

Access Starts Online – Venue Access Info Guide

1. Introduction

- 1-2 lines on behalf of the venue to welcome Deaf and disabled customers.

The introduction text is a chance to communicate your venue's ethos when it comes to being inclusive. If you have been awarded the Access Starts Online stamp of approval or have achieved a level on our Charter of Best Practice you could mention this here.

2. Contact Details

- If possible, a named person as a point of contact + their job role i.e. 'Access Officer'
- Email
- Phone
- Postal
- Give estimate of response time

Aim to provide a named person and have that person be responsible for all access-related communications. This greatly reassures customers and assists in providing continuity of customer service if specific access requirements are being discussed. We recommend a dedicated `access@` email address rather than generic `info@` address where possible. If not able to provide a phone number, inform customers to provide a number for you to ring. A postal address might be useful for sending any access facility booking evidence required. We think customers with access-related queries should be responded to within a minimum of 5 working days.

3. Download link for all access info

- Provide a link to a downloadable word file.

This is really useful, especially for people who use screen readers because of a vision impairment, as they can download this and not have to navigate back to the access info page.

4. Venue Description

- State whether or not there is step-free access to the box office, toilets and performance space(s) from the street.
- If the entrance / performance spaces are not step-free give the number of steps and whether this is up or down.
- If a temporary ramp or alternative entrance is used then describe how this works.

This information is essential to enable potential customers to make informed decisions about buying tickets and planning their attendance – for example, regarding any mobility-related equipment they might require. Getting this right can cut down the number of direct customer enquiries ahead of any event.

5. Bookable Access Facilities

- Free tickets for personal assistants.
 - Describe scheme.

Providing free tickets in order to enable a disabled person to bring a personal assistant / support worker is a form of reasonable adjustment that enables people who require support linked to an impairment or long-term medical condition to attend your venue. Some venues choose to request evidence to support a request. We can provide further guidance on this topic.

- Access to viewing platforms / areas.
 - State if the venue has a viewing platform or area.
 - Describe where it is in the venue.
 - Describe the seating that is provided for non-wheelchair users and personal assistants.
 - Provide the distance to the nearest accessible toilet(s).
 - Describe how customers can gain access to this location.

We recommend if possible allowing a Deaf or disabled customer and personal assistant plus the group of friends they are with access to the viewing platform or area. If this is not possible due to space allowances implement a 1 + 1 system. A stewarded system should be in place to ensure that only Deaf and disabled people who require this access facility can access it. We can provide further guidance on the design, placement, accreditation and stewarding of viewing platforms and areas.

- Accessible parking (if applicable)
 - Describe any venue-specific accessible parking that can be booked
 - If it is not possible to book accessible parking, provide information about public parking in the Travel Guide section.

6. How To Apply

- Describe process
- Describe the forms of evidence accepted (if required)

We can provide further guidance on the subject of bookable access facilities and evidence collection, as well as a template access booking form. If as a venue you have decided that you will take requests for personal assistant tickets on face value without demanding evidence, stating 'personal assistance tickets for customers who would otherwise be unable to attend the venue' or other such wording is best practice.

7. Travel Guide

- Provide any relevant information regarding:
 - Accessible parking.
 - Taxi / drop-off for customers.
 - Nearest accessible public transport hubs or stops.

Provide distance to nearest accessible public parking and provide information about any restrictions on Blue Badge parking. Consider the most accessible drop-off location and public transport stops for your venue and describe route including distances.

8. Arrival Guide

- Venue opening times
 - Provide all relevant info related to daytime opening and any standard opening times for gigs, or state if times are gig-specific.
- Arriving at the venue
 - Describe what customers should expect upon arrival at the venue – who will direct them, who they should approach if they have any questions etc.
 - Describe any early entrance options for customers who may request it as part of their access requirements (i.e. to avoid moving through crowds).
- Ticket and access accreditation collection
 - Describe access route from entrance to box office.
 - Describe what customers will need with them in order to collect tickets and access accreditation.

