

Checklist for Accessible & Welcoming Spaces

This resource has been developed by Aberdeen Equalities Participation Network, to help create spaces that people **want** to visit (and return to). We consider both **physical space** and **human interactions**.

Consider Different Types of Accessibility & Inclusion

*Notes for your context: Any unique considerations?
What are you doing well? What could be improved?*

Sensory

Well-lit. Clear pathways with contrasting colours. Limited background noise and echoes. Hearing loops and quiet spaces available. Materials available in different formats (large print, BSL, etc).

Physical

Disabled parking. Taxi drop-off space. Mobility aids available where necessary (railings, lifts, ramps, etc). Clear corridors and pavements, without trip hazards. Enough space to move freely. Places to sit down.

Practical

Accessible toilets, baby changing and crèche facilities. Free or affordable refreshments, meeting a range of dietary needs. Easy to find and navigate. Close to bus routes or based in communities.

Financial

Low/no cost for entry – or certain blocks of time that are more affordable. Equipment provided on site for free or a small fee. Expensive clothing not required.

Communication

Clear signage. Straightforward booking processes. Staff and volunteers easily identified by badges or uniforms. All personnel give clear, consistent information.

Language

All material is presented in plain English. Interpreters, translations, or subtitles are used where possible.

Timing

Opening hours fit around schedules for school and work (including shift work), bus timetables, religious days, and daylight hours for safe journeys home.

Other Elements to Consider

*Notes for your context: Any unique considerations?
What are you doing well? What could be improved?*

Ambiance

Be as **informal** as possible. A **relaxed atmosphere** is much more inviting and less intimidating.

Be **friendly**. Staff or volunteers should take the first step and speak to visitors, ask if they need help, etc, rather than waiting to be approached. **Don't make people feel like a burden.**

Social Rules & Expectations

Don't segregate people who are 'different,' unless that is their preference.

Going into a new space can be intimidating for anyone, and **social rules are not always obvious.** **Explain expectations** where possible.

Invite people to **participate on their own terms.** Respect their **needs and preferences.**

Advertising & Representation

Who sees your leaflets and social media posts? Consider **diverse channels** for advertising: ethnic minority shops, places of worship, SHMU radio and magazines, online community forums, etc.

Consider content and design. Is the information presented clearly? Are different formats available? (BSL, translations, large print, etc)

Advertise accessibility. Tell people **how** your space is accessible. Otherwise they'll never know.

Showcase diversity in your programme of events, advertising materials, etc.

Inclusion & Outreach

Consider **who's not coming through your doors?** What are the barriers?

Reach out and invite community groups to visit your space or attend your event. Ask if there's anything you can do to improve their experience.

For example: a tour of the space, refreshments, language interpreters, crèche (or child-friendly activities), vouchers for free or reduced-cost entry, sensory adjustments, different opening hours, etc.

Some Practical Ideas

Always challenge prejudice and discrimination in your space. Not just for the sake of the person targeted, but to show everyone that **intolerance is not welcome**. Seek help from police if necessary.

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Extending the opening hours and days makes a space or event accessible to a wider range of people.

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Low-cost and flexible room booking encourages community groups to host events, classes and meetings. Local artists can create and rehearse. New organisations and projects can take shape.

Being able to **move tables and chairs** can make space for wheelchairs, buggies, or larger groups.

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A designated quiet area (perhaps on specific days or times) would benefit people with sensory needs in many kinds of spaces and events.

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Introductory events can help people take the first step. Consider open days, coffee mornings, youth or child-friendly events, taster sessions, etc. Advertise these beyond your usual clientele.

Activities that meet specific needs can reduce barriers. For example, film screenings for families with disabled children, women-only swimming or gym sessions, events designed to fit shift work patterns, museum tours in other languages.

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Diversity training can help staff and volunteers understand physical and cultural differences, and recognise the barriers people face.

Ideas for Specific Groups & Spaces

Arts spaces or cafés might invite local communities to contribute to exhibitions, or create themed mini-exhibitions with their own art. This would give local people a space to showcase their work, attract visitors from their communities, and build towards normalising diversity.

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A sports or fitness space might host monthly or quarterly taster sessions of different activities, designed for people of all genders, ages and ability levels. 'Satellite events' held at community centres would allow people to enjoy activities in their local area, reducing barriers for the main space.

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A café, restaurant or pub might set aside an alcohol-free area on certain days and times, making it more attractive for religious minorities, young people, recovering addicts, families with children, and those who prefer to avoid alcohol.

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'Trails' and 'treasure hunts' can connect multiple venues, giving people an excuse to go into different spaces for the first time. Statue trails like the dolphins and lighthouses have been popular, and once someone goes through the door, they're more likely to return. In developing a concept for a trail, ensure it appeals to a range of different people (not just families).

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Consider new possibilities. Are there **different activities or events** that might attract people from diverse communities? This could also help enrich the experience of those who already use your space or attend your events.

Further Resources

More on sensory accessibility:
sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/access-chain-an-inclusive-design-tool

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ACC Interpreting and translation services:
tinyurl.com/inter-trans

How Fair is North East Scotland? Information on demographics and inequality: grec.co.uk/hfines

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Community groups in Aberdeen:
grec.co.uk/community-directory

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Equalities Participation Network: grec.co.uk/e pn