

CREATIVE

ACCESS

TOOLKIT

Advice for working with and supporting deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent artists and audiences

for visual arts organisations.

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INTRODUCTION

This Toolkit is a resource to support visual arts organisations to be inclusive, accessible and representative in working with artists, audiences and staff who are deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent (DDN). We encourage you to get the most from this resource by being open to change within your organisations.

We are aware this is a large document, and we don't want people to feel overwhelmed. Certain aspects will only be relevant to particular teams, so check the contents page in relation to this. Otherwise perhaps focus on one aspect that you can make improvements on initially and expand it from there. Everything you do will have an impact and help to bring about change – things do not need to be rushed.

BACKGROUND

The Creative Access Toolkit was created for organisations in the Plus Tate network following a series of workshops in 2023/4 led by TripleC, DANC (Disabled Artists Networking Community), Jennifer Gilbert (Jennifer Lauren Gallery) and DDN artists Christopher Sacre, Sonia Boué, Christopher Samuel and Thompson Hall. Using advice on best practice shared during and after these sessions, a first iteration was released to the Plus Tate network organisations with the intent of providing clear, practical solutions to common challenges. Staff from across the Plus Tate network provided feedback on the first iteration that has since been implemented into this version and shared across the UK sector.

INTRODUCTION

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our intention when building this Toolkit was to make it easier for visual arts organisations to work on real solutions and change for the inclusion of more deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent artists (DDN) artists, both in programming and staff teams.

Remember, you don't have to work at speed. Slow down and take time to get things right and get the best support in place.


We encourage you to consider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as an agenda point for all team meetings across your organisation.

We encourage all staff to improve their practice in working with deaf, disabled and neurodivergent individuals, including Directors, Curators, and Programming, Learning and Front of House teams and volunteers.

It is important to understand that not all conditions are visible, and it may not be readily apparent that someone is disabled. Therefore, please treat everyone as individuals.

Please use this Toolkit as a guide only. Always have conversations with the DDN artists you are working with and/or any supported studios they may be part of, as every person is different and has different requirements.

Always make sure you consult with those you are working with so their voice (or that of those who support them) is heard and validated.



This Toolkit is a resource to support visual arts organisations to be inclusive, accessible and representative in working with artists, audiences and staff who are deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent (DDN). We encourage you to get the most from this resource by being open to change within your organisations.

“ ACTION,
NOT TALK,
IS NEEDED. ”

- Christopher Samuel, artist.



*Photo: Claire Griffiths
Artwork: Christopher Samuel: Sleep-in Installation, ART B&B, Blackpool.*

This is a room for people to experience inaccessibility. Christopher Samuel wanted to challenge the idea that when it comes to access, one size fits all and to create a conversation around accessibility. It was about designing a space that needs to be experienced to be understood, a slightly theatrical space, one that targets non-disabled people, somewhere they will find inaccessible to use.

DEFINITIONS OF DEAF, DISABLED & NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE

DEAF

We advise that you always take an individualised approach to deaf people's access requirements, as individual deaf people vary widely in what they may require. Historically, deaf people have suffered from both a neglect of their access requirements and a 'one size fits all' approach, which has not been fit for purpose and has led to a high degree of scepticism regardless of good intentions.

We are using the term 'deaf' as a broad term which includes people who are deaf, hard of hearing, and those who use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first or preferred communication.

For a number of years, an established convention was to use 'D/deaf'. This convention is used less widely now, and those we consulted for this Toolkit would prefer it not to be used at all.

BSL (British Sign Language) is **a language of its own** and is not a replica of the English language.

Ensure that any document or signage should be in **written plain English**.

WHERE POSSIBLE, A **BSL VIDEO** OF ANY READING MATERIAL IS ADVISED AND SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE CAPTIONS. Deaf people are very diverse in terms of their language needs, e.g. some may require full British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation, whereas others may prefer written or spoken English and use lip-reading and/or technological aids such as hearing aids and cochlear implants to access sound. This is often true for people who are hard of hearing (HOH) as well. Others may require a mixture of BSL support and English Language access.

WHO ARE DEAF, DISABLED & NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE?

DEAF

Some deaf people may use spoken language expressively but prefer to receive information in sign language. Find out what changes in approach an individual deaf person needs you to make to ensure that they can have an inclusive and welcoming experience.

Understanding your deaf audience's needs is vital, especially in instances where you wish to encourage deaf people to attend an event or, more broadly, want to make your organisation more inclusive for deaf people.

Deaf people themselves are the experts in their own requirements and can advise on positive steps to reach out to deaf people. For example, whether to create a BSL video for promotion of an event, and where to direct your publicity efforts, or creating 'plain English' versions of text.

Employing deaf people to lead BSL tours is important. Deaf culture is real and established, and deaf people are best to explain this.

It's important not to become 'hung-up' on the terminology and concentrate on finding out what any individual deaf person or deaf group needs to make their visit/your work with them a success.

DEFINITIONS OF DEAF, DISABLED & NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE

DISABLED

To paraphrase the UK's Equality Act 2010, you are disabled if you have a physical or mental condition that is long-lasting and has a substantial adverse effect on day-to-day activities. Under this definition, almost 20% of the population – i.e., 1 in 5 people – are disabled in the UK today [source: [ons.gov.uk](https://www.ons.gov.uk)].

It is for each person to decide if they identify as disabled under this definition. Some people have conditions which, to an outside observer, might meet the criteria and will choose not to identify as disabled. Others may choose not to disclose or share openly that they are disabled. Even though some people may not self-define as disabled, you may still have legal duties towards them under the Equality Act. Everybody is different; the best rule of thumb is to avoid any assumptions and be led by the individual.

WHO ARE DEAF, DISABLED & NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE?

DISABLED

You must make adjustments to ensure disabled people are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs or visiting your venue. This means removing any barriers they may face because of their conditions.

Adjustments can be in terms of the:

- physical environment and processes
- technology and equipment
- communication methods

This way of thinking about disability is called the [social model of disability](#). It says that people are disabled by barriers in society, and not by their impairments, conditions, injuries or illnesses. Barriers can be physical, such as buildings not having step-free access, or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference. For instance, assuming disabled people cannot do certain things.

The social model of disability looks at how to remove the barriers that restrict or exclude someone from taking part, rather than what is 'wrong' with them. It helps us all to recognise the external barriers which make life harder for disabled people; and identify solutions. **Rather than expecting the disabled person to fix or change themselves, it puts emphasis on wider society to adapt to ensure disabled people aren't excluded or disadvantaged.**

DEFINITIONS OF

DEAF, DISABLED & NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE

NEURODIVERGENT

Written by **Sonia Boué** - artist, writer and consultant on neurodiversity.

Neurodivergent people are individuals whose brain function varies from the majority or so-called 'norm'. An individual cannot be neurodiverse, but this language error is common even amongst some neurodivergent people. We are all still learning; however, it is good practice to use terms accurately as this helps decentre norms and assumptions. As always, speak to the person you are working with, to check their preference.

Language about neurodiversity is complex, contested and evolving. It can feel hard to 'get it right', but there are three simple things you can do to decentre your work and remain respectful.

- **Avoid othering.**
- **Respect** that everyone has a right to self-define and use their preferred language about their identity.
- **Don't assume.** If in doubt about a person's language preferences it is good practice to ask.

RECOMMENDED READING

Please follow these links for further reading:

[A Neurodiversity Facts and Myths Primer](#) by Shannon De Roches Rosa

[Neurodiversity: Some Basic Terms & Definitions](#) by Dr. Nick Walker

[NAS \(The National Autistic Society\)](#) has updated its guidance on how to talk and write respectfully about autistic people.

[Working with Neurodivergent Artists](#) toolkit exploring social interaction, designing opportunities and workplace conditions for neurodivergent artists by Neuk Collective.

GLOSSARY

Neurodiversity

Inspired by biodiversity, the concept of neurodiversity came about to challenge the idea of autistic people and others being 'broken' and needing 'fixing'. The term champions diverse minds and ways of thinking as valuable and important to humanity as a whole. It has inspired a global social justice movement to bring dignity and equality for autistic people and others.

Neurodivergence

Neurodivergence is a term that can be used to describe a person's autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, bipolar, brain injury and other types of cognitive differences which can be inherited, acquired and/or mental health related.

Neurodiverse

Neurodiverse is a term which applies to mixed groups of neurodivergent and neurotypical people (see below). For example, the Project Art Works Collective is neurodiverse as this is a mixed group of neurodivergent supported artists, neurotypical artists and their carers. The terms neurodiverse and neurodivergent are often confused and used interchangeably and inaccurately.

Neurotypical

Neurotypical is a term that has been used to describe people who aren't neurodivergent. It is commonly used, but some consider it dated.

Person first language

Person first language is when you say that someone **has** autism, for example, or that they are a person **with** autism. It is more likely to be used by people who don't consider neurodivergence in terms of identity.

Identity first language

Identity first language is when you say a person is autistic, for example. For many, being autistic is a core identity and the use of identity first language is strongly preferred. (*see NAS guidance on previous page*).



Sonia Boué, *She stroked my back in the garden (for K)*, 2022, Collage. © Sonia Boué



INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality recognises that a person can experience multiple disadvantages due to different identities – for instance, disadvantages due to gender and disability (of course, it is not limited to two characteristics).

Intersectionality recognises that the lived experience of, for example, a white woman is not that of a Black woman.

For DDN people, intersectionality suggests that sometimes the barriers society put before them can be due to other characteristics as well as due to their condition/s.

THE EQUALITY ACT

The purpose of the Equality Act is that everyone has the right to be treated fairly at work or when using services. It protects people from discrimination based on certain characteristics. These are known as protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex (gender)
- Sexual orientation

As well as these characteristics, the law also protects people from being discriminated against:

- By someone who wrongly perceives them to have one of the protected characteristics.
 - Because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. This includes the parent of a disabled child or adult or someone else who is caring for a disabled person.
-

Whether you are an employer or a service provider you have a legal responsibility to treat everyone fairly.

These are the main forms of discrimination:

- **Direct discrimination** - Treating a person worse than someone else because of a protected characteristic.
- **Indirect discrimination** - Putting in place a rule or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one.
- **Discrimination arising from disability** - Treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability when this cannot be justified.
- **Failing to make reasonable adjustments** for disabled people.
- **Harassment** - Unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which is hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to someone with a protected characteristic or in a way that is sexual in nature.
- **Victimisation** - Treating someone unfavourably because they have taken (or might be taking) action under the Equality Act or supporting somebody who is doing so.

In every aspect of a person's employment, they have protection by the Equality Act.

This includes day to day management, recruitment, dismissal, maternity leave, decisions on time off and workload.

There is a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. A reasonable adjustment means providing support for a disabled person at work or in accessing services.

It may mean:

- Changing the way in which employment is structured , e.g. **flexible working patterns**
- The **removal of physical barriers**
- Providing **extra support or equipment** for a disabled worker.

NOTE: We recognise that some people take issue with the term 'reasonable' and state that it is always reasonable to make adjustments for DDN artists.

Various factors influence whether a particular adjustment is considered reasonable, and this decision-making responsibility rests with employers or service providers. The following factors should be considered when deciding whether to make a reasonable adjustment:

- How **effective** is the adjustment.
 - Is it **practical**.
 - **Cost**.
 - The organisation's **size and resources**.
 - The availability of **financial support**.
 - The **basic nature** of the job does not have to change when it would go beyond what is **reasonable**.
 - If **advice** or **support** is available e.g., Access to Work support then an adjustment is more reasonable.
 - **Health and safety** implications can be considered of any adjustment.
-

LANGUAGE & TERMINOLOGY

Avoid using 'art jargon' (complicated language) in your spaces, as this can alienate many people and discourage them from visiting. Instead, use plain English, as art is for everyone.

Simplify press releases, marketing materials (online and in print), exhibition information and labels.

