

11 Million Reasons
to Dance: **Cymru**



**People
Dancing**
the foundation for
community dance



Inclusive resource for organisations and venues



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government

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[People Dancing](#) is working with a consortium of Welsh partners to deliver **11 Million Reasons to Dance: Cymru**; a dance participation programme that positively profiles D/deaf, sight impaired, neurodiverse and disabled people who dance.

Funded by the **Arts Council of Wales** a programme of activity was delivered in 2021 that set about making a positive change for disabled people who dance. The work involved an artist training and mentoring programme, four creative projects, a photography exhibition, a national networking event, and the creation of a Welsh strategy group to drive the campaign forward.

This document is a collaboration between People Dancing and **Unlimited** and is intended for use by organisations and venues across Wales who aim to work more inclusively in dance, and support positive change for D/deaf, sight impaired, neurodiverse and disabled people and artists who dance in Wales.

What is the Social Model of Disability?

Understanding the Social Model of Disability

The Social Model of Disability defines disability as a social construct; it asks the question 'where is the problem?' and locates it in social organisation, attitudes, and environment - not in the individual's perceived impairment.

Unlimited presents a short animation to help explain the Social Model of Disability

[Unlimited: Removing Barriers](#) - [Unlimited: Removing Barriers \(Audio Described\)](#)

Employing and Supporting Disabled Artists (Including Programming)

It is important when working with, or alongside, D/deaf and disabled artists that each artist is treated as an individual; and given the space to clearly articulate their own access needs.

Below is further information regarding ways of creating an environment that supports disabled artists.

Access Rider:

An access rider is a document for D/deaf and disabled people to share their access requirements. Organisations/venues should ensure to make every effort to support a person's access requirements. In order to ensure you have the time to make such adjustments, you should offer D/deaf and disabled artists the option to share their access rider before their contract begins.

You can find more information on creating your own access rider [here](#).

Access to Work: FIX+

Access to Work is a UK government scheme, available to people 16 years and older, to support disabled people in accessing work. This scheme aims to meet the additional costs of access, above the reasonable adjustments made by an employer, that can be a barrier to employment.

Access to Work offers support based on needs. This could include a grant to cover access requirements in the workplace, for example: an interpreter, speech to text reporter, specialist equipment, a support worker, and/or disability awareness training for those working with a disabled person. If a person employed needs to receive Access to Work, ensure they have practical support throughout the process and that they apply well in advance.

You can find more information on Access to Work [here](#).

Working with Disabled Participants and Groups

There is no such thing as 'all inclusive'. Many ways in which we make a space or workshops accessible to some participants can make the space/workshop less accessible for other participants. The aim is not to ensure a perfect space but to be respectful, flexible and innovative in how we explore accessibility for participants and groups.

When working with disabled participants and groups it's important to respond to the various needs of each individual participant in the group. Creating a supportive environment means more than allowing people into your space; it also means ensuring they have a voice in how they are engaged with during the process.

Before participants enter the space for the session make sure to discuss their needs and be prepared to make adjustments wherever possible. Once in the space, it is important to

remember that a lot of disabled people don't have the privilege of being able to articulate their needs so this may be a collaborative journey where you as a facilitator support the artist in exploring what they need to access the session.

Allowing adequate time for check-ins at the beginning of sessions and reflection time at the end of sessions can enable space and time for participants to share their needs.

Access Needs (and making your venue more accessible)

Running an Accessible Event

It is important to make it clear to your team from the early stages of planning and preparation that access and inclusion are essential to the culture of the event. This will ensure that money can be allocated to ensure greater accessibility and inclusion. However, there are many ways to be inclusive that don't require a lot of extra money or staff.

The following list is to support those who wish to run an accessible and inclusive event.

