

attitude
is everything

Accessible Volunteering Guide



Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund

Beyond 
The Music

 **COMMUNITY
FUND**

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Attitude is Everything works in partnership with audiences, artists and the music industry to improve disabled people's access to live music.

We aim to increase the number of disabled people participating in music and to raise awareness of the barriers that disabled people face, and to demonstrate how to overcome them.

We aim to celebrate and highlight best practice and give clear, practical guidance on what works and why.

This Accessible Volunteering Guide is part of our Beyond the Music Programme, a three year programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund to improve accessibility to the music and live events industries for disabled professionals, employees and volunteers.

The guide was created by a combination of our over 20 years experience working in the music and live events industry including providing opportunities for disabled volunteers at Glastonbury, Latitude, Reading, Leeds and several other events. Because our experience is in the festival industry, that will be the prime focus of this guide. However we hope the advice is relevant to the music and live industries as a whole, as well as other sectors that use volunteers.

We provide a range of advice, training and consultancy to industry organisations about how to improve accessibility for staff, customers and volunteers.

Attitude is Everything wants to create a unified industry approach and set of standards for accessible volunteering. We are launching Volunteering Without Barriers, a network and discussion forum for festivals, festival volunteering organisations and freelancers who run volunteer teams at festivals.

We recognise that disabled people may also experience discrimination around other intersectional barriers (age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) and also that some impairment groups may encounter specific barriers we have not addressed. If you think there are perspectives we have not considered, or improvements we could make to this guide, please contact us on either of the below email addresses.



Contact us

Website: www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk

Training enquiries: Training@AttitudeIsEverything.org.uk

Consultancy enquires: Consultancy@AttitudeIsEverything.org.uk

What are the advantages of having an accessible approach to volunteering?



Value for customers:

Volunteers are often the face of the festival. It therefore makes sense to get the best volunteers possible. Around 1 in 4 people in the United Kingdom could be considered disabled under the Equality Act. If your volunteer process excludes 1 in 4 of the population, it is very unlikely you'll be recruiting the best possible talent.



More effective teams:

Diverse teams are more effective than non-diverse teams. Research suggests widening the pool of potential recruits opens your teams up to new skills, experience, knowledge and perspectives.



Build your community:

For many festivals, the goal is to create a sense of community and unity where everyone can come together and participate. Can you really have a sense of community and unity if some people feel excluded?



Immediate feedback:

Disabled volunteers can also play an important role in identifying potential barriers at your event and give you feedback to become accessible. This can help improve your customers service and reduce the risk of complaints.

Advertise your accessible volunteering programme

It's important to recruit with an inclusive, responsive and dynamic approach.

- Actively advertise volunteering opportunities to Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent organisations, both nationally and within your local area. In-person meetings can be valuable to meet groups and individuals who may want to volunteer. These may include: Local and National Disability Organisations, local DDPOs and activity centres.
- Provide accessible formats of BSL, Large Print, Easy Read and Audio files to advertise your offer.
- Include photos, videos and testimonials of Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent volunteers from previous years.
- Include a statement to show that you welcome disabled volunteers.
- Avoid generic statements that could be seen to exclude disabled people such as "all volunteers must be in good physical health."
- State that you will make reasonable adjustments and give examples of the type of adjustment you might make. This includes offering:
 - volunteers access to a seat
 - adjustments to shift times
 - PA support
 - regular breaks

Providing accessible volunteering information

Before your volunteers apply, you should have information about your accessible volunteering offer.

