

## Accessibility Pack for RC Workshops

This packet about accessibility at RC workshops is a resource developed by several co-counselors in Europe. It is offered here as a resource for workshop organizers and accessibility teams anywhere in the RC community. Feel free to use this packet in organizing RC workshops, making changes where appropriate for your location and situation. (Although changes can not be made to this file, you should be able to copy text as needed and paste it into your own document.)

Accessibility includes making the workshop fully accessible for all participants. Listen to and handle issues, complaints or difficulties voiced by people with special needs\* and make necessary arrangements so that they can fully participate in the workshop. (Hearing induction loops, signer, special chairs, mattresses, cushions, etc.) Make sure that aisles are clear between chairs and around the back of the room and reserve chairs at the front for hearing impaired people. Organise transport as needed. Arrange that people with special needs choose their ally and that the allies agree. See to it that the allies have discharge time on their job.

*\* The term "special needs" sometimes causes confusion for workshop registrants and organizers about what types of needs organizers are expected to accommodate. Please continue to use discharge and your best thinking in this area.*

### Contacts:

Chris O'Mahony – c.omahony@diseed.org.uk – leader on disability issues in the United Kingdom  
Vicky Grosser – vicky@grosser.clara.co.uk – ally



## Letter Introducing Packet to Regional Reference People

Dear RC Regional Reference Person,

Some years ago I led the team that organised accessibility at a large national workshop, and in the process of pulling together some good resources we have developed in the UK, I decided to put together a pack of our best thinking to date as a step towards full inclusion at these events.

This pack was compiled by me and edited by Dorann van Heeswyk, who developed the clear 'job description' for the team to work. It has been checked by Micheline Mason (IRLP for Inclusion) and Chris O'Mahoney (leader of disabled people in the UK). The pack includes feedback from people with special needs who are in the RC communities as well as comments from team members on what they have got out of taking on the job and learnt about accessibility.

The pack includes a letter I sent to team members when I did the job, as well as lists and contacts which I used and heard about in the course of leading the team in England [*note: some contact information specific to England has been removed for web publication*]. I hope that they will be helpful to others in thinking about accessibility in our communities, as well as be built on as we become more aware and creative. The pack includes:

- Initial letter to accessibility team members
- Model for allocating accessibility team jobs
- Model for listing all workshop special needs
- List of all known accessibility equipment available in England [*note: this information has been removed for web publication*]
- 'Job descriptions' for accessibility jobs
- Useful announcements on accessibility for the workshop
- Article on accessibility for workshop participants folders
- Information on booking Sign Language Interpreters
- Information on inclusion of blind/visually impaired people
- Feedback from people with special needs on accessibility at workshops.
- Comments from Accessibility Team members on how this work has been re-emergent for them.

It is a fabulous job, which has certainly assisted me to start to build a bigger picture of the world and what it will mean to all of us when every place and every activity is fully inclusive to ALL people.

Please circulate the pack as widely as possible, for example to all ARP's and workshop organisers. I would love to hear what you learn in the process of improving accessibility in your region.

With best wishes,

Vicky Grosser

## **Initial Letter to Accessibility Team**

Dear

I may have spoken with you on the phone by now, but if not I'm writing to let you know that you are a member of the team - led by me as 'Accessibility Co-ordinator' - which is organising accessibility at the ..... workshop.

I offered to do this job because I want to learn more and am ready to push myself more in this area. I am delighted to have a group of us working together, and wanted to let you know our 'job.'

Accessibility includes making the workshop fully accessible for all participants. Listen to and handle issues, complaints or difficulties voiced by people with special needs and make necessary arrangements so that they can fully participate in the workshop. (Hearing induction loops, signer, special chairs, mattresses, cushions, etc.) Make sure that aisles are clear between chairs and around the back of the room and reserve chairs at the front for hearing impaired people. Organise transport as needed. Arrange that people with special needs choose their ally and that the allies agree. See to it that the allies have discharge time on their job.

I will shortly receive a list of all people with special needs who are coming to the workshop from the organisers. I will group these and think about jobs, e.g. arranging for people local to the workshop to bring firm chairs and other equipment. I will also make initial contact with each person with special needs.

I will then contact you to ask you to take on a specific area of the organising before the workshop, e.g. a job of arranging for all induction loops to arrive to be set up before the workshop begins.

