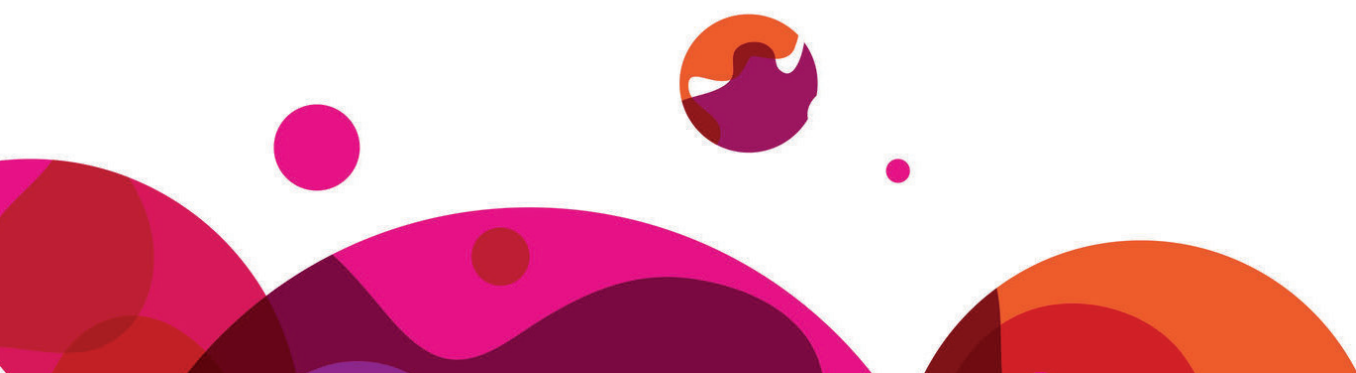


Barriers *to Access*

Report on the barriers faced by young disabled and D/deaf people
in accessing youth arts provision in Scotland.

Dr. Matson Lawrence & Birds of Paradise Theatre Company





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Executive Summary

This report outlines research that investigated the barriers faced by young disabled and D/deaf people in accessing youth arts provision in Scotland. Funded by the *Time to Shine National Youth Arts Strategy for Scotland*, the research was conducted by Dr. Matson Lawrence in conjunction with Birds of Paradise Theatre Company.

The research relates to young people aged 0 – 25, with specific empirical focus on young people aged 16 – 25. Through in-depth interviews and online surveys, the research engaged with 20 disabled and D/deaf young people across Scotland, alongside a number of individuals working within the Scottish youth arts sector and in disability and D/deaf arts.

The research found that young disabled and D/deaf people face multiple and intersecting barriers to accessing arts provision. **Five main barriers** were identified:

1. Finding suitable arts provision;
2. Availability of access information;
3. Lack of provision for access and support;
4. Travel, transport and location; and
5. Attitudes and awareness of arts providers.

The research identified **five key strategies** to address these barriers:

1. Provision specifically for young disabled and D/deaf people;
2. Centralised information about arts opportunities;
3. Front Door to Stage Door Access provision;
4. Connections built with disabled and D/deaf communities across Scotland; and
5. Education and awareness for arts providers.

These strategies offer arts providers concrete recommendations for improving disabled and D/deaf access. It is anticipated that, in light of this report, organisations and agencies providing arts opportunities to young people will be better informed of the barriers faced by young disabled and D/deaf people, and better equipped to address these barriers and improve access to their provision.

A note from Garry Robson, Artistic Director, Birds of Paradise Theatre Company:

"When Robert Softley Gale and I first became the Artistic Directors of Birds of Paradise one of our concerns was that although we were committed to putting Scottish based D/deaf and disabled performers centre stage, at that point there were simply very few such performers based in Scotland. The situation in the rest of the UK has been improved by the Unlimited programme and the Paralympics Opening Ceremony where a general call out for performers had brought a number of new faces to light, people who had previously never considered a career in the performing arts partially because there had been little opportunity for them to access arts provision and also because there were no obvious role models around.

This is what we had in mind when we began our Be-BoP Ensemble, a group of young D/deaf and disabled theatre-makers in Glasgow, and initiated our nationwide outreach project *Looking for Talent* – a Birds of Paradise national roadshow with open auditions targeting D/deaf and disabled people interested in theatre and performance work. When *Time to Shine* gave us the opportunity to set up a research project to look into why more D/deaf and disabled young people were not accessing existing arts provision we jumped at the chance. We were particularly keen to look at this area in a more formal way as our impression from the *Looking for Talent* project was that there were many young D/deaf and disabled people who were not being catered for by existing arts services.

The initial findings in this report would seem to back this up, and will enable us to develop our work further in this area in collaboration with our colleagues offering arts provision for young people throughout Scotland. What's perhaps most concerning is how we reach those who through class, education, disability or geography do not even consider the arts as a possibility.

- Garry Robson, Artistic Director, Birds of Paradise Theatre Company
May 2016

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the young people who participated in the research; without your generous insights this research would not have been possible. We would also like to thank Colin Bradie and the *Time to Shine* team; Creative Scotland; Starcatchers and Rhona Matheson; Karen Forbes; and Sandra Alland.

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INTRODUCTION

This report outlines research conducted to investigate the barriers faced by disabled and D/deaf young people in accessing youth arts provision in Scotland. The research was funded by *Time to Shine* – the National Youth Arts Strategy for Scotland – and was undertaken by Dr. Matson Lawrence in conjunction with Birds of Paradise Theatre Company.

The purpose of this research was to identify the main barriers faced by young disabled and D/deaf people in accessing arts provision, in order to enable arts providers to be better informed of the barriers faced by this group of young people. The barriers were identified through conducting interviews and surveys with young disabled and D/deaf people in Scotland, alongside exchanges with individuals working within the Scottish youth arts sectors. The research investigated what arts providers can do to improve access to provision, in order to develop solid recommendations for arts providers to utilise when considering disabled and D/deaf access. Again, these recommendations have been directly shaped and informed by the empirical research conducted with young disabled and D/deaf people in Scotland.

Why is this research area important?

This research area is important because it addresses a major lacuna in Scottish arts scenes: the dearth of disabled and D/deaf people on Scottish stages and screens, in front of and behind television cameras, in the books we read and the films we watch, on governing bodies and in management positions, and at the front of classrooms delivering arts provision to future generations of Scottish artists. It is imperative to understand the barriers faced by young disabled and D/deaf people in order to equip arts providers with the knowledge of how to better enable access and thus nurture the next generation of disabled and D/deaf talent in Scotland.

The purpose of this research was to instigate a meaningful dialogue with young disabled and D/deaf people and, through this report, with arts providers. While previous empirical research has been conducted into young disabled and D/deaf artists¹, no such research has explored across artforms the specific barriers faced by young disabled and D/deaf people in accessing youth arts provision in Scotland. It is anticipated that, in light of the findings from this research, arts providers will be better informed of the barriers to access faced by young disabled and D/deaf people. Moreover, this report aims to establish tangible and practical recommendations to enable arts providers to improve access for young disabled and D/deaf people.

Defining the research terms

To provide context and clarity, briefly outlined and defined below are the main terms used within the research.

