

## **Inclusion and Accessibility Guide**

### **The Big Festoon**

#### **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.

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.

Let us explain 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 BIPOC 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 chosen 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
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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 of presentations, 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.

We have also made sure the venue we use has a dedicated lower-traffic accessible entrance, accessible toilets and lifts to ensure all our guests are able to enjoy the event to its fullest potential.

**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](mailto: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 also 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 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 two 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 two 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!

**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.

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 three screens - two 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 third 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 SENStory Garden breakout area and workspace along with 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 quiet space on the second floor should you need it for complete sensory rest.

**Site Maps:** There is a site map available on every floor to help guide you to the areas you need

**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 two dedicated car parks for the event labelled 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:**

This 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 three 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.

## **Refreshments**

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 second 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.

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.

There are fidget toys, weighted blankets, beanbags and noise reducing earphones in place on the mezzanine level.

There is a separate lift and stairs entrance that arrives at the 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.

The SENStory Garden breakout space area has its own dedicated toilets including accessible toilet.

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

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 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.

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.

Toilets without urinals and accessible toilets will have bins for use for sanitary products.

## **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 BIPOC communities, 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 Qur'ans on the second floor near the Quiet Zone.