

**WE WANT TO STAY  
UP LATE, WE WANT  
TO HAVE SOME FUN!**

**A GUIDE TO  
BETTER ACCESS  
FOR PEOPLE  
WITH A LEARNING  
DISABILITY BY:**



**GIG  
BUDDIES**

**with Thera Trust**

"HI, MY NAME IS \_\_\_\_\_"

HELLO!

We are Gig Buddies with Thera Trust, and we aim to enable adults with a learning disability to live an active and independent social life. We do this by pairing adults with a learning disability to volunteers who share the same interests, to get out whenever they want, and enjoy their shared passion together... whatever their 'gig' is!

We also love making friends with venues and arts organisations in the communities where we work. This enables us to connect our members, and the wider social care community, with mainstream events in their local area, and hopefully make them more accessible along the way.

Picking up this guide is a great first step in making your venue, and therefore our community, country, and hopefully world, more accessible for people with a learning disability.

'We want to stay up late, we want to have some fun!' - The immortal words of punk band Heavy Load, founders of the Stay Up Late campaign . We hope that this guide can help make their lyrics a reality.

"I'd never been to Sneaky Pete's before. It was a nice venue and the staff were really friendly."  
- Richard, Gig Buddy.

**31% OF ADULTS  
WITH A LEARNING  
DISABILITY FEEL  
THERE AREN'T  
ANY ACCESSIBLE  
EVENTS FOR THEM\***

\*Statistic taken from Mencap's 'Going Out and Nightlife Survey' 2019

People with a learning disability have hidden access requirements that can be a barrier to being included at events. We want to highlight these issues and help make your events more accessible for people with a learning disability. Becoming more accessible doesn't just benefit people with a learning disability, it makes your events more accessible for everyone!

*SAM MAGGS*

Samuel Maggs

Gig Buddies with Thera Trust - Project Manager

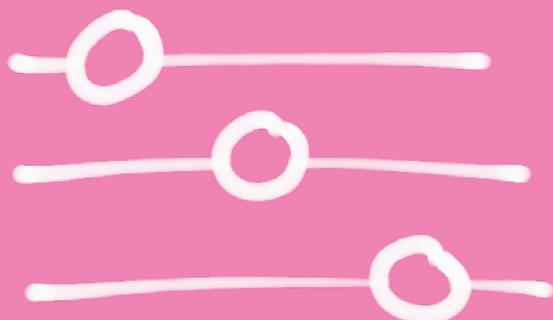
# "I FOUGHT THE LAW, AND... THE LAW WON."

It's not just our wish for venues and events to be more accessible, it's also the law. Under the Equality Act 2010 it's the duty of venues and events organisers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to enable people with a disability to access events.

## SO, WHAT ARE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS?

Adjustments are one of the most important elements of the Equality Act. Organisations providing services or public functions all have a duty to make reasonable adjustments. Various factors influence whether a particular adjustment is considered reasonable. The test of what is reasonable is ultimately an objective test and not simply a matter of what you may personally think is reasonable.

What's reasonable for you and your event will depend on the size and nature of your organisation and the type of service or event that you're organising. You won't be required to do more than is reasonable for you. What's more, many of the adjustments that you can make to improve accessibility are quite inexpensive.



When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable you can consider:

- ⊗ How effective the change will be in avoiding the disadvantage the disabled person would otherwise experience.
- ⊗ Its practicality.
- ⊗ The cost.
- ⊗ Your organisation's resources and size.
- ⊗ The availability of financial support.

**YOUR OVERALL AIM SHOULD BE, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, TO REMOVE OR REDUCE ANY DISADVANTAGE FACED BY A DISABLED PERSON.**



**70% OF ADULTS  
WITH A LEARNING  
DISABILITY WOULD  
LIKE TO GO OUT  
MORE IN THE  
EVENINGS.\***

# THE GOLDEN RULE: BE OPEN AND HONEST.

Being clear and honest is always our first piece of advice. Providing clear information about what to expect at a venue allows people to confidently plan their night out. Be honest about what you can offer and what the limitations of your venue are. If someone isn't able to access your venue for any reason, it's a lot better for them to find this out when looking for tickets on your website, rather than when they turn up at the door.

