

Planning Accessible Meetings and Presentations



**Glasgow Centre
for Inclusive Living**

INTRODUCTION

Most people delivering meetings or training already have strong core practice.

Accessibility is often shaped by a small number of additional choices about how information is shared, how people participate, and how barriers are removed.

Not everyone will access information, communicate, or engage in the same way. Some accessibility requirements will be obvious, while others may not be visible or known in advance.



The best starting point is usually to ask participants what they need and remain flexible enough to respond.

Often, small adjustments can make a significant difference to someone's ability to take part.

"Accessibility is rarely about one major adjustment. More often, it comes from thinking ahead, asking what people need, and being willing to adapt."

UNDERSTANDING YOUR PARTICIPANTS

When planning a session, it is useful to recognise that some participants may not be able to:

- see or read information clearly
- hear speech clearly
- move easily around a room
- follow fast-paced discussion or large amounts of information
- communicate or participate using one specific format

A person's requirements can also change, sometimes at short notice.

Including a simple question when people register or receive joining information can help identify any adjustments that would support participation.

People may request things you had not considered, or they may need to participate in ways that are not immediately obvious, such as taking notes electronically, recording information for personal use, contributing in writing, or taking breaks at specific times.



BEFORE THE SESSION

SHARE INFORMATION IN ADVANCE

Access to information is one of the most common barriers to participation.

Providing agendas, slides and supporting documents in advance allows people to prepare, use assistive technology, or adjust materials to suit their own needs.

Where possible, provide documents in formats that can be adapted by the user. Documents that allow changes to text size, spacing or colour are often more accessible than content that is fixed or difficult to edit.

If information is only available through screen sharing or displayed on slides during the session, some participants may not be able to access it effectively.

ARRANGE SUPPORT EARLY

Some sessions may require additional arrangements such as interpreters, captioning, hearing support equipment, or accessible seating layouts.

These are often easiest to organise when requirements are identified in advance.

If interpreters or captioners are involved, consider sharing materials beforehand so they can prepare effectively.



MAKING INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

Information is often communicated visually through slides, charts, diagrams and written notes. This can create barriers if important messages are only available on screen.

Try to ensure that key messages are always explained verbally rather than relying solely on visual information.

For example:

- explain what a chart is showing rather than expecting participants to interpret it independently
- describe the important features of images or diagrams
- avoid phrases such as "as you can see here" unless the information is also explained

The aim is that understanding does not depend entirely on being able to see the screen.



CONSIDER PACE

Accessibility is not only about format.

The pace of a session can have a significant impact on participation. Fast moving discussion, large amounts of information, or frequent changes of topic can make it difficult for some participants to engage fully.

Allowing time for questions, pauses for reflection, and regular breaks can help people process information and contribute more effectively.



POSITIONING AND SOUND

Consider where you are positioned when presenting and whether all participants can see and hear clearly without needing to move.

If microphones are available, use them consistently. Avoid speaking while facing away from the audience or moving around the room if this makes it harder for people to hear.

SUPPORTING PARTICIPATION

Accessibility is about more than accessing information. It is also about being able to contribute.

Many sessions use flipcharts, whiteboards, wall exercises or activities that require movement around the room. These approaches can be useful, but they are not always accessible.

Content written on flipcharts may be difficult to read from a distance, difficult to access online, and is often unavailable once the session has ended.

Similarly, activities that require participants to move around the room may create barriers for some people.

When using these methods, consider whether there are alternative ways to contribute. Shared documents, online collaboration tools, sticky notes, chat functions, or verbal contributions may allow more people to participate equally.

ONLINE AND HYBRID MEETINGS

Online and hybrid meetings present additional accessibility considerations.

When some participants are joining remotely, it is important to ensure they can contribute as easily as those in the room.

Good practice can include:

- repeating questions asked in the room
- using captions where available
- describing visual information being shared
- avoiding side conversations that remote participants cannot hear
- checking that online participants have opportunities to contribute

AFTER THE SESSION

Accessibility does not end when the meeting finishes.

Providing a short summary, sharing presentation materials, or making outputs available afterwards allows participants to revisit information and contribute to ongoing discussions.

This can be particularly important for people who use assistive technology, need extra time to process information, or were unable to engage fully during the session itself.



FINAL THOUGHTS

Accessibility is rarely achieved through one adjustment. More often, it comes from thinking ahead, asking people what they need, and being willing to adapt your approach.

Small changes can make meetings, presentations and training sessions more inclusive, helping more people to access information, participate fully, and contribute their views.

ACCESSIBILITY AT GCIL

Our meeting rooms in Glasgow can provide a range of accessibility features, including hearing loop technology and flexible room layouts. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

Tel: 0141 550 4455 www.gcil.org.uk