



attitude
is everything

improving deaf and disabled people's
access to live music

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State of Access Report

A survey of UK live music accessibility

February 2016

#StateofAccess



Supported by
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Foreword

Glastonbury has always prided itself on being an event that is open and inclusive. In 2005 we realised that we needed help to improve our offering to Deaf and disabled customers to ensure that this was the case, so we reached out to Attitude is Everything for their advice and guidance. In the first two years of our partnership, fewer than 100 Glastonbury-goers registered to use the festival's access facilities. A decade on, we now welcome more than 600 Deaf and disabled customers to each festival, alongside having over 100 Deaf and disabled crew members working on the event itself. We are also very proud to have become the first camping festival in the UK to be awarded the Gold standard of the Charter of Best Practice.

When we began working together, it quickly dawned on us that in order to achieve our goals, we needed to appoint someone to oversee - and champion - the accessible facilities at Glastonbury. As a result, we now have a wonderful Access Co-ordinator, Claire Elsam, who acts as a point of contact for customers, artists and crew who have access requirements, alongside overseeing the continual development of access facilities on site and the recruitment of our access stewards. We have learnt that having a well-trained and sympathetic team to address people's concerns and questions gives disabled customers the reassurance they need before, during and after their visit to a festival as big and potentially overwhelming as Glastonbury, as well as ensuring that access at the festival functions correctly.

Our work with Attitude is Everything has shown us that making the festival a place everyone can enjoy is not just about ensuring the site has accessible infrastructure that is fit for purpose. It is also vital that festival goers can easily access clear information about how to buy tickets, what facilities are available onsite and how they can arrange for the necessary support in order to be able to attend. This principle applies to any event and it is for this reason that I urge all venue and festival organisers to ensure that they provide high quality and comprehensive access information based on the guidance of Attitude is Everything.

Here at Glastonbury Festival, our aim is always to make the event a beacon of how things can be better, opening hearts and minds to different ways of seeing the world: greener, cleaner, fairer, kinder, a lot more peaceful and a lot more fun. We see absolutely no reason why this shouldn't extend to Deaf and disabled festival goers, and we're excited about continuing our work with Attitude is Everything to ensure this.

Emily Eavis, Glastonbury Festival

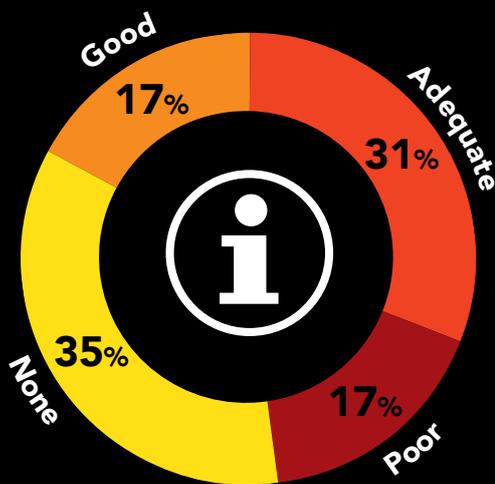


—ACCESS INFORMATION—

We surveyed 386 venue and festival websites:



1/3 provided no access information



Less than 1/5
provided
information
rated as 'good'



2 out of 3
mystery shoppers
were unable to find
out everything they
needed online

PA tickets were not offered by:



Accessible parking described by:



86%

large venues



56%

medium venues



33%

small venues

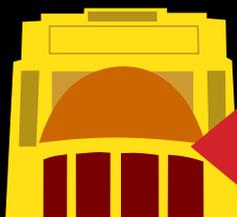
1/3 of venues did not advertise their accessible toilets



Venues



Festivals



60%



74%



provided some access information

About Attitude is Everything

Attitude is Everything improves Deaf and disabled people's access to live music by working in partnership with audiences, artists and the music industry to implement a Charter of Best Practice across the UK.

Having begun as a pilot project in 2000, we are now a fully independent charity and part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio of Organisations. We support venue and festival organisers to understand their legal obligations according to the Equality Act 2010, and implement best practice solutions to deliver reasonable adjustments.

Our central role is enabling the music industry to truly understand the varied access requirements of audiences, artists, staff members and volunteers at gigs and festivals. Our ethos is that Deaf and disabled people should be able to be as independent as they wish to be at live music events.

Mystery shopping is the cornerstone of our work. Our dedicated team of mystery shoppers are Deaf and disabled music fans who continuously report back on the accessibility and overall experience at UK music venues and festivals. This is vital for identifying each venue and festival's strengths and areas for improvement.

We channel the feedback received into our Charter of Best Practice and its associated access guidance. The Charter is now firmly established within the live music industry as a framework with which to examine all aspects of making a venue or festival as accessible as possible for Deaf and disabled people. This framework is structured around a progression route through Bronze, Silver and Gold awards.

Over 100 venues and festivals have successfully gone through the process of having awards signed-off via the Charter, with many more having benefitted from historic and ongoing advice and guidance. In 2014 we opened up the Charter to engage with Local Authorities.

Since the publication of our last State of Access Report in January 2014, we have grown our commercial services via the ongoing delivery of Disability Equality Training sessions and Access Consultancy supporting major outdoor events and arena construction. Over 5,000 people working within the live music industry have now received our training.

In addition to these activities, we continue to run a festival volunteering project, recruiting around 50 volunteers each year in partnership with Glastonbury, Festival Republic and Oxfam Stewarding. We also host our annual showcase Club Attitude, in order to demonstrate best practice gig accessibility.

Timeline

Motivation

The State of Access Report is intended to provide a biennial snap-shot of the live music industry when it comes to accessibility and inclusion for Deaf and disabled people. The aim is to highlight areas of good practice and progression, both in terms of those venues and festivals that have benefitted directly from our assistance, but also across the wider industry. At the same time, the report is an opportunity to reflect upon the barriers that Deaf and disabled people continue to face, and consider best practice solutions.

2011

The first State of Access Report, published in November 2011 and launched by Matthew Hancock MP in the House of Commons, led to a series of debates in Parliament and meetings with Ed Vaizey MP, Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy. The report culminated in a set of aspirations centred on furthering the concept of access provision being promoted and enforced via the licensing process.

2014

The second State of Access Report was published in January 2014 and launched at the Roundhouse in London. The report revealed that 95% of Deaf and disabled people questioned had encountered barriers when seeking to buy tickets to live music. Its call to action focused on ticketing and access-related bookings, with the central aspiration being development of a system to provide universal proof of disability for access provision-booking purposes, and thus the implementation of equality of access when it comes to online ticket bookings.

A major outcome of that report has been the formation of the STAR Accessible Ticketing Working Party, a coalition of ticketing retailers, venue and festival management and Attitude is Everything that is working to create online ticketing schemes that include Deaf and disabled customers needing to book access facilities.

2016

The third State of Access Report was published in February 2016 and launched at Bush Hall in London. This report revisits many topics highlighted in the previous two reports, with central themes being the importance of access information provision, the benefits of viewing access as an extension of customer service, and the need for facilities to be fit for purpose.

As Attitude is Everything has tracked the state of access across live music events over multiple years, it has become clear that there is growing momentum when it comes to positive change in this field. There now exists a significant body of best practice within the industry that is closely related to the work and campaigns carried out by Attitude is Everything since 2000. However, Deaf and disabled people still face significant barriers at all stages of seeking to and actually attending live music events, as presented in this report.

Data and Methodology

Mystery shops

The 2016 State of Access Report is based on a total of 280 mystery shopping reports returned from venue and festival visits, collated between April 2013 and March 2015. This report draws upon data and feedback from a greater number of mystery shops than the previous report, with 184 reports returned from venue visits compared to the 159 used previously, and 96 festival mystery shops in this period compared to the 69 shops that informed the previous State of Access Report.

Changes to the mystery shopping forms

Our mystery shopping forms were redesigned in advance of the period covered in this report to include a finer level of detail in order to better inform both our Charter work and the State of Access Report. One of the key changes was a move towards a greater number of binary yes/no questions to improve the consistency of reporting. The new forms also contain more opportunities for mystery shoppers to provide subjective and qualitative feedback in the form of ratings and text-based answers that are included as quotes in this report. Finally, shoppers are now asked about their impression of a venue or festival post-event, in an attempt to gauge the wider impact of the presence or lack of access facilities.

