

Inclusion and Accessibility Guide

The Big Festoon - Oct 2025

Inclusion Statement

At The BIG Festoon, we're fiercely committed to bringing you a quality event that everyone can enjoy.

We believe business is for all. So we also believe it's our responsibility to ensure that we're doing everything in our power to help you not only enjoy your time with us, but to feel safe, welcomed and included, as you get the most out of your experience at The BIG Festoon.

We know that for members of minority and marginalised communities, there are regularly barriers to accessing other business and personal development events like ours. We've heard from members of our wider community how these barriers have meant they haven't felt supported to join in or come along. As a team, we're on a mission to change that.

And although we're not fully there yet, we have been working hard on doing better and getting things right.

Here's what we've been putting in place to make that happen:

Inclusion: We have actively met with some of the very best neurodiversity, disability, LGBTQIA+, larger body advocates and global majority consultants to put in place measures that bring inclusion and accessibility to the forefront of the event. As such, The BIG festoon has undergone a full inclusion audit to identify areas where we can improve.

This has meant really looking at how we can ensure that our event-specific marketing, day-to-day operations, and wider communications are open, clear and cater to all.

We will ask for pronouns, ask if you have any additional needs, and ask if you have mobility or physical needs that we need to be aware of.

Our team and flight squad have also attended inclusion and diversity training and have specific mental health first aiders at our events.

All our toilets are non-gendered

We want to make this as clear as possible: we have an absolute zero-tolerance policy for hate or discrimination of any kind. If we are made aware of any such activity, we reserve the right to remove that individual from the vicinity, without a refund.

Accessibility: As well as putting in physical measures such as a hearing loop, plain text formats, providing an accessibility guide, and ensuring wider spaces for guests with mobility needs, we have partnered with the incredible SENStory Group to provide a Sensory Breakout Space. This Breakout Space is a designated low-noise, low-light space to help you regulate any sensory needs and will be available throughout your time at The BIG Festoon.

Diversity: We know that the speaking arena is still predominantly male, predominantly white and predominantly cis-gendered and straight. At The BIG Festoon, we actively seek speakers from marginalised communities to raise their voices and reflect the differing perspectives and lived experiences of all, which gives a richer experience for our delegates.

Accessibility Statement

We've worked really hard to make sure that accessibility and inclusion are a central part of the event but we also recognise that there is a wide

spectrum of need around inclusion so if there's anything you can't find here that you need to know, then please let us know by contacting us via email on bookings@iatqb.com and we will support you in making any reasonable adjustments.

Team IATQB recognise that inclusion is an ever-evolving process in business. We are always looking for ways we can improve our events and services, so we really welcome feedback to help us achieve this. Opportunities to share feedback will be made available after the event but the flight squad (easy to spot in their yellow t-shirts) are on hand if there is anything you need during the event too.

For full information about accessibility and inclusion at The Big Festoon, read on!

How to Use the Accessibility Guide

We've pulled together this guide with our Inclusion Consultancy partners SENStory Group to help you understand the access and support that's available during The Big Festoon. This guide is provided in plain text format to ensure the best accessibility.

You'll find all the information we have to share about physical, sensory and emotional wellbeing elements of the event in here but if you're looking for something specific you can always search this document or click the accessibility tab if you need to alter font, contrast or use the screen reader.

There are a few areas of information we will be adding, such as menu choices, as this information becomes available to us nearer the time so please do check back or reach out if you can't find what you need yet.

About the Event

The Big Festoon will be hosting 800 people in The Bolton Stadium for 2 days of inspirational talks, singing, learning and connections. The venue is fully

accessible for those with physical needs, including wheelchair users and the event has been created with dedicated areas for breakout space to support sensory and wellbeing needs too.

The event takes place over 2 floors. Lift access is available to all floors with level access to all areas and accessible toilets on each floor. As part of our commitment to inclusion all toilets and signage are also genderless.

We want you to feel at home at The Big Festoon, so to help with that we've made it easy to navigate the space with dedicated zones/rooms we will have a lounge, garden area, bedroom and dressing rooms amongst other things!