- Access information should be easy to find, not buried deep within the Frequently Asked Questions.
- Have a dedicated accessibility page on your volunteer information which:
 - States that you welcome applications from disabled volunteers
 - Explicitly states that volunteers can request reasonable adjustments and provide some examples of the type of requests you will consider
 - Provides a link to role descriptions for your volunteering opportunities
 - Provides access information for the festival (this can be a link to the festival's customer access information) but make sure you provide any additional information that applies to staff
 - Explains the application process and how to request adjustments
 - Explains your PA policy
 - Provides a contact for the volunteer to ask questions
 - Avoid vague or subjective phrases such as "our volunteering is fully accessible". 'Accessible' can mean different things for different people so it is important to explain exactly what is provided
 - Review your language to ensure you are using plain, clear language and explaining any jargon
- Check the accessibility of your website so that:
 - The website works with screen readers
 - Text can be magnified
 - Fonts are sans serif and colour contrasted with their backgrounds
 - All pictures are accompanied by Alt Text
 - There are no posters or blocks of information that are saved as pictures and cannot be saved as text

An accessible application process

Gather information so that you can prepare to offer reasonable adjustments and provide a safe, enjoyable volunteer experience. Through asking the right questions, in clear language, you will be able to best support your team.

- Ask all volunteers if they have access requirements. Make very clear that you will make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and that volunteers will not be penalised or face discrimination for explaining the adjustments they need.
- Ask specific questions about access adjustments for:
 - Training, briefing and handbooks – understanding information
 - Being on shift
 - Personal Assistants (PAs)
 - Camping
- Some people don't recognise the phrase 'reasonable adjustments'. Ask questions that give someone an opportunity to consider adjustments they might need, such as:
 - Are you comfortable to stand for over X hours?
 - Are you comfortable with walking for over X metres?
 - Do you have any communication requirements when talking to customers?
 - Is it comfortable for you to pick up heavy objects?
- Provide contact details including an email address and phone number that volunteers can contact if they are having difficulties with the process.



Useful to know:

Some people with access requirements don't consider themselves disabled or wish to disclose an impairment.

You do not have to agree with every request someone makes if it is not a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act but it might help you to ensure people are coming forward with what they need.

Forms can become inaccessible if there are too many questions. Think carefully about the questions you ask and why you need the information. Remember that you do not need to know someone's diagnosis or medical history to meet their access requirements.

You might have a separate process where you capture someone's emergency contacts, allergies and medication they are taking. Avoid combining this with the access application process as these are two separate sections.

If a volunteer has access requirements, a member of your volunteering team should liaise with both the volunteer and the festival access officer to ensure the volunteer's requirements are met.

The volunteer should be fully involved in the process but the responsibility for ensuring their access is met should not be placed on them.

Requesting evidence

- Avoid requesting evidence unless there is a very clear reason why you need to do so.
- If you do ask for evidence, show sensitivity. If someone has a new impairment or has experienced discrimination in the past, it may be distressing and embarrassing to be asked to justify a part of their identity.
- Try to be as flexible as possible with the evidence you are prepared to accept.
- Evidence volunteers might provide includes:
 - a. DLA/PIP/Attendance Allowance/War Disablement Pension
 - b. Evidence that they are registered severely sight impaired (blind)
 - c. Recognised Assistance Dog ID card
 - d. CredAbility Access Card (+1 requirement stated)
 - e. A letter from their GP or hospital (It is fine if a volunteer wants to provide this but do not request a letter from a volunteer as this may be something they are charged for)
 - f. Other evidence the volunteer feels is relevant
- Some volunteers may give a written or verbal statement of their impairment and the impact it has. This should be considered on a case by case basis.

Training, briefings and handbooks

Access to information about the role and responsibilities of being a volunteer are essential to the confidence of being on shift. To start the process in a positive way, plan time to have your information prepared in accessible formats.

- Handbook adjustments:
 - Large print
 - Plain text
 - Easy Read
 - Alt Text of images
 - Printouts of electronic information
 - 1-1 time to talk through the information
- Training adjustments:
 - Information or slides provided in advance
 - Familiarisation with the training venue
 - A BSL Interpreter, Induction Loop or Captioning during presentations
 - Sitting at the front
 - An accessible toilet at the training venue
 - Additional time to explain any unusual terms or jargon
 - A Personal Assistant, note-taker or support worker
 - Additional breaks
- Briefing adjustments:
 - Access to a seat if everyone is expected to be standing
 - Consideration given to the onsite distance people might need to travel to get to the briefing
 - Ensuring a volunteer is able to be in a position to lipread if required