TIPS:

- 1** **Ask!** It's important to give space for people to share their identities, including pronouns. If the person in question is unable to do so themselves, ask those who can share on their behalf. Avoid making assumptions.
- 2** **Identifiers should not confine.** Many artists fear that, if they choose to share aspects of their identity, they will be considered by these aspects alone, i.e., their disabled identity over their art practice. It's important to ensure that all feel comfortable, not judged, and that artists can agree the language used to describe them and their practice.
- 3** **It's okay to say 'the wrong thing'.** Be open to learning and do not feel embarrassed if you do make a mistake. Often, people will be pleased to let you know their preferences.
- 4** **#NothingAboutUsWithoutUs.** Involve deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent (DDN) people in what you are doing to make sure that your activities are accessible, and you are using the right language.

WORDS TO USE:

Non-disabled

Disabled people

Access requirements

Wheelchair user

Learning disabled

Living with chronic mental health or lived experience of mental health:

- mental health based disability
- mental health needs
- mental health challenges / difficulties
- mental distress

Deaf, deaf, British Sign Language user

Hard of hearing, Deafened

Visually impaired person, blind person or partially sighted person. (NOTE: Broadly the term 'visually impaired' can be used to include all in this group)

Small person, person with restricted growth

Support worker, access worker, personal assistant, PA

AVOID:

Able Bodied, differently abled

Handicapped, cripple, invalid

Special needs, Special Educational Needs (NOTE: this term is still used in school systems. It is also important to note that the DDN community has reclaimed the use of the acronym SEN.)

Confined to wheelchair or wheelchair bound

Stupid, slow, special, moron, dumb

Mental Illness

(NOTE: This is an increasingly unpopular term, though do be aware that many people will describe themselves as having a mental illness.)

Deaf and dumb, mute

Hearing impairment

'The blind'

Midget, Dwarf (though this can depend on personal preference)

Carer (NOTE: The term carer is used by some people where others are uncomfortable with it, so it is useful to ask what terminology the individual uses. If in doubt, we recommend 'support worker' in the first instance.

INTERACTION & COMMUNICATION

This section of the toolkit was created for BAFTA in conjunction with DANC (Disabled Artists Networking Community) in May 2022.

- Always address disabled people in the same way as you talk to everyone else.
- Always **speak directly to the person**, regardless of whether they have an interpreter, support worker or companion with them.
- Equipment such as a wheelchair, assistance dog or walking stick is an **extension of the person**.
- Always ask if you would like to interact with an assistance dog as they may be working.
- Please **don't touch or take control** of someone's equipment (e.g., their wheelchair).
- Do not lean on someone's wheelchair, this is like leaning on someone's shoulder.
- Someone's wheelchair is their personal space. Please be careful not to lean over someone who is a wheelchair user.
- Words can often tie us up in knots and can come across as **unintentionally patronising**. For example, "I find you very inspirational." – the person may well feel uncomfortable with you drawing inspiration from their day-to-day life.

- **There are things people often hear, which don't sit well with them:**
 "Do you get a speeding ticket in that wheelchair?"
 "Don't drink and drive."
 "Aren't you brave?"
 "You speak well for a deaf person"
 "You don't look autistic", or "I couldn't tell you are autistic"
- **Use a normal tone of voice.** Sometimes we inadvertently change our tone of voice when we're talking to someone we're not used to talking to. If you're inexperienced at having conversations with disabled people, this can be daunting at first, as it's the fear of wanting to make sure you get everything right. Just be relaxed and friendly.
- **Sometimes people take longer to communicate information or may communicate it in ways you're not used to** – this needs to be understood. Always ask for clarification if things do not make sense to you, and respect the ways that people choose to communicate.
- **Please don't attempt to speak or finish a sentence for someone.** Allowing space and time is fine. If you have a relaxed approach about it, you will allow the person to also feel at ease.
- **You rarely need to ask someone about their disability, you only need to ask about their access.** Don't worry about being too personal because you're asking nothing personal of the individual, just how you can support their access.
- **When assisting someone to navigate the space to use the toilet, do not make a big announcement** asking people to clear the space. Be **sensitive** to the situation and treat it like you would if you were asking someone to let you get past, e.g., go up to the person/people blocking the space and ask, "are you ok to stand to the side a second while we get past, thank you."

- All staff should be able to sign the following:
“I am sorry, but I cannot use sign language.”
 - It may also be worth your organisation researching into **deaf awareness training** for staff, particularly front of house teams, and learning basic signs. [Signing Works](#) offer this service.
 - You could also look into **VRS – Video Relay Services**. This usually has an annual subscription and includes several minutes of ad hoc BSL interpretation. Learn more about [SignVideo here](#).
-



*DANC in-person event before the pandemic.
Image courtesy Triple C/DANC*

VENUE INFORMATION

Make sure **signage** around the venue is **clear** and in **obvious places**. Signs should use a good **colour contrast** between the background and the lettering. **Be especially clear where the toilets, lift and café are**, as well as any **quiet spaces** – we understand that not every venue will have room for a quiet space, but they are especially important for neurodivergent people and families. Please make sure **all staff are aware where the quiet space is** if you do have one, as people often need to use them in high anxiety/meltdown situations. If you are holding events in your venue, all staff should be able to direct people to the necessary rooms.

The **reception desk and front area** of your space needs to feel **welcoming, open** and be a **safe space** – remember, you do not know the journey that someone may have made to make it into your space, so the aim is to make them feel welcomed. If there are **long desks, lots of staff or no staff** at all, it puts people off entering the space as it raises their anxiety levels. **Reception desks should have a section at a suitable height for wheelchair users**. A **glass partition** can be a barrier for deaf people and people with speech impairments. There should be a **strong colour contrast**, so that the desk stands out to visually impaired people, with a **tactile route** from the entrance to the desk so they can find it.

There should be at least **one member of staff on reception who knows basic BSL**, and where budget allows, there could also be a **screen displaying venue information in BSL or a QR code link**. In May 2022 the Royal West of England Academy (RWA) relaunched in Bristol with a screen at their entrance - read about this in the [case study section](#) of this document.

Have **clear ticket options with different prices in an obvious place** for people to see upon entering. This needs to include concession tickets, and free tickets for support workers being able to accompany someone. People often don't want to ask if these tickets are available as they are embarrassed and feel like they are judged, so **make it clear from the outset**.

Have **stools available for people to take around with them**. These need to be **lightweight, easy to carry, and readily available at the entrance in small venues, or at the beginning of the exhibition in larger venues**. Please make sure **all staff are aware** of the existence of the stools and where they are located.

There should also be **seating at regular intervals** throughout the space for people who **cannot carry a stool** around with them. Ideally this would be **comfortable seating with backrests and armrests attached**.

All **written documents** should use a clear font of at least size 12 point, and ideally 14 point. Other formats should also be available, such as **Easy Read, visual stories and large print label guides**.

WEBSITE INFORMATION

- **Include a visible link on your website to Access Information.** The link to this page should be at the top of each webpage, so that people don't have to search for it.
- In the 'visit' section on your website, have **clear ticket options** with different **prices**, including **concessionary** tickets and **free** tickets for a person's support worker.
- **Information in BSL (British Sign Language) needs to be easy to find on websites.** BSL is a language need, not an access need, and must be accommodated. BSL videos should be obviously signposted or embedded directly on the 'visit' page. **Basic information (location, opening times, ticket prices, etc) in BSL should be a part of all websites.** If budget allows, exhibition videos in BSL can be added over time.

Remember: deaf people will feel much more welcome in your organisation if you implement the above advice. For further advice, you can contact [Jennifer Lauren Gallery and/or TripleC who can connect you to experts in our sector with lived experience.](#)

WEBSITE INFORMATION

People like to **plan their visits in advance**, so it's best to have access / sensory information such as visual maps or visual stories available on your website and social media.

The information should include:

- Detail on how to get to your venue from the car park and local transport links (with photos)
- Detail on **lighting and acoustics** in foyers and gallery spaces
- Detail of the floor layout of each floor of your building (with photos), to include notation of seating, toilets, cafe, etc.
- **BSL tour times**
- **Audio described tours**
Wheelchair / step-free access
- **Relaxed opening hours** (e.g. autism friendly times)
- Availability of **ear defenders** and/or **sensory backpacks** (and where to collect them)
- **Images** of all spaces open to the public
- Any **sound / video pieces** within exhibitions so visitors can make their own decision as to whether the show is suitable for them

Several venues have a 'Visual Story' in place to aid people planning visits in advance.

[See Tate Britain example here.](#)



TATE

Q Search

ART & ARTISTS

EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

PLAN YOUR VISIT

Tate Britain visual story

A step-by-step visual and written guide to help you plan your visit



Entry to the gallery is free – there's no need to book before you visit.

Booking a ticket is recommended for exhibitions but some tickets may be available at the door.

Members do not need to book

Image: screenshot of Tate Britain web page

See sensory maps section in 'access within exhibitions' section further in the toolkit.

- **Be transparent about what access provision is available**, e.g., what parts of your building has step-free access, are there lifts, do you have accessible toilets and/or changing places toilets, what sort of disabled parking is available and where is it located, etc.
- **How information is presented really makes a difference** to deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent (DDN) people. Do not use a small font size. White backgrounds with black text can be difficult for people with dyslexia – soft pastel shades make better backgrounds.
- **Have good signposting on the website** and make it **easy to navigate** and book tickets and events etc.
- **Use 'alt text' on your website and social media images** for visually impaired audiences.

Something to consider: Digital spaces can sometimes become over stylised and therefore inaccessible in a multitude of ways to everyone, not just DDN people.

Make design choices that make information and art accessible to a wide range of people. Bear in mind the principles of clarity and leaving space around things and allow for contrast.

You can still have things looking good, so you don't have to compromise your creative vision. This becomes a creative challenge for your organisation to make visuals both accessible and aesthetic.

The Science Museum's website is a good example of information presented in a clear way with links to other resources that may be of use to their visitors.

[Visit their website here](#)

The museum is quieter from mid-afternoon on week days in term time.

Queues may form at the entrance to the museum. If this presents a barrier, please approach a member of staff who will be able to grant you priority entry.

To help familiarise yourself with the museum and galleries ahead of your visit, you can find a series of Gallery Introduction videos on our [Learning page](#). You can also explore [our museum collection online](#) or view a [360 tour of our galleries](#).

We have also created a [visual story](#) and [sensory map](#) to help you plan your visit to the museum.

Our multi-faith room, located on Level 2 next to our Information Age gallery, will also be open should you require a quiet space. Please ask a member for staff for more information during your visit.

Ear defenders are available at the Information and Tickets desk (Level 0), IMAX Box Office (Level 0) and Wonderlab ticket desk (Level 3).

Image: screenshot of The Science Museum's website

ACCESS INFORMATION

Access should be non-negotiable.

Galleries and museums need to think about how access gets embedded all the way through a project – be proactive and not reactive. Access needs are more than just offering ramps and safe spaces, and they will change for every person – it is not one size fits all.

Remember: You don't need to know someone's medical condition, just their access requirements, to support them.

Budgeting from the beginning:

- Build access budgets into every project from the start.
- Every individual's circumstance will be different, but it is essential that if the artist requires any form of support (either from support workers, home support, and/or facilitator support from studios), these costs must be factored into the access costs. Depending on the artist and their level of needs and understanding, if they lack capacity to make decisions about their support for themselves, always speak to their support network and make sure everyone is part of the conversation – this may include family members and/or support studio staff.
- Always add access costs into any funding applications so it becomes a pot to be used to support artists and/or make events and exhibitions accessible and more inclusive for wider audiences. Highlighting these additional costs will help funders see the importance of the argument and understand the costs involved.

- Set up in-house access audit groups of DDN people to advise on the accessibility of the building, marketing, interpretation materials, etc. This group must be paid fairly for their time. A group like this will also help stop the pressure being put onto one staff member for EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion). Another great example is [Liverpool Biennial's Critical Friends Group](#).
- Partner with organisations who have more experience working with DDN artists to help your organisation, e.g., [Disability Arts Online \(DAO\)](#) and [Triple C/DANC](#). Any consultancy work needs to be paid for fairly – look at [Artists Union England](#) for rates of pay.
- Disability Arts Online also has good, clear information on '[Access to Work](#)' and how it works both for individual artists and for organisations to support those artists. It is worth looking at applying to Access to Work for access funding but needs to be done well in advance of projects beginning as it takes up to 9-12 months to put in place.
- Employ an access co-ordinator who is a DDN person.

