

# Integrating Access In Your Outdoor Show From The Outset A Guidance Document For Artists



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## **1. Introduction**

Without Walls is committed to supporting the development of inclusive outdoor work. Outdoor Arts plays a vital role in reaching diverse communities and offering artistic experiences that enrich people's lives. Our work finds creative expression in public space transforming ideas of how we use our shared places. These opportunities should be made available and open to all that encounter them.

Over the last 4 years, Without Walls has helped many of its supported artists to find creative approaches for making their work more inclusive for Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent audiences.

Without Walls has produced this document to support artists and companies to find positive and creative solutions to access barriers. It's important to address any barriers from the very beginning of your development to ensure your show is welcoming for those with access needs. We encourage you to use this document as a springboard of ideas and use the experience of artists who have previously made access part of their practice.

Without Walls works within the [Social Model of Disability](#), which is a view that people are disabled by the way society is organised, rather than a person's impairments or differences. This highlights the need for everyone to work together to break these barriers, disrupt societal norms and find solutions that support a more inclusive society. We recognise the Equality Act 2010 to be used as a starting point to create 'reasonable adjustments', and hope to reach beyond this to provide unique, engaging and thoughtful inclusive practice.

We recognize that each show is unique and will encounter different challenges. There are always new ways of working and new practice. This process takes time; there isn't a quick-fix or 'one-size-fits-all' approach. So, it's time to be bold and innovative in how you make your work connected to audiences.

This guide has been devised by Without Walls, with contributions from Alex Covell in her role as Without Walls Access Advisor. This guide has also benefitted from the Without Walls Outdoor Arts Access Guide: [Without Walls Outdoor Arts Festivals and Events Access Guide](#) (Without Walls, 2020)

## **2. Integrating Access for an Inclusive show**

There are many ways you can integrate access into your show to create an inclusive piece. Each show is different, so there is no one size fits all when it comes to access. It's useful to start by completing the [Access and Inclusion Rider Template](#) this will help you break down your performance into key areas:

- Text
- Visuals
- Content
- Site



If it's your first time thinking about access for your show, do not try to cover everything in this document. Pick a couple of access provisions and do them well - this is better than trying to do too much the first time around. It's great to be enthusiastic but try to be realistic and mindful of your capacity.

The Rider will go into a lot of detail about your show, some key questions are:

#### Text

- If you're using text, for example on signage, can you ensure it is large/clear enough?
- Is text vital to the understanding of your piece?
- Have you considered incorporating BSL/ captioning? Could this be integrated into the show, or would this be an add-on service?

#### Visuals

- Are the visuals integral to the understanding of your show? If so, how can these be audio described?
- Are the set and props vital to the understanding of the show? If so, could you do a pre-show touch tour?

#### Content

- Does the show deal with potentially distressing issues or themes? If so, how can you communicate this with audiences?
- Can you provide Easy Read Visual Stories?

#### Site

- Is the set at accessible heights and widths for wheelchair access?
- If it's processional, how are you mindful of mobility access?



Include Accessibility conversations to your creative discussions right at the beginning of your process. Consider how inclusive practice can be embedded within your performance for all audiences and all shows. For example, in the puppet show *What Happened to You?*, Nikki Charlesworth and her team creatively integrated audio description and BSL throughout the show. Through hiring a Deaf Performer, Mia Ward, the team provided in-role BSL-interpretation. They also played with the ideas of describing the visuals through involving an Audio Describer in the rehearsal process. With all shows BSL-interpreted and Audio Described, there was no need for the festivals or promoters to add those provisions.

[Click here to find out more about What Happened To You?](#)

## **Conveying text**

Outdoor arts performances often use minimal or no text. However, for some shows text is the primary tool of conveying the messages in the piece. The text may be audience-responsive, dynamic and improvised to connect with our audiences.



If your show has no text, include this in your marketing copy as this may encourage Deaf and Hard of Hearing Audiences.

Text can be used in a myriad of ways, in different language and for different purposes. When thinking about access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing audience members, you want to be offering an equitable experience.