Resources for creating accessible materials

General guides

- Without Walls Events and Festivals Access Guide: [WW Access Guide](#)
- Attitude Is Everything: [Access Guide for Online Music Events](#)
- Access London Theatre [Assisted Performance Guide](#)

Examples of practice

- Artificial Things: [Audio Described by Rationale Method: Stopgap Dance Company's Artificial Things](#)
- GDIF 2020 Digital Access materials: <https://festival.org/gdif/access-2/digital-access/>
- GDIF 2020 Audio Descriptions: <https://soundcloud.com/gdif>
- GDIF 2020 BSL examples: [Lullaby](#) and [Weavers of Woolwich](#) (Note both these work with Deaf interpreters/ creatives in different ways)

Digital

Accessible Formats: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

The University of Washington have created brilliant, very easy guides to making your documents more accessible:

- [MS Word Accessibility](#)
- [MS PowerPoint](#)
- [PDF Checker](#)

There are also some fantastic guides to your [website](#), [video](#), [designing online courses](#), and more!

Text/Speech

- Subtitling Videos: [Access into Action: Subtitling Online Content](#)
- Subtitling videos on Social Media: <https://www.kapwing.com/>
- Subtitle training (Free) with Stage Text: <http://stagetext.org/training>
- BSL Level 1 free course: <https://www.doncasterdeafsign.org.uk/>
- BSL Advice, fees, guidance: NUBSLI: nubsl.com
- BSL Directory: <https://www.nrcpd.org.uk/>
- Interpreters of Colour Network: <https://www.interpretersofcolour.net/>

Resources for creating accessible materials

Visuals

- Colour contrast checker:
 - <http://contrast-checker.glitch.me/>
 - <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>
- Alt Text Tutorial:
 - <https://www.levelaccess.com/quick-tips-writing-meaningful-alt-text-webinar-qa-resources/>
 - <https://supercooldesign.co.uk/blog/how-to-write-good-alt-text>
- Audio Description: Writing Accessible Introductions: [Access into Action: Writing Accessible Introductions](#)

Information sharing:

- Plain Language: <https://www.mapping-access.com/blog-1/2021/1/14/on-plain-language>
- Easy Read: <https://www.photosymbols.com/pages/easy-read>
- Photo bank: <https://www.learningdisabilityservice-leeds.nhs.uk/easy-on-the-i/image-bank/>
- Paid-for Photo bank: <https://www.photosymbols.com/>

Content and Trigger Warnings

- The Mix: [A guide to content and trigger warnings](#)

Relaxed Performance

- [Tourettes Hero Blog](#)
- [Video Introduction to Relaxed Performances with Tourettes Hero](#)

Relaxed Introduction Videos:

- [Peter Pan Relaxed Introduction Video](#)
- [HOME Manchester Relaxed Video](#)
- [Curious Incident of A Dog in the Night time Relaxed show intro](#)

Camping

- Adjustments you should anticipate include:
 - a. Accessible parking and drop-off
 - b. Support carrying their camping gear onto the campsite
 - c. A Personal Assistant
 - d. Accessible toilets and showers
 - e. A changing places unit
 - f. A toilet with running water
 - g. Electric charging for access equipment such as powered wheelchairs, hearing aids
 - h. An electric hook-up for customers who have access equipment they need to use at night (e.g. sleep apnoea machines)
 - i. A campervan
- Involve the volunteer in preparation discussions and share an update on what will be available before they arrive on site.
- Offer a choice between staying in the workforce campsite or staying in the audience accessible campsite.
- Staff showers and toilets should include an accessible option.
- If a volunteer is staying in a different campsite to the other volunteers (e.g. the accessible campsite), ensure that campsite team is briefed on arrival.
- Volunteers staying in the audience accessible campsite should be able to arrive and register at the campsite where they are staying and be supported with travel to briefings or events.



