

Protest For All



A guide for climate change groups to help them understand how to make their protests and meetings better for Disabled people.

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Jargon Buster

We have written this guide in **Plain English** to make it **accessible** to as many people as possible. Where words need more explaining we have put them in bold to let you know that explanation are in this Jargon buster.

Please include a jargon buster in your own documents and make your language clear and simple. This will mean more people understand what you are saying and can support your work.

Accessible: This is when people are able to understand or use something because it meets their needs.

Accessibility: Is about what on offer is **accessible**.

Ableist: Acting in a way that puts non-Disabled people's needs first and not thinking about the needs of Disabled people. Often people don't even recognise they are doing it.

Access needs: Something a person needs to communicate, learn, or take part in an activity.

Activist: Someone who takes action to try to change the world and make it better.

Advertising: Drawing attention to an event or object to persuade people it is something they want.

Alternative descriptions: Text that is added to pictures that lets blind people or visually impaired people understand visual information.

Buddy system: When people are paired up with another person look after each other during a protest.

BSL interpreter: A person who lets people who use British Sign Language (BSL) talk to people who don't understand BSL.

Climate Change: The planet is getting dangerously hot because of how people are using **fossil fuels**. This is leading to lots of problems locally and around the world.

Disability Discrimination Act: A UK law made in 1995 that says people shouldn't treat Disabled people unfairly.

Disruption: When protestors stop something from happening or make it more difficult to draw attention to their message. For example, they might block a road to draw attention to the damage **fossil fuels** to the climate.

Dropped kerbs: Parts of the pavement where the edge slopes down to let wheelchair users and people with pushchairs cross the road.

Easy Read: This is a version of a document that is made for people with learning difficulties. It uses simple English and has pictures to help.

Eco-ableism: This is when people who are acting to look after the planet are **ableist** and upset Disabled people by not thinking about how their actions could hurt them.

Emissions: These are the gases made by using **fossil fuels**. They are making **climate change** happen.

Exclusion: This is when people are unfairly left out.

Fossil fuels: Fuels like oil and gas that cause hurt the planet.

Gazebo: A tent with open sides that is big enough to walk around in like a room.

Gradient: This is how steep a slope (like a wheelchair ramp) is.

Hearing loop: A sound system for people who are hard of hearing.

Hub: A fixed place where people can come and go from.

Inaccessible: When people's needs aren't met so they can't use or understand something.

Impairment: This is a difference in a person's body or mind, like missing an arm. The person with an **impairment** becomes a Disabled person when they are treated unfairly because of that **impairment**.

Legal system: This is how it is decided whether someone has broken the law. It decides if someone should be punished or not.

Net zero: This is when a place or organisation makes very little of the gases that harm the planet. This means they aren't making **climate change** worse.

Noise cancelling headphones: These are headphones people can wear to make the sounds around them less noisy.

Not yet Disabled: We sometimes use this phrase to talk about people who are not Disabled to make it clear that most people become a Disabled person at some point in their life.

Personal assistants: A person who supports a Disabled person to do the things they need and want to do in their daily life.

Plain English: This means writing in a simple way that is **accessible** to lots of people. It avoids jargon and uses simple sentences that aren't too long.

Play our part: This a phrase that means everyone doing a little bit to help make things better.

Problem-solving: Being good at noticing problems and working out how to fix them.

Protest/Protesting: Being loud about a problem to show what is wrong and try to get it changed for the better.

Samba bands: A band where everyone has a drum that they carry around while they walk.

Straight-jackets: Clothes that hold a person's arms close to their chest, so it is hard to move and do things.

Sustainability: A way of living and doing things that are good for the planet and people by slowing down **climate change**.

United Nations: An organisation that helps governments across the world to work together.

Venue: The place where an event takes place.



Why Use This Guide

"I find protests very difficult. If access information was shared and planned right from the beginning it would help people a lot." – Joanne, Steering Group Member.

The **United Nations** says that Disabled people are one of the groups most hurt by **climate change**. For example, Disabled people are up to four times as likely to die or be hurt in disasters as any other group. We are also hurt by **climate change** plans that don't include us. For example, the UK plastic straw ban lowered ocean plastic waste by only about 0.02% by weight. But plastic straws were used by some Disabled people to stop them choking before **not yet Disabled** people started using them. This means that the oceans are still full of plastic but people who need plastic straws to drink safely now face a new barrier. This kind of **exclusion** is called **eco-ableism**. **Eco-ableism** can make Disabled people feel like action on **climate change** isn't for us. But we are over 20% of the population, so the big changes needed to stop **climate change** can't be made without us.