It may be worth limiting your words, consider: What is the value of them? Why are they needed? What do they describe?

Consider how you can visually convey the words and offer creative solutions. You should also consider lip-reading and the best place for Deaf audiences to be, and the volume of the sound. In the next section, we will discuss BSL Interpretation, Captioning, Sonic Stories and Sound Access Cards.

In addition to Deaf and Hard of Hearing audience members, these tools can also benefit a variety of other disabled people and audiences with varying needs. For example they can also be useful for audiences who are autistic, ADHD, learning disabled and also those who have English as an additional language.



Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences are all unique in their preferences for best practice access. British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation is often best for Deaf audiences who have BSL as their first language, this is because the language has its own grammatical structure. For many audiences who are Hard of Hearing, or have acquired deafness later in life, captions are the preferred option. Therefore, it is important to consider how you might be able to incorporate both options.

## **BSL interpretation**

BSL interpretation can be most useful for poetic, text heavy or narrative-based performances.

There are a few things you can do to make sure BSL interpretation is being maximized and fully integrated within your show:

## Create a BSL pack

A BSL pack can support touring performances to ensure a local BSL interpreter is able to perform confidently and creatively. If you attend a festival that is already working with BSL interpreters, the interpreters will have the right information about the context of your show beforehand.

It may take several days of rehearsal with your company working with a BSL interpreter, a Deaf consultant and a filmmaker to create your 'pack'. This pack may be a series of resources saved in a shared folder (ie: Google Drive).

A BSL pack can include:

- A filmed version of the full performance with the BSL interpreter
- An annotated script with notes of interpretation
- A video with sign names of all the characters, place names, show title etc. This video can also include a short introduction of the characters' physicality, movement and performance style (for character shifts)
- A stage plan with optimal position for BSL interpreter and audience
- A page of notes
- Costume information (ie: cabaret-style, red lipstick, waiter etc)
- Marketing resources:
  - o BSL trailer
  - o BSL introduction of the show



When budgeting for this option, include the additional days required for your cast and creative team. Most BSL interpreters have different rates, so it is worth discussing their day rate. You can find a [recommended rate guide on NUBSLI](#).

## Integrate a Deaf BSL-using cast member

One way of devising an inclusive performance is to integrate a Deaf BSL-using cast member. Not only will this make all of your performances accessible for BSL users, it can contribute to changing public perceptions and is a highly visual representation of the creativity of the aesthetics of inclusion.

Casting decisions need to be considered from the very beginning of your creation process and will have an impact on the number of people needed to perform the show.

When casting, you should consider:

- Your casting call-out:
  - o Use the preferred language and terminology
  - o Have clarity of information, resources, time requirements and role
  - o Send to Deaf and disabled-led organisations and networks
  - o Provide information in BSL.
  - o Offer an email address to ask questions and be open to new performers
  - o Be open to cast from a variety of backgrounds
- Your auditions:

- o Have a Deaf consultant on the panel and a BSL interpreter (you may require 2 depending on the amount of applicants)
- o Send any text, questions or materials at least a week in advance
- o Do **not** require sight-reading
- o Consult with a Deaf consultant about the format of the audition
- Supporting your performer:
  - o Apply for [Access To Work](#) funding
    - You can apply for funding for a BSL interpreter, scribe etc.
    - Allow at least 6 weeks before the first rehearsal to receive the funding
    - The application form may take some time to write, and you will need to support your performer to do this
    - BSL interpreters can charge more for Sunday engagements, so ensure this is added into the application.
  - o Run a Deaf Awareness training for your whole team (if new to working with Deaf people). Don't add this to your performer's workload.
  - o Provide information with plenty of time, correspond in plain English and use bullet point and title information.
  - o Allow additional time to translate lines with a Deaf BSL consultant.

Get in touch with Without Walls for recommendations of suitable providers.



Note that this option will come at a higher cost as you will need to include the performer and Deaf BSL consultant into your budget plus additional time for translation. It is important to make decisions early and be highly organised so that you can ensure you receive your Access to Work grant and support your performer throughout the process.

