

How to run an accessible event

Introduction

This guide has been put together to support NHSGGC staff in organising and delivering community events that are accessible to all patients. Obtaining feedback from patients on their needs and experiences is vital to improving the quality and delivery of health care and we have a responsibility to ensure that the views of our diverse population are integrated into this process.

Barriers to engagement

Different patient groups may experience barriers to engaging, such as:

- Lack of understanding regarding different cultures and religions
- Physical barriers such as access to buildings and availability of hearing loops
- Communication not being in plain English or made available in different languages or formats
- Cost or availability of suitable transport
- Lifestyle issues, for example for Homeless patients and Gypsy Travellers

General Planning Tips

When inviting patients to your event, ask them if they have any particular requirements which need to be addressed. For example:

- Information in an accessible format, such as Braille, audio or large print
- An induction loop
- Wheelchair access
- An interpreter – spoken or British Sign Language
- Parking for disabled patient/transport issues
- Specific dietary requirements

You can use the [Including You Booking Form](#) to ask people their requirements. Make sure patients know who to contact with any questions about accessibility, giving email, telephone, fax and post options.

Ensure that patients and carers know that you will pay travel expenses. Provide clear instructions on how to find the building, with pictures if possible, and include information on local transport.

When setting a date for the event, avoid school and religious holidays. It's also best to avoid starting your event too early, especially if patients are travelling long distances.

Let patients know about housekeeping at the beginning of the meeting. Ensure signs are in picture format and that the venue for your event is DDA (disability) compliant. If you haven't used the venue before, check its accessibility before confirming the booking. See [Checklist /General Tips for Accessible Event](#). It's helpful for venue staff to be made aware of any specific requirements or issues participants may have.

Plan breaks around every 45 minutes. Make sure that they are long enough for people to eat and drink, go to the toilet etc especially if anyone is assisted. Some patients may like to bring their own supporter or Personal Assistant and some may want support arranged for them.

In addition to any physical needs, some patients may need support with understanding reports etc. Ask speakers to provide you with their presentation at least four weeks in advance of the event so that they can be prepared in different formats if needed.

Partnership working with community organisations can be extremely useful, both in terms of supporting patients with particular needs and in promoting your event. e.g. Scottish Refugee Council, DDA, Deaf Connections etc. See [Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector Infobase and search by protected characteristic](#) for voluntary sector agencies.

Tips on planning for specific groups

Black and Minority Ethnic patients

Before the event:

Translation/interpreting should be provided if required. To book an interpreter contact NHSGGC Interpreting Services on 0141 347 8811 or email interpretingservices@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

Time and day of the event should be considered in relation to specific communities e.g. Friday afternoon prayers for the Muslim community and weekday college attendance for many Asylum Seekers.

At the event:

If someone comes along to your meeting unplanned and needs an interpreter, you can use telephone interpreting. Call Language Line on 0800 028 0073. Make sure you have a note of your authorisation code when you call. You can get this from the Interpreting Service or from Staffnet. Also ensure that interpreters are identifiable on the day.

Consider setting up a prayer room that could also be a quiet room. If possible put an arrow in the room pointing south east for prayer direction.

Disabled Patients

Before the event:

If you have difficulty understanding a person on the telephone, ask if they would prefer to use email, fax or post or continue on the telephone.

Clarify what people want using questions that need simple answers. Repeat back what they say and wait for them to confirm. You could ask another member of staff to listen and help you. Always ask the person on the telephone if this is OK.

Never agree to something when you do not know what the caller has said. If the call is not going well, make sure the caller is aware. Check if they would be happy to write their request instead either by email or letter.

At the event:

Never assume that you know what a person needs; always ask. Remember that some people may have a disability that is not visible.

Some patients may like to bring their own support or Personal Assistant and some may want support arranged for them.

Always treat a disabled person in the same way that you would treat anyone else. If someone has an assistant make sure that when you are talking, you continue talking to the disabled person, not the assistant.

If someone is in a wheelchair, try to get to the same level as the wheelchair user, by kneeling down or sitting on a chair. Never lean on someone's wheelchair or move it without the person's consent.

Guide dogs are working dogs and should not be patted.

When dimming the lights for a presentation, please make sure patients can still see their supporter. You could try closing the curtains to reduce glare but keep the light on. Covering bright surfaces with a tablecloth can also help reduce glare.

Patients with Visual Impairments

Before the event:

Try to send papers in patients' chosen format such as Braille, large print, audiotape or on CD before they come to the event. If you are going to be using a video during the event check whether an audio described version is available. This means that there is extra narration to tell people about facial expressions, body language, actions and costumes.

Organise staff to meet and greet patients at the front door and help them to their seats. Ensure there are enough staff to guide patients throughout the venue. Signs (showing rooms and toilets) menus etc should be large, use large simple fonts, contrasting ink/paper (e.g. blue on yellow) colours and not be produced on glossy paper.

Be aware when booking the venue that glass doors can be very dangerous for people with visual impairments. It is really important that there is a strong contrast between the door and the door frame. Stickers or bright signs can be put on the glass. Similarly, vastly different lighting levels between rooms can make it difficult for patients.

Water bowls should be provided for guide dogs.