We are also often left out and ignored by groups **protesting** about **climate change**. It is our right to have our voices heard and **climate change** groups are missing out on our skills. To be Disabled is to live in a world that is unfriendly to you and not made for your needs. Because of this Disabled people become very good at **problem-solving**. As **climate change** makes the world more unfriendly for everyone, Disabled people's skills and knowledge can help everyone **problem-solve**.



Think about the **climate change activist** Greta Thunberg who is autistic. She has said that being autistic helps her understand what is important and come at the problem of from a new angle.

Climate change groups are missing out on the skills of many Disabled people like Greta because their protests and meetings are inaccessible. But simple changes mean lots more people could be part of pushing for the future we all want and need. This guide offers ideas for anyone **protesting on climate change** to make what they do more accessible.

It is written by Disabled **climate change activists** who understand that groups often don't have much money, many people, or time. You might not be able to do everything in this guide. We don't need you to be perfect or make it so we can do everything. We do need you to do your best to include us. This starts with letting people know they can ask for changes and being creative about how to make them instead of giving up before you even try. For example, if you are climbing onto a roof to put up a banner, we don't need you to make it so that everyone can climb up with you, but some Disabled people might want to help from the ground or home. It is about making sure our voices can be heard and we can **play our part**.

Climate change

needs action and fast. With a little care and careful thinking this can be done in a way that includes everyone.



Problems People Experience

Every Disabled person is different and has different needs. The below won't cover all Disabled people or all their needs. Not everyone will experience the problems listed. However, reading it will help you start to understand how your **protest** might be **inaccessible** for different Disabled people.

People with Mobility Issues: Some people have difficulties moving around. Some of them are wheelchair users. Using **inaccessible venues** might mean they can't get into your meetings. **Protests** on uneven ground or grass might make it hard for them to walk or roll around the site. They might need to sit down often or be unable go the whole length of a march. Sitting down without good seating, like in the middle of a road, will often not be possible. They might feel unsafe in large crowds and worry about being hurt or that their wheelchair will roll into other people. It might be hard for people to see your stage or what's happening. The toilets on offer might not be **accessible**. Some people will be unable to leave their homes to join.

Neurodiverse People: These are people who live, learn, or experience the world in a way that some people see as different. Some neurodiverse people can find loud noises, talking to people, not knowing what is happening and strong smells stressful. They might find your ways of working or talking **inaccessible**. Police can sometimes find the way some neurodiverse people act threatening and be violent or unfair to them.

People with Learning Difficulties: People with learning difficulties have difficulty learning or understanding information. Sometimes this called a learning disability. If you have your own ways of organising and doing things these might be confusing and **inaccessible**. Filling in forms might be hard. **Climate change** information can be very difficult, and people use lots of jargon, which is confusing for most people who aren't **climate change** experts. So being more **accessible** to people with learning difficulties will help everyone to understand and be interested in what you are saying.

Blind people and visually impaired people: These people can't see or can see less than other people. Visual things like documents, signs, slides, flyers, and banners can be **inaccessible** to them. Small and

unclear fonts, lack of contrast between text and background, glaring colours, not having **alternative descriptions**, and having pictures behind text will make your information **inaccessible** to them. They might feel unsafe in crowds. If you use hand gestures to make decisions, they might not be able to see this.

d/Deaf people and the hard of hearing: These people can't hear, can hear less than other people, or need hearing aids. Deaf people with a capital 'D' are people who use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language. This means that some Deaf people are less confident with written English because it is their second language. If you don't have **BSL Interpreters, Plain English** written information, and a **hearing loop** your **protests** and meetings will be **inaccessible** to them.

People Mental Health Problems: People with mental health problems find the ways they're thinking, feeling, or responding to events difficult to cope with. **Protests**, which can be confusing and scary, can make mental health worse for some people. Filling in forms, talking to people, noise, crowds, events that feel unsafe, and being around police might be very difficult for them.

Invisible Disabilities: Some Disabled people don't have **impairments** you can see. This can mean that people are unfair or judge them when they ask for changes or act in ways that people don't expect. At **protests** you might want to offer stickers or lanyards with a picture of a sunflower on them so that people can show that they have an invisible **impairment** or health condition if they want to.



General Pointers

Do: Ask people joining your group and events if they have **access needs**.

Don't: Think you will know what those needs are by just looking at a person. You don't know what they can and can't do.

Do: Make space for people to tell you how to make your group more **accessible**.

Don't: Ask Disabled people to do the work of making your group **accessible**. It might be that they would like to but they probably joined your group because they want to help make the changes that you are **protesting** for, not to give you free advice.

