**Disabled Artists’**

**Guide To Creating an Access Statement**

**Purpose of this guide**

In times of such monumental change to our world we need to ensure that organisations and venues are held to account on their accessibility. Little Cog is calling for an end to ableism which in the arts will involve an examination and reconstruction of our existing structures and systems and an end to inaccessible activities in inaccessible venues led by inaccessible people with inaccessible attitudes. Policies and systems must change to ensure disabled people are equal in cultural settings.

We see a regression in accessibility in our current times and so our aim to continue to keep these matters visible. We hope this guide will give you information about how to create an Artist’s Access Statement for you to use in your work. Disabled people often have access requirements that there aren’t existing routes to communicate and share with employers, commissioners, companies and collaborators. This is a way to take control of ensuring your access requirements are shared, acknowledged and met.

Whether or not you choose to use the term disabled, if you have a condition or impairment which means you're at risk of discrimination and exclusion, where both unintentional and intentional barriers keep you out or make your practice difficult - you have RIGHTS. They are solid and enshrined in law. We hope that by introducing this into our own practice that organisation and partners will begin to use it in theirs, and really positive working environments and relationships are created. We want organisations to embed disability equality ethos into their identities and practices. [There is more information on that here.](http://weebly-link/106890471481070247)

Having access requirements met is NOT the responsibility of the artist, and it is NOT the job of the artist to either provide free organizational access advice or solve an organisation’s access problems. An access statement is a tool to meeting the access requirements of the artist it belongs to.

**What is an Access Statement For?**

* Musicians, comedians and film actors use ‘access’ statements all the time and call them ‘riders’. Simply put and in principle, they are requests for things that will make the working process run more smoothly, or are essentials to them working effectively. We’ll ignore people who ask for all the blue M&Ms to be removed, even if they do have a point about e-numbers.
* You’re putting down on paper, succinctly and without apology your access requirements, the things you require to be in place for your employment and collaboration to run smoothly for you and anyone working alongside you.
* The most effective Access Statements generally consist of an opening paragraph and a series of bullet points, which may be covered by a number of headings if there are various things to cover. See template.
* This document is to empower you and not to expose you. Think about it in that way.
* It is a really important time to focus on accessibility and online use – in the first instance we need access requirements met to fully participate just like in society, but also screen fatigue and overwhelm need to be factored into our use of the digital world as a workplace. [We hope this guide to accessible online meetings might assist in thinking about your own access.](http://weebly-link/345386100994174302)

**What to Include**

The most important thing is that whoever is reading your access statement has a clear picture of your requirements, however, as this is still new to some people, giving broader context can often be helpful. You might want to consider writing a quick explanation of supporting information, such as including a link to the social model of disability.

It’s good to ask yourself some questions about the barriers and obstacles you experience in your work which have an impact on you. It might be an idea to just get them on paper or into a voice recording and then start to group and prioritise.

**Questions you ask yourself might include:**

* What access barriers have I encountered in the past and how could these have been navigated?
* What would stop me from being able to do the project at all? How can this be supported?
* What situations do I expect to be in during an upcoming project, and what barriers might I encounter there?
* What aspects of working cultures are unhelpful and inaccessible?
* What about being around during an install / a production week / a get in / a technical check? Speaking at an event? How can my access requirements in those instances be facilitated?
* Be clear about that meeting a person’s access requirements through adjustments are non-negotiable, although it might be possible to find compromises when particular obstacles are faced (eg if they are building related)

**What to Leave out**

You do not need to go into any medical detail about conditions – meeting access requirements are about finding solutions that relate to the working environment. It is also not appropriate if people ask you for medical information (other than on a confidential emergency contact document for very specific reasons).

You don’t need to give explanations of why require each item. For example, if you know you’ll need to be able to get to a toilet quickly at all times, you can just say that, and don’t have to explain that it’s because you have IBS.

**When to use it**

Deciding at what point you introduce something new to you and your employer/collaborator can feel tricky but remember that this is about your right to have an accessible working environment. And you will be surprised at how grateful people can be to have concise information so that they are not left with uncertainties.

You may also consider how private you want the document to be, or is it better if all colleagues are aware. You will need to judge that job by job.

It’s good practice to keep access conversations as separate items on meetings agendas so that they are ring-fenced and prioritised.

If you are discussing access in emails, perhaps give them their own thread to make sure they are not missed or glossed over but are actively agreed.

/continues….

**Artist’s Access Statement Template**

**Your Name**

**Title** e.g. **Disability Access Requirements / Disability Access Statement**

**Intro sentence or two for context**

I have created an access statement to ensure that as a disabled person my working environment and practices are accessible and barrier free. Please let me know if you need further clarification on any of the below points. Here is a link to the social model of disability which may help explain why this is important. www……

**My requirements**

You might want to break these down into sections like the example below. The examples relate to a variety of conditions and barriers

E.g.

**Travel**

* My mobility means that I require a taxi to get from place to place
* First class train travel is required

**Meetings**

* I require a clear agenda at least two days in advance
* BSL interpreter
* Captioning on zoom

**Installation of exhibitions**

* My access assistant will be with me or you need to provide an access assistant
* Agreements in advance

**Events**

* Information of expectations well in advance
* Step free access to the venue

**Time Frames**

* Regular working hours – I require regular working hours and am unable to stay late or work longer hours during production week
* I need regular breaks in a quiet space

**Working practices**

* No last minute changes
* No ambiguity of communications
* Clear agreements and timeframes
* Avoid overwhelming information or events

**Online Working**

* Time limited meetings with rest breaks
* Clear meetings agenda in advance
* Captions for meetings

**Additional notes**

If you think these are useful to include – use your experience to guide you and remember this is about other people meeting your access requirements (empowering not exposing)

* There can be some variations in my condition you should be aware of and which we need to factor in.
* My energy levels can fluctuate day to day / week to week so it is essential to have a balanced and well planned workload, with plans in place should things change.