Arts: The research employs a cross-artform definition of the arts, incorporating:

- **Performance-based arts**, such as drama, dance and physical theatre;
- **Music**, such as composition, musical production, playing of instruments, and singing;
- **Visual arts**, such as fine arts, painting, sculpture, drawing, textiles, illustration and multimedia work;
- **Filmmaking**, including production, camerawork, editing, and work related to the film and television industries;
- **Design**, such as graphic design, theatre design, and fashion;
- **Writing**, such as creative writing, scriptwriting, and arts-related journalism.

Disabled: The research employs the **social model of disability** to frame and define the terms 'disabled' and 'disability', wherein people are disabled by society and barriers are created by external socio-cultural structures and the physical environment.² This marks a shift away from the medical model, which places onus on an individual's impairments as the source of barriers. When employing this term, **self-identification** is key.

D/deaf: The research employs the term 'D/deaf' to encapsulate the many identities and cultures within D/deaf communities. This term incorporates **Deaf, deaf, deafened, and hard-of-hearing** individuals and communities. For many people, Deaf (capitalised 'D') indicates a distinct identity, culture and language – namely **British Sign Language (BSL)**.³ Most often, Deaf is regarded as a category distinct from disabled. However, much like the social model of disability, D/deaf people too face barriers within mainstream hearing-centric culture and society. Again, when employing these terms, **self-identification** is key.

¹ See: Band et al (2011); Bang and Kim (2015); Hodges et al (2014); Ineland (2006); Kupperts (2008); Price and Barron (1999); Rice et al (2015); Taylor (2005).

² See: Oliver (2013); Tregaskis (2002); WHO (2011).

³ See: Corker (1996); Lane (1997); Sutton-Spence and Woll (1998); Valentine and Skelton (2003).



Methods



METHODS

Research Questions

The three main Research Questions for the research were as follows:

1. What arts activities are young disabled and D/deaf people currently engaging in?
2. What barriers are faced by young disabled and D/deaf people in accessing arts provision?
3. What factors would improve young disabled and D/deaf people's access to Scottish youth arts provision?

Research Design

This research used an inductive approach and qualitative design, utilising both in-depth semi-structured interviews and an online survey. The purpose of the research design was to instigate a dialogue with young people about their experiences of participating in the arts in Scotland as disabled and D/deaf people. The data from the empirical research was analysed manually, utilising a 'grounded theory' approach (see Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

Interview Design: The interviews utilised a semi-structured design, consisting of a series of questions and topics drawn directly from the Research Questions (as outlined above). Interviews were conducted face-to-face and over the telephone, depending upon the method most suitable to the individual young person. Face-to-face interviews typically took place in the Birds of Paradise Theatre Company office in Glasgow, in young people's own homes, or in public locations (such as cafés) as suggested by participants. The duration of interviews was typically between 45 minutes and 1 hour, per interview. Interviews were conducted verbally and/or via a BSL interpreter. Interactive interview materials were made available to stimulate topic-specific conversation, using the Spectral Elicitation method (see Lawrence, 2015: 58).

Survey Design: The online survey was created on Google Forms and launched during November 2015. Two versions of the survey were made: a main version and an Easy Read version. The surveys were tested to ensure they were compatible with screen-reading and online text-to-speech software (ChromeVox). The purpose of the survey was twofold: firstly, to recruit interview participants through promoting the research and acquainting prospective participants with the research; and secondly, to provide an alternative to participating in an interview. The first page of the survey fully briefed prospective participants about the research. The survey questions consisted of:

- **Demographic questions**, e.g. age, location, disability and D/deaf identity.
- **Which artforms are you interested in?** (Multiple choice) Drama and theatre; Dance and physical theatre; Music; Visual arts; Film; Other (please state).
- **Do you take part in any groups or activities?** (Paragraph answer)
- **What difficulties or barriers have you faced in getting involved in the arts?** (Paragraph answer)
- Questions relating to interview participation and usage of personal information.

Participants

Participation criteria: The criteria for participating in the empirical research was that the young people

1. were aged between 0 and 25;
2. self-identified as disabled and/or as D/deaf;
3. were involved in or wanted to be involved in the arts; and
4. currently resided in Scotland.

Sample Size: A total of 20 young people participated in the empirical research, including 7 young people who participated in in-depth qualitative interviews.

Age: The average age of those participating in the research was 22, with most participants being aged between 18 and 25 years.

Location: The majority of participants resided within the central belt of Scotland, with many living in Edinburgh and Glasgow (and surrounding areas).

Range of Disabilities: The majority of the participants in the research identified as disabled. In addition to disability, four participants identified as **D/deaf** or as both D/deaf and disabled. The specific disabilities or impairments as self-declared by participants included:

- **Blind and visually impaired** young people.
- **Learning disabilities and neurodivergence**, such as Downs Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Dyslexia, and developmental delay.
- **Long term health conditions**, such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, chronic pain conditions and chronic illnesses.
- **Neurological conditions**, such as Epilepsy, Hydrocephalus, Sensorineural deafness, delayed speech.
- **Physical disabilities**, such as Cerebral Palsy and Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome.
- **Mental health conditions**, such as Bipolar Disorder and Anxiety Disorders.

There is of course cross-over between these categories of disability or impairment. Some of the young people did not use any diagnostic terminology when describing or discussing their disability, and instead, for example, stated that they are a wheelchair-user or that they have low energy. The range of disabilities represented among the young people are outlined here not to pathologise disability, but in order to demonstrate that there are a wide range of disabilities and health conditions to consider within this dialogue on barriers and access.

Ethical Considerations

It was of paramount importance to ensure that the research was conducted ethically and so a number of steps were put in place.

Data Protection:

- Only the researcher had access to participants' personal information and this information was used for the purpose of the research only, e.g. arranging interviews.
- All personal information and research data were stored securely on a password-protected computer and e-mail account to which only the researcher had access.
- Digital audio recordings from interviews were stored securely on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher had access. These digital audio recordings were used for the sole purpose of data transcription and were permanently deleted upon completion of the project.
- Participants were assigned or chose pseudonyms for use in the written report.

Briefing and Consent:

- Participants were fully briefed about the research and how their information would be used. Participants were fully briefed before completing the survey and again prior to participating in an interview, and were invited to discuss any queries or concerns.

⁴'Arts' as defined on page 7.

- Participants were required to formally give their consent, via an Informed Consent Form and/or through stating their agreement to the research terms and conditions.
- Participants had the right to withdraw their information during and following completing surveys and/or taking part in interviews. Participants were made aware of this right and instructed how to withdraw.

Access and Support:

- Participants were invited to bring a supporter or assistant into the interview context.
- The surveys and interview materials were made available in alternative formats.
- British Sign Language interpretation for interviews was contracted by the researcher and paid for with the research access budget. Deaf participants were given the opportunity to choose a specific BSL interpreter to interpret for them, should they have a preference.