Our relationship to the venues and festivals shopped

The majority of targeted venues and festivals had not previously worked with Attitude is Everything. Many of them were approached as a result of being shopped in order to pass on feedback, with some going on to join the Charter. 69 venues (38% of those shopped) and 19 festivals (20% of those shopped) were signed up to our Charter of Best Practice by the end of 2015.

Size definition

For this report, we have retained the venue and festival size definitions used in the previous report:

	Venues	Festivals
Small	0 – 499	0 – 9,999
Medium	500 – 5k	10k – 30k
Large	5k+	30k+

Online access information survey

To bolster this report, Attitude is Everything commissioned a survey to assess the prevalence and quality of access information across venues and festivals beyond those mystery shopped.

This survey covered 251 venues and 135 festivals, and included high profile, large-scale and commercial as well as smaller, independent and grassroots venues and festivals.

Venues were sourced from Independent Venue Week, Ents24's list of top 100 venues in terms of page views, and venues engaged by Attitude is Everything via the Charter of Best Practice.

Festivals were sourced from the Association of Independent Festivals, the Guardian's 2015 music festival guide, and the festivals engaged by Attitude is Everything via the Charter of Best Practice.

A basic rating system for access information was applied for the purposes of the survey:

Good

Accessible toilets + Personal Assistant (PA) ticket scheme + physical access + additional facilities described

Adequate

Accessible toilets + PA ticket scheme + physical access mentioned

Poor

1-2 lines of text

Additional sources

In addition to the core mystery shopping data, we commissioned and carried out several other studies that support the findings and recommendations of this report. These include a survey of Deaf and disabled artists carried out in partnership with the Musicians Union, a survey of Deaf and disabled audiences in the North East, email interviews with 10 mystery shoppers on the subject of access information and a survey of 100 mystery shoppers regarding their live music spending habits.

In several sections of the report we also quote external studies and reports, including Mencap's Little Noise 2015 survey, Action on Hearing Loss' 2015 report Hearing Matters, a DWP economic study, the most recent DCMS Taking Part Survey, and Disabled Access Day and Euan's Guide's 2015 Access Survey.

Access Relies on Information

“ I’ve often thought about going to events at the venue, but decided against it as there is no information on their website about access. ”

All customers need information before booking tickets for a gig or festival. This information might include ticket options and prices, travel details, line-ups or amenities offered.

In addition to these basic information requirements, many Deaf and disabled people need to seek out an additional layer of information in order to clarify access facilities on offer and any access-related booking systems.

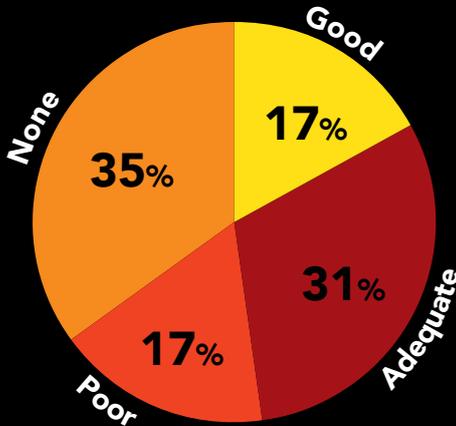
The provision of detailed access information is therefore an essential component of customer service and communications for any venue or festival, including venues that are unable to offer physical access.

Key findings

Our online survey of access information at 386 venues and festivals revealed that 65% offered some access information. However, of these 250 venues and festivals, only 26% provided content rated as ‘good’. 52% of all the venues and festivals surveyed provided poor information or none at all.

Our mystery shoppers also found that only 65% of venues and festivals they visited provided some access information.

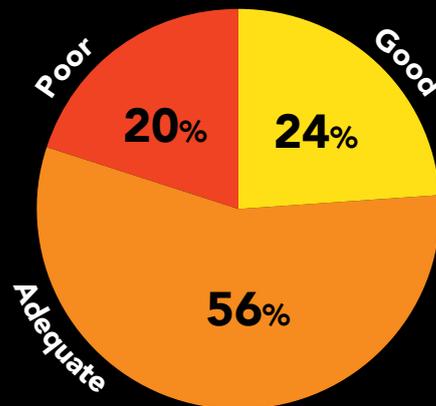
Online access information at venues and festivals:



Venue trends

A total of 251 individual venues were surveyed. 60% of venues were found to have some access information, with the remaining 40% having none. Of the venues with some information, 73% had a dedicated access information page. Only 24% of venues featuring information provided content rated as ‘good’. Of the remaining venues, 56% were rated ‘adequate’ and 20% were rated ‘poor’.

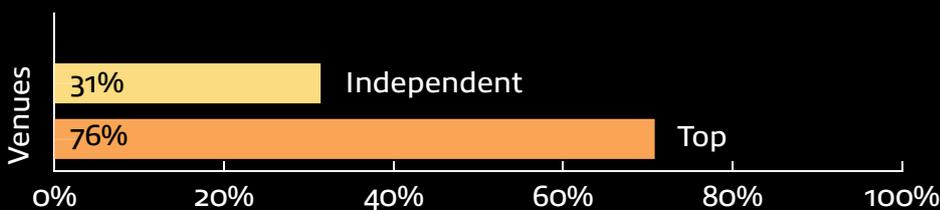
Venues providing access information:



Our survey of Ents24 top music venues found that 76% provided some access-related information, with the remaining 24% providing none. However, only 37% of venues featuring information provided content rated as 'good'. An impressive 87% of venues that featured access information on their websites did so via a dedicated webpage. This list leans towards larger and more established venues, perhaps explaining the higher proportion of venues having some information and a dedicated webpage.

A parallel survey of independent venues revealed that only 31% provided some access information. Of those who did provide web content, 50% were rated as 'poor', meaning that in many cases only a sentence and email address was provided. This highlights the disproportionate number of small and independent venues that currently fail to provide quality access information.

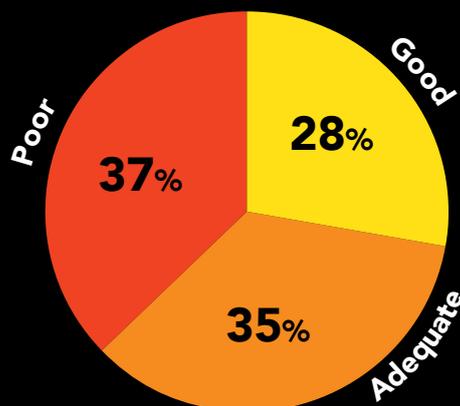
Independent vs Top venues providing online access information:



Festival trends

A total of 135 individual festivals were surveyed. 74% of festivals were found to have some access information, with the remaining 26% having none. Of the festivals with some information, 60% had a dedicated access information page. Only 28% of festivals featuring information provided content rated as 'good'. Of the remaining venues, 35% were rated 'adequate' and 37% were rated 'poor'.

Festivals providing access information:



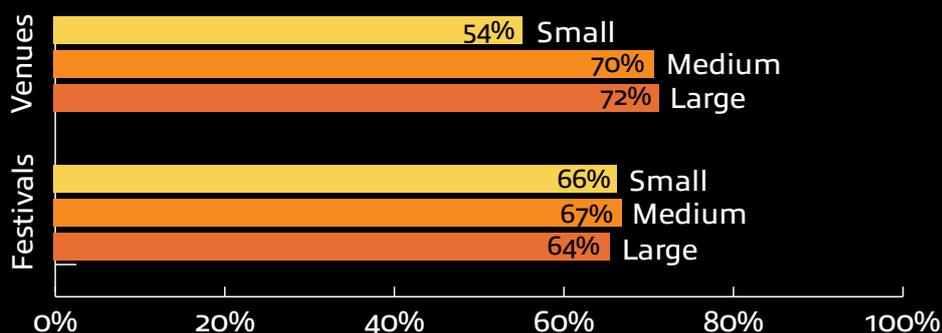
When we surveyed the Guardian’s 85 top festivals, we found that 73% provided some access-related information. 60% of festivals that provided some access information did so via a dedicated webpage. Despite the good number of festivals providing some information, only 21% provided content rated as ‘good’.

We also looked at independent festivals separately and found an almost identical proportion provided some access information – 72%. In contrast to the top festivals list, however, only 47% of independent festivals provided information via a dedicated webpage. The number of information-providing festivals rated as ‘good’ was again only 21%.

Scale trends

Our mystery shoppers found that there was a greater gap between the likelihood of small venues offering access information versus medium and large venues (54% compared to 70% and 72% respectively). With festivals, the difference was more negligible, with 66% of small festivals, 67% of medium festivals, and 64% of large festivals providing information.