## Captioning

Captioning is a process of interpreting the sounds and spoken word as text on a screen. This provides access to the sounds of your piece for Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences as well as those with auditory processing disorders, English as an additional language and autistic people.

Captioning can be provided in multiple ways:

### Projector

Captions can be projected onto a screen as part of the performance. This works well for scripted pieces or for songs. Captions can be formatted on a PowerPoint, edited into a video or you can use a Caption programme.





(Christopher Green, Greenwich+Docklands International Festival 2021, Doug Southall)



This is a low-cost option. If providing lyrics to a song, you can work with a video editor (Christopher found theirs on Fiverr) at approximately £100 per song.

### Caption Units

Captions can also be provided on Caption units. It may be that the festival works with [StageText](#) to provide these units.

You will need to provide a digital copy of your script (in MS Word). Captions are formatted differently to the script, and a captioner will need to observe a performance or rehearsal and also have a filmed copy of the performance to support with timing, line structure and tempo.



StageText offers different rates depending on the size of the company and performance. You may need to budget £1000 per show. They will provide the units, a captioner and a technician for the performance.



A company may also want to integrate a caption unit into their show. Puppets with Guts developed a captioning unit to provide captions for their Jukebox show.

This was an investment for the company and provided scope to experiment with emojis, colours and programming text for songs.



### Mobile Captions

Captions can be provided by the mobile App [‘The Difference Engine’ by Talking Birds](#).

Audiences download the App onto their phones and the captions are sent directly to their screens.

Shows that benefit from this are often promenade shows with a set script.

The company will need to share a digital copy of their script in an editable document. A captioner will then edit the document into ‘Caption-friendly’ lines of script. They will use the laptop provided by Talking Birds which has a Caption programme to enter the script into.

As a company, the main thing you need to think about is having a MS Word written version of your script that you can share with the festival, who will be responsible for sorting out the captioning solution, should they wish to proceed with it. Speak to the festival about what their plans are.

### Printed Script

If you are unable to provide any of the above options, a low-cost offer is to make your script available to audience members to read during your performance. This can be provided by print-outs and/or a QR code to link to the script.

