



improving deaf and disabled  
people's access to live music

[www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk](http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk)

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# State of Access Report

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Surveying the Facilities for Deaf and Disabled Customers  
at UK Live Music Venues

Written by Nina Muehleemann and Graham Griffiths

Supplementary evidence by Gideon Feldman and Suzanne Bull

Edited by Jean O'Reilly



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## Foreword

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Being able to attend live music is a really important part of our social and cultural lives. But for some, getting hold of the tickets isn't the only consideration. At many venues, access can still be a serious worry.

Attitude is Everything's State of Access Report represents the first piece of systematic research into access and inclusion within the music industry. It examines views and approaches to access across the industry and sets out recommendations to ensure that all venues follow best practice. In particular, it includes suggestions for an 'Event Standard' to which all venues should subscribe.

Significantly, this study has been user-led, with research conducted by Deaf and disabled music-lovers who are directly affected by these issues. On Attitude is Everything's behalf, I would like to thank all the mystery shoppers for volunteering to gather the information that is so vital to this report. I am also grateful to the Charter Venues that have signed up, and I urge all music venues that have not signed up to do so, as they will clearly benefit from being part of this excellent scheme.

I would also like to thank the music industry in general for the access improvements that it has made so far. I strongly support collaboration between the music industry, Government, Local Authorities and Attitude is Everything to build on this good work and ensure that live music is accessible to everybody.

Matthew Hancock MP,  
Patron of Attitude is Everything



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# Introduction

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## 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.

Attitude is Everything began as a pilot project in September 2000 in direct response to Deaf and disabled people's calls for fair treatment at music venues, clubs and festivals. We set out to address the music industry's apparent lack of awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and its obligations. Spurred on by its success, in April 2008 Attitude is Everything separated from its host organisation, Artsline, and became an Arts Council England Regularly Funded Organisation. In April 2011, our National Portfolio Bid to the Arts Council was successful and as a result, we secured a 48.4% increase in our funding over 4 years, until March 2015.

Over the past 11 years, we have developed a series of strategic programme strands that support the Live Music and Outdoor Arts sectors to become accessible.

## Track record

### Assistance:

We now have 45 music venues and festivals signed to our Charter of Best Practice and have worked with live music industry leaders such as Academy Music Group, Glastonbury Festival, Festival Republic, MAMA Group, the National Arena Association, Ticketmaster and the UK Festival Awards. We are becoming the UK authority on access to music venues and festivals.

We helped over 200 organisations improve their access in 2010, and will assist over 200 more by the end of 2011. We offer Disability Equality Training and undertake Access Audits to advise on changes that may be required.

Our Access Toolkit: Making Outdoor Arts Events Accessible to All was awarded the London 2012 Inspire Mark.

### Festivals:

As a result of our work with Glastonbury Festival to improve its access facilities, disabled people's attendance increased from 195 in 2007 to 565 in 2010.

Similarly, the attendance of disabled people at Reading and Leeds Festival increases by at least 25% each year, demonstrating the impact of our partnership with Festival Republic.

In 2010 London borough Tower Hamlets made the Charter an 'Event Standard' for all festivals that take place in Victoria Park. In July 2011 Lovebox, High Voltage, Field Day, Underage, The Apple Cart and LED (London Electronic Dance Festival) all signed up to the Charter of Best Practice.

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## **Attitude is Everything's Charter of Best Practice:**

In our original pilot project, we set out to address access issues with a ground-breaking creation – the Attitude is Everything Charter of Best Practice – and it is upon this Charter that all of our programme strands are still based. We created it to assist the music industry in understanding the requirements of Deaf and disabled people at music venues and festivals, building equality into the strategic thinking for events (instead of, for example, providing access facilities as an add-on or after-thought) and fostering a culture of providing an equal experience for Deaf and disabled people. The ethos of the Charter is that Deaf and disabled people should be enabled to be as independent as they want to be at music venues and festivals.

The Charter is divided into three levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold – each one has conditions that must be fulfilled to achieve that status. Venues and festivals who sign to the Charter are expected to work through all of the levels and aim for Gold, which is a commitment to achieving Best Practice in Access and Attitude over a period of 5 years. Part of the process is for Charter Venues and Festivals to create a realistic action plan for achieving each of the 3 levels, as well as making a commitment to go beyond the Equality Law and achieve Best Practice. Having regular Disability Equality Training is an integral part of Charter conditions. Managers and event organisers are also encouraged to share their experiences with the network of Charter Venues and Festivals.

The full Charter of Best Practice can be found as an Appendix to the State of Access Report.

## **Mystery Shopping:**

Attitude is Everything's first organisational objective is to be user-led at every level. Our Mystery Shopping programme strand does exactly this.

With help from a team of 100 Deaf and disabled volunteers, we run a programme of Mystery Shopping at music venues and festivals across the UK. Our volunteer shoppers attend events and fill in a detailed feedback form about what they experience, covering staff attitudes, physical access and a broad range of access issues. Charter Venues and Festivals also agree to be "mystery shopped". The feedback provided by our shoppers enables Attitude is Everything to assess the accessibility of music venues and festivals as well as examining how they are managed from a customer's perspective. We discuss this feedback with managers and provide constructive advice so that they can make improvements.

No other disability organisation collects real-life experiences and analyses feedback in the way that Attitude is Everything does - our Mystery Shoppers directly and strategically influence the conditions of access within the Music sector.

# The Purpose of the State of Access Report and its Methodology

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After our previous success in making music and outdoor arts festivals accessible, we turned our attention towards a project that focused more narrowly on permanent music venues (i.e., excluding outdoor music festivals) and how inclusive those venues were for Deaf and disabled audiences. We realised that we could use our mystery shoppers' qualitative and quantitative feedback to publicise what access was like at these venues for Deaf and disabled people. And so we decided to produce a report to show current trends in access, make recommendations, offer solutions and inform the music industry of what their Deaf and disabled customers want from them.

Thus, the State of Access Report was created.

## Profile of the State of Access within the UK's live music venues

The analysis for our report was based upon 130 mystery shops conducted at music venues across the UK, completed by 100 volunteers between March 2009 and March 2011. Our volunteers all self-define as Deaf and/or disabled people. They are based all over the UK, with the largest regional group being in the South East (this does not include London). Nevertheless, Arts Council England funding enabled our Mystery Shoppers to travel all over the UK to collect feedback. They are asked not to identify themselves as Mystery Shoppers to music venue staff or management whilst collecting feedback.