Access information available:



This suggests that there might be more of a culture of small festivals looking to larger and more established rivals and seeking to emulate the website provision offered, whereas small venues, with their perhaps increased reliance on social media platforms, might be more likely to overlook website improvements.

The importance of access information

Access information is the gateway for many Deaf and disabled people when it comes to gauging whether or not a festival or venue might meet their access requirements. This might include needing to determine whether or not an accessible toilet is available; whether there are steps and if so, how many; whether or not a PA scheme is provided to enable someone to attend with essential support; or if there is an accessible campsite with facilities to charge power-chair batteries, to give just a few examples.

We know that people simply do not go to events if they cannot find this information. In a survey of Deaf and disabled people that we carried out in the North East in 2015, 60% of respondents said that they had been put off considering events they would otherwise have loved to have gone to because of a lack of access information, therefore lowering their confidence that basic access requirements had been anticipated by organisers. The 2015 Access Survey carried out for Disabled Access Day and Euan's Guide supports this, with 54% of respondents stating that they avoided going to new places if they could not find relevant access information

In many cases, venues or festivals may in fact provide access-related facilities and policies, but leave them unadvertised online. This totally undermines any positive actions that may have been taken by organisers – the damage is done when it comes to the public's perceptions.

“ A lack of access information is very off-putting, as it seems to show that the venue or festival isn't bothered about access needs. ”

Clear and comprehensive access information empowers customers, and gives them the confidence to invest their time and money in visiting a live music event.

The additional benefits of getting it right

Beyond meeting the requirements of Deaf and disabled people and opening the doors to them choosing to buy tickets, getting access information and access booking systems right has several knock-on benefits to events producers. Providing high quality access information:

1. Provides a context within which to reassess access as a team and identify areas for improvement.
2. Cuts down on the burden of responding to customer enquiries.
3. Provides the basis for access-focused staff briefings and hand-outs to improve customer service on the ground.
4. Eliminates the loss of custom caused by Deaf and disabled customers discounting events due to a lack of access information.

As access information improves across sections of the industry, Deaf and disabled customers are increasingly able to draw positive and negative comparisons. Striving for best practice in this area is another way to win the hearts and minds of audiences and differentiate a venue or festival from the competition.

“ Since starting to work with Attitude is Everything in 2012, Ground Control has worked to implement a universal system for providing access information and booking across all of the events we work on. This has provided familiarity and reassurance for Deaf and disabled customers and encouraged people to attend repeat events. It also means that we can set up new events quickly and easily, and that although the facilities and layouts of sites differ, any questions regarding basic access facilities and the booking procedure can be replied to confidently. We are always looking to improve the way we communicate to make things easier for customers with access requirements. ”

Rachel Lewis, Event Coordinator, Ground Control

Access information contents

As the survey of online access information reveals, having a section on a website devoted to access information is only the first step. In order for it to be fit for purpose, its location and contents need to be considered.

The impact of website structure

If information is hard to find, it may as well not exist. This can cause anxiety and inconvenience for potential Deaf and disabled customers.

“ The dedicated access information page was so well hidden that I had to phone the venue to find out the information I needed. ”

This can often arise from information being placed within FAQs, or in other sections of a website that may not be logical for someone seeking to find it. In addition to these barriers, information that requires multiple webpages and large amounts of text to be navigated in order to find it can be very difficult for people to access when using assistive technology due to a vision impairment.

“ I found no access information on the website. I'm a blind screen reader user and if there was any access information on the website it was not obvious to find. The website was very difficult to use with a screen reader. ”

It is for this reason that Attitude is Everything advocates the use of a dedicated 'Access Information' webpage that is placed in a logical section and easily navigated to from the home page of a website.

Facts vs assumptions

The contents of access information is a chance for events producers to communicate a positive message welcoming a significant section of a potential audience. Getting the tone right is crucial. All too often mystery shoppers found information provided that may have been originally composed with good intentions, but ended up presenting a negative and assumption-based image of what was on offer.

In our survey of online access information, we found that 73% of the festivals on the Guardian 2015 Festival Guide list mentioned physical access around a site, but 17% of these festivals provided negative information regarding how difficult their sites might be for disabled people, which could be construed as off-putting.

“ The festival’s only access information on their website went on about how difficult access was likely to be for disabled people as the festival took place in fields. I decided not to bother! ”

Attitude is Everything advocates explicitly welcoming all Deaf and disabled people, and crucially, the provision of facts in the form of distances and descriptions, to enable individuals to make up their own minds about whether or not an event is for them.

Nozstock Festival

When we began to work with Nozstock, the festival organisers were concerned that the hilly and uneven terrain of the rural farm where the festival was held would make it inaccessible for disabled customers. After discussing the issue with Attitude is Everything, they decided the best thing was to be upfront about what customers should expect at the festival. They put detailed information on their website, with descriptions, gradients and pictures of the terrain in different parts of the site. The end result is a wealth of fantastic information that equips disabled customers to make an informed decision about attending and what kit to take. As a result of attending the festival knowing what to expect, our Mystery Shopper thoroughly enjoyed the festival and came away wanting to recommend it to both her friends and to other disabled festival-goers.

The need to be comprehensive

Access information is only fit for purpose if it is comprehensive. Despite the fact that the majority of mystery shopped venues and festivals offered some access information, only 38% of our mystery shoppers were able to find out everything they felt they needed from venue and festival websites.

The need to honour commitments

“ No charging location could be found despite saying charging would be available. ”

Venues and festivals need to ensure that what is promised is delivered, which is why access information should be the end-product of dedicated meetings with all relevant parties to establish what reasonable adjustments might need to be planned and implemented, ahead of recording these policies and facilities and sharing with potential customers.

The Access Survey carried out for Disabled Access Day found that 84% of respondents had found accessibility information on a venue’s website to be misleading or inaccurate.

Timing is crucial

When it comes to annual festivals, or the release of tickets for high-profile venue tours, it is essential that access information is available in advance of tickets going on sale. There have been examples of gigs that have gone on pre-sale before any information has been made available regarding accessible facilities or booking procedures for disabled customers. Shows for artists as large as Adele and Foo Fighters have tended to set up mini-sites to deal with ticketing and have neglected to provide any access information until the complaints start rolling in.

Many festivals that were mystery shopped offered discounted early-bird tickets, and these are often promoted via splash-screens with links to a ticket purchase webpage in lieu of a fully populated website. This results in Deaf and disabled people who need to view access information only being able to take advantage of discounted rates if they are prepared to do so without knowing if their access requirements will be met. Policies such as PA ticket schemes are not time dependant, and specific access facilities on a site can at the very least be bullet-pointed before further information is made available.

The value of a dedicated access contact

Alongside comprehensive access information, the value of venues or festivals providing a dedicated point of contact for access-related queries and bookings cannot be underestimated. Our mystery shopping data revealed that 58% of venues provided a dedicated contact, compared to 72% of festivals.

Many of our shoppers recounted negative experiences when seeking to find out information beyond websites. Sometimes this was due to uninformed staff:

“ Phoned box office to ask about PA tickets. Was initially told they were not available for these events. When I pushed it further the box office assistant checked and I was told that free PA tickets were available. ”

In many other cases, the barrier to gaining clarification regarding access facilities available was simply a lack of response on behalf of a venue:

“ I emailed the general contact address given on website; I had to send the same email twice (over a week later) before I received any response. ”

This lack of engagement due to poor systems in place has inevitable consequences for a venue:

“ I have avoided buying tickets for some venues due to lack of access info on their websites and access email addresses and phone lines not being answered. ”

Access information should be viewed as an essential customer service tool, given that it constitutes a resource to inform staff about access facilities when fielding direct customer enquiries. We recommend implementing a policy concerning how long customers should expect to wait to be responded to, and including this along with contact details in access information.

Booking

“ Even the initial bit about buying a ticket can be complicated. Is there a PA scheme? Are there special ‘disability access’ tickets or do I buy one ticket and apply for a PA ticket separately? Can you get access tickets on pre-sale? All these factors need to be understood beforehand. ”

To conclude this section, we want to return briefly to a key theme from the previous State of Access Report, and highlight the crucial relationship between online information and the implementation of policies and procedures that enable customers to book tickets and access facilities.

