**Hull 2017, UK City of Culture – Access Guide**

**Introduction**

Our aim at Hull 2017, UK City of Culture is to work positively to improve the experience of our audiences and to do more than the minimum required by the Equality Act. We expect the organisations and artists we work with and commission to do the same.

At Hull 2017 we care about representation and reaching a wide and diverse audience with the work we programme and produce and we believe that throughout the year we should be able to offer something for everyone within the city. There are 11 million disabled people in the UK alone; that’s almost 1 in 6 people (Source: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)). It is up to us to identify solutions that remove the barriers in accessing the arts.

We are therefore inviting all the organisations, partners and artists we are working with to **do more to make their events accessible**. We’ve created this document as a starting point to help you think about some ways in which you can do this. It is by no means a limit to what you can do, we invite you to be bold and make sure accessibility is considered at all points during your creative and planning process.

There is also a wide range of additional materials and documents available online for free - you can find some of our recommended reading at the end of this document.

**What you can do to make your event or performance more accessible**

**Programming work and giving a platform for Deaf and disabled Artists**

Programming or commissioning work by Deaf and Disabled artists is one way of building and engaging with Deaf and disabled audiences. People generally appreciate seeing themselves mirrored in your event. Deaf and disabled companies can attract audiences who come specifically to experience the work and once these audiences are on site they have the opportunity to engage with your wider event.

There are other ways of engaging with Deaf & Disabled audiences, such as Captioning, Audio Description, Sign Language and Wordless performances.

**Captioning**

Captions are similar to television subtitles and give people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing access to live performance/events.

For a theatre show captioners will have the script in advance and will watch at least one performance in advance. On the night of the show a captioner who is the person that controls the captioning display unit will need to sit in the venue in a spot where they can see the stage. The words will appear on a LED caption unit (or units), placed next to the stage or in the set and is visible to the audience. Captioned units can be hired from companies such as VocalEyes.

You can also arrange live captioning for literature events, panel events, festivals and comedy. A speech-to-text reporter (STTR) transcribes every word a speaker says using a special electronic shorthand keyboard which allows them to type phonetically (how words sound rather than how they are spelt). The words are then immediately converted back into English text by a computer software program, enabling the STTR to keep up with the speed of spoken English.

Things to consider:

* Captioners need material to prepare with in advance of the show. This is not always necessary with live captioning but any material provided helps them be as accurate as possible.
* If you are providing captioning for the show event and it’s followed by a post show make sure you have arranged captioning for this as well or make it clear to your audience in advance that this will not be captioned.
* Reserve tickets in an appropriate place with a clear view of the stage and captioning units if the show or event has reserved seating.
* If the event or show is likely to sell out quickly consider holding back a number of access holds (accessible spaces in the audience area) for people who may need the service but may not be able to book tickets on the date they go on sale.

An organisation you could use to provide captioning is: <http://www.stagetext.org/>

**Audio Description and touch tours**

Audio description is a means of making the arts accessible through words to blind and partially sighted people using an experienced audio description interpreter.

In theatre and other performing arts such as opera or dance it consists of three essential elements. The first is a description of the set, characters and costumes, giving the blind and partially sighted audience information about the visual style and design of the production, information that would be immediately available to sighted people, helping to shape their experience. These ‘introductory notes’ are delivered just prior to the performance, and ideally will also be recorded and sent out in advance.

The second part of the audio descriptive process is the touch tour, which enables the blind and partially sighted audience to explore the set and some crucial props or costumes, enabling them to gain a fuller picture of the style of the production. Sometimes it includes an opportunity to meet the actors.

The third part is a description of the visual elements of the performance. This will include characters’ actions and reactions, shifts in location and lighting effects. The description is usually delivered live, in order to accommodate the changes in pace that are integral to live performance, whether a play, a circus, an opera, a piece of street theatre, contemporary or classical dance. The describers will time the description so that it does not overlap dialogue or lyrics, taking care to describe only essential elements, and allowing the piece to ‘breathe’. They will use a vocabulary and a vocal delivery that is unobtrusive and sympathetic to the production. In the hands of an expert, audio description is almost unnoticeable. The audience member uses a lightweight headset to listen to the description.

