



Stockton Arts Centre

## **Access Guide for ARC Artists & Companies**

ARC is committed to making productions created by supported artists and companies as accessible as possible.

This guide is intended to provide basic information to encourage artists to consider access when making and presenting their work. More detailed guides are available online.

### **Disability Equality Training**

ARC will provide Disability Equality Training at least once a year, which will be offered to supported artists and companies.

### **Access**

ARC and its supported artists and companies will consider the following when creating and touring new work:

#### **1. Audio Description**

Audio description is a three part process:

- a description of the set and context to be made available in advance
- a touch tour (see below)
- an audio version of your programme
- a description of the visual elements of the performance usually offered as a description to listen to alongside the performance through a personal set of headphones

Audio description can also be integrated into the performance.

#### **2. Touch Tours**

A touch tour is a tour of the set, props and costumes for a performance, that usually takes place approximately 45 mins before a performance.

ARC staff will be trained in touch tours, and can share their skills with ARC supported artists and companies.

#### **3. Captions**

Captions provide access to audio-content for people with hearing impairments. The dialogue and soundscapes of the performance are transcribed into words for the audience to read, on a

screen of TV monitor (which can be incorporated into the set). Captions can be pre-written based on the script of the show.

#### **4. BSL interpretation**

Having a British Sign Language interpreter gives hearing-impaired BSL users access to the spoken content of the work. You can work with an interpreter to integrate them into your show, or employ one to stand separately to the staged action. Careful consideration is needed when deciding where your interpreter will be positioned and lit, and where BSL users are seated.

#### **5. Written transcripts**

If captioning isn't possible, consider providing a written transcript of the show (in standard and large print) for use by deaf and /hearing impaired people.

#### **6. Venues**

Although new buildings in the UK are now built to consider access, many venues still do not have suitable facilities. It is important to consider this when looking at tour venues, by asking about:

- Parking
- Wheelchair access throughout the building
- Accessible toilets

Working with venue staff to ensure the access requirements of audience members are captured on booking is essential. Seating can then be arranged, and possibly reserved, as required.

#### **7. Relaxed performances**

Relaxed performances have a more relaxed attitude to noise and movement and may include some changes to the light and sound effects. People who may benefit from relaxed performances include those with Tourettes syndrome, and learning disabled or autistic people.

ARC has a separate guide to staging relaxed performances.

#### **8. Mental Health Triggers**

Providing written information about mental health triggers within the performance meets the access requirements of people who experience mental health conditions.

Triggers may include environmental aspects including:

- sound and lighting effects if they are loud, sudden, repetitive sounds, particularly dark or flashing lighting.
- If there is anything unusual about the layout of your piece, and if there is any audience participation is important to know in advance.

In terms of the content of your piece, triggers will include:

- information about themes or content relating to, for example, violence, death, sexual assault, people taking their own lives, hostage situations, alcohol or drug dependency, miscarriage, loss of children, difficult family relationships, and bullying.
- Particular types of characters, for example, people experiencing trauma or mental health distress, or conversely, psychopaths and sociopaths, bullies.

## **9. Marketing**

### **9.1 Print**

Consider the following to make marketing materials more accessible:

- Use text 14 point (12 point minimum)
- 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, unless you use a gradient or semi-transparent layer inbetween
- Avoid high gloss finishes (because they reflect the light), low weight paper (because text can show through) and folds that hide text
- Make Word versions of documents available online rather than PDFs, which are often incompatible with screen-readers
- Consider alternative formats (such as large print (18 point size))

Include access information on your publicity.

### **9.2 Video captioning**

Consider captioning videos promoting the show, as this will benefit people with hearing impairments but also people viewing videos without sound, and/or where English is their second language. Many programmes enable you to add captions including YouTube, Vimeo, Amara and Aegisub.

### **9.3 Audio flyer**

If you are providing audio description, consider creating an audio flyer using Soundcloud or a similar programme.

### **9.4 Campaign planning**

If you are adding accessible elements to your performance, then there has to be a promotional campaign implemented alongside the show to ensure disabled people are aware of them. This can be written into marketing packs which are sent out to venues with every show.

If agreed in advance, information about access can also be included in the venue information packs used for tour booking, with disabled audiences (as appropriate) highlighted within the marketing and audience development section.

## **Budgeting**

When designing your show budget, can you include costs for:

- Audio description
- Captioning
- BSL interpretation
- Alternative formats for marketing materials

## Consultation

When considering access to performances, ask disabled people for their input.

## Resources

VocalEyes - [www.vocaleyeyes.co.uk](http://www.vocaleyeyes.co.uk)

Audio Description Association - [www.audiodescription.co.uk](http://www.audiodescription.co.uk) (includes directory of freelance describers)

Stage Text [www.stagetext.org](http://www.stagetext.org)

Theatre Sign [www.theatresign.com](http://www.theatresign.com)

Signed Culture [www.signedculture.org.uk](http://www.signedculture.org.uk)

Association of Sign Language Interpreters [www.asli.org.uk](http://www.asli.org.uk) (includes directory of BSL interpreters)

London BSL interpreters <http://london-bsl-interpreters.info/interpreters/> (includes directory of BSL interpreters)

## Questions

Can you record a description of the set and context and make it available online to download in advance?

Can you learn how to lead a touch tour of your set?

Can you work with an audio describer, either to integrate audio description within your show, or to provide live audio description alongside your show?

Can you build a projector and screen or TV monitor into your set to enable the show to be captioned?

Can you provide venues with resources to enable them to use a BSL interpreter local to them (script, full length film footage of the show, opportunity to meet you before the show to agree lighting/position on stage)?

Can you work with a BSL interpreter within your show?

Can you tour with a BSL interpreter?

What access facilities do the venues you are touring to have?

Can you make any of your performances 'relaxed performances'?

Does your show contain any mental health triggers, and have you made venues aware of this and included information in your publicity?

Have you considered the print guidelines when designing your flyers and posters?

Can you provide your flyers as Word documents/text only/large print documents?

Can you caption your video trailers?

Can you provide an audio flyer?

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