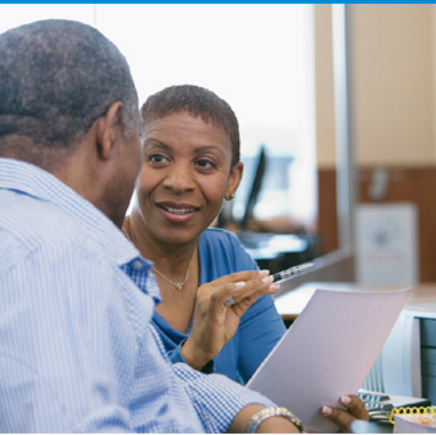




Creating a disability-smart world together



Meetings matter

A guide to hosting inclusive meetings.



Abridged content for sample purposes

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Foreword - Diane Lightfoot

Millions of meetings happen every day. All over the world people come together to talk about their work or everyday lives.

Advances in technology mean that we don't now all have to be in the same room (or even the same country) to meet. Meetings can and should be a coming together of people to share ideas, solve problems and identify actions but so often this is not what happens.

From work team meetings and organisational away days to stakeholder or client consultations and meetings that can decide the future and the lives of the people affected; meetings matter.

For so many disabled and older people, however, meetings are frustrating experiences in which they can never fully participate because often simple adjustments have not been made by the meeting organiser or Chair. Adjustments aren't a "nice to have"; they are absolutely essential for disabled people who might otherwise leave a meeting with incomplete or inaccurate information or simply not be able to attend at all.



Diane Lightfoot,
Chief Executive, Business
Disability Forum

Too often, simple adjustments that are core to participating in a meeting are overlooked. Yet, they are (generally) not only easy to put in place but benefit other participants too; a speech to text service can aid understanding of an audience without a hearing impairment as well as providing a ready-made transcript of an event. Easy read agendas – and just papers in advance – can help everyone prepare, especially in an increasingly time-poor world.

At Business Disability Forum we know that too often it comes down to a lack of confidence; fear of doing or saying “the wrong thing” can mean that meeting organisers – at all levels – do nothing. But it doesn’t have to be difficult. There is only one thing we really need to do and that is ask the person what they want. It’s that simple.

As we often say, if you get things right for disabled people, you get them right for everyone. Accessible meetings mean more productive meetings for everyone. I very much hope that this practical guide will give you the tools – and the confidence – to transform your meeting experience

**Diane Lightfoot,
CEO, Business Disability Forum**

...ask the person what they want. It’s that simple.



Meetings matter – how to organise and chair accessible meetings.

Introduction

Where and how do people meet? These days, meetings for work as well as meetings with your lawyer, financial adviser or even your GP can take place from a train, coffee shop, dining room table or while walking and talking. In a work context, it is now more likely than ever that some of the people meeting will be in a different city, country and time zone.

If you are the meeting organiser or the Chair of a larger meeting, how can you ensure that everyone attending the meeting can participate fully and get what they and you need from the time spent together?

The checklists and tips that follow are mainly for large meetings organised in advance rather than one to ones or ad hoc meetings called at short notice but some will help make these smaller meetings more accessible and fruitful as well. Not all the tips will be relevant to every meeting, particularly if you know the people attending and can ask them about their needs in advance. If, however, you are unsure about the needs of the people who will be attending e.g. it is an open meeting for a particular group of people, then thinking about all the accessibility tips in advance is a good idea.

So much of this, however, is just good meeting etiquette. As is so often the case, if you get things right for disabled people the meeting will be better for everyone. Accessible meetings mean more productive meetings.

You might not think that you have disabled people in your meetings or think that you rarely meet someone with a disability. This however, is unlikely to be true.

