**Welcome to the**

**Crucial Conversations**

**‘Adding Your Voice’**

**Form**

**for Disabled Artists**

**This form relates to our blogs on Crucial Conversations which you can find here.**

**We are presenting the questions posed in the conversations so that other people can contribute.**

**Please send your responses to** **info@littlecog.co.uk**

**By emailing this form you grant us permission in perpetuity to include your anonymised comments in our information on this project and when case-making for equality in other projects. You can withdraw this in writing at any time.**

**Access – if you need this form in other formats please ask at the above email address. We can accept your responses in writing, in audio and video.**

**Please only complete what feels relevant to you.**

**Information**

Crucial Conversations were a series of discussions created by disabled artist Vici Wreford-Sinnott to provide spaces to examine important matters of the day, in response to the fact that the conversations just weren't happening with any level of scale and our voices are not incorporated into planning for the future in any meaningful way. Millions of disabled people from all of our communities are being left behind in the approach from the arts to a return to 'in person' art and culture. There is a serious absence of these spaces, these conversations and we’d like to see more of them. We acknowledge the work of other disabled artists and disabled-led organisations also having similar conversations – we’d love to be able to collaborate and unify our voices in a continued show of strength to bring about change.

Not everyone could make the meetings but we invite all disabled artists to add their voices to these conversations - we need to get our voices and the exclusion we are experiencing out there. Disability drops to the bottom of everyone's diversity agenda and often isn't visible at all. Disabled people from a range of communities and backgrounds often experience double, triple and more discrimination whether that is in relation to race and ethnicity, gender identity, LGBTQIA+, age, multiple conditions, learning disability, mental health, neurodivergence, education routes, institutionalisation, benefits & employment status and class.

We have to be clear - these conversations hold only the power they are received with in the mainstream arts sector, funders and policymakers. Vici is not an appointed official of any kind, she is a freelance artist committed to community and collectivism. There is a much wider responsibility by those better resourced than we are. These conversations should however be seen as a call to action and an education to the arts sector. There is work to be done.

These conversations are beginnings, are not endings, are not definitive and are not exhaustive – there are many, many voices which need to be heard. It is an honour to have been joined by those who could make it along on these occasions and their eloquence, emotional labour is seen and valued, their voices heard.  They are not whispers on the wind. Do not make them so.

The aim of each meeting was to promote the space for people to come along, have a conversation, respond to a series of questions and then we would release blogs into the public domain to reflect the voices of those who attended, the transferability of their experiences to disability equality and access broadly and illustrate how they might inform future conversations. Such conversations need to be large scale, public, publicly funded, disabled led, and include the voices of disabled people from all communities. Disabled people should not be 'hand picked' - we need to hear diverse voices. To segregate disabled practitioners into national portfolio funded and independently funded is incredibly unbalanced and serves no one well, and has created division in the disability arts sector where there needs to be much more equality of representation and thinking.

**Disabled artists can still get involved and add your voices.**
The three conversations we held were:

* **Access Riders and Their Role in Disability Equality**
* **Just what is the new normal?**
* **Disabled Playwrights' Legacy in Print - Where is it?**

You can click on the links above to read the blog reportage of the conversations.

We'd love you to add your voices to a campaign for change which includes involving disabled people in planning for the future of the arts, not at a fringe level but as significant cultural contributors.

The questions each conversation posed can be found below for information and also in a document available here to download and email to us.

**PLEASE –** do not reveal personal and painful information. We want to conserve everyone’s emotional labour, yours and ours, which we are expending all of the time we campaign. If possible approach this as reportage – one step removed, and keeping in mind that we are creating a report for the outside world.

Also – keep it as brief as you need to so that it doesn’t take hours of your time.

Please ensure you have good support around you. We have to be open and transparent and say that we do not have the capacity to provide that support.

And please don’t complete this if it is in any way triggering. We must take care of ourselves and each other.

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**Access Riders and Their Role in Disability Equality**
We looked at the scope and scale of disability in the UK and reminded ourselves that there are over 14.1 million disabled people living here from all communities and backgrounds. Disability is a huge umbrella term, which we acknowledge not everyone chooses to use to define themselves. We were thinking about the societal and systemic barriers anyone with a long term or lifelong condition experiences where accessibility is required. We talked about disability rights, community action, solidarity and disability pride. Please add your responses below each point.

