Introduction: Why accessibility is important

Accessibility has become a buzzword lately - everyone has an aspect of it they significantly care about. This document is a guide to how Young Liberals as both an organisation and individual people can try their best to be as understanding and as open as we can be. This document was put together via charity websites, personal communications with individuals, government advice, The Access Guide 2015 created by Charley Hasted and support of the 2019 Young Liberals executive. If you feel anything should be added to any of this document please, please email the current Accessibility, Diversity and Standards officer for Young Liberals.

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Accessibility issues to consider - this is a very small list but are some of the most common that you may encounter. It is important to understand every person has different needs and they, and their carer if they have one, will know their needs best. Someone with a disability is still a someone - talk to them and ask what you can do for them!

- Anxiety
- Autism Spectrum Disorder or Aspergers
- Colour blindness
- Depression
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Hearing impairments
- Physical disabilities
- Visual impairments

Disclosing a disability

When an individual tells you about their disabilities, it can be a very important step for them. Some people are open about it, but others prefer to keep it quiet. Treat it as the personal information it is - do not discuss it with other people and do not bring it up in front of others unless the individual has. [perhaps mention that disability is a protected characteristic and therefore under GDPR needs an even greater level of care when handled]

Contents

Conferences and events

How to make an event accessible

- Advertise the access! Many individuals with access needs do not go to events for fear of disappointment. Advertise that your event is accessible [and in what way]
- Allow people a place to disclose their access needs - this helps both you and them, so neither party is surprised. [perhaps you need to be specific that this place is a form, (emails never get sent), GDPR]
- Try to follow this document but ultimately listen to the individuals themselves - they know their access needs best.
- Be flexible. Willingness to change is one of the best forms of accessibility.

Venue

What a venue MUST have

- Lifts or no stairs
- Disability toilets (possible radar key)
- Close toilets (for illness' or chronic disabilities)
- Wide doors (for wheelchairs)
- Suitable chairs (moveable, to create wheelchair space)
- Hearing loops
- Microphones (ensure people actually use these)

Note: If your venue does not have any of these essential access requirements, please highlight this in the Event Bio / Introduction.

What a venue SHOULD have

- Controlled lighting
- A quiet room with stim toys and ideally low lighting
- Nearby accessible parking

Transport

- Put distances as well as the time it takes e.g 200m instead of 5 minutes.
- Be aware of hills or even steep steps/stairs with no lift.
- Consider distances and stairs inside the venue - if cars can get close to the doors but the room is on the other side of the building, people may struggle still.

Emergencies

- Ask the venue for its protocols for emergencies including possible evacuation of disabled individuals. This is vital if the venue has lifts and the event is not on the ground floor.

During the events

- Add breaks to the agenda, with an appropriate length of time. This both allows you to run over and helps keep the day easier to deal with.
- You may not know someone requires a hearing loop until five minutes before, so get to know the equipment or have someone on the team who does.
- Be flexible. Disabilities often impact differently at different times. A wheelchair user may be part-time, and using a cane on the first day but arrive in a wheelchair on the second day.

Social situations

Socialising is a key part of YL and can be the main draw, however, not everyone is comfortable in a pub atmosphere. Be aware of individuals who may not drink or do not enjoy loud noises. If the plan is to go somewhere loud, try to offer a quieter alternative. This can be better for people with **autism spectrum disorder**, **anxiety** or just individuals who do not want to be in a loud atmosphere that evening.

- Offer travel support i.e taxis or explained, accessible bus routes
- Where possible, book a small room off to the side as a quiet room for evening events like the main conference
- Ensure people know there is no pressure to stay or engage in every activity
- Organise events that are not solely around drinking. Try and avoid pubs, or make it clear there is no pressure to drink. This does not have to prohibit drinking.
- Be aware of venues that may make people feel uncomfortable - this is not just relevant for disabilities but for all liberation groups.

Visual Impairments

- Make all slides available online - offer to print off in advance if required
- Be prepared to translate things to braille, but the majority of young people do not use this anymore, meaning it is not a priority.
- If there are handouts, make them bigger/online in word/google docs not pdf.
- No sudden light changes (flashing lights can be annoying)
- Remember to put lights back on if lights are dimmed for a presentation
- Be prepared to guide people in unfamiliar locations to the toilets or back out into familiar locations.

