

Accessing London's culture through lifelong learning

A London 2012: All inclusive workshop



In May 2012, CAE organised a Grundtvig learner workshop entitled London 2012: All Inclusive Workshop. It was gratefully funded by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme. For CAE this was an opportunity to explore the principles of inclusive design and accessibility through the diverse travel and cultural interests of the European participants. London, only a couple of months before the Olympic and Paralympic Games, offered the platform to put these principles to the test, and in the end, it passed successfully. Here, CAE Project Managers, Wai Chan and Foteini Galanopoulou, introduce CAE's first residential workshop for European adult learners.

Applying access

Participation in the Workshop was open to disabled and older people from across Europe. Shared interests included arts, culture, sports and accessibility.

From the start, all procedures were designed to be as accessible as possible – alternative formats were made available, including Easy Read and Plain English, both of which were used in all communications before, during and after the workshop. Individuals were invited to apply along with their personal assistant or companion.

This was one of the few Grundtvig workshops actively welcoming applications from disabled people and, as a result, CAE received a high number of enthusiastic applications – over 70 in total.

Positive learning

Once the difficult task of selecting participants was completed, an enthusiastic group of 12 learners from seven different countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Portugal and Romania) was formed. Their age range of participants was between 35 and 74-

years-old, all representing unique personal experiences and access requirements.

For many of them this was completely new territory – including, travelling abroad, using the internet, learning about inclusive design and of course, meeting new people. Therefore, one of the key aims was to create a positive environment for everyone involved. This was achieved partly through an online blog for participants only. The blog helped bring cohesion within the group in a number of ways, such as:

- participants could begin getting to know each other
- developing internet and website skills
- sharing and learning a common language
- following the progress of the workshop programme
- influencing the activities

Though it was not compulsory for everyone to contribute posts or take part in the group tasks, the blog remained a safe and welcoming platform for sharing; for some just following the weekly posts helped them feel part of the group before the workshop took place.



Workshop participants explored a wide variety of London's attractions and historical spaces

The right learning context

Mapping out everyone's profile before their arrival was essential in choosing the appropriate learning content and teaching styles: for example, a traditional paper-based style may have created barriers for some. Instead, a combination of discussion, open questions, worksheets (Easy Read versions), tactile items, images, photos and videos were used, giving everyone options for a preferred method of participating, receiving and sharing information. Furthermore, all sessions were designed so that participants' real-time comments were incorporated into the experience and learning, there and then. Participation was encouraged at all times but not pressurised.

In addition to pre-arrival information about their trips to London, participants were given details and helpful resources such as:

- schedule of activities
- maps and guides
- customised materials (that took into account personalised requests, including, A3 large print maps of the London Underground)
- suggestions for accessible theatres and other cultural venues

In their own words:

'This is the first time in my life that somebody asks my personal opinion about accessibility in public buildings

such as museums. I find this amazing because what disabled people need sometimes is difficult to think of, if you do not have personal experience'

'I enjoyed the freedom to choose what I wanted to do. I learnt more about culture, London, the Olympics ...'

'I would like the achieved experience to be implemented in accessibility about Europe and that a standard of accessibility could improve troubles and cultural believing through European Community'

Practicalities

Accommodation and transport were vital elements in the success of the workshop. Visits to many London hotels were conducted by members of CAE's team in advance, in order to select one that met high hospitality and access standards as well as the requirements of our workshop participants. The main criteria included accessibility of the hotel and rooms, facilities for hearing impaired guests, disability awareness of staff and customer service. The hotel chosen was the Copthorne Tara in Kensington, West London.

Staff at the hotel there were keen to offer additional services, such as assisting participants' in their preferred language. It was one of the few hotels that allowed the participants to stay in their preferred accessible room and on the same floor as other Workshop participants. CAE found that many other hotels seemed to locate single accessible rooms at the far end of each floor.



Workshop participants visit the Olympic Park

Participants also experienced and tested public transport's accessibility during independent journeys. Just a few months before the London 2012 Games, the accessibility of black taxis scored highly for the group, while the tube network and staff's helpfulness impressed our guests.



Workshop participants at the NHM

For participants the workshop was an opportunity to develop their skills and expand their knowledge in familiar and new fields. During the course of the five days they attended sessions on inclusive design and access to culture and sports, intellectual access and, understanding contemporary arts and London's heritage.

Lessons learnt: Top tips for running accessible workshops:

- do not be afraid to ask
- visit every location in advance to review accessibility (hotels, restaurants, local attractions, facilities, transport)
- make use of accessible guides online but do not depend on them
- check for Changing Places facilities and accessible WCs
- incorporate comfort breaks and rest opportunities throughout
- use clear print information and large print maps

- language: use plain English and Easy Read formats
- check local community transport providers for accessible vehicles and make sure there are safe and accessible setting-down and collection points on planned routes
- get to know your participants
- do not try to control everything – provide choice and flexibility ●

For more tips, visit the London 2012: All inclusive workshop site

<http://tinyurl.com/cae-accessible-workshop>

For further details the programme and to view more photographs, visit the blog

<http://allinclusiveworkshop.edublogs.org>

CAE would like to thank staff at the Science Museum, the Natural History Museum and Tate Modern for their support in planning the workshop activities and joining the groups during their visits.



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The value of well-designed outdoor spaces

Health and wellbeing for older people and people with dementia

This article looks at how we can all promote better health by ensuring the external environments we use are appropriate and enabling by being clear, understandable, easy and enjoyable to use. Here, Annie Pollock very clearly sets out why this approach is so important and imparts valuable guidance on creating healthier and more pleasant outdoor spaces.

by Annie Pollock, Director of Landscape Architecture, Dementia Services Development Centre, University of Stirling

There are now 800,000 people living with dementia in the UK and this includes over 17,000 younger people (65 years-of-age and below) and an estimated 11,000 people from black and minority ethnic groups. As the number of people with dementia grows (by 2021 it is estimated to be over 1 million), all our lives will undoubtedly be affected.

One-in-three people over 65 will develop dementia. Therefore, it is vital to explore ways that we can help lessen the impact of this disease on those that have it, their carers and the health services. Keeping everyone and particularly older people and people with dementia as healthy as

possibly has the potential for enormous savings on our national health bill as well as creating happier and easier people to care for.

How does being outdoors promote better health?

One of the best ways of improving one's health is by getting outdoors, to exercise, socialise and to engage in activities. By being outdoors, we also get vitamin D from the sun, even on an overcast day.

Up to 80 per cent of ultraviolet rays can pass through clouds

The Skin Cancer Foundation of the US