ACCESS INFORMATION FOR CALLOUTS

[See the full section on Callouts.](#)

..... A general offer for access support to help with applications should be sent out with the callout information, e.g., to include a name, telephone number and email address, and a brief line about how long it may take a staff member to respond. You should also include a **photo of yourself** as this makes many individuals feel more comfortable. This support might include you helping them to fill out the form online, or recording their answers in **other formats**, like audio.

..... People need to know if there is **financial support available** if they need someone to help them to write the application, e.g. a support worker, who understands and communicates well with them already. This needs to be **factored** in from the start and should not be expected to be taken from artist budgets.

..... DDN artists may need financial support to do the work/take part in the activity/travel to the activity. Access Riders can be put in place once an artist has been selected, so they are not sharing too much personal information unnecessarily at application stage.
[See the section on Access Riders.](#)

..... It is not a level playing field if the callout is not also available in **accessible formats**, to include Easy Read documents and BSL (British Sign Language) interpreted videos. Make sure written text is in plain English as well.

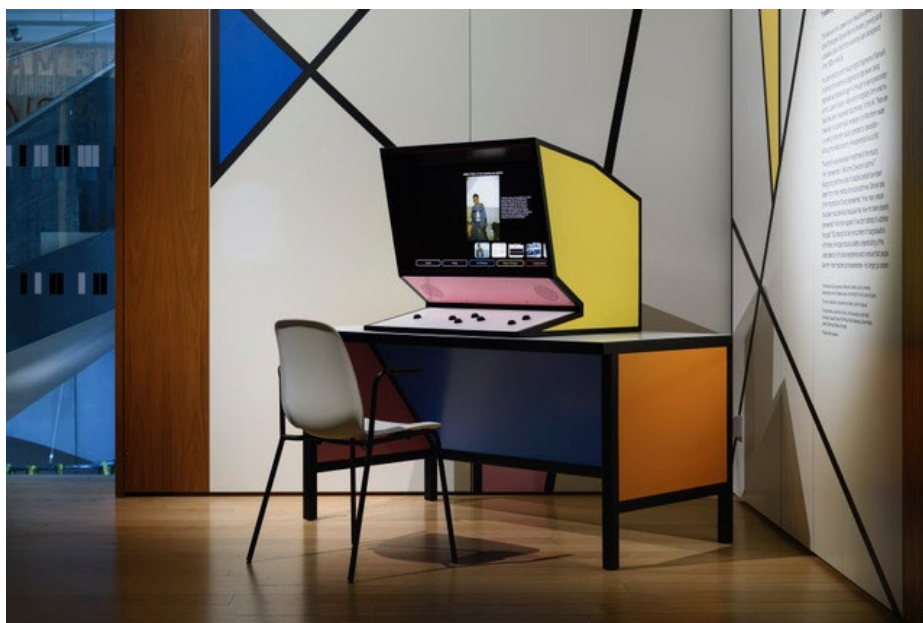
..... Always offer different options for applying to callouts, and other opportunities, like video and audio responses. This needs to include extra details including the size of the files, and how they can be sent to you, e.g. WeTransfer.

“Access Denied: Will Art Ever Learn to Embrace Disability?”

Siobhán Forshaw wrote a piece in 2021 for Elephant Magazine, looking at the art world’s woeful record on disabled inclusion and the many ways it can be improved. [Read it here.](#)

Remember: Arts Council England have access budgets available for artists – so this can always be added to any National Lottery Project Grant applications, on top of the amount requested, to support any DDN artists you will be directly working with.

This means if you are applying for up to £30,000, any access budget does not get included in that amount, so if it goes over £30,000 with access costs, it will still be assessed as if it is under £30,000.



Artwork by Christopher Samuel: 'The Archive of an Unseen', Wellcome Collection, 2022.

'The Archive of An Unseen' tells the story of Christopher Samuel's childhood, displayed in a custom-built Microform reader which visitors can explore. It contains photographs, medical documents, videos, audio clips and archival items to build an honest narrative of what it was like growing up as a Black, disabled, working class child from a single parent household in the 1980s and 1990s in the UK.

EXHIBITIONS

It is vital to make exhibitions (and the surrounding communications) more accessible in all arts venues. Small changes can make a huge difference. During workshop sessions for the Plus Tate network led by TripleC/ DANC and the Jennifer Lauren Gallery, we established how having an organisation that is clearly accessible would encourage more DDN artists and audiences to feel more comfortable working with or visiting you.

LAYOUT CONSIDERATIONS

Consider:

- Hanging heights
- Space around 3D structures
- Label placement
- Seating, to include space for wheelchairs
- Directional flow of exhibition

Shape Arts have created a free resource guide:

[How to put on an accessible exhibition](#)

Tip: We have developed an exhibition checklist template that you can adapt for your venue to ensure access needs are met throughout your venue. [See checklist on p.97 of this Toolkit](#)

You could also set up an **access audit group** in your organisation as mentioned previously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Hanging height:** 135cm for the centre line of a piece. With very large works hanging around smaller works, the centre line may make the large work too high. These larger works would be best hung by eye in relation to the works around them (making the centre line lower).
- **Large wall text panels:** Avoid placing this in a doorway and/or blocking the entrance to the exhibition. When people stop to read it, it makes the space inaccessible for anyone else wanting to get through. Instead, put it on the opposite side of the room where it will not block passages for people to move around in.
- **Labels (walls):** Clearly visible in relation to the work and written in a large, clear font at a reasonable hanging height. Try to keep the label in the same place in relation to each work where possible (e.g. to the left, 10cm from the bottom corner.) If a work is placed in the centre of the room, make sure the label is in the most obvious place and indicates clearly which work is being referenced; 'This work is placed in the centre of the room.'
- **Labels (accessible information):** If a label has film/audio information included, ensure the length of the piece is given. Make sure the label is in an accessible font size of at least 12pt.
- **Labels (large print):** Be sure to have large print labels available in exhibition spaces, along with transcripts for screen works (either within the space or accessed via QR codes). Long panels of wall text should also be available in large print in the space or via QR code.
- **Labels (plinths):** Place on the side of a plinth, not flat on the top. If the label must be on top, ensure that the label is at an angle and viewable to those using mobility equipment.

- **Plinths:** 80-100cm as a maximum height. (If the work is particularly tall, the plinth should be lower.) It may help to outline the area around a plinth with tactile strips to illustrate their location non-visually.
- **Plinth placement:** When you are placing plinths or large floor-standing sculptures in a space, allow 1.3m between every object and the walls, to allow for people who may be using mobility equipment to move around easily and safely. Always remember to consider the turning circle of an electric wheelchair. Tate Access Guidelines for staff recommend 1.8m of space for turning circumference.
- **Screens:** Please consider leaving space for mobility equipment in front of these too. Do not have a bench blocking the whole view – make sure it is to one side, to allow space for mobility equipment to also have the same view of the screen as anyone else would. If the audio is to be accessed via headphones, make sure more than one pair is available so multiple people can enjoy it at the same time.
- **Seating:** Please make sure seating is placed around exhibition spaces, to allow all visitors to rest, including stools that can be carried around. The seating ideally needs to be comfortable with back and armrest supports, rather than the long hard benches we are used to seeing, recently nicknamed “gallery bricks.” Seating also needs to be in place near audio/video pieces to allow people to sit where needed, and within reach if headphones need to be worn. As mentioned above about screens, please bear in mind space for mobility equipment in these instances too.
- **Route:** Make sure the exhibition route is clear with obvious signage if it is intended to be viewed in a specific order.

Tip: Discuss the exhibition layout with DDN artists when installing their work. They may have set ideas as to how they wish the work to be viewed.

Something to consider: How do you work with non-disabled staff in your organisation and/or non-disabled artists, who feel that accessibility damages the aesthetic or visual identity of the/their work?

This is an attitudinal barrier that need to be challenged. You must have the challenging conversations, as some adjustments can always be made to make things more accessible that will not visually affect artworks and/or installations. When it comes to creative decisions, there must be creative solutions. If your organisation is having these conversations, it makes DDN audiences more likely to visit and shows them that your organisation is part of making change happen.



Installation photograph of *To all the Kings who have no Crowns* at Carl Freedman Gallery in Margate, 2022.

Photograph courtesy Carl Freedman Gallery. This exhibition featured 17 disabled and self-taught international artists and was curated by Jennifer Gilbert of the Jennifer Lauren Gallery.

ACCESS

WITHIN EXHIBITIONS

We encourage staff in visual arts spaces to improve their understanding of how these spaces can overwhelm DDN artists, audiences and their families. One suggestion would be for your organisation to appoint an access lead, who can help shape a sensory strategy for the whole team.

Programme relaxed opening hours specifically for neurodivergent people, where you remove any sensory stimulus that may be overpowering for a short time, e.g., dimming lights, looking at the volume of things (including hand dryers in toilets), temporarily switching off fans in gallery spaces, considering strong smells, etc.



British Museum Visit. Photograph courtesy Claire Madge of Autism in Museums. Autism in Museums is an initiative to raise awareness of accessibility for all in museums and cultural venues. Run by Claire Madge, it supports, promotes and advocates for inclusion in everything you do.

Make sure the wording is clear on your website and/or marketing outputs for these sessions on exactly who they are aimed at/useful for, otherwise they miss their purpose and attract the wrong audience. For relaxed openings, several venues already have in place sensory items in boxes or on chairs next to artworks that can be handled, to allow for a fuller experience.

Do not always programme relaxed viewings as early bird slots, as it can be challenging for neurodivergent individuals/family members to travel to your venue and early bird offers are not necessarily accessible. Equally, weekday slots are not always a good idea as many neurodivergent audience members may be at school or at work. An early evening and one weekend slot per exhibition would be advisable.

[Autism in Museums](#) is a great place to look for more information and help on this. You can also list your openings on their events page which is well used.



Sensory items at the Igshaan Adams relaxed viewing at the Hayward Gallery. The Hayward implements these sensory boxes for each of their shows and has tours available should neurodivergent audiences feel they could take part. Photograph courtesy Lisha Rooney.

//

We would not only be missing out on art or a chance to experience cultural events if it were not for relaxed openings, but we'd be missing out on life. We look to art to assist with education, communication, emotional regulation, and a chance to explore humanity. This is often impossible in a crowded environment with multiple sensory distractions and, perhaps more significantly, fellow visitors and staff who do not understand disabilities and do not appreciate our interpretations. And as disabilities can affect entire families, relaxed openings serve as welcomes for parents, carers, and siblings, helping everyone to feel more comfortable in a world which often doesn't.

//

Lisha Rooney, Parent of autistic child (Co-Creator of [What Do](#))

RECOMMENDATIONS

QR codes: Provide information about the exhibition that can be accessed on phones/tablets. Locate outside the exhibition entrance so that they can be looked at in people's own time and pace. BSL information can be accessed via QR codes too outside of exhibition entrances, with clear signage to make deaf people aware of this information.



Audio descriptions: Ideally these would also be accessed via phones/tablets for free to enable more people to enjoy them. Avoid lengthy sign-up processes for people to be able to access these. Have information recorded for every work but have the option for people to choose what they want to listen to. QR codes could also be placed on raised squares next to each work, always in the same place so visually impaired people know where to locate them.

Subtitles on films: This is essential and must be in place to ensure access for people. Transcripts should be available for all films too – either printed or accessed via QR codes through the nearby label.

BSL videos: Have a screen within the exhibition space with a BSL video on explaining the exhibition, to be captioned as often deaf or hard of hearing people will need to see both to fully understand it.

BSL tours: It would be ideal to offer these in person and lead by a deaf individual.

Audio description tours: Provide tours during the exhibition for blind and visually impaired visitors to learn about several key works within the exhibition, often followed by tea/coffee to allow for further discussion with these groups.

Braille: Consider having braille printed for the main larger panels of text within your exhibitions, into one booklet. The Arthouse Wakefield offers this service, with quick turnaround times.

Note: Be aware that not all visitors will have the technology and/or knowledge on how to use QR codes. Ensure staff are willing and able to assist as needed.

