



**Community
Transport
Association**
**Cymdeithas
Cludiant
Cymunedol**



Getting There Together

**Toolkit for Local Authorities: Inclusivity and
Accessibility of the Consultation Process on
Changes to Transport Services in Wales**

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Foreword by the Minister

I welcome this useful guidance which has been prepared on behalf of the Public Transport Users Advisory Panel for Wales. It is designed to support local authorities in engaging effectively with local communities as they develop and implement their plans for local bus services in their areas.

This guidance looks in particular at how we can ensure that the voices of those with protected characteristics are heard. This is about making sure we are in a position to provide the kind of transport services that are needed, in an inclusive way. We do this through assessing the impact of planned changes to transport services on people's lives before we put these changes in place. This means involving them in our decision-making at an early stage and making sure our plans aren't discriminating against any groups, and in particular those that are vulnerable and may be reliant on those services.

This does not mean that we cannot or should not make changes, but these decisions should be taken in a way that involves those affected, is open about the reasons for making changes and about the options available.

I am confident that this guidance will help improve the public sector's ability to design, develop and deliver the inclusive services that communities across Wales need.

Recommendations

1. Ensure that the consultation process is inclusive and accessible through:
 - (i) Early engagement;
 - (ii) Conducting a wide-ranging public consultation exercise using a mixed method approach;
 - (iii) Working collaboratively with community groups and organisations.

2. Never cut or make changes to bus and community transport services without undertaking a full and robust analysis of the impact that this will have on the wellbeing of everyone in the community. Services should be kept running at existing levels until a decision can be reached following a full consultation.

3. Undertake research to better understanding the impact of the cuts to bus services on communities and across all the protected characteristics.

4. Always effectively communicate the outcomes of the consultation process and next steps.

Context

“On the last day our subsidised bus ran before it was cut, there were six passengers. It was a lifeline. I can’t go out now.”

Pat, Cardiff

The loss of bus and community transport services is significantly impacting on all sections of community. Local Authorities, bus operators and community transport organisations have all gradually seen their funding reduced as a result of funding cuts. The fear is that the effects will be significant and far reaching.

Transport is one of the areas devolved to the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government makes decisions about how the money is allocated, for example, bus funding via the Bus Services Support Grant (used to subsidise routes that are not commercially viable, but are seen as socially necessary or to fund not-for-profit community transport). The Welsh Government also funds the concessionary bus pass scheme, although bus operators are only reimbursed for a proportion of the cost of all journeys taken by a concessionary pass holder. Since April 2013 concessionary bus passes can no longer be used on the majority of community transport services in Wales.

Many organisations can demonstrate the impact of the cuts to bus and community transport services to the health and wellbeing on people with protected characteristics e.g. Guide Dogs Cymru have raised concerns that visually impaired people in Swansea, Cardiff and Newport, have not been able to access their GP’s surgery, and other essential services. A report by Sustrans (2012) warned that *“The rising cost of transport and the inadequacy of our public transport system means people feel excluded and isolated, unable to access opportunities, from jobs to healthcare, that many take for granted”*.

Since 2012 there have been further cuts to bus services; it is important that we gain a better understanding of the impact these cuts have on communities through developing a more robust evidence base. More recently a 2014 report by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales emphasised that bus services are crucial to the maintenance of public health, inclusion in society and the prevention agenda.¹

Many third sector organisations assert there has been a disproportionate effect on the lives of some groups of people as a result of decisions already made by a number of Local Authorities across Wales. In difficult times, difficult decisions need to be taken, however bus and community transport are essential resources that need to be maintained for the health and welfare of individuals, communities, the economy, and the environment.

Given the financial outlook for local government it is expected that further difficult decisions will have to be made on the future of bus and community transport services. It is essential that going forward everyone in our community is offered an opportunity to become a partner in the decision making about future bus and community transport services.

As there are a range of bodies involved in running bus services in Wales the situation is complex, but this should not preclude the active engagement and consultation of the community in the decision making process. The proportion of commercially run services versus subsidised services is different across Wales. For example rural areas are more likely to have a higher number of subsidised services when compared to more urban areas which can better

¹ Older People's Commissioner for Wales, 'The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.' http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.sflb.ashx

sustain commercially run services. However Local Authorities decide which services should be subsidised and under certain conditions may financially support a service in an urban area to ensure a bus route is protected. In addition to bus services the community transport sector in Wales also receives funding to run some services.

