



Enhancing Accessibility at Events – Insights from PIWS Training

- **Delegate:** Lowri Morris | Operations Manager, Eisteddfod yr Urdd
- **Location:** Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells LD2 3SY
- **Course:** Piws 4-day Champion Training Course
- **Date:** 26/02/2025



Urdd

4-day Champion Training Course

Background

Lowri recently attended a 4-day pilot PIWS training course on event accessibility. With over 14 years of experience working for the Urdd, Lowri has recently stepped into a new role as the Operations Manager and was wanting to learn how to enhance accessibility and inclusivity at festivals and events. The training provided her with valuable insights into improving the overall accessibility of the Eisteddfod.

Motivation for Attending the Training

Lowri's primary motivation for attending the workshop was to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of how to make events more inclusive. She sought to identify accessibility barriers, learn best practices from other large-scale events, and implement improvements in event planning. Her goal was to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, could fully participate in the festival experience.

Key Takeaways from the Training

One of the most valuable aspects of the training was the opportunity to network with other big events there, such as those from the Royal Welsh Show, and the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol, which was really useful as the major events don't get the chance to work together, being able to share best and worst practices. Through discussions, Lowri gained insights into legal accessibility requirements, strategies for better site planning, and methods to improve accessibility policies, strategies and how to implement them onsite. The training also emphasized the importance of clearly communicating accessibility measures to attendees and staff.

Impact on Accessibility Approach

The knowledge gained has already begun to shape Eisteddfod yr Urdd's approach to accessibility. Key improvements identified include:

- **Site Design Enhancements:** Making annual site adjustments to better accommodate accessibility needs.
- **Improved Communication:** Ensuring digital content, including the website and social media, is accessible to all users, including those using screen readers.
- **Feedback Collection:** Developing more detailed accessibility-focused feedback forms to gather data for future improvements.

Identified Areas for Improvement

The training highlighted several key areas requiring immediate attention:

- **Website Accessibility:** The need to review the website for compliance with web accessibility guidelines, particularly regarding PDFs, alternative text for images, and screen-reader compatibility.
- **Volunteer Training:** Expanding accessibility training for volunteers beyond the brief pre-event session to ensure they are well-equipped to support attendees with diverse needs.
- **Digital and Social Media Content:** Ensuring all event-related digital content is accessible, including subtitled videos and accessible documents.

The Value of Industry Collaboration

Engaging with other major events in Wales has been particularly beneficial. The training allowed Lowri and her team to exchange ideas, share challenges, and explore solutions collaboratively. For example, discussing accessibility ramp issues with other event organizers has led to practical solutions that will save time and resources.

Implementation of an Accessibility Strategy

Moving forward, Eisteddfod yr Urdd intends to implement a structured accessibility strategy, including:

- **Assessing current accessibility measures** to build on strengths and address weaknesses.
- **Setting clear, achievable goals** within budget constraints, working towards a long-term strategy over three to five years.
- **Prioritising staff and volunteer training** to ensure accessibility awareness is embedded at all levels of event planning.
- **Enhancing public communication** to ensure attendees are well-informed about the accessibility features available.

Immediate Benefits and Expected Outcomes

While immediate results have not yet been observed, Lowri anticipates positive long-term effects, including:

- **Increased engagement** with the accessibility community, fostering a reputation as an inclusive event.
- **Stronger public relations** by demonstrating commitment to accessibility improvements.
- **Enhanced feedback mechanisms** to measure the effectiveness of accessibility initiatives.

Further Support and Training Needs

To continue improving, Lowri expressed interest in further training on:

- **Digital Accessibility:** Learning how to optimize websites and digital content for full accessibility.
- **Legal Compliance:** Staying updated on evolving legal requirements to ensure full compliance.
- **Event-specific Accessibility Workshops:** Gaining deeper insights into accessible event design, including seating arrangements, signage, and inclusive on-site facilities

Conclusion

The PIWS training has been instrumental in helping to further shape Eisteddfod yr Urdd's future approach to accessibility. Through industry collaboration, strategic planning, and continuous improvement, the organization aims to create an inclusive festival experience for all attendees. Lowri acknowledges the value of having an Accessibility Officer and emphasizes the importance of ongoing learning and implementation to ensure accessibility remains a core focus of event planning.