Touch boxes: Are you able to create a touch/sample box or tactile wall panels, so that audiences can feel some of the key materials used by artists in the exhibitions? All staff, volunteers and invigilators would need to be made aware of this.



Touch table and wall-based touch piece in the 'LOOK EVERYWHERE' exhibition, Philadelphia, 2025. Photo by Constance Mensh

Sensory information and visual stories: Provide this in advance on websites for audiences considering visiting to enable them to plan ahead. Consider sounds, temperature changes, lighting, floor texture changes, etc. Describe the properties of a space, e.g., toilets with loud hand dryers, the large atrium becoming acoustically challenging when busy, sounds that carry and echo, the open staircase that looks out across several levels of the building and may cause problems with balance. If you feel you need extra advice around this, consult with DDN artists and/or disability arts organisations.

Sensory/visual maps: These could be printed copies (or perhaps a few laminated copies at the exhibition entrance) and they should also be on the website. Consider: floor levels, sounds, lighting, age suitability etc. Examples include the 2022 [Sensory map from Science Museum \(London\)](#) and the [Visual Story Guide for BALTIC](#). We have also included visuals from Anna Farley's Visual Map for the 2021 Turner Prize at the Herbert Art Gallery on the next page.

Review exhibitions and their feedback: Have debriefs at the end of each exhibition and review any feedback received, including from social media and emails. What can you alter and amend ahead of the next install? It's good practice also to review Government legislation and guidelines in this area.

Create an app: If budget allows, visually impaired audiences would like you to create an app that allows all audiences to navigate your space. Make sure this app is compatible with the systems visually impaired people use on their phones and tablets.

Below is a crop of the new 'Sensory Map' from the Science Museum in London. [Visit their website to see the whole map.](#)

SENSORY MAP

① This map represents an average sensory experience but this may vary at the time of your visit.

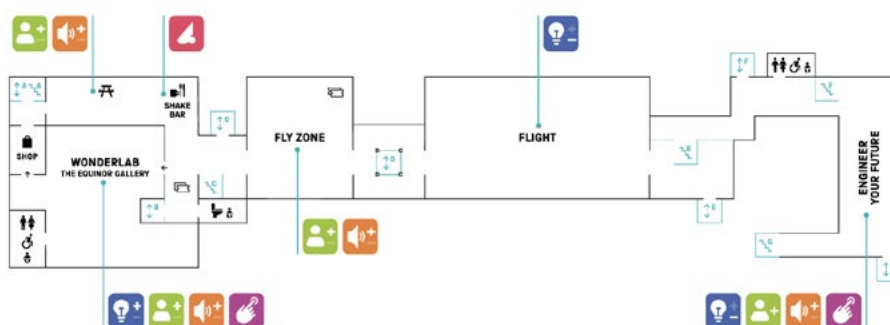
LEVEL

SENSORY HIGHLIGHTS

3

Engineer Your Future
Test your problem-solving and team-working skills by playing games in this interactive gallery.

Wonderlab
The Equinor Gallery
See lightning strike before your eyes and much more in this fascinating interactive gallery. Demonstrations in this gallery tend to be noisy and bright.



Sensory Map



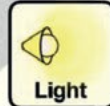
Directions



Seat



Film / Video



Light



Sound



Film / video
Projection



Visual Disturbances

Studio space
MAY VARY

activity
tables
chairs
noise
light



Autistic artist Anna Farley co-designed a 'Visual Map' for the 2021 Turner Prize exhibition at The Herbert in Coventry. This included sensory map information for each collective, and what sort of things to expect in each space, with clear information. Here is one page from the Project Art Works Collective section of the document. Please [reach out to Anna directly](#) if you'd like to discuss the creation of sensory maps for your organisation.

ARTWORKS AND ARTISTS

'Art is made by all people. Curators should not worry so much about the way they present work to audiences. What matters is the work they are curating, and they need to have more open minds.'

– Yinka Shonibare, Artist

- **Diversifying artworks on display** is a huge topic for our organisations. How can we broaden our horizons and show new works from previously unseen artists? Do they always need to be academically and/or art school trained?
- **DDN artists can be involved in all exhibitions** – not just DDN-focused or community project exhibitions.
- **Avoid tick-boxing** and consistently relegating DDN artists to Learning/Community spaces instead of more formalised exhibition spaces.
- DDN artists rarely see themselves represented on the walls hanging in galleries. For many of you reading this, you have an exciting opportunity to change this fact.

- Curators – we encourage you to plan in visits to DDN artists’ studios, and research local disability art studios / progressive art studios / disability art groups to visit. Volunteers can help with research for this, and there is a list of the major disability art studios in the UK at the [end of this toolkit](#). However, there are many DDN artists who are not supported by studios and/or find networking difficult, so there is still much work to be done in building relationships with informal networks of DDN artists, including through disability arts organisations and their networks.

Neuk Collective have set up a membership directory of neurodivergent artists in Scotland that you can access [here](#).

- There is a real need for inclusive and relaxed events both online and in person. These events should give space for DDN artists to learn more about accessing the art world, meet and talk with curators and directors, and platform their voices. Networking in formal situations can often create anxiety, and we can all do more to be more welcoming to everyone. It may be useful to consult with DDN artists ahead of more formal events to ensure you have considered and implemented suitable ways to programme and make them accessible.
 - It’s important to remember that there are DDN artists who create work solely about disability. Much of this work is featured in [NDACA \(National Disability Arts Collection and Archive\)](#). There are also disabled artists who make art with no relevance to disability culture or their own personal disability. These are two very different things, not to be confused. Exhibitions don’t always have to show DDN artists’ lived experiences, they should just be about showing the work of DDN artists broadly.
-



“The criteria seems to be whether you have been to art school or not. It shouldn’t be whether you have been educated in art, but about the creative side and the imagination that the individual has – it should be more about this.”

– Thompson Hall, Artist

Thompson Hall. Photo courtesy ActionSpace



Installation photograph of the 2021 exhibition by Sharif Persaud, Have You Ever Had?, at Autograph in London. Placing himself at the centre of his work, Sharif Persaud explores identity through his experience of contemporary life and autism. ‘Have You Ever Had’ was the culmination of the UK-wide EXPLORERS Project, highlighting the extraordinary contribution neurodivergent people make to art and culture.

■ Here is an example of mixed group project and exhibition:

[NUNO \(Neither Use Nor Ornament\)](#) by Sonia Boué. No hierarchy was present, with the project initiator being neurodivergent, and the group involved being a mix of disabled and non-disabled artists. A blended approach was used where needs were listened to and adjustments were made accordingly as the project progressed, significantly altering the parameters of the project.



Performance piece by artist Naomi Morris, as part of NUNO, 2019. Photograph by Stu Allsopp.

[NUNO](#) brought together two seemingly very different artist networks on a level playing field, with an ambitious group show and event programme. One group identified as autistic, the other group did not.

EXHIBITION PRESS

It is extremely rare for exhibitions about or including deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent (DDN) artists to be written about within the press and/or critiqued. If they are, they are often framed in negative ways. Ableism needs to be called out.

Consider: How might your venue could go about challenging/commissioning writers to write about this work? Could new writers with lived experience be commissioned to write pieces?

Places like [Disability Arts Online](#) is a good source to find writers who are equipped to critique and write informed text on/for shows. An example of this would be artist Sonia Boué's sensory reflection on the Sonia Boyce exhibition at MIMA that you can [read here in PDF format](#).

In August 2023, Cathy Reay wrote a [5-star review](#) of 'differently various' at the Barbican for the Guardian. Not only did this review speak highly of the exhibition from brain injury survivors from Headway East London, but it also calls out the lack of access still within exhibitions in the UK.

Critic Eddy Frankel who writes independently for different arts based papers and publications has been doing his research recently and writing thoughtful, carefully considered pieces about Nnena Kalu being nominated and then winning the Turner Prize. The nomination piece can be read in the Guardian [here](#). The winning piece can be read in Artnet news [here](#).

Please be conscious of the language used when writing about artists, their works, and exhibitions, always speak to the artist/supported studio staff/support staff where possible about this, and avoid using art jargon. If terms must be used, make sure explanations are given in plain English.

RELATED EXHIBITION EVENTS

We recommend programming online and hybrid events for people unable to travel for health/medical reasons. Covid showed us that this is possible. Ideally, online events should also include audio description, captioning and BSL (British Sign Language) interpretation.

Also remember that for panel discussions/events, where possible, offer panel members the opportunity to participate digitally, if this is best suited to their needs and anxiety levels. This has worked well for 'Late at Tate' events from 2022 onwards and allowed more voices to be heard who were not able to travel to present in-person.

CURATOR TOURS

During Covid, many organisations offered online events/tours and there has been a sudden decline in these. We would strongly encourage organisations to run more – particularly curator tours with closed captioning and BSL. Highlight these events via social media and newsletters to ensure they are seen by people who cannot visit your venue. These tours are not just suitable for DDN people, but anyone unable to travel to your exhibition, e.g. if they don't live locally.

AUDIO DESCRIPTIONS TOURS

Tours with audio description can be offered online and/or in person, with several artworks chosen that cover a range of different styles/ mediums. chosen that cover a range of different works. Not all works have to be covered in these tours as this will be too much information and be too long in length. A touch/sample box of materials can also be provided where possible. One hour long is a good length of time. These could be followed by tea/coffee and further chance for discussion.

BSL (BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE) TOURS

BSL tours are a fantastic opportunity for deaf artists and BSL signers, who have lived experience and understanding of deaf culture to be employed within your organisations. We recommend programming two BSL tours per exhibition, and for at least one of them to be at a weekend. Advertise these via your website and social media, using a short video of the BSL tour guide. You should employ a deaf person as opposed to a hearing person for this role.

After the tour, we recommend up to one hour for further discussion and/or networking in a comfortable environment. BSL tours could also be followed by creative workshops to allow for a full immersive experience while in the venue.

Examples of relevant groups to share with online via Facebook include DVA UK (Deaf Visual Artists UK) and Deaf Tours & BSL Tours UK. The BSL tour guide can also share the events with their own networks.



Photo: Deaf artist Chisato Minamimura leading a BSL (British Sign Language) tour of *To all the Kings who have no Crowns* at Carl Freedman Gallery in Margate, 2022.

WORKSHOPS

Advertising - Give clear information about when, where, what, and with who. If the workshop is to be held in a specific room, this also needs to be stated.

Access - Specify the access that you are providing when sharing workshop news. You can then give space for those booking on to share any further access requirements. It is good practice to pencil BSL interpreters for your dates so that you are not looking for them last minute, as BSL interpreters often get booked months in advance.

Clarity - Make pricing structures clear, e.g., different prices for people in employment or on benefits/unemployed, etc.

An example of a successful DDN-led workshop is BSL signer and artist Christopher Sacre, who works with hearing artists to facilitate sessions at the Tate and British Museum. BSL is used as well as spoken English.



Deaf artist, and contributor of this toolkit, Christopher Sacre leading a creative workshop. Photography by Ben Boardman

OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

'If you don't remove the barriers, people won't apply.'

– Mike Layward, DASH Arts former Director.

CALLOUTS

- Language and terminology should be clear, accessible, and open. Avoid jargon and unnecessary words.
- Callouts should be available in more than one format to ensure equality and equity of access for all. Examples of various formats are:

Easy Read – please ensure you are clear with what constitutes an Easy Read document before you action it. Easy Read has writing in short, simple sentences without any hard words or jargon. Easy Read also uses clear, easy to understand pictures that support these words. [PDF from Change People for more information here.](#) Refer to organisations like [Photosymbols](#) who offer Easy Read training online for staff.

BSL (British Sign language) format - including captions.

Audio reading - callouts and accompanying forms and information should be accessible to visually impaired people who use screen readers (i.e. in Word and/ PDF format).

- Programme Q&A sessions for callouts, so that you can help many people together at once. Make sure they are programmed about halfway through the callout to give people time to see the Q&A event, but also to allow them time to apply afterwards. Give a brief overview at the start, and keep it focused on the Q&A, and often you'll be answering a question that many people want to know the answer to.

