



Hosting inclusive meetings: Communication checklists

Why it's important

Meetings are an important part of all of our lives, whether they take place in person, or online (as many more have recently).

But meetings can be a frustrating experience for many disabled people. It is important that meeting organisers not only think about issues around physical access, but also the communication needs of those attending the meeting, whether in person, or remotely.

The communication checklists below will help make sure your meetings 'in person' and remote meetings are accessible to everyone

Communication checklist for 'in person' meetings

Ahead of the meeting

- Check if anyone attending the meeting has any communication requirements, including receiving information in an accessible format, such as large print, Easy Read or audio.
- Send out information about the meeting in good time, so that people can prepare. Remember to schedule breaks into the agenda.
- Provide details about internet access – particularly if there will be no access as some people may rely on it to take part in the meeting.

Communication and notetaking support

- If someone needs assistance with note taking, consider providing a written or audio transcript of the meeting or using the services of a speech to text reporter to provide live onscreen transcription of the meeting. Alternatively, the person might want to bring someone with them to take notes or assist in other ways.
- Book any external communication support – such as interpreters, speech to text reporters – in good time. Remember that interpreters are in high demand so do this as far in advance as possible if you know someone needs an interpreter or speech to text reporter.
- If the meeting is large, try to provide microphones so everyone can be heard.
- Check that hearing loops are available and are working.

Briefing speakers

- Brief anyone speaking at the meeting to ensure their presentation is accessible and any video content is captioned.

Briefing the Chair

- Brief the person chairing the meeting about any communication requirements. This should also include people taking part remotely.
- Remind the Chair to stick to the order of the agenda and to maintain agreed breaks. Suggest the Chair announces this information at the beginning of the meeting.

On the day

- Before the meeting begins, check that everyone has everything they need and all communication support is in place.
- Remind everyone to introduce themselves before the meeting, to repeat their name each time they speak and to speak one at a time.
- Ensure the Chair gives everyone the opportunity to contribute.

This checklist has been adapted from Business Disability Forum's comprehensive guide to hosting inclusive meetings – 'Meetings Matter'. To find out more about the guide and how to purchase it, go to the resources section of the Knowledge Hub

Communication checklist for remote meetings

Accessible platforms

If you are hosting a meeting remotely, or if some people are joining remotely, check that the remote access facilities will work for everyone. Some platforms are more accessible than others. Things to consider:

- Does the platform support screen reader users? Screen readers are a form of assistive technology used by people who are blind or have visual impairments, as well as people with dyslexia or learning disabilities. Screen reader users may want to access the meeting without a screen. Some platforms come with built in screen readers.
- Does the platform support closed captioning? Closed captioning is useful for people who are D/deaf or having hearing impairments. Some platforms allow you to provide live captioning. Others provide automated captioning.
- Does the platform have keyboard shortcuts? These are useful for people who have physical disabilities and may not be able to use a mouse to navigate.
- Does the platform offer magnification? These are useful for people with visual impairments.
- Can the platform be used by BSL interpreters? Interpreters can be booked to take part in the meeting remotely.

- Does the platform allow you to record the meeting and/or create a meeting transcript? This is useful for anyone wanting to recap on the meeting afterwards.
- Does the platform allow people to dial into the meeting? Disabled people are less likely to have access to the internet than non-disabled people.
- Check accessibility needs and whether alternative formats are needed.

Ahead of the meeting

- Check if anyone joining the meeting has any communication requirements and whether these can be met on the platform you are using. Check if documents shared during the meeting will need to be available in alternative formats.
- Send out details of how to join the meeting to people in advance. Let people know if they need to download an app or particular software to take part in the meeting. Most platforms can be used on a computer or as an app on a phone.
- Send out any information about accessibility features within the platform and how to use them. Suggest joiners might want to try out the features before the meeting and offer to assist with this.
- Book any communication support needed, such as a BSL signer, and someone to caption the meeting.
- Provide a telephone number for anyone dialing into the meetings.
- It's also useful to provide additional 'on the day' contact details, in case anyone has trouble joining the meeting
- Send round any documents in advance.
- It can be hard to hear everyone on remote meetings. Consider asking joiners to use headsets and microphones.
- Consider how people will communicate with the chair during the meeting. Consider using a platform with a separate chat function or providing a separate chat function so people can let the Chair know if they cannot hear them or another speaker without having to chip in and interrupt.

Briefing the chair

- Ask the chair to set out the rules for participation at the start of the meeting e.g. asking people to mute their microphones if they are not speaking and assigning people an order to speak in, so everyone gets a chance to contribute.
- Ask the chair to stick to the agenda and timings, to make the meeting easier for everyone to follow.

During the meeting

- Check everyone's audio (and video) are working before you start the meeting.
- Assign someone to keep an eye on any messages coming in via the chat function.

- Make sure everyone is introduced, including any BSL signers taking part in the meeting.
- Check that the captioning and screen reader functions are working.
- Make sure anyone joining the meeting late is entered into the meeting and isn't left waiting in the 'lobby'.
- Remind everyone to say their name before they speak.

After the meeting

- Share any resources and notes from the meeting. Remember that some people may prefer to receive physical copies rather than digital. Also consider whether any information needs to be made available in an alternative format.

Making remote meetings accessible is discussed in a webinar on Covid-19 and home working. This is available in the case study section of this toolkit.

Further information

- NYC Mayor's Office for people with disabilities, Accessible Virtual Meetings Guide [<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/virtual-meetings-accessibility-guide.pdf>]
- Big Hack, Best video conferencing apps and software for accessibility [bighack.org/best-videoconferencing-apps-and-software-for-accessibility]
- Microsoft, Accessibility overview of Microsoft Teams [support.office.com/en-us/article/accessibility-overview-of-microsoft-teams-2d4009e7-1300-4766-87e8-7a217496c3d5]
- Zoom, Accessibility [zoom.us/accessibility]
- Google, Google meet accessibility [support.google.com/meet/answer/7313544?hl=en]
- Microsoft, Accessibility support for Skype for Business [support.office.com/en-gb/article/accessibility-support-for-skype-for-business-fbe39411-6f25-405d-acb4-861735865d18]



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