- **Start with a basic checklist or guide.** There are a lot of checklists around like [this one](#). And remember to start from the social model of disability thinking – if you are running an event, you are responsible for access. You are also [legally responsible](#) so, no excuses.
- **Representation** – yes, access is also about what you programme, who you invite to speak, and what your content is. Does it involve disabled people? Is it relevant to disabled people? And have disabled people been involved in designing and shaping the programme in any way? Do disabled people make up the usual audience for your event – if not have you tried running bursaries targeted specifically at disabled people (alongside all the above) to increase representation? Have you considered the intersectionality of disability and ethnicity in your programming for the event?
- If the event includes any **performances**, then this [Demystifying Access guide](#) might be of help. Aimed at artists and producers, it hopes to make providing access to the performing arts easier and clearer, especially on a budget, and explains captioning, BSL interpretation, relaxed events, and more.
- If there are any **visual or exhibition elements**, then take a look at [some of the resources Shape Arts have produced on Audio Description](#).
- **Think about rest** – are you planning a quiet room (also called a rest space or a respite area). It's a place where people can go if they are overwhelmed, need time out or just want a nap. No phone calls or meetings, so you do need to check in there from time to time, and soft furnishings can be a real help. You could add in Lego, ear defenders, blankets etc or even [design your own bespoke space like Battersea Arts Centre](#) did.

- **Travel is important** – parking and drop off points, rail links, taxis that can accommodate all sizes of wheelchairs, lighting outdoors if running an event that ends after dark. The responsibility for access doesn't start once someone enters your event, it starts as soon as someone wants to attend your event. Are you signposting people to what is available? Do you know what is possible and what's not? With access, some things are simply not possible in some spaces. You have to know your boundaries and be clear about them. There's no point just finding out on the day.
- **Remote access** – whatever you offer, not everyone can travel. So how can people engage remotely? Live stream? Discussion group on line? Twitter? Or are you recording the event and making a transcript or a video available online later (and if so, can there be social media activity around that too)?
- **Audio Described Content** - Create both a captioned version and an audio-described version of your content if you can. You will need to budget more for this and should use an experienced audio describer. Here are examples of audio described films on [Unlimited's YouTube channel](#).
- **Let people know** – if people know what you are providing then they can make their own plans – and add in an email and phone contact and then they can ask if they need more info or a further adjustment too. [Have a look at how we handled access for our symposium last year](#) – there's lots there to help.
- **Report on access** – Evaluate what you offer and tell people how you did. Everyone benefits when we share both our successes and our less than successful experiences. [Check out this blog](#) for how Unlimited reported on access at one of their events. Whether a disabled person is part of the project or the work is for a disabled audience, always get input, feedback and evaluation from disabled people.
- **Keep learning** – Access is an ever-evolving area, be it new technology ([look at the National Theatre's access specs](#)) or new requirements such as for those with fatigue related requirements. No one knows everything so keep reading and researching. And if you've not done so yet, [book yourself some disability equality training](#) and/or download or order a set of [Cards for Inclusion](#) and get your teams playing access!

Marketing and Communications

The ways in which you market your organisation, events, and work is the first step in ensuring disabled artists, participants, and audiences feel accepted in your spaces. Marketing is your first opportunity to prove to a person whether or not the event itself will be an inclusive and supportive environment.

Below are a few tips for organisations and artists to take steps toward more accessible marketing.

Tips for Accessible Marketing

- Get the basics right:

Access for disabled people is often about getting your main marketing materials right, not just about alternative formats. Alternative formats support many people, disabled and non-disabled, so where possible ensure your main marketing materials reflect this.

- Don't assume all disabled people see themselves as disabled people:

When offering options for access explain clearly what the offer is instead of who you believe the offer is for eg 'Audio Described Performance' instead of 'Access for Blind Audiences'.

- Think about the words you use:

Keep it simple and keep it short. Why not check your reading age in Microsoft Word to get your Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (the school year your writing is suitable for). Add 5 to this to get the reading 'age' – you should aim for a reading age lower than 13, or 8 on the Flesch-Kincaid scale (these notes are graded as 5.3).