Each volunteer assessed a venue from a variety of impairment perspectives. Information was collected via questionnaires that had both "tick boxes" and open questions. A sample questionnaire can be found as an Appendix.

We felt that it was important to show that accessibility is both achievable and affordable in a wide variety of venues. Therefore the Mystery Shoppers reported on different types of music venues ranging from small, local pubs (e.g. Guildford's Boiler Room) to large arena-sized venues. We included both independently-run venues (e.g. KoKo) and venue chains (e.g. the 02 Academies) and included both commercially funded and publicly funded venues (e.g. The Sage, Gateshead). We also included club nights and we made sure that the venues were spread regionally across the UK, even though Attitude is Everything's office is based in London.

This Report is based on information gathered from the venues' audience areas only, but future State of Access Reports will include feedback on the accessibility of artist and staff areas.

## Mystery Shopping Analysis Summary

- Charter Venues are music venues signed to the Charter of Best Practice.
- Non-Charter Venues are music venues not (yet!) signed up.
- Mystery Shoppers are funded to give feedback on live music venues and festivals of their choice as well as Charter Venues.
- "Don't know" answers can result when access issues or poor signage prevent the Mystery Shopper from getting around the venue or when venue staff lack knowledge.

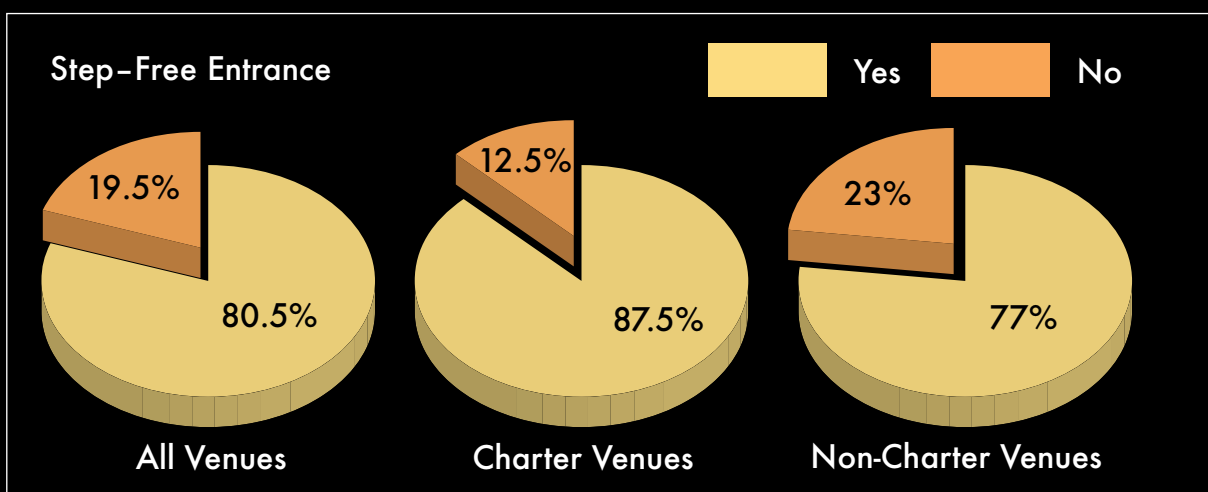
## Key Findings

### Reliable Access Information in Advance of the Event

This phase of the mystery shop asks the Shopper to find out what access information can be learned about the venue before the on-site visit and compare it to the venue itself. In other words, this part of the mystery shop determines whether the access information matches the reality the Shopper finds once he or she gets to the venue.

#### Step-free entrance:

Our Mystery Shoppers reported that 81% of all venues assessed had step-free access at the main entrance or provided an alternative step-free entrance. It is likely that this figure is artificially high because our Mystery Shoppers are likely to choose gigs at venues they know to have step-free entrances.



Charter Venues had a higher percentage of step-free entrances (88%) than Non-Charter Venues (77%). We would expect Charter Venues to have an above average proportion of step-free entrances as it is part of the criteria of the Charter of Best Practice. However, the lower percentage could reflect that some venues had portable ramps that were not used during the mystery shop or had alternative step-free entrances that were not advertised in advance or signposted well.

When an alternative entrance is used to bypass a stepped main entrance, it is important to consider the following:

- Is it advertised on the website?
- Are staff aware of its use?
- Is it clearly signposted?
- What do customers do when they arrive?
- Is there a doorbell or entry system?
- Would a Personal Assistant need to enter the main entrance to announce arrival?
- Does arrival need to be arranged in advance?

The Charter of Best Practice is set up to allow Deaf and disabled people to be as independent as they want to be at live music events, and we would recommend an alternative entrance system that allows disabled customers to arrive at the venue at their own convenience and gain entry without requiring a Personal Assistant and without hassle.

As always, whatever may be the policy for step-free or stepped entry to a music venue, detailed information must be provided in advance of the event, enabling Deaf and disabled people to make informed decisions about their visit. It is possible that someone with a mobility impairment could deal with a few steps on arrival, but not two flights of stairs, so detailed information is important. Information about portable ramps and step free alternative entrances is also important: wheelchair users could be put off buying tickets to events if they are aware of steps at the entrance, unless they can easily find out about entry options.

## Concrete Shoreditch

## CASE STUDY

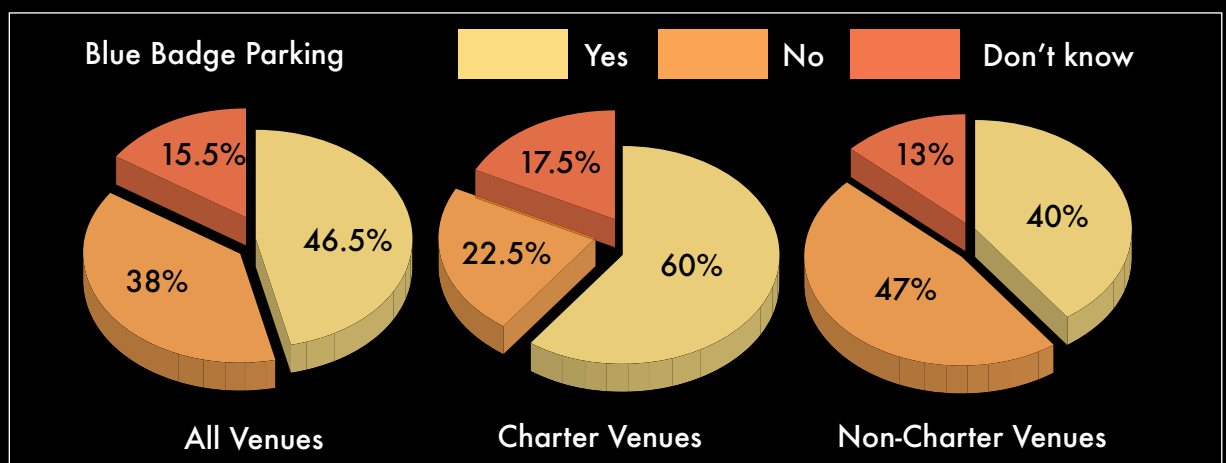
This venue is currently not signed to the Charter of Best Practice

Capacity: 250 people.