Child Protection and Protection of Vulnerable Groups:

- Surveys: The research required that young people aged below 16 had parental/ guardian consent prior to completing the survey, confirmed only via a telephone or in-person conversation between the parent/guardian and the researcher.
- Interviews: In addition to requiring parental/guardian consent, we also required that a parent/guardian attend interviews with under-16s or – should the parent/guardian give their consent – another responsible adult (such as a teacher or arts worker) in their place.
- The researcher holds a Disclosure Scotland certificate for work with vulnerable adults, and has a professional background of working with vulnerable adults and a Doctorate in social research from Durham University.

Limitations

Sample size: As is typical of small-scale qualitative research projects, a small sample size limits the generalisability of the research findings as compared to larger-scale quantitative studies. The sample size remained small in order to collect in-depth and nuanced data from the young people in accessible formats. Small-scale qualitative research is well-suited to exploratory research, by instigating an in-depth dialogue on a particular topic.

Participant age: Most of the young people participating in the empirical research were aged between 16 and 25 years old. During the empirical research process, significant effort was made to engage with young people aged 0 – 15. However, despite these efforts, it was consistently challenging to secure participation from this particular demographic, in part due to a lack of uptake from youth arts providers and schools working with younger people. To account for this, the researcher undertook consultations with youth arts providers who work with children in order to consider this important element of the age remit (as discussed further on page 23).

Participant location: The majority of the young people participating in the empirical research resided within the central belt of Scotland, with many living in Edinburgh or Glasgow and the surrounding areas. Considerable effort was made to recruit participants from other areas, and as a result a number of participants residing rurally and on the islands were recruited. Recruiting participants from the north of Scotland presented a particular challenge, in part due to a lack of uptake from youth arts providers and schools in these areas.

Project resources: The research was undertaken and report written by a sole researcher contracted for this purpose. As with any project, the resources available to and time spent on the project are limited to what has been contractually agreed upon, and to the amount of funding and time that has been allocated to undertake the particular project.

⁵The approach to child protection was developed from best practice guidance for working and conducting research with children. For more information, see MRS (2012).

Findings



FINDINGS

Outlined in this section are the findings from the empirical research. Responding to the three main Research Questions (as outlined on page 10), these findings are organised into three sections: 1. Arts provision engaged in; 2. Barriers faced by young disabled and D/deaf people in accessing arts provision, and; 3. What arts providers can do to improve access to provision.

Arts provision engaged in

The young disabled and D/deaf people participating in the research had engaged in a variety of arts provision. The young people discussed having engaged in:

- Arts curriculum and extra-curricular arts activities in school;
- Performance-based arts activities;
- Community-based arts groups;
- Professionally-facilitated workshops; and
- Formal arts training at further education colleges and universities.

This includes both past and current engagement. Almost none of the young people discussed having engaged in provision delivered by the Scottish Youth Arts Hubs. The young people had engaged in both youth arts-specific provision and in provision designed for those of adult age. For this reason, the findings discussed throughout this report have relevance to both youth arts providers and providers of arts opportunities for adults.

Artforms: The young people had engaged in a wide variety of artforms and often had simultaneous interest and/or involvement in more than one artform. The most often discussed artforms were performance-based (such as drama, dance and physical theatre), with many of the young people also being involved or interested in the visual arts, music and film.

Future engagement: Across the board, the young people discussed wanting to engage in more arts provision, yet faced difficulties as a result of multiple and intersecting barriers, as will be discussed in more detail throughout this report. In terms of future engagement, the young people were interested in:

- Attending artform-specific classes and workshops;
- Performing or exhibiting at events and exhibitions;
- Undertaking formal arts education and training;
- Employment, residencies and apprenticeships;
- Participating in disability and/or D/deaf-specific opportunities.

Barriers faced in accessing arts provision

Responding to the second main Research Question (outlined on page 10), this section outlines the research findings relating to the barriers faced by the young disabled and D/deaf people in accessing Scottish youth arts provision. The main barriers faced by the young people can be categorised into **five key areas**, which form the structure of this section:

1. Finding suitable arts provision;
2. Availability of access information;
3. Lack of provision for access and support;
4. Travel, transport and location; and
5. Attitudes and awareness of arts providers.

The five barriers are ordered in this way to demonstrate the process of a young person's engagement with arts provision. These five barriers run concurrently and are five additional stages that young disabled and D/deaf people navigate prior to gaining access to and engaging in arts provision that non-disabled and non-D/deaf young people do *not* necessarily navigate. Each stage greatly influences *whether* and *how* young people gain access to arts provision.

Beginning with finding arts provision and the availability of access information, we can gain an understanding of *how* young people find arts opportunities and how the availability of access information greatly influences both *whether* and *how* young people gain access to the provision. Next, once arts provision has been located, the lack of provision and support again greatly influences whether and how young people gain access to the provision. Having navigated these three barriers, the young people then face barriers pertaining to travel, transport and location, which dictate *whether* and *how* young people can access provision. Finally, the attitudes and awareness of arts providers not only impact upon the young people's experiences of engaging in arts provision, but also influence the extent to which the young people face barriers because – as will be discussed further in this report – a number of actions can be undertaken by arts providers to reduce these barriers and improve access to provision for young disabled and D/deaf people.

1. Finding suitable arts provision

The first main barrier faced by the young people pertained to finding suitable arts provision. As discussed previously in relation to the arts activities engaged in (see page 14), the young people expressed great enthusiasm and aspiration for engaging in further arts provision. However, they often encountered barriers in finding arts provision that catered to their interests.

"For me, knowing where to start and how to find the right groups is a barrier."

When actively seeking out arts provision, the young people mostly used the internet – particularly **social media** – alongside searching for opportunities on **arts-focused websites**. However, the young people discussed not knowing what to search for and where to search when seeking out opportunities and provision. Some of the young people were introduced to specific arts provision (such as classes and groups) by their parents or school teachers who had researched available and relevant provision on behalf of the young person.

It emerged that much of the young people's participation in arts provision to date had been within or via **formal educational settings**, and thus this barrier was especially pronounced and noticeable for **school-leavers** and those not currently in formal education. Many of the young people currently participate in or had participated in arts provision in school settings. In addition, some of the young people aged 17 – 25 were currently or had been in receipt of some form of formal arts education or engagement within colleges and universities.

Once the young people had left these formal educational settings, they faced challenges in locating suitable arts provision and opportunities. For Howard, a 16 year-old dancer with learning disabilities, this was a source of concern; with his arts provision currently being offered as part of the curriculum, there was a real concern for *whether* and *how* his arts practice can continue once he leaves school. Similarly, Caitlyn, a 22 year-old arts promoter with Cerebral Palsy, discussed how "Once you leave school, there's not a lot to do in the way of art" and that this presents a real barrier for continuing arts engagement post-formal education – especially when residing, as Caitlyn does, on an island."

"Once you leave school, there's not a lot to do in the way of art."

Outside of these formal educational settings, the onus for finding suitable and relevant opportunities rests largely on the young people themselves, which presented a major challenge and often led young people's engagement in the arts to greatly reduce upon leaving school. This highlights the importance of **'bridging' provision** for disabled and D/deaf young people – arts provision that young people can engage in post-school and pre-25 years old – to encourage and nurture the continuation of arts practice into their adult lives.

