearby, can certain guests be fast-tracked? Are staff trained in the ['sunflower lanyard scheme'](#)?

Ensuring that all staff have an awareness of the objectives of the event and of the diversity requirements is essential. This does not need to be a long, specialist training session. A simple briefing document and phone call/meeting in advance should be sufficient.

Ensure staff and panellists are aware of any specific delegate access requirements so they can support where necessary.

Some simple tips for presenting include:

- always face the audience when speaking to support those who are lip reading
- use a microphone (and if not mobile only speak when near it) - even if you think you don't need it
- do not stand with your back to a bright light or cast your face in shade
- reinforce language by adding visual prompts (large text labels on items etc)
- use simple, accessible language

Supporting those with a disability or impairment

The four key types of disability you may need to ensure your event caters to all are as follows:

1. visual Impairment
2. hearing Impairment
3. mobility Impairment
4. cognitive, neurodiversity and mental health issues

By asking for information at the point of registration you should be aware of who your audience are and whether they have any needs. Consider the following when planning and setting up your event:

Lighting

Lighting levels - consider your visually impaired participants and D/deaf audience in particular - can they see the action/read lips/see the BSL translator? Ensuring lighting levels are adequate is good practice even if your audience does not include any delegates with additional needs.

Sound

All live videos should have subtitles, whether you have someone in the audience with a hearing impairment or not. This is good practice as some people find it easier to absorb information by reading as well as hearing it, and it can support those who do not speak English as their first language.

- for small events, PPT subtitles may be suitable - a simple guide to using these is available [here](#).
- for larger events, there are several agencies who can 'live transcribe'. If using an events agency, they may be able to recommend someone.
- pre-recorded video content or scripted content can have subtitles produced in advance.

If requested, a BSL interpreter should be provided. The translator should be positioned so that they can easily see the speaker and the audience members who require them should be positioned so that they can easily see both gestures and facial expressions.

If recorded material is going to be hosted digitally post-event, BSL interpreters are recommended as they ensure the footage is accessible to all future audiences.

Provide hearing loops and/or portable hearing loops on key locations e.g. reception desks, discussion venues.

Housekeeping announcements

When making housekeeping announcements at the beginning of the event make sure you are considering who is in your audience. Have you made it clear:

- where the accessible and gender-neutral toilets are?
- how those with hearing impairments will know if the fire alarm is going off?
- whether those with visual or mobility impairments need to report to anyone/anywhere specific if the fire alarm goes off?
- where those with dietary requirements will find their refreshments?
- who is working at the event and therefore available to answer questions throughout the day?

Other

If using a PPT for your presentation the '[Accessibility Checker](#)' is a useful tool for checking your content is accessible.

There is also a [useful guide on producing accessible content which can be found here](#).

Meeting the requirements listed in the 'venue sourcing' and 'staff/panel training' sections will hopefully support all participants with a disability or impairment to feel welcome and included and to access the event.

If anyone makes any requests at the point of registration that you are unsure about, please feel free to discuss this with the Head of EDI.

Digital events

Much of the advice above applies whether face to face or digital. The NCCPE have put together an [excellent guide for hosting digital events](#), which is worth referring to as well.