All operators are required to register routes with the Traffic Commissioners and must give 56 days' notice of any change to an existing service; although operators can ask for a shorter notice period if they have secured the support of the local authority. The shorter period does not allow sufficient time for information on changes to be effectively communicated and therefore short notice requests should only be granted in exceptional circumstances. It is important that passengers, who may rely on these services to get to work or to access important services, are also given as much notice as possible to make alternative arrangements.

Before withdrawing funding from a subsidised service a Local Authority must run a public consultation and conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). Some Local Authorities are very good at the engagement and consultation process and we have included some examples of good practice. However there has been a growing concern that consultations have not been done ahead of making a decision and have not been inclusive or accessible.

Legal Background

As a public body, Local Authorities must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and are also subject to the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. One of the specific duties covers matters of engagement and places a duty on Local Authorities to ensure that any consultation on changes or cuts to bus services is inclusive, accessible and meaningful.

Most bus companies in Wales are privately owned and are not required to run a public consultation on changes to purely commercial routes as they are not subject to the Public Sector Equality Duties. Nevertheless all public transport providers (whether or not they receive any subsidy) have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make their services accessible. Making a service accessible goes wider than just physical accessibility and includes how someone can access information on bus services. The Equality Act requires 'reasonable' changes to policies and practice that may place certain people at a substantial disadvantage and this would include information provision. EU Regulations on Passenger Rights in bus and coach transport requiring non-discriminatory access to transport have been in force since March 2013. Another requirement which is yet to be enacted includes the requirement for information to be provided throughout the journey. This toolkit will be of benefit to all public transport providers as it provides useful guidance which can help ensure that information is accessible.

Regardless of the legalities it makes good business sense for private companies to consult with the public to get a better understanding of what services are, or could be, commercially viable. Gaining community support could in turn motivate communities to run a 'use it or lose it' campaign in support of commercial services.

Introduction

“If there is a consultation, it’s for their benefit...if they [bus services] were owned by me, I’d never let them get away with cutting services.” **Lynda, Vale of Glamorgan**

This toolkit aims to support Local Authorities to ensure that their consultations are accessible, inclusive and meaningful. The purpose of the toolkit is to ensure that all people, particularly those with protected characteristics, are fully and meaningfully consulted when changes are proposed to bus services. The toolkit is intended to be a short, useful and practical document for both elected members and officers to ensure that engagement and consultation takes place with people across Wales, ensuring their needs, concerns and priorities are fully understood when changes to bus services are put forward.

Before withdrawing funding from a subsidised service, a Local Authority should run a wide-ranging public consultation seeking the views of a large sample of the population. Local Authorities need to consider the equalities dimension to transport because of the disproportionate effects on groups of people with protected characteristics resulting from changes or cuts to bus services. It is therefore important that consultations are accessible and inclusive which means that a different approach should be taken, not only in contacting hard to reach groups or protected characteristics groups, but also in conducting the consultation exercise itself.

In addition to running a public consultation there is a legal requirement to conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). An EIA is essential since, if undertaken correctly, it will highlight the disproportionate impacts that cuts to some subsidised bus routes may have on people with particular protected characteristics e.g. disabled and older people. Whilst this toolkit is not

intended to provide information on how to undertake an EIA, it does intend to support Local Authorities to meet their general duty to consult people with protected characteristics. A forthcoming Good Practice Guidance by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales will provide advice and support on carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and scrutiny around changes to community services, including public buses. A good engagement and consultation process should look at the way the proposed changes or cuts to bus services may affect different groups in society: young people, older people, disabled people, women and people from minority ethnic groups. It is essential that people with protected characteristics are not an afterthought when it comes to transport planning given that they are at risk of being disproportionately affected by any changes or cuts to bus services.

Case Study

Mrs J contacted the Older People's Commissioner for Wales since the bus service she used to travel on was coming to an end. She made contact with the company who told her that the route was not being utilised and not generating enough profit to continue. There was no notice to the termination of this route and local people were told about the decision rather than being consulted on it.

Mrs J raised the point that these bus routes between rural towns and villages are a lifeline for older people. Cutting these services renders their bus passes idle and isolates the local business community in her area.

