



DISABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY 2025

#ConnectingLives



INTRODUCTION

Connecting Lives with inclusive experiences

Excel London's mission is to be the best event destination in the world. The experience that organisers, exhibitors and visitors have of the venue and the campus is pivotal to delivering that mission. Our new brand purpose – Connecting Lives – reflects this ambition.

At Excel, inclusivity is at the heart of everything we do. We embrace and celebrate the diversity of everyone who visits or works within our venue, recognising that no two people are the same. By providing an accessible and welcoming environment, we ensure every event has the foundation it needs to succeed.

What is accessibility?

Accessibility means ensuring that everyone – including , care providers and personal assistants as well as anyone with temporary access needs due to illness, injury, or recovery – can have an equitable experience of our venue.

Our approach to accessibility is holistic and inclusive, recognising both what we currently provide and what we are working towards.

Our focus has been:

- **Physical access:** Step-free routes, lifts, escalators, accessible toilets, Changing Places facilities, Blue Badge parking and free to use mobility aids.
- **Support:** Frontline staff trained in Sunflower Lanyard awareness and providing our organisers with advice and guidance.

Our focus will be:

- **Communication access:** Embedding facilities such as hearing loops, BSL interpretation, clear signage and visual aids.
- **Services:** Extending staff training so every team member feels confident in providing respectful, informed support at every touchpoint. Provisions for assistance dogs.

Each person is different. We're committed to treating their needs with care and respect, whether they are an organiser, exhibitor, visitor, contractor or our team member.



UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY, DISCRIMINATION & BARRIERS



In the UK, over 16 million people – around 24% of the population – live with a disability (Family Resources Survey, 2023). That number is growing and includes people with a vast range of lived experiences. Many of these individuals attend events, work in the industry, or aspire

to do so. If we design with them in mind, everyone benefits.

People’s needs and preferences vary widely, and inclusive design requires ongoing dialogue, flexibility and creativity. People are not disabled by their impairments, but by the barriers society creates.

Definitions

Physical disabilities: Includes mobility impairments, dexterity limitations and chronic pain conditions.

Sensory disabilities: Includes blind and partially sighted people, D/deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals, people with sensory sensitivities such as autism and PTSD.

Intellectual and learning disabilities: Includes conditions such as Down syndrome, global developmental delay and cognitive impairments.

Neurodivergence: Includes autism, ADHD, Tourette’s, dyslexia, dyspraxia and other forms of cognitive difference.

Visible and invisible disabilities: Includes visible disabilities (e.g. limb difference, use of mobility aids) and non-visible ones (e.g. mental health conditions, chronic fatigue, epilepsy, diabetes).

Complex disabilities, care providers and personal assistants: People who experience multiple and often interconnected physical, sensory, cognitive, or health-related impairments. They may require ongoing care, medical support, or high levels of assistance to participate in everyday life. People with complex disabilities often attend events with the support of a care provider, support worker, or personal assistant (PA). These support roles are essential, enabling them to participate in society with dignity and ease.

Discrimination

Creating an inclusive environment isn't just the right thing to do – it's a legal responsibility.

The Equality Act 2010 protects disabled people from unfair treatment in the workplace and when accessing goods, services and facilities. It defines disability as “A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

Under the Act, there are several types of unlawful disability discrimination. Understanding these is essential for building an inclusive events organisation that upholds dignity, fairness and equity.

Understanding barriers to access

Disability is not just about impairment – it's about the barriers that stop people from participating fully, equally and independently. This strategy focuses on reducing those barriers to create a welcoming and accessible environment for everyone.

Barriers can exist in our spaces, systems and attitudes, affecting people in different ways. Our role is to remove or minimise these obstacles and actively support inclusion. This approach shifts responsibility from the individual to us and our partners, without diminishing the impact of any impairment.

Being truly inclusive means understanding and addressing a wide range of barriers – physical, informational, financial, systemic and attitudinal. Each disability may present specific challenges, such as lack of step-free access, poor lighting, or low contrast between text and background – and organisations can take deliberate actions to address them.

At Excel, we work with organisers, event managers and producers, to help them design events that reduce barriers, while taking responsibility for those within our control.

UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY, BARRIERS AND DISCRIMINATION

Creating an inclusive environment means understanding both the barriers disabled people face and the forms of discrimination they may experience.

Types of discrimination

1. Direct discrimination: When someone is treated less favourably than someone else because of their disability.

Example: Refusing a person entry to an event because they are a wheelchair user, or because of assumptions about their support needs.

2. Indirect discrimination: When a policy or practice that applies to everyone disadvantages people with a particular disability.

Example: Requiring all event attendees to queue for entry without alternatives. This may disadvantage people with mobility impairments, chronic fatigue, or anxiety.