Concrete is an event space in the basement of a restaurant (Pizza East in Shoreditch). It hosts regular club nights and sometimes gigs, or club nights with an added live music act. The main entrance is not step-free: there are four or five steps to get into the restaurant, and then there is a lift down to the basement. However, staff can take people round through the venue's garage and there are no steps via this route. There is no access information on the venue website.

Concrete is a club that has basic access for disabled people, including an accessible toilet, and keeps its facilities up to a good standard. Staff know about the facilities and are helpful when approached, but they are not as forthcoming as they should be. The Mystery Shopper concludes that: "they need to provide access information on their website, and staff could be a bit more attentive to the needs of disabled customers. But, with a bit of effort, this venue could provide terrific access."

## Blue Badge Parking:





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47% of the venues that were “mystery shopped” had Blue Badge parking available at the venue. Even if there are no spaces directly outside a venue, it is a good idea to provide details of the nearest Blue Badge parking space and a good drop-off point.

### Reliability of access information provided:

“ The information on the website is very good, there is a dedicated page. It has a link from the main page labelled ‘Accessibility for All’. Information is provided on wheelchair access, hearing assistance and loops, parking, assistance dogs and more. From what I saw at the venue, all this information was correct. ”

64% of our Mystery Shoppers claimed that the access information gathered before the event correctly represented the actual access facilities at the venue. Charter Venues did slightly better with 70%, and Non-Charter venues fared worse with 60%. These low percentages may have been caused by insufficient, incorrect, or out-of-date information on many venues’ websites or even that staff on the day were unaware of the facilities available due to lack of training and understanding.

### Guildford Boiler Room

### CASE STUDY

This venue is not currently signed to the Charter of Best Practice

Capacity: 200.

The Guildford Boiler Room is a small pub. It has no access information listed on its website, but on attending the gig, the Mystery Shopper discovered that the pub had a basic level of access.

The Mystery Shopper also noted that staff were friendly and that the venue tried to make disabled customers feel welcome: “There was certainly evidence that they are trying to provide an acceptable environment for disabled customers.”

The Guildford Boiler Room is a good example of a small venue or pub that provides basic access, but could easily make its access fantastic with a very small effort. This venue shows that small venues and pubs can, and do, provide basic physical access. However, if customers do not know about the basic accessibility it is less likely anyone will profit from it, whether it be disabled people enjoying a new accessible venue or the Guildford Boiler Room profiting from the revenue generated by having more disabled customers.

### Relationship between website ratings and access information:

Mystery Shoppers who gave a venue’s website a high rating were also more likely to report that the information they received prior to the event reflected what actually existed when they arrived. For the venues whose websites were rated 5 (out of 10) or under, only 49% of mystery shoppers found that the information available prior to the event was reliable, compared to 73% for websites rated 6 or over.

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Therefore it is clear that the venues that had put time and effort into their websites were more likely to consider access information as a crucial part of the information given. In general, arenas are more likely to include comprehensive access information on their websites than small independent venues. However, it could be argued that despite their limited time and resources, it is crucial that the smaller and perhaps even more inaccessible venues provide a detailed description of the access one would expect to find on arrival.

### **Relationship between access information and access facilities:**

“ Website was a little confusing. There was no access information so I phoned the facility. The venue has a step at the entrance and steps to access the different rooms once inside. It may just be one but it affects getting around inside. ”

Our analysis shows that mystery shopping reports that gave low ratings for the access facilities also found little or confusing information on the related websites about the access available before the event. In some cases, there was no information at all. This might mean that the venue would have scored higher for its access facilities if the website information were improved, or it could be that venues do not wish to advertise the fact that they have poor access facilities. Either way, it is important for Deaf and disabled people to make informed choices about attending live music events prior to the event. Therefore access information provided by websites, staff members and ticket lines (i.e., telephone-based ticketing services) are an integral part of the booking process.

### **Summary**

Providing comprehensive and reliable access information in advance of events is a crucial part of the service offered to Deaf and disabled customers. Whether a venue has perfect access facilities or is completely physically inaccessible, Deaf and disabled people need to make informed choices about whether they wish to attend.

Access requirements are so varied that the level of detail provided by venues becomes especially important. A single step encountered at a venue that advertises a no-step entrance makes the whole venue completely inaccessible to certain customers.

It is very important that all staff are aware of the facilities at their own venue, not just so that they can handle phone and email enquiries but also to ensure that the experience on the night matches that described during the booking process. It is no good having an accessible toilet if no-one can locate the key, or having step-free access into the venue if staff are unable to clearly describe the accessible route.

Venues must test all accessible equipment on a regular basis, as we have received many reports of hearing loops or platform lifts being out of order for long periods of time, instantly outdated any information provided in advance of the event and making the venue needlessly inaccessible to Deaf and disabled customers. Under the Equality Act (Disability Discrimination), failure to ensure that a facility is properly