Another passenger advised the Older People's Commissioner for Wales that her local bus route had been altered. She attended a consultation event but didn't feel that the Local Authority had listened to the issues she and others had raised regarding the impact the local community would feel as a result of the proposals. This impact is that older people are limited in the time they can spend in their local town and that onward travel is no longer possible to other towns in the region.

What are the benefits of ensuring that consultations are accessible and inclusive?

“Two million people with sight problems [across the UK] add up to a lot of potential customers. Surely it makes economic sense to do all you can to reach them ”

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Changes to bus and community transport services should not proceed without a full and robust analysis of the resulting impact on the wellbeing of everyone in the community. Consultations that include equalities groups (whether as individuals in the community or actual representative community groups or organisations) are in everyone’s interests, as it ensures that the impact of decisions on various groups are addressed properly as an integral part of the planning and development stage.

It is important that consultations are accessible and inclusive in order to fully appreciate that the poorest in society, older people, young people and disabled people, are more affected by cuts and changes to bus routes than other groups in society.

The direct engagement and the examination of a wide range of innovative partnership processes can lead to positive outcomes for the community and Local Authorities. Early engagement is likely to lead to new innovation solutions or alternative ways to mitigate the impact which produce better final outcomes for both Local Authorities and communities.

Good consultations can lead to more accurate data gathering, especially on the likely impact of service changes, and can help to identify alternative ways to save money and make improvements.

With Local Authorities across Wales likely to face further budgetary challenges during the coming years there is a pressing need to identify new and innovative solutions to deal with the consequences of changes to bus services. Improved engagement and consultation with communities can produce options for efficiencies that can be achieved in less damaging ways e.g. creative solutions to integrate home to school transport with regular bus services or new routes which will increase passenger numbers.

We recognise that there is a cost to the consultation process and a cost caused by the delay in implementing cost savings. However those costs are outweighed by the benefits of consulting. Local Authorities currently have limited resources however consultations do not have to be expensive, especially with the support of community groups and organisations. The consultation process gives an opportunity to change proposals for the better and enable longer term cost benefits.

Additionally Local Authorities could face costly legal challenges if they do not take their duty to engage and consult with communities seriously. Although the threat of legal action should not be the main reason for undertaking engagement and consultation processes, an inclusive and accessible consultation process will enable Local Authorities to give full and proper consideration of the potential impact on different groups. This further ensures that the Local Authority is not in a position where decisions are challenged, or maybe even overturned, through legal action. There are case law examples of Local Authorities who have faced legal action and the costs involved far

outweigh the cost of applying some simple steps early on to ensure a thorough consultation with different groups.

Additionally Local Authorities now have a duty under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to think about the long term impact of the decisions they make. Decisions regarding bus and community transport services must therefore take into account the impact they could have in the future on people living in Wales. Bus and community transport services are essential if Local Authorities are going to demonstrate how they are working to achieve the seven well-being goals.

Most importantly engagement and consultation processes should be inclusive and accessible as some sections of the community are more likely to be more affected, for example:

- People who live in rural areas are already marginalised and cuts to services will only increase isolation and difficulties for many;
- A quarter of all households in Wales do not have a car and the poorer you are, the less likely you are to have a car;
- Older and disabled people are more likely to use buses and are less likely to have access to a car and many, such as those who are sight-impaired, cannot use cars;
- Women are less likely to drive than men and so are more likely to be adversely affected by bus cuts;
- Public transport is essential for many people to access healthcare;
- Social inclusion, people's health and quality of life will be affected by the continued cuts to subsidised bus routes. The people who will be affected therefore have a right to be consulted when such changes are proposed.

Case Study

Cardiff Bus Station

In the autumn of 2014, Guide Dogs and Cardiff Institute for the Blind, (CIB), were represented at three meetings where the imminent closure of Cardiff Bus Station was discussed. Presentations were given and questions were asked, in all it was a great start to the engagement process.

This was done through Cardiff Council's Access Focus Group, (CAAFG), which represents a range of people with protected characteristics. CCAFG has a great track record of supporting Equality Impact Assessments on schemes in the city ranging from St David's 2 through major regeneration projects, and it was confidently expected that engagement would continue.

However, communication on the topic of the Bus Station seemed to stop early in 2015, so that the news of the closure came as a complete surprise. RNIB and Guide Dogs wrote officially to complain about the needs of people with sight loss being overlooked, and that the changes to the location of bus stops put them in danger. We also raised our concerns in the press and on Radio Wales.