Some young people also discussed the importance of arts networks in locating arts provision and opportunities, including employment. For Claria, a 23 year-old film graduate, these networks played a key role in locating and securing arts opportunities. However, since Claria had to cease work due to an acquired physical disability, she discussed how it is now "more difficult" to find arts opportunities "once you're out of the network... because you find out about opportunities through people all the time. I've really lost that community".

2. Availability of access information

In direct continuation from the first main barrier – finding suitable arts opportunities – the availability of access information constituted the second major barrier for the young people. The young people described being left to effectively 'second guess' *whether* they can engage in provision and also *how* they might gain access to that provision.


Once young people had found an opportunity that catered to their interests, the young people reported that these opportunities seldom provide information about disabled and D/deaf access on their advertisements, listings and websites. As a result, young people regularly had to make their own enquiries to arts providers and to venues to obtain access information. The absence of outright access information thus constituted a major barrier.

Can I get in?

Due to the general lack of outright access information, young people with physical disabilities routinely contacted arts providers and venues prior to attending provision to make enquiries about whether the venue is wheelchair accessible, has level and/or lift access, and has wheelchair accessible toilets, as Caitlyn explains:

"I would probably phone-up the venue or the organisation to say 'Look, I'm interested in this event but I'm a wheelchair-user, so what's the deal? **Can I get in? Do you have a lift? Do you have an accessible toilet?**' Those kinds of things..."

– Caitlyn, 22, arts promotor and wheelchair-user



"I always Google venues because I want to know what I'm facing."

In addition, the young people often searched for the venue online to find access information. Some young people searched for the venue on Google Streetview to assess the venue and the outlying streets, in order to ascertain whether the route from public transport to the venue itself was manageable for them.

Having to make these enquiries constitutes a major barrier to access, as this process requires considerable time and energy, alongside access to the internet, communication and language, and research skills.

For many young people, such as Ben, this process is inherently inaccessible:

"To find out about access in advance, you've got to phone and I don't do well with phones because of anxiety, so that hits this huge barrier of then 'How do you access that?' Because half of the time these people don't check their e-mails for these places, so then how do I find out about accessibility to actually go for something? Because if you don't have the ability to do that – because of your health problems – it just becomes another barrier to access things..."

– Ben, 20, visual artist and wheelchair-user

As Ben explains, the lack of readily available access information puts considerable strain on the young people and constitutes a major barrier to access.

Will I be welcome?

The young people discussed how – as disabled and D/deaf people and access were seldom mentioned by arts providers on websites and promotional materials – it was difficult for them to gauge whether they would be welcome and encouraged to engage in provision. For the young people, the lack of access information indicated that the arts provider had not considered that disabled and D/deaf may be among the participants, and they therefore expressed trepidation towards accessing the arts provision. There was particular concern regarding arts providers' – alongside other participants' – attitudes towards and awareness of disability and D/deaf identity, as discussed further on page 21.

"For me there are a few challenges associated with trying to find the right sort of group that I can be part of, because I would be worried to go to a mainstream drama group initially, just to see how people would be with me and to see how I would fit in, and just to see how it would all work out. So, I don't know if I'd actually do that. I think initially it would be quite hard."

"I think a lot of the time I'm trying to gauge whether the person who's organising this, when they picture who's gonna be on this course or in this position, are they picturing someone who might be like me? Or do they automatically have in their head that it will be Chad who can lift a bus?! Have they at least entertained the possibility that other people might want to do it?"

3. Lack of provision for access and support

The third main barrier faced by the young people pertained to the lack of provision for access and support. Without access and support requirements being met by arts providers, it is very difficult – and, in some cases, not possible – for many of the young disabled and D/deaf people to participate in provision, thus constituting a major barrier. Within the young people's accounts on access and support provision, travel and transport emerged as such a major factor that this finding has been addressed separately in the following section (see page 19).

Many of the young people discussed the lack of access provision in terms of **physical access**, such as wheelchair and level access, accessible toilets, and space for turning and movement. The young people also discussed the need for specific access considerations for **blind and visually impaired** people, **D/deaf** people, and for people with **mental health conditions, chronic health conditions, neurodivergence** and/or **learning disabilities**. These access and support considerations will be outlined further in the context of what arts providers can do to improve access from page 27 of this report.

The young people also discussed the need for **support and understanding** when engaging in arts provision. Within this, some of the young people expressed the need for **dedicated support staff** to work within provision delivery. Such staff assist in facilitating a young person's engagement in provision, for example through guiding blind and visually impaired young people, ensuring young people are well supported, assisting with movement or speech, and responding to any difficulties or challenges the young people may be facing whilst participating. The young people also discussed the need for **relaxed spaces** as an access consideration (discussed further on page 29).

Timing of provision was also a barrier for some of the young people – in particular, they found it difficult to access provision in the evenings due to lower energy levels and so preferred daytime provision. Many of the young people expressed that it was important that those around them understand that their **disability or health condition may be variable**, and so there may be instances where they cannot attend provision or experience sudden changes in their health and need to leave. For these young people, **openness and flexibility** of arts providers is key. The young Deaf people discussed the importance of provision for **BSL interpretation** because the cost of personally hiring interpreters was prohibitive and thus constituted a major **financial barrier** to access.

The young people also discussed barriers faced within formal education, arts funding, and arts-based employment. While significant, these accounts extended beyond the remit of this particular research and so are not discussed in full in this report. It is, however, worth noting that the young people *did* face significant barriers in these areas, as summarised below.

Arts education at colleges and universities: A number of young people discussed the lack of provision for access and support as barriers specifically in the context of accessing arts education within colleges and universities. These young people described a range of experiences, including physically inaccessible buildings and inadequate access provision to instances of outright discrimination and exclusion within educational institutions.

"The group was promoted as being inclusive to young people with learning disabilities, but – 1. I absolutely had to be there and 2. If he kicked off in any way, it didn't seem that the teacher would really be able to manage that... so, for me, that isn't really being inclusive, if the support isn't available."

- Parent of Howard, 16, dancer

Applying for arts funding: One young Deaf person discussed their experiences of applying for arts funding, and how the lack of provision for access and support presented a major barrier in applying for project funding. They discussed how the funder did not understand nor adequately respond to their requests for access support to complete the application, with specific comment on the length of the application forms, the type of language used, and the funders' refusal to provide a BSL interpreter to assist in understanding and completing the application forms.

Gaining and retaining arts-based employment: Some of the young people discussed the lack of provision for access and support as a specific barrier faced in gaining access to and retaining employment in the arts sector. These young people discussed how it was often "the nature of the business to work long hours" and to "work your way up... starting with lower level jobs", particularly in theatre, film and television. For these young people, this established structure of gaining and retaining arts employment was incompatible with their disabilities and specific access requirements, and so they faced significant barriers in this area.

4. Travel, Transport and Location

A major barrier for many of the young people pertained to travelling to and from arts provision. Over the course of the research it became evident that many of the young disabled people had faced significant challenges in gaining access to and successfully using public transport. These challenges predominantly arose from the general inadequacy of public transport in providing access for disabled users, alongside the attitudes and actions of individuals working within the transport sector (i.e. taxi drivers, bus drivers, and railway staff).

"A big barrier for me getting back into performing arts is how I would get there and back."

