



## Transcript from launch event

Title: Barriers to Access  
Date: Thursday, December 1, 2016  
Time: From 09:46 am  
Venue: Scottish Youth Theatre  
Client(s): Birds of Paradise Theatre Company  
Speaker(s): Various  
ENT(s): Linda Wilson

THE FOLLOWING TEXT IS NOT A VERBATIM RECORD

Welcome to Barriers to Access  
Birds of Paradise Theatre Company  
at the Scottish Youth Theatre  
on 1st December 2016

**Robert Gale:** Right. Hello. In you come at the back. Hello and welcome to the event today. At least we are warm and cosy in here. How well can you hear me at the back.

**Mairi Taylor:** Thanks for coming. I'm Mairi Taylor and this is Robert Gale from Birds of Paradise.

**Robert Gale:** Today we have quite a lot to get through. No pressure but we want some big outcomes today.


**Mairi Taylor:** We are going to get you to do a lot of work today.

**Robert Gale:** So the whole point of today is to launch our report which has

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taken some time in the making and is now ready for your beady eyes.

**Mairi Taylor:** The whole point of the research was to reach out and speak to young disabled people and find out their experiences. We have learnt a lot and will take this as a starting point for going forward. We will look at the report this morning, and future strategies this afternoon.

**Robert Gale:** In this room we have a lot of people involved in the making of the report and who have an interest in what's going on. It's about learning from each other, and we are in this together.

**Mairi Taylor:** The report started up a dialogue which we want to keep going in an open way. We want also to be quite focused today and leave with a set of actions to take forward and ideas for the future. And are there aspects we can lead on. We don't see today as a one-off event, but the start of a longer term piece of work.

**Robert Gale:** We all come together and come up with great ideas and then go away. But we want to make things happen. We are happy to hear your views so we can move forward.

**Mairi Taylor:** And we will send everybody a link to this presentation. We will talk through the day briefly. This is the introduction. Then we will hear from Colin Bradie from Time to Shine. And then from Lawrence, the researcher and writer of the report. And two of the research participants who will speak publicly about their experiences to keep the dialogue going. Robert and I will lead a session before lunch to look at ways to move forward. Then we will hear from 20 Stories High who are on a train just now

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and we are not panicking about that. After that we will get practical and have a working session on setting out the strategies. We want everybody to find a way to input and later we will work as groups. For some people speaking out is easy but not for others, there are lots of ways to feedback. There should be lots of breaks and please leave the room if you need to. You may also use our office if you need a quiet space. Just ask.

**Robert Gale:** Within reason of course! I'm not paying your mortgage for you.

**Mairi Taylor:** So ask myself.

**Robert Gale:** I'm not very helpful. There will be a number of questions as part of what we are doing to gather your input. There are choices as to how you can vote. There is wifi in the room, and if you don't have a connection you should be able to use it. Or you can vote via your phone using the details on the screen. [See slide/other screen] you can also vote by text, and if you want to do so, text bopbarriers on this number [See slide/other screen] and you can vote using that same number. Finally you can also vote on twitter, when we ask a question. You will see how this works. We are now going to test this, I think. If this works, if you log in you should see the question, what would you rather be, an apple or an orange? That's a very important question. Cast your vote if that question has come up. It hasn't yet. Hold on.

**Mairi Taylor:** Text the word.

**Robert Gale:** Would you rather be an apple or an orange? Cast your vote

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now. There we go. It's a very important question. Did anybody not vote? Great, OK, lovely. You can see how that works. We will use that throughout the day. Right.

**Mairi Taylor:** I think it's time to invite Colin Bradie up.


**Colin Bradie:** Thank you very much and hello. [reading quickly from sheet] For those who don't know me I'm the program manager for Time to Shine and we are delighted to be able to support Birds of Paradise today. I hope you are all aware of the Time to Shine National Youth Arts Strategy for Scotland which we are three years into. I know a few people here today, who have received funding. It's the vision to support all of Scotland's young people and a key principle to tackle inequalities, with a huge focus in delivering the strategy so far. We were given £5m back in 2013 by the Scottish Government to put the strategy in place and we are now coming to the end of that, with only £20k left. It's been a privilege to work with these people.

The strategy aims to address the most significant issues facing young people. We have taken some steps but have a long way to go. We are delighted the projects have focused on participation and access. Everyone funded through Time to Shine are large scale regional arts projects.... also our youth in parliament group where we have set up a youth arts voice Scotland group to influence everything we've been doing. And through young scot, a fund for young people to get grants up to £6k and that's been a really important part of this and we have made a difference to young people in progressing their talents and accessing arts. It was a condition that everyone had to think about participation and access, the programs


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are still running till March 2017 but to date the Time to Shine has engaged over 38,500 young people, many of whom have never been engaged in the arts before.

To give a sound bite of the works we have done. Groups have been working with partners to target specific groups, undertaking an arts award project for example and the projects address transport barriers, and go to as many rural locations as possible providing free and low cost activities, and advising young people how to access arts, and providing small local grants and asking projects to consider the barriers young people face and ensure they have a plan in place, they promoted activities as no experience necessary, and have engaged with schools and target young people not normally engaged. We have raised the issue of disability awareness.


So a lot has gone on but that's just the tip of the iceberg and it's all been funded through the Time to Shine program which is unfortunately running down now. We await the outcomes of the future budget across Scotland and I'm sure the direction is forward and we are all committed to future delivery. The strategy is not linked to that funding and regardless of funding, I think we all agree we are behind the aspirations of the strategy and we all subscribe to those aspirations within our power to address the key principle of inequality. This is an important conversation and we hope they continue. I'm really pleased to be here and the main outcome of working out what's coming next so we can support the sector and continue working in this direction. Thank you for coming today, and please ask me if you have any questions.