You will each have an area of responsibility, e.g. to ensure that all aisles are free, that signs are on chairs for hearing impaired people, that allies get together each day for discharge time.

I have drawn up some guidelines for all workshop participants on accessibility, which will be in every person's folder on arrival.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you will not be at ALL of the workshop. That will be helpful for thinking about jobs. We will get discharge time as a team at the workshop, but in the mean time do take a session on early memories connected with illness or disability. Thanks for being on the team, and I very much look forward to this adventure together!

## **Brief Description of Accessibility Team Jobs**

Co-ordinator: Set up the accessibility team, giving clear information on jobs for each person. Also provide all team members with list of disabled people/people with special needs, and what has been set up to meet their needs. Have initial contact with all disabled people/people with special needs before the workshop.

Assistant to the team co-ordinator: Check in with the co-ordinator regularly, and contribute your own thinking. Be willing to step in to assist with other jobs as needed. Be available to allies of people with special needs to link them up with relevant person on the Accessibility Team.

Accessibility monitor: Check that aisles are kept free, look out for whether activities are accessible, “Have you thought about access?” E.g. be available to sports co-ordinator.

Transport of people with special needs: Transport to the workshop. Then, depending on the site, arrange transport between meeting rooms and sleeping accommodation.

Setting up and maintaining induction loops: In main workshop/conference rooms, and around tables in eating area for meal tables, topic groups, etc.

Supporting allies to people with special needs: Ensure that daily discharge time is set up, hear what is going well and difficulties/areas needing sorting out. Remind people that this job is about closeness, and not ‘care-taking.’

Maintaining ‘Quiet Room’: Ensure that the room is available and not being used by others for mini sessions, etc. Keep mattresses, pillows there, and drinking water.

Co-ordinating (or providing) support to the Personal Assistant: These people are usually unfamiliar with RC, so provide them with a pack, e.g. copy of *Human Side of Human Beings* and *Present Time*. Check in with them regularly, and support disabled people in allocating use of P.A. tasks between them.

Link person for Signers: Do they know about RC? If not provide with pack of information about RC, e.g. *Present Time* and *Human Side of Human Beings*.

Equipment co-ordinator: Special chairs, mattresses, cushions, etc. Make sure that equipment is maintained in the places it is needed. Link with beauty and order team. Also link with taping team/microphone system.

Special diets: Link with site co-ordinator to request all meals, and be available to sort any difficulties in needs being met at the workshop.

Quiet sleeping area: Link with the registration team to arrange allocation of this corridor. Ensure that the corridor is accessible – on ground floor, or by lift. Put up clear notices, e.g. ‘Quiet at all times’.

## Accessibility Equipment

This is what I know is available either in the RC communities in England, or which can be hired. *[Note: details of RC community contacts have been removed for web publication.]*

### Induction Loops for Deaf/Hearing Impaired people:

For main meeting room: if your room is very big, you can hire loops. If you hire from a company close to your venue they can set it up at picture-rail height, so people won't trip over it.

Good contact: Ampritronics 01636 610062. They will provide you with the name of a local company anywhere in England from which to hire induction loops.

Having two microphones available on the main loop system is best for inclusion, e.g. one tie microphone for the leader and another for asking questions, etc.

The English RC community has purchased a very light-weight loop, which will have a receiver for each deaf/hearing impaired person.

Tape for loops:

Wide white masking tape is cheapest (or any tape which is not metallic as it interferes with the loop system induction). Tape down all induction loop wire round rooms or tables, for safety.

Tape for marking aisles, etc.: Narrow white masking tape for marking out aisles, wheelchair users area in workshop room, and other areas which need to stay clear for access at all times. Works VERY well as a reminder to people.

Cars: To transport people from conference site to sleeping venue, etc. This is necessary when the meeting space and bedrooms are not on the same site. It works best if those who will need transport are identified before the workshop, and have mobiles/beepers to contact them when needed.

Halogen Lamps: For people sensitive to fluorescent lighting.

Metal Ramp: Back-up access for wheelchairs; up to three small steps height.

Do Notices: e.g.

- chair reserved for '.....' - quiet room only
- be careful of the loop - quiet sleeping corridor at all times.
- keep aisles clear at all times

Notes for all folders on 'Accessibility':

- see copy in this pack.