– Rachel, performer and wheelchair-user

For many of the young people, the most convenient and accessible mode of transport was via a **pre-booked taxi**. The research found, however, that the cost of taxi travel was generally prohibitive for the young people, thus constituting a major **financial barrier**. As a result, many of the young people **relied on public transport** to access arts provision, while some also relied upon family members to drive them to and from provision. Some of the young people were **not able to travel alone** due to age and/or disability, and so travelled on public transport with a supporter, parent or companion. In addition, particularly for neurodivergent young people and those with learning disabilities and mental health conditions, travelling via public transport can be prohibitively stressful and challenging.

For young people to travel by **train**, wheelchair spaces and ramps had to be booked at least four hours in advance, and they sometimes had to wait long periods of time for accessible carriages and for ramps to be set up. With **bus** travel, some of the young people recounted negative experiences of buses driving past them or being told to leave buses to make way for pushchairs, and being left to wait for long periods at the roadside as a result. They also recounted similar experiences when attempting to hail taxis from the roadside, as Caitlyn recalls:

"We were going to get a taxi to Tramway. About 5 or 6 wheelchair-accessible taxis drove right past us, and another said 'Our ramp is broken' and they wouldn't take us. The driver said to us 'You need to go down to Central Station and get a taxi from there', so we went there and loads of taxis just drove past us, until one stopped and took us to the venue. It's things like that that put me off doing anything because I'm thinking: Can I get there okay? Is there gonna be accessible transport for me to use?"

Young people living on the islands also had to factor in travel by **ferry or aeroplane** to reach opportunities on mainland Scotland and on other islands.

The young people discussed at length how much preparation is necessary when planning and undertaking any journey. While non-disabled young people navigate public transport with little incident, the young disabled people face significant barriers. These barriers are compounded by the negative experiences that young people face, which in turn serve to dissuade them from making future journeys so as not to risk being exposed to further negative experiences.

The young people's accounts corroborate findings from a report entitled *End of the Line* (Trailblazers, 2009), which investigated young disabled people's experiences of using UK public transport networks. David Gale, a Lockerbie-based contributor to the report, stated that the Scottish public transport system is "failing a generation of disabled people", explaining:

"Young disabled people in Scotland told alarming stories of feeling trapped and struggling with a transport network that neglects their needs [...] Two thirds of disabled travelers [were] denied boarding a bus due to the negative attitude of the driver or public, and a third of disabled people [were] left stranded after taxis refused pick-up because of their disability [...] Others reported being denied entry to buses, despite wheelchair spaces being available. The behaviour and attitude of transport staff and the public plays a big part in disabled people's use of transport [...] The fact that young disabled people are being denied life opportunities by an inaccessible network is a national disgrace." (Armour, 2016)

In addition, Trailblazers' report states that:

'Despite the Disability Discrimination Act of 2005 stating that transport service providers are obliged to make 'reasonable adjustments' if their services are not fully accessible to disabled people, our report shows that many young wheelchair users and people with mobility difficulties face serious challenges when accessing public transport compared to their non-disabled peers.' (Trailblazers, 2009: 1)

As is evident, the experiences of these young people are very specific to being disabled; non-disabled young people do not face this particular detriment when travelling to provision, and so it is vital to make budgetary accommodations to address this. Whilst making improvements to the public transport system is not within arts providers' particular purview, understanding the challenges faced by the young people before they even reach a venue highlights the importance of budgeting for participants' taxi travel to and from the provision, if required.

Geographic Location: Further to transport, geographic location of arts provision constituted a major barrier for many of the young people, especially for those residing in rural or remote areas and those residing on the islands. As the majority of arts opportunities and events occur in larger cities on the mainland (such as Glasgow and Edinburgh), geographic location constituted a major barrier to access for those who reside outwith the central urban areas of Scotland. These young people discussed how their locations had a big impact upon what (if any) arts provision they could engage in, and again discussed how a large amount of preparation is necessary in order to travel to provision in the major cities. As a result, this also presented further financial barriers, due to the cost of long-distance travel and the occasional need for overnight stays.

5. Attitudes and awareness of arts providers

It emerged during the research that the attitudes and awareness of arts providers constituted the final main barrier for young disabled and D/deaf people. Within this, the young people discussed the impact of arts providers':

- attitudes towards disabled and D/deaf people's **capacities and autonomy**;
- attitudes towards disabled and D/deaf people's **artistic practice and worth**;
- awareness of disabled and D/deaf **issues and identities**; and
- awareness of **access** provision for disabled and D/deaf people.

Capacities and Autonomy: During the research, many participants discussed the negative impacts of arts providers' attitudes towards their capacities and autonomy as disabled or D/deaf young people as significant barriers. These young people discussed how they face barriers as a result of arts providers' assumptions about their capacities, their capabilities and their autonomy as individuals and as artists. Within this, these young people discussed how **societal stigma** and **ableism** – discrimination against disabled and D/deaf people – impacted upon their access to the arts. It is worth noting here that these attitudes and assumptions of course do not exist in a vacuum, and are indicative of wider socio-cultural attitudes, assumptions, and biases about disabled and D/deaf people.

It emerged during the research that some of the young people faced barriers relating to **what other people assume they can and cannot do**. The young people described how people's assumptions varied depending upon the extent to which their disability was visible to others.

For the young people with less-visible or invisible disabilities and for the young D/deaf people, they often **encountered assumptions that equated age and youth with being non-D/deaf and non-disabled**. These young people discussed how they often faced expectations to perform tasks that were incompatible with their physical, mental, or linguistic capabilities. Meanwhile, the young people with more visible disabilities tended to encounter assumptions that underestimated or overlooked their capacities and autonomy.

"The assumption largely made is that if a person looks well, they must be so. With invisible impairments, it becomes much more difficult to enlist the support of those surrounding you."

Some of the young people discussed having been denied access to opportunities – both overtly and subtly – due to people's perceptions and assumptions about their capacities. A blind young person discussed being denied access to a theatre group *because* she is blind, stating: "They just wouldn't take me on". Meanwhile, a parent recalled the story of their son's friend – a teenager with learning disabilities who is a member of a mainstream dance group, but was denied the opportunity to perform in the public shows:

"There's a young woman in Howard's school who's a really fantastic dancer, she's really great. And she joined a mainstream dance class and goes to the dance lessons and **isn't allowed to be in the show**. And I don't know what that's about – good enough to be in the classes, but not good enough to be in the show... So she was actually given a main role in the theatre show and her mum got the tutor from the dance class to come along, who then of course realised 'This is ridiculous – here she is, clearly very talented and why are we...?'. So I think there's been a shift there... but you just think, really, still? 2015 that was, y'know."

"It's hard because you're never gonna know why it is – you're never really gonna know – because they're not gonna tell you, 'Well, we don't want to go to any extra effort' – they're never gonna come out and say that, so you're never gonna know why they don't want you there."

