



Good Practice Document on Working with Experts by Experience in Planning & Delivering Events

About this Document

Purpose of this document.

A short document to support the planning and delivery of events and making sure Experts by Experience are fully included and heard; there is a particular focus on those who will be presenting or speaking during an event.

What do we mean when we say Experts by Experience?

For the purpose of this document, Experts by Experience refers to young people with additional needs, special educational needs or learning disabilities and Autistic young people. An Expert by Experience will be able to share lessons and suggestions from their own 'lived' experience.

Planning & delivering events.

Please remember that, when it comes to events, being organised and considering other people's needs is helpful for ALL participants, so many of the suggestions in this document are things you might naturally do when planning an event anyway. Do remember that 'Experts by Experience' is a broad term, so the best thing you can do to start with is to get to know the Expert/s you're working with, how they like to communicate and what they need from you in order to share their suggestions and experiences.

Preparing for an Event

Find the best way to communicate.

- Ask your Expert by Experience how they prefer to communicate when preparing for an event, and be flexible in your approach.
- Check if they would like you to involve the person who supports them (e.g., a job coach or PA) in the event planning.
- Ensure any info/documents are in an accessible format and shared in an organised and considered way.

Co-plan input.

- Find out and discuss how your Expert by Experience would like to contribute to the event (e.g., a presentation, a question-and-answer session, a group discussion etc.).
- If your Expert by Experience is going to attend the whole event, tell them about the other sessions so they know what to expect. Make sure the agenda is in an accessible format and try not to make avoidable, last-minute changes.

Be clear about timings.

- When should they arrive, when will they be speaking, what time will it finish?
- It is better to be specific about timings (e.g., if you are inviting people to attend a two-hour event and they have a 15-minute slot to speak, let them know what time they will be speaking to avoid anxiety).
- Add clear breaks to the agenda.

Send your questions for the event in advance.

- If you are going to do a question-and-answer session during the event, make sure to send the questions to your Expert by Experience in advance so they can prepare.
- Also, check if your Expert by Experience is or is not happy to take questions from other participants on the day (i.e., questions they have not seen in advance). You could make an adjustment by collating any questions after their sessions and then giving them to the Expert by Experience during the break, so they can go through them with support, if needed. But always check to see what your Expert by Experience is happy to do.

Be creative.

- Even if your Expert by Experience is planning to attend the event, they might not feel confident talking in front of a large group. Find out about other ways that they'd like to be involved, e.g.: you might consider pre-recording your question-and-answer session.

- Their PA might need to translate while your Expert by Experience signs, so consider how you'll make sure other participants can see them (please note, some online platforms don't allow you to split the screen, so consider the platform carefully).
- Think about having a number of different ways for people to contribute to the event.

Send instructions & practice for an online event.

- Firstly, consider what online platform you will use; if you can be flexible, ask if your Expert by Experience has a preference.
- Send accessible joining instructions and plan to do a practice session beforehand.
- Use the practice session to check that your Expert by Experience can access the online meeting and turn their microphone and camera on and off etc. Take the opportunity to do a run through of your session and answer any of their questions.
- Make sure your Expert by Experience knows the details for someone to contact, if they are having any difficulties.

Check venues and send instructions for in-person events.

- Ask participants about their access needs and book an appropriate venue.
- Check that venues are Autism friendly (sensory wise). You could ask Autistic experts by experience to help you create a checklist or ask them to check the venue in advance.
- Create a document with photos of the venue (see appendix for an example) with information about what they can expect from the moment they arrive to the moment they find their seat.
- When you make the venue booking, ensure there is a designated 'quiet' space that individuals can take themselves to, if it is overwhelming.
- Send accessible and clear travel instructions.
- Make sure your Expert by Experience knows the details for someone to contact, if they are having any difficulties.

During the Event

Reassurance about reasonable adjustments.

- Reassure your Expert by Experience that there will be clear breaks and encourage people to take breaks when it suits them.
- For online events, remind people that they are free to turn their camera off or on as they wish.
- For in-person events, remind your Expert by Experience where the 'quiet' space is.
- Make sure any info/documents shared during the event are accessible.

Listen and be patient.

- Remember that you want to hear their voice, their experience and their input, so allow time and space for this. Go at their pace. You might feel uncomfortable with breaks and silence, but an Expert by Experience may need this time to think about what they want to say.
- Allow your Experts by Experience to answer questions themselves, try not to be too keen to 'jump in and help them out' if they take a little longer to reply.
- Let participants know if your Expert by Experience will be taking open questions or not, so it's clear for everyone.
- If your Expert by Experience has someone there to support them, be mindful not to rely on their support person to answer on their behalf (i.e., try not to direct questions for your Expert by Experience at their job coach or PA).