To find Personal Assistants (P.A.'s) and other resources in England call the local Centre for Integrated Living (c/o Directory Enquiries).

- British Nursing Agency are very good.
- choose thoughtful people to liaise with the P.A.'s, who may need information and support to be at an RC event.

## **Model List of People With Special Needs**

This is an example of how to pull together all the names and needs of people with special needs, in order to ensure that all needs are met.

IT IS A MODEL ONLY.

Name (Tel:)

- hearing impaired
- use of induction loop

Name (Tel: )

- Lying down space in class
- Chair to move to when necessary near by
- Room: share with ally, quiet room
- use of 'quiet room'

Name (Tel: )

- wheelchair user
- bringing own Personal Assistant
- Room: wheelchair accessible, near toilet
- lying down space in class

Name (Tel: )

- epilepsy

Name (Tel: )

- Has M.E.: use of 'quiet space'
- will bring own cushions; save space for them in class on floor
- sensitive to fluorescent lights – needs halogen lights
- Room: small quiet bedroom, share with ally

Name (Tel: )

- soft, firm surface to lie on with 3 pillows; back support
- ALSO a comfortable chair (like office chair with good back support)

Name (Tel: )

- Brittle bones: needs physically safe space around her
- Room: wheelchair accessible, ground floor.

Name (Tel: )

- BSL Interpreter
- Hearing induction loops

Name (Tel: )

- partially deaf: needs to sit near front of class
- sign on chair to save.

## **Accessibility Team Jobs**

### Allies to People With Special Needs

Guidance from a disabled person to allies:

Take time to support and encourage the disabled person you are an ally to, to think ahead about who s/he would like to have sessions with at the workshop/conference. Then assist them to set this up – as often otherwise disabled people don't get to have the sessions they want/choose.

This job makes it possible for people to fully participate in the workshop. It is about closeness, and is not to be confused with 'care-taking'.

Get a list of people who are doing key jobs from the organiser, as these people should not be an allies on the whole.

It works well to ask all workshop applicants to state on their booking form if they have a disability or special needs and need an ally. Ask them to give 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices of their allies. You or a team member can then allocate allies easily.

Talk with the allies to check that they are willing to do the job, and ask them to be in touch with the person they will be ally to, to link up and think through how it will work for that person. Some people might benefit from two allies, or more. But ensure that they have a leader, or the person they are supporting can get caught up in the job.

### Maintaining Rest/Quiet Room

This room is set aside in the main meeting area as a place for people to go and rest. It should not also be used for sessions, etc. It is for people with M.E., who are pregnant, or are ill, etc. and need to rest. So make signs for the door, e.g. QUIET ROOM, etc.

Link with site co-ordinator about ensuring that it has mattresses, blankets/duvets and pillows set up to be used at all times.

Might be good to have jug of water and cups in there, plus flowers or something pretty.

### Lying Space in Class/Seating

There are usually a number of people who need to lie at the front of class. Some also need seats reserved nearby (with notices pinned on them) so that they can sit on chairs some of the time.

Get it announced early in the workshop that this area is only for people who stated this need before the workshop, or who come to speak with you, plus their allies.

Some people will bring their own cushions, but also arrange for a lot of others to be brought.

Link with the site co-ordinator, about getting use of mattresses, duvets/blankets.

Also consider space at the front for wheelchair users (on one side or both) and chairs booked for those

who are hearing impaired/deaf. Do signs for them to go on chairs.

### Discharge Groups for Allies to People With Special Needs

Accessibility goes best when those who are allies get time to discharge, so set up a time for all allies to come together early in the workshop, including noticing what they are doing well on the job.

Get allies working on early memories connected with illness or disability, including a time when they felt helpless (e.g. as a young one).

Have a team member check in with allies now and then to see if they want to think anything through.

### Loop Systems for Hearing Impaired

It usually works best to have an induction loop for the workshop meeting room(s) plus two others which need to stay mobile for use at meal tables/topic groups, etc.

Buy several rolls of white masking tape to stick it to the floor. Don't get tape with metal in it, as this affects transmission.

Think about how you want to set up having the two portable ones available for when needed and have at least one other person to assist you as they can need moving quite often, especially if there is more than one person needing them at the workshop.

Someone should be available near the front of class at all times to deal with any difficulties with the loop.

### Chairs for Workshop

Check the list of people with special needs to see who needs a hard/high backed chair, etc.