"In a room full of non-disabled actors, I am at a disadvantage – I don't perform well in interviews and social or networking situations, and often find myself disregarded for this reason rather than my abilities as a performer. "

Artistic Practice and Worth: Attitudes towards disabled and D/deaf people's artistic practice and worth emerged as a barrier, with some young people discussing how their artistic practice and worth is viewed differently by others as a result of being disabled or D/deaf. These young people discussed how they as individuals and their artistic work can be viewed as **tragic or inspirational**. Some of these young people also discussed how narratives around disability often follow a set script or pattern of 'overcoming adversity', often produced for the purpose of 'inspiring' non-disabled people. In addition to this, some of the young people discussed how they feel limited by the expectation to make work only about being disabled or D/deaf.

"I find that if I am making work that is angry in some manner, it is always read as tragic or inspirational by non-disabled people. This leads me to not wanting to make work at all, because anything I express is viewed through the damaging lens of non-disabled expectations and biases, and it makes me feel I am not being viewed as human..."
– Connor

"From a certain point of view, disability has a built-in narrative and so it's very attractive as a story to tell, so that's what you see – it's the tragedy and the overcoming, or the tragedy and the more tragedy – and so you don't tend to see stories of the disabled person who does something unrelated..." – Claria

Awareness of Disabled and D/deaf Issues, Identities and Access: The young people also discussed the impact of arts providers' awareness of both issues pertaining to disabled and D/deaf people and disabled and D/deaf access as barriers to accessing provision. The young people stated that arts providers' awareness of disabled and D/deaf issues and of access considerations is vital to ensuring provision is accessible to them. The young people offered many practical recommendations to aid arts providers' awareness of disabled and D/deaf issues and access, which are discussed in the next section – 'What can arts providers do?' (See pages 25 – 31).

Disabled and D/deaf children

The research engaged with Starcatchers – Scotland's premier multi-arts organisation for babies and young children – to discuss younger disabled and D/deaf people's access to arts provision. Based in Edinburgh and delivering arts provision across Scotland, Starcatchers have delivered three artistic projects that involved focus on babies and children with additional support needs.

Starcatchers' engagement with this demographic began when groups of disabled children attended their provision as audience members, which served to expand their awareness of delivering provision for children with additional support needs. Their second major engagement with disabled and D/deaf children was in conjunction with the Playground Project – a project which placed artists within childcare settings, one of which being a D/deaf-specific school in South Lanarkshire. Starcatchers' third main engagement in this area was the delivery of an interactive sensory arts project in collaboration with Sense Scotland, for young disabled children and their families.

Starcatchers gave insight into the challenges art providers face in delivering provision specifically for disabled and D/deaf children. In terms of monitoring and evaluation, data pertaining to disability and D/deaf identity was not generally collected because the information they aim to monitor relates predominantly to areas of socio-economic deprivation and particular social needs (via referrals from statutory and third-sector agencies). The organisation described being caught in a familiar chicken and egg or catch 22 situation, wherein without the demand for disability and D/deaf-specific provision such provision was not prioritised, yet without this specific provision being prioritised and offered, the demand for it was unclear. However, Starcatchers aim to make all of their provision accessible to disabled and D/deaf children and their families, and intend to pursue future projects with Sense Scotland.

As discussed previously on page 15, as children the young people who participated in the empirical research had mainly engaged in arts provision in school settings. For these young people the barriers to access became most prominent post-17 years of age, once they had completed formal education and left school settings.



A Further Consideration: Intersectional identities

When conducting the research with young people, it became apparent that many of the young people had multiple and intersecting identities. Whilst the young people identified as disabled or D/deaf, they also had other identities and experiences allied to other groups and communities also often marginalised within society.

For the young people participating in the research, these identities and experiences included:

- Social class – specifically being working class and/or having a low household income;
- Being black, minority ethnic and/or a person of colour⁶;
- Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer;
- Being transgender and/or gender-variant; and
- Being a migrant or refugee.

In addition, some of the young people also identified as having more than one disability or as being both disabled and D/deaf.

Intersectionality describes the notion of people being at the intersection of multiple identities and lived experiences.⁷ For example, a young person may be Deaf, a migrant and a person of colour, or a young person may be disabled, transgender and working class. Living at the intersections of identities often marginalised within society can present unique challenges and create additional barriers for young people. It is important to recognise that these young people may face additional and specific barriers.

"If you want to make your place accessible to all people, you have to really think about what that means and say it outright."

The young people discussed social class (specifically being working class), race and ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, and gender identity as additional factors that contributed to whether and how they access arts provision, as May, Dorian and Claria discuss below:

"I think that's why I didn't do an acting course, even though I wanted to I didn't do it, because I'm queer, I'm Deaf, I'm half-Asian and I'm a woman. I'm working class as well – so all of that makes me feel like maybe I wouldn't get into it. I think the way they provide information is off-putting, because I thought theatre was only for the middle class. Like, some interpreters with the signed videos, it's too formal... but now I know it's not only for the middle class – it can be for people like me..."
– May, 25, arts apprentice

"In general, I find it extremely difficult to connect with people around me, because of my migrant identity in tandem with my mental health condition. However, expressing myself through dance, without the need for verbal communication, is intensely liberating at times [...] I would love to take part in a dance group that is LGBTQ and disability inclusive." – Dorian, 23, dancer and visual artist

"As a young disabled lesbian in the countryside, I didn't really want to go to any group things because it was all probably gonna be older than me, probably straight, and it just really wasn't the right thing for me." – Claria, 24, film graduate and writer

⁶ 'Person of colour' and 'people of colour' are terms increasingly used in place of or in addition to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME/BAME).

⁷ See: Crenshaw (1993); Sawyer et al (2013).

These young people expressed wanting to engage in arts opportunities that were affirmative of their identities and experiences, and expressed trepidation towards how they might be treated by others. These young people also pointed to the lack of intersectional role models as a barrier, as they seldom found themselves represented in arts provision, nor on stages or screens.

When working with young disabled and D/deaf people, it is imperative that arts providers understand that these young people may have complex or multiple identities and experiences. As also discussed in the context of disability and D/deaf identity, arts providers can provide affirmative environments by actively recruiting and overtly welcoming all young people, building connections with marginalised communities, undergoing education and awareness training, and actively challenging oppressive or discriminatory behaviours when delivering provision.

What can arts providers do?

Responding to the third and final Research Question (as outlined on page 10), this section outlines what arts providers can do to lessen barriers and improve access for young disabled and D/deaf people in Scotland.

1. Provision specifically for young disabled and D/deaf people

The first main recommendation is for provision specifically for disabled and D/deaf young people. This refers both to provision for everyone with specific focus on access for disabled and D/deaf young people, and to provision only for disabled and D/deaf young people. The young people discussed how it was beneficial to engage in arts activities with other disabled and D/deaf people, due to the potential for **"shared understanding"**, **"empathy"** and **commonality of experience**.

Some of the young people – Ailsa, Howard, Ben and May – already had experience of engaging in some disabled and D/deaf-specific provision, which they explained had a positive impact both upon their self-confidence and arts practice. While Ailsa participated in the Be-BoP Ensemble (discussed on page 27), Howard participated in several large-scale theatre productions through his Special Educational Needs school. Ben had participated in an intersectional LGBT and disabled and D/deaf-specific filmmaking project, which provided him with an affirmative and accessible forum in which to develop his filmmaking skills. May, meanwhile, began an arts apprenticeship with a Deaf-specific theatre organisation, and explained that this role has provided her with positive Deaf role models and enabled her to enter the arts professionally – something she thought impossible given her intersectional identities and the lack of intersectional Deaf artist role models (as discussed on page 26).

