



Learning Disability Pride guide

A guide for planning a Learning Disability
Pride event in your area

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N.B. All text highlighted in pink throughout the guide links to websites and online resources.

Background

On 27 May 2017, Northern Ireland held the first ever Learning Disability Pride event in Carrickfergus. It was organised by Carrickfergus and District Senior Gateway Club in partnership with Mencap. The event received funding from the Big Lottery Celebrate fund, Mencap, Carrickfergus and District Mencap and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. There was also a range of in kind support from local businesses, community organisations and individuals.



Learning Disability Pride was the idea of the Carrickfergus and District Senior Gateway club leader, Thomas Haighton, who said: “There are 33,000 people with a learning disability in Northern Ireland and we wanted to organise an event to bring them together and to show pride in who they are. We wanted to raise awareness that learning disability does not have to stop someone achieving their full potential.” On the day of the event, 3,000 people took part in the parade and 2,000 people lined the streets in support and enjoyed the event.

Elizabeth Crozier, a member of the Carrickfergus Senior Gateway Club said: “I really enjoyed Learning Disability Pride! It was a great day out for everyone and I can’t wait for the next one”



There were 4 main elements to the event:

- **Flying the Flag for Learning Disability** - A parade by people with a learning disability, family members, volunteers and supporters.
- **Get into the Groove** - A concert featuring a range of entertainment including live bands, DJ’s, dancers and much more.
- **Market Stalls for All** - Local businesses, community and voluntary organisations were on hand to selling refreshments, products and providing information about services and projects for people with learning disabilities, their families and carers.
- **Let’s Learn Together** - Workshops where people could try out activities such as kite making, different types of dancing, petting farm animals, horse and cart rides, music, art and crafts.



Margaret Kelly, Director of Mencap Northern Ireland said: “Learning Disability Pride is a great idea and Mencap are very proud to be part of this event. People with a learning disability need to be listened to, valued equally and fully included in society. Raising awareness and changing attitudes with events like Learning Disability Pride is a fun way to do it. “

This was the first Learning Disability Pride event in Northern Ireland and it was a great success. We hope that it will be the first of many across the UK!

Purpose of the pack

The Learning Disability Pride event raised awareness of learning disability in Carrickfergus and further afield, helping to reduce stigma and discrimination by celebrating and acknowledging the place of people with a learning disability in society. The event brought about a great sense of pride and freedom of expression for people with a learning disability, parents, carers and much more.

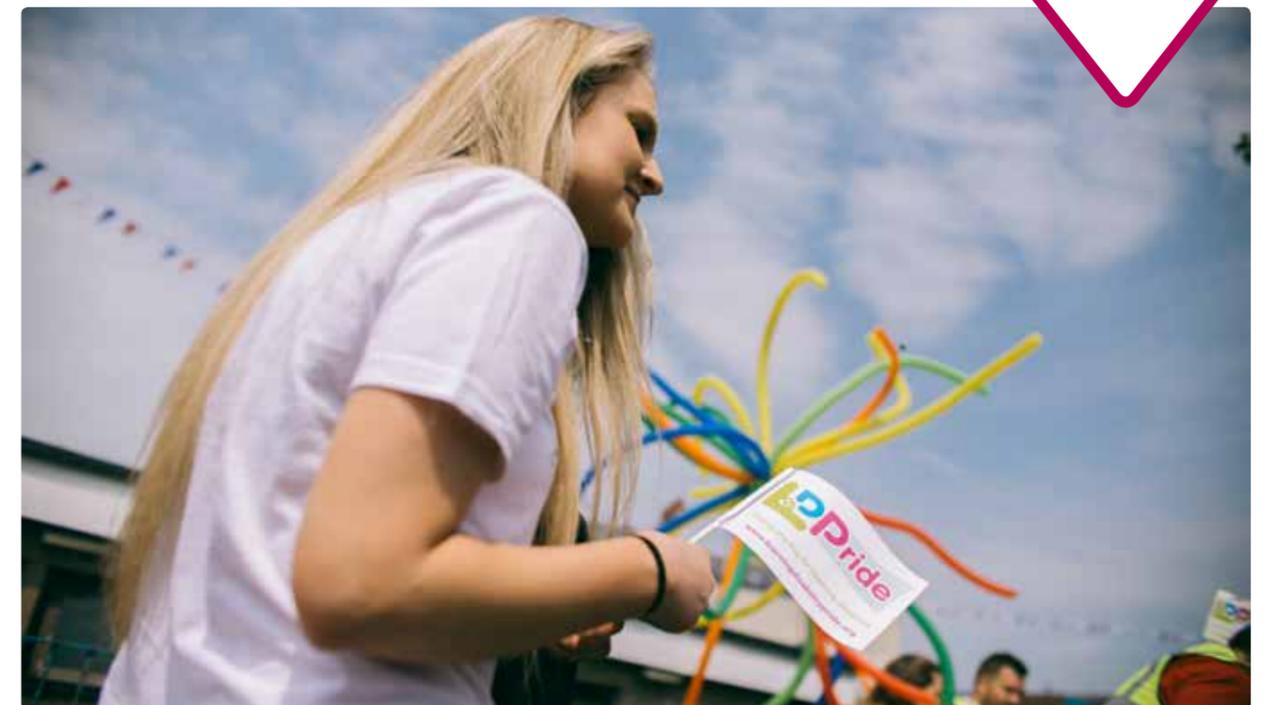
We have created this guide to support groups connected to learning disability to engage their communities about learning disability issues and to support people with a learning disability to get their voices heard.