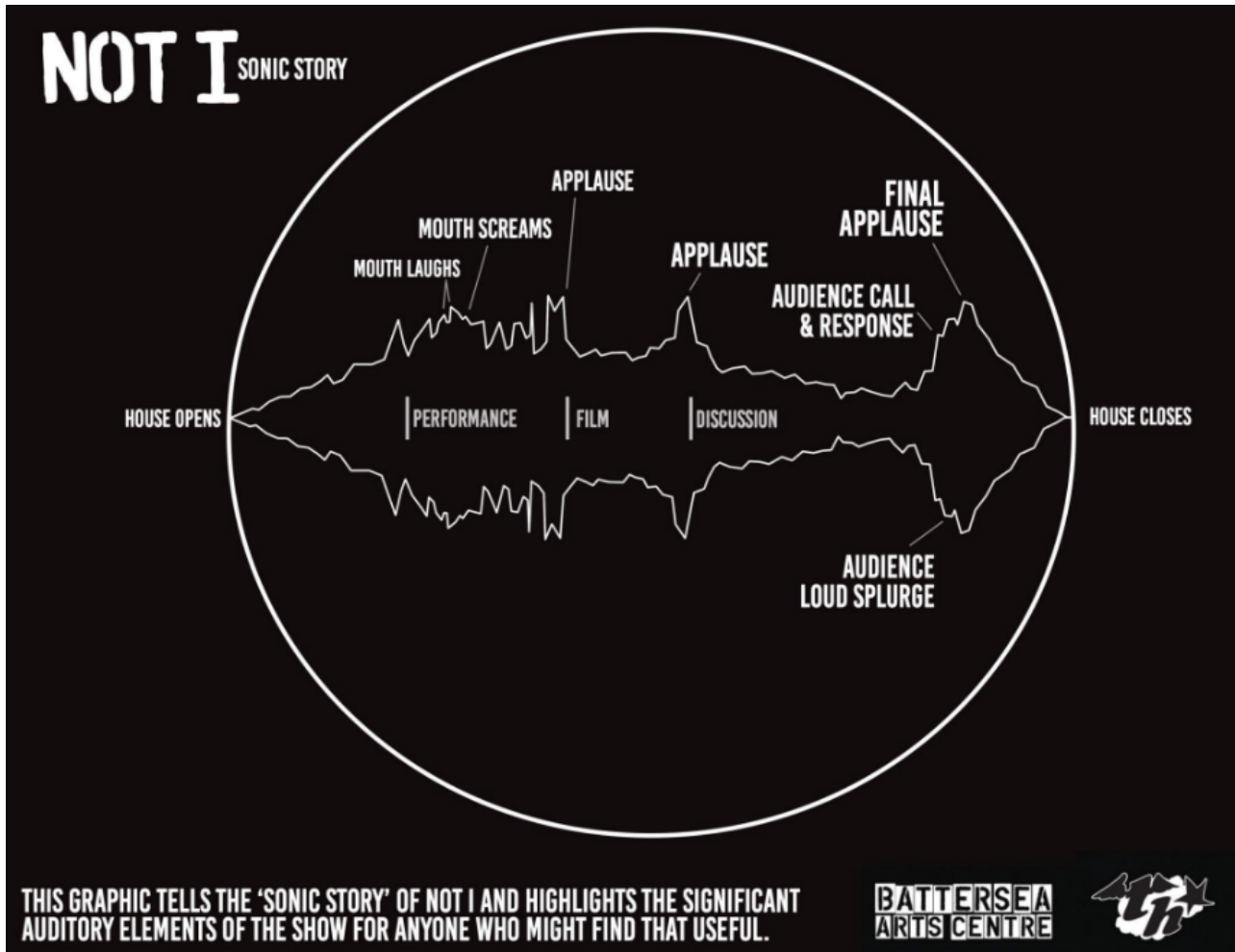
Ensure that you are using a sans serif font (ie: Arial) and a minimum of size 14.

Time permitting, you may also want to add photos to key moments and make it visually appealing. [See this example from Candoco Dance Company’s Graceful Act of Stupidity](#).



## Sonic Story

A **Sonic Story** highlights the loud and quiet auditory elements of a show. This uses a visual representation of the sound increasing and decreasing and displays the reasons for this. This will be particularly useful for anyone who might benefit from an increased understanding of the sensory elements of the show.



A SONIC STORY OF NOT I, BY BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE



Tourettes Hero charge approximately £210 for the creation of a Sonic Story. It may be that you have someone in your team who can replicate this. Contact Without Walls for more examples.



### **Text as visuals**

Within your performance, you may also find creative ways to display text as visuals.

*The Rascally Diner* used signage to support audiences for their 'applause' and when the show was on and off 'air'.

### **Conveying visuals**

It is important to understand how you may communicate the visuals of your piece to Blind, visually impaired, and partially sighted audiences. Visually confident audience members are able to immediately perceive a lot of information about your performance in a moment, however more time and work needs to be done to provide this information accessibly.

Each performance is different and therefore this information may need to be provided in different ways depending on the piece. Visual Arts and Installation pieces can provide an Audio Introduction that audiences can listen to at any time. Dance pieces with set choreography could be a perfect fit for a pre-recorded digital Audio Description. Shows with devised text could work with a consultant to integrate audio descriptive qualities within the text. In addition to the audio information, it is useful to offer opportunities to touch set, props and costume pieces.

### **Audio description**

Audio description (AD) is a verbal commentary that tells a Blind or visually impaired person what is happening. Audio Description is mainly provided for a show in the following ways:

- Integrate audio description into the performance, with live verbal commentary of the visual elements being creatively included into the text
- Deliver a live audio description separately, via headsets or an audio relay system
- A pre-recorded in-time Audio Description, via headsets or the audience's own phones that plays at the same time as the show.
- A pre-recorded Audio Introduction that can be played at any time.