3. Discrimination arising from disability: When someone is treated unfairly because of something connected to their disability, rather than the disability itself.

Example: Asking someone to leave an event because they exhibit involuntary vocalisations related to Tourette's syndrome.

4. Failure to make reasonable adjustments: Organisations have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce barriers that put disabled people at a substantial disadvantage.

Example: Not providing an accessible toilet at a venue, or failing to offer alternative ticketing methods for someone who cannot use online platforms.

5. Harassment: Unwanted behaviour related to a person's disability that has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

Example: Staff making jokes or remarks about a customer's mental health condition.

6. Victimisation: Treating someone unfairly because they have made (or supported) a complaint of disability discrimination.

Example: A staff member being overlooked for promotion after raising a concern about access barriers.



Types of barriers

1. Physical barriers: Obstacles in the built environment that restrict movement or access.

Example: Inaccessible entrances, stairs without alternatives, or poorly placed seating.

2. Informational barriers: Communication that is unclear, overly complex, or not provided in accessible formats.

Example: Event signage that is small, low-contrast, or not accompanied by audio or visual alternatives.

3. Financial barriers: Costs that prevent disabled people from participating equally, including extra expenses required to access or enjoy an event.

Example: Higher ticket prices for carers or assistive equipment hire fees.

4. Systemic barriers: Policies, procedures, or organisational structures that unintentionally exclude or disadvantage disabled people.

Example: A booking system that only works online without alternatives for those unable to use digital platforms.

5. Prejudicial barriers: Negative attitudes, assumptions, or stereotypes about disability that limit opportunities or inclusion.

Example: Assuming a person cannot participate fully because of a visible or invisible impairment.

ACCESSIBILITY AT EXCEL

Inclusion is central to everything we do. At Excel, we aim to set the benchmark for access and inclusion in the events industry – going beyond legal requirements to deliver exceptional experiences for everyone.

We work with lived-experience consultants and partner with *Attitude is Everything* through the Live Events Access Charter, reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement.

Excel has four distinct venue areas that cater to a wide range of events – from large-scale exhibitions to premium conferences and next-generation immersive experiences. While some parts of the campus are over 25 years old and others have only just opened, our commitment is the same across every space: to continually improve accessibility, service and comfort so that all guests feel welcome and included.

Our current accessibility baseline includes statutory access requirements, mobility aid hire, Blue Badge parking and Sunflower Lanyard awareness training for frontline teams. These essential measures ensure everyone – organisers, exhibitors, visitors, contractors and staff – can participate fully and equally.

Building on this foundation, Excel is committed to going further: continually improving facilities, services and staff training to create exceptional, inclusive experiences that set a benchmark for the events industry.



EXCEL'S VENUE SPACES



Over the past 25 years, Excel has continually expanded and evolved, with new spaces designed to meet the needs of different types of events. While each area reflects the time in which it was built, our commitment remains the same: to review every part of the venue and raise it to a consistent standard of accessibility, service, and comfort. Just as importantly, we support organisers with information and guidance to ensure accessibility is embedded into the way events are planned and delivered within our spaces.

Halls 1-18 & ICC

The original part of the venue, hosting the majority of exhibitions, conferences and large-scale events.

These halls offer a flexible blank-canvas design with a striking entrance, an information point and excellent transport links via the Elizabeth line, alongside a series of conference spaces and an auditorium.

Some aspects reflect the age of the building, such as limited wayfinding and underused information points, but we are committed to upgrading user-friendliness, accessibility and support services so these spaces continue to meet modern expectations.

Maritime Halls & Suite

Opened in 2025, this is the newest part of the venue, purpose-built to host premium meetings, conferences and large-scale events. It has been designed to rival leading international venues and luxury hotels and the spaces can operate as a self-contained facility with its own dedicated entrance or integrate seamlessly into the wider campus.

As a brand-new development, the Maritime Halls & Suites set a benchmark for accessibility, service and comfort, shaping expectations for the future of guest experience at Excel.

South Gallery

A dedicated training and meeting venue, it can be accessed from both the South Halls and Waterfront and has a separate lounge and toilet facilities.

The Waterfront access will be reconfigured to make arrival smoother and more inclusive for all guests, ensuring the experience matches the high standard of the facilities inside.

Immerse LDN

Launched in 2024, Immerse LDN brings a new dimension to the venue with purpose-built spaces designed for a range of immersive experiences hosted by different Intellectual Properties (IP).

With direct entrances from the Waterfront and links to the South Gallery and the Waterfront Kitchen and Bar, it sits at the heart of a vibrant new district.

Our priority is to work closely with each IP partner to ensure their experiences are fully accessible to all guests, and that staff receive the training needed to deliver confident, inclusive and welcoming service.