In museums, galleries and heritage sites, audio description is offered in different ways. It might be a recorded guide on a handheld device, giving orientation information and descriptions of key exhibits that the blind or partially sighted visitor can listen to as they make their way around the collection. It might be a recorded description that the visitor can listen to at a listening post, or it may be a bespoke tour from a guide trained in the principles of audio description. It could be a description of a tactile diagram or handling object. A combination of these methods can be used to give access to blind and partially sighted visitors.

Things to consider:

* Providing a touch tour before the event or show. This can be useful even if audio description is not being offered.
* If possible do not provide audio description for the first show, as seeing it in advance can help the interpreter to prepare.
* Make sure you reserve tickets in an appropriate place with a clear view of the stage if the show or event has reserved seating.
* If the event or show is likely to sell out quickly consider holding back a number of audio description holds (accessible spaces in the audience area) for people who may need the service but may not be able to book tickets on the date they go on sale.
* Provide clear information in advance to let the audience know if guide or assistance dogs are able to be in the event space or performance area. If not then let people know if there is an area they can leave their assistance dog with a volunteer or member of staff. Please notify dog owners of loud noises (like gun shots etc) or use of smoke within productions.
* Providing extra staff or volunteers that are trained in guiding people who have visual impairments – not every audience member will bring an assistance dog or carer with them so it’s useful to have extra support available if requested.

An organisation we have used to provide audio description is: [**http://www.vocaleyes.co.uk/**](http://www.vocaleyes.co.uk/)

**British Sign Language**

During a BSL interpreted performance, every word that is spoken or sung is interpreted into British Sign Language (BSL) by an interpreter standing on stage, so that Deaf members of the audience can understand the play and follow the story.

Doing this well depends on an in-depth knowledge of the script, and the two languages. BSL is a visual-gestural language that is distinct from English, with its own grammar, structure and syntax.

In conveying the meaning of every line uttered on stage, they effectively ‘perform’ the play for the Deaf audience and can be thought of as an additional performer on stage.

BSL can also be provided for launches, events and festivals. Although it’s helpful for the interpreter to see material in advance for launches and panel events this is not always necessary if they have been fully briefed in advance.

Things to consider:

* If possible do not provide BSL for the first show as seeing the show in advance can help the interpreter to prepare.
* Invite the interpreter to the dress rehearsal if possible.
* If you are providing BSL for the show and it’s followed by a post show event make sure you have booked the BSL interpreter for this as well.
* Make sure you reserve tickets in an appropriate place with a clear view of the stage if the show or event has reserved seating.
* If the event or show is likely to sell out quickly consider holding back a number of access holds (accessible spaces in the audience area) for people who may need the service but may not be able to book tickets on the date they go on sale.

We will have a local list of BSL interpreters that may be available. Please contact us if you would like a copy of this list.

**Integrated Access Performances**

This usually means that British Sign Language and / or captions and / or AD are part of the show, and used alongside the spoken word within the format of the show itself. The access workers will have worked with the company or artist in the development of the show.

You will need to work with access workers who are able to attend the creative rehearsals. We can help recommend organisations that will be able to put you in touch with local access workers if you would like support finding one.

**Relaxed Performances**

Relaxed performances are designed to welcome people with learning disabilities or people who may struggle with the normal theatre conventions. There is a relaxed attitude to noise, movement and some small changes may be made to the light and sound effects.

Things to consider:

* Reducing audience capacity to allow people to come and go from the space easily and to choose to sit alone if they would prefer.
* Providing a chill out space outside of the performance space where people can go if they need to take a break from the performance or event.
* Making it clear in advance to all staff and audience members that the show will be relaxed.
* Creating a visual story aid that is downloadable from the website in advance of the show and venue to help audiences know what to expect.

**Highly Visual Work / Wordless Performances**

Shows that are highly visual with little or no text spoken may be suitable for Deaf or hard of hearing audience members. You can flag shows in the brochure and online that are highly visual or highly visual and wordless performances.

Things to consider:

* Reserving a number of seats in an appropriate area with a clear view to the stage.
* If the event or show is likely to sell out quickly consider holding back a number of access holds (accessible spaces in the audience area).
* If there is a pre/post show discussion look into providing BSL or captioning to make sure this is accessible as well.

**Highly Auditory Work**

Events that are highly aural with little or no visual elements may be suitable for blind or visually impaired audience members. You can flag works in the brochure and online that are highly aural – this might include music events and spoken word events.

Things to consider:

* Reserving a number of seats in an appropriate area for clear sound.
* If the event or show is likely to sell out quickly consider holding back a number of access holds.
* Look into providing a touch tour to explain staging or instruments.

