

Making your festival disabled friendly

A festival is about engaging, serving, celebrating and equipping a community to see what a community can be. That includes making sure everyone – yes ‘everyone’ – feels welcome.

At the same time, the challenge is to create a festival that serves the whole community. And children and young people who are disabled or have learning difficulties have skills and talents to contribute that will be a gift to everyone.

Practical issues

Underfoot

Think about where you have the festival. Is the ground even? Many children/young people with learning, sensory and/or physical disabilities could struggle on very uneven ground.

Car access

Think about disabled car parking. Is there somewhere nearby where a family could park their car if they need to. Or a special dropping off point?

Signposting/labelling tables

Use clear association pictures and Makaton or PEC (picture exchange communication). This is a form of communication, which uses pictures or symbols to support communication. Makaton is words used alongside a signing vocabulary taken from British Sign Language.

Many children/young people use either Makaton or PEC symbols at school. Perhaps when allocating roles to volunteers ask if anyone has knowledge of alternative forms of communication. This is a great opportunity to engage with local special needs schools - see <http://www.makaton.org>)

Facilities

Is the venue near toilets, disability facilities such as a disabled bathroom and changing bed?

Activities involving food

Think about specialist diets, eg. gluten free, wheat and dairy free. Use alternatives or offer alternatives.

Team

Peer Buddy: This is a great role for a young person (peer leader) to be a be-friender, to simply come alongside another peer who may have

learning or physical disabilities. This demonstrates a good example of inclusion.

British Sign Language

Can you make sure at least one team member can communicate using British Sign Language.

It would also enhance your festival if you had people who experience or trained in British Sign Language (Level 2 – interpreters). Scour local churches for help – someone will just love to help.

If so, when promoting your festival you can make this known, something that will speak loudly in itself.

Games and activities

Chill zone

Create a multi-sensory space with things such as light and materials. Use a gazebo with mats on the floor and bean bags; this could be known as the 'light and sound hub'. Create a theme within a theme eg. under the sea or at the beach.

Children/young people with complex needs would enjoy this activity but also could be in a safe environment listening to the crowd in a more comfortable setting which is not as busy.

There could be an activity around making foil fish. The children could put their names on them and hang them up 'in the ocean' and other children could go in there too. Ensure that the gazebo is open - no sides. The MC could go in the ocean and celebrate the community fish, encouraging participation.

Resources: Foil/shining card, child safety scissors, and templates as some need to be already cut out, things to stick on, string, and coloured paper.

Multi - Sensory Activities

Have a couple of sensory activities for children/young people with complex needs and learning disabilities; everyone can enjoy multi - sensory activities.

Musical Instruments

Musical Instruments – make rain shakers, using cardboard tubes, dried peas; then firmly tape round the top and bottom (cardboard tubes can be purchased from a stationers). Then decorate with shiny paper and colourful stickers.

Learn a Paralympic sport in your sports zone area

There are several Paralympic sports you could use/adapt and model at a festival. This will encourage people of different abilities to work together.

An arts space

Are there local 'drama groups' for disabled young people: What groups are there in your local community who you could involve? Be creative with drama, music and movement.

Games

It is helpful to have instructions limited to avoid confusion, observe the crowd and be aware of individual needs. Be prepared to adapt where necessary, use visual prompts like a picture to introduce e.g. Game or Dance.

Use coloured cards to get ready for a start of a game e.g. amber coloured card for get ready, green for start and red for stop/finish.

It is good for the MC and games MC to remember to try and speak as clearly and slowly as possible, to observe the crowd and be aware some people may lip read. Also, not to stand in direct light in order to be clearly seen.

- **Parachute games** are good at involving everyone: use a soft ball that people around the parachute can throw in the air.
- **A volleyball competition** with the parachute as a net.
- **Sign a song:** Choose one or two simple songs that everyone knows and sign them
- **Chair dance:** Place about three rows of chairs with no more than four chairs in each row in the centre and showcase the dance. Then invite people to be involved. Use musical instruments like the drums to create movement and sound. One example of a chair dance could be movement to a specific piece of music using material, ribbons and light to create colour and a story. It is about working together to create the experience.

Put it all in context

The ideas on this sheet have been adapted from those in the Comprehensive Guide to running a Community Festival produced by Fusion Youth and Community.

To purchase the full Festival Kit with everything you need to run an inclusive festival go to <http://bit.ly/wAWwIK>

More Than Gold
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