



## Accessible Event Guide

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Accessible Event Guide (the **Guide**) has been published by the disAbility Legal Network (the **Network**) in celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD) 2023. The Guide was prepared by the Steering Committee of the Network (the **Committee**) to provide some helpful guidelines to event organisers within the legal sector with the goal of ensuring that conferences and other events are universally accessible for all attendees including those attendees with disabilities.
- 1.2 The Guide has been prepared in line with best practice and draws from the experience of the Network in hosting accessible events to date, and its committee members, many of whom identify as being a Person with a Disability (**PWD**) and have encountered accessibility barriers when attending events in the past.
- 1.3 The disAbility Legal Network co-ordinated the first Committee meeting in May 2021. The Networks mission and vision is to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities within the legal sector and to promote a more inclusive legal sector. At the core of the Networks values is Diversity and Inclusion within the legal sector. All details of the disAbility Legal Network can be found [here](https://www.disabilitylegalnetwork.ie) - [https:// www.disabilitylegalnetwork.ie](https://www.disabilitylegalnetwork.ie).
- 1.4 The Network is currently supported by the following 'Allies': William Fry LLP, A&L Goodbody LLP, Mason Hayes and Curran LLP, Arthur Cox LLP, McCann Fitzgerald LLP, Ronan Daly Jermyn LLP, Matheson LLP, the Chartered Governance Institute, the Bar of Ireland, Frontline Ventures, Eversheds Sutherland, McMahon & Williams Solicitors, DAC Beachcroft LLP and Maples and Calder (Ireland) LLP. To sign the pledge and become an Ally of the Network, see [here](#) for a copy of the Pledge which requests Allies (amongst other things) to promote the use of accessible technology in their workplace
- 1.5 While it may not always be possible, for a number of reasons, to ensure that all of the below accommodations are put in place, it is the Network's hope that Allies of the Network and other stakeholders across the legal sector and legal professions will aim to take the accessibility of events into consideration, in particular where they are aware that some of their attendees are PWD.
- 1.6 We hope that the Guide will be particularly helpful to our Allies in collaboration on future events and other event organisers covering D&I topics (as it will be expected that PWDs will be in attendance). However, it is our intention that the Guide will inform the organisation of all events in the legal sector, regardless of whether the theme of the event is around disability.

### 2 What to do before the event?

#### *Advertisement/Invite*

- 2.1 When advertising an event or selling event tickets, a request should be made for anyone with additional accessibility requirements to contact the organiser, including an email address or phone number for making that request.

#### *Accessible Documentation*

- 2.2 Where requested by a PWD, event organisers should provide accessible event materials, such as papers and power point presentations, in whichever format the PWD has requested in advance of the event. For example, someone who is vision impaired may require pdf materials to be converted to word and alt text should be provided for graphics and images.

#### *Hybrid Events*

- 2.3 Wherever possible, events should be offered on a hybrid (in person and online) basis to ensure the event is inclusive for those who may not be able to attend in person due to their disability.

#### *Staff Training*

- 2.4 It is advisable to provide disability awareness and assistance training to all staff and volunteers that will be involved in the event.

#### *Accessibility Audit*

- 2.5 It is advisable to conduct an accessibility audit of the venue well in advance of the event to address any potential barriers.

#### *Toilet Facilities*

- 2.6 All in person events should have accessible toilets. Every event organiser should consider if wheelchair users will be attending and if the disabled toilets are practically accessible independently by a wheelchair user.
- 2.7 If your office or event space does not have accessible toilets, you should consider flagging any limitations in advance of the event and/ or discussing any accessibility limitations with any attendees who use a wheelchair. You may consider holding the event elsewhere if possible.

#### *Parking*

- 2.8 Event organisers should consider whether they have accessible parking for in person events. Ideally, this information should be included in an email to the attendees before the event along with information about how to access the location by public transport.

#### *Emergency Planning*

- 2.9 Contingency plans should be in place for the emergency evacuation of any disabled attendees. Any event organiser should collaborate with their facilities team for in person events to make sure the planning around emergency evacuation is in place for those with physical impairments. The event organiser ideally should reassure attendees at in person events that this planning is in place.

#### *Sign Language Interpreter*

- 2.10 For every event where an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing registers for the event, an Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreter should be arranged. Bear in mind the audience and if some of them are outside of Ireland whether booking another language interpreter (e.g. for British Sign Language) would be appropriate. If you are aware of any deaf attendees or speakers at the event, or if you receive any requests for ISL interpreters in advance of the event, you should enquire whether they have any specific sign language requirements or names of any preferred interpreters they wish to share.
- 2.11 We recommend that, given the short supply of ISL Interpreters in Ireland, if no one who is deaf or hard of hearing registers for the event, then the ISL interpreter should not be booked to allow them to be useful to other deaf people who may need them.