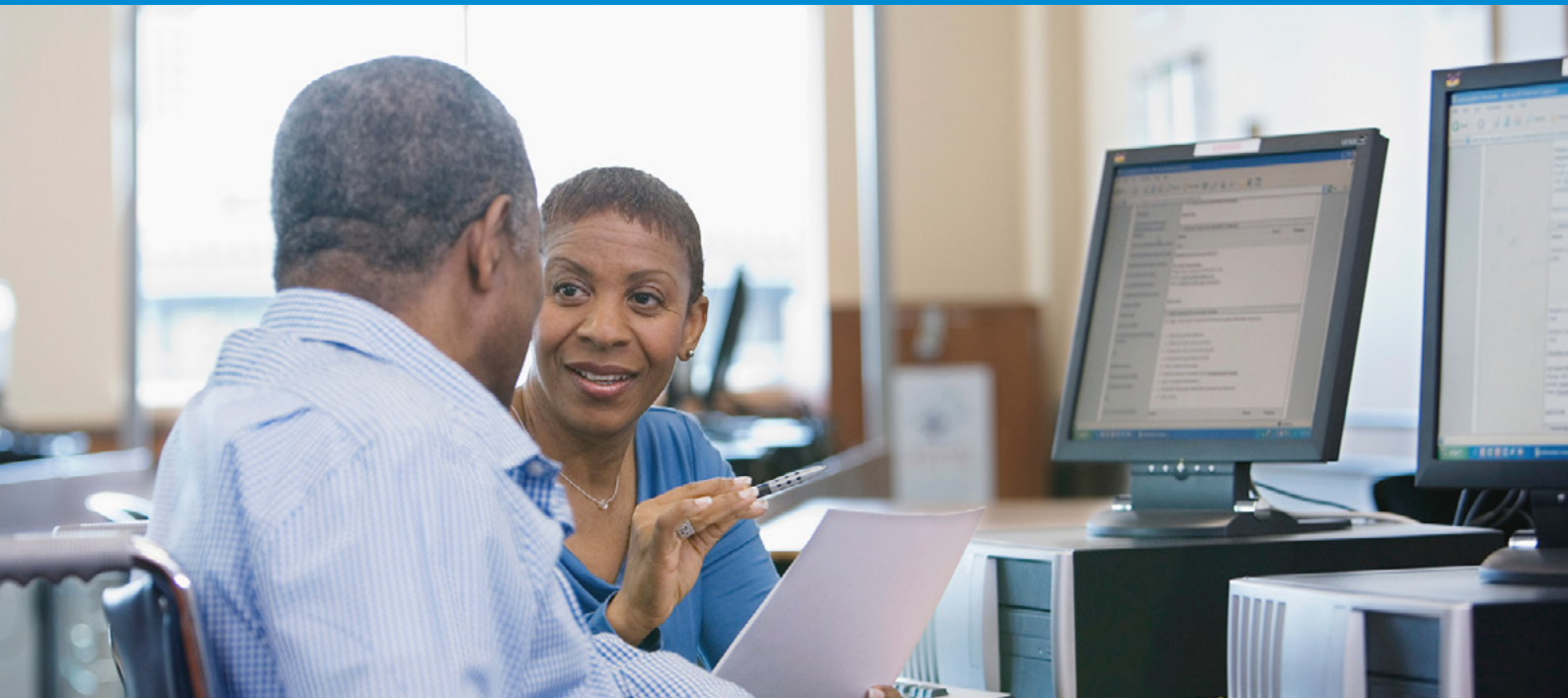
There are 13.3 million disabled people in the UK [1]. This means that one in five of the clients and colleagues that you meet each day may have a disability [2], and as the population ages in coming years, this number is set to increase.

It is not always easy to know who has a disability. Many people live with a condition or impairment which is not visible or immediately apparent – particularly if you don't meet them in person.

Understanding and recognising how disability can affect a person's needs and preferences is therefore incredibly important. It makes good business sense and is also a legal requirement.

Good communication reduces the risk of miscommunication and benefits everyone.

[1] and [2] Department for Work and Pensions, March 2017, Family Resources Survey 2015/16, available at assets.publishing.service.gov.uk



Meetings matter – ensuring everyone is properly present

Accessible meetings checklist for meeting organisers and chairs

Following the tips below will help you ensure that everyone is able to participate fully in the meeting and that the meeting is as productive as possible.

Tips for meeting organisers

What to do in advance of the meeting

- Check if anyone who is going to attend the meeting has any requirements, or needs any support to take part in the meeting. You can do this at the same time as asking about dietary requirements if you are going to provide lunch or refreshments.
- Send out information about the meeting in advance, so people can prepare.
- Check if anyone would like to receive information in an accessible format, such as large print, Easy Read or audio, before sending.
- Consider sending a meeting reminder a few days before the meeting.
- Brief the meeting Chair about adjustments or access requirements anyone attending needs and how many people are joining remotely and if they have access requirements.
- When designing the agenda remember to schedule breaks and remind the Chair to keep the breaks in the agenda. Tell the Chair when refreshments will be available and if more are going to be brought in at a particular time.
- If you know that people with particular access or communication needs are attending the meeting, consider providing the Chair with additional information on how to meet those needs.

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. If you do this you will also have a record of the meeting that you can share as a transcript or edit for notes, benefiting everyone. Alternatively the person might want to bring someone with them to take notes or assist in other ways. Make sure you can accommodate this extra person and that they are on appropriate lists for security and catering purposes.
- 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 you are not sure if anyone will need communications support, it is good practice to have it in place anyway. Many people who do not have a hearing impairment also like speech to text, as it can help them concentrate on what the speaker is saying.
- If the meeting is large, try to provide microphones so everyone can be heard. See also what to do for people joining the meeting remotely.
- Review the accessibility of your venue before the day.
 - Check that hearing loops are available and are working (when were they last tested?),
 - Is there a visual fire alarm system and appropriate lighting (this could be bright or low level lighting, depending on individual needs)?

**Content has been removed
for sample purposes. Pages
11 to 22 are available in the
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