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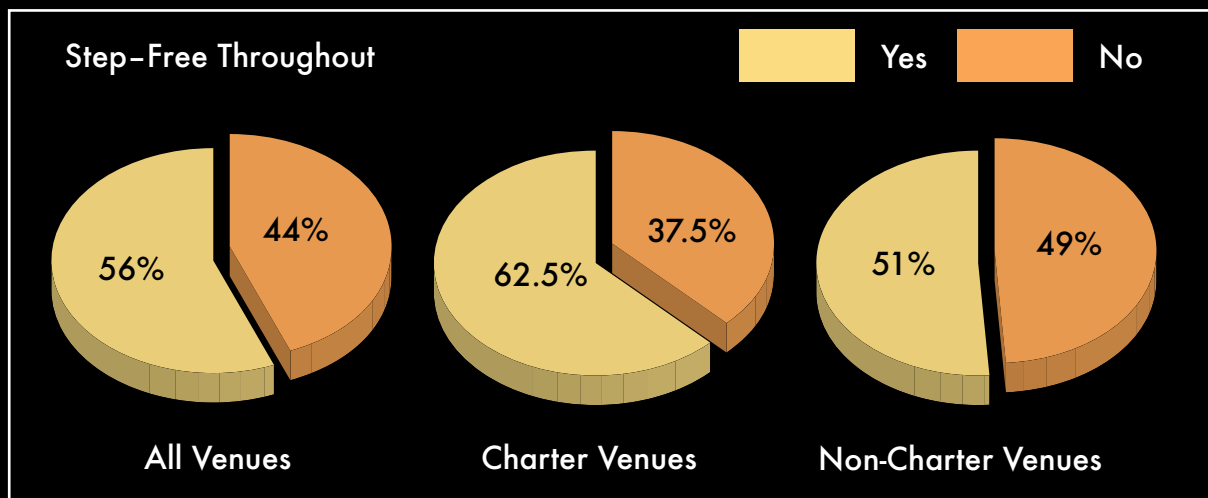
maintained and working correctly constitutes a failure to make a “reasonable adjustment”.

So many gigs sell out on the day tickets first go on sale that it is becoming especially important to make access information readily available to Deaf and disabled customers, so that informed choices can be made before the tickets sell out.

It is worthwhile to bear in mind that wheelchair users make up only a small proportion of the Deaf and disabled population in the UK. Therefore even if a venue is physically inaccessible to wheelchair users, it is still important to make sure that access information is available for customers with mobility impairments, sensory impairments, learning disabilities and a whole range of different access requirements.

# Independence

## Step-Free Access Throughout:



Only 56% of the “mystery shopped” venues provided step-free access throughout the building, meaning that there were inaccessible areas for wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments at nearly half of the gigs our Mystery Shoppers attended. Again there was a slight improvement at Charter Venues, where 63% had step-free access throughout compared with just 51% at Non-Charter Venues.

Inaccessible areas are a common situation in larger venues that have been converted from a theatre or cinema with many levels and lots of stairs (e.g. KOKO or Shepherds Bush Empire). Often there will be an accessible entrance and then step-free access to a toilet, bar, and viewing area, but not to other public areas such as the dance floor.

Venues that are entirely step-free enable Deaf and disabled customers the freedom to join their friends throughout the venue and promote independence. If bars, merchandise stalls, or cloakrooms are physically inaccessible, then Deaf and disabled customers must rely on their Personal Assistants to spend money inside the venue.

If it is impossible to provide step-free access throughout a venue, alternatives should be considered, such as providing table service from the bar or providing staff to take coats or bags to the cloakroom. In order to provide an equal experience for both disabled and non-disabled customers, it is worthwhile to consider accessible routes to smoking areas as well.

## Step-free emergency exits:

Only 58% of all of the “mystery shopped” venues had obvious step-free emergency exits, (Charter Venues scored 68%). If no step-free emergency exits are available then a suitable fire policy will need to be in place.

Step-free emergency exits again provide disabled people with the independence to leave a venue without assistance. Venues that cannot provide step-free exits or fireproof lifts might consider using stairclimbers or refuge points. It is also crucial to provide a visual signal for emergency alarms to alert people with hearing impairments. Finally, venues must ensure that Deaf and disabled customers are aware of the fire safety policies and what to do in the event of an emergency.

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## KOKO, London

## CASE STUDY

Charter Status: Silver.

Capacity: 1,410.

KOKO is a perfect example of how a venue can be made accessible even if its basic infrastructure makes it challenging for disabled people to get around.

KOKO is located in an old building with many different levels and stairs but it is still an accessible venue. Many useful facilities, like hearing loop systems, ramps and easily accessible websites, are fairly easy to provide for any venue. KOKO makes sure that the accessible facilities it has are excellent, for example, by keeping the accessible toilet clean and providing a mirror at lowered height. The venue also makes sure that other facilities, which could add potential barriers for disabled customers, are made as accessible as possible through an excellent staff policy.

The Mystery Shopper concludes "I enjoyed the event very, very much. I'd go back to a gig at KOKO anytime."

### Lowered counter or bar:

Only 24% of "mystery shopped" venues had a counter or bar lower than 1m high. It is quite common for newly built venues or multi-arts venues, such as the Barbican or the Royal Festival Hall, to have a lowered counter at both the box office and the bar, but unfortunately three quarters of the "mystery shopped" venues had neither. Therefore wheelchair users found it almost impossible to the gain attention of staff in order to purchase tickets, drinks, food or merchandise.

Table service could be offered at bars with high counters, or staff could be trained to come round the bar to take orders. Even a low table placed at the end of a bar or box office counter could help to create an independent experience for Deaf and disabled customers at music venues.

### Summary

Venues should be providing alternatives to step-free access, e.g. via alternative routes or ramps. These routes and the types of other access equipment provided should be made clear in the venues' access information. Staff should be trained to offer these alternative routes and use access equipment. Venues must ensure that the alternatives offered are proper, safe, and reliable, and that they adequately meet the access requirements of disabled people.

If a venue cannot provide alternative routes and access equipment, staff must be ready and willing to provide other forms of accessible services, such as table service in a bar area.

Staff must be trained in how to evacuate Deaf and disabled people from venues so that they are fully aware of the issues that customers with impairments face when leaving a building in an emergency.

# View of the Performance

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## Viewing platforms:

“Sightline was very good. The seating allocated to wheelchair patrons and those with mobility impairments is halfway up the front stall area, near enough to hear and see clearly, and far enough away not to be overwhelmed by music and having to crick one’s neck up.”

Mystery Shoppers found that 78% of Charter Venues offered a viewing area specifically designated for disabled people and their guests to watch the performance. This compares to 61% of all venues that were “mystery shopped”.

In an ideal world there would not be any need for a separate viewing area, as venues would be designed with disabled people in mind. However, in the current live music environment viewing areas are essential to provide an equal experience for disabled people, especially wheelchair users and those that require seating, as they often have compromised sightlines when audience members stand front of them.

A viewing area need not necessarily be a raised platform. Smaller venues may have a reserved area at the front of the venue near the stage to give wheelchair users a suitable view of the performance without the need for structural changes.

