

# Section two

# Consultation

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## Consultation

To examine and improve access – physical, attitudinal and access to information – talk to disabled people or disabled-led organisations. There are many organisations, consultants, agencies and individuals who offer support and advice. They can provide advice on governance, consultation, resources, local links, and local support. It is useful to develop and encourage your own advisory group of disabled people (contact disability arts organisations for suggestions. See [Useful contacts](#)).

### When and why to consult:

- before new buildings or refurbishments are carried out and before new developments and new services are introduced
- to carry out access audits
- with regard to programming, information and marketing
- when programming sign language interpreted, captioned and audio-described events
- in developing policies and procedures
- in the provision of training and the development of staff and boards' awareness of disability issues
- when producing events in unusual venues, spaces or public sites

Many professional agencies and consultants will provide specialist advice. Local groups and individuals may be keen to offer expertise either for a fee, a donation, or on a voluntary basis. If this is the case, travelling expenses should be paid, refreshments provided, and time and expertise should be properly recognised. Complimentary tickets for performances or invitations to private views can be used as thank yous.

### Additionally:

- user and advisory groups can act as key links to the communities that you are trying to attract to your venues
- user groups and auditors can advise on the effectiveness of your facilities – from your staff to your induction loop – and on their reactions to your product
- user groups and access consultants are good sounding boards for programming ideas. They will tell you if they believe that your programme is likely to interest disabled people and why

- user groups and access consultants may be able to advise on specific funding for initiatives which improve access
- beware of tokenism — one disabled person on your board or consultation/advisory group does not fool anybody, although one is better than none
- remember that one disabled person will not necessarily share the same views as another disabled person in subjective areas like programming
- consultation helps keep artistic staff in touch with the real world and thus will improve access

If you do not take any notice of what the user groups tell you then they are bound to feel exploited and undervalued and unlikely to give you their time again. Be realistic about what changes can be implemented and by when.

### Consultation about your programming

Plan meetings well in advance and even if you cannot talk about specific plays or exhibitions, talk about the sort of things people would like to come to and why.

### Consultation about pricing

This can be done as part of other discussions about publicity and programming. What discounts should be given and when? (see [Pricing](#))

### Consultation about publicity

This can be very effective but needs doing well in advance of going to print. Have a feedback session where you take your latest print and websites along and see what suggestions the group comes up with.

### Consultation about policies and procedures

Disabled people experience the results of your policies and procedures and thus are well placed to offer opinions on these. You may feel that these are internal matters best decided by your board and senior management, but if you have no disabled people on your board or senior staff, then you lack a disabled person's perspective. Also if your organisation is in receipt of public funds then certain obligations may follow with regard to representation on boards and accessibility to your services.

## Self-audit

You can gain a lot of information about the openness of your organisation to disabled people by carrying out a self-audit.

**The following questions and checklists will help you audit:**

- what you have and provide at your own venue and venues you tour to, in terms of accessible premises, access services, equipment, and what can be provided with short, medium and long term notice (see [Meeting a range of access requirements](#) and [Questions, questions, questions](#))
- what your staff have to offer in terms of skills and knowledge and what their training needs are (see [Meeting a range of access requirements](#), [Customer Care](#) and [Questions, questions, questions](#))
- what resources you have available, what your likely costings are, what budgets you have already and where you can apply for further funding (see [Finance](#))
- what, when and how you tell people about your organisation, your products and services – examine your marketing, information, image, your organisation's representation, your ethos (see [Communication](#))
- who you ask for support and advice – access consultants, disability arts organisations, local disabled people and so on. And what links you and the partners you work with have with disabled arts practitioners, companies, networks (see [Consultation](#), [Monitoring](#) and [Working with disabled arts practitioners](#))
- what you offer in terms of programming, participation, representation of disabled people, role modelling, promotion of disabled artists and disability related work (see [Activity](#) and [Working with disabled arts practitioners](#))
- whether you have any disabled board members or staff, full or part-time, freelance or casual, or volunteers (see [Employment](#))
- how the Disability Discrimination Act affects your policies and procedures, for example recruitment, customer care, induction and so on (see [Employment](#), [Meeting a range of access requirements](#), [Communication](#))

The following sheets can be printed from the Arts Council's website if you prefer to complete them electronically.

<b>Premises/adaptations/equipment</b>	Details (see relevant sections)	Plans to improve and by when	Budget implications
Transport p.50, 58-59			
Parking p.35, 42, 58, 89			
Physical access (visitors and staff) p.16, 33, 42, 81, 89			
Ramps p.15, 90			
Doors and floors p.15, 90			
Box office/reception counter p.15, 58, 61-62, 89			
Colour contrast p.58, 81, 90			
Lighting p.14, 42, 81, 96, 98			
Signage p.16, 58, 63, 68, 81			
Lifts p.15, 58, 63, 81			

<b>Premises/adaptations/equipment</b>	Details (see relevant sections)	Plans to improve and by when	Budget implications
Steps within venue p.15, 81, 89			
Minicom/textphone p.62, 92			
Induction loop p.8, 42, 62, 76, 83, 96-97			
Infra-red system and head-sets p.83, 93, 96-97			
Audio description and audio guides p.41, 64-67, 75, 83, 93, 96-97			
Sign language interpretation p.21, 49-50, 64-66, 81, 83, 91, 96			
Captioned performances p.21, 64-66, 83, 96			
Equipment for employees p.33-35, 41-42			
Access to workshop/participation activities p.41-42			
Toilets p.15, 42, 56, 58, 90			

<b>Policies/procedures</b>	Changes needed (see relevant sections)	Review dates	Budget implications
Employment p.11, 33-36, 84			
Complaints p.10, 63, 75			
Equal opportunities and access sections one, three and four			
Induction p.33-36			
Recruitment and selection p.33-40			
Emergency and evacuation p.42, 63			
Health and safety p.15, 42, 94			
Casting p.35, 39			
Programming p.21-23, 35, 39-41, 50, 84			
Outreach p.41-43, 47, 50, 53, 81, 83, 93			
Customer care and disruptions p.23, 42, 61-63, 68			

<b>Policies/procedures continued</b>	Changes needed (see relevant sections)	Review dates	Budget implications
Working with children and vulnerable adults p.42			
Disability access p.6-100			

<b>Information and marketing</b>	Details (see relevant sections)	Plans to improve and by when	Budget implications
Variety of formats p.47, 51-53, 63, 65, 68, 75			
Distribution and mailings p.49			
Website p.22, 53, 68, 89			
Campaigns p.47, 50, 56, 66			
Monitoring p.10, 23, 51, 73-77, 83			
Pricing p.22, 50, 56-57, 68			

<b>Consultation and involvement</b>	Details (see relevant sections)	Key dates	Budget implications
Access focus groups p.21, 47, 73			
Disabled staff and board members p.21, 23, 33, 35, 39			
Disability equality training, staff and board p.33, 84, 91, 102			
Consultation with disability organisations p.21, 23, 35, 39, 47, 73			
Organisation access audit p.10, 21, 23, 29, 73, 82, 85			
Partnerships p.21, 23, 35, 39, 41			