"Often when I'm involved in the arts, I'm the only disabled person in the room [...] I'm very self-conscious, so if there were other disabled people or someone disabled running the event, I might not be as self-conscious than if I were with non-disabled people."

A parent's view: "I would want evidence that something is truly trying to be inclusive. That for me would mean you can't have a dance tutor and a group of young people – there have got to be other people in the room – not mums and dads – other young people who are available and are going to be there to support."

"It'd be nice to spend time with people who get it. It's really nice to be with other disabled people because we can match each other's pace – an understanding is there. So I'd definitely like to go to arts things that are specifically for disabled people."

Disabled and D/deaf artist role models delivering provision: Within the dialogue on disability and D/deaf-specific provision, the young people also expressed the need for disabled and D/deaf artist role models and discussed the value of disabled and D/deaf artists leading youth arts provision. Many of the young people discussed a lack of disabled and D/deaf role models, which negatively impacted upon their self-confidence and their inclination to pursue artistic opportunities. Similarly to the young people's discussions regarding engaging in provision with other disabled and D/deaf people, many of the young people discussed how engaging in provision led by disabled and D/deaf artists would help to foster an environment of shared understanding and commonality of experience. The young people also discussed how disabled and D/deaf role models would be "good for everyone" – non-disabled and disabled, hearing and D/deaf – "to have disabled and Deaf people visible, living lives, making art".

"There's that understanding and it's assumed that you're going to need accessibility - it's assumed that things are going to have to be changed about a bit..."

"It's good for everyone to have disabled and Deaf people visible, living lives, making art."

2. Centralised information about arts opportunities (including provision for disabled and D/deaf access)

Providing centralised information about arts opportunities may serve to address the barrier faced by the young people relating to the difficulty in finding suitable arts opportunities catered to their interests (as outlined on page 15). While such centralised resources are currently in operation – via the Youth Arts Events⁸ and Creative Scotland⁹ websites – the listings do not generally provide information relating to disabled and D/deaf access, and the websites do not require this information nor offer the ability to filter by this information (or allied 'key terms'). To provide young people with a forum to find suitable arts opportunities, it is imperative that centralised information continues to be provided and that these listings include full information on disabled and D/deaf access provision and a named contact for any further access enquiries.

"I've had confidence issues that I wouldn't be able to do theatre because of a lack of support and a lack of role models..."

"I think it's good for people who come to watch the shows because it makes them realise that just because that person doesn't walk or can't see doesn't mean that they can't act and that they can't put on a good show."

⁸ Youth Arts Events website, see: www.youthartsevents.co.uk/events/ [accessed 06/04/2016].

⁹ Creative Scotland Opportunities website, see: <http://opportunities.creativescotland.com/> [accessed 06/04/2016].

3. Front Door to Stage Door Access provision

During the course of this research, the term 'Front Door to Stage Door' access provision was devised. This refers to the need for arts providers to consider *all* elements and stages of how a young disabled or D/deaf person gains access to arts provision. This term encourages arts providers to expand their ideas of disabled and D/deaf access; arts providers' responsibility to provide access begins not at the point of provision delivery, but at the point of provision inception and design.

*Image of a Be-BoP Ensemble rehearsal.
[Stylised photograph depicting twelve people – some visibly disabled – sat in a circle discussing ideas]*



Be-BoP Ensemble, Glasgow

The Be-BoP Ensemble, devised by Birds of Paradise Theatre Company, delivers performance-based arts provision specifically for disabled and D/deaf young people. The provision is delivered by disabled and D/deaf artists.

Ailsa, a participant in the ensemble, discussed the value of taking part in arts provision delivered both by and for disabled and D/deaf people: "You're less likely to get the attitude of 'You can't do this' or 'Don't do it that way' from a disabled person.

They're more likely to be supportive of you – and they certainly were. It definitely helped that Garry and Robert were disabled themselves because they had that understanding and they would know what it was like for them to do drama, and they'd worked with someone who was blind before they met me, so they had some understanding and just applied that [...] and there was also a Personal Assistant that would help everyone in the group. If I hadn't found Be-BoP I probably wouldn't have done drama again since school..."

Over the following pages, the young people's accounts and experiences have been combined with examples of best practice to outline what, in practical and achievable terms, arts providers can do when considering disabled and D/deaf access. This has been broken down into a number of steps or stages, beginning with provision design and ending with provision delivery. These recommendations are not exhaustive nor designed to be a 'one size fits all' model, but instead serve to highlight the areas that arts providers may wish to consider when improving access to provision.

Rather than approaching disabled and D/deaf access as an 'add-on' or optional extra, access considerations should be integral to provision from its inception to its delivery.

Provision Design: When initially designing and planning the provision, it is here that disabled and D/deaf access should be first considered.

Access Budget: If an access budget was not already built into funding applications, arts providers should ensure that funds are made available to provide access. Access budgets can include: travel costs for participants; British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters; translation and transcription costs (to Braille, Easy Read, etc.); hiring support staff / assistants; relevant training for existing staff; and any other relevant considerations for the specific artform or activity.

Marketing and Outreach: It is important to include access information on any marketing materials and information about provision. Access symbols are a useful and easily recognisable way of communicating access information. It is also useful to provide a named contact for any further access enquiries and offer a few different methods for them to be contacted. Many of the young people expressed that overt and affirmative statements about disabled and D/deaf participation would serve to indicate that the arts provider had specifically considered and had awareness of the disabled and D/deaf communities and access. For D/deaf people, short videos in BSL with English captions can be made to promote provision or an event. It is also useful to provide marketing materials and information about provision in Easy Read, Large Print and Braille formats.

Pre-participation Meetings: The young people discussed how meeting with or speaking to arts providers or facilitators prior to provision delivery can be a useful way to ensure that individual access requirements will be met. These conversations provide a forum for the young people to discuss, in their own words, what they hope to get out of participation and what they require in order to achieve this.

"If we arranged to meet beforehand... because you can have on paper that I'm blind - but they might not actually know what that means in terms of when I'm in the room with them. [...] I have to say 'This is what I need - can we make it work?'. Because I'm kinda putting myself out there if I was to just turn up somewhere new."

This also provides the young people with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the arts providers or facilitators prior to engaging in the provision.

"It's even just meeting who's facilitating it before you're thrown in with a big group, because I'm anxious enough meeting a big group of people, but when you actually don't know anyone - not even the person facilitating it - well..."

Travel and Transport: As discussed previously, travel and transport constituted major barriers for many of the young people. As a result, it is imperative to consider travel and transport to and from provision as access requirements. Funds should be made available to pay for participants' transport via taxi, train and/or bus, and cashflow should be made available to immediately reimburse participants. The young people stated that it is important to advertise that travel funds are available on websites, marketing materials etc.

Venue: Participants should be provided with clear instructions of how to find the venue in advance. Ideally, the venue should be located only a short distance from public transport links, and along a level and even pavement. It should be well-signposted from the outside (and inside, if applicable). A member of staff can wait outside the venue to greet participants.