Initially, Cardiff Council's response was not satisfactory: They provided print copies of a leaflet outlining the changes and no audio or accessible electronic versions were offered. As this fell far short of what is required in the Equality Act, RNIB and Guide Dogs stepped up the pressure and were eventually invited to a meeting with the Chief Executive. It has now been agreed that a full Equality Impact Assessment will be conducted on the plans for the new Bus Station. Tactile Maps and audio information will be provided by Cardiff Council and Guide Dogs and RNIB will support the Council in disseminating information about where to get them. The Council will support early engagement with the architects and developers to ensure that the Bus Station and Central Square reflects its commitment to inclusivity.

RNIB and Guide Dogs are pleased with these commitments and monitoring of implementation will be through the CCAFG through regular updates to support the development of the EIA.

“Cardiff Institute for the Blind and RNIB service users are people with sight loss who travel to Womanby Street where the organisations are based. Almost all of them were affected by the bus station closure; staff had to accompany them to look for the new bus stops, a lot of vulnerable people were put at risk.”

How to run an inclusive and accessible consultation

“Relatively small adjustments can mean the difference between inclusion and discrimination.” **RNIB**

1. Early engagement

An inclusive and accessible consultation process will only be fully realised if there is early and effective engagement prior to developing proposals for changes or cuts to bus services. Communities should be given the opportunity to become active partners in development of proposals, rather than passive recipients of decisions made for them.

Engagement at the outset of developing proposals will enable Local Authorities to better understand the social need and as a result formulate better options for consideration. It will also ensure proposals and various options have been properly considered e.g. not just top-slicing bus services with the poorest usage or highest cost per passenger journey. The engagement process can also help to gather information on what services are already provided, who uses them and the impact of withdrawing them.

Additionally if proposals and options have been developed with the community from the start, then when decisions are made Local Authorities are less likely to face resistance. Communities can also help to make a subsidised route partly or wholly commercial, for example they may want to run a ‘Use it or Lose it Campaign’.

Engagement with the community can also produce solutions that mitigate against the changes proposed, for example is there a way that costs could be reduced by reducing a service or introducing route changes.

Top Tip:

Set up a group of representatives (possibly coordinated through town and community councils) to look at proposals from each area and at potential options which will give communities opportunities to be involved and have ownership of services.

Top Tip:

Engagement should be with the local community as well as ‘communities of identity’ such as disabled people’s groups (see Appendix B).

Engagement should include a commitment to ongoing and early dialogue with bus and community transport operators in order to develop innovative options that minimise impact of the subsidy reductions which then can be presented when consulting with the wider public. Operators are likely to have ideas for reducing costs and have the aspiration to preserve services where possible, perhaps by reducing vehicles and changing routes.

There may also be options for the development of community transport demand-responsive services, ‘feeder’ arrangements or supplementing existing services by school transport. Offering different transport delivery models, such as demand-responsive transport, will also minimise negative responses by demonstrating that Local Authorities want to continue to invest in public transport.

Engagement should never be tokenistic or a tick box exercise. The engagement process should not be a watered down version of participation that only really

yields legitimation for the real decision-makers, where limited choice effectively means no choice at all.

Local Authorities should allow enough time to carry out a full consultation. If an operator gives notice to cancel, or significantly reduce, a commercial service, an emergency contract should be negotiated to keep a service running at the existing level until a decision can be reached on whether that service should be subsidised.

Case Study

Half day public meetings are held within a community setting. The communities which are most affected by the proposals are always consulted. Quite often public meetings are held to find out what services people feel are most important before any proposals are even considered. Conwy County Borough Council acknowledges that it is important to speak to the actual users of services to understand the exact needs and requirements of the community. Usually they arrange the event themselves rather than through a particular group or as part of any other event as they feel it helps to ensure they get as much interest as possible from the target audience. More often than not they get a good turnout at events which are held in the community/village hall or somewhere central to the town/village.

2. Public consultation exercise

A wider public consultation should be undertaken as soon as possible after proposals have been developed. It is important that the consultation exercise is worthwhile i.e. the decision should not have already been made and the public should be able to influence the final decision.

The recommended consultation period should be over at a twelve week period.

2.1 What should be communicated?

A full explanation of why changes are being proposed should be shared with the public. The process should be open and transparent and include details of what is currently subsidised and how much savings are needed to be found to help gain the trust of the public. If routes are not commercially viable this needs to be explained to the public.