Integrated audio description, when taken time to fully consider, can mean that all shows provide visual access. This can be provided through working with a consultant when writing your script to write in the visual elements. This worked particularly well for *Rascally Diner* by LasTheatre, where each character introduced themselves at the start of the show and what they looked like.

It may also be that you work with an Audio Describer to pre-record lines of description that are used within the soundtrack of the piece. Alternatively, a narrator character can provide audio description to all audience members.

Note that this is an exciting, experimental way to develop your inclusive practice, but if not done in consultation with a disabled professional, can become clunky or provide sub-par access. If you choose to fully integrate AD into the performance, consider your choice of words as well as using sounds and noises. Think about how you could approach your show if you were creating it for radio. A consultant can help you find out what may be best for your show.



To integrate the visual descriptions, you may need to spend 2 days working with a consultant. This can cost up to £600 per day depending on the piece. Contact Without Walls for recommendations of consultants.

Live Audio Description offers a personal experience for the audience to receive the audio description live via headsets. A company such as VocalEyes would provide the Audio Describer, equipment and a technician to administer the audio headsets and ensure all the equipment works.

The process of working with an Audio Describer varies depending on the needs of the show. For a dance or theatre piece, you will need to:

- Have a pre-meeting to discuss style, content and themes
- Share a script, video of the show and general descriptions of cast
- Invite the Audio Describer to rehearsals

VocalEyes have developed a questionnaire to support the describer to provide accurate and consensual description of diversity in your cast. [Find out more about describing diversity here](#). There is constant conversation around Audio Description best practice, so keep up to date by following conversations by IDEA on the above link.



A show over 45 minutes will require a second audio describer. When casting your audio describer, consider how they are representing your piece to your audience.



Audio kit hire is approximately £300 for a weekend. Depending on the length of the performance and the amount of visual description, an audio describer could charge between £400 (20 min) - £750 (60 min) show. VocalEyes offers competitive rates for equipment, describer and technician but this completely depends on the show and would require a conversation.

Pre-recorded digital audio description can be used for shows that will be the same for each performance, such as choreographed dance or aerial performances. These aren't recommended for improvised shows.

The value of Pre-recorded AD is that it will be available for all performances.

The pre-recorded AD will have the same initial process as above. It is vital for this process to have a full video of the final version of the show.

The Audio Describer will then share a copy of their written Audio Description in-time to the performance for you to read and share feedback.

Once feedback has been provided, they will then professionally record the audio and it will be edited to ensure high quality audio.

For *Future Cargo*, the company created a Digital Audio Description that was available via a separate channel on the binaural headphones that all audiences received. Therefore, the AD was also edited together with the soundscape file.

For *Wild*, the audience were able to download the audio file to their own phones. The company pre-recorded an announcement that was played before each show. An example announcement is:

5 minutes before the show: "This show has a pre-recorded digital audio description to provide access of the visuals in this show. To use this, please speak with a member of the team or scan the QR code on the sign at the front of the performance. The show will begin in 5 minutes"

"The show is about to begin, please press play on 3, 2, 1."



An Audio Describer will charge between £300- £750 for a digital audio description and the audio editing.



For both options you should also create an Audio Introduction to go into more depth about the set and costume as well as provide an audio copy of the show flyer or list of cast and creatives.



For installations, visual art or pop-up pieces a simplified Audio Introduction is a highly effective and useful tool to provide access for the visuals. Often referred to as a Visual Description.

An Audio Describer can support this process and ask questions, write copy and record and edit an audio file for you to share via QR codes and as part of your marketing strategy for the show.

There are also plenty of resources to support writing your own Audio Introduction. The Museum sector have created useful resources for similar processes. [Art Beyond Sight's Writing Visual Descriptions](#) is a brilliant starting point.



This can be a fun and creative job for a new member of your company, at an assistant level. If hiring an Audio Describer, plus audio editing, this can cost up to £150.

Consider how you communicate your offer with your audiences. Speak with your Audio Describer to also record:

- An Audio Flyer for your show
- Individual cast descriptions
- Audio Described promo film
- A countdown to press play

Feel free to be creative in what you record and share on your socials. Try to also share your process and run trials with local Blind/ VI organisations.