**Robert Gale:** Thank you. Thank you Colin. Now.... where are you going

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Mairi? Now Dr Matson Lawrence will speak a bit about the report.

**Dr Matson Lawrence:** Throughout me talking somebody is handing out copies of the report. You have not had a heads up to read it so I will give an overview of the findings.

About the research, the aim was to investigate the barriers faced by young disabled people. [See slide/other screen] It was a small scale qualitative research project to examine the barriers faced by young disabled and deaf people in depth.

So to give a brief overview and not assuming any knowledge in the room, when we approached this project we used the social model of disability, that says that people are disabled by society, barriers are created by the external physical and socio-cultural environment.

You will see we use the term D/deaf, which incorporates deaf, Deaf and hard of hearing people in the community. There's a distinct identity and culture with the Deaf community who use BSL. Self-definition was key when doing this research, so if you feel you are experiencing barriers, you were entitled to take part.


When we started, we developed some questions. [See slide/other screen]. It was to get an idea of what people currently do and what they want to do in the future. We also looked at the barriers they faced. The question was to find out what arts providers can do to improve provision, as you might just get a list of the things being done wrong, but we wanted to engage in dialogue. There was empirical research which incorporated an online

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survey and in depth semi structured interview. [See slide/other screen] The participants were recruited via pre-existing groups. The research engaged with 20 young people.

An overview of the findings.

You should see on page 13 onwards there are the research findings, and some highlighted quotes drawing out the main points of the research.

The first question.

We found that people had engaged in a wide variety of training, including activities, and performance based and community based, and professionally facilitated workshops.

We identified five main barriers, ordered in a way to show how a young person would access arts opportunities, all the way to the end of being in the arts provision. [See slide/other screen]. There were a number of barriers where people didn't know where to go or start, but for disabled people the main barrier was accessing information. There was no information on whether there was disabled or D/deaf access so they had to make additional enquiries which was a real barrier for them.

There was a lack of provision for access and support. They were often told there was no funding for BSL or an accessible venue. Also travel and location was a barrier in terms of the travel they had to take, relying on public transport. Trail Blazers have undertaken research and found that travel is a significant barrier. The fifth main barrier was attitudes and awareness. This was found to be inadequate and alienating.

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In terms of creating useful information, we have key strategies asking what could be done to make provision more accessible. There are more specific guidelines in the report, and these are the main areas. [See slide/other screen] Often there was a perception that arts providers will provide access and then wonder why there were no disabled or D/deaf people taking part.

Education and awareness - it's fantastic we are here to engage in discussion. I'm happy to take questions now. We have two research participants here today as we felt that it's difficult unless these things are brought to life, so they have come to recreate a live interview so you can hear their experiences.

So the plan was we would do a Q & A but if you have questions please ask. This is Flick and Amy McAinsh who both participated in the research and gave their perspectives. Shall we start with what you have been involved in?

**Felicity Anderson-Nathan:** I became disabled at 21 and it was lovely to be here as I loved youth theatre, and now I'm disabled and look back and think I could not have done that. I'm now involved with writing and have a background in theatres.


**Amy McAinsh:** Had done drama in school and wanted to continue after school. I heard about the ensemble - for people who wanted to gain more acting experience. I wanted to focus on drama and knew that being blind my access needs would be taken into consideration as the leaders were disabled themselves, so that made me feel more confident.

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**Dr Matson Lawrence:** Did that differ from things in the past.

**Amy McAinsh:** Sometimes when they found out I was blind they refused to take me. I could not pretend I wasn't blind, of course. I couldn't lie about it.

**Dr Matson Lawrence:** In terms of barriers what were the main ones Flick.

**Felicity Anderson-Nathan:** What you don't realise when you are able bodied is just how far things are from each other, and how many physical barriers, like doorways you can't get a wheelchair through, or awkward stairs. I live in Edinburgh and the number of accessible buildings is low and although some venues are accessible there, I anticipate access will be difficult. Disabled people are not expected, and it was my responsibility to ring ahead and find out what they can do for me. Then it becomes a negotiation process. It's great if I can go, but it means a lot of extra effort placed on the disabled person.

**Dr Matson Lawrence:** So it's about the quality of access and being on a level footing.


**Felicity Anderson-Nathan:** Yes, it's more difficult.

**Dr Matson Lawrence:** What about you Amy McAinsh, what improves your access?

**Amy McAinsh:** It helps if I can get transport to the venue and I quite like for somebody to meet me to guide me in, because if I have not been there

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before I don't even know where the entrance is. Also I quite like and find it useful to have somebody to guide me round, as that allows me to fit in and not to have to ask somebody to guide me, as nobody knows me and might not know what to do. Somebody to guide me around and give visual information helps me to have a level access and everyone then feels more relaxed and people can talk to me and not feel responsible. If I'm reading a script I would have an audio version or they could email me it and I could put it on a Braille machine.

**Dr Matson Lawrence:** So lots of things to think about in terms of each individual's access. Why did you want to take part in this project?

**Felicity Anderson-Nathan:** It sounded really interesting and because I feel I have seen both sides, the amazing work that goes on and how some disabled people just can't get into it. It should be broken down. It's a way into professional work. I used to know professional actors who now work in the industry and if you don't get that when you are young, you can't move up and that's impoverishing for the entire industry.

**Dr Matson Lawrence:** The expectation is to do the most physically laborious jobs, and if that's not where you are, that's the expectation and it's not suitable. How about you Amy?