This guide and supporting resources are intended to help you get started and provide ideas about how to host your very own Learning Disability Pride Event. Supporting resources are available for download at the Mencap NI [website](#).

You can use this guide in any part of the UK and we strongly recommend that you get your Local Council involved in the event.



This guide was developed by Christine Mulvenna (Network Communications and Events Manager) with support from Thomas Haighton (Leader of Carrickfergus and District Senior Gateway Club).



Step by Step Guide



For clarity, these steps have been set out as taking place one after the other, but in reality, you may find that there is some movement back and forward, as a change or issue identified at one step may require you to modify some of the plans or activities developed at an earlier step.

Step 1: Develop your vision and key objectives

Your first step will be to decide on a clear vision and key objectives for your Learning Disability Pride event. You may wish to link these into Mencap's strategy called **Our Big Plan**.

The Carrickfergus event focused on three out of six of Mencap's strategic priorities including: Reducing stigma and discrimination, making a difference here and now and supporting friendships and relationships.

It is important to set objectives so that you know the direction of the event and it will help you to plan the event according to the intended target audience. Our objectives include:

- Increase awareness of learning disability across Mid and East Antrim Borough
- Engage with 1000 people with a learning disability to take part in the parade and fly the flag for learning disability
- Increase awareness of the importance of friendships and relationships for people with a learning disability
- Engage with a range of stakeholders across NI to maximise impact we can have for people with a learning disability and their families.

It is important to set a realistic timescale for your event. A gantt chart can be useful in mapping out what needs to be done and by when. Our event took 9 months to plan and deliver; this can vary depending on the scale of the event and the resources you have available.

Learning disability pride gantt chart

	Month									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Project management meetings	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Identify vision, objectives and target audience See Step 1 and Step 2	█									
Draft event plan Step 3	█	█	█	█						
Audit existing resources e.g includes stakeholders, in kind support, finance, service providers	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
Seek and secure funding See step 4	█									
Identify planning groups See step 5		█								
Planning group meetings			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Confirm event plan (update as needed) See step 6					█	█	█	█	█	█
Communication and marketing, planning and activities See step 7			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Volunteer engagement activities See step 8							█	█	█	█
Evaluation and reporting activities See step 10	█							█	█	█

Make sure you leave yourself enough time, both before and after the event, to plan and also tie up any loose ends like invoices, evaluations and reports.

Step 2: Identify your target audience(s)

You will need to decide which audience(s) you want to reach for your event and what would engage them.

