



Planning your visit – Accessibility Guide

Do you offer easy access and disabled parking?

If your group requires disabled coach access and parking please print [this sign](#) to display in your window to ensure you are directed to the appropriate car park. Your coach will be able to drop your group off near the main entrance for The Big Bang Fair. Please note you may be requested to display your blue badge, so please ensure you have this on you.

Parking costs do apply, details of this can be found on the [NEC website](#). Please note that the venue charges the same amount for disabled access parking as standard parking, **no** free parking is available.

If travelling by train, the NEC may have discounted rates available. Please check their [website](#) for that latest information.

Is the NEC accessible?

The NEC is fully equipped to offer all visitors facilities to meet their needs. You can find full details about everything from parking and transport to disability access and cloak rooms on The NEC website at www.thenec.co.uk/visiting-us/facilities. Alternatively, you can phone the venue on 0121 780 4141.

Can I hire mobility equipment from the NEC?

Wheelchairs are available free of charge for blue badge holders and £5 for all other visitors. The number of wheelchairs the NEC has available is limited, so if you've got your own, please bring it with you.

Scooters - £15 per hire for all visitors.

The NEC strongly advises visitors to pre-book equipment to avoid disappointment. They operate a telephone booking line Monday to Friday 0900hrs-1600hrs on 0121 780 4141 (Option 2 and then Option 7), or alternatively you can email at InfoEmailAccount@necgroup.co.uk

All pre-bookings will be held until 1100hrs on the day booked for, unless otherwise advised.

For any visitors who have not pre-booked equipment and arrive on the day, any remaining stock will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis. As collection location varies from show to show, please check the collection point when making a booking.

Please note: Mobility equipment hire is only available during show open times and we only accept payment by card for any equipment hired.





The Big Bang

UK Young Scientists & Engineers Fair

What should our group do when we arrive?

Upon arrival at The NEC, please follow the signs and guides towards the registration area. Please ensure your whole group check-in together and that a member of your group has a copy of your e-ticket either printed or on their phone. If you have indicated in your booking that members of your group have accessibility needs, you should ask to be registered via the accessibility fast-track lane in Hall 19. You and those in your care who require additional support should be issued with green sunflower lanyards which indicate to our exhibitors and staff visitors with potential hidden disabilities. If this does not happen, please ask for one. Exhibitors and staff are aware that those groups with sunflower lanyards have accessibility needs and can support in the following ways:

- **Show queue fast track**
- **Fast-track to exhibits** (*where exhibitors are able to facilitate this)
- **Priority access to SENSory Zone activities**
- **Access to the calming room (organiser office 20.4 & 20.5)**

What catering facilities are available?

The Big Bang Fair has picnic areas available for those who wish to bring a packed lunch. There are also catering facilities inside the exhibition space for those who wish to purchase food at the venue. The picnic areas can become very busy so you may wish to have lunch with your group in the calming room located in organiser offices 20.4 & 20.5.

Are toilets easily accessible?

There are accessible toilets throughout the NEC, however, the toilets inside the halls can become very busy. There are some visitor toilets located just outside the main entrance between Hall 19 and Hall 20 and queues for these toilets are often shorter. There is also a [changing places](#) toilet located in this location, a radar key is required to access this. The security staff in this area can support you with access if required.

How busy is the Fair?

The Big Bang Fair welcomes approximately 20,000 young people, parents, teachers and guardians per day, so is a very busy environment. The Fair is quietest between 09.30 – 11.30 and 14.00 – 16.00, you may wish to plan your visit to work with one of these times when queues will be shorter and visitor numbers lower.

How loud is the Fair?

With large crowds and potential loud noises from shows and demonstrations The Fair can be quite a noisy place to be in. If this could cause distress to members of your group, it may be advisable for them to bring ear plugs or ear defenders. We also have a calming room available which is located in organiser offices 20.4 & 20.5 just off the main picnic area.





How are activities tailored to support accessibility?

- **SENSory zone** – within the STEM Playground we have created a SENSory Zone which has a variety of activities catering to different sensory learning styles. This area is prioritised for pink card holders.
- **STEM Playground** – all activities in the STEM playground are aimed at 7-12 year olds and explore STEM skills through creative play. These activities are often adaptable for SEN students and are easier for groups to explore at their own pace.
- **Interactive activities** – all exhibitors are aware that visitors with accessibility needs will have pink cards. They will try to give you priority access to their activities where possible.
- **Shows** – for all show performances the front row is reserved for those with accessibility needs, additionally the first performance each day on the headline stage and mini stages are relaxed performances, this means:
 - the lights in the audience will be up so that it's not too dark
 - we make small changes to the lights and sound (such as taking out strobes lights) so that the performance is more accessible if you have sensory sensitivities
 - audiences will be warned of any loud noises during the show
 - you can take your seat earlier than usual, or arrive later than the arrived time (subject to space still be available in the theatre)
 - you can make noise during the show
 - you can come and go as you please
 - you can sit on the floor rather than chairs if you prefer (*headline stage only*)

Can you provide BSL Interpreters?

The Big Bang Fair is happy to provide free of charge BSL interpreters to groups where required. To book this service, please contact the [Big Bang Team](#) by the 7th February with details regarding what day you are attending the Fair, how many people in your group require BSL interpreter support, and an approx. outline of what you would like to visit e.g. show names and times and a list of activities, this will enable us to fully brief the interpreters allowing them to provide the best possible experience.

What health & safety measures are in place?

The Big Bang Fair's visiting schools risk assessment can be downloaded [here](#). Full details of our health and safety arrangements can be viewed [here](#).

What should we do if a member of our group gets lost?

All lost persons will be taken to organiser office 18.1 where we are able to look up the lead contact for each booking and contact that person to help re-unite the group. If you have lost a member of your group, please report to this office. If you have members of their group who may struggle to communicate who their teacher/guardian is to event staff, please ensure they have this information on them that they can provide to event staff. Wristbands upon which you can write this info are available from registration.





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How can we prepare for our visit?

The Fair map is available approximately 1 month before we open. It can be found on our [website](#). You may find it helpful to plan your route in advance.

You can view information about available activities in the [see and do](#) section of the website. Please be aware this is regularly updated before The Fair.

We also have a pre-visit visual story power point that you may wish to run-through with your group. You can download this [here](#).

Do you have information about accessible careers routes?

All exhibitors at The Fair should also be able to discuss all routes into their organisation with you. Below are some useful links you may wish to explore highlighting non-degree led routes into STEM careers.

Post-16 options (UK)

www.ucasprogress.com

Apprenticeship info and vacancies

England: www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

Scotland: www.apprenticeships.scot

Wales: <https://gov.wales/apprenticeships-skills-and-training>

N. Ireland: www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships

Alternatives to university

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

Career videos

www.icould.com

www.careersbox.co.uk

Careers information on...

Engineering: www.tomorrowengineers.org.uk

Physics: www.iop.org/careers

Biology: www.rsb.org.uk/makeadifference

Chemistry: www.rsc.org/careers/future/career-options

Maths: www.mathscareers.org.uk

Questions or suggestions?

If you feel that your group's needs are not met by the support we currently offer please let us know, we will always do our best to support groups to attend The Fair and try to make improvements to our accessibility procedures. If you have any suggestions or questions, please email info@thebigbangfair.co.uk and we will respond to you within 48 hours. The usual working hours of the team are 9 am – 5 pm on weekdays.

Social media

Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #bigbangfair to share the highlights from your day.