## **Touch tours**

Touch Tours (TT) are highly effective in creating meaningful and person-centred engagement with Blind and partially sighted audiences. These provide access to the set, costumes, props and key movement moments or action. Often the Audio Description doesn't have time to give detail about key moments of movement or action and this can ensure that audiences are able to have time to interpret and understand the information that visually confident people can receive.

Touch Tours last about 30 minutes and should happen either on the performance area, or as close as possible. Allow your cast and crew time between the TT and the performance time to set up, therefore you might start the TT 90 minutes before the show. The best TTs involve the cast and are run in a workshop format that offer space for creative connection, questions and even a slow motion description of some key moments.

You can include:

- Full tour of the set- start on one side and move across in a logical order. Try not to do a scatter-gun approach.
- Visual description of the actors and their costumes (should be said by each actor to connect their voice, if using text)
- An understanding of how the space is used (ie: mostly in the centre, or spanning across the whole space). Examples of proxemics between characters or set pieces.
- Description of and physically touching examples of costume or significant props.
- Examples of how the characters move
- Breakdown of key dance moves

Consider your performance style and how you can infuse your TT with this style. If your show is a children's show make sure your TT is appropriate, fun and creative for that audience. Feel free to make it playful and interactive if you have that experience in your team.



It can be a good idea to work with your Audio Describer to create a plan so that the team feels empowered to create and deliver the touch tour to audiences. [Click here to read about Motionhouse's experience of touch tour training.](#)

Touch Tours can also be useful for audiences who may need more time to familiarise themselves with your show and the environment. It may be useful to also frame this as a relaxed introduction.

## **Communicating information**

Access planning goes hand in hand with marketing. To reach diverse audiences, it is vital to consider how you are providing information about your show that is suitable, inclusive and in a variety of formats for your audiences.

In earlier sections, we have touched on Audio Flyers, BSL flyers and large text. It is vital to also consider neurodivergent audiences who often find information presented in Easy Read and Plain English most useful.

### **Easy Read**

An Easy Read provides information in short, clear sections with visuals to represent the words.

This document can also be referred to as a Visual Story or a Relaxed Guide. An Easy Read document reduces the barrier to information, promotes independence and offers a deeper understanding of the piece. [Click here to see an example of an Easy Read document](#), made by Strong Lady Productions.

Information you should include:

- Access information
- Trigger Warnings
- Contact information
- Character guides
- Show Synopsis

If you have time, you can create an Easy Read document by yourself – you might find [this guidance on creating Easy Read](#) useful. You can also ask an external provider to do the Easy Read document for you and include this in your creation budget.

### **Relaxed performance**

Relaxed Performances, also called Autism friendly performances, are aimed at anyone who might benefit from a more relaxed environment – for example adults or children with learning disabilities, movement disorders or are autistic. Performances are adapted in a variety of ways, including a more relaxed attitude to noise and movement, in order to reduce anxiety and ensure a safe, enjoyable visit for



anyone. Make sure you communicate to festivals that you offer relaxed performances, and they can include this in their programme.

The changes can include softening loud sudden noises and special effects, making it known that audiences are free to make noise and move around, creating a designated chill out space or organising a pre-show familiarisation tour. It is important that you work with the presenter to put on a relaxed performance and communicate it to the audiences.

Telling your audience what to expect when they come to see your work is also a good way to reduce potential anxiety and barriers. You can create an introduction video, a social story or pre-show information sheet and work with the presenter to share it with audiences. For example, you can tell your audience about the piece, include photos to introduce the characters and give more information about the performance space. [Click here to see an example of a pre-show information sheet](#), made by TourettesHero and Battersea Arts Centre.

### **Access statement and access rider**

When communicating information to a presenter about your show, we would recommend sharing an access statement to explain your commitment to making your show accessible.

It is also a good idea to share an access rider – the same way you would share a technical rider. For example, his document can include your own access needs, access provisions in your show, content and trigger warnings. You can find a template and guidance on how to create an access rider [here](#).

