

Making meetings accessible for people with learning disabilities

A GUIDE FOR ALL MEETING PARTICIPANTS
NATIONAL PLATFORM OF SELF ADVOCATES & EQ BURNS

What are access supports and why do we need them?

The way meetings are run often exclude people with learning disabilities. We need small changes to make meetings accessible for us. Our access needs are:



Information in formats we can understand and in advance so we can prepare for the meeting.



Time to understand, to think, and to speak.



Structure so we can follow the meeting easily.



Respect from other participants around communication and inclusion.

Accessible meetings are better for all participants. People with different disabilities will have different access needs. These guidelines come from National Platform members' experiences of attending and chairing meetings.

ACCESSIBLE MEETING GUIDELINES

Before the meeting



Read through these guidelines.



Let the facilitator know about your own access needs if you have any.



Ask if a person with a learning disability will be chairing the meeting.

At the start of the meeting



Please give your name clearly, and the name of your organisation if you are part of one.



If you were given a placecard or a nametag please use it for the whole meeting, including breaks.

During the meeting



Speak clearly and slowly.
Use plain English and explain any jargon.
Use short sentences.
Don't speak for too long.



Check that other people understand you.



Give us a chance to speak and time to speak.



Do not ask for the group to skip breaks. Many of us need these breaks. It can be embarrassing if we have to explain.



Stick to the agenda. It helps us to understand how the meeting will be structured.



Allow time for discussion and summary. It helps us to understand and supports us in contributing and making decisions.



Be aware of your tone and language towards us. We recognise when we are being treated as equals and when we are not.

After the meeting

Please make sure that any decisions or actions made in the time between meetings include your colleagues with learning disabilities. This may take more time than you are used to.



We need time to process what happened at the meeting.



We need time to share information with other people with learning disabilities.



Not all of our members read or have access to laptops or mobile phones and need time to reply.



We need time to prepare feedback and contributions. We often need support to prepare documents and emails.

Please be an ally and only take part in processes that include all disabled voices.



Extra guidelines for online meetings



Display your name and organisation name on screen for the whole meeting.



Mute your microphone unless you are speaking.



Please be patient with those who are new to online meetings or who are learning how to use technology.

Accessibility and inclusion mean scheduling meetings, actions, and decision-making to match the pace of people with learning disabilities.

Please respect our access needs.

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Reference: National Platform of Self Advocates & EQ Burns, 'Making meetings accessible for people with learning disabilities: A guide for all meeting participants', Version 1.2, Dublin 2020.