Information on bookable access facilities

One of the main things that many Deaf and disabled people look for online when assessing a venue or festival prior to booking tickets is whether or not certain access facilities require pre-booking and the submission of evidence. Attitude is Everything strongly advocates for certain facilities to be pre-bookable, to give peace of mind to customers and assist organisers with the planning and implementation of reasonable adjustments such as PA ticket schemes, accessible viewing platforms and areas, accessible parking and accessible camping.

Our mystery shoppers reported that of the 52% of venues that advertised the presence of a viewing platform or area, 84% stated the need to book access to these locations. This is unsurprising given the often limited space available.

In contrast, 61% of festivals advertised the presence of viewing platforms or areas, but of these only 52% explicitly stated the need to pre-book accreditation to access these areas.

Our website survey revealed that when access information was provided, PA ticket schemes were advertised by 68% of Ents24’s top venues and 77% of Guardian listed festivals. However only 34% of venues asked for proof of disability compared with 63% of festivals. This variation is likely explained by the difference in value between the average gig and festival tickets. Attitude is Everything supports venues and festivals implementing an evidence requirement for issuing PA tickets.

Access booking forms for festivals

“ Once I had my email booking confirmation I completed an online form. I quickly received confirmation that my application had been successful. ”

Attitude is Everything recommends that festivals implement a policy whereby customers purchase their own ticket, and then utilise a ticket reference to book any access facilities they require via a booking form that is available from an ‘Access Information’ webpage. This process needs to be supported by information listing all bookable access facilities, and describing the booking process. This method enables festivals to capture all necessary information in a single place, such as need for a PA, accessible camping, parking or access to viewing platforms, number in party and power-charging requirements.

Online ticketing for venues

“ Not being able to book accessible tickets online is no longer acceptable - if a venue isn't willing to make the effort needed so I can buy tickets in the same way as other people, they are less likely to get my custom. ”

Following on from the previous State of Access Report, Attitude is Everything recommends that venues offer identical ticket buying options to both disabled and non-disabled customers. This includes making tickets available online and should include the facility to book access facilities such as accessible seating or a PA ticket. 38% of Charter venues are now offering accessible tickets online, including the Roundhouse, Band on the Wall and Village Underground.

Proof of disability

“ I really love having my Access Card which means that I don't have to write an essay about my access requirements every time I go to a festival/venue. ”

A universal system to provide proof of disability and thus eligibility for different bookable access facilities is a key component of delivering widespread accessible ticketing.

The Access Card

In our last State of Access Report in 2014, we highlighted how just 2 out of 10 venues were selling tickets to disabled people online and called on the industry to be offering identical booking options to all of their customers.

In partnership with the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers, we have worked closely with the major ticketing retailers to understand and overcome the barriers to offering an equal service. Having called for a universal proof of disability scheme to aid customers with online validation and repeat bookings, we have been working with Credibility's Access Card and the Arts Council Wales-funded Hynt Card to offer a solution.

The Access Card is based on the social model of disability and uses symbols to represent a user's access requirements, providing proof of disability and helping service providers to identify potential barriers to an equal experience. The card is increasingly accepted across the UK, at venues including the O2, Genting and Motorpoint Arenas, The Sage, Forum and all Academy Music Group venues, and festivals including Glastonbury, Download, Reading and Bestival.

Access Covers the Basics

“ The festival has a lovely atmosphere, all the staff seem more than willing to help out or find someone who can. The accessible facilities and services made the experience even better. ”

In this section, we will examine feedback that relates to the core aspects of travelling to and being at an event. The ‘basics’ presented here are the topics that affect the live music experience for the majority of disabled people.

PA ticket schemes

85% of festivals shopped offered PA tickets, and 72% of venues.

PA ticket schemes are essential to enable people who might require the support of another person (or more than one person) in order to attend a gig or festival. Recently settled discrimination cases support the argument for PA tickets being a non-negotiable means for providing an equal service according to the Equality Act. All Charter venues and festivals provide PA ticket schemes.

Travel and arrival

Pre-travel information

Only 31% of mystery shoppers received additional or more detailed access information after booking access facilities. We strongly advocate post-booking communication with customers, to ensure people have up-to-date information, are aware of everything that is on offer and have access to information tailored to their confirmed visit, such as an access map for festivals.

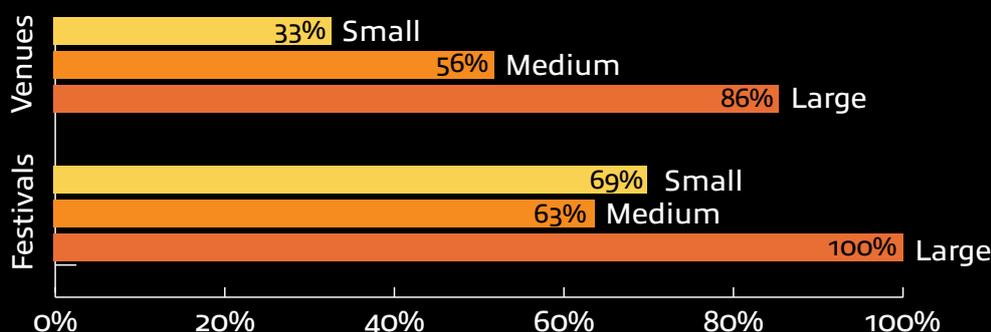
Parking

64% of venues shopped advertised Blue Badge parking. This includes venues that signposted the nearest accessible parking when there was no dedicated venue parking.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the larger the venue, the more likely there was to be Blue Badge parking offered or signposted: 86% of large venues advertised Blue Badge parking, compared to 56% of medium venues and 33% of small venues.

78% of festivals advertised Blue Badge parking. 100% of large festivals offered accessible parking, compared to 63% of medium festivals and 69% of small events.

Parking described by venues and festivals:



There is no reason why venues or festivals of any size cannot signpost customers to the nearest Blue Badge parking locations, even if there is no dedicated parking available.

Having parking and ensuring it is fully accessible can be two different things. Festival organisers need to ensure that as well as being located in an accessible location for wristband exchange and any accessible campsite, it is properly signposted on the ground.

“ Finding the car park was extremely difficult, as there were only directions to one car park, not the car park that had the disabled parking in it. ”

Step-free access to venues

67% of the venues visited had step-free main entrances. If a physically accessible main entrance is not possible, use of alternative entrances is always an option. Coupled with well-briefed staff, consideration of access routes, and prior warning in access information, this zero-cost solution can work very well for customers.

“ When we were ushered into building via a side entrance, a security person was waiting by that door for us. He gave us our wristbands and gave my PA the actual ticket in exchange for the e-ticket. I did not have to queue to get in at all. ”

Early entry to venues

“ I used the early entrance system so they were expecting me. This was great as it was very cold and there was a long queue. Once inside the building I was able to sit, I was greeted by staff personally and they explained that I would be escorted to my seat by a member of staff. ”

The option to pre-arrange early entry to a venue for access reasons was reported at 19% of venues. Again, this is a policy that can be implemented at any venue, and can significantly improve the experience of some disabled customers.

Box office and wristband exchange

Step-free access

Mystery shoppers found that 84% of venues and 94% of festivals surveyed offered step-free access to any box office or wristband exchange.

The main access issue found at festivals in this area is the use of cabins with high windows for customer service. Some Charter festivals choose to construct ramps to negate this barrier. Alternatively, physical barriers can be easily overcome by tweaks to customer service, such as briefing staff to leave a cabin to provide a face-to-face service.

Hearing loop for customer service

As Action on Hearing Loss's 2015 report Hearing Matters highlighted, there are more than 11 million people in the UK with some form of hearing loss, or one in six of the population. At least 1.4 million of those people use hearing aids and would therefore benefit from the presence of a hearing loop to amplify spoken word.

47% of venues were reported as providing a hearing loop at the box office, a large increase on the 20% of venues logged as having a box office loop in the previous State of Access Report. 19% of festivals provided a hearing loop at their wristband exchanges.

We advocate having hearing loops at any location where customers are expected to interact verbally with staff – namely when purchasing or collecting tickets and wristbands, and at information points.

Toilets

The importance of advertising facilities

The presence of an accessible toilet was advertised by 61% of venues, whilst mystery shoppers reported that 88% of venues had one or more available on the night. This disparity shows how important it is for venues to provide comprehensive access information that shows off what they have to offer.