Venues should include: Wheelchair and level or lift access; wheelchair accessible toilets (with changing space); tables, door handles and light switches at wheelchair accessible heights; Assistance and Guide Dogs welcome; an additional 'break out' room or space; bright lighting with adjustable light levels; wide corridors with turning space.

"Can I get into the venue?
And is there an accessible
toilet? Do I have enough
money to get there?
Do I have enough money
if I need to pay for it?"
– Caitlyn

British Sign Language (BSL) Interpretation and D/deaf communication: BSL interpretation should be provided. It can be beneficial to hire BSL interpreters who have experience of interpreting in a particular setting, for example within the expressive arts. It can also be beneficial to use venues equipped with a Hearing Loop. SolarBear, a Scottish Deaf arts organisation, offer Deaf awareness training and introductory BSL courses for workplaces and arts providers.

Alternative Formats: Consider providing any written materials in alternative formats, such as Braille, Large Print, and Easy Read, and provide coloured acetate to aid reading. It can also be helpful to audio-record rehearsals or instructions for participants to listen back to (as opposed to reading a script). It is often useful to provide any written materials in advance of the session.

Audio Description: For blind or visually impaired participants it is useful to verbally describe any visual information, such as the layout of the room, set or immediate environment, any movements and actions, films screened or images displayed, and any other visual cues.

Relaxed Spaces: 'Relaxed' is a term increasingly used in theatre practice to denote an environment where it is acceptable to move around, make noise, and behave in non-normative ways. These spaces are especially helpful for those with learning disabilities, mental health conditions, neurological conditions, and chronic pain conditions. It is important to communicate to participants that the space is relaxed and explain what this means in practice.

Designated Quiet Space: It is important to secure a designated 'quiet space' or 'break out space', where participants can go to be apart from the main group. Participants should be free to use this space at any time as required and this should be communicated to participants. These spaces are particularly beneficial to participants with mental health conditions and some learning disabilities.

"Someone can be a really good
director or leader of a group, but
they can be really absolutely rubbish
at communicating their thoughts
clearly. So they'll be doing things
visually that everyone else in the
room can get, but they're not
explaining it to me, so I'm sitting
there confused."

Support Worker / Personal Assistant: The young people discussed that it would be beneficial to have a designated Support Worker or Personal Assistant to assist with delivery of provision. This person would assist participants to fully engage in the provision, performing practical tasks including guiding blind and visually impaired participants, assisting participants with movement, and assisting with eating and drinking. This person would also offer emotional, behavioural and social support to participants.

"It's not that you have to turn up and then you have to go through it all – it's already there and you're not having to think about it for a change. It takes that bit of responsibility away for even five minutes, which is often a breather..."

4. Connections built with disabled and D/deaf communities across Scotland

Establishing and building connections with disabled and D/deaf communities may serve to reach young disabled and D/deaf people who are not currently engaged in arts provision and those who wish to continue their engagement. In building connections with disabled and D/deaf communities across Scotland, youth arts provision can be developed and delivered for and in collaboration with young disabled and D/deaf people.

A major barrier for the young people was locating suitable arts provision that catered to their interests, as discussed on page 15. In addition, many of the young people found it difficult to find suitable provision once they were no longer in formal educational settings. Some of the young people currently attended or had attended **Special Educational Needs schools** and schools with **specialist D/deaf units** and **visual impairment units**. While these young people had positive experiences of engaging in arts provision in these school settings, once they left formal education they faced barriers in locating suitable arts provision. Such scenarios present real challenges to young people who wish to continue engaging in the arts. As discussed on page 16, it is important to consider '**bridging**' provision for disabled and D/deaf young people to encourage and nurture the continuation of arts practice from school and into their adult lives.

Given the specific barriers discussed throughout this report and the experiences shared by the young people, it may be beneficial for youth arts providers to consider building connections with:

- **Special Educational Needs schools/education units;**
- **D/deaf schools/education units and community groups;**
- **Blind and visual impairment schools/education units;**
- **Young people in areas of socio-economic deprivation;**
- **Young people in rural or less populated areas;**
- **Intersectional communities and groups** ¹⁰.

¹⁰ Such as young people who are disabled or D/deaf and also members of people of colour / BME communities, LGBTQ+ communities, and migrant and/or refugee communities.

5. Education and awareness for arts providers

The final recommendation drawn from the young people's accounts relates to improved education and awareness for arts providers about disabled and D/deaf access and the barriers faced by young people. As previously discussed on pages 21 to 22, the attitudes and awareness of arts providers had a significant impact upon both the young people's access to provision and the likelihood of them continuing this access. The young people explained that their access to provision could not improve without improved education and awareness among those delivering arts provision. It is anticipated that this report may serve to raise awareness amongst youth arts providers about the barriers faced by young disabled and D/deaf people, and begin to equip arts providers with knowledge of how to improve access.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The findings discussed throughout this report suggest that young disabled and D/deaf people face multiple and intersecting barriers to accessing youth arts provision in Scotland. While working within acknowledged limitations, this research has identified the barriers to access and offered concrete recommendations for how access to arts provision might be improved for disabled and D/deaf young people in Scotland. As a result of undertaking this research, an important dialogue between young people and arts providers has been instigated, and it is anticipated that a meaningful dialogue on disabled and D/deaf access will continue within the Scottish youth arts sector.

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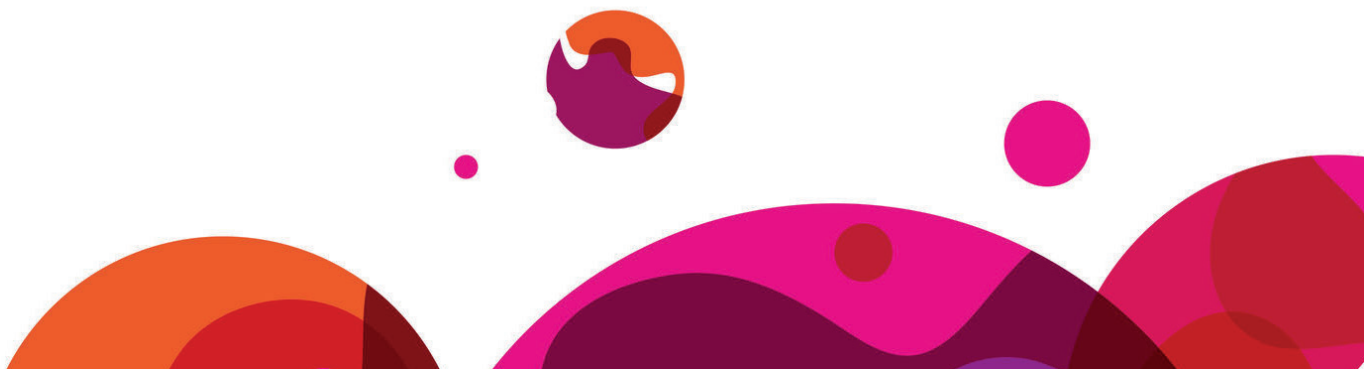
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