**Group conversations focussed on :**

* What access at both societal and personal levels looks like, and how this translates into art and culture settings.
* Barriers past and present
* What changes to accessibility did you observe and experience during the pandemic? - home working, safe environments, digital working
* How can we include other peoples' access - eg collaborators access and access for audiences in our riders

**Access Riders continued…/**

The rest of the session focussed on introducing an access rider template and how to start thinking about creating one. Everyone gets a follow consultation whether by email or zoom if they would find it useful. We acknowledged that there is labour involved to create the riders, but we hope they can save labour long term, and that their very presence becomes part of the vocabulary of working together, influences change and can be included in contracts with partners and commissioners. WE need to support each other and ensure we have community. We acknowledged the lack of infrastructural support for artists impacts on us in many ways, not least as a campaigning voice which is still much needed.

[**You can access the access rider template and information here.**](http://www.littlecog.co.uk/artist-access-statements.html)

**Just what is the new normal?**

This conversation was held because many disabled people feel they are left out completely of the return to 'in person' arts and culture activities, and are concerned that the lack of guidelines about safety for everyone has led to a mistaken perception of safety. A position of just getting on and 'living with covid' misinforms and hides the fact that many people just can't do that and are having to stay at home. It really does need further discussion as the arts face the biggest moral dilemmas in a lifetime. And the idea of any kind of normal is a complete misnomer. Normality is a construction to suit a dominant ideology that ensures difference of any kind is 'othered', distanced and removed. This isn't simply about disability equality, which is a big enough social phenomenon on its own, it's about how we are being manipulated to think and behave as a society, a so-called democracy where the arts should be at the heart of truth.

When you add your voice to this conversation, you will see from the existing blog that peoples' responses in our 90 minute meeting fell into a series of headings, these weren't prescribed beforehand, so if new headings are needed please create them. The respondents were answering from their own perspectives and not there to represent everyone and everything.

1. What was the old normal like for disabled artists, reflecting on your experience and observation?

2. How would you characterise the last two years (the pandemic) in terms of disabled artists experiences of the arts? What changes did you experience?

3. What moral (and legal) dilemmas are the arts facing, or not facing, up to?

4. What do we need to fully participate – audiences, participants, artists, leaders? The question is what should arts funders, decision makers and artists be thinking about to make sure those shielding and living with Long Covid can be included?

5. And anything else you'd like to add.

**Disabled Playwrights' Legacy in Print - Where is it?**

**This section is for disabled playwrights only please.**

This conversation aimed to examine the lack of disabled playwrights' work in print and how that impacts our artistic and cultural legacy as a result. We were to look at possibilities to redress the balance and to raise the profile of disabled playwrights' work**. Vici Wreford-Sinnott** (Theatre and TV writer/director, AD of Little Cog). We were joined by **Mark Ravenhill** who co-hosted (playwright and Artistic Director & Joint CEO of the King's Head Theatre), **Matt Applewhite** (Managing Director and Commissioning Editor, Nick Hern Books) and **Katherine Murphy** (Editor, Playography at the Irish Theatre Institute) and an amazing group of disabled playwrights, all credited in the blog.

**Question 1 -**Given the low numbers of published works by disabled playwrights compared to what both what we know has been produced and what has been published by non-disabled peers, what do you think is behind this? What is our experience of submitting/not submitting work?  Have we submitted our work and's not been accepted or have we not submitted work because we didn't think it was worth it?

**Question 2 -** For context, sometimes as playwrights, we work in different worlds of theatre – independently with a self-created company of colleagues, project funded perhaps, sometimes writing in isolation with a view to submitting to venues, companies and competitions, or we may have been commissioned by an established venues or company. Are we being supported to write – how and by who? And where do we get good critical feedback on the work?

**Question 3 -**Are there suggestions we could make to publishers about the unpublished body of work that already exists?

**Question 4 -**What other methods are there of raising the profile of the work and sharing it? A centralised library of published works? Pros and cons of a script depository for access to unpublished scripts.

**Question Five** - If you have answered these questions, and you are a disabled playwright, are you interested in getting involved in further Playwrights’ Legacy Conversations?

Yes / No

**Completing the following information is optional** – it will be completely confidential, will be stored securely and will not shared with anyone else at any time.

**Name**

**Email Address**

**Would you like to keep in touch by email?**  Yes / No

**Are you happy to have your name added to the credits for contributing to the conversation?** Yes / No

Can you please let us know how you define yourself in the headings below please. We leave them open for you to use your preferred language. This information will be anonymised and removed from this form.

**Age range**

**Gender Identity**

**Sexuality**

**Race and ethnicity**

**Disabled person Yes / No / Other description – please state**

**Socio-economic description**

**Employment status**

**Thank you so much for being part of gathering and sharing this information. To help us get the conversations into the public domain please share our blogs with your networks and on your social media. Send to your local venues and partners. We are @viciws & @littlecog1 on twitter and Little Cog on Facebook**