**Marketing**

Engaging with audiences in advance is vital to building an audience for accessible events and performances. This normally needs a more grassroots campaign. James McGuire, Hull 2017 Audience Engagement Manager has already made links with community groups and can work alongside you to develop your audience.

**Building Deaf and disabled audiences**

In your communications it’s important to advertise what access provision is available. If you are offering good access provision and your audience know it, Deaf and disabled audiences are far more likely to attend.

**Marketing to Deaf people**

For Deaf people and those that are hard of hearing, emphasise the spectacle and visual content. If it is British Sign Language interpreted or captioned let people know. Using clips of the performance on websites or within e-flyers is very useful.

**Marketing to visually impaired people**

Create and use downloadable audio files on your website. Let people know if the show is going to be audio described or has a touch tour. If you do radio interviews mention the fact the show is being audio described or has a touch tour.

**Let people know what you have in marketing material:**

You could discuss:

* Accessible toilets.
* Accessible parking or parking near the event.
* Public transport to the venue or location.
* Maps or the area or performance space available in advance can be helpful to allow people to plan their visit (should include the locations of the above)
* Are there any areas of the venue that are not wheelchair accessible (e.g. the bar, and back stage).
* Consider offering a free or discounted ticket for personal assistants, support workers, a family member or friend who may accompany a Deaf or disabled person. This also applies to people with learning disabilities who may have a specific requirement for support workers.

**Producing Print:**

Some basic print guidelines:

* Use text at 14 point (12 point is the absolute minimum). Many Blind and partially sighted people will require a point size of 18+.
* Provide large print where possible on websites and in print. Have these ready and make it clear that they are available.
* Avoid italics, serif or ‘handwritten’ fonts or capitals for long, continuous text.
* Use high contrast between colours and text (at least 25%).
* Avoid putting text over images
* PDFs are often incompatible with screenreader software and therefore may be inaccessible to Blind and partially sighted people. It is best to have a plain Word version of any documents too. Offer a choice of formats.

**Online Material**

* Subtitle or provide a transcript of videos that you release online.
* If you are providing audio description you should create an audio-flyer to promote your show or event to your target audience.

**Budgeting**

If you’re interested in captioning, providing a BSL sign language interpreter or audio description get in contact with a supplier to discuss options or contact us if you need help budgeting.

It is your responsibility to include provision for accessibility in your budget.

**Venue or Location access guidelines**

All buildings and sites that you use as a venue must be accessible for wheelchair users. If physical access is limited in the venue or location you wish to use you can look into renting ramps and accessible toilets, for example. These can be very affordable, and easy to organise via a rental company.

**At the Event**

* If you have event stewards, they should receive a specific briefing regarding Deaf and disabled audience members/participants e.g. allowing assistance dogs on site
* Information points and box office (where applicable) should be wheelchair accessible
* If the event is standing only, chairs should be available and your event stewards instructed to provide seating for anyone who has difficulty standing.
* Viewing areas wide enough for wheelchair users should be available
* Accessible toilets may need to be provided (note if you need to hire these then book early because sometimes there can be a limited number available)
* Radar keys for accessible toilets should be kept at information points, with stewards or at box office. All staff should be briefed as to their location.

**Information for outdoor events - Access routes**

* Temporary tracks for wheelchair users, which should be managed during wet weather so there aren’t any dangerously slippery surfaces
* Adequate lighting at night and during twilight, as that is a difficult time of day for people with partial sight
* All cables run through public areas should be contained in cable ramps or be buried beneath the ground at a minimum depth of 500mm
* Guy ropes should have hazard tape along the entire rope or other method of making them visible
* There should be enough space for wheelchair users everywhere e.g. between stalls

**What support Hull 2017 can provide**

* We can put you in touch with local access groups – a full list can be found towards the end of this document.
* Inclusion in our accessible marketing material that will be produced each season.
* Support in organising audio description, captioning and BSL interpretation.
* Help captioning videos (this is subject to capacity – please discuss with us)
* Support finding accessible venues.
* Volunteers who are trained in guiding people with visual impairments.

**Organisations**

Below are organisations you may wish to contact – if you would like to discuss what organisation to get in touch with or need contact details please contact: James McGuire, Hull 2017 Audience Engagement Manager - [James.McGuire@hull2017.co.uk](mailto:James.McGuire@hull2017.co.uk)

**Hull and East Riding Institute for the Blind (HERIB)**

HERIB is a UK registered charity which provides support for people with sight loss in Hull and the East Riding.