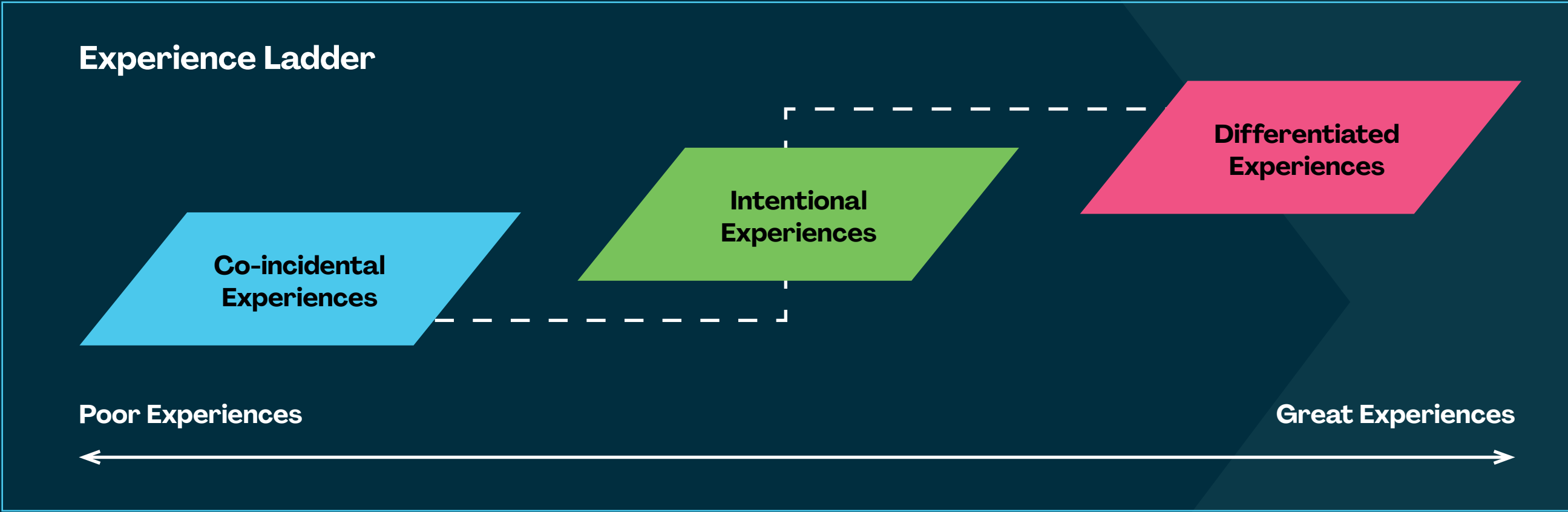
Across all spaces, Excel is committed to removing barriers, supporting diverse needs and creating Differentiated Experiences that reflect our brand, values and vision for industry-leading inclusivity.