Here are some ideas of the types of audiences you might want to reach:

Network Partners affiliated to Mencap

This may include:

- Local gateway clubs
- Other leisure opportunity providers
- Local societies
- Social enterprises

Your audience(s) might be:

- People with a learning disability
- Volunteers and/or staff members
- Trustees/Committee members
- Parents, carers, other family members

Other voluntary and community organisations interested in learning disability

For the Carrickfergus event some of these included:

- Caring Breaks
- Sense
- Kilcreggan Homes
- Positive Futures
- Lead Inclusive Conselling

Your audience(s) might be:

- People with a learning disability
- Volunteers and Staff
- CEO's, Directors, Senior Management
- Parents, carers, other family members

Learning Disability Services

This may include:

- Adult centres
- Day centres
- Day opportunities providers
- Supported living schemes
- Respite units
- Residential homes

Your audience(s) might be:

- People with a learning disability
- Volunteers and/or staff members
- Board members
- Senior management team
- Parents, carers, other family members
- Health care professionals
- Trust staff/NHS staff
- The wider community

Education providers

This may include:

- Schools for children with learning disabilities
- Main stream schools (primary and secondary)
- Colleges
- Training organisations

Your audience(s) might be:

- Children, young people or adults with a learning disability
- Parents, carers, other family members
- Teachers, learning support assistants, volunteers
- Board members
- Parent teacher associations
- Education professionals

Local Businesses and community organisations

This may include:

- Local information centre
- Local library
- Community centres
- Hotels
- Restaurants
- Leisure centre
- Local businesses
- Social enterprises

Your audience(s) may include:

- A wide range of stakeholders who may wish to support the event or be present at the event to provide an information and advice stall for example.

Others

This may include:

- Local churches
- Local sports clubs
- Political parties

Your audience(s) might be:

- Members of the congregation
- Local sports people
- Local politicians

In our experience, we found involving as many local people and organisations as possible really helped in terms of securing additional in-kind support and generating interest in the event.



Step 3: Decide what you will do to meet your objectives

Your next step is to decide what type of activities will help you to meet the objectives you set yourself at Step 1. For instance, will you just have a parade, or will you follow it with activities such as a concert with live entertainment, food stalls, or other activities? Deciding on your main activities will help you to set an outline budget for the event, which you will need in order to seek funding (see Step 4).

As mentioned previously, the activities in Carrickfergus consisted of four main elements which tied into the overarching aims and objectives of the event. It is always worth revisiting your objectives to ensure that all activities and plans relate back and how they do this. Always have a clear rationale for each part of the plan and make sure it is communicated across your working group (see step 5).

Some of the activities provided within each of the four elements were:

Flying the flag for learning disability	
Parade: 1 mile along the Carrickfergus Marine Highway (we had a local celebrity to lead the parade)	Superheroes who joined in the parade and kept everyone engaged
Get into the groove	
Host for the event – local radio DJ (well known) Key note speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Mayor Organisers People with a learning disability Director of Mencap NI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live band performance DJ with a learning disability Performances from local children's dance groups including cheerleading Irish Dancing group Drama performance from local gateway club Clubbercize Performances from local adult centre
Market stalls for all	
Craft stalls, food stands	Information and resources marquee (relating to learning disability)
Let's Learn Together	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Petting zoo, donkey and cart rides African drumming sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selfie mirror, bubble performers, bouncy castle Arts and crafts, kite making, balloon makers

For the Carrickfergus event, all costs in relation to activity providers were included in the budget so that participants on the day could engage in the activities free of charge. This might be something that you want to consider when running your own event. If your budget is limited you may need to consider charging for some activities, but bear in mind that this could exclude some people and could reduce the overall numbers participating.



Step 4: Seek funding for the event



It is very important to set a realistic budget for your event. In total, LDP in Carrickfergus cost around £30,000; although you could reduce the cost by limiting the scale of your event.

If you plan to seek grant funding, you need to bear in mind that most funders require a defined period to reach a decision. Be sure to read their funding guidelines thoroughly to ensure:

- That your event is a good fit with their funding criteria
- That you apply in sufficient time to enable them to reach a decision well in advance of your event.