- It is encouraging to directly invite DDN artists to apply in callouts with a line such as 'we welcome applications from deaf, disabled, neurodivergent and/or learning disabled artists'. It's vital to ensure that you have processes and knowledge in place to support DDN artists if they are shortlisted, and then selected. Another recent callout wrote the following:

"We are committed to encouraging diversity and intersectionality in the arts and we actively encourage proposals from artists from under-represented communities, including people who experience racism, identify as working class, have disabilities, are from the LGBTQ+ community, are care experienced or are discriminated against. We encourage you to apply for this opportunity no matter what your age, caring responsibilities, disability, gender, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation."

Share opportunities with disability arts organisations to reach these artists, such as:

DANC (Disability Artists' Networking Community)

Send an email to: triplecmanchester@gmail.com

Disability Arts Online

List on their website/social media [here](#)

DASH Arts

Send an email to: info@dasharts.org.uk

Artsadmin

List it on [Artsadmin Anchor newsletter](#)

Shape Arts

Send an email to: info@shapearts.org.uk

- **Increase deadlines** – often 2-3 weeks is not enough for artists to complete an application. We would recommend 5-6 weeks, with consideration that many DDN artists only get support once a week to help with their art practice (if they are funded by Access to Work) and they may already have things scheduled in the 2–3-week period of a callout.
- **Access budgets can help people with applications.** Some DDN artists need support from someone else in understanding and writing an application, so a small budget to pay those costs will ensure equal access. If this simply isn't possible, have a named person and their email address/phone number/text message number so that DDN artists can get support. Be clear if there may be a delay before they hear back from someone. Have an image of the person so that people know who they will be contacting.
- If an **open call has a fee** you need to be clear and transparent about this. Is there any way you can reorganise budgets to allow it to be free? If not, you need to be clear to everyone why there is a fee and what it is being used for. For example, Exeter Phoenix had a £10 fee for 4 submissions to their 2024 Open callout with the following explanation:

'Why do we charge a fee?

We understand that fees are a barrier to many artists participating in opportunities and in 2022 we reduced our entry fee from £20, which includes up to 4x artworks per entry. The fee helps us to cover some of the extra administration costs of running the Open to make it the best exhibition we can possibly achieve in a time of reduced core funding. Although we receive some financial support from Arts Council England (through the National Lottery), Exeter Phoenix still needs to cover more than 85% of our overall running costs. We achieve this through a mixture of ticket sales, donations, sponsorship and income from hospitality & hires. Our gallery spaces are free to access for all and, across our various programmes, we strive to provide a broad range of high-quality, accessible opportunities for artists to grow and develop their practice.'

- You could have someone who has set aside bookable 30-minute time slots for support.
- Repetition and clear information can be key to successfully connecting and working with DDN artists.
- If an access budget is available on selection, this needs to be included in the callout, so that DDN artists do not apply to something that would not be suitable for their needs. If there is no access budget available, many DDN artists will not have the funds to participate successfully and with the right support in place for the opportunity.

Tip: If possible, pay for targeted marketing through social media to reach DDN artists.

- If you are not planning to send feedback on applications, this needs to be clearly written in the callout information. Artists sometimes require feedback so they can improve specific areas of their working practice, so if you can offer feedback, let people know. If you give feedback, ensure it is meaningful and useful.
- Always acknowledge when you have received an application. It helps to put people's minds at rest.
- Be clear when people will hear an outcome, and if this changes, make sure that everyone is notified immediately of the change.

Something to implement: What training might your teams need to work with DDN artists successfully, ensuring the artists are supported throughout?

TripleC At Manchester Art Fair 2022 – Artist Call Out – Deadline 25 Sept



Easy Read Document

— TripleC at Manchester Art Fair 2022 —

Easy read and BSL versions of this information are also available above.

We have some exciting news! TripleC will be having a booth at Manchester Art Fair this November. This will be our first appearance at the Fair and is another step towards growing our visual arts strand and being able to showcase deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent artists to a wider audience.

- This opportunity is open to UK based deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent visual artists.
 - The work needs to be able to be hung on a wall, so please bear that in mind before submitting things for selection – this can include drawing, painting, canvases, textile-based works, digital works, and photography.

As well as sharing more about our work, we will be sharing four artists' work on the TripleC booth, with a few pieces each. Please see below for information on how to apply to be one of our showcased artists. The Art Fair dates are 4–6 November 2022.

Example: A 2022 Triple C/ DANC callout for Manchester Art Fair, where the BSL and Easy Read documents are placed clearly at the top, and the information is laid out with bullet points. [You can see the full callout information here.](#)

“

With my residency at Autograph in London, things were different, as they saw me as an artist-in-residence, and not as an artist with a disability doing a residency. This seemed to make our relationship a lot easier.

Thompson Hall, Artist

”

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN WRITING CALLOUTS AND ANNOUNCING RESIDENCY OPPORTUNITIES:

Be aware that DDN artists may need more **rest**, more **time** between **communications** and often, someone to **travel** with them for support.

Be **open** and **welcoming** towards DDN artists.

Understand the inequalities that often exist in current structures.

Mention that artists are **responsible for paying their own tax and national insurance**, and **offer reassurance, support, and advice** in this area, if needed.

Be mindful that some **artists' benefits** (e.g., Employment Support Allowance) **can be affected/stopped** by payments, so mention that payments can be made flexibly, dependent on the artists' individual situation – see the [Payments to Artists](#) section of this toolkit for more information.

One option is to **split callout responses into two stages**. The first is an **'Expression of Interest'** which is shorter and takes less time for artists to complete. After a selection process, the second strand could then **ask more questions** with space for longer answers.

Is there scope for artists you are interested in working with creating their own residency? Could a callout be to co-create a new kind of residency with your organisation? For instance, an artist residency suited to the needs of neurodivergent artists, perhaps solely digital to remove social anxieties and potentially triggering situations that some may face, like lots of in-person collaborations.

REJECTIONS/NON-SELECTIONS

Consider the **wording** of rejection messages to ensure your organisation **does not cause hurt or harm** to DDN artists. Many artists report feeling unworthy following rejections which have taken a toll on their mental health. An example to **consider avoiding** is *'the quality of applications was very high, but sadly you were not selected'* or similar, as **language** can be taken very **literally**. This has **often** caused artists to feel as though **their work** is not of high **quality**.

Think about writing things like, "We understand that this news may be disappointing. Please know that this decision is not a reflection on your talent, creativity, or the value of your work."

Be **clear** in callouts when the artist **should expect** a response and notify artists if this changes.

It is **stressful** for all artists, **particularly neurodivergent artists**, to be told that they will be **notified** on a **certain date** and then not **hear** anything. This is common and poor practice for **supporting** mental health. If there is a delay, **let people know**.

CALLOUT EXAMPLES

Rise – [A Channel 4 Production Mentoring Initiative](#)

For this callout, the information was available in text, audio, BSL and Easy Read formats. The information was clearly laid out with spacing, and the use of bold font and other colours to highlight information, with the application form following this.

Jerwood/FVU Awards 2022

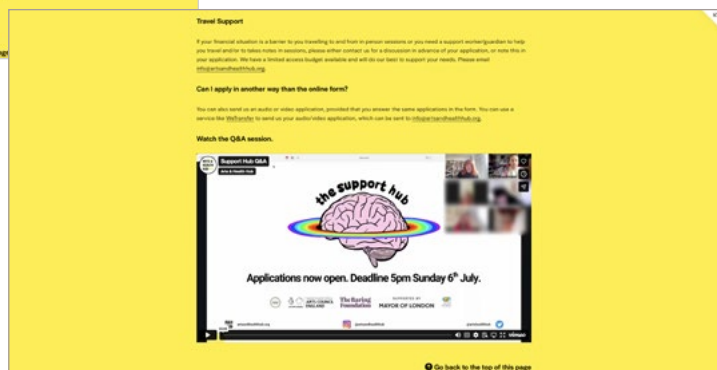
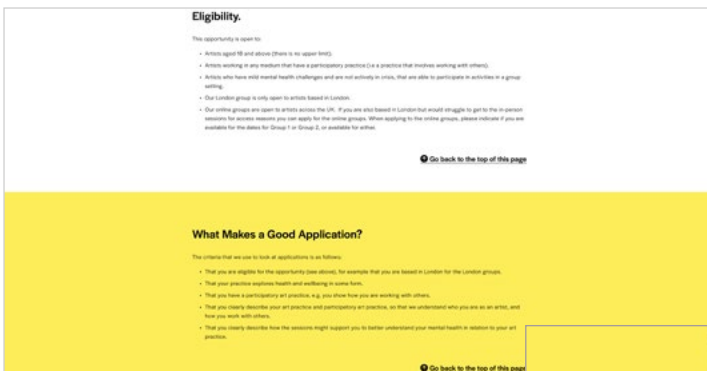
This callout encouraged under-represented groups to apply, had a £200 access fee to anyone who may have needed support to apply, gave different options of submitting the application like in audio or video, and gave a breakdown of all the questions that would appear in the contract and their word counts.

Unlimited – [Open Awards 2023](#)

For this callout, the information was available in standard format, BSL and Easy Read formats, large print and audio formats. An FAQ guide was given too.

Arts & Health Hub ‘Support Hub’ programme

A series of screenshots here show how the Arts & Health Hub structured their callout information in clear sections with bulleted points, with Easy Read guides, plain English and anything needing further explanation was provided in simple terms. A contents list was given to allow you to jump between sections for ease. An online Q&A session was held for artists and uploaded to the website after for those unable to make it.



INTERVIEWS

The interview process is a stressful experience for anyone. We have listed a few suggestions to make it **less anxiety-inducing and stressful** for DDN artists. The advice below can be applied to interviews for any role in your organisation.

Allow enough **time** between **notifying** the artists for interview and the interview itself, for people to arrange support, travel, have rest periods and mentally prepare for the interview. This will enable them to be at their best. At least a week's notice is needed, even with online interviews. If the artist has far to travel, then please **allow online interviews**. This may be less stressful as the artist can be in a **safe space** where they feel comfortable. A studio/safe space visit is a good example of a **more relaxed approach** to 'interviewing,' instead of asking questions in a formal setting. If there is scope to have an alternative process to an interview for a neurodivergent applicant, do consider it.

Make sure you ask artists for their **access requirements** for the interviews **ahead of time**. Access provision like BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters and accessible rooms need to be booked in advance, where needed.

Questions should be **sent in advance** to allow time to prepare. Often DDN artists need time to properly interpret questions fully to be able to answer them to the best of their ability, so having the **extra time** to prepare is **essential**. If you cannot send exact questions, do give an indication of the subject areas which will be covered. Make sure timings are clear, so that all artists know approximately how long the interview process will take.

Artists who are BSL users might like to use an interpreter who they **know well** and have a good rapport with. If this is not possible then they may like to meet the interpreter beforehand (this could be online). BSL users must **trust** the person speaking on their behalf and want to know they will be saying the correct things – so organisations either need to pay for the interpreter the artist knows well, or give them extra time beforehand with a new interpreter. Make sure the interpreter has the questions in advance too, so that they can prepare.

'Don't make the assumption that if you can do something, everyone else should be able to as well.'

–Ashokkumar D Mistry, Artist

ARTIST CONTRACTS

Once artists have been recruited, **artist contracts** should be put in place, no matter how big or small the project. This is so that **everyone** involved is clear on roles, access, timelines, expectations, payment, and credit lines.

Key things to consider

- Please make the contract as **simple as possible**, use bullet points, and do not use any jargon or complicated words. If you are using a word that you think may not be understood, it will need an explanation.
- **Alter the contract** depending on the work you are doing with the artists, so that they do not spend time giving you unnecessary information.
- You will encounter DDN artists with **different support needs** and levels of experience. Offer to go through the contract with artists in person/ over zoom/over the phone so that things can be explained and so that you can fill it out with them. Some may say no, but it is always worth asking.
- If you need a contract to be **signed**, it is often more accessible to post contracts. Send along **two copies**, telling them to keep a copy for their reference. Be mindful that anything you can do to make the admin smooth for DDN artists, is invaluable. Check for their preference.
- If working with a **supported studio / progressive art studio / disability art group artist**, it may be best to have the contract in place with the supported studio on behalf of the artist, so that everything is **clear**, and the studio can go through it more thoroughly with the artist or create a more suitable way for them to understand the **key points**. Always check with all involved what would be the best solution. Doing this may make the DDN artist less anxious that they may sign something they do not fully understand or something key is missing. The contract does need to be signed by someone who has the mental capacity to understand what they are signing for - please bear this in mind.