On shift

There are a variety of roles that a volunteer might take on shift at your event. Through giving clear role guides, your volunteers will be able to share which would be most appropriate for them and where they might need some support.

- Information to share before the shift:
 - Times and break times
 - Walking distances
- Adjustments could include:
 - Flexible shift times
 - Additional breaks
 - Sitting down on shift
 - A Personal Assistant
 - Close to an accessible toilet
 - Working “split” shifts (e.g. half a morning shift and a half an afternoon shift)
- If you do not think a request is practical, have a conversation with the volunteer and get as much information as you can. This might give you ideas of alternative adjustments.

Around the festival

Enjoying the festivals off-shift is a key perk of volunteering. Disabled customers should have the same opportunity as anyone else during the festival.

- Volunteers should be asked what access requirements they need around the festival. Examples of this include:
 - Access to viewing platforms/ areas
 - Accessible toilets
 - A Personal Assistant
 - British Sign Language or Captioning Services
 - Shuttle buses or accessible cut-throughs
 - Large print copies of festival programmes or running times
- It is reasonable that a volunteer be expected to follow the same rules and procedures as customers when off shift.

Personal Assistants (PAs)

Many disabled people will request a Personal Assistant as a reasonable adjustment. PAs can be vital to providing person-centred support.

- A Personal Assistant might have a variety of roles. These include:
 - Providing intimate personal assistance
 - Helping with medical procedures
 - Assisting with physical tasks
 - Providing essential practical and emotional support
 - Knowing how to provide support in a medical emergency
 - Helping someone navigate a festival
 - Helping someone to communicate

Useful to know:

- The event team are not expected to provide or pay for a Personal Assistant.
- Some volunteers will require their Personal Assistant to join them on shift and others will only need their Personal Assistant outside of their shift times. It is reasonable for the volunteer to state when they do and do not need their Personal Assistant.
- Some volunteers might find it useful to have the option of their PA covering for them if they are unable to carry out a shift. This should only happen if the volunteer does not need support from their PA at that point.
- If a Personal Assistant is joining a volunteer on shift – or potentially going to be covering for them – it is reasonable to insist that they attend training and briefings and abide by your rules and policies.
- It is possible some volunteers will not be able to find a Personal Assistant who can do the whole festival and will request swapping Personal Assistants. This request should be considered as a reasonable adjustment but it is reasonable to request evidence that the first PA has removed and returned their wristband before accrediting the second PA.

Breaks:

- Over the course of five or more days at a festival, it is advisable for the assistant to take breaks.

Contracts and agreements

It is reasonable to draw up a commitment of expectations for the Personal Assistant and ask them to sign and agree it ahead of the festival. Attitude is Everything has a template document.

Where a Personal Assistant is assisting a volunteer on shift, it is reasonable to expect them to attend any training, and understand and follow your policies and procedures.

What to do if there are issues with the Personal Assistant

Personal Assistants are at the festival in order to assist the volunteer. It can be challenging for the volunteer if there is an issue, so ensure that you are working within your Safeguarding Adults at Risk policy to listen and support the volunteer with any decisions that they want to make.

If you feel a Personal Assistant is not providing the support required, first, have a discreet non-judgemental conversation with the volunteer. It is important to ascertain three things from the volunteer:

- Is the Personal Assistant meeting their expectations?
- Is the issue that the volunteer isn't requesting assistance or that the PA is not carrying out the volunteer's requests?
- Is there a pastoral or wellbeing issue?
- If the volunteer does not agree that there is an issue, it is useful to use the PA's contract to remind them of their agreed responsibilities. If there isn't a contract, talk through their expected roles and identify what is and isn't being completed.

If the volunteer agrees there is an issue, it is best to find a resolution through conversation first.

