

## How to Screw Up – and some tips on how not to

The quick answer being – consult, consult and consult some more. This is going to be about ensuring the accessibility of your venue for disabled people – but honestly – you need to do this for all of the visitor groups you want to encourage to visit your venue. I speak as a disabled healthcare researcher with expertise in how to consult participants in clinical trials to ensure relevancy and practicality. I can assure you the principles I have identified that allow me to do this well are identical for making your venue as accessible as possible

Key principles:

- Time is precious
- Respect your visitor's knowledge
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- Value must be paid for
- Don't forget the team
- Sometimes you need to make an apology
- Tea is essential

**Time is precious.** Important to understand that fatigue and mild cognitive impairment (brain fog) are very common with illness and disability. So respect that any meetings or work you ask your visitor adviser to do will be high load for them - design interactions to accommodate this. E.g. paperwork well in advance, short meetings, optimise meeting time of day, simple meeting structures. Remember that travelling is tiring – and can be complex to organise (if accessibility is an issue) and costly.

**Respect your visitor's knowledge.** Important to genuinely respect the lived experience of your visitor advisers. They will know their condition(s) and context better than anyone else. Hopefully they will also be aware of other people with their condition's experiences too. They will know how they have interacted with your displays, lectures, workshops. But take care with



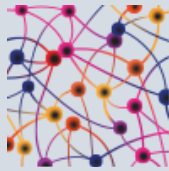
extrapolating personal expertise – it may not represent everyone – even if they have the same condition. Consulting a wide range of visitor advisers is recommended.

**Respect your knowledge.** You've usually worked in museums and science centres for many years. Remember that. Don't expect your lay advisers to understand the process of curating a display, the terminology, the abbreviations, the regulations, etc. Give them time and appropriate training to help them understand what they need to about your venue and the aims of your display or event so they can then apply their expertise to the problem.

**Value must be paid for.** What your visitor advisers say is valuable. Always pay expenses. Where possible pay their expenses in advance. Pay them for their time. This is becoming a substantial issue in disability fields – if what we say is valuable then we should be paid for sharing our expertise – just like you would any other external expert. And pay for the real time spent on your project – not what you think they would spend on it.

**Don't forget the team.** People don't live and work in isolation. Remember they may be supported by family members, friends, carers, teachers – they need their expenses met, and they could easily have expertise that is relevant. Also your disabled visitors will have other responsibilities – they may work, volunteer, may look after another family member. So don't assume they are not needed by others, or that they have lots of spare time.

**Sometimes you need to apologise.** Disabled people are sometimes treated badly by systems, people or just circumstances. Its not uncommon that they need their story to be heard before they can step back and give a more dispassionate perspective on your venue's accessibility. Do them the courtesy of listening, and if they were wronged apologise. You weren't responsible for the wrong but it can help people move on if their insult is acknowledged. So



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even if the insult was done by another venue, a member of the public, hell even the bus driver on the journey in – just apologise.

**Never underestimate the importance of hospitality.** Tea and cakes are a small cost but provide great benefit.

**Dr Katherine Deane**, Senior Lecturer and Access Ambassador. University of East Anglia, School of Health Sciences. [k.deane@uea.ac.uk](mailto:k.deane@uea.ac.uk)

And here are my contact details. Feel free to contact me for further information on how to do consultations well. Thank you for watching.