CONTRACT DOCUMENT MADE SIMPLE

Begin with your details:

- **Your contact details** – name, pronouns, email, telephone, and address of the venue where you work.
 - **What the contract is for**, e.g., title of exhibition, workshop, etc.
 - **Put the date** the contract starts and when it will end.
 - Say **how to get in touch** if anything needs to change at any time, from either side.
 - The **full fee**, and how much is in the **access budget**.
-

Then ask the following information for the artist:

- Their **name, address, telephone number and email address** (if they have one, or someone else's who supports them if not).
- Their **pronouns** (give an example here, e.g., she/her), and **preferred name**.
- How they **would like to be known** as an artist, e.g., 'neurodivergent artist' or just 'artist', etc.
- The **best way for you to contact them** – e.g., tick box; email, phone, letter.
- If they have a **support worker/family member/someone else** that they would like to be copied into correspondence and their details
- If they have an **Access Rider**. (Include a brief description of what an access rider is.) The contract needs to explicitly state that the access requirements in the Access Rider will be met.
[See the section on Access Riders in this toolkit.](#)

The next part will differ depending on what you are doing with the artist, how long you are working with them, and the type of working relationship you will be having with them:

- You need to **outline your responsibilities**, e.g., insurance of works, covering courier costs, covering framing costs, promotion of work with credit lines, photographic documentation and the sharing of images, commission percentages and payment terms if things are for sale. You also need a tick box section for how you might use images of the work for promotion with no fee attached, e.g., on websites, on social media, on the press release, etc. This is essential so that you do not use their work without permission.
- Then outline **what is needed** from them, e.g., an artist statement/biography and its length, a portrait photo and the credit line for the photo, social media handles, an Access Rider, copyright lines if their work is to feature anywhere, etc.
- If you plan to ask the artist to take part in some form of **evaluation**, please make sure it is mentioned in the contract. Where possible, mention what type of evaluation will take place, e.g. a conversation, survey, etc. and how the information will be collected, e.g. a conversation, a questionnaire, etc.
- Include a **short timeline** if that is relevant to the project/event, so that everyone is clear of **deadlines** from the outset.

- Include a **budget breakdown** if relevant to the work.
- **Payment details** – Will you pay in instalments? How will you pay them and in what time frame? If an invoice is needed, who does it need to be made out to, and what sort of information is needed on it?
- A line stating that this **contract cannot be altered** or varied except through written amendment agreed and signed by both parties.
- It would also be good to add in a **legal line**, suggested here as follows and delete as appropriate:

This agreement shall be governed in accordance with the laws of [England and Wales / Scotland/ NI] and subject to the jurisdiction of [English / Welsh / Scottish / NI] Courts.

Ensure the contract is signed and dated by all involved. If the person does not have the mental capacity to make decisions, please also get it signed by a third party like a support worker and/or guardian.

A great example is this [Easy Read Artist Contract on Google Docs](#), produced by FACT. Artist Jack Tan was invited onto the Board of Trustees at FACT. Jack was commissioned to write a contract for artists that was accessible, easy to read, and free of jargon.

The key things to consider are:

- A small section on **Intellectual Property**, and an explanation of what that means
- A small section on **terminating the contract early** by either party and how that can be done
- A line on how you will **safely store the artist's personal details**.

ACCESS RIDERS

An Access Rider is a document that describes an artist's **individual access requirements**. They are often described as 'living documents' as artists' needs may change with different jobs, different situations and changes in health. New documents need to be circulated when needed.

Access Riders are used by DDN artists to ensure that you are aware of any **adjustments** they may need to make and any reasonable adjustments that you need to consider and action, to get the best from that artist. An Access Rider ensures that the person is **not unfairly disadvantaged** because they are disabled.

Conversations about access can be difficult and some people struggle to communicate their needs fully. An Access Rider is an easy way to **clearly communicate access needs** and start a conversation – it does not replace the conversation. Using an Access Rider can help everyone feel **confident in their working relationships** with each other.

Access Riders are the **property of the artist**, not the organisation. It is up to them to decide how, where and when they feel comfortable using it. It should be sent to you once the artist has been contracted/engaged/commissioned. Sending an Access Rider **early in the process** will mean that everyone knows what to expect and ensures that there is time for adjustments to be made.

NOTE: to some DDN artists, an access rider is a very exposing and personal document. Sensitivity and respect must be given.

- As policy, do not ask for Access Riders until an opportunity has been accepted, since it contains so much personal information.
- Keep Access Riders in a safe place, and only print them if necessary. You should delete them once you stop working with the artist.
- If a DDN artist has never heard of Access Riders, explain what they are and encourage them to write one, and offer support around this if needed.

Template examples:

1. [Disability Arts Online](#) have produced this information and free to download template that can be used.
2. [Unlimited](#) have created a free resource in order to help create Access Riders.
3. Leah Clements, Lizzy Rose and Alice Hatrick pulled together free resource '[Access Docs for Artists](#)' after a 2019 residency at Wysing Arts Centre.

PAYMENTS TO ARTISTS

Every DDN artist will be in a **different financial position** and could be on a range of benefits which may affect how they can be paid and how often. When it comes to payments, you need to be **flexible** and open to conversations. Payment is a concern for DDN artists, and some decide to not be paid due to the stress it will cause and/or fear of losing their benefits. **We all agree that all artists deserve fair pay, and to be paid, for the work that they do.**

We know that you will not be experts in benefits and payments for artists. We recommend that you advise the artist to speak to the DWP (with support as this often gets complicated) or to someone they trust, to look at their options on how they can get paid and not be penalised. If the artist is part of a supported studio, suggest they get advice from the finance staff. Be careful not to say anything that could get you or the artist into financial difficulty.

If the artist is on benefits and wants to keep them, it may be worth going down the '[Permitted Work](#)' route. Under Permitted Work, the artist is given an amount they can earn each week that would not stop their benefits. Payments can be made up to that amount and spread across several weeks, so that the full and correct amount of money can still be paid. The contract should outline this and how long the payment would then take to be paid in full. This helps if the artist is planning to do other work elsewhere too, so that double payments are not made on certain weeks.

As an example, when Jennifer Gilbert worked with three learning disabled artists from the supported studio [Venture Arts](#), it was decided to go down the permitted work route to ensure they could all receive the same fee for an artist residency. Although completely unfair, two artists were permitted to earn £120 a week and one could only receive £20 a week, so it just meant payments were spread out over a longer time-period for the third artist.

[Permitted to work form link here](#)



Artwork by Thompson Hall: Universal Credit, 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 80 x 60cm. Thompson's 2019 work was inspired by the inequalities of society and what was happening within politics, social change and the marginalisation of people.

In some circumstances, artists may not have a bank account themselves, so the payments would need to go to a family member. The contract should say that the funds must be used for the benefit of that artist. We have seen artists exploited in these circumstances, so please avoid this type of payment if you can. This again is where conversations with the DWP can help.

Supported studios may also be able to manage the money on behalf of the DDN artists that attend that studio, which a) takes the stress away; b) takes the anxiety of losing their benefits away; and c) allows the spending to be recorded accurately.

Always look to websites like a-n or [Artists Union England](#) to look at current rates of pay for consultancy work, exhibition fees, workshop delivery fees etc, for visual artists.

CONSULTANCY

Make sure you pay deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent artists for their time and knowledge. They have years of lived experience which should be recognised. Please also credit them as they would like to be credited.

Whilst it is important to recruit DDN people to boards or governance groups, this should not be done solely to get them to do the above for free. Sadly, we see this happening a lot at present, with all EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) work for an organisation being placed on the head of that individual. This is wrong and unfair.

Creating an access audit group that you consult and listen to is paramount.

See earlier references around this, in the '[Access Information](#)' section of this toolkit.

SUPPORTED STUDIOS

What are supported studios and what is their role?

With thanks to ActionSpace, Art Riot Collective, Blue Room and Martin Swan for their help in creating this section.

This section details the role of supported studios (also known as progressive art studios or disability art groups) in how they support artists with a range of different access requirements. It gives examples of how the relationship might work if you choose to work with an artist/s from a supported studio. It should be noted that whilst some suggestions are included here, every artist and studio have different circumstances and ways of working, so **consultation with all involved is key here.**

Remember, we all make mistakes, studio staff included, but we can all be open to learning and doing things differently moving forward. We have included a couple of [case studies](#) in this toolkit for reference.



Art Riot Collective Studio, Coventry, photo courtesy Art Riot Collective

SUPPORTED STUDIOS

A supported studio is a creative environment for individuals with specific access requirements that encourage and support art practices. Supported studios facilitate professional and artistic development, advocacy (some artists are able to advocate for themselves while others need support) and career-building opportunities for artists — individually, as a group or collective.

Supported studios are different from day service/daycare provisions. Studios generally have a much higher ratio of specialised staff and facilitators than day service provisions and this focus on collaboration and support allows greater emphasis on quality, process and a holistic approach. They work closely with families and/or care givers and support workers to build the right, personalised environment for each individual to work on their own terms and be creative in their own way.

- Supported studios work over long periods of time with deeply committed and passionate artists and makers. Some focus specifically on learning disabled, neurodivergent and autistic individuals, whilst others work more broadly with artists who are marginalised by physical or mental health conditions or by other intersecting and excluding factors. Be sure to speak to each artist and studio about the language they have chosen to use to describe themselves.
- Supported Studios exist to provide a safe space for artists to create. This includes artists with complex needs and/or artists with limited to no verbal communication.
- If you choose to work with a supported studio artist, please be sure there is budget to cover the role of the studio – this is imperative. The studio staff are people that artists have come to trust, so their knowledge and expertise across all areas is crucial. A conversation with the studio will help to calculate the costs to be sure they are sufficient to ensure the success of the project.

SUPPORTED STUDIOS

- The studio often cover things that other artists might do for themselves, including things like:
 - Liaising with social care providers
 - Invoicing and payment support
 - Making Easy Read versions of your contracts / other documents and providing clarity on these
 - Supporting the creation of artworks
 - Holding site visits to help reduce anxieties around new places (studio staff can highlight things that others may not think about, including parking and food options)
 - Organising packaging and transport of works
 - Getting artist/s and their support workers to venues/meetings on time
 - Helping to plan routes for people to venues

We mention this here as often these points are not considered when working with artists. This level of administrative work takes up staff attention and time, and this extra support needs to be compensated. It is worth noting that studio access costs can differ from the individual's access costs. Someone might need a support worker AND a studio advocate.

- In relation to the above, quick turnaround times and short deadlines are often not feasible. Studios may only have in-person contact with artists one day a week as the artists often attend as part of a social care plan and/or have limited budgets for studio time. When working with studio artists, phone calls are often not a good way for studio staff to communicate in a meaningful and accessible way, hence the delay in getting answers due to face-to-face meetings with artists being required.