It is hugely important to have your objectives, timescale and an outline budget identified before applying for funding as these will support your case.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council was a great source of information and advice about available grants, local by-laws and running large events. They also helped to negotiate in-kind support in the Carrickfergus area. However, you might want to secure funding via a different avenue or you may have funding already available to you.

Don't forget to account for V.A.T in your budget, and be sure to use it as a live working document that helps you to compare expected against actual costs. You will need to track all costs carefully as most funders will require a report showing how their contribution was spent.

Step 5: Identify people to help plan and organise activities

Your next step is to identify people who can help with the more detailed planning and organising of your event. You should think about:

- Who wants to be involved?
- What skills and interests do they have?

Here are some ideas of who could be involved:

People with a learning disability

Learning Disability Pride is all about people with a learning disability, so it is important that they are included at different stages of planning, delivery and feedback. You may also wish to have a sub working group of people with a learning disability to filter ideas about the event.

Staff, volunteers and/or trustees from your Network Group

There might be someone in your group who really enjoys organising events, someone else who enjoys social media and another person who is great at talking to people/communications. Get them all involved with the planning of the event. It is great to have a mix of skill sets in your working group, and means that you can break the event down into manageable tasks.

Other organisations connected to learning disability

There might be other organisations who would really love to collaborate with you for a Learning Disability Pride event. We found that our offer of partnership was well received by a range of organisations. Having different organisations connected with learning disability ensures a range of expertise in your working group. It is also helps to ensure that they feel committed to the event and are keen to promote it to the people and organisations they work with.

Events Management staff from your Local Council/ Local Authority

In our experience, we found it very useful to ask the local council to get involved in the planning of our event. They were able to bring expertise on event safety plans and the provision of in-kind support such as a stage, marquees and crowd barriers.

We would recommend that you look into your Council's community/neighbourhood plans and find out how a Learning Disability Pride event can support them to meet some of their objectives. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Mencap were a great support for our event and we have partnered with them again for the next Learning Disability Pride event in Carrickfergus on Learning Disability week, June 2019.

In advance of pulling together a working group for your event, it may be useful for you to consider drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding or Terms of Reference for the group. This is an informal document, which outlines the aims of the group, roles and responsibilities. This means, from the onset, that each member of the working group will have a clear understanding of what is expected from them and from the group, which helps to manage expectations.

You will also need to get in contact with the Fire service, Police and Ambulance services to inform them of the date, time, location, access routes and anticipated participant numbers for your event. You can contact your Local council/authority for advice on how to do this. These services will plan this into their work schedule and will be on call should you require their services at your event.



Step 6: Create detailed plans

Parade route

One of the first things that you will have to do when planning your event is to pick a route for your parade. If you want to have entertainment, activities or stalls after the parade, it is best to have the parade leaving from one venue and ending up at another venue where the activities will take place. This will allow you to set up any stalls, staging or other facilities in advance.

It is important that you estimate how far people will be willing/able to walk, how long you expect it will take and that you work with your Local Council and Police Service to ensure crowd and traffic management if the parade is taking place along a main road.

If you live in Northern Ireland, you will need to apply to the Parades Commission before confirming your parade. If you live in Scotland, England or Wales, please contact your local authority for guidance.



For the starting point for your parade, seek permission in writing to use a large venue, for example a local football ground or park, to gather the crowds and then finish at the main event site where your entertainment, activities and stalls can be. If you want to use council owned land for either of your venues, you should check the process for requesting use with the council as far in advance as possible.

You will need to work closely with your working group, local council/authority, the police and other advisers to ensure a thorough event plan.

