

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE



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 <https://www.thenec.co.uk/visitors/facilities/>. Alternatively, you can phone the venue on 0121 780 4141.

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.

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 11:00am 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.

Information on the evacuation procedure, should there be an emergency, can be found here: [Atrium | AccessAble](#)



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 12**

Do you provide sunflower lanyards?

Visitors are welcome to bring their own sunflower lanyards, or you can pick one up in the registration area. Wearing a sunflower lanyard:

- Fast tracks you through queues
- Provides access to the calm area and quiet rooms (see below)

We understand that not all young people want to wear a sunflower lanyard but they are needed to access some of our facilities, please encourage your students to take one and keep it in a pocket or bag if they'd rather not wear it! If members of your group do not have a sunflower lanyard, please ask for one.

What support is provided for Deaf visitors?

Our science shows on the Big Bang Stage will be signed by BSL interpreters, and will have closed captions displayed on large screens. The same is true for the Big Bang Competition awards ceremony.

Please let us know at the event if you require seating near the front to ensure a good view of the screen and/or BSL interpreters, a member of staff will be on hand to help lead you to the reserved seating.

Unfortunately, we are unable to guarantee BSL interpreters to go around with each individual school group. If you are able to attend with interpreters for your group, this is helpful. If you or someone in your group requires support from a BSL interpreter for an emergency, please speak to a member of staff on-site who will be able to support you.

If you are a volunteer, exhibitor or supporter and need support from a BSL interpreter please let us know in advance by emailing info@thebigbang.org.uk

What support is provided for blind/visually impaired visitors?

If planning to join a science show or careers panel discussion, please arrive a couple of minutes before the scheduled start time and ask to be seated near the front. As the stages are part of the show floor, they can be noisy and sitting near the front will make it easier to hear more clearly.

The show floor is very busy, and our young visitors can be boisterous. We recommend blind or visually impaired visitors are chaperoned by a peer/adult supporter where possible, and they are welcome to use our calm area or quiet rooms if they need a break.



Are toilets easily accessible?

Visitor toilets are located at the back of Hall 12. There are also some visitor toilets located just outside the main entrance between Hall 11 and Hall 12 and queues for these toilets are often shorter.

For safeguarding reasons, the accessible toilet at the back of Hall 12 is also the gender-neutral toilet. This will be clearly signposted.

Are there Changing Places toilet?

Changing Places toilets are also available by Hall 20, on the Atrium side and by Hall 2 on the Piazza side. It provides more space for up to 2 carers and extra features to meet additional needs, including height adjustable adult-sized changing benches and a hoist system. The security staff in this area can support you with access if required. Full details can be found on [The NEC website](#).

How busy is The Fair?

The Big Bang Fair welcomes approximately 3,500 young people, parents, teachers and guardians per session, so is a very busy environment.

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. Due to the number of young people we are expecting, we are unable to provide ear defenders but welcome you to bring your own.

Is there access to a quiet room?

We have a number of calm and quiet spaces available on-site:

On the show floor, the calm area is a space for young people who need it to escape the crowds and take a moment to reset. This space will be equipped with sensory toys, beanbag chairs and sensory lighting. Whilst we can't guarantee that this space will be quiet (as it is on the busy show floor) we intend to control numbers by only providing access to those wearing sunflower lanyards and a friend/adult accompanying them. This area is labelled as Calm Area on the map.

Organisers Office 12.3 is a dedicated quiet room just off the show floor for teachers to take any student who may need to have a quiet space off the show floor. This space will not be equipped with sensory toys or any additional resources but will be a lot quieter than the show floor and the calm zone. There will be a security guard on the door to provide access, but they will be fully briefed so will be welcoming and supportive to anyone who needs access.

Exhibitors/volunteers/supporters also have access to the exhibitor green room as a quiet space.





Is there access to a multifaith/prayer room?

There are no longer any multifaith/prayer rooms available at The NEC. These have been renamed Quiet Spaces and are multipurpose. The nearest Quiet Space is Atrium Suite 1. The closest entrance to access the room is Atrium 1.

Are there baby changing and feeding facilities?

You can find the locations of the baby changing and feeding facilities throughout the NEC via this link: <https://www.thenec.co.uk/media/4543/baby-change-and-feeding-leaflet.pdf>

Our Big Bang Unlocked is a breastfeeding friendly event, so please feel free to feed wherever you feel comfortable.

What if I have a medical emergency?

Please ensure you bring any medicine that you or your group may require. If you require medical assistance whilst on-site please find a member of the Big Bang team (Navy and Aqua t-shirts), NEC Security team (Hi-Vis jackets) or Fresh team (black polo shirts). They will make sure you are taken to the First Aid Organiser Office (12.4) where a member of our First Aid team will be able to assist you further.

Please be aware that some of our stands include a 'Van de Graaf generator', which may cause problems for people with heart problems or pacemakers. These stands will be clearly signposted.

How are activities tailored to support accessibility?

- Interactive activities – all exhibitors are aware that visitors with accessibility needs will have green sunflower lanyards. They will try to give you priority access to their activities where possible.
- Exhibitors have been briefed to ensure their stands are as accessible as possible. They have been advised to include ramp access, tactile flooring, include subtitles on any digital content and where possible ensure interactive activities are not fixed on high surfaces.
- We are always striving to improve the accessibility of our event and would welcome any feedback both on-site or post-event.

What health & safety measures are in place?

The Big Bang Fair's visiting schools risk assessment can be downloaded [here](#).





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

All lost persons will be taken to organiser office 12.2 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.

How can we prepare for our visit?

The Fair map is available on our website. You may find it helpful to plan your route in advance: <https://www.thebigbang.org.uk/the-big-bang-fair/plan-your-visit/#map>

You can view information about available activities in the What's on section of the website. Please be aware this is regularly updated before The Fair: <https://www.thebigbang.org.uk/the-big-bang-fair/what-s-on/>

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: <https://www.thebigbang.org.uk/media/22zp0dcu/my-visit-to-the-big-bang-fair-visual-story.pptx>

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@thebigbang.org.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.