**Amy McAinsh:** Because I had done drama in school I knew there were challenges and that was good but I was in a class with people who could see. When I then took part in BeBop it gave me confidence and when I found out about the research and realised the issues affected me, I was able to give my views and could help other disabled people to contact and

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join in with theatre companies. I think for me it puts me off wanting to phone up a group to join them, as they might ask if I can do this and that, and I tend to get anxious and nervous. It's because I don't have the ability to see round the room where I'm supposed to go, and it can be embarrassing. Even if people are not able to do everything that's fine as long as they have a positive attitude. I'm fine to go with the flow and try things out and it's about people having a positive attitude.

**Dr Matson Lawrence:** The willingness. Any questions? For either of us.

**New Speaker:** I have a question, a broad one; around what do you think is stopping us making progress across these areas? I've seen a lot of excellent things happening, new initiatives, making things accessible and fantastic initiatives and a lot of barriers all the way through, so we know broadly what the challenges are and have done some development, and know what the problems are and have tried elements, so what's holding the broader arts sector from making the big steps?

**Dr Matson Lawrence:** I think a lot of it is around broader attitudes and issues and how people perceive disability and D/deaf identity. There have been a lot of changes and also there's an argument that making provision accessible, if at the centre it's not developed and shaped by disabled people, then how accessible is it?

**Felicity Anderson-Nathan:** I think it's just hard, and expensive, and if I had a pot of money and could reach ten able-bodied or one disabled person, then it's a hard question to fix in that situation. If one person is reached and others are disadvantaged, then it's hard. It's a long process.

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For me, if there is a positive attitude that helps.

**New Speaker:** Is there a conditioning of young disabled people due to the lack of access. There is not so much of a history of people seeing themselves there. We are skilled. I was fascinated by the comment that you would not have done all those things as a young disabled person. Why not? I wonder whether it's just not visible yet, or an assumption. We don't see disabled performers on stage and when we do it's amazing. So there's a conditioning of young disabled people.

**Felicity Anderson-Nathan:** I talked about this before, the fact that when you become disabled the doctor doesn't give you a leaflet and tell you how to do everything and what to expect. You have to figure it out, Google the social model of disability and especially with young people, they might not have a handle on what access means, and that means the onus is on them to say what they need, and they might not know. You might have to make suggestions and it might be the first time they realise they can get a note taker, for instance. Or they might ask for it, but that's not an assumption to make.

**New Speaker:** Do you think attitude is a big problem. We in a theatre group looked at disabled access and did training and I was in wheelchair, and asked to bring my brother in. Their attitude was to sit in our chairs and figure it out for ourselves.


**Dr Matson Lawrence:** I think there's the narrative around pity and tragedy, and a lot of young people discussed young disabled people being the objects of pity, and non-disabled people feel very apart from them.

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There is a disconnect.

**Felicity Anderson-Nathan:** I think you are talking about just sitting in our chairs and understanding, it doesn't work that way. So they bring in a couple of people who use wheelchairs - there are things you won't see unless that is how you see your life.

**Amy McAinsh:** Everyone is different. Some might think they have worked with a blind person, but everyone is an individual and needs different things. To have a place as accessible means different things for different people. It might not be accessible, despite having wheelchair access. People don't really understand different conditions and the effect of them.

**Mairi Taylor:** I think it's time for a break for the communication support. Any questions to ask before the break.

**New Speaker:** What is resonating at the minute? I might ask what you have taken from this day so far.

**Mairi Taylor:** Let's have ten minutes now, and come back after the break.

BREAK

**Robert Gale:** Can we all get back together now.....

**Mairi Taylor:** I will start. Thank you very much to Lawrence and Flick and Amy McAinsh for bringing the report to life for us. We are now jumping from there and talking more about barriers and solutions and strategies growing

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out of the report, a pre-lunch audit snapshot and after lunch we can move forward.

**Robert Gale:** If we all want this to happen and work in the same direction, why are we not doing it. We keep coming back to that to work out why, and if we are further ahead than we think.

**Mairi Taylor:** We have talked about barriers and as part of the questionnaire we asked questions about what you have received in the past, and also we asked organisations to get a picture of who is in the room and to point out we are starting from zero. We got a lot of feedback from organisations about what they are doing, but not much from individuals. That can mean several things; it could be people's barriers and needs are being addressed seamlessly, or they are not being met, or that the person is not able to identify what their access requirements are. So when we think of barriers we have the generic ones but have to remember they are individuals.

**Robert Gale:** We keep talking about this, what do we need to know? To make it more accessible, for individuals, what do we need to know to make that happen. We will have a quick exercise, in your table groups, talk to the people you are with and find out what their postcode is, and try to remember it. The person on your left. Ask what their postcode is and remember it.


**Robert Gale:** Have you all done that? Thank you. Now we can go round the room to get everybody's postcode but that would be very dull. So now ask the person on the right to describe where they live. Their house or

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neighbourhood. The person on your right.

Right, thank you.!!


So, hopefully you now have a bit of information about the person on your left, which tells you something but not much, and a bit more from the person on your right. For most of us that only tells you roughly where we all live, or a picture of what their house or neighbourhood is like. You could be illustrating a point - being.....

**Mairi Taylor:** The point being there is some information that we need to know and some that is not useful. This grew out of a conversation with the steering group and that comes up for disabled people, what is wrong with you, and what do you need. We are trying to bluntly make the point that you need to know about individuals' needs and access requirements. This is an important thing. An individual needs to be able to articulate what they need and we have found that disabled people are not always the best to know about their own access requirements, sometimes they need help.

**Robert Gale:** There is an organisation who were approaching young disabled people and asking their parents and how they could be involved in arts provision. The young person is visually impaired, so that is what they need. They need to find the solutions, but they might be making presumptions about what the young person needs, in some cases, but if they asked what they could actually do here, they could save on a lot of hassle and expense. So asking people what they actually need is important.