- Think about your design:

You can make your marketing and website attractive and accessible – they aren't mutually exclusive. Space is great – keep it clear and simple. Leave space between paragraphs and keep your paragraphs short.

- Think about images:

Images are great – they can support meaning when chosen well, and illustrate your commitment if you have photos that include disabled people or access provisions. Avoid putting text over images and avoid using photos of disabled people to promote events where those people will not be platformed or showcased in the event.

- Audio description:

You can create audio versions of your marketing materials, which can then be downloaded from or embedded in your website.

For social media, use the alt text option, or add text below, to briefly describe your image.

- Don't make text too small or too fussy:

Use text at 14 point (12 point is the absolute minimum). Avoid italics, serif and 'handwritten' fonts, and capitals for long, continuous text.

- Think about contrasts:

Contrast between colours and text should be at least 25% – so no pale colours on a pale background however pretty it looks. Avoid reds and greens.

- Get it right online from the start:

Build access into your web design brief – check out the WC3's Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI and their A, AA or AAA rating. For more information, visit: <http://www.w3.org/WAI>

- When writing for the Web:

Use even simpler words, even shorter text and if you have images, make sure you offer a brief text alternative that describes the picture (the title is not enough).

- Think about links:

Make them usable – what does 'click here' mean? How about "click here for more details of our next show" instead?

- Have conversations with disabled people:

This is key – not just to getting it right but to building audiences too. This consultation should always be paid and, more importantly, employ a diversity of people in your organisation and as a part of your projects to ensure a wider voice is heard within the team.

- Diversity and representation

It's important in disability arts to ensure to represent a diversity of ethnicity as well. Make a commitment to go beyond the work that you do currently in order to engage with diverse networks and audiences.

Disability confident language – the basics

The following terms provide an example of appropriate and inappropriate disability-related terminology.

Appropriate

Disabled Person

Wheelchair user

Neurodiverse

Visually impaired people

Mental health service user or survivor

Chronically ill

Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing

Inappropriate

Person with a Disability

Wheelchair bound

Mental handicap

The Blind

Mentally ill

Sickly

Hearing impaired

Deaf, deaf and disabled

'Deaf', 'deaf' and 'disabled' mean very different things.

British Sign Language (BSL) is an official language in the UK. Deaf culture is very strong for people whose first language is BSL, who identify as a linguistic minority rather than disabled people. People who have become deafened and non-BSL users are more likely to think of themselves as disabled. The term 'disabled' can include 'deaf', but not 'Deaf' people.

Disability confident behaviour

The following list provides some key guidelines to disability confident behaviour:

- Be receptive. Remember that the disabled person will know how to manage their own adjustment needs but be prepared to offer assistance if requested.
- Do not make assumptions. Everyone's experience is unique.
- Do not move wheelchair users without their permission. Grabbing or resting on someone's wheelchair is not appropriate or respectful.
- When communicating with a wheelchair user, try to seat yourself at a level that allows you both to communicate at eye level where possible.
- Do not distract working assistance animals when they are on duty.
- When communicating with someone with a visual impairment introduce yourself and ensure that you inform them when you are leaving a discussion so that they are aware you are departing.
- When guiding someone with a visual impairment ask them how they would like to be assisted and inform them when they are approaching to steps, ramps, railings or doorways.
- If you are using a sign language interpreter, remember to look and speak directly to the person you are communicating with, not the interpreter.

- If you are unsure what someone has said, ask them to repeat themselves. This reduces the risk of misunderstandings. Never guess. If you are still unsure what is being said, explore other ways of communicating.

More information and resources

For information on recruiting and commissioning disabled artists:

[Top Ten Tips for Accessible Recruitment](#)

[Eleven Top Tips for Accessible Commissioning](#)

More information on marketing and visually impaired audiences:

[Accessible Marketing Guide](#)

[Top Tips for Accessible Marketing](#)

[Creating Accessible Events for Visually Impaired People](#)

Information on creating an access rider:

[Creating Your Own Access Rider](#)

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