There is a high correlation between the availability of a viewing platform or area for disabled customers and the ratings for both the access facilities and the enjoyment of the gig. At venues with a viewing platform the average rating for access facilities was 7.3 out of 10, compared to just 4.9 at venues without a platform, and enjoyment ratings fell from 9 out of 10 at venues with platforms to 7.7 at venues where platforms or viewing areas were not available.

## Seating:

84% of venues had specific seating that could be arranged, designated, reserved or booked by those with access requirements, such as an aisle or a front row seat. There are still issues with some venues being unable to put removable seating in front of the stage, apparently due to the fire risk and potential trip hazard. However this policy makes live music completely inaccessible to those who cannot stand for long periods of time.

## Summary

Viewing platforms improve the experience of watching live music for Deaf and disabled customers. Venues that do not provide viewing areas may find it impossible to provide a view of the event with uncompromised sightlines. As disabled customers pay the same price for their tickets as non-disabled customers, under the Equality Law venues must provide everybody with an equal experience.

It is also worth considering how flexible viewing areas are, as limiting the capacity of that area may mean turning down Deaf and disabled customers when there are still tickets on sale to the general public.

When creating a viewing area, we recommend roping off the area or creating some form of barrier, and paying close attention to signage and access routes into the viewing area and back out to bars and toilets. Depending on the size and nature of the performance, it might also be worth positioning a steward or security staff member to ensure that the viewing area is not abused.

# Toilets

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## Accessible toilets:

Our Mystery Shoppers found that 82% of all venues had an accessible toilet suitable for wheelchair users and conforming to Part M:2004 of the Building Regulations. A higher percentage of Charter Venues (98% ) than Non-Charter Venues (74%) were reported to have accessible toilets.

All of our Charter Venues are expected to have a suitable accessible toilet as it is among the entry level criteria. Charter Venues that were reported to lack an accessible toilet actually lacked good signposting to the accessible toilet.

It was also reported that 93% of the venues with step-free access throughout have an accessible toilet while only 68% of venues lacking step-free access throughout have accessible toilets. This reinforces the idea that if there is no step-free access to a venue, then other access facilities are less likely to be present. The lack of accessible toilets partly reflects the incorrect assumption that all disabled people are wheelchair users, so a venue that is physically inaccessible need not install an accessible toilet. In fact, wheelchair users make up just a small proportion of Deaf and disabled people nationwide and an accessible toilet and other access facilities will benefit the majority of the Deaf and disabled customer base, whatever the step-free access is like.

## RADAR key system:

It was reported that 25% of accessible toilets were locked using a RADAR key system, comprising 35% of Charter Venues and only 20% of Non-Charter Venues.

Some music venues lock their accessible toilets to keep them clean and ensure that they are not used by people who do not need them. However, although there is a universal system for locking accessible toilets (RADAR) and a universal key that disabled people can acquire easily, many venues locking toilets doors with their own key systems. This can cause issues when the key is needed, such as finding out how to get the key and coping with lost keys.

Venues that don't use the RADAR key system also cause issues for people with hidden impairments who may have to face unintended, embarrassing questions to prove that they require an accessible toilet. To prevent these incidents from happening, we suggest using the universal RADAR key system. Over a period of years, we have surveyed our Mystery Shoppers to ascertain if accessible toilets should be locked when not in use. Interestingly, the results are evenly split: 50% say no, whilst 50% say yes due to hygiene factors.

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## Summary

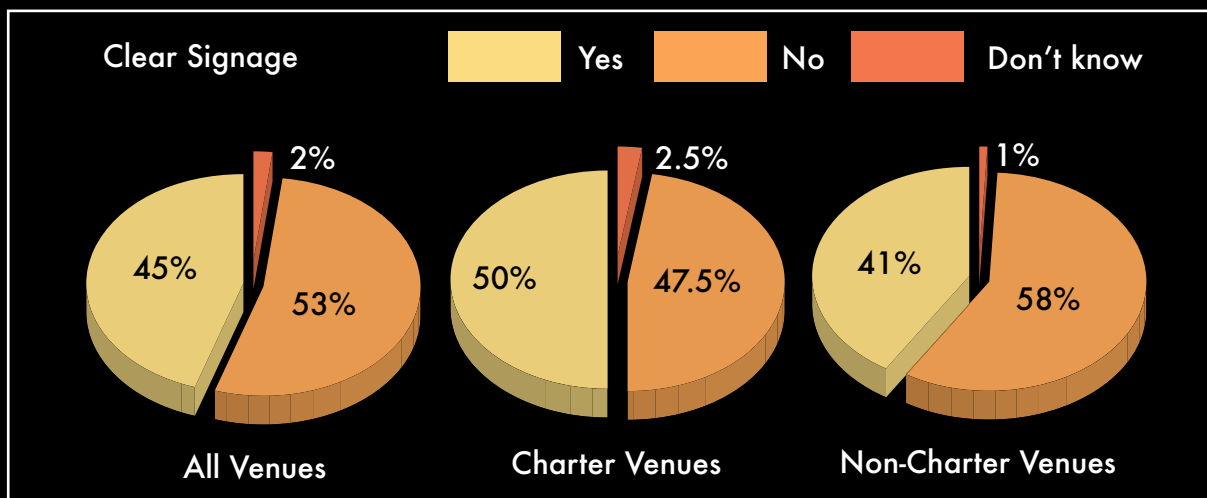
Even when accessible toilets are present, it is surprising how many of them do not meet the standards set out in Part M:2004 of the Building Regulations. It is not uncommon to find an accessible toilet being used as a storage closet. The most important factors to consider in an accessible toilet are:

- Turning circle for wheelchairs users
- Adequate space around toilet
- Toilet flush on the transfer side of the cistern
- Grab rails
- Height of sink and mirror
- Easy-to-use door handles/taps/dryers/locks
- Emergency alarm cord (to the floor)
- Colour contrast around white fixtures



# Facilities for People with Sensory Impairments

## Clear Signage:



Only 45% of the venues that were “mystery shopped” had clear signage. Clear signage is especially important for people with visual impairments, but it also benefits all customers attending a gig. The “Sign Design Guide”, produced by the JMC and the Sign Design Society, provides good guidelines on signage.