Customers can be particularly anxious about arrival, particularly if they have accreditation to collect. Describing the process in advance alleviates this and cuts down on direct customer enquiries.

9. Toilets

- Describe accessible toilet provision.
- Describe route and provide distance from any dedicated viewing platform or area to the nearest accessible toilet.

We recommend siting viewing platforms and areas in a location that is best served by any accessible toilet facilities. All internal fittings should be checked to ensure that they meet Approved Document Part M guidance. We can provide further guidance on this topic.

10. Customers with Medical Requirements

- State that you welcome attendees who need to bring medicines, food or drink to manage a medical condition, or medical equipment.
- Invite people to contact you if they have any concerns.
- Describe any services on site or who to approach in an emergency.

Staff should be briefed on the policies and procedures in place. All venues are legally obliged to set up systems to ensure that people can gain access with the necessary medical supplies. It is important that self-management of conditions is not questioned by staff in an inappropriate manner i.e. door staff questioning why someone with Type 1 diabetes wishes to bring a glucose drink into a venue, or refusing entry to someone with an Epi-Pen to manage potential anaphylaxis shock. We can assist with establishing your policy in this area.

11. Access to Performance

- Describe any services offered – Audio Enhancement such as loops, intra red or mobile connect systems / British Sign Language / Captioning / Audio Description / Relaxed Performances
- If not offered, state that this is the case at the present time.

We ask venues working on the Silver and Gold levels of our Charter of Best Practice to consider and work towards providing access to the performance for anyone with an access requirement, including Deaf and hard of people, people with vision impairments, and people with learning disabilities and autism.

12. Assistance Dogs

- Describe policy + facilities available.

It is a legal requirement to accommodate an assistance dog. We recommend asking that people inform you in advance and provide proof that any dog is registered with an organisation that is a member of [Assistance Dogs UK](#). However, customers may arrive without informing the venue they are an assistance dog user. We can assist you in setting up a policy.

13. Strobe Lighting

- Describe venue policy and what to expect.

We urge all venue organisers to implement a strobe-free policy, as the presence of strobing, with or without warnings, poses a significant risk to people prone to strobe-related seizures. At the very least, prior and on-site warnings should be provided.

14. Other Info

- Mention any other services or facilities that might be relevant, for example the presence of any lowered bars.

Next Steps

1. Contact us to request best practice guides including:

- Bookable Access Facilities
- Venue Viewing Platforms and Areas
- Accessible Toilets
- Accessible Bars

2. Schedule a team meeting

- Arrange some dedicated time to consider access and your venue.
- Include people responsible for the website, customer service and on-site production
- Use this document as an agenda for discussion

3. Make a dedicated access info page on your website

- We recommend calling this page 'Access Info' alongside a suitable image such as a version of the internationally recognised wheelchair-user symbol: 
- Make this a standalone webpage rather than a section of a long FAQ

4. Gain the Access Starts Online stamp of approval

- Getting your online information sorted is the first step towards comprehensively tackling the subject of accessibility and your venue.
- Once signed-off, we will provide an Access Starts Online web banner and social media stamp.
- You will also be included in press releases linked to the campaign.

5. Consider joining the Charter of Best Practice

- Once we have got the conversation started, the next step would be to consider signing up to work towards a [Charter of Best Practice](#) award.
- Meeting the requirements of the Access Starts Online campaign goes a long way towards the targets set out for the Bronze level of the Charter.

6. Arrange for your venue to be mystery shopped

- We have over 500 Deaf and disabled people across the UK signed up as Mystery Shoppers
- If you wish to provide a ticket (plus PA ticket if required), we can seek to recruit someone to attend and complete a detailed [mystery shopping](#) feedback form.

7. Invest in Disability Equality Training

- We offer industry-specific [disability equality training](#), and have trained over 5,000 people.
- This is a chance to learn about your legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

8. Contact Gideon Feldman, Senior Project Manager, about any of the above:

Email gideon@attitudeiseverything.org.uk or ring 020 7383 7979.