- 2.12 As a best practice, it is recommended to book more than one ISL interpreter for big events such as conferences, depending on the number of deaf attendees. This ensures continuous availability of an interpreter to accompany deaf individuals during breaks and networking sessions, while allowing for the others to rest between interpreting presentations. Such a provision is essential to maintain seamless communication and full participation throughout the event.

#### *Transcription*

- 2.13 Ideally a live transcription should be arranged for every event, particularly where events are being broadcast online. In this way an expert transcriber can accurately reflect the discussion that takes place at the event. At the very least a service should be used for the virtual event that allows for transcription to be offered of the discussion.

### **3 Organising the Event Space**

#### *Reserved Seating*

- 3.1 Seats at the front of the event should be reserved for attendees that have visual impairments and might need to be close to the speaker in order to read the slides provided, and deaf attendees who might wish to be close to the ISL Interpreter/ the screens to read any captions.

#### *Environmental Sensitivity/ Quiet Rooms*

- 3.2 For an in person event ideally the host should be able to create a sensory-friendly environment, moderating noise and light where necessary. In particular, we recommend in-person events offer a quiet room for attendees to retreat to during the event for attendees with certain neurodiversity needs.

#### *Remove Physical Obstacles*

- 3.3 For an in person event, event organisers should consider the built environment they are working in and how it might present obstacles.
- 3.4 Care should be taken to reduce obstacles for guide dog users and users of mobility aids or wheelchairs. We suggested at the end of an event a host ask guests to put their chairs back in a way that would reduce such obstacles.

#### *Networking Space*

- 3.5 At many events high tables are used to encourage and facilitate networking opportunities for guests with refreshments stationed at the back of the room. However, this furniture and catering set up is not always accessible/ inclusive. For example, wheelchair users may feel alienated and attendees with physical impairments may not be able to stand at such tables for long periods of time. Thought should be given by event organisers that are planning a set up for networking like this to offering alternatives that are more accessible, e.g., combining with other tables and armchairs that are lower to the ground.

#### *Canine Attendees*

- 3.6 In general, where a service dog is attending the event, their handler (i.e. the PWD) will have everything the dog needs. However, it might be an extra inclusive touch to have a bowl of water for the dog, or even a name tag! Don't forget that your canine attendees are working and you can't pet them.

### **4 On the Day**

#### *Lend a hand*

- 4.1 Ask your receptionist or another person to wait at the main door to ask attendees if they need any assistance making their way to the event space and finding a seat.

- 4.2 If refreshments are being served, ask attendees who are vision impaired or who have other physical disabilities whether they would like any help getting a drink or a snack.
- 4.3 Remember to say your name to attendees as some may have vision impairments and might not be able to read name tags.

#### *ISL*

- 4.4 Ideally an in person event ISL interpreter should be stationed at a point at the event that is easy to see for the audience.
- 4.5 If an in person ISL interpreter is being simultaneously broadcast online ideally there should be separate cameras focused on the interpreter and the speaker or panel.
- 4.6 To accommodate the communication needs of deaf and deafblind attendees, event organisers should ensure that appropriate visual arrangements are in place. This includes providing a neutral background colour, such as black or navy blue, for ISL interpreters to ensure optimum contrast, particularly for the benefit of deafblind individuals. Additionally, good lighting is essential to facilitate clear visibility of the interpreter, whether the event is attended remotely or in person. Such measures will help ensure that all attendees have equitable access to the event's communication.

#### *Physical Descriptions*

- 4.7 At the start of each event (whether in person or online) it is best practice for speakers to describe themselves for the benefit of blind attendees, provided of course that they are comfortable doing so.

#### *Announcement at Commencement of Event*

- 4.8 At the start of any event announcements should be made about where persons might easily access the rest rooms and emergency exits.

#### *Slides and Pictures*

- 4.9 Care should be taken to ensure all forms of documents presented at an event are accessible. This means using alt text on slides that are to be distributed online after an event, ensuring that pictures are described and explained to the audience and/ or providing documentation in braille upon request.
- 4.10 Event organisers should share the event agenda/list of names & order of speakers and panellists, etc/ further & relevant information / draft transcript or slides ahead of the events to the interpreters for preparation.

#### *Breaks*

- 4.11 We recommend ensuring enough breaks are planned during the event.

#### *Technological Aids*

- 4.12 We recommend incorporating hearing loops or other assistive listening devices for attendees with hearing aids / cochlear implants.

#### *Dietary Needs*

- 4.13 Cater to diverse dietary requirements, ensuring food and drink options are clearly labelled.

### **5 Post-Event**

#### *Feedback Mechanism*

- 5.1 After the event, we recommend requesting accessibility feedback from attendees to inform future event planning, including the option to provide feedback in sign language.

*Accessible Documentation*

- 5.2 Event organisers should distribute accessible event materials, such as transcripts and presentations, to all attendees in an accessible format post-event. For example, pdf materials should be searchable and alt text should be provided for graphics and images.

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*If you have any questions, please feel free to email [info@disabilitylegalnetwork.ie](mailto:info@disabilitylegalnetwork.ie).*

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