The need for adequate coverage

The presence of accessible toilets was advertised by 70% of festivals. However, only 52% of festivals surveyed had accessible toilets at all toilet blocks. Lack of adequate coverage at outdoor events can pose such a major issue for customers that it can ruin a person's experience.

“ The music was good. But it was a weekend of high anxiety with the toilet situation. I had to stop drinking liquid because I was scared of not being able to go to the loo. ”

The need for facilities that are fit for purpose

“ Very clean, functioning with grab rails and clear info on the walls on what to do if there were any problems including various contact names and numbers as well as a pull cord alarm, mirror and powerful hand dryer and easy turn handled taps. ”

An accessible toilet is only an accessible toilet if its size, fixtures and fittings are fit for purpose. Whilst there are fantastic examples to be found, we regularly find toilets with inaccessible and missing fittings that render them unfit for purpose. We call on all venues and festival toilet providers to ensure that what they offer meets best practice standards.

Irwin Mitchell's Access All Areas campaign, which examined access at several venues and festivals in 2015, highlighted a range of basic access facilities at venues and festivals that were let down and often rendered unfit for purpose by issues that could have been easily addressed:

- A venue viewing platform that was overcrowded due to people with VIP tickets being allowed to access it.
- Accessible venue parking that was only signposted from one direction, making it hard to find.
- Festival toilets that required a specific key, that was only obtainable from an inaccessible location.

As we shall present in this report, poorly briefed staff were found to play a key role in rendering facilities ineffective:

- Festival accessible toilets that were spread thinly around a site, with staff not being able to direct customers to them.
- An accessible buggy service at a festival that staff were unaware of.

Food, drink and merchandise

38% of venues visited by mystery shoppers featured a lowered bar, compared to 22% in the previous State of Access Report. This is one example of the type of access improvement that can be achieved simply by looking again at a space with accessibility in mind and implementing a policy.

In the majority of cases, festival bars are usually step-free, serving out of or within tented structures. This inherent physical accessibility means that the majority of festival bars are prime locations for lowered bars. Despite this, dedicated lowered bars were observed at only 23% of festivals surveyed.

Beyond physically making lowered bars, customer service provided by staff can also be integral to providing an inclusive and equal experience.

“ I told the barman that I was vision impaired and asked him to tell me what drinks there were. He patiently ran through what was on offer giving sufficient detail. ”

In the best scenarios, physical adaptations and customer service go hand-in-hand, making a significant difference to a customer's experience.

“ [The bar] had a lower counter and the young woman who served me was really helpful. She stretched out the card reader so I could hold it and use it and interacted with me directly and exclusively instead of my friends. Up to that point, I was starting to feel invisible. ”

Venues and festivals should anticipate where barriers might arise, and properly brief staff to be vigilant when it comes to spotting when someone requires assistance.

“ The venue was packed. Security spotted that I was having difficulty and helped me to get through the crowd to the toilets and bar. ”

Lowered bars at festivals are a great example of how events of any scale can achieve the same outcome, either in a DIY manner or in partnership with bar suppliers:

2000trees

Based on specifications provided by Attitude is Everything, 2000trees festival built lowered bars for the first time in 2015. The organisers asked a friend and volunteer who works as a carpenter to construct the lowered sections to add on to their existing bars which are all hand-crafted. He used leftover wood from previous years, painted it white and covered it in vinyl. The organisers briefed the bar management team on their purpose, who then handed down the briefing to bar staff.

BBC Proms in the Park

The lowered bars at this event were the product of collaboration between the event's production company, Festival Republic, and bar supplier Central Catering Services. A dressed table was added to the end of a long modular bar, and the pedestrian exit of a fenced queuing system was utilised as the access route to and from the sign-posted lowered section. Viewing platform accreditation doubled up as the means by which to gain access to the bar via the stewarded pedestrian exit. A lowered bar was also placed at the back of the viewing platform for the convenience of customers.

Accessible camping

“ I wanted to go to a festival with my friends this year, but there was no information about access on the website. I contacted them to ask if there would be any charging or disabled access facilities on the campsite and their response was no, so I couldn't go. ”

If a festival features camping, it is reasonable for the public to expect the provision of accessible facilities that considers customer arrivals, the layout of the site, and proximity to stages.

67% of the festivals surveyed for this report featured camping. Of these festivals, 78% provided a dedicated section of public camping for disabled customers.

There are now festivals in the UK providing fantastic accessible campsites that truly stand out compared to the competition in terms of going beyond best practice and providing exemplary customer service.

However, despite many festivals claiming to have accessible campsites, as we find in other areas, these might not always be fit for purpose. For example, whilst 80% of 'accessible' campsites featured dedicated stewards, only 64% featured power charging for wheelchair and scooter batteries or medical equipment and 40% did not provide accessible shower units.

Viewing platforms and areas

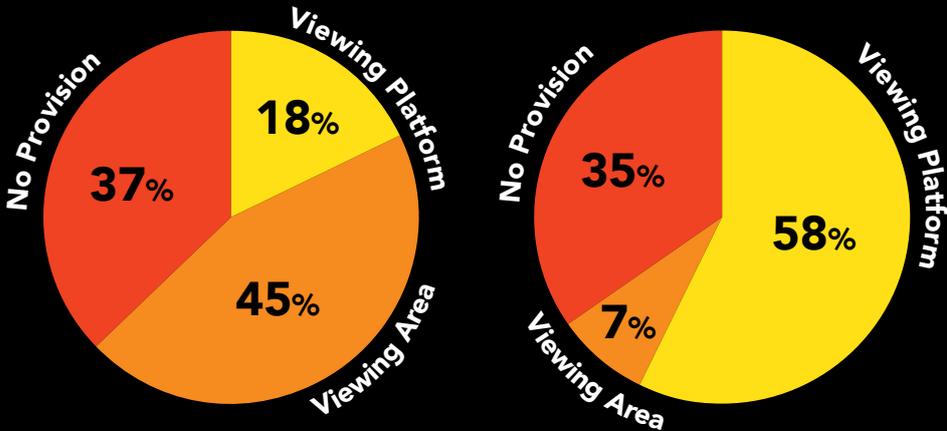
Having access to a sightline is a basic requirement for the majority of Deaf and disabled live music attendees. These facilities cater not only for wheelchair users, but for many other people that may require the option to sit or stand and lean on something, an elevated position to gain better audio clarity, or a sheltered position away from crowds.

Prevalence

63% of venues surveyed featured a viewing platform or area. Of these venues, 28% featured a built viewing platform, whilst the majority (72%) had a dedicated viewing area in an elevated position such as a balcony. This means that only 18% of all venues surveyed by mystery shoppers featured a dedicated viewing platform.

65% of festivals shopped featured a dedicated viewing platform or area. Of these, 90% of these festivals featured viewing platforms at their main stage, with the remaining 10% reported as having viewing areas at ground level.

Viewing platforms and areas at venues and festivals



Build and location

In many cases viewing platforms or areas, whilst present, may be not fit for purpose due to their physical build and location, and/or poor staffing. Indeed, 10% of venue and 5% of festival viewing platforms and areas tested by mystery shoppers provided a poor view.

Mystery shopper feedback reflected the different ways in which viewing platforms and areas can be rendered unfit for purpose:

“ There was no signage to indicate that this was a disabled viewing area or staff available to ask for assistance. ”

“ The area really was just an extra wide corridor, so constantly had people coming and going alongside it. ”

“ The fencing was at eye level if you were seated. As the area was on ground level, if anyone outside of the viewing area was standing up in front of it, your view was completely blocked. ”

“ The sightline was very poor as the side poles and open curtains of the marquee blocked a lot of the view. As the platform is to the side of the stage it is impossible to see all of the stage. ”

Staffing and accreditation

“ Staff were obstructive when I tried to access the platform with my ticket. One steward told me I didn't look disabled enough to be using the platform. I ended up being very upset because of the way I was treated and this ruined the gig for me and my PA. ”

86% of venues and 84% of festivals with a viewing platform or area provided dedicated staff at those locations, an action we strongly advocate.

However, staff have to be supported with an accreditation system that ensures that Deaf or disabled customers are not questioned about the nature of their impairments in order to determine whether or not they have a right to access a viewing platform or area. It is for this reason that we recommend making access pre-bookable, so that staff simply need to check accreditation.

