

'Dear Art Gallery... ...it's time to make exhibitions more accessible to us'

A toolkit for art galleries
written by disabled artists.





This toolkit is shaped by...

The **SOCIAL MODEL** of disability:
it is societal barriers and negative attitudes
that disable people, not impairments.
The way society is organised needs to change.

This toolkit is for...

PLACES: Artist-run spaces, galleries,
national museums, art centres.

PEOPLE: Everyone involved in creating and
hosting exhibitions – educators, technicians,
curators, front of house staff and directors.

In this toolkit we suggest how...

PLACES can improve accessibility for
their visitors and participants.

PEOPLE can change cultures and mindsets
through action, education and conversation.

Find out more and access online tools,
advice, resources and definitions here:



We, disabled artists, have four questions for you:

1. What do you know?

Here we ask what you already know about access requirements and disabled people and suggest how you can increase your knowledge.

2. What do you have?

Here we ask about your existing access tools and suggest ways you can make your work more accessible.

3. How do we reach you?

Here we ask how disabled people can reach your organisation physically and online and suggest ways you can make these more accessible.

4. What can you offer?

Here we ask how you support disabled artists with accessing exhibition and development opportunities and suggest ways you can make these more accessible.

1. What do you know?



Increasing knowledge about access is essential. Our lived experiences as disabled people are often excluded, resulting in a lack of knowledge about access requirements.

Exhibitions are frequently created based on assumptions about us rather than knowledge, or sometimes without thinking about us at all. You can change this by being willing to learn, and through having open and honest dialogue with us.

Tools for PLACES

- Collaborate with disabled-led arts organisations, these are organisations where at least 50% of the staff identify as disabled, such as Disability Arts Cymru.
- Carry out access audits of exhibition spaces to find out from disabled people how accessible your work really is.
- Co-produce and co-design exhibition spaces in conversation with us.
- Appoint disability advocates with lived experience for your organisation.
- Employ people with lived experience of disability at all levels in your organisation, including those who make decisions about exhibitions.
- Find out about disability legislation – access is a legal right, not a privilege.
- Actively listen to feedback and concerns about access and take steps to resolve issues.

Tools for PEOPLE

- Never make decisions about us without us! #NothingAboutUsWithoutUs.
- Provide ways for disabled staff to give constructive feedback about access. This should be within their role, and not an add-on or as a voluntary activity.
- Get young people involved! Introduce discussions about access and disability justice into school and university programmes.

2. What do you have?



There isn't just one solution to access!

Be adaptable and innovate. It's essential that you understand our access requirements are as individual as we are and are always changing.



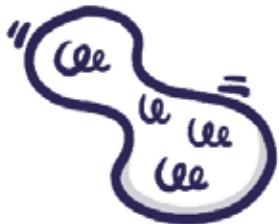
Tools for PLACES

- Install accessible lifts and/or ramps to all exhibition spaces.
- Ensure your doors are automatic or easy to open.
- Have clear navigational signs in high contrast text, and textured orientation floor mats.
- Install an induction loop, maintain it and train staff on how to use it.
- Ensure you have accessible toilets and/or Changing Places facilities.
- Develop accessible interpretation materials: information panels, artwork labels, gallery guides and digital content e.g. large print, braille labels and audio versions.
- Have sensory equipment available such as ear defenders and magnifiers.
- Provide comfortable gallery seating with backs.
- Make sure exhibition spaces are clear of trip hazards.
- Allow plenty of space around and in front of artworks for wheelchair and wide mobility vehicle users.
- Think about adaptable light and sound levels in audiovisual work.
- Provide water bowls for assistance animals.



Tools for PEOPLE

- If you are a curator commissioning new work, talk to the artist in advance about building-in accessibility from the start.
- Consider how you display works – think about hanging heights, plinths and texts. For example an accessible height for hanging wall-based work is 135cm to the centre of the work or 80cm to the top of plinths.
- Consider and plan for different audience needs for example schedule quiet hours for people with sensory requirements and masked hours for people who are shielding.
- Make your programme more accessible by having touch tours for people with visual impairment, and schedule BSL or audio described exhibition tours and workshops.
- Provide staff across the organisation with BSL training.



3. How do we reach you?



Wales has poor transport links to some areas, and as disabled people we face additional barriers using public transport. Many of us find it difficult to leave our homes, so digital access to your programming may be the only way we can take part.

Think creatively about alternative modes of access, including taking elements of the exhibition out into the community, creating digital exhibitions and other digital content.

There are access tools you can put in place before we're through your door.

Tools for PLACES

- Include details of onsite accessibility (e.g. information about lifts, stairs and accessible toilets), and locational accessibility (e.g. parking, transport links) on your website and publicity materials.
- Have information about your access tools and accessible events clearly visible on your website (e.g. large print guides, quiet visiting hours, accessible tours).
- Have a virtual map of the building and exhibition online.
- Add an accessibility widget to your website.
- Include a BSL welcome video on your website.
- Include a visual story and social script on your website – these help us plan our visit in advance.

Tools for PEOPLE

- Share knowledge within the sector. Praise exhibitions and organisations that have good access provision and feed back to those that don't with suggestions for improvement.
- We can all lobby local government and councillors for accessible and effective public transport to venues.
- Contribute to and read reviews relating to access provision.

4. What can you offer?



Exhibition opportunities and artist development programmes are often inaccessible to us as disabled people. This can make it difficult for us to participate in exhibitions and develop as artists.

Tools for PLACES

- If you offer a residency programme, adapt it so that we can access it remotely or through a hybrid or digital model, as well as in-person.
- Always ask if artists have an Access Rider – read and honour these important documents.
- Develop programmes that meet our access requirements, this could mean making adjustments to existing projects, or offering ring-fenced opportunities specifically for us.
- Host a disability ‘critical friends’ panel, making sure more disabled artists and their carers can give critical insight and feedback about your work, and are involved in all aspects of the decision-making process. These should be paid opportunities.
- Create an internal policy for best practice in working with disabled artists based on principles of inclusivity and care.
- Be upfront about the support you can offer us and be proactive about asking what else we might need.

Tools for PEOPLE

- The culture of an organisation is changed by people as much as policy. Make access part of your personal development.
- Read Access Riders before working with artists. Make sure you understand it beforehand – it is better to ask if you aren’t clear about something.
- Be adaptable, be flexible and most of all – be open to change.



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Notes



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Arts Council of Wales



Noddir gan
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