At the event:

When greeting someone with a Visual Impairment, make sure that you introduce yourself to them. Ask the individual how you may help them and if you guide them, make sure that you describe where you are going and if there are any stairs, be sure to say whether the stairs are going down or up.

If there are other people in the room, make sure that you introduce them and say a bit about them e.g. 'This is Tom who is a member of the Patient Focus Public Involvement Group'.

If you offer someone a seat, guide their hand to the back of the chair, telling them that there is a chair to sit on.

If you leave the person, let them know that you are going and if they are sitting with other people, be sure to introduce them.

Large signs should show rooms and toilets or ensure there are enough staff to guide patients throughout the venue.

Patients with Learning Disabilities

Before the event:

Booking forms and papers should be in Easy Read format see [Clear to All Toolkit](#). Make information also available on audiotape or on CD (containing documents in different formats).

Papers can be colour coded (keep colours the same each meeting) and sent out at least two weeks in advance.

If telephoning the participant, avoid taped information if possible, as people find it easier to use a personal service.

A few patients with Learning Disabilities use Makaton to communicate. Makaton is a basic signing and symbol system. If they use it, they may ask for papers in Makaton and their supporter will use it to communicate with them.

Do not plan too many things in one meeting and put the most important things at the top of the agenda. Stick to the agenda and try not to introduce anything new on the day.

At the event:

Speak to the person as you would to anyone else but do avoid jargon.

Patients with Learning Disabilities often need support to understand reports and papers before and during the meeting.

Traffic light cards are useful at meetings. You can have a green card for 'ok/yes/I agree', a red card for 'no' and an orange card for 'slow down/repeat'. These might help people who are nervous to take part.

If you find people are finding it hard to take part in a large meeting you could do some small group work.

If possible give people different ways of saying what they think. You can use props and objects to support you (a ballot box for voting for example). To help follow the agenda, you could put a picture up for each agenda item and take it down when it has been covered.

[An Equality Monitoring Form](#) should be used. If time permits, go through the form with people. Interpreters could be used as a communication aid if needed.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Patients

Before the event:

Events should have Minicom's or text numbers available, or confirm through Type-talk.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients may require various kinds of support in order to participate in meetings.

Some buildings have loop systems built in and have portable loop systems available for small to medium events. This is the sort of adjustment, as well as physical adaptations, that the venue should be responsible for.

Some patients may require a British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreter or other Language Support professional.

It is the responsibility of NHS staff to book a BSL interpreter. (Patients should not book interpreter directly). Contact the NHSGGC interpreting service. Tel: 0141 347 8811 Email: interpretingservices@ggc.scot.nhs.uk Book four to six weeks in advance if possible and try to give Language Support professionals an idea of what the meeting is about beforehand.

Other forms of language support can be booked via the Interpreting Service if requested. These include:

- Relay interpreters – who put BSL into a different form for those with less developed BSL skills.
- Lip speakers – who repeat what is being said for easy lip reading
- Note takers – who note the main points on a computer for the patient to read
- Speech to Text – who type out everything being said

If you are using videos, they can be subtitled or overlaid with British Sign Language interpretation. If none of these are possible, you could send out the transcript to Deaf and Hard of Hearing people, or have it signed on the day.

At the event:

Ask the person how they would like to communicate. Do not assume that because they are Deaf, that they cannot hear anything. There are many different types of Deafness and individuals will have their own ways of communicating.

During the event, try not to have your back to a light source as they will not be able to see you clearly. Speak clearly and don't cover your mouth. During discussion, make sure that people speak one at a time.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing patients are likely to prefer seats where they have a good view of what is going on and where they can see any communication support they are using.

Language Support Professionals will advise you on where they need to sit or stand in relation to the speaker and the audience.

Give interpreters and language support professional's regular breaks.

Remember, people can't sign and eat and so need to keep their hands free and will require a place to put plates down.

Patients who are Deaf Blind

Before the Event:

Let the person know that you are there by lightly touching them on the arm. If they have a guide with them, speak to the individual, not the guide.

Deaf Blind communicators and guides work with people on a one-to-one basis and can be booked through Deafblind Scotland. They use different ways of communicating such as the manual alphabet, block alphabet, Braille keyboard and hands-on signing (the person places their hands on the communicators to follow the shape of the signs). Please bear in mind that Deaf Blind communication often requires more time (often 50 – 70% more time).

Patients with Mental Health problems

At the event:

Do not start meetings too early in the morning.

Keep presentation segments short as some people find it difficult to concentrate for long periods.

A quiet room may be really useful for patients with Mental Health problems and also patients experiencing fatigue.

Patients with Speech Difficulties

At the Event:

Listen to patients carefully and if you do not understand ask them to repeat it. Do not attempt to finish sentences or assume what they are going to say.

If the person needs to write something down, ask them if they are able to do it. They might want a personal assistant, carer or friend to write it down for them.

People with speech or language difficulties may telephone to book or find out more information. If you have difficulty understanding a person on the telephone, ask if they would prefer to use email, fax or post or continue on the telephone.

Clarify what people want using questions that need simple answers. Repeat back what they say and wait for them to confirm. You could ask another member of staff to listen and help you. Always ask the person on the telephone if this is OK.

Related documents

[Including You Booking Form](#)

[Checklist/General Tips for Accessible Event](#)

[Clear to All Toolkit](#)

[Equality Monitoring Form](#)