Glastonbury Festival

Whilst being the largest and most famous festival in the UK, Glastonbury provides countless examples of the ways in which basic access can be improved in a DIY and low-cost manner that could be applied at any event:

- Making dedicated access routes behind stages to cut travel distances and provide better surfaces to traverse.
- Providing space for complementary therapies to be brought into the accessible campsite, offering an experience that otherwise requires crossing the site to get to.
- Partnering with a local community transport service to provide volunteers and accessible minibuses in order to offer a shuttle service from the carpark to the campsite, and around the site.
- Using a dedicated team of Access Stewards to run the accessible campsite and viewing platforms at stages, including checking pre-booked accreditation wristbands.
- Providing stewards to assist customers with pitching tents upon arrival.
- Implementing viewing areas in spoken word tents in partnership with area organisers.
- Developing a locking system for un-stewarded accessible toilets around the site.
- Placing accessible toilets behind stewarded gates to better protect them.
- Providing lowered bars in partnership with bar suppliers.
- Providing accessible fridge storage for medication.
- Providing pre-bookable viewing platform wristbands.

Access Includes the Whole Experience

“ When I go to a concert I want to have the whole experience. I want to go somewhere that I feel valued as a person. ”

It is only in relatively recent years that venues and festivals in the UK have begun to address the need to provide viewing platforms and areas for Deaf and disabled attendees, and thus recognise the crucial role a protected sightline can have when it comes to making performances on stages accessible. A protected sightline is now accepted by many across the industry as a default audience need to be addressed. But all too often, the other sensory and cognitive aspects of accessing what a gig or festival has to offer are still overlooked.

The ‘full experience’ includes accessing the moment of performance, but also extends to the creative ways in which organisers can improve the accessibility of the sensory and cognitive journey that an attendee undertakes to actually experience a performance.

Access to the performance

Ironically, the need for customers to actually be able to hear live music and/or access lyrics and the words spoken by artists in-between songs and during spoken word performance continues to be overlooked by the vast majority of venues and festivals.

Assisted hearing systems

Assisted hearing systems (hearing loop and infra-red systems) in performance spaces are a key way in which a barrier can be removed for people with hearing impairments by amplifying sound on an individual basis using their personal hearing aid or a headset. An assisted hearing system in the performance space was reported as being available at 38% of venues shopped, but only logged by mystery shoppers at 10% of festivals, so there is still considerable work to do in this area until this becomes the norm. The figure for venues is undoubtedly skewed by the proportion of larger venues shopped, as this does not reflect the situation across the industry. When hearing loops are present, it is essential that they are installed properly by a trained person, and tested in advance of any performance.

Cecil Sharp House

Cecil Sharp House used a 2015/16 refurb as an opportunity to install a hearing loop system into their main performance space, Kennedy Hall, for the first time. The venue had not previously been set up to offer this service. A specialist loop installation company was used to ensure that the loop was set up correctly. This was in response to demand from audiences and hiring groups, alongside the venue’s long-term aspirations to become more accessible. In order to capitalise on having a new access facility, specific promotion about the new service was planned to ensure that existing and new audiences were informed.

Captioning

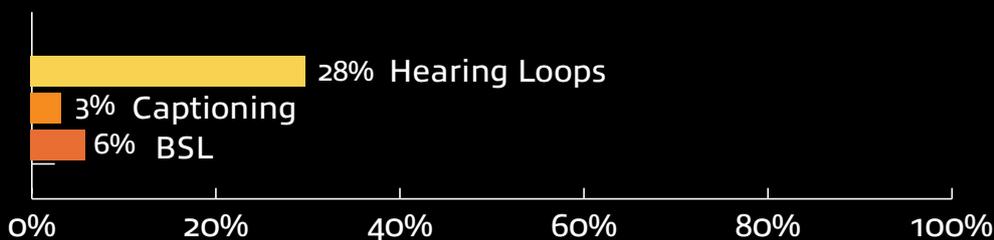
As highlighted in the last State of Access Report, captioning of lyrics and live-subtitling of spoken word is an increasingly desired service amongst audiences with hearing impairments. Despite this, captioning remains largely undeveloped in the world of live music, with only 4% of venues surveyed advertising the possibility of captioning, and no festivals at all.

A snap-survey of attendees at the 2015 Club Attitude gig, which featured captioning and live-subtitling, found that the majority of people felt that it impacted positively upon the experience and, if they did not have a hearing impairment themselves, knew someone who did who would benefit from such a service. The majority of people assumed that a major venue would provide this service upon request.

British Sign Language

For some Deaf people, British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation is their preferred means by which to access spoken word and sung lyrics. However, interpretation services were only advertised as available at 6% of venues and festivals. Festivals now providing a service include Glastonbury, Latitude, Reading and Leeds.

Assisted performance available at venues and festivals



Access for people with vision impairments

Whilst the adoption of 'viewing' platforms and areas highlight an awareness of the importance of a view for the majority of live music attendees, the access requirements of those with vision impairments are rarely taken into account, despite the vast wealth of creative possibilities that exist when it comes to producing audio description of visual spectacles, as demonstrated by the work of VocalEyes. This is a topic that Attitude is Everything plans to address further through future collaborative guidance, as there is massive potential for the needs of live music attendees with vision impairments to be integrated more fully into event and performance planning.

Relaxed performances

Attitude is Everything strongly supports ongoing work, primarily in the classical music sector, to develop models of audience outreach to engage people with dementia, learning disabilities and autism. A concept well-established in the world of theatre, relaxed performances have yet to become the norm across music venues, but there is a considerable amount of exciting work being carried out involving collaboration between venues, artists and access professionals in this area.

Wigmore Hall

Wigmore Hall has worked with people living with dementia in care homes and the community for a number of years, and is now undertaking a wide-ranging project to transform itself into a dementia-friendly venue. Dementia information sessions are being provided for front-of-house and office-based staff by a member of the Learning department - a Dementia Champion with the Alzheimer's Society - with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding. Tailored concerts, creative projects and events are offered to people living with dementia and their families throughout the year, including an annual concert in Carers Week and work in partnership with Westminster Arts and The Royal Academy of Music. The physical environment is also being re-examined, with a re-vamp of directional signage being directed by best practice guidance on providing information for people with forms of dementia.

Beyond basic access information

Another area ripe for development is the provision of tailored information that goes beyond that set out in the Access Relies on Information section of this report. This includes information in audio form. Some fantastic examples in this field are beginning to emerge, such as Band on the Wall's implementation of an audio programme guide, featuring ticket prices, door opening times and clips of performing artists.

There is also a body of work building up in the field of information provision for people with learning disabilities and autism, for whom prior information about the sensory and cognitive experience to expect when at a venue or festival can be incredibly beneficial.

Just So Festival

Just So is a family festival with a wide range of children's performances over the weekend. The festival wanted to find a way to support families with children with autism or learning disabilities in a way that fitted into the ethos of the festival. They worked with their performers to categorise each show within the main programme, such as:

- Make Some Noise (performances where children would be welcome to move about or make as much noise as they wanted)
- Sit Back and Relax (performances where children could feel confident they could watch without being asked to participate)
- Sensory Spectacle (a "very visual and nicely noisy" sensory experience)
- Quiet Corner (a relaxed space away from the hustle and bustle of the festival)

This enabled families including children with autism or learning disabilities to make informed decisions about which performances would best suit their children's needs whilst also helping all families at the festival make decisions about which performances they would enjoy the most.

Access Depends on Customer Service

“ I wanted to go to an outdoor festival at a country house. The advert said it was standing room only. I telephoned to ask if I could use my camp chair or if they had a viewing area. They said no, and that if I sat I would cause a hazard. As a result, I said I didn't want to go to their old-fashioned and out of touch festival. I didn't pay for tickets and the seven friends that would have gone with me didn't go either. ”

Interactions with staff can make or break the experience for Deaf and disabled customers. At the same time, the access facilities and policies implemented by organisers are dependent upon well-informed and disability-aware staff in order to render them effective. The best facilities in the world can be critically let down if staff cannot provide the necessary stewarding or descriptive and wayfinding information in an appropriate and timely manner.

Venues do have an advantage over festivals in this area, as they are far more likely to utilise paid, regular and trained staff than festivals, where much stewarding is carried out by temporary volunteers. This is perhaps reflected in the feedback from mystery shoppers, who rated staff disability awareness an average of 6.9/10 for venues compared to 5.8/10 for festivals.

The benefits of informed staff

Often, poor stewarding is the natural consequence of poor staff briefing, but well-versed and helpful stewards can significantly contribute to a customer's positive impression of an event, especially when combined with organisers ensuring that a sufficient number of stewards are provided.