Call the site organiser for the workshop, and ask if the chairs needed can be made available. This may not be possible, in which case you could arrange for some to be transported, or contact a community centre or elders day centre near the site to ask to borrow them. This often works well.

### Accessibility Monitor

This job is about keeping an eye out for access, e.g. that aisles are free, that people don't block doorways, that games/creativity/activities are accessible. Think about songs and sports activities – check that the team have thought about checking that songs are not oppressive to disabled people, and that events are inclusive.

You might ask “how can you make this more accessible?” to push us all to keep thinking and acting around accessibility.

Stay ‘tough’ and build a team as you go to back you.

## Transport

This job seems small, but is very important. E.g. if workshop rooms are not in the same building as the sleeping area, people with special needs may need to go back to rooms to rest, or for meal times, etc.

Call round and find cars with drivers (or insurance for others to drive).

Think about wheelchair accessible transport, if needed.

I think this works best if the drivers are linked up with people with special needs, as transport buddies. They can then figure out how they want to work it. Mobile phones or beepers will often help with contacting one another when needed.

## Personal Assistants (P.A.'s)

This is a very important job for enabling disabled people to participate in the workshop.

Ask the disabled person to let you know what they are needing, and at roughly what times of day before booking the P.A. Once the booking has been made, link them up so that they can discuss details.

Sometimes the workshop will have a P.A to be shared by two or three disabled people. Ask one of the disabled people to co-ordinate this as otherwise those who need the P.A. can be set up against one another. Give the co-ordinator an able-bodied assistant to support this process.

Decide together how you will give the P.A.'s information about RC in advance and as the workshop progresses. It is then the role of the assistant to give them time if necessary, to minimise clienting at the disabled people.

Remind workshop participants that the P.A.'s are not to be 'recruited' to RC, but be friendly and appreciative for their role in making the workshop go well.

Mobile phones/beepers are often useful for contacting the P.A.'s when needed.

## **Accessibility Team Announcements for the Workshop**

- a) Read the notes in your folders on accessibility.
- b) Notice where there is tape on the floor to mark access aisles, etc. and stay outside these areas.
- c) Introduce each person on the accessibility team, stating their job. Show where flip-chart list of team is in the room.
- d) Inform people about the reserved seating/lying areas at the front of the workshop, and the need to keep them available ONLY to people with special needs and their allies.
- e) State first time and place for discharge for allies to people with special needs.
- f) Give information about the 'Quiet Room.'
- g) Inform everyone about 'Personal Assistants' jobs (if appropriate), and their ally.
- h) Give information about induction loops and access to them at meal times for deaf/hard of hearing people.
- i) Use accessibility monitors to think about inclusion in all activities.
- j) See team leader if you still need an ally regarding special needs.

## Notes for Workshop Packs/Folders

### ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS EVERYONE

Please read these notes at the beginning of the workshop

As Isabel Auerbach writes in the January 1998 *Present Time* “*We’re all in this together. Accessibility benefits everyone.*”

There is an ‘Accessibility Team’ at this workshop, but it is the responsibility of each of us to ensure that everybody is included.

Each person with special needs has an ally, where they have asked for one. However, it makes a difference if we all look out for one another - ‘all for one and one for all’ - as well as think about what makes sense in terms of physical contact with one another.

Take the time to set things up well so that everyone can be included.

Keep gang ways/corridors clear at all times.

Think about activities, and ensure that everybody is included. If necessary, change the activity to ensure that it is inclusive. There are ‘Accessibility Monitors’ – ask them for assistance if you need it.

Notice if disabled people/people with special needs are able to gain access to a group/session/the dining room, etc. Assist them to do so.

Ensure that support groups/sessions, etc. take place where an induction loop is available, if there is a deaf/hearing impaired person in the group.

Face the window if you are leading, so that you are well visible.

Notice if it could be useful to set up discharge time on people’s feelings about disability/accessibility.

Please keep the following things in mind:

1. Let’s all facilitate the participation of disabled people. Disabled people are the experts on what their requirements are. *Always* ask a disabled person how they want to be assisted, do not assume you already know.
2. *Always* talk directly to a disabled person and remember not to answer for people if they are being asked a question.
3. You *do not need to know* a disabled person’s impairment(s) in order to assist that person, therefore you do not need to ask them any questions about it. You do not need to ask anyone else any questions about it either. If a disabled person wants you to know about their impairment(s) they will volunteer the information.
4. It is important to be accurate and clear in your description when assisting a disabled person, especially about distances and where things are. Consider offering to show the disabled person where things are,

i.e. accompany them to where they want to be.