Event safety plan

Some of the main things the working group will need to consider are -

- Audience profile, site design, proposed capacity, event start and finish times
- A policy in place about safety planning and management based on 'The Event Safety Guide', HSE 1999. Who will be responsible for safety?
- Key personnel: Roles and responsibilities for staff and/or volunteers
- Volunteers: Selection, pre-event briefing, identification of volunteers (Hi-Visibility vests for example), volunteer roles, allocation, training, support on the day and post-event recognition
- Crowd management: Admission, access to venue, security, spectator access, monitoring the crowds, egress
- Participants and spectators with disabilities: Car parking, access, accessible toilet facilities
- Emergency plans: Evacuation procedure, police, safe meeting point
- Exiting capacity/Ease of escape analysis: Site capacity, entrances and exit routes
- Medical facilities, first aid and ambulance
- Fire safety: Major fire requiring assistance including access, litter and waste disposal, catering units, fire assembly point
- Health and welfare provision: Toilets, accessibility and sanitary provision
- Drinking water
- Control room and communication facilities: Radios, failsafe measure e.g what will happen in the event of radio breakdown
- Temporary structures and installations
- Lighting and auxiliary power
- Tests and inspections
- Designated officers for site management
- Designated officers for safeguarding: Missing person, lost and found area.

Risk assessment and management plan

See below headings to help you get started:

What is the risk (area or activity)?	What might happen?	What action will be taken to reduce the risk?	Who will take the action?	Risk level/likelihood score	Additional information
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Event operational plan

This is the operating plan for the entire event. This can include:

- Date, time, location, contact person for event, who needs to be involved, target audience – who, message – what, objectives – why, description of event, participants
- Event plan for the day including times, who is involved and actions from start to finish; including set up and clear up
- Roles and responsibilities of working group and paid staff on the day, specific tasks, contact numbers
- Radios, PA systems, failsafe measures in the event of communication equipment breakdown
- Volunteer break down: Who, where, why, task(s), time(s), reporting to who, contact details and emergency contact details
- List of stall holders and catering providers, contact name, contact number
- Parade list in order for parade of all registered participants/organisations, names, contact, leave blank spaces and room at end of the parade for groups/participants joining on the day
- Entertainment plan on stage: times, requirements, type of entertainment, notes, actions
- Entertainment plan off stage: times, locations, requirements, types of entertainment, notes, actions
- You may wish to add budget breakdown for the event at the back of this operational plan

As part of this guide we have available a template **event planner** for your convenience.

Step 7: Develop your communication, media and marketing strategy

Your next step is to develop a communication, marketing and media strategy. This will help you to think about how you promote your event.

Things to consider:

- Who do you want to communicate with?
- What is your market?
- What types of media would you like to use?
- What do you want to say?
- Where do you want your message to reach?
- How are you going to engage your audience?

Key messages

Make sure that you have a short and sharp key message about your event. We used 'Flying the Flag for Learning Disability'. It was short but captured the essence of the event where people could join in the parade and fly handmade flags or small flags distributed on the day. The key message had connotations of pride, independence and inclusiveness. We wanted our audience to think this when they saw the key message and feel empowered to join in on the day in any capacity.

The key message was consistent throughout our marketing and promotional materials and it is important to keep this consistent in the run up to the event and on the day. The key message should be clear and relate to your objectives and aim of the event



Promote event to your audience

Who do you want to contact?

Once you know your audience you will need to find out who is the best contact in your local area

What do you want to say?

You need to think about what you want to tell them, for example, who you are, why you are contacting them, what is it you are offering?

What method to use?

You will need to decide which method you think will be the best way to contact them. You can give them a call, send them an email, send a letter, put an article in a local paper, ask to put an article in local bulletins, via social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

If you have your own website, you may wish to put communications here and sign post people to it.

For the Carrickfergus event we created our own website, please see link below to this website:

<http://learningdisabilitypride.org/>

Contact your local media

Why promote your event?

Learning Disability Pride offers a great opportunity to get the media interested in learning disability, Network Partners and Mencap. The more we promote and spread the word, the more the general public will understand the issues that affect people with a learning disability and their families.

What media to use

Using your local media (newspapers, television, radio and social media) is an important part of campaigning and one of the most effective and cheapest ways of ensuring everyone is aware of your event.