## Hearing loop or infrared system:

Our Mystery Shoppers found that only 25% of venues definitely had a hearing loop or infrared system; however, 50% of Mystery Shoppers could not tell whether a hearing loop or infrared system was in place. This could be down to poor signage or information missing from the website.

Unfortunately, it is also common to find that despite having these systems in place, they are not in fully operational order, so it is important to test hearing loops and infrared systems periodically. Staff must also be trained in their use and the availability advertised on the venue website and inside the venue itself. As mentioned earlier, failure to maintain an access facility constitutes a failure to provide a “reasonable adjustment” under the Equality Law.

## Accessible performances:

“Accessible performances” refers to a range of different creative ways of making performances accessible to Deaf and disabled people, such as sign language interpreted performances, captioned or subtitled lyrics, or audio description of performances for visually impaired people.

This is an area that the theatre has been successfully developing over the past decade and we recognise that this kind of access is a fairly new concept for the music industry. However our mystery shoppers reported that 38% of the venues offered accessible performances, which is likely to be weighted towards the larger arena venues.

There is still a long way to go to make live music accessible to people with sensory

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impairments. Outreach work with organisations who provide services to Deaf, hard of hearing and visually impaired people in the arts, such as Stagertext and Vocaleyes, will help venues to understand better the demand for accessible performances and how best to deliver them. There may also develop opportunities for volunteers to assist with delivering accessible performances at smaller independent venues.

### **Accessible formats:**

Our Mystery Shoppers reported that just 17% of venues advertised that they could provide their publicity materials in accessible formats, for example in large print or Braille. However 48% of our mystery shops reported not knowing if information was available in accessible formats -- so if accessible formats were available, that availability was not obvious. These materials do not always need to be prepared in advance, but a sentence on the website informing customers that they are available makes a lot of difference.

The new Equality Act (2010) sets out that venues have a positive duty to anticipate and make reasonable adjustments for Deaf and disabled customers, artists and employees. This includes the physical environment and policies. Essentially, rather than waiting for someone to request access, venues should put reasonable adjustments in place regardless of requests and consider what disabled people with a range of impairments might require.

Relationship between signage, hearing loops and accessible performances:

Whilst only 8.5% of the venues mystery shopped were reported to have clear signage, a hearing loop system and accessible performances, it was clear that venues that provided one of these facilities were more likely to provide the others as well. For example, 53% of the venues that offered a hearing loop system also had accessible performances, compared with just 33% of the venues with no loop. Similarly, 33% of the venues with clear signage also have a hearing loop system, while only 17% of venues with unclear signage have a hearing loop system.

### **Summary**

If the signage is unclear, customers will not know what facilities are available at the venue. Consequently, they will find it harder or even impossible to get around the venue independently, quickly and easily. If customers are unable to find the bar, food, cloakroom or merchandise areas, they will find it harder to spend money in a venue, which means that the venue loses out financially. Also, clear signage benefits everyone who visits the venue.

There is a lack of consistency in providing access facilities for people with sensory impairments - many venues only provide facilities for people with hearing impairments and not for people with other sensory impairments. Other venues provide no access facilities for people with sensory impairments at all. We recommend that venues take a collective approach on this, aiming to reach potential customers with a wide range of sensory impairments. Portable induction loops are easy to acquire and volunteers are sometimes available to provide audio description to make performances more accessible.

## 2-for-1 Ticketing Scheme

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“ I bought a ticket online and then emailed the venue for information re access and +1s. I received a prompt reply informing me that assistants could come free, giving me details on parking and telling me to ask for the manager on arrival to be shown. ”

A 2-for-1 ticketing scheme enables disabled people who require a Personal Assistant to receive a free ticket for the Personal Assistant, in effect paying the same amount as a non-disabled person to attend the event. Sometimes Deaf or disabled people have to pay wages to their Personal Assistant to attend the event, making live music an extremely expensive pastime.

However, only 56% of the “mystery shopped” venues offer a 2-for-1 ticket policy for their events. That percentage rises to 78% among Charter Venues, compared to just 47% of Non-Charter Venues. That means less than half of the venues not signed up to the Charter of Best Practice offer this service and provide an equal experience for Deaf and disabled customers.

When you compare the venues that had a 2-for-1 ticket scheme to the ratings our mystery shoppers gave to both the website and the booking experience, there is a strong correlation among all 3 factors. Venues offering 2-for-1 tickets averaged 6.6 (out of 10) for their website and 7.2 for their booking system, compared with just 5.6 and 5.7 respectively for venues that did not offer 2-for-1 tickets.

### Summary

Not all of our Charter Venues seem to offer the 2-for-1 ticket scheme. It could be the case that some Charter Venues do offer the ticket scheme but do not advertise it well, perhaps out of fear that the system will be misused by non-disabled people pretending to have access requirements. Asking for proof of access requirements in advance is common practice at large venues but it is very rare at small grassroots venues, especially when tickets are bought on the door.

When promoters do not comply with venues’ policies (if they have one) to provide a 2-for-1 ticket scheme for disabled customers, venues need to enforce their policies through contractual agreements between promoter and venue.

## Staff Attitude and Disability Equality Training

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### Relationship between staff attitude, Disability Equality Training and enjoyment ratings:

The ratings for staff attitude toward disability, access facilities, and enjoyment seem to be generally correlated; the higher the rating for staff attitude and access facilities, the higher our Mystery Shoppers' enjoyment ratings.

Mystery Shoppers who had bad experiences with the staff at venues expressed a strong opinion that the venues would benefit from Disability Equality Training. Some shoppers had wonderful experiences with staff but still thought that Disability Equality Training would be worthwhile to maintain that good standard. Venues that scored highly on both staff attitude and access facilities were more likely to have trained their staff better about disability equality, which led to a better level of satisfaction for the mystery shopper.

Disability Equality Training (also called Disability Awareness Training) focuses on Best Practice customer service towards disabled people; helps managers create inclusive policies for their businesses and organisations; underlines the ethical, legal, and business cases for improving access; and makes staff and managers aware of their obligations as service providers under the Equality Law.

Mystery Shoppers suggested that Disability Equality Training would be beneficial at 100% of the venues where the staff attitude rated 5 out of 10 or lower.

“ No one really cared about helping disabled customers, neither showing them where the viewing area or the toilet was, and they were even clueless about their own facilities. In fact, most of their issues could be easily resolved with training. Even though I enjoyed the gig, I would have enjoyed it twice as much if they could improve their access. ”

The following quote provides an argument that there is always a need for on-going Disability Equality Training.