Providing sufficient information in accessible formats (see 2.3) will help to make the consultation exercise inclusive and accessible. The details of the proposals and options should be presented simply and without using jargon e.g. what services will change and how, what will remain and what will be withdrawn. Individuals should be able to glean a good appreciation of the impact the changes will have on them, such as the scale of the changes and timetable.

Top Tip:

Make it clear that no decision has been made and that there is an opportunity to influence the outcome of the decision.

2.2 Who should be consulted?

The consultation should be initially targeted towards those who are affected by the services and those who rely on or benefit from them e.g. consult with people on the bus or at bus stops.

However where new services are being introduced or services extended it is important to consult with non-users and users of other services. It makes good

business sense not to exclude potential customers e.g. those who may not have used services previously because they did not meet their needs, or because they were not aware of the service due to a failure to promote it widely enough or in an accessible format.

As highlighted in Section One it is important to consult with under-represented groups or so called 'communities of interest' to make sure services are relevant to their needs and provided fairly. However early engagement with groups that are disproportionately affected can help to re-shape services in order to improve access for specific groups.

A consultation exercise will only be fully inclusive if all sections of the community are involved, including local businesses.

Top Tip:

Consider generators of bus trips such as health, education and retail establishments.

2.3 How to make the consultation process inclusive?

The mechanisms by which community involvement can be achieved can often result in the reinforcement of existing social inequalities. A good consultation process requires a move away from traditional ideas about participation, membership and activity if they are to be fully inclusive and accessible. A variety of different approaches may be required to reach a diverse audience as a single method or approach will be insufficient. The consultation exercise should be approached with the idea that each member of the community is able to take an active part in the community.

Community groups/organisations (see Appendix B) can help provide an effective way of reaching people. However it should not be assumed that the community speaks with one voice and so consultation with as many representative groups as possible is necessary. Given the complexity sometimes involved in making changes to bus services qualitative research through events involving existing networks and community groups is often the best way of ensuring the consultation process is inclusive and accessible.

Qualitative research can often be more effective in order to gain views on alternative means of providing services especially if there are to be changes to the provision of conventional bus services in some locations or perhaps views on alternative ways of providing demand responsive transport.

Material needs to be effectively targeted and distributed to all those who rely on the affected services. Sending questionnaires to most residential and commercial addresses will ensure that everyone who contributed to them have all been made aware of the consultation and have had an opportunity to influence the process. Questionnaires should be sent out with letters to community groups, resident associations and hard to reach groups. Phrase the questionnaires appropriately to ask about the change, for example if the question asks whether the service should be cut then the response is likely to be no.

Events need to be fully accessible and held in venues which are used by the public including libraries, local community centres, church halls and civic offices. Also consider whether there is transport available to get to the event especially if the event is being held in the evening.

The consultation should be advertised using posters which are widely displayed at all local libraries, local housing offices, civic centres/community hubs/centres/ on the bus and at the bus stop. Adverts in local newspapers can also be effective.

It is important to ensure that websites, leaflets and questionnaires are accessible, easy to read and use. Social media is increasingly used as way to consult widely with communities. Support and advice can be sought from the community groups/organisations being consulted, as well as from Participation Cymru, or the Digital Accessibility Centre.

There is also an opportunity for Local Authorities and bus operators to link in with events which are run by Bus Users Cymru. Each year Bus Users Cymru facilitates over twenty events at locations across Wales. The events are free to attend and attract members of the public (both passengers and non-passengers) in the local area, bus operators' staff and transport officers from Local Authorities. These events should be utilised by the local authorities to inform and consult with the public.

Top Tip:

Make meetings, events and materials accessible (see Appendix C)

How to make materials accessible for people with visual impairments:

- No PDFs
 - No unnecessary capitalisation of whole words
 - No shading
 - Stick to high contrast on Black on white or Black on yellow
 - Keep underlines and italics to a minimum
 - Material that is tabulated is inaccessible to those using Braille and screen readers
 - Stick to non-glossy if published
 - Keep to fonts such as Arial or Calibri that do not have 'tags' (serifs)
 - Never right justify (makes it harder for those using magnification to work out if it's coming to the end of a line)
 - Minimum 14pt font, 16pt if possible
-

Allow sufficient time to analyse results and factor in the time to go back to bus and community transport operators with new proposals.