Do: Offer to pay Disabled people if you are stuck and really need their help to understand how to be more **accessible**. The work can be upsetting and take a lot of energy so you must value it.

Don't: 'Help' people without asking if they want you to.

Do: Make the changes people ask for. It is very difficult to be asked for ideas then ignored. Think before deciding whether change is possible. Often it is easier and cheaper than you think.

Don't: Get upset if you are told to do better. It isn't an attack on you and no one wants you to feel bad. When people explain what you are doing wrong it is a chance to grow. It is a gift.



Checklist for Meetings

Venue

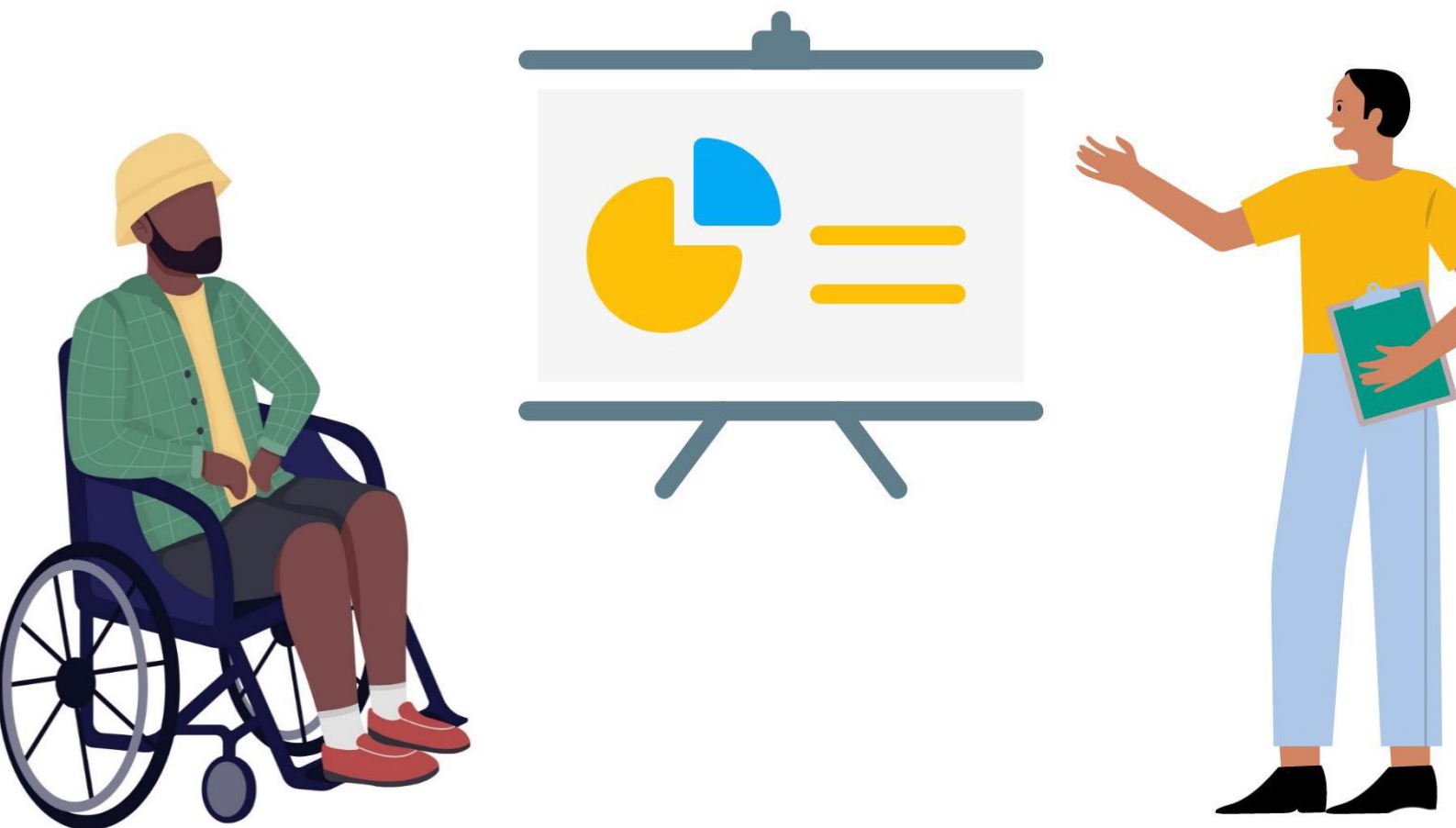
Accessible venues are a must. You wouldn't meet in a building a woman or Muslim couldn't go into so don't do this to Disabled people.

