

# Inclusive Festive Gatherings: A Leadership Playbook (with Rapid Plans You Can Start Today)

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Executive take: Year-end events are a reputational moment. Done well, they strengthen culture, retention, and brand. Done poorly, they create exclusion, complaints, and risk. This guide sets a clear standard any employer can adopt plus accelerated timelines if your event is in late November or early December.



## **Why this matters now**

Festive season diaries are tight, teams are mixed (on-site, hybrid, shifts), and budgets are under pressure. An inclusive approach isn't "nice to have": it's how you maximise participation, protect wellbeing, and model values in public.

## **The Standard: What "Good" Looks Like**

Policy statement (copy/paste):

“Our year-end celebration will be inclusive, accessible, psychologically safe, and fiscally considerate. We will provide equally prominent alcohol-free and alcoholic options, step-free access throughout, clearly labelled food with allergen information, and meaningful participation routes for remote and shift-based colleagues.”

#### Accountability

- Owner: People/EDI lead (delivery: Event Lead)
- Approvals: Legal (conduct), H&S (risk), Comms (language)
- Budget guardrails: Travel safety, accessibility, and alcohol-free parity are ring-fenced (not discretionary)

#### **The 5D Operating Model (use with your events team)**

1. Define — Purpose, audience, inclusion risks, budget, success metrics
2. Design — Venue/layout, sensory plan, food & allergens, hybrid option, recognition moment
3. Decide — Vendor selection with inclusive criteria; confirm conduct protocols
4. Deliver — Clear signage, visible sober contacts, low-sensory zone, quiet/prayer room
5. Debrief — Survey, incident log, lessons learned, publish actions

Leadership signal: Share your purpose and non-negotiables in the first all-staff announcement. It sets expectations before the invite lands.



## **Don't Have 30 Days? Use an Accelerated Plan**

### **A) 10-Day Quick Start**

- Day 1: Approve purpose/non-negotiables; send vendor brief; launch 60-second dietary/access survey
- Day 2–3: Confirm venue with clauses; book two sober contacts; draft pre-event info sheet
- Day 4–5: Send invite and conduct note; set up 30–45 min virtual segment for remote/shift staff
- Day 6–7: Finalise menu labels; print signage; identify low-music zone
- Day 8: Collect peer nominations; complete mini risk register
- Day 9: AV/light test; manager briefing (bystander action, escalation, taxi policy)
- Day 10: Deliver; next morning send 4-question survey

### **B) 7-Day Sprint**

- Day 1: Email venue and survey staff
- Day 2: Confirm clauses, sober contacts, info sheet
- Day 3: Invite sent with expected behaviour; book hybrid slot

- Day 4: Menu labels; signage
- Day 5: Peer nominations; risk checks
- Day 6: AV/light test; manager brief
- Day 7: Deliver and survey afterwards

### **C) 72-Hour Last Minute Plan**

- 72h: Lock venue with non-negotiables (access route, accessible loo, low-sensory/prayer room, label all food, alcohol-free parity)
- 60h: All-staff message and 60-second needs form
- 48h: Assign sober contacts; publish info sheet; confirm transport plan
- 36h: Labels & signage; low-music zone; 10-min values recognition
- 24h: AV/light test; brief managers
- 0h: Deliver
- 12h: Survey; log actions



## Must / Should / Could (when time is tight)

### Must-dos (non-negotiable)

- Step-free route end-to-end; accessible loo on event floor
- Written allergen controls and clear labels at service
- Alcohol-free parity (0.0% options at the same bars, same prominence)
- Low-sensory area and quiet/prayer room (signposted)
- Named sober contacts; conduct and reporting route in the invite

### Should-dos

- Pre-event info sheet (schedule, photos, noise levels)
- Hybrid/shift inclusion (short virtual segment + snack/voucher)
- Values-linked recognition (peer nominations; 5 short stories)

### Could-dos

- Name badges with communication preferences
- Ear defenders on request
- Gratitude wall or low-key activities



### **Vendor Requirements (put these in your booking brief)**

- Accessibility: Step-free routes to all spaces; accessible toilet on event floor (written confirmation; photos if needed)
- Sound & light: Independent control; designated low-music zone
- Allergens: Ingredient lists, labelled items, cross-contamination controls
- Beverage parity: Named 0.0% options presented at the same bars as alcoholic drinks
- Spaces: Clearly signposted quiet/prayer room (no alcohol), with chairs and soft lighting

### **Design Principles That Travel Across Cultures & Teams**

- Timing equity: Daytime and early-evening options; avoid major religious dates; publish finish time for safe travel
- Format diversity: Replace “sit-down and bar” with participation modes: mingling, quiet corners, brief recognition, optional activities
- Language: “Festive gathering” / “year-end celebration” rather than single-tradition terms
- Neuro-inclusion: Info sheet (schedule, menu, noise levels, photos), low-sensory area, optional comms-preference badges
- Cost-of-living aware: No pay-to-play; no dress code implying spend; cover modest travel/home-safe costs where needed
- Hybrid parity: A 30–45 min virtual moment mirroring the recognition segment; snack/voucher packs for remote/night-shift staff