## **3. Budgeting access**

### **Who pays for access?**

It is essential to have conversations with festivals and presenters about the access provisions available for your show. Most outdoor festivals will include access provisions, but you should discuss this during booking and contracting discussions.

The best way to have an inclusive show is to provide access provisions within your show, which won't require presenters to pay for extra services. For example, if you have integrated BSL interpretation, a pre-recorded Digital Audio Description or an Easy Read Visual Story. There are several bursaries and funding opportunities for access. It can also be included as additional funding in Arts Council funding.

### **Standard prices**

The table below provides an overview of standard costs for the industry and time needed for several access services.

Please note that these are standard costs only (i.e. filmmaker, audio describer, BSL interpreter etc). You should also add in your budget potential travel costs and your own time – from either an administration or production point of view – to develop those resources.

These costs are also accurate to providers that we have worked with and vary depending on area, experience, time needed and style of performance. Costing provided in January 2022.

	Cost	Time
<b>BSL pack</b>	£1,500	3 days BSL interpreter + 2 days filmmaker + 1 day of your own time.
<b>BSL integrated cast member</b>	Bespoke budgeting	All rehearsal and performance dates, plus additional time for translation, BSL consultant and any training.
<b>Captioning</b>	£0- £350	Film with subtitles: £150 for a song. Discuss with the festival how they can help display the captions, if providing a captioner, this can be up to £350. Company will need to provide a script.
<b>Audio description</b>	£400-700 for audio describer £350 consultant day fee	1 day of your own time.
<b>Touch tour</b>	£0	1-2 days of your own time.
<b>Touch tour training</b>	£400	1 day training
<b>Easy Read</b>	£0 - £200	1-2 days of your own time. Plus check with consultant. Or send to a provider.
<b>Consultant day fee</b>	£300 to £600	Ask for quotes before budgeting if you have specific requirements.
<b>Sonic Story</b>	£210	Half day of your own time.

## Access to work

[Access to Work](#) is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support for disabled people or people with long term physical or mental health conditions. The person who needs the support needs to be the one applying.

Access to Work can help cover costs to remove barriers one person can face. You can apply to Access to Work for a grant to help cover the costs which fall into the following three categories:

1. Equipment: a specialist wheelchair for a dancer, digital hearing aids, specialist software...
2. Travel: if public transport is not accessible, you can apply for the costs of getting a taxi.
3. Support workers: BSL interpreter, lipspeaker, note-taker, travel buddy, etc.

In practice, this means that if one person in your team needs support to do their work, the government can give out a grant to cover the costs. You can find more information in Arts Council England and Disability Arts Online's: [Access to Work: A guide for the Arts and Culture Sector](#)

## **4. Further resources**

- [Resources from Without Walls' series of artists workshops around accessible practice](#) (Without Walls, 2021)
- [Without Walls Outdoor Arts Festivals and Events Access Guide](#) (Without Walls, 2020)
- [Demystifying Access, A guide for producers and performance makers: how to create better access for audiences to the performing arts](#) (Unlimited, 2018)
- [An Accessible Marketing Guide](#) (Culturehive, Artsadmin and Unlimited, 2016)
- [A Brief Access Guide](#) – especially the section on language and disability confidence on pages 9-12 (Unlimited Impact, Shape Arts, 2015)
- [Galaxies of Neurons Firing: Every Brain's guide for theatres & cultural organisations on supporting neurodiversity](#) (Every Brain, 2021)
- [DIY Access Guide](#), a guide for bands, artists and promoters on how to make gigs and tours more accessible for deaf and disabled people - especially useful section on language (Attitude is everything, 2018)
- [Developing visually impaired audiences in Wales](#) by Chloë Clarke and Disability Arts Cymru for Arts Council of Wales – a useful toolkit about how best to cater for VI audiences.
- [Touretteshero's Relaxed Performances - The FAQs](#)
- Arts Council England and Disability Arts Online's: [Access to Work: A guide for the Arts and Culture Sector](#)