“ The venue has some good points, and some staff relate well to disabled customers. There is, however, a need to identify ways of addressing the remaining access issues, whether this means alterations or just making staff more aware, and willing. ”

Having Disability Equality Training can also lead to management and staff having better overall access at their venue. The Equality Law (Disability Discrimination) states that one example of a “reasonable adjustment” is to regularly train staff in disability equality.

“ I only managed to make eye contact with one member of staff and others only dealt with my Personal Assistant. I think the venue staff definitely need some sort of Disability Awareness Training. The band was one of my favourites and we watched an awesome show but I wish I could have socialised, and been equal and acknowledged, as well as being able to buy my own drink. I also really needed the toilet and was unable to use their facilities, so these things caused frustration and irritation, and reduced my enjoyment of the gig. ”

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## Comparison of staff, website and booking rating:

Quite often, the rating of the staff attitude was similar to the rating of the website and the booking experience, which seems to back up other results that suggest that venues that care about access and show it in several areas. However, we saw a few instances in which a high staff rating was accompanied by low ratings for the venue's website and booking experience. Such examples are unfortunate because the venue generated low customer expectations before the customer even arrives at the event.

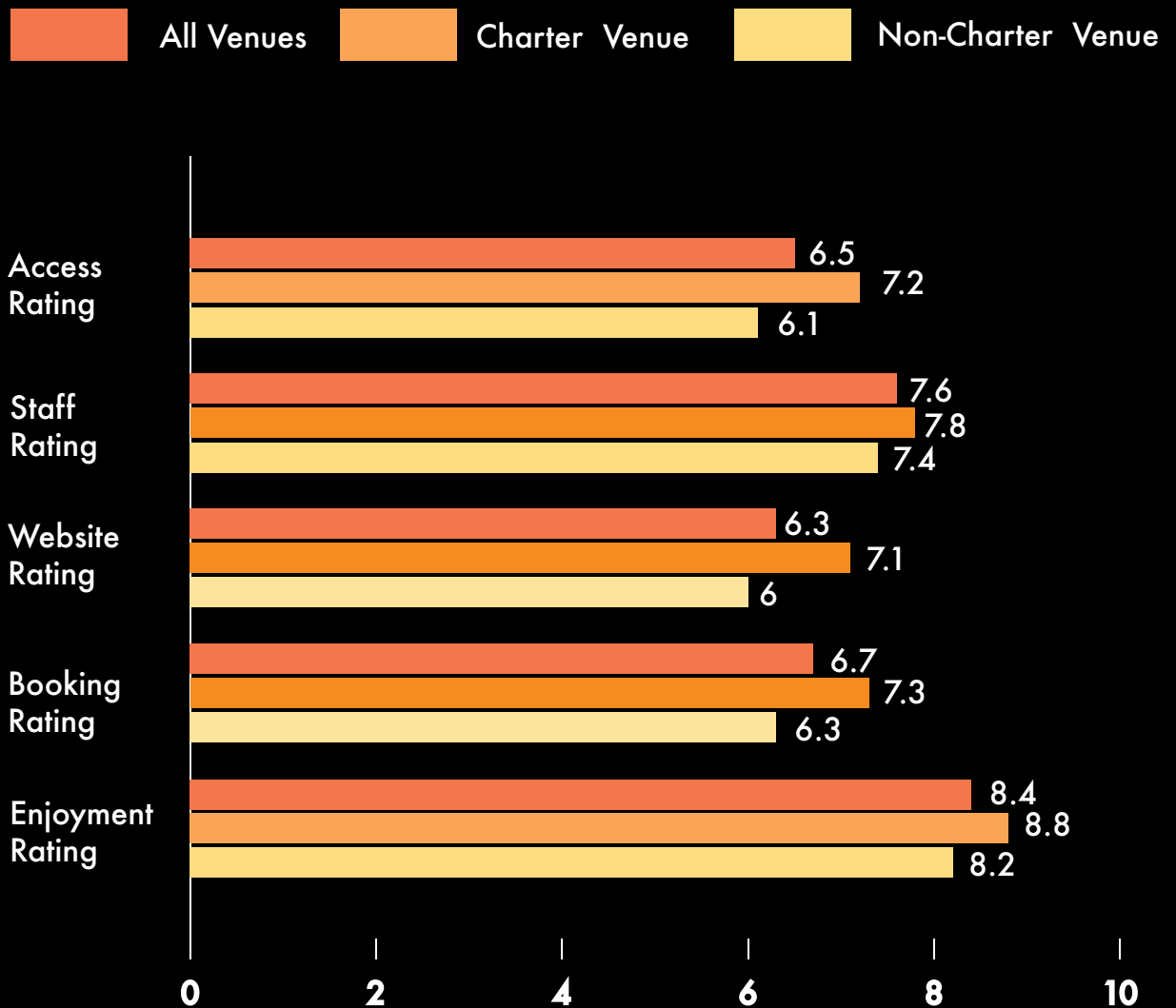
## Summary

Disability Equality Training is necessary because it adds to the enjoyment of a gig to disabled customers. Staff can better describe and direct customers to the access facilities and therefore the facilities are better utilised. Staff also become more aware of the different requirements of customers, more polite, and more respectful, thus creating a better experience for the customer.

“ The training we have received from Attitude is Everything has been of enormous value - increasing staff knowledge and awareness, as well as helping us to develop workable policies on access at KOKO. We have had fantastic feedback and are very proud of the progress we have made. A rolling training programme is now in place to ensure standards remain high. ”

Mike Hamer, Operations Manager, KOKO

## Average Ratings



### Access Rating:

The Mystery Shoppers rated the access facilities at each of the venues. The average rating for all of the venues was 6.5 out of 10, compared with 7.2 at just Charter Venues and 6.1 at Non-Charter Venues.

### Staff Rating:

We asked our Mystery Shoppers to rate the staff on whether they had a positive attitude towards them and were knowledgeable about access. We calculated an average rating of 7.6 overall.

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### **Website Rating:**

The Mystery Shoppers also rated some of the access facilities. In terms of the website, the ratings related to whether the website was easy to navigate and understand, and whether it was easy to find access information about the venue. The average rating for all of the mystery shops was 6.3, rising to 7 for Charter Venues.