After a decision has been made produce reports which explain how and why original proposals were modified in light of the consultation or why that option was chosen.

Equality Impact assesses the consultation responses to identify the likely impact of proposed changes or cuts to bus services on the ability to comply with the Public Sector duty. Also use the responses to assess the impact on people with specific protected characteristics. The reports of the Equality Impact Assessment should be published.

Put simply use the consultation results to:

- Highlight possible inequalities
- Investigate their underlying causes
- Remove any unfairness or disadvantage

Example - 100 people responded to a questionnaire, 75 stated they were content to go with an option for reduced routes. Traditionally that would be seen as a good result for the service. However using equalities monitoring, when analysed it may show that the 25 people who were not in agreement were all older people or all had stated that they had a disability. This would indicate that there would be a disproportionate impact on those people with specific protected characteristics in that community.

Conclusion

Making a decision is not the end of the consultation process, it is also very important to communicate the results. The decision made should be explained and summaries from all the responses should be produced i.e. the information from the qualitative and quantitative exercise. The information should also show how and where the original proposals have been modified in light of the responses received. A timeline for what happens next should also be included.

The consultation exercise must be a two way process and Local Authorities should provide feedback on what was said and decided to ensure people know that their voices were heard and their contributions acknowledged and valued. Emphasising the value of consultations can only help to encourage future engagement.

Once the decision has been fully communicated, Local Authorities should work with operators to ensure clear and timely notification of service changes to passengers. It is important that passengers, who may rely on these services to get to work or to access important services, are also given as much notice as possible to make alternative arrangements. It is important that feedback is provided to those who contributed to the consultation, along with the potential impact of any changes.

The toolkit's recommendations, if fully implemented, would be of benefit to everyone using bus and community transport. The recommendations would lead to a more collaborative and community focused approach to making decisions on transport services in the future - 'Getting there together'.

Appendices

Appendix A – References

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Campaign for Better Transport (2013) Campaigner's Guide to: Saving your Bus Service in Wales [Online] Available at: <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/save-our-buses/sob-campaign-pack>

Disability Wales (2015) The Social Model of Disability [Online] Available at: <http://www.disabilitywales.org/social-model/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2015) 'Guide Your Rights to Equality: Transport' [Online] Available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/your-rights/service-users/transport-and-travel>

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RNIB (2006) 'See it Right' [Online] Available at: https://www.ntu.ac.uk/equality_diversity/document_uploads/92879.pdf

Passenger Focus (2012) 'Bus service reviews consulting on changes to local services, A best practice toolkit' [Online] Available at: <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/bus-service-reviews-consulting-on-changes-to-local-services-a-best-practice-toolkit>

Sustrans (2012) 'Access Denied' [Online] Available at: http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/Access%20Denied_eng.pdf

Appendix B – Contacts

Age Cymru
Tŷ John Pathy
13/14 Neptune Court
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CF24 5PJ
Tel: 0292043 1555
Website: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/>

Guide Dogs Cymru
Building 3
Eastern Business Park
St Mellons
Cardiff
CF3 5EA
Tel: 0118 983 8746
Email: Cardiff.MobilityTeam@guidedogs.org.uk
Website: <https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/guide-dogs-cymru/#.VgrLy9GFPIU>

Bus Users Cymru
PO Box 1045
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CF11 1JE
Tel: 029 2034 4300
Complaints Number: 0300 111 0001
Website: <http://www.bususers.org/cymru-wales/about-us>

Cardiff Gypsy and Traveller Project
First Floor West
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Cardiff
South Glamorgan
CF10 5EQ
Tel: 029 2021 4411
Website: <http://cgtp.co.uk/>

Chwarae Teg
1st Floor
Anchor Court
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CF24 5JW.
Tel: 029 2047 8900
Email: post@chwaraeteg.com
Website: <http://www.cteg.org.uk/contact/>

Community Transport Association Cymru
Forge Fach
Hebron Road
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Tel: 01792 844290
Email info@ctauk.org
Website: <http://www.ctauk.org/in-your-area/wales.aspx>

Disability Wales
Bridge House
Caerphilly Business Park
Van Road
Caerphilly
CF83 3GW
Tel: 029 2088 7325
Email: info@disabilitywales.org
Website: <http://www.disabilitywales.org/>