### **Conduct & Safeguarding (make it easy to do the right thing)**

- Re-affirm expected behaviour and reporting routes (incl. anonymous)
- Two sober, identifiable contacts on duty; briefed on boundaries and escalation
- Alcohol is optional: no rewards tied to consumption; no drinking games
- Transport: last trains/buses, taxi point, reimbursement rules published in advance

### **Recognition That Builds Culture**

Swap “most festive” for values-anchored stories.

- Before: Invite 2–3 sentence peer nominations aligned to values

- During (10 mins): Share five short stories; avoid competitive/appearance-based awards
- After: Publish the stories internally; link each to a behaviour to repeat next year

### **Measure What Matters (fast KPIs you can still hit)**

#### Participation & inclusion

- Attendance by location/shift; % remote joining
- Dietary requests fulfilled (100% target)
- Accessibility issues resolved pre-event (100% target)

#### Experience

- "I felt welcome and comfortable participating" (avg  $\geq 4.4/5$ )
- "Non-alcoholic options were high-quality and visible" ( $\geq 90\%$  agree)
- "The event respected my needs (access, sensory, faith)" ( $\geq 90\%$  agree)

#### Risk & conduct

- Incidents/near-misses (target: 0 material; all minor closed with actions in  $\leq 10$  working days)



## Drop-in Templates (ready to use)

### 1) One-email vendor brief

Subject: Inclusion requirements for our festive event – confirmation needed

Hello [Venue],

We're confirming booking for [date/time]. Please reply today confirming:

- 1) Access: Step-free route to all spaces + accessible loo on the same floor
- 2) Sound/light: We can set a low-music zone and adjust lighting independently
- 3) Allergens: You provide ingredient lists; items are labelled at service; cross-contamination controls in place
- 4) Beverage parity: Named 0.0% options available and displayed at the same bars as alcoholic drinks
- 5) Space: A quiet/prayer room (no alcohol) with chairs and soft lighting

Please confirm in writing. Add this clause: Failure to meet these standards is a material breach and allows fee reduction/alternative provision.

Thanks,

[Name], [Role], [Phone]

### 2) All-staff message

Subject: Our inclusive year-end gathering – what to expect

We're celebrating together with an event designed for everyone. Expect step-free access, clearly labelled food (including allergen info), and high-quality alcoholic and alcohol-free options. A low-sensory area and quiet/prayer room will be available.

If you have dietary, access, or sensory needs, please complete this 60-second form by [deadline]. Our conduct policy applies—if you need support, [Sober Contact 1] and [Sober Contact 2] will be available throughout.

Can't join in person? Join our 30-minute virtual moment at [time/link].

—[Name], [Role]

### 3) Mini run-sheet

- 16:00 Doors open; signage visible; 0.0% drinks at every bar
- 16:15 Short welcome (purpose + inclusion standards)
- 16:20 Food opens (labels visible; separate utensils)

- 17:00 Values stories (5 × 60-second peer nominations)
- 17:10 Transport reminder; quiet/prayer room signpost
- 18:30 Gradual close; sober contacts available for support
- Next day Survey; thank you; publish actions

#### **4) Four post-event questions**

- I felt welcome and comfortable participating. (1-5)
- Food/drink options met my needs. (1-5)
- The event respected my access/sensory/faith needs. (1-5)
- One improvement for next time? (free text)



## One-Page Checklist (print and go)

### Before

- ☐ Purpose and non-negotiables agreed
- ☐ Date/time avoids major clashes; finish time supports safe travel
- ☐ Venue confirmed with access, allergen, sound/light, parity, and space requirements in writing
- ☐ Dietary/access survey sent; pre-event info sheet prepared
- ☐ Sober contacts named; conduct & reporting in invite
- ☐ Hybrid/shift alternative planned

### During

- ☐ Clear signage to quiet/prayer room & accessible facilities
- ☐ Low-sensory zone active; ear defenders available if possible
- ☐ Labels on all food/drink; separate utensils for dietary lines
- ☐ Named contacts visible; short values-based recognition moment

### After

- ☐ 4-question survey sent within 12 hours
- ☐ Thank you note with photos/resources
- ☐ Lessons learned logged; KPIs published internally

## How Diversiti UK can help

- Inclusive Events Sprint (2 weeks): We co-design your 5D plan, vendor clauses, and run-sheet, then brief managers and sober contacts.
- Venue & Supplier Audit: Rapid assessment against accessibility, allergen, and sensory standards.
- Manager Micro-Briefing (15 mins): Practical behaviours to ensure a safe, positive event.