1. Not everyone can leave the house or use the internet. So let people join in online or in-person.
2. Ask for people's **access needs**. Put an email address and phone number on your flyers and website.
4. Use **venues** that are easy to find and have good public transport to them. Give clear directions and maps. Say what the **venue** has on your website.
5. There needs to be parking within 50 metres of the **venue**.
6. If your group isn't struggling for money you might want to offer travel costs to those who need this. Half of all UK households struggling for money have at least one Disabled person.
7. Make sure the path into your **venue** is clear of bins, signs, etc. and there is step free access. Even little steps outside or inside can stop people from being able to enter the right room. If there is an **accessible** entrance, make sure it is unlocked and your website tells people how to get to it. If possible, make sure it is the way in used by everyone, e.g., not at the back by the bins.
8. Make sure there is an **accessible** toilet.
9. Make sure chairs are comfortable with good back support and some have armrests.
10. Set up the room at a height everyone can access.
11. If you have food, offer different types to meet different needs.
12. Avoid bright light, flickers, glare, and reflections.



Organising

1. If you have a complicated way of doing things make sure you explain it to everyone clearly. Give people ways to take part that don't need them to understand everything.
2. Use **Plain English** and concrete examples to help people understand ideas. Words that seem simple to you can be difficult for people outside **climate change** groups. For example, words like **sustainability**, **emissions** and **net zero**.
4. Avoid use of metaphors where you can. These can be **inaccessible** to some neurodiverse people.
5. Share slides ahead of meetings if possible. Tell people what the picture on each slide is during the presentation.
6. Have [Easy Read](#) version and [BSL videos](#) of your most important information.



Before the Protest

Advertising

1. **Advertise** details of what accessibility is offered at the **protest**.
2. **Advertise** an email and phone number people can contact to ask about access needs. Remember not everyone can use email.

Information

1. Give everyone **accessible** information on how to get ready, what they'll need and how to stay safe at the **protest**.
2. This includes information on how to not be arrested if this could happen and how to look after themselves if it does. [Disabled people can be up to 44%](#) more likely to be arrested. Police stations and the **legal system** are not made for the needs of Disabled people.
3. Provide a schedule. People will feel safer if they know what's going to happen and when.

Support

1. Offer people a **buddy system**. This is where people are paired up to look after each other.
2. If your group isn't struggling for money, paying for **personal assistants** for Disabled people can be a really great way of supporting them to take part and showing you care about them being in your group.



During Protests

Communication

1. Have clear signs explaining where things are and what is happening when.
2. For your flyers use fonts that are at least size 14 and **accessible**, such as Century Gothic like this guide uses.
3. Don't use all capitals or italics. These can be hard to read.
4. Don't put pictures behind text. Make sure that there is a good colour contrast between the text and the background.
5. Include **alternative text descriptions** on all social media posts with images and digital documents. This lets people who can't see the pictures know what is in them.
6. Have subtitles on videos and make sure they are accurate.

Safe Spaces

1. Some Disabled people can feel very unsafe at **protests**. Some wheelchair users find crowds stressful. Some people might worry about being pushed over or crushed if police come in or crowds get angry. Having a safe space off to one side of crowds will help these people feel safer.
2. Make sure this safe space is close enough to any speeches and/or stages so that they can still feel included.
3. **Advertise** the safe space beforehand so people who feel nervous are confident enough to come.

Protest from Home

Not everyone can leave the house or will feel safe at a **protest**. Give them ways they can make a real difference from home, such as on social media or phoning people up.



Hubs

1. Put **hubs** in places that are even, flat and have good quality surfaces. Avoid cobblestones. Remember that going on grass can be hard for some wheelchairs.
2. If you are in a space for half a day or more, hire an **accessible** loo if there isn't one nearby.
3. Have a quiet space nearby. This can be a room or **gazebo** that is quiet and has no strong scents. Disabled people can go here to feel better when things feel too stressful.
4. At your welcome stall have clear information about what **accessibility** is on offer at your **protest**.

Speeches

1. Use a sound system.
2. Use a **hearing loop** for speeches indoors if you can get hold of one. You might be able to hire one from a local charity or community organisation.
3. Hire a **BSL interpreter** for Deaf people.
4. Have a space at the front for Disabled people.
5. If you have a stage, make sure it has a ramp (at least 1:12 **gradient**) and can carry the weight of electric wheelchairs.
6. Invite Disabled speakers to make speeches.