“ The festival had improved upon last year. There were more staff within the access tent assisting people with putting up tents. There were access maps and information. Staff were very knowledgeable about the access and facilities. ”

The same can be said in a venue context:

“ I rang up and spoke to a very helpful agent in the Box Office call centre and she was very understanding of the needs of disabled customers and made some useful suggestions and tried her very best to get the best seats. ”

The ultimate impact of effective and considerate access-related stewarding is that it encourages disabled customers to return.

“ This was the best staff experience I have had at any festival (and I've been to a few) and the staff and their positive attitudes would encourage me to visit the festival again next year. ”

Simple changes involving staff

Having great staff is one thing, but recognising the easy ways in which staff can extend customer service and offer equality of experience is also important. A member of staff recognising how an element of an event could be tweaked on the fly can profoundly impact on disabled people's experience.

“ [He] went to get the face painters to come up to the platform so that I could join in like everyone else. I couldn't get down to them but I really wanted to have mine done too. He didn't even pause. He just did it. I thanked him during the course of the evening and told him how welcome he had made us feel and that he had made our evening even better. ”

This is a great example of a simple action taken on the ground by a thoughtful member of staff that could so easily be translated into prior event planning and staff briefing so that it happens automatically and is a seamless part of a truly inclusive experience.

The impact of poor disability awareness

Several themes emerged in the feedback received from mystery shoppers when negative experiences related to staff were shared.

The apparent lack of Disability Awareness Training for staff was starkly highlighted in cases where shoppers reported issues concerning communication and the use of PA support at a gig or festival. There are still many occasions when people using PAs to access live events find staff unprepared for what are in reality very basic demands when it comes to how to interact with them appropriately.

“ When we went through security, they barely acknowledged me and spoke to my friends instead. They wouldn't ask me anything directly, everything was aimed at my friends and they didn't seem to want to communicate with me at all. ”

This is often caused by a lack of confidence when interacting with people who are identifiable as being a Deaf or disabled person, and wrongly made assumptions about what it means to be an attendee who has PA support. Disability Awareness Training is undoubtedly the answer, as is ensuring that policies such as PA ticket schemes are linked up with comprehensive briefing of staff to ensure continuity and high quality customer service.

“ Disability Equality Training not only enthused the team, but gave them life lessons which will be useful in their capacity as public facing employees as well as in their everyday lives. Since working with Attitude is Everything, we have seen growth in the number of disabled people coming to gigs, with a good number of repeat customers due to the policies we now have in place. I am acutely aware that this would not have been possible if my operational team had not been able to provide excellent customer service informed by disability awareness. ”

Ty Vigrass, Operations Manager, Village Underground

Access accreditation supports staff

The actions of organisers can impact staff/customer interactions in other ways. There were many cases reported where venues or festivals lacked prior-bookable accreditation schemes for access facilities such as viewing platforms, whilst apparently having instructed or simply left staff on the ground to determine who should be granted access.

““ The awkwardness with the steward who couldn't figure out if I was disabled or not was embarrassing, especially when around other people. ””

Attitude is Everything provides comprehensive guidance on the accreditation and stewarding of bookable access facilities in part to promote the idea that no Deaf or disabled person should have to be questioned whilst at a gig or festival as to the nature of their impairment or right to access a certain facility.

The law and staff on the ground

Some reports suggested that bad policy and practice can persist for years if unchallenged. Left unchecked, policies and 'ways of doing things' can become significant barriers and indeed illegal activities under the Equality Act 2010.

““ The security staff didn't want to let my partner's guide dog in. They said they'd refused guide dogs for 15 years and no one had ever complained. ””

Whilst audiences are becoming more informed and equipped to demand what is legally entitled to them, many 'service providers' - including venues and festivals across the UK - continue with discriminatory practices due to a lack of enforcement when it comes to the legal requirement to implement reasonable adjustments.

All venues and festivals should ensure that they are informed about their duties according to the Equality Act 2010, in the same manner in which other legal requirements for putting on events should be taken seriously.

Staff should be supported

Clearly, there is much that can be done to ensure that staff are well equipped to offer great customer service to Deaf and disabled attendees. Whilst highlighting some examples of very poor customer service in this report, Attitude is Everything recognises that the vast majority of event staff are wonderful assets to organisers. This is why it is so crucial that they not be let down by lack of instruction and training.

““ The vast majority of the staff tried their best and made every effort to help. However, they clearly had no proper accessibility training and lacked the resources to help as much as they would have liked to. ””

Investment in training can have a profound impact upon the customer service provided to Deaf and disabled people, and the working practices of venues and festivals themselves.

Access Generates Custom

“ I wanted to go to an outdoor festival at a country house. The advert it was standing room only. I telephoned to ask if I could use my camp chair or if they had a viewing area. They said that if I sat I would cause a hazard. Therefore I said thank you I don't want to come to your old fashioned and out of touch festival. I didn't pay for tickets and the seven friends that would have gone with me didn't go either. ”

A key consumer group

Deaf and disabled people are an incredibly significant consumer group in the UK that make up over 12 million people or 1 in 5 of the population. According to DWP figures, their household income, the so-called 'purple pound', is around £212 billion a year.

Consideration of household income is highly relevant when considering the economics of making live music accessible, because it can never be considered to be an issue that solely relates to individual Deaf and disabled attendees. People go to gigs and festivals together, as well as making recommendations to friends and family members.

Deaf and disabled people are now estimated to make up 15% of live music attendees according to the most recent DCMS Taking Part Survey, so their preferences and access requirements demand to be taken into account.

Spending power of mystery shoppers

A survey carried out for Attitude is Everything's 15th Anniversary revealed that on average our mystery shoppers go to 9 gigs and 2 festivals a year. To demonstrate the economic impact of poor access, shoppers reported being unable to attend an average of 4 gigs a year due to inaccessible venues. Our regular shoppers spend over £1,000 each on music-related activity every year, including nearly £500 on live music tickets alone.

Missing audiences

Alongside the large numbers of Deaf and disabled people who do engage with the world of live music, there are also many people who are disengaged, in part due to the barriers that persist within the industry, and people's perception of what the live music experience will be like.

According to Mencap, there are approximately 1.5 million people living in the UK who have a learning disability. In Mencap's Little Noise 2015 survey, focused on people aged between 18 and 35 who have a learning disability, 82% of respondents stated that they wished to go to more music concerts. 1 in 4 had never been to a gig or concert before, 45% were afraid of approaching staff, and 29% feared being bullied by members of the public. Outreach work and training of staff to create a welcoming environment is the key – indeed 56% said that they would be more likely to go to a venue if they could be confident that staff knew about learning disability and therefore would treat them appropriately.

Access drives new business

92% of festival mystery shoppers and 87% of venue shoppers stated that they would recommend the event they had visited to friends and family. Such recommendations only come about when a person feels that an overall experience has been a positive one. Experiences relating to accessibility and inclusion obviously have the potential to impact these perceptions. When asked if they would specifically recommend venues or festivals to other Deaf or disabled people, the percentages are tellingly lower: 74% of festival attendees felt able to recommend the festival to others, and only 70% of venue attendees. This clearly demonstrates how getting access right can influence audience recommendations.

Access improvements retain customers

82% of festival shoppers and 87% of venue shoppers said they would go again. Whilst these are reasonably high percentages, venues and festivals obviously need to ask themselves what can they do to ensure that 100% of Deaf and disabled audience wish to return.

Supporting this point, the 2015 Access Survey carried out for Disabled Access Day and Euan's Guide found that 86% of people were very likely to revisit a venue if they experienced good accessibility.

Getting access right and making improvements are key factors in audience retention:

- “ I always go to this festival because I know the accessibility is always spot on. ”
- “ All my needs were met... I will look out for performances at this venue and other venues [run by the company]. The overall experience gets better and better each time - they are obviously serious about making the venue as accessible as possible. ”
- “ I'm starting to feel 'at home' and it usually takes me three or four visits to get that feeling. This festival is definitely trying to improve the access facilities and have made visible improvements from last year. ”

Access Goes Beyond the Audience

Finally, it is important to briefly highlight that the subject of accessibility and inclusion for Deaf and disabled people extends far beyond the realm of customers.

Getting things right for customers goes a very long way towards catering to the potential access requirements of staff, volunteers and artists, but there are specific things that can be addressed to ensure that all aspects of an event are as accessible as possible.