You may also wish to consider a pre-launch event for photographs with newspapers and for social media in advance of your event. This is a good way to generate interest and promote the event to a wider audience. For Carrickfergus this worked really well, with around 100 people with a learning disability from Carrickfergus Senior Gateway attending (see picture below).



Marketing

In the initial planning stages, we held a competition to design the Learning Disability Pride logo. The winner of this competition was an adult with a learning disability from Northern Ireland. This may be an idea for your group to consider. Or please feel free to use the logo developed for the Carrickfergus event. Following on from this, the working group worked with a creative team to create a flyer as a marketing tool; please see front and back of flyer below:



We asked the local creative team to make two large banners which could be used for the parade but could also be used to tie on railings (with Council permission) for promotional use in advance of the event. It is worth costing into your budget some promotional banners in order to raise the profile of your event in the local community.



On the day of the event, we provided parade participants with whistles, bam bam and Learning Disability Pride branded small flags. These were a great idea to help make lots of noise and have lots of colour in the parade.

It is worth considering asking all parade participants to dress up, make their own t-shirts, flags and art work to display in the parade.

There are many different ways of marketing your event. You may think about creating shop stickers and asking local shops and restaurants to display these to show their support. Many shops in our local area put up posters for us in order to promote the event. Always remember, if you don't ask, you don't get!

Step 8: Recruit volunteers

Involving volunteers is hugely important for an event like this. It is an opportunity to raise awareness of learning disability and to engage people in a short-term activity that has the potential to be lots of fun.

Depending on the scale of your event, you will need to consider the number of volunteers that you require and also the roles and responsibilities.

We recommend that you have a clear picture of how many volunteers you require and what the roles on the day include. Some of the roles we had included:

- Set up night before
- Promotional material distributors at local train/bus station, near event site and at the starting point of the parade
- Bus guides
- Stage hands
- Cheerers
- Communications
- Guides for Parade
- Car parking volunteers
- Survey gathering
- Arts and crafts
- Farm support
- Donkey and cart support
- Bouncy castle support
- Balloon distributors
- Troubleshooting
- Clean up

Once you have a clear idea of how many volunteers you require you can use social media and other ways to promote your volunteering opportunity. It is useful to outline the list of roles available. Please see the **template** used at our event.

Step 9: Other considerations

It is important to arrange a **briefing session** for the volunteers. This session could include:

- Aims and objectives of event
- Parade plan
- Entertainment plan
- Safeguarding considerations
- Health and safety
- Event emergency contact details
- Volunteer expenses
- Roles and responsibilities on the day

We found it useful to outline all volunteer roles at the briefing session and to have a **sign-up sheet** to collect names, contact, email, emergency contact number for each volunteer and preferred role for the day.

Communication with volunteers is essential in the lead up to the event so that everyone has a clear understanding of how they will work together as a team to ensure the success of the event. Consider how you will contact each volunteer and their preferred method of contact; you must think about consent for contact and how this is given/communicated.

Other considerations for volunteers include making sure that they have enough water on the day. If possible try to cost their lunch, dinner and travel expenses into your budget. They will provide you with such valuable support and it is important that we recognise and reward their fantastic contribution.



Insurance

If you would like to have a public event then you must ensure that you have appropriate Public Liability Insurance that will cover your event.

Event layout

We would advise that you get a **site map** with key and then map your event layout onto this. Ensure that you have considered and mapped emergency exits and access for emergency services. It is also important to consider and plan where you want to have for example, stage, marquees and catering. These can be scaled to your site map to ensure your venue can facilitate the size of the event.

Resources

Considerations of resources for the day:

- Tables
- Chairs
- Banquet roll
- Arts and Crafts
- Bins
- Marquees
- Generators
- Crowd barriers
- Toilets
- Accessible toilets
- Radios
- Hi-visibility vests
- Lunch/water for volunteers
- Water for stage
- Stage
- Lighting
- Sound
- Mics
- Signage

Catering

In terms of catering, we recommend that you request and keep copies of vendors':

- Public liability insurance
- Gas certificate (if applicable)
- Hygiene certificate

Security

In Carrickfergus, we hired a private security firm to support with the event. This was very advantageous and worth investing in to manage the large crowd on the day. We also hired them to secure the venue, which was set up the day before the event.