- If the volunteer has not been **confident giving instructions**:
 - Ask the volunteer if there are ways you can support them in advocating for themselves.
- If the **volunteers' requests for assistance are not being met**:
 - Ask the volunteer if they would like you to have a chat on their behalf. Do not insist this or talk to the Personal Assistant without their consent as you do not know the power dynamic between them.
- If a PA is **not carrying out their role**:
 - Mediate a discussion between the volunteer and their PA discuss the roles, responsibilities and tasks.
- If the PA is **causing reputational damage to your event**:
 - You are entitled to ask for them to be removed from the site. However, ensure you understand the consequences on the volunteer, especially if the Personal Assistant is acting without their knowledge or consent.

If the Personal Assistant's actions are so serious that you have to ask them to leave. Have a conversation with the volunteer and see if there is anything that can be done to ensure their needs are met for the rest of the festival and they are able to get back safely. This may include:

- Having a new PA arriving onsite to take the place of the removed PA
- Making alternative arrangements for the volunteer to get home.
- Talking through the support the volunteer needs and supporting them to find a strategy to manage onsite.
- Introducing the volunteer to other volunteers to ensure they do not become isolated.

After the incident:

- Financial arrangements: you should do everything you can to avoid the volunteer facing additional costs as a result of their PA being removed.
- Safeguarding: In some cases, a Personal Assistant's behaviour towards a volunteer may raise safeguarding concerns. Ensure you have a robust safeguarding policy and the Designated Safeguarding Lead is informed.
- Keep records: keep accurate, factual and non-judgemental records of what happened and the reasons for any decisions taken. It is reasonable to not welcome back problematic Personal Assistants again.

Assistance dogs

A volunteer may require an assistance dog as a reasonable adjustment. Not all assistance dogs are trained by registered charities or have official documentation, but you can ask for assurance that the dog is trained to:

- behave calmly around crowds and other people
- only go to the toilet when commanded to
- remain with the owner and not wander off or approach other customers
- wear a harness, jacket or identification when on-shift and around site.

An assistance dog should not be expected to wear a harness and jacket for the entire duration of the festival.



What if you feel a volunteer is not requesting the access requirements you feel they need?

- There are a number of reasons why people might not request access requirements. These can include:
 - Not knowing access facilities are available
 - Being worried about coming across as “difficult” or demanding
 - Not finding it easy to ask for help
 - Being newly-diagnosed – or having had a change in impairment – and not knowing what they need
 - Some disabled people may not request Personal Assistants due to loneliness and isolation and simply not knowing suitable people to assist them.
- If you find someone is not requesting access and this is impacting on their experience, be kind. Approach the matter sensitively and give them time and space to explain how they found the volunteering experience and what their perception is of their needs.
- Be open about the amount of support senior staff can give onsite. Don't commit to aiding or supporting anyone that you cannot deliver in practice and – without being unkind – explain openly if a volunteer is expecting more support from their colleagues than those colleagues can realistically give.
- If someone is new to requesting access, talk them through what is available and support them to apply for access.

What to do when you think someone can't perform a role due to their impairment

- It is general good practice to think about the essential skills and requirements for all volunteer roles. You should not include anything that is not genuinely essential, but you can be honest about what you need.
 - For example, a first aid team member might need to be able to crouch to ground level to check on someone who is on the floor, or a fire team member might need to carry and operate a backpack hose or a bucket of water.
- If someone applies for a role where you do not feel they meet the essential requirements, first think carefully about whether you are making assumptions or stereotyping, or whether there is a genuine question over the volunteer's ability to do the role.
- If the latter, have an open conversation with the volunteer and ask them how they would manage the essential requirements of the role. Give choices and be open to proposed solutions.
- The volunteer may request adjustments to the role, or to be accompanied by a Personal Assistant. Always try to find a way to adjust in a way that works for the volunteer and also works for the role.
- If needed, have conversations with colleagues or seek external advice. However, keep the volunteer informed and consulted, and try to work with them rather than imposing solutions on them.
- If you have exhausted every possibility and cannot find a way to make the role work within their requirements, discuss alternative roles that they could do on site instead. However, make this a last resort rather than immediately ruling out roles which could be made accessible.

