

Press release

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New Guidance Helps Events Organisers Open Up To Disabled People

Event organisers are facing tough new laws designed to ensure that disabled people get equal access to their events.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has given disabled people equal rights to attend, participate in and enjoy events. From October 1 this year, further duties came into force under the DDA requiring service-providers to consider making reasonable adjustments to premises and physical features of buildings.

Organisers could face legal challenges from disabled people unable to access an event resulting in a potential court case, financial penalties and bad publicity.

New guidance has been launched by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), the body set up to enforce the Act and to assist both disabled people and service providers.

'Creating Accessible Events', available from the DRC or the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland aims to help organisers avoid breaking the law by developing better practice and getting it right first time.

As well as giving a clear overview of the law and the duties of service providers, the Guide uses examples and 'Top Tips' to show the way. It covers a whole range of features common to most events including choosing an accessible venue, staff training, publicity, transport, catering and PA systems.

Many of the changes recommended are very simple - like reserving seating for disabled people when providing catering, planning where to put displays and using a larger font size for printed material - and encourages organisers to plan ahead to be inclusive, rather than to put things right after they go wrong.

Bert Massie, chairman of the Disability Rights Commission, said: "As DRC chairman I am asked to be keynote speaker at various high-profile events - yet as a wheelchair user, I often find I am unable to access the stage!

"Events are big business and an important part of the lives of very many people. We hope people will follow this guidance so we can achieve a position where all disabled people can enjoy, learn from and participate in all events they want to attend."

You can order copies of the Guidance free of charge from the DRC Helpline telephone 08457 622 633, textphone 08457 622 644, email Enquiry@drc-gb.org or download a copy at www.drc-gb.org. For businesses in Northern Ireland, contact the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on 02890 500600.