5. Do not grab or touch a disabled person unless asked. A person requiring an arm, for example, usually prefers to hold onto an assistant rather than to be held.

6. Never grab hold of a wheelchair someone else is using and attempt to move them without checking that they *want* to be moved. A wheelchair is a user's private space and is not to be used for leaning on, hanging things on, etc.

7. Be aware of what language you are using and avoid patronising or stereotyping. If you are unclear about how to refer to someone, ask them and *accept what they say*.

8. Not every impairment is visible. *Do not make assumptions* as to whether someone is disabled or not.

9. If you are having difficulties understanding what you have been asked to do, *do not guess or pretend that you have understood*. Ask again and if necessary explore other ways with the disabled person to find out what they require.

## Needs of Deaf/Hard of Hearing People

These points have been written by one deaf person. Some of these points are general good practice and some are specific to one person. Not every deaf person will experience all these things and other deaf people may have different needs. Please bear this in mind when reading these points:

1. Please don't put your hands near your mouth, stroke your moustache, or chew a pencil when you are talking.
2. Make sure the light is in your face and not behind you.
3. Be flexible about allowing me to change where I am sitting. Where I sit in any grouping makes a huge difference to my ability to follow a conversation. Ask me where I want to sit and be prepared to move.
4. Don't cross between me and the BSL interpreter (or someone who is talking), please go around us. The effect is as if someone has abruptly turned off a radio.
5. If you genuinely want to know what it is like for me to be deaf, I don't mind telling you. If, however, you really want to client about a friend, relation, acquaintance, etc. who is deaf, I may not want to give you a session on it. Please think before attempting to discuss deaf issues with me.
6. If I ask you to repeat yourself several times, never say "Oh, it doesn't matter," then give up on telling me whatever it was you wanted me to know. To me, it matters a lot and you will have plenty of time to discharge any embarrassment you may have to suffer.
7. Ask me to choose my ally and interpreter for a workshop, rather than allocate one to me.
8. Don't assume deaf people are stupid.
9. Be thoughtful about the loop system. Movements of the microphone sound horribly loud in my ears, although you can't hear anything. Warn me before you intend to move it so that I can adjust my hearing aid if necessary.
10. In particular, don't assume that because I don't wear an aid on my right ear, that I can hear in it. The reverse is true. I wear an aid on my left ear because I have some residual hearing in it which can be amplified. I don't wear an aid on my right ear because I have no hearing at all in it and an aid is useless. When you are on my right hand side I probably will not hear anything you say. Don't get offended and discouraged, move around to my left and try again.
11. Interpreters at a workshop are there as a resource for deaf people, not as a resource for the workshop generally. Please do not ask him/her to have minis or sessions with you unless you have been specifically asked to do so.
12. Interpreters get a lot of empty praise from hearing people about their signing skills. Though sign language may look very clever and interesting to watch, you are not in any position to judge the skills of the signer unless you have learnt BSL.
13. A good interpreter reflects the mood of the person s/he is interpreting. Thus if the person speaking is attention out, the interpreter's expression will look attention out to you. This does not mean you are seeing who the interpreter really is at that point, you are seeing someone doing a professional job well. If you want to make contact with the interpreter you will need to think about approaching him/her as a person and not only on the basis of what he/she does for a living.