THE AMBITION FOR ACCESSIBILITY

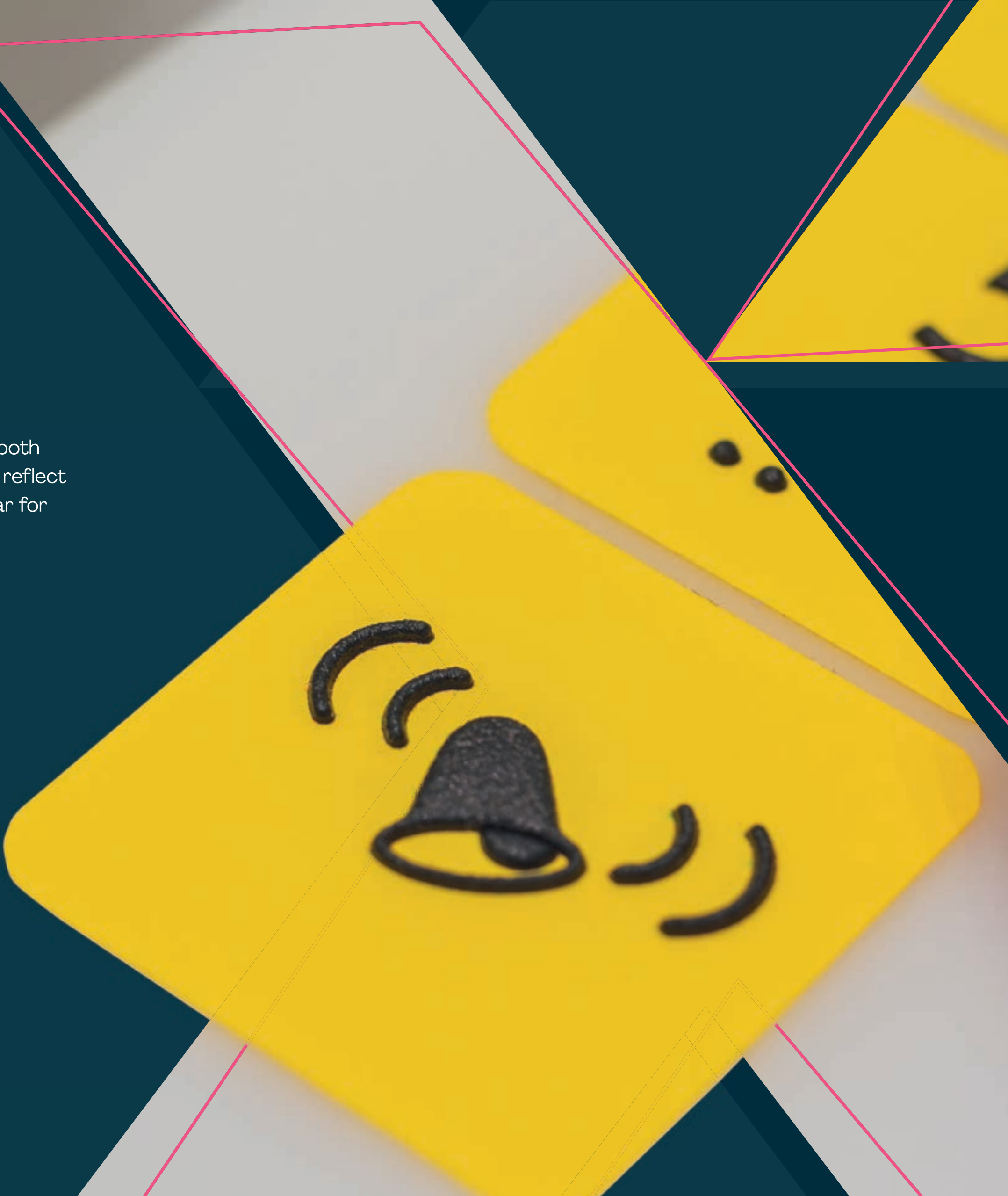
The lived-experience audit showed us that many guests with access needs already enjoy positive experiences at Excel, but these are often Co-incidental Experiences – shaped by individual staff knowledge or the condition of the building.

Our ambition is to create Intentional Experiences, where accessibility is consistently built into everything we do.

By embedding a clear, organisation-wide standard across both team behaviours and building design, every interaction can reflect the Excel brand, its mission and core values – raising the bar for accessibility across the events industry.



(Graphic courtesy of Custerian)



Being inclusive

To welcome all guests, we must also welcome the people who support them. Accessibility is about the whole network around each individual. By designing with lived experience in mind, we ensure every aspect of Excel – from customer service to digital platforms – is inclusive, flexible and grounded in real needs.

We will continually engage disabled people in shaping our services, audit our physical and digital environments and provide comprehensive staff training to support an inclusive culture.

By removing barriers, offering choice and treating every individual with dignity and respect, we create not only accessibility, but belonging.

Our venue and our people showcase who we are and what we stand for. Embedding equity, co-production and inclusive leadership ensures every interaction reflects our values and creates an environment where everyone can participate fully.

The lived-experience audit has shaped our priorities and delivery plan, which includes:

- A forward-looking Disability, Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy
- Partnering with organisers to embed inclusion into every event
- Clear, accessible online information reflecting lived experience
- Infrastructure improvements, including signage, seating and sensory-friendly spaces
- A permanent Disability Hub and refuge for respite and support

Excel is committed to setting the standard for inclusion – where barriers are removed, choice is offered and every guest feels valued.

LEARNING FROM LIVED EXPERIENCE: THE DISABILITY TASKFORCE ACCESS AUDIT

In 2024, we commissioned a comprehensive Disability Access Audit across Excel and its services, led by *The Disability Taskforce*. This audit was a cornerstone of our inclusion strategy – designed not only to identify barriers but to ensure that disabled people shaped the process, the findings and the solutions.

What we learned

The audit gave us a clear roadmap for improvement – highlighting where we are doing well, and where change is needed to ensure a truly inclusive experience. Key themes included:

Communication gaps: While many access features existed, they were not always clearly signposted or communicated to the public and staff.

Online barriers: Accessibility information should be consolidated in one clear, easy-to-find location.

Sensory overload: Environments were often overwhelming, particularly for autistic and neurodivergent guests, with limited quiet spaces or sensory adjustments available.

Event access issues: Insufficient consideration for Deaf and blind guests and a lack of accommodation for wheelchair users.

Customer journey barriers: Booking platforms, queuing systems and check-in procedures sometimes created unnecessary stress.

Positive culture: Staff showed genuine willingness to help, but often lacked the tools, confidence, or training to provide effective support.



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