



Thank you for considering the accessibility of your event for people with myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME). This document will outline different steps you can take to make your event more accessible, including provision for people unable to attend in person.

AT A GLANCE:

- Have full details of the event accessibility on the website beforehand
- Ensure event is wheelchair accessible
- Provide a quiet room where attendees can rest (must be close to event)
- Ensure there is lots of supportive seating
- Record event and livestream for people who are housebound

OFFLINE ACCESSIBILITY

Before the Event

Give full details of the event accessibility on your website beforehand. For a great example and template click [here](#). Indicate whether carers are welcome, and can come free of charge.

Ensure the venue has several blue badge parking spaces, provide information on location of these spaces in advance on website .

Access to the Event

Some people with ME can walk short distances; indicate rough walking distances e.g from entrance to room where event is held. Indicate if there are any stairs, and how many. Make sure your event is wheelchair accessible for those who can't walk. This includes signage (using international symbol of disability) that directs people to drop off points and accessible entrances. Ensure there are curb ramps, ramps to stage, and lifts if needed (wide enough to fit a wheelchair). Indicate if lifts are services lifts and, if they are in a difficult to find location, they should be signposted. Make sure when setting up a room, that it is negotiable by wheelchair, and that there are wider spaces available to park the wheelchair if seated. The venue should have a wheelchair accessible toilet. For more information on how to make your event wheelchair accessible click [here](#).



Create lots of Opportunities to Rest!

ME prohibits the body from creating energy properly. Create a break room, a quiet space where there is no music/talking and people are able to lie down. If possible, allow participants to lie down during the event, rather than sit. This could be done by providing yoga mats, cushions, bean bags and blankets. A great example is [here](#). Ideally seating should be comfortable, high backed and supportive. Make sure there is seating available whatever the activity e.g tea breaks, and that if others are standing, seating is made available for those who can't. Allow delegates to reserve a seat if there's limited seating. Have a break at least every 2 hours to allow for short rests.

Catering

Some people with ME have food intolerances including dairy, gluten and nuts. Ask for people's dietary requirements upon registration. If you can't provide food, provide facilities for people to prepare/warm foods they have brought.

Avoid Bright Lights and Loud Noises

ME affects the autonomic/central nervous system and so can cause sensory sensitivities, especially to light and noise. Try to avoid bright light, loud noises, and provide plenty of quiet spaces. Natural rather than artificial light is ideal, and ensure that sound systems aren't too loud. BSL applause, especially for any speakers with ME, can be useful.



ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY

25% of people with ME are severely affected and are house/bed bound. Ensure they can participate by making the event accessible online.

Before the Event

Allow housebound delegates to send in questions ahead of time. This function can also be used by delegates who may need to leave the event prematurely due to decline in health.



During the Event

Live Stream your event. See this article for tips on live streaming on different social media platforms.

Allow housebound delegates to participate in real time through SMS, twitter or facebook comments. Use a hashtag to connect online delegates.

After the Event

Upload on youtube, facebook or another video sharing platform afterwards for those with cognitive difficulties so they can view in their own time.

LINKS



1. <https://belfasttrans.org.uk/access/>
2. http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org/patient_public_participation/participation_toolkit/accessibility_checklist.aspx#.W98QAJp7Q2z
3. <http://www.disabilityarts.online/the-best-seat-in-the-house-an-unashamedly-crip-trip-to-the-cinema/>