## Information on Booking a Sign Language Interpreter for RC events

1. Check that BSL Interpreters are Qualified or Registered Trainee Interpreters. They are registered with the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) - the governing body for BSL/English Interpreters. There are only 100 Qualified Interpreters in the country and 75,000 deaf people, so it is important that we realise what a rare and precious commodity they are and that we treat them with respect and consideration. Organisations which fail to do so find it extremely hard to get any interpreters to work with them.
2. CACDP registered interpreters are bound by a strict code of professional conduct which includes not working with unregistered and unqualified interpreters. To expect a qualified interpreter to work with an unregistered interpreter is embarrassing and professionally compromising for him/her.
3. You should check with the deaf person which interpreter(s) he/she prefers. S/he should be told what is happening and who will be interpreting for him/her at the event. It is very restimulating to arrive at an event expecting an interpreter who knows your interpretation needs only to be met by someone you don't know and who has no idea what your needs are. Worse still is arriving to find that something has gone wrong and there will not be an interpreter at all. It's easier to discharge disappointment before the workshop than during introductions.
4. CACDP expects you to book two interpreters if the assignment exceeds three hours. As almost all RC events exceed this, we should think about if some interpreters are willing to work alone for long periods of time but we should recognise that this is not to be relied upon. When the first interpreter is booked he/she will probably have ideas about who the second interpreter should be for the event and it is wise to go with his/her thinking about this. If there are any changes to the co-working arrangement, the interpreters will be responsible for letting everyone concerned know.
5. Payment - as a rough guide a Qualified Interpreter will charge £100 to £150 per day. A Trainee Interpreter will charge £80 to £100, exclusive of expenses. Work in the evening or at weekends normally costs more. You will need to negotiate: a) fees for the event, b) travel expenses, c) accommodation, and d) rest periods.
6. Ensure that the interpreter booked is given the following information as soon as possible:
  - a) Date, time and duration of the event
  - b) What type of event it is
  - c) The identities of any deaf people s/he will be interpreting for and any additional requirements they may have
  - d) Location of venue (including map, directions and details of accommodation if needed)
  - e) Some background reading (e.g. *Present Time* or liberation material about a particular issue) – this helps to familiarise the interpreter with the thinking and vocabulary needed for the event.
  - f) Programme/timetable of the event. Although programmes are rarely finalised earlier than the night before a workshop, it would be helpful if leaders were encouraged to think about allowing for short breaks at regular intervals (20 minutes is the recommended time limit for interpreters to work without a break). It is also important to start and finish when we say we will. Interpreters have home lives and are just doing a job - it's not fair to run on for an hour or two after we've said we'll finish and it gets RC a bad reputation as an employer (see 1 above!).
7. Finally, CONFIRM THE BOOKING as soon as possible. Interpreters are much in demand and half-arrangements are very difficult for them to deal with. At the very latest, he/she should have a firm

commitment at least two weeks before the event. If you cancel the booking you can expect to pay a proportion of the negotiated fee. This depends on how much notice of the cancellation you give, as follows: over 14 days - no fee; 14 - 8 days - half fee; 7 - 0 days full fee.

## **Guidelines for Thinking About Blind/Visually Impaired People**

Discuss with him/her how s/he would like to have the workshop made accessible.

1. During class, ensure that the blind/visually impaired person has an ally close to them. Discuss with him/her how s/he would like to have the class made accessible. If wanted, explain during demonstrations what the client and counsellor are doing, e.g. holding hands, hugging, wrestling, etc. Also any nonverbal discharge such as shaking. Describe expressions on faces, gestures being made and physical attitudes. In short, describe all valuable visual things happening. Some may also be helpful during theory classes. Often the leader or person talking is using gestures, which accentuate meaning.

2. During class: assistance when it's time to book a session with someone (including mini sessions). Discuss strategies with the disabled person beforehand and keep checking with him/her. Try one of the following:

- Nobody chooses a counsellor until the blind/visually impaired person has got their counsellor. Ask people to say their name out loud if they would like to have a session.
- Wait until the blind/visually impaired person solves it for themselves – they might ask who is near them and then ask one of them the people close by for a session
- Encourage people to come to the blind/visually impaired person and book sessions/mini sessions early in the workshop

3. Written information: get someone to read out information/announcements clearly so that the blind/visually impaired person hears them. Have any information in folders read onto a tape before the workshop. Ensure that any information put on the wall or overhead projectors are read out to the blind/visually impaired person, as well.

Ask anyone who has information (e.g. stuff for folders) on IT system to download a copy onto floppy disk or CD. Some Braille users have access to IT which will translate text into Braille.

4. Meal times: help to get food. Give information about what there is to eat, and maybe help to carry it to the table. It is helpful to tell people where food is on their plate by describing it as a clock, e.g. “fried egg at 12 o'clock, ketchup at 1 o'clock, sausage at 6 o'clock, etc.”

5. Finding rooms: set up help to assist the blind/visually impaired person to find meeting rooms, bedroom, dining room, etc. Also bathroom/toilets for the first time, or whatever they need. Think this through with the blind/visually impaired person, depending on the numbers of people and the layout of the venue.