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**Mairi Taylor:** We were involved in a project called Flip Artists and we did disability equality training with them, and we thought we would be showing them what we do with organisations, so we were going to run through things quickly but we had to stop, slow down and do disability training. They did not all know about the social model, had not had a leaflet from the GP, so we had to do the full training with them. Also they were not actually able to identify their own access requirements and so we created access statements for everybody, using another process, and ended up with a document which laid out what they needed. Organisations have gone on to use this. It's simple stuff, sometimes like preferring email than speaking on the phone. These things are key to enabling somebody to continue to engage. Individuals need to know their options.


[See slide/other screen]

So it's about striking the balance. I have stolen this from Flick who talked about the idea of the burden or responsibility and where it lies, and sometimes it's too much with the individual, to know and communicate what they need, so we had to shift that balance.

**Robert Gale:** Another thing is coming back to the attitudinal thing, a lot of people here have talked about the wrong attitude is the barrier. People are sometimes nervous about getting it wrong, as if disabled people know this stuff and there is some ignorance which is a massive barrier for people to work out what they should know. We advocate what you are asking, not about what you already know.

[See slide/other screen]

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So on the questionnaire we had responses as to what you are already doing in organisations to promote access, and we put this together into five handy categories. We hope.

[See slide/other screen].

**Mairi Taylor:** This is a summary, and we will amalgamate all the information and share it all afterwards. This is a summary.

Working with existing groups, bespoke Workshops, projects tailored for needs, experimental music projects, etc...[See slide/other screen] Bespoke is a key word here, tailoring things.

**Robert Gale:** Going to existing groups or new groups and working with the key things that are already happening.

**Mairi Taylor:** Training, support and mentoring, volunteering and fully funded training.

**Robert Gale:** Training is important for staff and youth workers etc.

**Mairi Taylor:** Activity and barrier removal - transport barriers, food, open access, physical access, space, individual needs, chill out spaces, etc.

Policy and strategic areas - consulting with organisations, families, etc, lobbying, diversity committees etc.

Funding - free opportunities for disabled and non-disabled people,

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additional funding for support costs etc.

**Robert Gale:** A lot of these go back to the funding question. It all costs money, but there is already quite a bit of free stuff going on, and a lot more that can be done other than finding money.

**Mairi Taylor:** So that's from the information you have supplied for us, as not everybody filled in the form, we will spend more time drawing that out. We want to do that mapping exercise and draw out good practice examples. It helps to build a picture of activity, and get new ideas of what's going on across the sector.

**Robert Gale:** On your tables there are white cards. There must be things that you consider best practice, so we want you to write it on a piece of paper or use your phone as before. We just want one sentence.

**Mairi Taylor:** Often there are good examples coming from other places, outside the arts.

**Robert Gale:** Ten minutes to talk and do that exercise, things that are good, write it on the paper.

Right can we all get back together? We have a list up here and we can add to it. We will collect your papers. We are going to look at the most inspiring suggestion. Starting with this table.

**New Speaker:** We took a few notes and talked about a creation centre using participants to identify the most accessible dance space.

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**Robert Gale:** We have been harking on about this for decades. Great. Just one example from each table, as we are all getting hungry. Next table.

**New Speaker:** High quality training outwith traditional education. Jodie does a traineeship at a dance company.

**Robert Gale:** Next table.

**New Speaker:** We talked about the welcoming culture on arrival, as soon as you get to a place, that's really important.

**New Speaker:** We talked about a multi-agency approach that followed a group or person as they moved through different aspects of their progression.

**Robert Gale:** I'm not aware if that's done yet.

**New Speaker:** The discussion focused on it not being planned but reactionary.

**New Speaker:** We did this as individuals,


**Robert Gale:** Just pick the best example.

**New Speaker:** I did something - we have just moved into a new building and spent lots of time talking about the toilets being gender neutral and talking to venues about how that works, and refreshing ideas in new ways of working.

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**Robert Gale:** Perfect. Next table.

**New Speaker:** We talked about things like films and events that are more accessible for parents. Engagement with certain organisations has given me confidence and when opportunities come up I can articulate that I have requirements, rather than assuming I can't engage. I asked if I could bring my baby along today and was told yes, but some people would not have asked and would have assumed. But I have the language and empowerment to ask the question.

**Robert Gale:** And the opposite of that experience, when you are disengaged, it becomes a vicious circle.

**New Speaker:** We talked about an organisation called Friendly Access and how we put structures and agreements in place.

**Robert Gale:** Please collect together all the cards and we will collect them in. We will leave this slide up over lunch, and you can text or twitter.


**Mairi Taylor:** We are stopping for lunch for an hour, and then we will hear from 20 Stories High and we will pick up from here, creating a snapshot of current good practice and doing what comes naturally, and moving into the what we can do. When we come back I would like you to sit at the table relating to the coloured dot on your badge.  
So come back and sit in the group with the same coloured dot.

LUNCH

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WELCOME BACK

**Mairi Taylor:** Thank you for coming back. I hope you are all in the right place. We are lucky to have 20 Stories High here with us today to talk about their work.

**Julia Samuels:** Hi. I'm from 20 Stories High. I will introduce Shauna Hogan and Abby who are two of our participants, Abby is Shauna's PA. We are based in Liverpool, and I have met some of you before. I will try not to go on all afternoon.

We are a theatre company that creates work for and with young people and diversity and access is at the heart at what we do, without a specific disability focus, it's mostly social inclusion and people who are excluded for various reasons. Our understanding of access is much broader than that and just now we are thinking about disability and how to become as accessible as possible to disabled young people.


This is what our tagline is. It looks great on the PC but it's not very accessible and I wish it was in white. Everybody has a story to tell and their own way of telling it. We collaborate with young people to think about the stories they want to tell and the form they want to tell them through. We recognise young people are creative and theatre is much more exciting if we bring that creativity into it, and by combining creative energies of young people with professional artists we make exciting theatre.