For every tip, idea, and piece of advice in this guide, we encourage you to make this information clear and easy to find. Make sure that you have a 'Venue Accessibility' page on your website, and ensure that it's kept up to date.

## EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

Let people know about access info:

- ⊗ On your site before people book tickets.
- ⊗ In their ticket confirmation email.
- ⊗ When they get to the venue. Make sure all your staff are confident in answering people access questions.

**“You don't always see a disability.”**  
**- Cammy, Gig Buddy.**

# ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION



Here are some quick tips to make your communications as accessible as possible:

- ⊗ Make it simple and clear. Provide short chunks of information that tell people the key points.
- ⊗ Use clear sans serif fonts as much as you can. Arial and Helvetica are great for this!
- ⊗ Use images where you can. Making information visual opens up your communications to even more people. To go the extra step, audio/video communications are even more accessible!
- ⊗ Text should be high contrast against it's background. Black text on white is a great way to go, but if you want to add colour, make sure to keep them minimal and make sure you can read the text.
- ⊗ Avoid putting text over busy images.
- ⊗ You can always make an 'easy read' version of any materials you put out. An example of this guide's intro in an easy read format is on the next page.
- ⊗ Ask people for feedback and listen to what they have to say!

“I'm ok as long as there's not too much information. Use simple words rather than big complicated words.” - David, Gig Buddy.



Gig Buddies enable adults with a learning disability to live an active and independent social life.

social

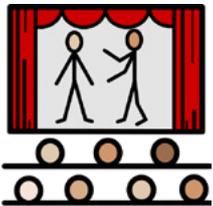


friends



gig

We pair our members to volunteers with similar interests, so they can get out to events together.



venue

We also work with local music venues and arts organisations to help make the community more accessible.



guide



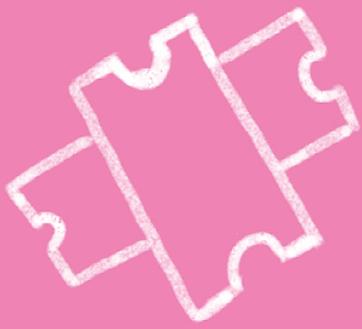
accessibility

This guide contains tips on how to be more accessible for people with a learning disability.



community

Becoming more accessible can benefit everyone, not just people with a learning disability.



# FREE TICKETS FOR PERSONAL ASSISTANTS

## WHAT IS THIS, AND WHY IS IT NEEDED?

A person with a learning disability may need a PA for a variety of reasons; to support them with travel, communication, making decisions or personal care. This might be a member of their family, or a friend, but it's often someone they pay to support them.

If a person wants to go to an event, they will often have to pay for their PA's ticket as well. Many people with a learning disability have a low income and paying for an extra ticket for their support can make attending a gig unaffordable. This can mean that it's often unrealistic, or even impossible, for someone's interests and hobbies to become part of their regular social life.

Someone's support is there to help them at that event. A free ticket means that person knows their support can be there with them. - David, Gig Buddy.

Providing a free ticket for their support takes away the financial pressure and provides more opportunities to get out to gigs and have a great time!

## IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Many venues and promoters ask people to provide evidence that they require a free PA ticket. We strongly oppose this practice. Many people feel very uncomfortable having to 'prove' that they need support, and this is likely to put people off. We feel a 'no questions asked' approach can lead to a more honest and trusting relationship with your audience.

**WE'VE ALL GOT A  
PART TO PLAY IN  
MAKING SURE PEOPLE  
WITH A LEARNING  
DISABILITY ARE ABLE  
TO GO OUT TO GIGS,  
AND NOT SPEND A  
LIFE IN THEIR OWN  
PERSONAL LOCKDOWN!**

**- STAY UP LATE**

# EARLY ACCESS AND QUEUE JUMPS



Knowing that you can get early access to a venue, or having a guaranteed place at the front of the queue, can dramatically help reduce anxiety for someone when planning their night out.