Displaced People in Action
The Exchange Building
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff
CF10 5EB
Tel: 029 2048 2478
Website: <https://www.dpia.org.uk/>

Digital Accessibility Centre (DAC)
Website: <http://www.digitalaccessibilitycentre.org/>

Interfaith Wales
c/o Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales)
58 Richmond Road
Cardiff
CF24 3UR
Tel: 029 2046 4204
e-mail: post@cytun.org.uk
Website: http://www.cytun.org.uk/interfaithwales/interfaith_eng_contact.html

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales
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Email: ask@olderpeoplewales.com
Website: <http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Home.aspx>

Participation Cymru
Website: <http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/>

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RNIB Cymru
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Welsh Refugee Council
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Website: <http://welshrefugeecouncil.org.uk/>

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Appendix C – Accessible Meetings & Events

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1. General guidelines

- Let people know that the meeting/conference is accessible and that support/interpreters can be booked. People will want to know whether they have to pay for anything to come.
- Prepare booking forms in a range of formats.
- Give people the option of e-mail, telephone, fax and post.
- Ask speakers to provide their presentations at least four weeks before the conference so they can be prepared and sent out in different formats if needed.
- You may need to send out papers two weeks prior to the event (also in different formats).

- Simple, clear and colourful signs will help people to get to the meeting room.
- At the beginning of the meeting, set up the meeting rules and let people know about housekeeping and accessible adjustments.
- When dimming lights for the presentation make sure that people can still see their supporter (for example, BSL interpreter). You could try closing curtains to reduce glare but keep the lights on.
- Let staff know that making the event accessible is a priority and that disabled people value a positive attitude. Tell staff about accessibility adjustments you have made and changes you want to make. Make sure they are well prepared to deal with any problems and to make further changes on the day.
- Label food. Say whether it is meat, vegetarian or vegan. Separate meat and fish from vegetarian food.
- Try to avoid pork, beef and shellfish. This covers many dietary needs.
- Make sure that any evening entertainment is also accessible.

2. Ensuring venues are accessible

- Before booking visit a venue you haven't used before to test its accessibility.
- Use a venue checklist to assess accessibility. You should ask the venue about:

- Designated parking spaces of sufficient width to allow wheelchair users to get in and out of the vehicle (with sufficient space either side of the car and at the rear)
- A visible intercom at the entrance, to make sure that deaf and hard of hearing people and people with physical impairments can still get in
- Is there level access between the pavement and the road or the slope leading to the dropped area accessible for people with mobility problems or people using wheelchairs?
- Level entrances and exits?
- Are the corridors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs?
- Are guide dogs allowed into the venue?
- Are wheelchair accessible lifts available? If possible hold the event on one floor only
- Are there accessible toilets?
- Is there a reception desk or bell to call for assistance?
- Are there quiet areas for speakers, performers, exhibitors?
- Does the venue have an induction loop in important locations, for example reception and meeting rooms?
- Can lighting conditions be altered?
- Are electrical sockets easily accessible and suitably colour contrasted?

- Is there a variety of seating available around the building?
- Can you control the temperature in the room? Is the air conditioning too noisy or powerful?
- Is there space for people to move about with trays and space for everyone to be able to sit down at a table in the eating area?
- Are flipcharts and pens available if needed?
- Are there accessible and covered smoking areas outside?
- Are venue staff trained in equality and disability awareness?
- Does the venue's evacuation procedure meet the needs of people with mobility and sensory impairments?

3. Events attended by black and minority ethnic people

- When setting time and date avoid weekends, school holidays and religious holidays. For example, it is not advisable to plan evening meetings during Ramadan when people tend to meet up with their families. A list of religious holidays can be found on www.interfaithcalendar.org
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion>
- Think about Muslim prayer times - these change each day and in winter and summer. See www.islamicfinder.org for more information.
- Plan breaks to meet prayer times.
- Consider setting up a prayer room (that could also be a quiet room).
- Ask people you are inviting whether they need language support. Translation and interpreting should be provided by professionals.