There are many different security firms that could support your event. It is important to ensure you have one direct point of contact, that you know how many security staff you require for the event and that you brief the security staff about roles, responsibilities, operational plans. It would be good practice to offer your chosen security company some

Learning Disability Awareness training in advance of your event to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge of how to support people with a learning disability.

Parking

On the day of your event, you may have a lot of people who need to park cars nearby for access. It is worth scoping out the local area and asking car park owners if they can reserve spaces and/or disability spaces for participants on the day. If successful with this, make sure you communicate the parking arrangements to your audience. Also, consider where parade participants will park their vehicles and/or if vehicles will be involved in the parade and where they will park afterwards. Will you have a designated area for them?

Photography on the day

Photography and videography is a great way to capture the crowds and atmosphere on the day. These can also be used in evaluations, reports and for future events. You can share these via social media and include photographs in your local press release. We would recommend putting up signage to show that photographs and videos will be taken on the day. Do not forget to invite your local news media along and make sure there is someone to manage communications and press on the day.



Key note speakers

If you are having on stage entertainment, it is a good idea to have someone act as Master of Ceremonies (MC) for the event, along with some key note speakers. We are sure that you will have lots of ideas about an MC; we would suggest a local radio presenter for example – it is important that the MC is someone who can interact well with the crowd and performers and can establish a good atmosphere for the event. Inviting keynote speakers can help give your event a central theme and focal point, which can be useful when engaging your audience.

Make sure you approach your potential MC and speakers in good time, especially if they are high profile people.

It is useful to provide the speakers with a full brief about the event, a clear time frame of the slot that you would like them to speak, confirm if there is a fee for their involvement and allocate someone to meet, greet and support speakers at the event. Check with the speakers if they have any specific requirements, e.g. access needs, ensure they have water and give them a walkthrough of the proceedings when they arrive.

Step 10: Evaluation

In preparation for the event, it is useful to consider how, who and what you will evaluate. This will allow you to demonstrate the success of the event to your partners and funders, as well as providing an opportunity to identify any ways in which you could improve future events.

There are many different ways to evaluate your event. You can use:

- A paper survey
- Electronic survey
- Feedback area on the day
- Provide an online survey after the event
- Hold feedback sessions after the event

It really is up to you and what works best for your event.

The people you may wish to consider asking to complete the survey could be:

- People at the event
- Stall holders
- Volunteers
- Entertainment providers

We also have available, as part of our resources, our participants survey and stall holders survey.

Our surveys may give you an idea of what to evaluate in terms of different questions that we asked. It is important that your evaluation relates back to your objectives and can demonstrate impact that is measurable.



Summary of resources

All resources including hard copy of this guide are available upon request by emailing your.network@mencap.org.uk or on the Mencap Ni website.

- LDP logo
- Our Big Plan
- Gantt chart
- Template event planning document
- LDP event flyer
- Template expression of interest for volunteer roles
- Template volunteer briefing session
- Sign-up sheet for volunteers
- Site map examples
- Participant survey summary
- Stall holder survey questions

Good luck

We would like to take the opportunity to wish you every success with your very own Learning Disability Pride event! We would love to hear from you if you are planning an event like this. If you would like to get in contact with us or have any questions in relation to this guide, please contact yournetwork@mencap.org.uk



Contact us

Royal Mencap Society

123 Golden Lane
London EC1Y 0RT
Telephone: **020 7454 0454**
Fax: 020 7608 3254
www.mencap.org.uk

Mencap Northern Ireland

5 School Road
Newtownbreda
Belfast BT8 6BS
Telephone: **028 9069 1351**

Mencap Cymru

31 Lambourne Crescent
Cardiff Business Park
Llanishen
Cardiff CF14 5GF
Telephone: **029 2074 7588**



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Carrickfergus
Senior
Gateway