<http://herib.co.uk/>

**Mencap**

Mencap works with people with a learning disability to change laws, challenge prejudice and support them to live their lives as they choose.

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/>

**Hull and East Yorkshire Mind**

Hull & East Yorkshire Mind was founded in 1976 and has 40 years experience in providing mental health services to people in Hull and East Yorkshire.

<http://www.HEYMind.org.uk>

**CASE Training**

Founded in 1985 by parents and carers of people with a learning disability, CASE is a local charity working with local people and their families towards creating better life opportunities.

<http://casetraininghull.co.uk/>

**Hull RED**

Hull Red started in 2005 running a nightclub for adults (18+) with learning disabilities to enable them to go out and meet friends in the evening, listen to live music, make new friends, build social networks, form relationships and have fun.

<http://hullred.co.uk/>

**Hull & East Yorkshire Centre For The Deaf**

The principal objective of the Centre is the provision of social amenities, recreational and other facilities for deaf and hard of hearing.

<http://hulldeafcentre.co.uk/>

**The Disabilities Trust**

Victoria House supports people with a range of disabilities including cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida and arthritis, multiple sclerosis and disabilities resulting from accidents or a stroke. As well as providing physical care, it is committed to ensuring that people have control over their lives and are treated with dignity and respect at all times.

<http://www.thedtgroup.org/physical-disabilities/our-services/victoria-house/>

**Talent Match Humber**

Talent Match Humber is a project for young people designed by young people, with the aim of helping those aged 18-24 long term unemployed, who are struggling the most to find career opportunities.

PADD group (People’s Awareness of Disability Discrimination)

PADD's primary aim is to raise awareness and to promote the positive aspect of employing a person with a hidden disability.

<http://www.hlc-vol.org/partner/talent-match-humber>

<https://twitter.com/PADDTalentMatch>

**Choices and Rights Disability Coalition**

Choices and Rights is an organisation for disabled people in the Kingston upon Hull and East Riding of Yorkshire area. They are 100% run and controlled by disabled people.

<http://www.choicesandrights.org.uk/>

**Music & the Deaf, Halifax, W Yorks.**

Music and the Deaf is a unique charity working locally, nationally and internationally providing musical opportunities and access for children and adults who live with any degree of hearing loss.

<http://www.matd.org.uk/index.php>

**Relaxed Performances at West Yorkshire Playhouse**

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<https://www.wyp.org.uk/about/creative-engagement/learning-disabilities/relaxed-performances/>

**Attitude is Everything**

Attitude is Everything improves Deaf and disabled people's access to live music by working in partnership with audiences, artists and the music industry.

<http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk/?gclid=CNvG7ua6480CFYdAGwodxLoNpw>

**Castaway, Goole**

Provides performing leisure and training opportunities for adults and young people with learning and physical disabilities and autism spectrum conditions.

<http://www.castaway-goole.co.uk/>

**Additional Material and documents**

Demystifying Access: a resource pack for the performing arts

<http://www.unlimitedimpact.org.uk/demystifying-access-a-resource-pack-for-the-performing-arts/>

Ensuring Your Venues and Events Are Open to All: A Brief Access Guide

<http://www.unlimitedimpact.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Shape_AccessGuide_2015_Draft-8.pdf>

A Guide to Making Theatre Performances More Accessible

<http://www.accessibletheatre.org.uk/>

ISAN Access Toolkit: making outdoor arts accessible for all

<http://www.isanuk.org/product/isan-access-toolkit-making-outdoor-arts-accessible-for-all-2010/>

British Dyslexia Association’s “Dyslexia Style Guide”:

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/About_Us/policies/Dyslexia_Style_Guide.pdf>

Royal National Institute for the Blind/UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) “Creating Clear print and large print documents” Guide:

<http://www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/UKAAF%20creating%20clear%20print%20and%20large%20print%20documents.pdf>

National Museums of Scotland have also produced a guide for designing inclusive exhibitions, which may also be useful:

<http://swfed.org.uk/images/resources/Users__Visitors/access/EXhibitions_for_all_NMScotland.pdf>

**Get in touch with us**

If you would like to discuss anything in the document please get in touch with a member of the Hull 2017 team.

If you are unsure of who your contact is within the organsation please email theteam@hull2017.co.uk