The Mini Festoon

If your child or young person has any accessibility requirements, the onboarding process for booking has included accessibility questions so we hope to have captured what you need. Please email bookings@iatqb.com if there is anything additional you need to share in advance of the Mini Festoon.

Our incredible event partners are adept at looking after children who do have various SEND support needs. However, while we can offer a certain level of support to children who have SEND needs, we are unable to meet the needs of children in this setting who require 1-2-1 support. If you have concerns about whether your child's needs can be met, please do not hesitate to speak to the team.

Our event partners are happy and able to support the giving of any ongoing medicines to children with medical needs. There will be a Paediatric First Aider as part of The Mini Festoon Squad at all times. However, if your child has complex medical needs which require specialist 1-2-1 support, we may be unable to provide the consistent level of specific care at the event

that will be needed. If you have concerns about whether your child's needs can be met, please do not hesitate to speak to the team.

Ground Floor

The ground floor contains the stage where the main event will take place. Attendees will be seated on tables of 10 which are only reserved if you've booked to come with someone who is hosting a table. The ground floor also hosts the bar areas and SENStory breakout space.

There is a dedicated accessibility zone (marked on the map) where tables are spread out a little wider to support access for those needing more space. This space will also have a Loop Induction system for hearing aid users.

The stage will have 3 screens - 2 at the sides with live feed that show the speakers up close and track them as they talk. Captions will be available on the left hand screen as you look at the stage should you need them. The 3rd screen in the centre of the stage will show the speaker slides and graphics.

The first floor

The first floor has a mezzanine area which overlooks the stage and seating areas. This floor is dedicated to the expo village and lunch and refreshments will also be served on this floor.

The stage and screens are still visible to some degree from this floor and some noise will carry into the spaces, so we have also allocated a dedicated quiet breakout space provided by SENStory Group on the 2nd floor should you need it for complete sensory rest.

Our breakout space provided by SENStory Group with bell tent, beanbags, weighted blankets and fidgets will be located at the back on the 1st floor. There is lift access to this floor. Noise from the event will travel to some degree into this space, and food and refreshments will be served during the

break times from the area adjacent to the breakout space, but SENStory Group are also providing a dedicated quiet breakout space on the 2nd floor to support this.

Site Maps: There are site maps available for every floor to help guide you to the areas you need. These can be found in the digital programme.

Support on The Day: If you need any support on the day, find a member of the Flight Squad in a yellow t-shirt. Our flight squad members have been provided with inclusion training for the event and will be able to signpost you if you need accessibility information

Arriving for the Event

Parking: There are 2 dedicated car parks for the event labeled A and C. Blue badge parking is available in both. There is level access along the footpaths from each car park to the entrance which is a 3-4 minute walk away. There are some areas with dropped curbs from the car park to the footpath that leads to the event space

Queue Jump: is available for anyone who requires it for accessibility. Just follow the signs for the VIP and Accessibility entrance or ask one of the Flight Squad on the doors to direct you.

Finding Your Seat or Table

If you are hosting a table or are a VIP ticket holder your tables will be allocated and signposted for you. Otherwise take a seat at one of the remaining tables as we don't operate a reservation system for seating.

If you have a requirement for accessibility, we have created an accessibility zone which is signposted on the maps and seating areas. You can find it on the front left as you're looking at the stage.

It has wider spacing between the tables, a hearing induction loop system, good proximity for movement breaks, access to the toilets and lift should it be needed. Please make use of this space if you need to.

All our seats are free standing, without arms and we've put 10 seats to a table to ensure there is space either side of you. This means seats can be moved if needed to support physical accessibility and accommodation for larger bodies.

Running of the Day

This year we are running an online programme rather than a paper one to support sustainability. You can access the running order for the day here or scan the QR code on the table to gain access to it. (Please note, programme link will be added at the start of the event and not be available before)

Talks are around 20 minutes in length and there are breaks scheduled roughly every 3 talks. If you need a movement break you are welcome to move, reset in the breakout space or step out and back in as many times as you need.

Eating

Food will be served on standard height tables, buffet style on the first floor in the mezzanine. There is stair and lift access to this floor. Please contact us if you have any specific requirements around food and eating.