Offer support when needed.

- If another participant asks a very long question and the Expert by Experience finds it difficult to answer, you could help by rephrasing the question and breaking it down into smaller chunks.

Use appropriate language.

- Try not to use acronyms, jargon or dehumanising language.

Other Useful Links

[Making accessible meeting, NHS England](#)

[Making communication work, Mencap](#)

[A quick, easy guide to holding an autism-friendly event, National Autistic Society](#)

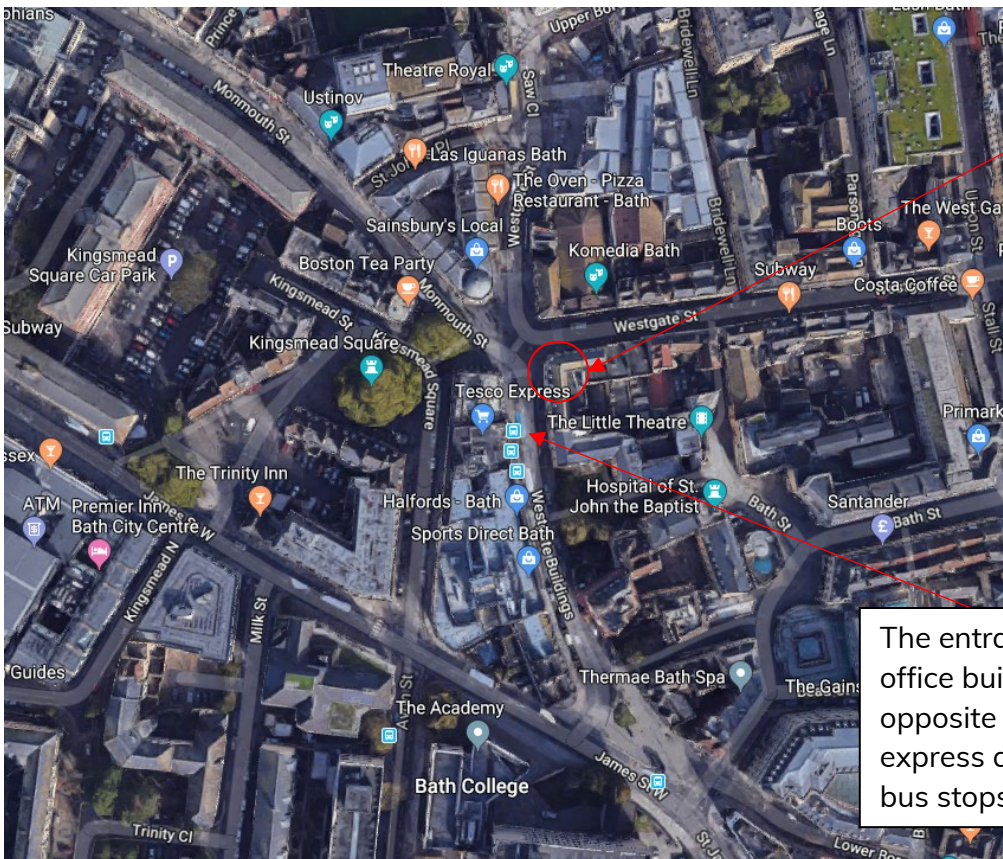
Appendix: Example of Venue Information

Instructions for the getting to and around NDTi office. Our office number is 01225 255 268. If you get lost, please call us.

Our office is on the first floor of a building. Below us is a stationery shop called Ryman and there are two other companies who use the second and third floor.



Door to the office building



Our office

The entrance to the office building is opposite the Tesco express and a row of bus stops.



To get into our office please ring the bell next to our logo on the right of the door.

We will speak to you through the speaker and 'buzz' you in. When you hear the buzz push open the door.



The buzz also opens the glass door just inside the building.

This leads to the hallway which does not have natural light, just fluorescent lighting.



Walk up the stairs to the first floor (there is a lift if you need it).



Someone will be at the door to let you into our office.

There is a disabled toilet to the left of the front door. It does not have any natural light and the flush uses a macerator which is noisy. There are more toilets down the corridor which are described below.





There are toilets on the left which are quiet, have natural lighting and two cubicles to choose from.



This is our main office. You will walk through it to the room where the meeting is being held. There are fluorescent lights in this area of the office.



The meeting is being held in here.

If you need a break at any point this room is available for you to use and has sofas and natural light. There may be noise from the road outside that comes through the window.



This is the room where the training will take place. It has lots of natural light but there can be noise that comes from the traffic and people outside.