Our structure is that we run regular activities in Liverpool with a theatre. A young writers group and a youth music group. We also create theatre that

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tours nationally, professional work usually, and increasingly those professional actors are people who have come through the young actors strands, sometimes. We are interested in what is happening, as our participation strand used to be different to the professional actors strand. Those things are coming together. This is Sam in the middle [See slide/other screen] in a professional show and that's little Sam a few years younger. We see people coming through the organisation.

This is not bright enough. This is how we work, young people and professional artists and everything landing on that line, always both energies in and meeting in the middle, looking at new forms and voices.


This is a poster from one of our shows. We are also interested in bringing what we do together with more traditional forms and also hip-hop and dance and lyrical content, trying to bring those things together.

I suppose these are the basics of our understanding of barriers and appreciation of the sectionality of it all. There are lots of things about the way we work that address people accessing it. We have an equality and diversity action plan and had a board meeting last night to go through it. We will only do workshops and performances in accessible spaces, unless we are booked in to do something in another space. That's physical access. Young writers etc nobody has to pay. This is important - we have a support worker called Donna who is there for the young people and they check in with her, and sometimes she's just there for them to talk to. In terms of retaining young people that's probably the most important thing we do. People's access needs change so somebody just doing OK now, might be in a mental health crisis next year. I don't know how it is in Scotland but

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our youth service in England has almost disappeared. We feel we offer enough support and that's key to access. We have access lines in all budgets so we can respond to additional needs. We probably spend it on bus fares actually, depending on circumstances. We do outreach work. The group of young people who don't pay or audition, we make sure they are diverse and do partnership workshops with schools and a disability festival organisation in Liverpool who have a lot of provision for young people to age 18, then we work with the organisation to see how the young people can come to us. We have relationships with hostels and all sorts of different things to ensure we reach young people who don't have the confidence or knowledge that we exist.

I was just hearing a story -- about barriers we don't see, a young man from a Muslim background who is part of a group from a local school. He told me that at first he could not tell his dad so he had to lie and say he was going to basketball, and when we went on trips his granddad signed his forms. This was a couple of years ago. That's a whole load of barriers he is having to solve for himself.


Also we are really passionate about finding positive role models so the young people can see it's people like them who do this professionally, in terms of gender, geography, class, and have collaborated with disabled artists. Our disability equality action plan is always in our mind. There's a broader challenge to ensure we are proactive.

The work comes from a collaboration and is authentically about the young people in the room who are making it. That's something that helps young people from all sorts of backgrounds with all sorts of needs. Not having to fit into a mould, the process is working together to find out about the thing


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**TIMET**  
**SHINE**

 **Birds of Paradise  
Theatre Company**

# Barriers to Access Transcript from launch event



we are making. In terms of being out doing shows, we try to do as much engagement work as possible with venues and partners to ensure an audience comes in. We are aware that we often put on a BSL performance but not sure if there's anybody in the audience who actually needs it. We need to do this more and better. We should provide a touch tour and audio described performances, but we have not done so yet.

That's the principles of how we work, and I will talk more about some of the young people we work with. Now over to Shauna Hogan for her presentation.

**Shauna Hogan:** Hi guys. I am 24 and I love performing. [reading from her notes] [See slide/other screen] .

APPLAUSE

**Julia Samuels:** That was interesting, the thing you did with your mum must have felt like an audition. Sometimes it is not always felt that it's not actually an audition.

Shauna showed us shows she's been in with us. After two shows I spoke to her mum and it was interesting that she has not played a character with Down's syndrome. That's interesting. We have something about being authentic and being yourself and we did not do that, so recently she has played characters with Down's and they have both been shows about independence, so it is interesting. In Promises as Bethany she had a lot to say and that was quite a challenge so we put the words up on the projector and it was doing different things in different scenes, but as part of the show.

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We managed to integrate it artistically.

I want to talk about Scott. In the thing before lunch you were talking about young people articulating their needs, and this is an interesting case study. Scott is in his twenties, and has learning difficulties. When we first met him he and his mum said they were fine. But we could see that he needed support that he was not articulating, and it took time to see how we could help him and when. We did a show about the group and through that Scott offered a piece where he talks about going to a school for people with learning difficulties. Somebody else was in a mainstream school and there was a common experience shared by various people. When we did this he wanted the scene about learning disabilities to be taken out, and he said it was because his mum said he would get teased about it. So we talked with his mum and Scott and in the end she was fine with him being in it and so was he, and we found a way to have a dialogue around need, through the creative process. But it took a couple of years.

Current challenges. We feel we need to do more and there are some disabled people in our theatre and some who don't identify as disabled but have additional needs. We want to do more and better. We talked about Dada [check information] and support for over 18s, and how we want to do more networking with disabled artists and organisations, and we also think about our next four years and what to do in terms of the end of the four years and our development, and decided we needed a focus as we can't do everything and we need different ranges of expertise. We have a clear need within our existing group around mental health issues, and we have a lot of young people with complex needs and we don't have the tools to support them, and other agencies are not accessible with long waiting lists,

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so three years to look at mental health and look at interacting with young people with mental health conditions, and maybe get a professional on our board and spend time on that focus, then start a new focus. That might be the way to look at it, although we haven't done that touch tour yet. It might be best to go deeper into one thing before we do the touch tour for blind people. They are not mutually exclusive but that's the direction we are going in.

That's us. We are happy to answer any questions you might have.

**New Speaker:** I wonder, and I would love to come and work with you, but is there work you can bring in that needs audio description and maybe that has been done. So it doesn't feel like you have to do everything. Piggy back on that.

