

Health and safety policy

The Braille Chess Association (BCA) is a very small organisation and has only two paid employees, our treasurer and our fundraiser, who are part time and work from home. The Association is run by a Board of Trustees, largely blind or partially sighted chess players, drawn from the membership. However, we also have a number of sighted volunteers to help with various activities.

Lone Working statement

Lone working usually occurs only in the context of coaches visiting members in their houses/schools or at international events to give training.

The BCA expects those engaged in such activities to provide their own insurance cover.

Our main health and safety concerns arise at the chess tournaments that we organise for members of the Association. These tournaments are held in various hotels around the country.

The tournament organiser plays a key role in ensuring that high standards of health and safety prevail. He/she meets the hotel management prior to the tournament to discuss the hotel's health, safety and emergency procedures, with the aim of establishing whether there would be any problems for blind or partially sighted members and agreeing what extra help the hotel might need to provide. The tournament organiser tries to ensure that BCA members are located in the same areas of the hotel and on lower floors as this would tend to make things easier, both for the hotel staff and for the members, in case of an emergency. Similarly, he/she provides the hotel with a preferred room allocation so that the sighted BCA guests are equally located among the blind guests as this could be helpful in an emergency evacuation of the building in the night. He/she also lets the hotel know which guests are likely to need assistance in an emergency, particularly those with serious hearing loss or walking difficulties.

The association carries appropriate insurance against public liability.

Selecting venues for events

1. We consider the risk to visually impaired people from obstacles such as potentially dangerous steps.
2. We ensure the fire procedures are satisfactory and we now arrange for vulnerable members, such as physically disabled people or those with serious hearing loss are catered for in this regard.
3. We check the venue is suitable and safe for guide dog owners.
4. We check the facilities for those with walking difficulties including wheelchair users. If we consider a venue is less than reasonably suitable for wheelchair users we include this information in notices for the event and where possible we prefer to avoid such venues. We have rejected far more venues than we have accepted.
5. The BCA has no control over the selection of venues for international events held outside the UK to which it regularly sends teams; however it expects the International Braille Chess Association to

exercise the same level of care in venue selection as the BCA does when choosing venues for national events.

During the event

1. We make a point of requesting more easily accessible rooms for those with walking difficulties and wheelchair users.

2. Our sighted members regularly assist our visually impaired members by guiding them round venues and helping at mealtimes, but cannot be expected to take on the role of a full-time carer. If a member attending one of our events has very particular care needs, they will be asked to make suitable arrangements themselves, for example by attending with a friend who has agreed to help them.

3. Although the association accepts its responsibilities regarding health and safety as outlined in this policy, members must understand that when they attend our events they take responsibility for their own health and safety as well. They must behave in a way that does not put themselves or another member at unreasonable risk. They must also take responsibility regarding any particular medication they use.

4. We have a document (see appendix 1) which we make available to members stressing the need for them to familiarise themselves with fire evacuation procedures at the hotel and to make sure they know where the nearest fire escape is located.

5. We advise those with special needs they may leave a sealed envelope at hotel reception containing information about medication and contacts in case of illness.

6. We have considered possible risks to other guests posed by guide dogs. Such risks are kept to a minimum by exceptionally rigorous training of the guide dogs with their owners but, in addition, the risks are covered by Guide Dogs Association insurance.

7. We have considered the situation where a BCA member might present a possible risk to other members and hotel guests because of their unpredictable behaviour. If we judge that the risk warrants it, we would exclude such a member from the event.

8. Hotels we use for our events must take proper measures to ensure the health and safety of our members during their stay, for example by ensuring electrical sockets in rooms are safe and by maintaining appropriate standards of food hygiene.

Appendix 1

Fire safety and evacuation procedure

The BCA would like to highlight the importance of fire safety at all events. Hotels have a responsibility to ensure that guests are made aware of fire evacuation procedures. However, members should also ensure for themselves that they are fully conversant with these, and in particular where their nearest fire exit is located. Please, therefore, when being shown to your room on arrival, make sure that you know the location of the appropriate fire exit.

If you feel you may have particular difficulties in the event of a fire evacuation, then please inform the Hotel Reception of this. In some circumstances, e.g. difficulty in hearing the alarm at night, you may consider letting another member of the party have a key to your room. If you are going to do this, then please let the organiser know as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made for the rooms to be located close together.

In addition, members are reminded, that in case of a medical emergency, and if they feel it would be helpful, they can give the Hotel Reception a sealed envelope containing appropriate medical details and contact details of a person at home.

Last reviewed in November 2017.