

Accessibility and Relaxed Events Policy

Harwich Festival and Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre

Policy 32 | Version 1.0 | Revised 25 October 2026

Owner: General Manager and Programme Leads | Scheduled review: 25 October 2027

Commitment and scope

Make HF and HAHC activities as accessible as reasonably possible and meet applicable Equality Act duties. Anticipate barriers for disabled visitors rather than waiting for a complaint. This policy supports Policy 04 and covers booking, information, participation, performances, buildings and emergency arrangements. Trustees oversee resources; the General Manager coordinates access information and improvements.

Accurate information and requests

Maintain a checked access statement covering arrival, entrances, steps and gradients, doors, toilets, seating, routes between floors, hearing or communication support and emergency assistance. Describe the facilities actually available and any limitations. Do not advertise a hearing loop, accessible toilet, quiet room or step-free route without checking it is usable. Offer alternative formats and practical contact through contact@harwichfestival.com or 01255 319191.

Ask what would help without demanding unnecessary diagnoses. Discuss requests respectfully and consider effective reasonable adjustments, auxiliary aids and reasonable alternatives. Do not charge a disabled person for a reasonable adjustment. An overall reference to cost or the age of a building does not replace a considered decision. Obtain required landlord or statutory permissions for alterations and consider interim alternatives. Record decisions, responsibilities and review dates.

Planning and delivery

Consider accessible booking and publicity, seating and companion arrangements, sightlines, clear routes, lighting, communication, assistance dogs and assistance with participation. Do not impose a blanket refusal of assistance dogs or require all disabled people to bring a carer. Assess genuine safety or practical issues individually and seek advice where needed. Explain any event-specific age, content or access restriction accurately.

Brief front-of-house staff and hirers about agreed arrangements. Do not touch or move a person or their mobility aid without permission except where immediate protection lawfully requires action. Coordinate evacuation assistance under Policy 27 with the people, equipment and training actually available. Access to an activity and safe emergency escape must be planned together.

Relaxed events and sensory needs

When advertising a relaxed event, agree and state what is different: for example, a more flexible response to movement or vocalisation, adjusted lighting or sound, advance visual information, a break or re-entry arrangement, or a quiet space where one can safely be provided. Consult participants where practicable. Do not promise that every event is sensory-friendly or remove essential safety precautions.

Check any quiet space for safe access, supervision arrangements and emergency communication. Make clear whether personal care or supervision is supplied; do not imply it is included when it is not. Provide appropriate content and effects information and brief performers and audiences about the agreed format. Reasonable adjustments must still be considered at ordinary events.

Feedback and review

Record barriers and actions, protect sensitive information under Policy 20 and use accessible complaints routes. Trustees should review progress and material outstanding barriers at least annually. Update the access statement when facilities change and check it before significant events. A proposed improvement is not an available facility until implemented.

Prepared for adoption. Record authorised approval in the master register. Review sooner after a significant change or incident.

Reference guidance

[gov.uk - disability quick start guide for service providers html](#)
[equalityhumanrights.com - chapter seven](#)