6. Games/sports: set up an ally to give assistance to participate. Take time to think through what will work well. Balls, etc. with a bell or other sound inside can be useful for blind people to access games.

## **Feedback from People With Special Needs About Accessibility at RC workshops**

- ◆ It is helpful if workshop leaders have had an opportunity to discharge on their feelings about disability, before leading the workshop. This makes the issue more central for everyone.
- ◆ Make accessibility a central issue for the workshop early on, e.g. get the accessibility team up front so that everybody can see who is doing each job. Keep up-to-date information on flipchart paper in the workshop, and make reminder announcements, e.g. remind everybody to ensure that people with special needs are being included in mini sessions.
- ◆ In organising allies for people with special needs, let the person with special needs know if it has not been set up, e.g. a sleeping mate.
- ◆ A member of the accessibility team should be at the front of the workshop at all times, to ensure that needs are met, e.g. loop systems are operating properly, and space for people to lie down and special chairs, etc. are maintained.
- ◆ Have allies to people with special needs on one job only. Also, ensure that sufficient allies are available for each person with special needs. Not everyone who is deaf, for example, will have the same needs. If there is more than one ally, consider one of them leading the group to ensure that people keep thinking flexibly.
- ◆ Check back after the workshop has started, to ensure that people with special needs are getting their needs met, and make changes if needed in accessibility arrangements.
- ◆ Allies stay on the job more effectively when they get discharge time. Set up clear times for this to happen. Also ask all allies to get discharge time on their job before the workshop, e.g. on early memories connected with being ill or seeing another person ill or disabled.
- ◆ Ensure that there are enough ‘access monitors’ to keep gangways and access into and out of the workshop and other key spaces clear.
- ◆ Quiet sleeping areas need to be in a quiet area, away from main corridors, and not with a ‘noisy’ one below or above it.
- ◆ The hearing induction loops need careful setting up. It is best if they have two microphones. Floor microphones work best, as they are not fiddled with by the leader/speaker. If you use tie-clip microphones, let the leader borrow a hearing aid to hear the impact of fiddling with it. The person maintaining the loop system needs to be near the front to deal with any problems arising with its use.
- ◆ Inform people to wait and start meal tables only when needs of those attending have been met, e.g. don’t exclude a deaf/hard of hearing person because they do not have access to a loop system. Think about what part of the dining room/other rooms you hold groups in, e.g. are they wheelchair accessible?
- ◆ Ask deaf/hard of hearing people if they want to move to the front of the workshop, facing the group, when there are question and answer sessions.

- ◆ Raise awareness about wheelchair users:
  - people who use wheelchairs easily get isolated.
  - they need access through safe routes (fire exits, etc. need to be kept accessible)
  - ensure that their allies get discharge time, and get close to the person using the wheelchair.
  - arrange seating so that wheelchair users get easy access to others for mini sessions, etc., e.g. small blocks of chairs 5 rows by 6 chairs with good aisles
  - leaders: use brief reminders to ensure that everybody is included in sessions, etc.
  
- ◆ For sports and other similar activities, have a member of the accessibility team available to assist people with special needs to consider what activities they want to participate in, and how these might be changed if necessary to be inclusive.
  
- ◆ Try not to have venues which have split sites, e.g. for workshop and sleeping. They can be very hard on people with special needs.
  
- ◆ Please add your additions to this list as you learn them.

## **Comments from Members of Past Accessibility Teams**

- When I was given this job I realised that I probably wouldn't get it done perfectly, and that I couldn't do it alone. I really started to see what inclusion could mean, and that this would be for everyone. I loved experimenting, listening to what disabled people needed and working in a tight team together. We also had a lot of fun, and discharging as allies was much less isolating in a group.
- It clarified my role in seeing that 'everything I come into contact with goes well.' I could see that it was about getting the job done without dramatising, and that this could be applied to every area of my life.
- Leading this team really taught me to keep being available to others, to hear what was needed and to keep thinking flexibly.
- As allies we need to be leading a team which is about empowering disabled people, people with chronic illnesses and people with special needs. Their needs can be very different and while some need practical things done for them, others may not.
- I am taking things I have learnt from being on accessibility teams out to all areas of my life, and others are very interested to hear what we are trying out and that it could be possible to include everybody.