SUPPORTED STUDIOS

- When involved in discussions, especially when a supported studio artist does not have the capacity or knowledge to make important decisions, studio staff have the artists best interests at heart. So, although across this toolkit we suggest having conversations with DDN artists directly, when studios are involved, they **MUST** be involved in the discussions too. They are not speaking on behalf of the artist but answering from an informed viewpoint to make decisions and are often advocating on behalf of the artist. The studio will also make you aware of the artist's support team (family/guardians/support workers) to bring them into conversations and obtain the appropriate permissions where necessary.
- Studios are highly specialised in supporting people, understanding how they communicate and what they need to be able to create artwork in the way they want to. Studio staff have a duty of care towards the artists they work with, which differs to other more traditional artist studios that you may have worked with across the country.
- We recommend visiting studios and meeting the staff and artists in-person, so that you get a better idea of how the studio works, and the communication styles that are used. The work is also often best seen in-person as not all studios have capacity to document artwork thoroughly. [There is a list of supported studios later in this Toolkit.](#)

SUPPORTED STUDIOS

- When sending information for studio artists there are a few things that could be done by you, to help in the first instance. Do always ask if there are ways the artist/studio prefers to receive information too, as then you can look to meet their access requirements:
 - Use 16pt font size
 - Limit text to 15 words in a sentence/ paragraph
 - Use pictures to show gallery spaces or signage examples, or to try to illustrate points being made
 - Use bold to highlight important words
- If you have chosen to work with a supported studio artist/s, there are other ways they can help:
 - Studio staff and some studio artists will be able to talk to you about making your interpretation and exhibition more accessible, whilst keeping it beautiful. See this case study of the [Kaleidoscopic Realms exhibition](#) at Nottingham Castle showcasing different interpretations.
 - Some artists use Makaton (a simplified form of BSL) to communicate, and some studios are trained to deliver information with Makaton symbols for their artists to understand. Your exhibition interpretation could include Makaton to make it more accessible, with payment needed to the studio to support around this. [A video case study from Art Riot Collective in Coventry showcases this idea more.](#)
 - Supported studios can support with payments to artists (or other forms of remuneration) and can offer advice around this or point you in the direction of who to speak to, to move things forward. Many artists on benefits have anxiety around payments, and studios can help ease these together with you.

SUPPORTED STUDIOS

- Some studios have worked with their artists to create their own 'Access Rider' style templates. Ask the artist/studio if there is already something in place, or if they'd like to create something together with you. A nice example of this is the 'About me' profiles that the Blue Room Inclusive Arts studio have created alongside their artists on how to best work with each individual artist. Please see the below 'About me' template for reference.
- Some artists might not understand the complexities of what is being asked of them, so may always say 'yes' as it is not clear to them. So do seek advice from the studios who can help to get confirmation, as they can ask questions in different ways to help the artist(s) understand further.

To reiterate the key points here – every artist and studio works in different ways, has different access requirements, and has different costs attached depending on the level of support/time required. Have the conversations right at the start, put budget aside, and be sure to clearly document the different roles and responsibilities of all involved. Do remember that all of this WILL take extra time, as many conversations will need to be had with different people (often only in once a week), and this extra time needs to be factored into timelines – no quick turnaround times will be of use here.

SUPPORTED STUDIOS

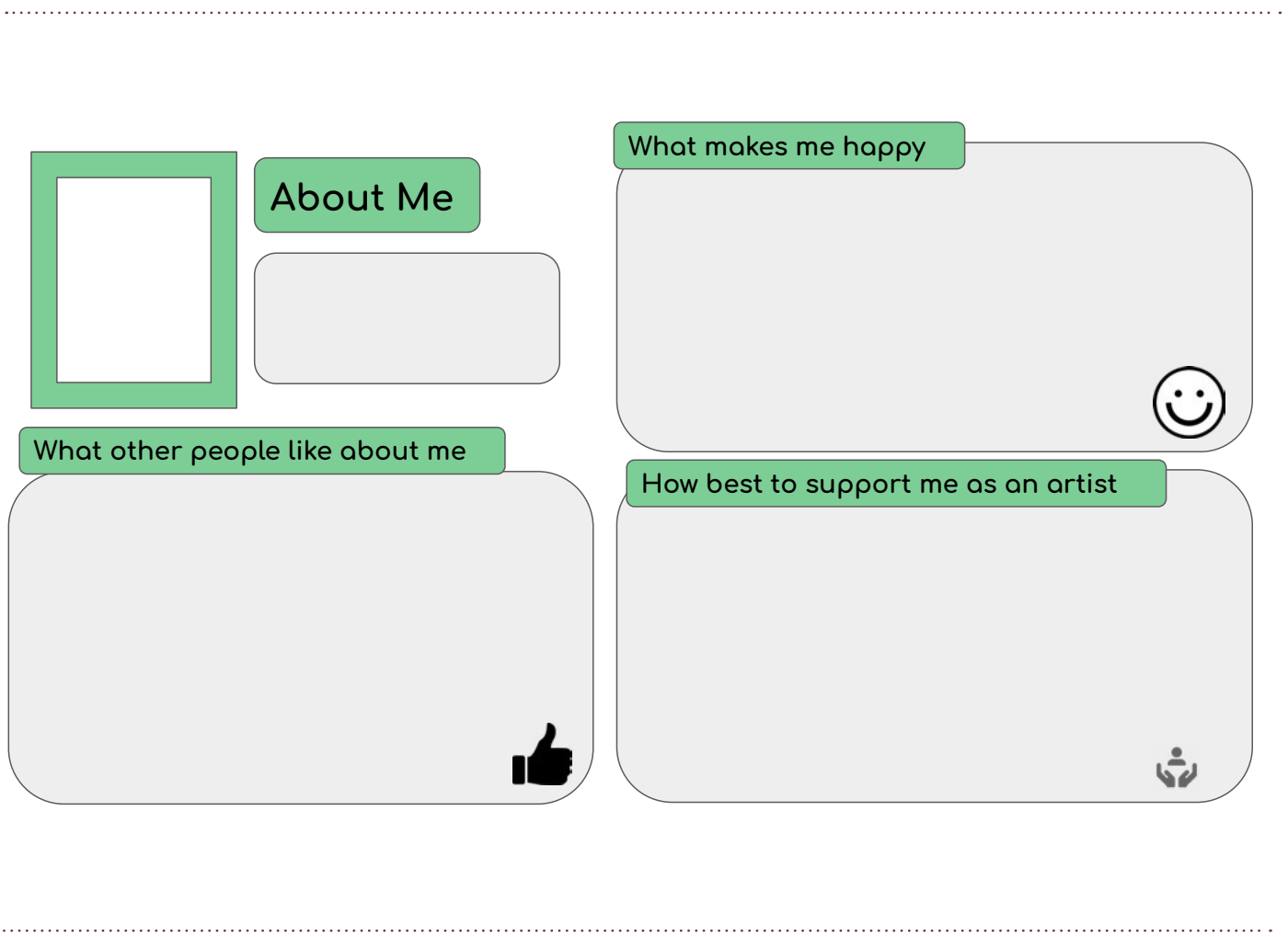


Image: example of the Blue Room Inclusive Arts Studio 'About me' profile template

CASE STUDIES

Royal West of England Academy (RWA), Bristol Implementing more provisions for deaf and hard of hearing audiences

In 2021 Signs of Art, a project co-led by Jennifer Gilbert, was commissioned by the RWA in Bristol to make their organisation, and offer, more accessible to deaf and hard of hearing audiences. Following several discussions and receiving their budget, Signs of Art designed a package for them to coincide with their launch after refurbishing their building.

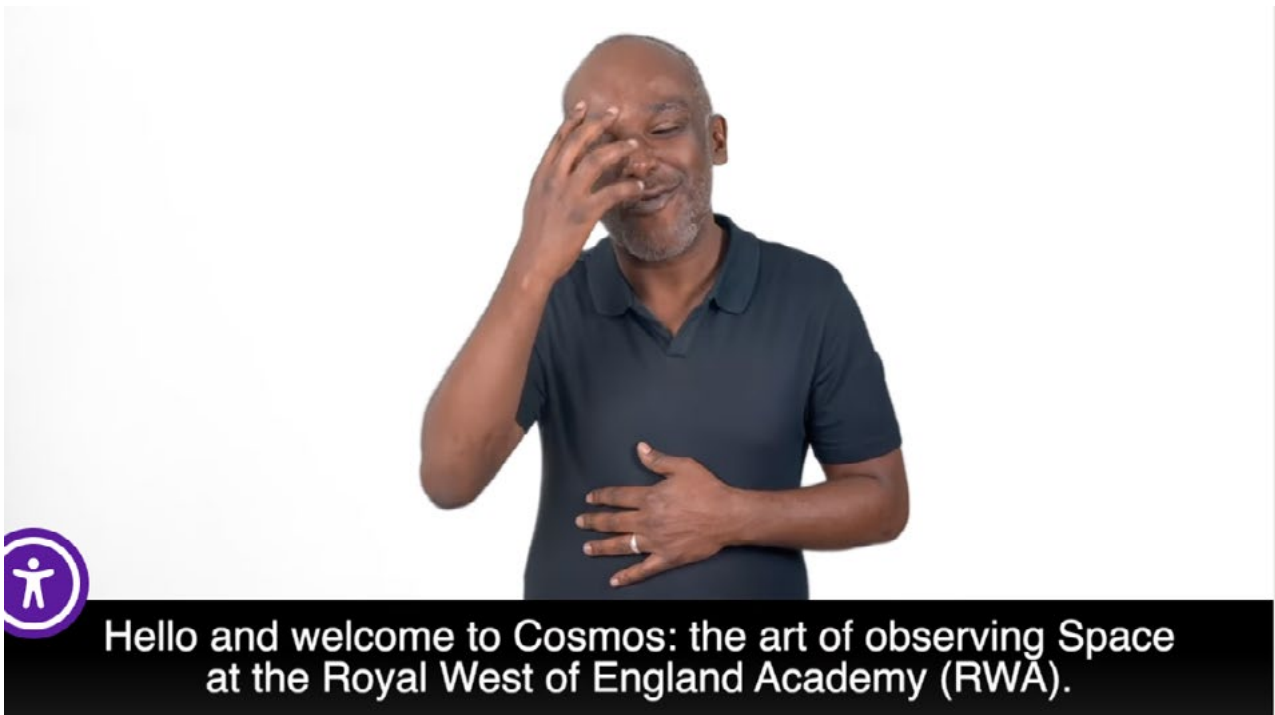
Firstly, deaf awareness training and simple sign language was rolled out across many of the staff at the organisation (including front of house staff) – this proved really useful when deaf and hard of hearing audiences came in for the BSL tours.

Secondly, after finalising a script and deaf artist Rebecca Vaughan making it more BSL friendly, she recorded their welcome video. This video explains about the building, where things are and what is on offer for deaf and hard of hearing audiences. Not only is this embedded in easy to find places on their website, including on their '[access](#)' and 'visit' page, but it is also the first thing you see on a large screen as you enter the building above their welcome desk. The video features Rebecca signing alongside captions, making it suitable for people who don't know full BSL.

Deaf presenter Ahmed Mudawi creates videos for their open callouts and exhibition information, that go on their website and as QR codes within the exhibition spaces. BSL tours are now in place regularly led by trained deaf presenters from Our Visual World. The deaf community have welcomed all this and said how needed it has been.



Photograph of the welcome desk at the RWA in Bristol, showing a screen above it with the 'BSL welcome video' commissioned specifically to welcome deaf and hard of hearing audiences into their space.



Deaf presenter Ahmed Mudawi presenting an exhibition video for the RWA, Bristol. With added images and captions along the bottom of the screen.

Herbert, Coventry

Changes made during the 2021 Turner Prize – Martin Swan, Project Art Works

Project Art Works relationship with The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum during the 2021 Turner Prize exhibition brought a number of new ideas to the institution.

The gallery built a changing place toilet, developed a quiet space for visitors and through funding by Arts Council England, was able to commission the artist Anna Farley, who is autistic, to develop a unique accessible visual guide for the whole exhibition that included tactile elements and did not 'dumb down' content of the works.

The gallery also held a special quiet opening for people with complex support needs who might not otherwise have been able to attend the exhibition during busy normal hours.

However, it is important to note that changes like these are highly dependent on the buy-in of individual gallery staff and their commitment to accessibility and inclusion.



*Supported studio Project Art Works' exhibition installation as part of the 2021 Turner Prize.
Photograph by Garry Jones*

Submit to Love Studios in London

Four-year partnership with the Barbican, London

– Billy Mann (Member) and Claire Stone (Public Engagement & Comms Manager), Headway East London

Since 2019, Headway East London has been the Barbican's "Community Collaborator" - a 4-year partnership to explore how a long-term collaboration between a large-scale arts institution and a community organisation could enrich and benefit both our practices.