**Julia Samuels:** Thank you.

**New Speaker:** It's interesting the comment you made about starting with professional work and how they have grown together. Can you say where you see that going in the future, or just let it have its own path.


**Julia Samuels:** Interesting question. One reason we started was that we saw in Liverpool, we could see there were not the actors around to portray the characters in the stories we were doing. It's interesting and tricky as an organisation that engages young people who don't audition, and creates work for the people in the room, so there's nothing about talent. When you start offering professional work to people that's where it comes in, and some of our young actors feel some are getting opportunities and others

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are not, so we are getting our heads round that by creating the work our young people are best to perform. When we did a performance of talking heads monologues, and a couple of people said we had really amazing actors. Yes, they are great actors but we have created something they could perform brilliantly in. They perhaps could not perform a Shakespeare play. We are not compromising our work. This is good quality and people enjoy it but it has to be right. The opportunities are not there for everybody and we can't afford to pay everybody. We are also looking at an artist development program to offer something closer to a training model for young people who do want that. And find partnerships to make that possible, and writing, and music and workshop leading. It's in development.

**Robert Gale:** How do you go about finding young people to be part of the company.

**Julia Samuels:** We find them in all sorts of different ways. Some is outreach work. Shauna's story was about Asda and also Dada so that happened. Abby's mate was involved in something else and he said she would love 20 Stories High so she came along. Sometimes it's outreach through schools, in Toxteth, so in going out to see who is there, that combines with people bringing friends and siblings, but there are not thousands asking to join in, but we sometimes have more people than we can have in the group, so we look at the balance in terms of age, gender, cultural heritage etc, so we have a mixed group. We explain that to them and if there is not a space that's because we are trying to preserve the diversity of the group and ensuring it's is appropriately diverse.

**New Speaker:** Do you have participants that are non-verbal and have

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more complex needs?

**Julia Samuels:** Not at the present time. The people we have, or have been referred, have been young people they feel confident can participate, we have not actually gone to the places where there are people with more complex needs.

**New Speaker:** It's so challenging when it's about professional performance, it's the ones with less severe needs who may get the bigger parts as they can remember text, so it's a challenge.

**Julia Samuels:** It's about, never being in the background as Shauna said. Her mum has mentioned that, and it's about creating the piece about the people in the room. So if somebody is non-verbal we would create something that is not verbal. It's got to start from that principle that what you are doing and bringing is as good as anyone else, and we find ways to support that. We haven't done that yet though.

**Mairi Taylor:** Thank you very much.

APPLAUSE.

**Mairi Taylor:** I hope you are feeling like your heads are full of information, so the rest of the afternoon will be spent getting these ideas into planning phase.

So what we will do now is try to come up with 8 actions to take forward. These will be fantastically focused, explored and articulated actions. We


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will do a bit of talking about what level these actions sit at. We have a visual here [See slide/other screen] of three circles moving outwards, individual, organisation, and sector. We are aiming for actions that are broad and can hit sector wide. They might be informed. Or something they can lead on. We want actions that are the sector level with a broad impact.

**Robert Gale:** Not to say they can't be specific to your organisation, but how you get together with other organisations and have a bigger impact and not just one specific incident.

**Mairi Taylor:** It's about spreading good practice and infiltrating and infecting everywhere. We know what we need to do, all that knowledge is there, and it's about breaking down barriers and getting the good practice to infiltrate across organisations.

**Robert Gale:** What does that word mean? People can get confused over whether it's an action or an aim or what. So we need to ensure we are all on the same page. For us, it's about what needs to happen and what we need to do. It's not all about the end result, but what we need to do to make that happen.

**Mairi Taylor:** We come at this from experience, and we tend to come up with aims, and aspirations, but it's the getting there we need to work on.

**Robert Gale:** So is there something that isn't currently happening and needs to, or something happening that needs to be done better?


**Mairi Taylor:** It's not an aim. So for instance, this is an example of an

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action. Audit websites. There's a lack of good information on websites, so to improve that online the action is possibly to audit websites and employ young disabled people to do that.

**Robert Gale:** And for a number of organisations who have websites, they need to know how to come together and learn from each other to get better at this. We have spoken about that quite enough!

**Mairi Taylor:** Here are more actions we stole from the Lighthouse symposium.

**Robert Gale:** We haven't stolen them!

**Mairi Taylor:** At their symposium, we pulled out some actions, for instance, creating a dedicated travel fund. [See slide/other screen]

The document resulting from that symposium can be found on their website. [See slide/other screen]


**Mairi Taylor:** What we want you to do in groups, actually first you need to introduce yourselves, then identify up to four actions. Don't worry if you get stuck on 3. We would like to get from you as a group four actions that you think are very important going forward. We will put up the main barriers again. We need four actions. As you come up with one, write it on the pieces of card and bring it to Robert and I, and we will consolidate them into 8 overall actions.

**Robert Gale:** We want you to be ambitious but also realistic. Four actions.

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It can have a big impact on the youth sector.

## GROUP WORK

**Robert Gale:** Hey! Right. Hopefully you all got at least four fantastic ideas. Now we will go round the tables and get your ideas up so we can look at the overall categories. We will capture everything together. We don't know what's going to happen. Can you give me idea number one and an explanation?

**New Speaker:** We spoke about almost having a board of young people who would then blog and share about access of shows, be it, audio described, or captioned, or BSL interpreted that they can share with others. And having a board of critics or advisors of young people.

**Robert Gale:** So young person led audience review.

**New Speaker:** Blogger, tumbler sort of group that is very diverse itself.

**Robert Gale:** Great. Next.

**New Speaker:** Almost the same thing. So that young people know where they can go and ask how to get tickets and get support. A young board who will go into organisations as a sounding board for the access. So they can say if something is not accessible, and why, and they would be young people themselves. That might help us have good practice.