Stewards

1. Make sure all your stewards know what **accessibility** is on offer.
2. Have one or two stewards with a focus on **accessibility**.
3. Give all stewards this guide to read so they understand the issues.
4. Make sure stewards know how to give people sunflower stickers (these mean someone has an invisible disability) or lend them **noise-cancelling headphones** or ear defenders if they need them.



Marches

1. Different Disabled people will feel best in different areas of the march. Some people will want to be at the front where they can set the speed and won't roll their wheelchair into the people in front of them. Some people will want to be at the back of the march away from noisy things like **samba bands**. Talk to Disabled people before setting out to help them to find where they feel best. This could be before the event, or you could call out for Disabled people 15 minutes before you start marching. You might want two blocks.
2. Have quieter areas of the march.
3. If your march moves on or off the road make sure there are **dropped kerbs** so that wheelchair users can get down and up.
4. Try to follow a path that has benches so that people can sit down. Carry fold-away chairs for when you stop.

Noise

1. **Protests** can be very noisy. This is often difficult for neurodiverse people. Have **noise-cancelling headphones** or ear defenders people can borrow. You can keep these at a **hub** or with stewards. Make it clear people can come and ask for them.
2. **Samba bands** and other loud music can be very bad for people who struggle with noise. Give a five-minute warning before they start playing so people can move somewhere quieter if they need to.
3. Try to make quieter areas of the **protest**.



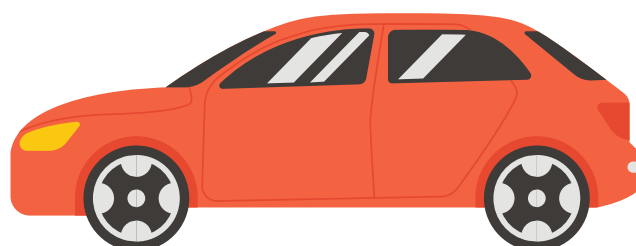
Public Disruption

Disruption of the public is a difficult topic. Some Disabled people are against it because the people who are most hurt by it are the people who are **excluded** and aren't the people causing **climate change**. Some Disabled people must drive because they will never be able to walk, cycle or use public transport. And many Disabled people who could, and want, to walk, cycle or use public transport can't because pavements, buses and cycle lanes are often **inaccessible**. When you stop traffic, you could be trapping Disabled people in their homes and causing those stuck in traffic pain or lots of stress.

Other Disabled people believe that **climate change** is so bad that **disruption** of the public is sometimes worth it. They might talk about how the **Disability Discrimination Act** was made possible by Disabled people chaining themselves to buses.

Whatever you think, make sure that you stop and think how your protest might cause problems for Disabled people. Find ways of making these problems less bad or other ways of doing things.

1. If you can, make it public where the **disruption** will be ahead of time. This will let Disabled drivers take a different road.
2. Where possible, let Disabled drivers through.
3. Ask if it is the best way to make change. Often **activists** block roads because that is what they think a **protest** looks like. But the best **protests** surprise people so they stop and think. Blocking roads makes less change than it did a few years ago because people expect **activists** to do this.
4. Don't **disrupt** hospitals or roads to them.



Arrests

If you try to get some of your **activists** arrested this will make some Disabled people feel unsafe. You need to offer them ways to feel safe. (Though some Disabled people will never feel safe around the police.) Other Disabled people will want to get arrested or support people doing so. Don't assume that Disabled people do or don't want to be arrested, and don't push them one way or another.

1. Give people the information they need to make the right decision for them in a clear and non-emotional way. Then support them to feel safe and looked after whatever they decide.
2. When arrests are possible tell people what to do to avoid being arrested.
3. When police are worried or violent, they might pick on Disabled people. If this happens, get in between the Disabled person and the police. Ask the Disabled person if they want support to get away. If they don't then respect their wishes.
4. If a Disabled person tells you that they are going to be arrested ask if they have any **access needs** that you can help with.
5. If a person plans to get arrested and they have important medicine they will need during the stay at the police station they should bring it with them in its packaging. People have a right to medicine, but the police could be slow to get it if the person doesn't bring their own.
6. At the station, people are asked if they have any mental health issues. Let people know that they don't have to say that they do if they don't want to. There are reports of police being unkind to people with mental health issues or putting them in clothes like **straight-jackets**. However if they might self-harm, they should probably let the police know.
7. The police should arrange for a **BSL interpreter** to be present with BSL users.
8. Neurodiverse people and people with learning difficulties have a right to someone else to explain what is happening and understand the police questions.

Acknowledgements

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Get In Touch

If you have any ideas to add to the guide you can get in touch with Emma at futuremancy@gmail.com.