The partnership grew out of the enthusiasm our members showed for the Barbican's "Community Views", in which groups of all kinds are invited to attend new exhibitions for free and join conversations and activities inspired by the themes. The Barbican staff seemed to thrive on engagement with our members as a new "way of seeing" the work they do, and the relationships stretched into a casual and co-productive consultancy.

Together, we devised and hosted talks and events inspired by their programme, including creating interactive workshops for the Modern Couples exhibition; developing a film called Blue Planet, Black Hole exploring the use of technology to support communication after brain injury, in response to the AI: More than Human exhibition; dancing on the Barbican stage with the Michael Clark Company; and curating an entire Community View for the Brutal Beauty exhibition.

Heated discussions came with the Jean Dubuffet exhibition *Brutal Beauty*, where our members engaged in conversations with the curators around the representation of so-called “outsider art”, and exactly what we thought about framing art made outside of institutions and the professional art world in those terms. These tough conversations helped the relationship flourish into a more honest and open partnership, and led to real changes, such as the phrasing used in the exhibition text.

At the end of 2021, Headway East London hosted a symposium at the Barbican called “Connecting Conversations: Can we be artists?”, building on the themes and questions that arose from those conversations. Newly appointed Artistic Director of the Barbican, Will Gompertz, joined the panel alongside our members, Kate Adams (CEO of Project Artworks), Ali Eisa (Learning & Participation Manager at Autograph Gallery), and David Tovey (Co-Director of Arts & Homelessness International), to explore the roles of art, artists and arts professionals. As a result, in August 2023, Headway East London held a 9-day takeover of the Curve Gallery within Barbican, taking audiences on a journey through brain injury. The key has always been to care for collaboration, to work hard and to make it grow.



Barbican x Headway East London, differently various, 2023, Credit Leon Foggit

MK Gallery, Milton Keynes Sensory Exhibition Tours

MK Gallery's Sensory Exhibition Tours have won a national award with the Family Arts Campaign in the category of Best Family Arts Activity. They have been developed in partnership with the gallery's Inclusive Practice in the Arts team, and local artist Julia Collar. The Sensory Tours are designed for both toddlers, and children with additional and complex support needs, who may otherwise have difficulty accessing the content of the exhibitions. During the tours, children and families go on a journey through the exhibition spaces and are transported to another world through storytelling, music, curious object handling, intriguing smells and costume. The galleries are transformed into animated spaces, and artworks are explored and activated in a playful language that is accessible to all. The programme has also recently expanded into a collaboration with local training provider MK Snap, whose learners are co-designing and co-delivering tours for learning disabled adults.

[You can see an example of the tours on their website](#)



*Photos: Audiences interacting with objects as part of MK Gallery's Sensory Exhibition Tours.
Credit: Chris Henley.*

Studio Voltaire, London LOEWE Foundation and Studio Voltaire Studio Award nominations

In 2021, Studio Voltaire invited key artists, curators, and community partners to be part of their nomination committee, so that seven artists could be selected to benefit from a free studio at Studio Voltaire in London, alongside many other benefits of support, professional development, and mentoring. When writing to the nominators they included the following wording to help them to nominate more diverse artists for the opportunity:

The key objectives of the award were:

- To provide key support to artists with limited financial means, low or precarious incomes, or limited support from contemporary art networks.
- To meaningfully support individual and self-directed development or a step-change in practice for artists at all stages of their careers.
- To increase and strengthen equitable representation and access, fully reflecting the diversity of London's population, and increase opportunities for under-represented artists within contemporary art practice. We welcome and will prioritise applications from artists of African or Caribbean heritage, artists of East Asian, South Asian and South East Asian heritage, artists of Latin American heritage and artists belonging to other groups that experience racism (including people of Romany, Irish Traveller, Jewish, Central Asian and West Asian heritage), and artists who identify as LGBTQIA+, d/Deaf, neurodivergent, disabled, chronically ill and artists who have faced barriers to practice due to their socio-economic background or financial precarity.
- To enable artists to actively contribute to the artistic community based at Studio Voltaire, as well as our wider community.

Photoworks In Focus Open Call

Written by Ricardo Reverón Blanco, Former Assistant Curator at Photoworks

During my tenure at Photoworks as their Assistant Curator, I oversaw the open call opportunity of Photoworks' second iteration of 'In Focus' – a partnership between Photoworks and Aspex Portsmouth and part of the Explorers Project, a national creative programme to increase the visibility and representation of neurodivergent artists in contemporary visual arts, led by Project Art Works with cultural partners nationwide. 'In Focus' is an ongoing programme run by Photoworks and includes new commissions, photography clubs, and public events designed with and for neurodivergent artists and communities.

For 'In Focus' callouts, we formulated an open call format which, after consultation with former Project Art Works staff member Martin Swan, we developed a simplified version that only asked candidates just four questions. This helped to streamline the process:

- 1 Tell us what your idea is for this commission (approximately 300 words)
- 2 Tell us how this commission would help you achieve that idea (approximately 300 words)
- 3 Tell us how the opportunity would benefit your artistic development (approximately 300 words)
- 4 Tell us why you like making artwork with photography (approximately 300 words)

Alongside the callout, we offered sessions for prospective candidates to speak to me about any doubts they might have about the application process or any queries they had around the questions being asked. These included face-to-face conversations, phone calls and zoom calls depending on the candidate's preference. These helped break down the hierarchy barriers and allowed a space to voice concerns and have queries answered in sensitive ways suited to each applicant. We would advise adding these to your callout information, to help demystify the process and support more diverse audiences to apply.

More about the In Focus programme can be found [here](#)

Here is a [resource made available through the Photoworks website](#) where Learning and Engagement Consultant Juliette Buss and Curator Julia Bunnemann held a Q&A together, following the learning that occurred from this project, and the collaborations Photoworks has held with neurodivergent artists and art makers.

Art Riot Collective and Mead Gallery

Art Riot Collective (ARC) is a supported studio in Coventry working with disabled and neurodivergent artists. In 2023, five artists from ARC were invited to be part of the 'Reason for Painting' exhibition at Mead Gallery within Warwick Arts Centre. ARC were then commissioned to create accessible interpretations for a 'making space' within the exhibition.

Firstly, as part of the selection process, the Mead Gallery Curator spent time visiting the supported studio environment, met with the artists, and really tried to understand the ethos of how the collective worked. Art Riot Collective were then invited into the gallery space with their art to see what worked well alongside the other exhibiting artists. This was an empowering moment, as the way that the exhibition pieces were selected, felt personal and flexible. The exhibition had a 'making space' within the gallery, which was a replica of the Art Riot Studio, so it made the studio artists feel welcome and they were able to interact with the gallery in a new way, as it felt very familiar to them. This space allowed all audiences to make noise, laugh and connect, changing the feeling of the whole gallery and allowing people to just be themselves.



The layout of the gallery this way led to the development of accessible interpretation using Makaton symbols, larger font, easier read interpretation in large-print printed formats, as well as BSL and Makaton films. [Here is a link to two films](#) created from ARC scripts which featured as part of the accessible interpretation to show people what they could do within the 'making space.' These were played continuously on an iPad but were also printed as instructions with Makaton signs and symbols on the walls. Having Makaton instructions in the gallery meant non-verbal, disabled artists paused, watched, and connected with the instructions, staying relaxed throughout.

The above was a really positive experience for ARC, and the accessible interpretation made the exhibition more inclusive for a diverse audience. However, there was not an allocated budget in place for the whole exhibition, so ARC's input was limited to the 'making space'. The gallery continues to have a 'Making Space', and BSL tours for every exhibition.

We encourage you to make sure your venue is more accessible with continued use of various access formats as set out above by bringing in the likes of Art Riot Collective. We advocate for consulting people with lived experience of disability and paying them fairly for their time and knowledge.

EXHIBITIONS ACCESS CHECKLIST

Please refer to p.36 onwards in the Creative Access Toolkit for specific advice.

- Have you got an access audit team or critical friends' group in place to help support and give advice on the access? This needs to be in place from the beginning.

- Review the accessible hanging height and plinth height suggestions made earlier in the Toolkit

- Will there be enough space around sculptures/screens to allow for wheelchairs and mobility equipment?

- Is there general seating, with back and armrest support, for people to rest on throughout the spaces (especially if film or audio works are lengthy)? Can you make sure this is off to the side, to allow wheelchair/mobility equipment to get the same view as others?

- Are there portable stools that people can access, in easy to find places, if they need to take them around the exhibition?

- Is there a clear way to navigate the exhibition? If not, can you use arrows or something else to make it clear?

- Have you moved your long wall text panels so that if people stop to read them, they do not block entranceways?

- Have you printed transcripts for all film and audio work, or placed online with a QR code nearby showing you how to access them?

- Have all the films got subtitles added as a necessity?
If budget allows, please add BSL interpretation as well.

- Have you programmed curator / BSL / audio description tours, as well as relaxed openings?

- Consider the advice on labels within the Toolkit. Language should be plain English, font should be clear, and they should be situated clearly in the space and on the side of plinths for access reasons.

- You might consider producing the supportive recommendations on p.43/p.44 of the Toolkit/Examples include: QR codes with exhibition information, BSL videos, Easy Read guides, braille guides, transcript pages for film/audio works, visual/sensory maps, and touch boxes.

USEFUL LINKS

BSL Interpreters recommendations:

1. Chisato Minamimura, London – angel-c@h-and-c.jp
 2. John, Surrey – deafjohn99@hotmail.com
 3. Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq, London – rubbena@gmail.com
 4. Martin Glover, London – martin@digitSPACE.org
 5. Our Visual World (wales) – www.ourvisualworld.com
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Useful link for booking BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters:

www.nrcpd.org.uk – The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People.

A volunteer could do research into local supported studios/ disability art groups, but several UK studios are listed here for reference:

1. ActionSpace, London – actionspace.org
2. Artbox London, London – artboxlondon.org
3. Barrington Farm, Norwich – barringtonfarm.com
4. Blue Room, Liverpool – thebluecoat.org.uk/projects/blue-room
5. Garvald, Edinburgh – garvaldmakers.com/artists
6. IntoArt, London – intoart.org.uk
7. Project Ability, Glasgow – project-ability.co.uk
8. Project Art Works, Hastings – projectartworks.org
9. Pyramid of Arts, Leeds – pyramid.org.uk
10. Venture Arts, Manchester – venturearts.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was developed by the following people:

Ceri-Anne Barrow, Plus Tate

Ceri works as part of Tate's National Partnerships team based at Tate Liverpool. She facilitates the Plus Tate network, organising events and creating resources in line with network priorities. Ceri is dedicated to improving access within arts organisations, and to creating safe and comfortable spaces for all – particularly DDN, LGBTQIA+ and global majority/BIPOC individuals.

[Plus Tate website](#)

Cherylee Houston, Triple C/DANC

Cherylee is a disabled actress and the co-creative lead at TripleC. TripleC is a Community Interest Company with a mission to drive up the role of disabled people in the arts & media and the role of the arts & media in the lives of disabled people. We run DANC, the Disabled Artists' Networking Community, a professional network of 1,500 deaf, disabled and /or neurodivergent creatives. TripleC's motto is "never leave anyone behind".

[triplec.org.uk](#)

Jennifer Gilbert, Jennifer Lauren Gallery

Jennifer is a Manchester-based gallerist, freelance producer, and curator, working with self-taught, disabled, neurodivergent, deaf and overlooked artists. In 2017 she launched the Jennifer Lauren Gallery to showcase and empower artists internationally, having previously managed a national arts charity for under-represented artists. Jennifer is passionate about promoting the voices and artworks of these artists to wider audiences, allowing their true artistic language to shine. In her freelance role, Jennifer helps disabled, deaf and neurodivergent artists with their professional development, alongside providing mentoring and more general support. Jennifer also does consultancy work alongside galleries, museums and organisations about access and inclusion.

[jenniferlaurengallery.com](#)

We would like to thank the four deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists that were part of the initial Plus Tate conversations that have all fed into this toolkit:

Sonia Boué – soniaboue.co.uk

Thompson Hall – actionspace.org/artists/thompson-hall

Christopher Sacre – christophersacre.com

Christopher Samuel – christophersamuel.co.uk

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PLUS TATE



JENNIFER LAUREN
GALLERY