**Robert Gale:** So peer advisory resource.

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**Mairi Taylor:** So a vague categorisation of young people led, but involvement, as it's more direct.

**Robert Gale:** Anything else from this table?

**New Speaker:** I was interested in sourcing a database of people who could work and make our service more accessible, a list of people interested in working with us. Access providers.

**Robert Gale:** Next table.

**New Speaker:** We talked about an organisation which advises on how to promote inclusion in arts practice, a bit like Creative Carbon Scotland [check information], but not necessarily just for youth arts.

**Robert Gale:** A resource, to get advice and information.

**New Speaker:** We thought a lot about the lack of communication of good ideas out there, so having a resource so we are not re-inventing the wheel.

**New Speaker:** We have been to so many meetings having the exact same conversations, and I'm not allowed to tell them they are all talking about the same thing. We talked about how your experience in your internship and how you had a proactive parent and could get in contact with Caroline and that's why you are here today. That's one solution, but are there other ways? Posters are not accessible to all, not everyone has English as their first language. It can be scanned into another language, or audio description, or BSL, so have those ideas at the beginning. We also talked

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about attitudes of people, and the crap excuses they give when refusing you. Education...

**Robert Gale:** I know I said be ambitious!

**New Speaker:** Having people, training and what the standards should be and how they should abide by it.

**Robert Gale:** Ok. Next table.

**New Speaker:** We talked about practitioners and the need for their skill base to be broader. We are interested in the 20 Stories High view of working with what's in the room.

**Robert Gale:** Creating opportunities for practice.

**New Speaker:** Recruiting people with a really broad skill set, and turning your nose up at those who don't have it. And also about language, a common language that we all understand. Relaxed performances, supported environments, what does that all mean. The action is, we need to talk about this more. What is an agreed standard.

**Robert Gale:** How do we get that agreed language?


**New Speaker:** We talked about websites and a screen reader which just gives a few random words. But something to describe it, so you know what you are going past, and that you have found the information you actually need.

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**Robert Gale:** That's about web page access. And something about the importance of language and how to get that. How do we get that?

**New Speaker:** Somebody creating an umbrella body with a confidence terminology glossary, and being able to use that, offering it to the wider industry in the hope they will share.

**Robert Gale:** I'm not being harsh; we need to get this down to the action. How do we get it, that's important.

**New Speaker:** One more, not sure it's an action! We talked about quality and focus and ensuring it's about quality and seeing individuals and understanding the needs of that individual. Quality over quantity. But it's not an action.

**Robert Gale:** We need some sort of quality framework - how do we know what quality is, in this sector?

**New Speaker:** I think there's a tendency to create another framework, and although we are talking about the same values, how much can we see each other's work? We will do that quality issue between ourselves, in workshops etc, and that's why it's important to go and see other practitioners, and see the stuff. The action there is to understand the request for development, and feeling that it's a reasonable reason to apply for funding.

**New Speaker:** And networks, so people can come together and see each other's work and aspire to do as well, or do different things, and that

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applies all over.

**Robert Gale:** I think we have that. I totally agree, we could have a quality framework, but how do we get to that end result?

**New Speaker:** We had quite a few, but they are not specific actions. To create more family engagement activities, to strengthen and support awareness of the arts.

Also, a membership program, on the job training, and providing opportunities for professional development. Establish partnerships with other arts organisations and partnership working.

**Robert Gale:** Learning from each other and the experts in how to do this.

**New Speaker:** We talked about quality framework and we came up with a manifesto or statement of beliefs that organisations can sign up to. We talked about what that might look like and having a charter mark around disability access, a stamp to say this organisation has been approved. And to have minimum standards. We talked about having role models who are disabled themselves, and specifically encouraging applications for jobs and workshop leaders from people with disabilities so there could be a line in the job advertisement, and networking.


**Robert Gale:** So employment.

**New Speaker:** And offering training for aspiring disabled artists or youth workers to ensure they can deliver Workshops. We had not thought what the action might look like, but the idea of lobbying policy makers and heads

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of big organisations to get a long term commitment to youth art and disability focus and the funding to go with it.

**Robert Gale:** More money. Next table.

**New Speaker:** A debrief or consultation on past initiatives that were tried and were not successful. We tried such and such and it didn't work. So we come up with a new set of conclusions.

**Robert Gale:** Could that be an event?

**New Speaker:** Yes. We talked about that, we felt it was about confidence building, we are all dealing with this and not getting it right. Another one was about connecting with external partners and having a timeline of existing training and signposting. Connected to the first one, we talked about specific models and taking on a model of a one to one approach of working with young people, an established inclusive route which was not always right for that group.

We thought it would be interesting to try to pursue a fund that tries to challenge artistic access conventions. Does BSL have to be outside the stage, does captioning have to be like that? And advancing the digital support in a more creative way.

**Robert Gale:** Great. Next.


**New Speaker:** We have Sensory Impairment, a one stop shop where you can go and find out information about dance or art. It has to be done by the guys using the group, because that's important that it comes from them.

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Whatever the issues are.

We talked about creating an access document, like a list of needs and what will make things easier for you. This would be created by the people themselves.

**Robert Gale:** Like a passport.

**New Speaker:** Yes that you take around with you. And looking at specifics and what you need to prepare for a project, and what you need to include, and the questions being asked. Research needs to be looking at how things are working.

**New Speaker:** We touched on this before, having networking events, and directing people who use the services to other things, and allowing and creating opportunities for networking between non arts, and arts organisations. Sense Scotland is a non-arts organisation but they have lots of knowledge about access and different needs. Is there more scope for collaboration between such organisations?