If you need a quiet breakout space to consume food and drink, the SENStory Garden will be open, or you can access the dedicated quiet zone on the 2nd floor. Both areas are identified on the site map and signage will be in place for these too as well as a member of flight squad being able to support you to get there if needed.

There are local amenities available if you wish to access any specific food from Middlebrook retail park which is right next door to the venue.

Physical accessibility

The venue has level access on each floor with lifts and stairs to each area. Lifts are wide enough for wheelchair access and will accommodate 1-2 other people as well as a wheelchair user.

Genderless and accessible toilets are available on every floor which have enough space for a wheelchair user and carer/PA if needed. Gendered toilets are also available on the 2nd floor with lift and level access. These are through a set of double doors and clearly signposted on each floor. Rails fold down from the walls at the side of the toilet and on the toilet wall should these be needed to assist transfers.

The venue layout has been carefully designed and planned to ensure there is enough space for wheelchair users and mobility aides to move around the venue.

All tables around the stage are an accessible height for a standard wheelchair and a flight squad member can be on hand to remove a chair from the table as needed. Seats have no arms on them and are free moving. With 10 spaces to a table there is also some free space either side of the seats to get in and out to also accommodate larger bodies.

Sensory accessibility and Neurodivergence

Our event has a dedicated sensory breakout space sponsored by our inclusion consultants SENStory Group. The space will include a dedicated rest space in the form of a large bell tent. There are fidget toys, weighted blankets, beanbags and noise reducing earphones in place on the ground floor.

If you need a total noise break we have a dedicated quiet room on the 2nd floor away from the event itself.

There is a separate lift and stairs entrance that arrives into the 2nd floor quiet breakout space so no need for attendees to travel through the busy expo space. This lift will solely be available to those needed to access the breakout space.

If you need to take a sensory or social break at any point, all talks are recorded and available on replay in the weeks after the event.

The event is lively, social and does contain loud music and lights throughout. Ear defenders, and noise reduction earphones are supplied in small numbers in the SENStory breakout space along with fidget items, but must be returned at the end of the day. Please also feel free to bring your own resources and meet your needs as required throughout the event. Including getting up to move or stand on the perimeter to watch the event.

We have identified any significant sensory triggers in the programme.

Emotional wellbeing

Trigger warnings are available for talks and in the programme. We encourage you to meet your needs however you feel is necessary throughout the event and keep yourselves well and feeling safe throughout but a selection of our flight squad members are mental health first aid qualified should you find yourself in need of support. The SENStory Garden and Quiet Zone are also available for breakout space should you need it.

Hearing and visual needs

Live feed screen on the left is captioned and a hearing loop system has been installed in the accessibility zone.

All recordings are available in plain text format, with audio, transcription, alt text and captions as well as in video format for after the event. Web pages are also available in plain text format.

Toilets

Toilets are non gendered across the venue and will be signposted as with urinals, without urinals and accessible toilets. Gendered toilet spaces are also available on the 2nd floor for anyone who needs these spaces.

Accessible toilets are all individual cubicles should anyone require a space that is not shared with multiple cubicles. Accessible toilets are available on each floor.

All toilets will have bins for use for sanitary products should they be needed.

LGBTQIA inclusion

We have worked to eliminate gendered space within the event through signage, language, training and consultancy.

Our speakers have received training from our LGBTQIA+ consultant Alex Lynam from Beyond the Binary and our flight squad team have also received training around use of gender inclusive language and wider inclusion from our Inclusion Consultancy Partners SENStory Group.

We ask for your pronouns and these will be displayed on your name badges and lanyards.

Ethnicity and Diversity Inclusion

Inclusion is always an ongoing and evolving process. We continue to strive to do better at each event we host.

We have worked actively to ensure representation from across marginalised and minority groups in our speaker, exhibitor lineups and team; including through sponsorship of places for communities and attendees to widen our diverse networks and connections.

We are working actively to increase representation from the global majority communities in particular, in consultation with ethnicity and diversity consultants. This forms an active part of our inclusion strategy for the next 12 months and we continue to learn and improve at every phase and so we are always looking for feedback about how we can support continued change.

We recognise that The Big Festoon is taking place during Ramadan. A prayer space is available with prayer mats and Qurans on the 2nd floor near the quiet zone.