What if you don't think an adjustment is reasonable?

Under the 2010 Equality Act, disabled people can request reasonable adjustments for any aspect of their impairment that has a substantial impact on their lives. The definition of "substantial" is not well-defined under the Equality Act and so this can occasionally lead to ambiguity.

- If someone requests an adjustment that you don't think is reasonable or possible, first try to understand their perspective and the impact if the adjustment is not in place. Instead of asking intrusive medical questions, ask how the adjustment will ask the volunteer with the required tasks. This will help you understand what is being asked and whether there are alternative solutions. Further context might help you understand both what is reasonable and what is possible.
- There may be some occasions where an adjustment:
 - Is not practical
 - Could not be done without causing considerable disruption to the festival
 - Would not remove the barrier it seeks to resolve
 - Is not financially viable within the festival's or your organisation's resources
 - Would present a health and safety risk to other customers
- First of all, discuss the issue with colleagues and make sure your concerns are warranted and that you are not missing a viable solution
- Working with colleagues, think about alternative solutions you could offer. Try to find two or three viable options you can present to the volunteer so they have a choice and control over what happens.
- If those are not possible, or if you could not find solutions, be open with the volunteer about what the obstacles are and ask them if they can think of an alternative solution that would work for them.
- Always try to offer an adjustment rather than saying nothing can be done. However, if you've made an attempt to find solutions, exhausted possibilities and still cannot find a viable solution, this may not be a reasonable adjustment.

Deposits and expenses

Useful to know:

- The average disabled person faces additional costs of £583 a month compared with a non-disabled person (Source: Scope, 2019). This is because disabled people can experience additional costs for housing, heating, transport, adapted diets, prescriptions, medical equipment, clothing and a range of other areas.
- 31% of disabled people live in poverty, compared to 20% of the general population. It is important to consider that this figure means that 69% of disabled people do NOT live in poverty. (Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2020)
- One key area disabled people face expenses is travel costs. Cycling and public transport are often not accessible options, coaches and festival shuttle buses are not always adapted and a disabled person taking medical equipment to a festival may not be able to carry all of their belongings, even with a PA.
- For these reasons, it may be a reasonable adjustment to:
 - Waive any deposits for disabled volunteers who can demonstrate that these would be a barrier to them volunteering at a festival.
 - Assist with travel costs, if someone is facing additional costs.
 - Provide an alternative solution if shuttle buses or public transport routes to the festival are not accessible.

Getting feedback and improving your practice

Feedback is a vital part of any volunteering process. It is useful to receive regular feedback throughout the event so that you can solve any issues on-site.

After the event, ask volunteers about their experience and assess the data.

Remember that learning is important and nobody gets everything 100% right. There will always be new challenges and areas for improvement. Use the feedback to continuously improve your offer.

Take pride in what you get right as well as improving what went wrong. Use positive feedback as quotes to share good practice and advertise your accessible volunteering practice for the future.

Put a system in place where volunteers are routinely told about paid opportunities that arise in your organisation so that they have a chance to apply.

Sharing good practice

- Advertise volunteering opportunities via Attitude is Everything. We will advertise opportunities by organisations that sign up to our Accessible Volunteering Commitment.
- Contact disability-led organisations local to your festival to let them know that your volunteering is accessible and ask them to share information with their members.
- Don't let a desire for good publicity lure you into promises you can't maintain. A day celebrating disabled people is meaningless if you are inaccessible 364 days of the year. Prioritise gradual but meaningful change over token gestures or short-term initiatives.
- Avoid "inspiring" stories about how disabled people have "overcome" their disability to volunteer at your event. Instead provide practical meaningful information about the changes you have made.
- Review your website and communications to ensure you publicly state your commitment to accessibility, that you are using plain English and that your website is compatible with screen readers, text magnifiers and other accessibility tools.
- Publicly demonstrate your commitment to employing and supporting disabled people by signing up to the government's [Disability Confident](#) Scheme and using Attitude is Everything's [Accessible Employment Guide](#).