There are multiple reasons why getting early access to the venue can be important to someone. Beating the crowds allows someone to become accustomed to the space without being overwhelmed by lots of other people.

“We were able to enter the venue before the main crowd which meant we could get some seats. This was very helpful.” - Richard, Gig Buddy.

If you're a seated venue, this allows someone to find their seat more easily at a pace they're comfortable with. If you're typically a standing venue and have little seating, early access allows individuals to secure seats should they need them.

“When me and my buddy went to the fringe we got to go to the front of the queue. That was good as it really helps me because I find it hard to stand for long periods of time” - Angela, Gig Buddy

# EAR PLUGS AND EAR DEFENDERS



Ear plugs are a low-cost, effective way to make gigs more accessible for all. Having a stash of disposable foam ear plugs behind the bar can help someone stay in the gig having a great time, without becoming overwhelmed by the sound.

“It was really loud, and I had to wear earplugs. We got these for free by asking at the bar.” - Bilal, Gig Buddy.

Many people find putting ear plugs inside their ears very uncomfortable, and prefer to wear ear defenders. However, these aren't one time use items meaning that they are more expensive, and if you're handing them out at gigs, they would need to be cleaned when returned.

“Some people find ear defenders much more comfortable than ear plugs, and can be a lot better at blocking noise out.” – David, Gig Buddy.





# QUIET SPACES

If you can provide a quiet space, it can massively benefit people with a learning disability. The space can be a huge benefit to anyone who has sensory issues and may need a break in order to enjoy a show.

“I remember when I first went to LGBT Pride in Glasgow, they organised a quiet space and I really appreciated that. It made me feel better, and the staff came in and spoke to us. The crowd outside was so big, it was absolutely jam packed. I was sh\*\*\*ing myself when I first saw it! The other good thing about a quiet space is you can actually speak to people!”

- Stuart, Gig Buddy.

If you can provide a quiet space make sure that:

- ⊗ It's clear what the room is for and where it is.
- ⊗ It's comfortable. A store room might be quiet, but it's not very welcoming. Chairs, cushions, and ambient lights all help in making quiet spaces a place for relaxation away from the busy gig.





# OTHER THINGS YOU CAN LET PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT:

## ACCESSIBLE TOILETS

If you have an accessible toilet, let people know!

If you don't have an accessible toilet, let people know!

Also tell them where the nearest one is. Get in touch with the people who run the space that it's part of, explain the situation and see if they'll open it up to your audiences.

## SET GUIDES

Set guides can greatly reduce anxiety and allow people to prepare or remove themselves from part of a set that they will have difficulties with. If you can provide this in advance it can make coming to your events accessible and more enjoyable for people who have sensory issues. This is especially important if you use strobe lights or smoke machines.

**80% OF ADULTS  
WITH A LEARNING  
DISABILITY WERE IN  
BED OR READY FOR  
BED AT 8PM ON A  
FRIDAY NIGHT.\***

# WHERE CAN I GET EVEN MORE INFORMATION?!



**Gig Buddies with Thera Trust** can also provide learning disability awareness training for venue staff, and help with creating accessible resources.



**Stay Up Late** created Gig Buddies in 2012. They believe that people with learning disabilities have the right to stay up late and have some fun.

<https://stayuplate.org>



**Thera Trust**, our parent organisation, provide support to 3000 adults with a learning disability across the UK.

<https://thera.co.uk>

"WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE YOUR  
NAME, AND YOUR NUMBER,  
AND I'LL GET BACK TO YOU."



Website: [www.thera.co.uk](http://www.thera.co.uk)



Facebook: [/GigBuddiesThera](https://www.facebook.com/GigBuddiesThera)



Twitter: [@GigBuddiesThera](https://twitter.com/GigBuddiesThera)



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