4. Events attended by people with learning disabilities

- Many people with learning disabilities read information in what is called 'easy read' (refer to Alternative Formats guidelines or contact the Equality Team). Enquire whether documents in 'easy read' should be provided. Easy read publications always use pictures to show what the text means.
- Use simple words and pictures. Avoid acronyms and jargon.
- Do not plan too many things in one meeting and put the most important things at the top of your agenda.
- Make information available in audio format (mp3) or on a CD (containing documents in different formats) if people need this.
- Consider using Power Point or a flipchart to support discussion.
- Traffic light cards are useful at meetings. You can have a green card for ok/yes/I agree, a red card for no and orange card for slow down/repeat.
- To help follow the agenda you could put a picture up for each agenda item and take it down when it has been covered.

5. Events attended by people with a visual impairment

- Before the event, ask people whether they would like papers in an alternative format such as Braille, large print or audio (refer to Alternative Formats guidelines or contact the Equality Team for more information).
- If you will be using video during the event check whether an audio described version is available. This means that there is extra narration to tell people about facial expressions, body language, actions and costumes.

- If a Power Point presentation will be given make sure that:
 - simple, clear and large typeface is used (for example Arial or Helvetica, minimum 20 points font size)
 - text is left aligned
 - there are no large blocks of capital letters, no italics and no words are underlined
 - there is a good contrast between the text and the background
 - no information is conveyed solely through the use of images, diagrams, maps and colour
 - strong contrast between the text and the background will make your document clearer and easier to read. Black text on a white background and **strong blue text on a yellow background** provides the best contrast. People with colour blindness may have problems distinguishing **reds** and **greens**. **When using white type make sure the background is dark to provide good contrast.**
- In meetings, it might be difficult for blind or partially sighted people to speak. It might be good practice to say that everyone who wants to speak should make themselves known and the Chair will tell each person when it is their turn to speak. Make sure that only one person at a time can speak.
- Introduce yourself by name and ask other people to do the same (it is important to attach voice to the name).
- Give an idea where people are in the room. If you are going to move away, tell the person so they are not talking to empty space.

- If you are going to leave a blind or partially sighted person standing alone, ask them if they would like to be guided to the perimeter of the room or piece of furniture.
- When offering a seat, ask if they want you to guide their hand to the back or arm of the seat.
- Remember that a guide dog is a working dog and should not be treated as a pet.
- People may need guiding from one part of the venue to another. Make sure staff are on hand to help with this. People may tell you how best to assist them. If not, you should ask them how they want to be assisted.

6. Events attended by deaf or hard of hearing people

- Deaf and hard of hearing people may require various kind of support in order to participate in meetings. Some deaf and hard of hearing use a loop system, others use language support professionals or hearing aids.
- Deaf and hard of hearing people can be supported by language support professionals. These include:
 - British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. For many people BSL is their first language.
 - Relay interpreters. This is an interpreter or a deaf person who puts British Sign Language into a certain form so that the deaf person can understand it.

- There are not enough language support professionals in Wales. You will need to book four to six weeks in advance. Before booking always make sure you get the right kind of interpreter.
- You do not always have to provide 'live' information through an interpreter
 - You could give information in British Sign language out on DVD or on a website (contact the Equality Team for more details).
- You might be asked to provide other forms of communication support:
 - Lipspeakers are trained professionals who repeat what a hearing person or speaker is saying without using voice and can be lipread.
 - Notetakers work mostly electronically and note down the main points of what is being said.
 - Speech-to-text reporter (or palantypist) types out everything that is being said. If there are only a few deaf people using a speech-to-text reporter, the text is usually viewed on a laptop screen but can be viewed on a large screen. This can also help everyone to keep up with what is being said.
- If no communication support is available, talk to people about the alternative steps that can be taken.
- Deaf and hard of hearing people are likely to prefer seats where they have a good view of what is going on and where they can see any communication support they are using.

- Make clear that only one person at a time can speak. If two people speak at the same time, the lipspeaker or a British Sign Language interpreter will not be able to communicate what is being said.

7. Events attended by people who use a wheelchair

- Never lean on someone's wheelchair – this is part of their space.
- Try not stoop or kneel, in other words, lower your body, when communicating with a wheelchair user or a small person. Though if a chair is available use it.
- Never move the wheelchair without the person's consent.
- If they need to write offer a clipboard.
- If a person wishes to transfer from a wheelchair to an ordinary chair, a seat with arms might help them.

8. Events attended by people with mental health issues

- Do not start meetings early in the morning. People who take medication or experience depression may find it hard to get up.
- Keep presentation segments short as some people find it difficult to concentrate for long periods.
- Offer breaks regularly as they might be particularly important for this group.



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