**New Speaker:** And lastly, funding for transport seems to be a huge issue. Accessing buses in the afternoon, but having that there at night time too. You should be able to phone up a bus when you need it.

**Robert Gale:** That's great. One thing, a bit controversial, having the experts, I would hate to say this is, how do you do a BSL performance?


**New Speaker:** So when we are told to go to Birds of Paradise when we do a certain kind of show.

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**Robert Gale:** And we talk about how we do it, but with a view to this being how we do it.

**New Speaker:** Every single person is different. You have to do your own research for your own people.

**New Speaker:** But every performance is different.

**Robert Gale:** We make it accessible as a creative thing. There's no right way to direct a show. Final table.

**New Speaker:** We talked about being less apologetic and more radical in our approach to life, and the idea of organisations having groups and projects being led by diverse tutors and looking at your staff. Are we representing the diversity of people who want to take part in our projects?

**New Speaker:** Sometimes having your own manifesto on things you are not willing to compromise with, saying this is our approach and we want to try it. But if it's in print you can't change it.

**New Speaker:** A creative way rather than a dry - here is our equality and diversity policy. We often are not finding creative ways to do this.


**New Speaker:** We have talked about this before. It's interesting your comments, about the idea of crash test dummies, you can try out stuff with, so it informs you but doesn't shape it. Having a diverse group to come in and talk about it. Doesn't have to be disability specific. With costumes of course.

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**Robert Gale:** Anything else on this table?

**Mairi Taylor:** I have got this into 8 themes. But it might only make sense to me.

**Robert Gale:** Now we are having a break.

**Mairi Taylor:** Grab a cup and come back as we want to redistribute these around the tables and you have more work to do.

BREAK

**Robert Gale:** Can we all get back together now, we have work to do!  
Come on!

So we have 8 actions.

We are going to give you each one action and we want you to look at how to make it happen. The key things to look at are:

- Outcome.
- What should it achieve?
- Who do we need to involve to make it happen? If it's about funding, who are the funders, who provides the training etc.
- Who should be leading it? Work out who is going to be responsible. It might be a group of you or whatever.
- Money - try to work out a rough budget. Is it millions or thousands? Or can it be done for free.
- What other resources, knowledge, information is needed to make it happen.
- What are the connecting opportunities? How do we connect it all up

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- to make it a better action. Sense Scotland for instance, what can they bring to the table? Who else can bring stuff?
- What are the challenges and what can make it difficult?

So with the action you have, start to answer those questions, in ten minutes. Just like that.

1. Form resource to provide CPD and sector training.
2. Audit past initiatives.
3. Peer review network for accessible work (charter mark?)
4. Establish organisational level network
5. Establish young people led resource to advice sector
6. Lobby funder and government around access funds (transport)
7. Access information resource.
8. Create engagement and guidelines and advice (outreach and families).

### GROUP WORK

**Robert Gale:** Right! sorry, didn't mean to wake the baby!


**Mairi Taylor:** The room has got much hotter due to all the energy with you working so hard. This is the last bit of the day so we will gather these 8 actions together and summarise them as they come. Then we will have time for milling around, and you can look at the actions on the wall, and add to them. Then we will do a prioritising exercise and get you rating how important the actions are to you. How are we ranking it?

**Robert Gale:** If you want to mark it as important on the wall, put a colour on it. Pick a colour. You can either do it on the wall or do it on your phone.

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You can order them to get the order of importance. High or low importance. Or you can do it physically on the wall. Pick your top three and give them a star.

**Mairi Taylor:** This is establish a young person led resource to advise.

**Julia Samuels:** We did it a bit differently on the other side. Communication through social media.

**Mairi Taylor:**

- An access information resource, this talks about the website.
- Lobby funders and government around access funds.
- Create engagement guidelines and advice.
- Form resource to provide CPD and sector training.
- Establish organisation level network.
- Audit past initiatives
- Peer review network for accessible work.

**Mairi Taylor:** Do feel free to come up and add more to what's on the wall.

**Robert Gale:** Right, let's all come back together.

**Mairi Taylor:** Thank you everyone. We want to praise you for all the actions there. Well done. I'm impressed by the richness of the ideas, things are well formed and ready to go. And it's interesting to watch the poll on the screen. We will consolidate all this information and this gives us a good idea of your priorities, and we will focus on the second and third choices too and get natural partners for those. If there is anything anyone here

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wants to be involved in, just get in touch directly to reach us. As we said, this is not just a one off event, but the start of a process.

**Robert Gale:** Halfway through that exercise, it seemed like utter madness, but we have come out with rich ideas of what to do. We need to commit to this, to start the ball rolling.

**Shauna Hogan:** Dada in Liverpool today are also starting a resource, a conversation with young people about disability. They sent me the code this morning, and I will pass that on.

**Robert Gale:** We will make sure you all get that.

**Mairi Taylor:** We will send round all the information and some things for Evaluation, including a disability equalities form. We are finished now and will hand over to Caroline for ten minutes or so. Please do what she says!

**Caroline Bowditch:** I have four of the easiest Evaluation questions known. Usually everyone gets asked to fill in a massive form, but I only have four simple questions that will be on the app and also that you can write on a post it and stick about the room. The first question is.

How would you describe today overall in one word?

Callum is collecting words from people who don't have the app.

So the next question:

One thing you have learned or discovered today. Something you didn't

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know when you arrived this morning. Or maybe you've learned that you know a lot.

The next question:

One thing you are going to investigate further as a result of being here today.

What are you curious about?

Next question:

One action that you will take, or thing you will do differently, as a result of being here today.

Thank you. You survived the Evaluation process. As we are milling around, if you want to put any thoughts on a post it, anything that would have made today better for you. Thank you very much for taking part in the evaluation.

**Robert Gale:** Thank you very much.

END