Useful resources

- AccessAble - https://www.accessable.co.uk/ - Accessable have information on the accessibility of venues all over the country, including a number of universities.
- Good Access Guide - http://www.goodaccessguide.co.uk/index.php - Access guides for a range of places including hotels. Smaller number of venues than Disabled Go.
- RADAR Keys - https://www.radarkeys.org/ - RADAR is the National Key Scheme for accessible toilets and most toilets require RADAR keys to open them. If you organise events regularly as part of a branch or society it may be worth buying one to have around.
- Equality Advisory Support Service- http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/ - if there is an issue with a venue EASS can provide advice for dealing with it. There is an advice line and number of template letters that can be used for free.

Campaigning

Creating Documents

Colour Blindness

- Test out websites and posts for colour blindness
- https://www.toptal.com/designers/colorfilter
- https://michelf.ca/projects/sim-daltonism/
- https://snook.ca/technical/colour_contrast/colour.html#fg=33FF33,bg=333333

Visual impairments

At the very least we should aim to print off separate posters and leaflets for visual impairments. Ideally, they should be suitable for visual impairments anyway. The following is advice from the Royal Institute of the Blind.

- Minimum text size of 14 point for clear print; minimum text size of 18 point for large print
- Text such as page numbers, labels, superscripts should be the same size as the body text
- Legible font such as Arial
- No italics or underlining
- Adequate line spacing
- Adequate space between paragraphs
- Left aligned text
- Text is horizontal
- Words and single pieces of information are not split onto two lines unless unavoidable
- Columns avoided or reduced in number if appropriate

- If columns are used, there is adequate space between them and possibly a vertical dividing line
- Good contrast between text and background - do not use yellow on white, blue on grey
- No information conveyed solely through colour, images or diagrams
- No text overlapping images
- Paper is non-glossy
- Paper is of sufficient weight to avoid show-through

Physical Campaigning

What we want from local parties

Campaigning is much more common in local parties than Young Liberals, which makes sense as travel issues and organising national Young Liberals is both difficult and only effective if done rarely. To engage young people with campaigning, we need to engage them with local parties. Doing so on their behalf can ease the stress and anxiety of going out and talking to the public, especially as young people can be inexperienced.

Communicate with your local party to try and work with them - it can be difficult to convince them that creating events accessible to young people will be worth it, but it will. Ask them to make socials inclusive of young people - cheap, non-alcoholic events with appropriate timings for young people. This can help make individuals feel more valued and part of the group and more comfortable campaigning.

Anxiety

Campaigning can be incredibly intimidating and as Young Liberals, a high number of people may be campaigning for the first time. Beginning with leaflet pushing and getting individuals used to going door to door can be a good way to ease them in, before canvassing and surveying. Pairing systems with an experienced and confident person can also maximise time and encourage individuals. This should also be considered for individuals with disabilities such as **visual** or **hearing impairments**.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autistic people can struggle with new situations, so campaigning is a hotbed for potential to struggle. The advice given for **anxiety** is all applicable here.

Dyspraxia

Disabilities like dyspraxia are often invisible, it manifests as clumsiness. If an individual requests to use a lift or be given houses without stairs to the doorstep, be accommodating.

Marches

- Encourage people to bring/remember:
  - Water
  - Suncream
  - Hat
  - Raincoat
  - Emergency money/food
  - Medication
  - Download an anxiety app incase of a meltdown

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Large crowds can be difficult and noisy - where possible, have a smaller group of people on the outskirts, either at the front or back. Be accommodating if people wish to leave or move away from the crowd/noise.

Physical Disabilities

- Large crowds can make manouvering difficult.
- A wheelchair user can benefit from having several people around them to try and ensure people will move out of the way.
- Individuals with physical disabilities who do not use a wheelchair may be slower and supporting them and letting them go at their own pace is important.

Online - behaviour, posts and socialising

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Be careful in discussion that the individual may not recognise jokes, especially without emojis.
- Consider how people may interpret things - autistic people can struggle to think from another persons perspective, so be patient with people.

Colour Blindness

- Test out websites and posts for colour blindness - if someone says they struggle with a certain colour, it should be simple to replace/not use certain colours.
- https://www.toptal.com/designers/colorfilter
- https://michelf.ca/projects/sim-daltonism/
- https://snook.ca/technical/colour_contrast/colour.html#fg=33FF33,bg=333333

Visual impairments

- Plain text all pictures with enough detail to allow someone with a visual impairment to fully understand the point the photo is making. This may include writing any text on the picture out.
- Plain texts should be in the main body of the main post, not as a comment.
- Plain texts for photos in comments should ideally be within the post of the photo, but it is acceptable to put another comment if this is difficult. I.E with GIFs.