### **Booking Rating:**

The average rating for the booking systems was 6.7 for all venues and 7.3 for Charter Venues. Different venues have different booking policies for disabled tickets, and sometimes venues must balance outsourcing ticket sales so that disabled customers have an equal experience against keeping ticket sales in-house so that access information can be given out and access requirements met.

### **Enjoyment Rating:**

The average rating for how much the Mystery Shopper enjoyed the event was 8.4, increasing to 8.8 at Charter Venues.

# Conclusions

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Clear information on access provided prior to events is crucial to the customer being able to make an informed choice about whether to buy a ticket. What is equally important is that the information matches the reality of what is provided at the venue once customers arrive.

Wheelchair users are a small proportion of the disabled community. Venues are required to provide access information and accessible facilities for a wide range of impairments.

Under the Equality Law, disabled people must receive an equal experience to their non-disabled peers (in fact, the law goes further, acknowledging that in order to provide an equal level of service, venues may treat disabled people more favourably than others). This means that sightlines should no longer be compromised, and full access should be provided to the bar. Venues must actively work towards eradicating these inequalities.

There is clear evidence from our Mystery Shoppers' feedback that Disability Equality Training is important because it leads to a better awareness of the issues disabled people face at venues, a better understanding of access requirements and a better understanding of what facilities must be put in place. It also leads to more positive and welcoming staff attitudes towards disabled customers. The impact of Disability Equality Training is that disabled customers have a much better experience and enjoyment of music events.

Attitude is Everything's Charter of Best Practice states that disabled people should be independent at gigs and Attitude is Everything can advise venues on how to achieve this.

Our Charter of Best Practice Venues receive better ratings from our Mystery Shoppers and have better facilities in place than venues who have not signed to the Charter. Therefore, all music venues should consider signing up, using the Charter as an Event Standard and implementing Best Practice.

The support and practical assistance that Attitude is Everything gives through our Charter of Best Practice, Mystery Shopping Programme, Disability Equality Training and Access Auditing makes a real difference to the way access has improved at UK music venues.

## The Sage, Gateshead

## CASE STUDY

Charter Status: Gold.

Capacity: It has two spaces that have a seating capacity of 1700 and 400.

The Sage Gateshead is a brilliant example of a venue that has accessible facilities and well-trained staff, and thus makes its gigs an experience that is equally fantastic and barrier-free for all customers. The facilities match the online description provided on the venue's website and are kept well in order.

Even though the venue's architecture makes it easy for disabled customers to get around and watch the gig, staff are still described as "friendly, polite and helpful without being intrusive".

The Mystery Shopper concludes: "I would say this venue is probably as close to perfect as you will get, they have obviously taken advice from a lot of sources and appear to have thought of everything. I really can't find any fault."



# The Way Forward

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The research contained in this State of Access Report now enables Attitude is Everything to make the following recommendations to influence strategic change in two key areas:

1. The need for the music industry to adopt the Charter of Best Practice as an Event Standard in access. Our Charter Venues and Festivals, leading festival and event organisers (such as Festival Republic, Glastonbury, and MAMA Group) and local authorities (such as London borough Tower Hamlets) can now vouch for our Scheme and demonstrate the real benefits of it.
2. The need for a coalition of supportive music venues, key festival organisers, local authorities and Licensing Officers to join together and work in partnership with Attitude is Everything to make access a condition that music venues must meet to qualify for entertainment licences, including the granting of temporary licences. Scotland made this change to its entertainment licensing laws in October 2011. England, Wales and Northern Ireland must follow.

At the moment, there is no regulatory body that regularly checks on access improvements and developments in music venues throughout the United Kingdom. With the exception of our Mystery Shoppers, no one systematically measures access in music venues. Access requirements are seldom enforced, often only when a disabled person sues a venue under the Disability Discrimination part of the Equality Law.

If access were made a condition for entertainment licences, an access question could be added to the club/venue/festival licence application that would both capture information about the current state of access among music venues and enable Licensing Officers to enforce required access facilities as individual licences come up for renewal.

Under Scotland's 2011 licensing rules, establishments that apply for alcohol licences as part of their full, new licence (the new rules do not cover temporary or renewal licences) have to provide a statement, in a prescribed form, that contains information about provisions made for access to the subject premises by disabled people, facilities provided on the subject premises for use by disabled people, and any other provision made on or in connection with the subject premises for disabled people. Scotland's new rules do not require pubs and other venues to change their existing facilities, but they do require them to detail what access facilities they do or do not have.

These new licensing rules have two goals:

- a) The information provided by applicants will be compiled into an access guide, allowing consumers to make informed decisions about where they want to spend their night out.
- b) Licence applicants will be required to think about access at an early stage. Applicants for Premises Licences are required to submit, along with their operating plan and layout plan, a statement on the venue's access and facilities for disabled people. Applications must include a "statement of compliance" with the 2005 Disability Discrimination Act, detailing where changes have been made to remove barriers for disabled people.

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Attitude is Everything recommend that similar changes to the licensing rules be established for the rest of the UK so that access becomes a condition for receiving an entertainment licence, including the granting of temporary licences.

We therefore want to lead a coalition of supportive music venues, leading festival organisers, local authorities and Licensing Officers to work in partnership to make this happen. This change in the law will have a huge impact, not only on Deaf and disabled music lovers but also on the Deaf and disabled population as a whole.

## Useful Links

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**Attitude is Everything – improving Deaf and disabled people’s access to live music**

[www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk](http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk)

**Access Toolkit – Making Outdoor Arts Events Accessible to All**

[www.isanuk.org/publications-downloads/downloads](http://www.isanuk.org/publications-downloads/downloads)

**Equality and Human Rights Commission**

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

**Office of Disability Issues – ODI**

[www.odi.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.odi.dwp.gov.uk)

**Building Regulations Approved Document M**

[www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/)

**Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people (BSI)**

[www.bsi-global.com](http://www.bsi-global.com)

**Arts Council of England**

[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

## Appendices

Available to download from [www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk/stateofaccessreport](http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk/stateofaccessreport)

- The Attitude is Everything Charter of Best Practice
- List of Live Music Venues and Festivals signed to the Charter
- Sample Mystery Shopping Music Venues Questionnaire



**attitude**  
is everything

improving deaf and disabled people's access to live music

54 Chalton Street  
London NW1 1HS

Tel: 0207 383 7979

Web: [www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk](http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk)

Email: [suzanne@attitudeiseverything.org.uk](mailto:suzanne@attitudeiseverything.org.uk)

Text Relay: 18001 0207 383 7979



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