Staff

All businesses have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments and not discriminate against Deaf and disabled people when it comes to recruitment and employment. The benefits of having people with lived experience of access requirements on staff teams cannot be underestimated.

The Albany

The Albany is a performing arts centre driven by the cultural diversity and creative mix of South East London. As an organisation whose mission is to provide a resource where 'diversity and creativity thrive', the Albany has a very strong interest in making sure that not only are disabled people represented in their activities and on the Board, but also in the people who work there.

In order to achieve this, the Albany set up an Access Working Group, which consists of people from every Albany team, as well as representatives from residents, associate artists and Board members. The first aim of this group was to deliver an access plan, share good practice and promote accessibility in all areas. One of the specific areas that the group decided to concentrate on was accessible recruitment, which they then tackled by:

- Attending workshops on Access To Work and mental health in the workplace.
- Forging partnerships with organisations to assist in the promotion of opportunities to disabled people.
- Setting up and hosting application-writing and interview workshops, targeted at members of disability-related groups.
- Developing new group assessment and task-based recruitment methods to make the interview process more accessible.
- Welcoming applicants bringing job coaches into interviews, and accommodating picture-based communication as part of this process.
- Monitoring the numbers of applicants and employees self-identifying as Deaf or disabled people over multiple years.

5 employees with self-declared disabilities were appointed over a 2-year period as a direct result of this positive action.

Volunteers

Given festival volunteering's role in enabling many people to overcome the cost barriers of attending festivals whilst for some providing invaluable events experience for future careers, Attitude is Everything is passionate about the need to ensure that opportunities are as accessible as possible.

Oxfam Stewarding

Oxfam Stewarding are one of the major UK suppliers of festival stewards who have worked closely with Attitude is Everything to make what they offer accessible. Alongside commissioning training for team managers, adding basic disability awareness to steward training sessions and enabling volunteers to list access requirements in the application process, Oxfam Stewarding have put in place a wide variety of adjustments at events to enable people to volunteer:

- Providing seats for volunteers that cannot stand up for long periods of time.
- Enabling volunteers to bring a Personal Assistant.
- Ensuring that volunteers with vision impairments had adequate light to work.
- Supporting volunteers to confirm a secure location for medication storage.
- Providing charging points for volunteers using power wheelchairs in Oxfam campsites.
- Making adjustments to the lengths of shifts and breaks.

Artists

Attitude is Everything carried out a survey of Deaf and disabled artists in partnership with the Musician's Union in 2015, which highlighted many of the issues faced by artists:

“ Events with good accessibility for disabled customers [can] forget totally about performers' needs. ”

Venues and festivals are all too frequently missing artists on their line-ups due to inaccessibility:

“ I have stopped approaching venues I don't know due to having to explain my needs and having bad experiences. ”

A little bit of creativity can often overcome apparent barriers:

“ So few stages have wheelchair access that I usually perform at floor level in front of the stage. ”

The experience of artists can be negatively impacted by a lack of consideration back-stage:

“ Accessible toilets are rare, but when they are present they often 'double up' as store rooms. ”

When facilities are available, artists with hidden impairments can still face barriers:

“ I have been refused access to lifts and even disabled toilets. ”

To sum up the message from artists to event organisers:

“ Be aware that artists can have access requirements too! ”

Conclusions

The purpose of this report is to bring the real-life experiences of Deaf and disabled people into focus and present the simple ways in which venues and festivals can make live music events accessible and truly inclusive. The conclusions and next steps of the third State of Access Report build upon those of the previous two reports, adding to a growing body of guidance and evidence produced by Attitude is Everything in order to support the live music industry to embrace Deaf and disabled audiences, artists, staff and volunteers.

This report is a document of contrasts, not only in terms of the positive and negative experiences highlighted, but in the way in which new and innovative practice is shared alongside the issues that continue to persist across the industry and have done since before Attitude is Everything was founded over 15 years ago.

Our ethos continues to be that barriers can be overcome with collaboration, creativity, and the right attitude. Attitude is Everything firmly believes that the live music industry is moving in the right direction, approaching the tipping point at which consideration of access becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Access information

Excellent customer service for Deaf and disabled people begins with excellent access information. Getting information right can be achieved by any size of venue or festival, regardless of physical accessibility. Whilst most venues and festivals provide some access information, a significant minority provide none at all. Many websites with access information utilise dedicated pages, which we strongly endorse. However, the information contained on these pages is often incomplete or lacking in detail. There is clearly a need for straightforward universal guidance on how to create high quality access information.

Customer service

It is essential for the industry to view the subject of access for Deaf and disabled people through the prism of customer service rather than as a niche topic affecting a few individuals. This demographic is a growing and increasingly demanding consumer group that needs to be catered for, with rights that have now been enshrined for over 20 years following the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Equality Act 2010.

Fit for purpose

All too often, the act of having access facilities appears to constitute a 'ticked box', with apparently little thought given to whether or not they are set up and operated to be truly fit for purpose. When investing in improving accessibility it is in the interests of organisers to take proper ownership of this process and demand that access facilities are designed, maintained and stewarded to be as effective as possible. All of our guidance exists to support organisers with this goal.

Access Starts Online

In order to meet the clearly identified need for universal guidance on how to create quality access information, the publication of the third State of Access Report heralds the launch of Attitude is Everything's Access Starts Online campaign to encompass all UK venues and festivals.

This campaign was soft-launched in partnership with the Association of Independent Festivals in November 2015 and Independent Venue Week in January 2016, and proved to be highly effective at affecting change.

Five steps

Any venues or festival can now follow a simple process to improve their access information:

1. Download the **Access Starts Online – Access Info Guide and Template** from Attitude is Everything's website.
2. Produce access information based on this guidance.
3. Seek support from Attitude is Everything during this process if required.
4. Place this information on a dedicated access information webpage.
5. Request an Attitude is Everything sign-off to receive a digital 'stamp of approval'.

Our aims

We will promote this resource as widely as possible, in order to impact venues and festivals far beyond those engaged on the Charter of Best Practice. The need to assist small and independent venues to implement and improve access information is a key priority, and we will work with industry umbrella organisations to identify the barriers to change that may exist for this demographic and seek to tackle them in partnership.

Industry support

We call on the live music industry to engage with this campaign, and ensure that high quality access information is provided for Deaf and disabled people on all venue and festival websites. This is an achievable goal for any venue or event organiser, including venues that may not be physically accessible. Online access information should be available for all live music events.

ACCESS STARTS ONLINE



Next Steps

In addition to the Access Starts Online campaign, we have identified additional areas of action to follow this report:

Increasing awareness

Having identified the fact that organisers could better cater to the access requirements of people beyond those with physical impairments, we will work with partner organisations to develop a series of toolkits that shine a light on the various ways in which events can be made more accessible for people who fall within different and often invisible impairment groups, such as:

- People with learning disabilities
- People with autism
- People with dementia
- People with mental health conditions
- People with vision impairments
- People with hearing impairments
- People who make involuntary noise

Extending training

We will continue to offer open and bespoke Disability Awareness Training sessions for live music industry professionals, whilst expanding the scope and impact of our training to incorporate train-the-trainer programmes and additional modules such as how to make volunteering accessible.

Empowering organisers

Finally, we are committed to future campaigns that bring event organisers and industry providers together to champion the immense value that exists in ensuring that access facilities are fit for purpose. There is a tremendous opportunity now that access is increasingly on the radar of venues and festivals for the concept of 'value for money' to be shifted from the need to tick a box to the need for invested-in access facilities to truly meet the access requirements of a growing and increasingly discerning Deaf and disabled audience.



This report was launched with the support of Irwin Mitchell

Irwin Mitchell is a leading national law firm which works with disabled people to help them regain their independence and get the most from life.

Accessibility is a huge issue for disabled people when going to music festivals and concerts, whether it involves viewing platforms, suitable accommodation or buying tickets. The ability to enjoy live events is a key condition of independence for many disabled people, so it's incredibly important for music venues to ensure they're as accessible as they should be.

To help raise awareness Irwin Mitchell established 'Access All Areas' which looked to review disability access to festivals and other major events up and down the country, examining all aspects of the experience for music fans who require specialist support to attend such events.

Irwin Mitchell is proud and pleased to have supported Attitude is Everything and their 2016 State of Access Report.



attitude
is everything

improving deaf and disabled people's **access to live music**

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