



improving deaf and disabled
people's access to live music

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State of Access Report

Surveying UK Live Music Accessibility for Deaf and Disabled People

January 2014



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

#StateofAccess

Charter venues and festivals

Venues

Aberdeen Exhibition & Conference Centre	King's Hall Exhibition & Conference Centre	O2 Academy Oxford - Academy 1
Band on the Wall	KOKO	O2 Academy Sheffield
Barbican	Leadmill	O2 Empire Shepherd's Bush
Bournemouth International Centre	LG Arena	Odyssey Arena
Brighton Centre	Liverpool Philharmonic Hall	Roadmender
Brighton Dome	Manchester Academy	Roundhouse
Cambridge Junction	Motorpoint Arena Cardiff	Rose Theatre Kingston
Camden Centre	Motorpoint Arena Sheffield	Royal Academy of Music
Capital FM Nottingham Arena	National Indoor Arena	Royal Albert Hall
Cecil Sharp House - English Folk Dance and Song Society	O2 ABC Glasgow	Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre
Colchester Arts Centre	O2 Academy Birmingham	The Albany
De Montfort Hall - Leicester	O2 Academy Bournemouth	The O2
Earls Court & Olympia	O2 Academy Bristol	The Sage Gateshead
Gloucester Guildhall	O2 Academy Brixton	Tyneside Cinema
Goldsmiths Student's Union	O2 Academy Glasgow	Village Underground
Hammersmith Apollo	O2 Academy Islington	Warwick University Student Union
Heriot-Watt University Student Union	O2 Academy Leeds	Wembley Arena
	O2 Academy Leicester	
	O2 Academy Liverpool	
	O2 Academy Newcastle	

Festivals

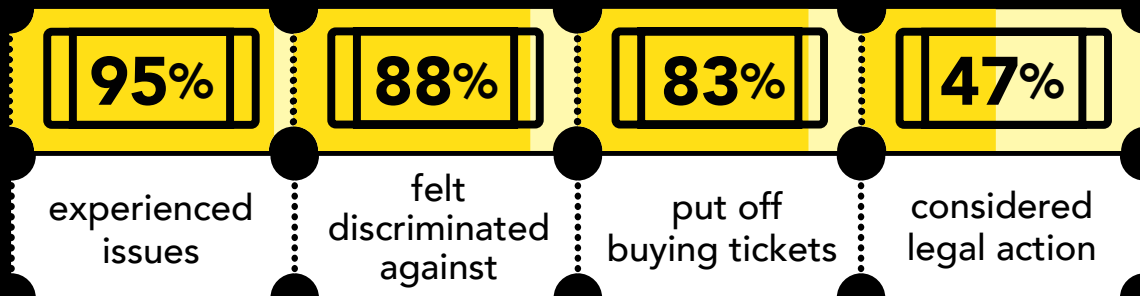
2000 Trees	Glastonbury	Liberty
Bingley	Green Man	Live from Jodrell Bank
British Summer Time Hyde Park	Greenbelt	Lovebox
Chase Park	Kendal Calling	Parklife
Festival Number 6	Latitude	Reading
Field Day	Leeds	Rewind – England & Scotland

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TICKETING

Disabled people's experiences of buying tickets to live music:

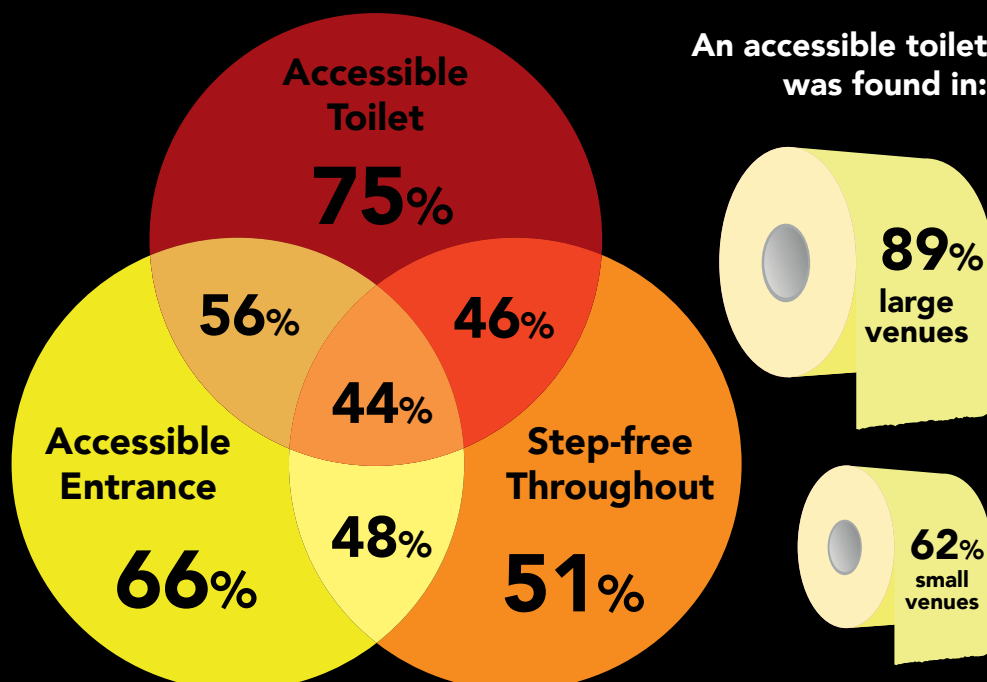


Disabled people prefer to purchase tickets:



Only **2 out of 10** venues offered online tickets to disabled customers

VENUES



FESTIVALS

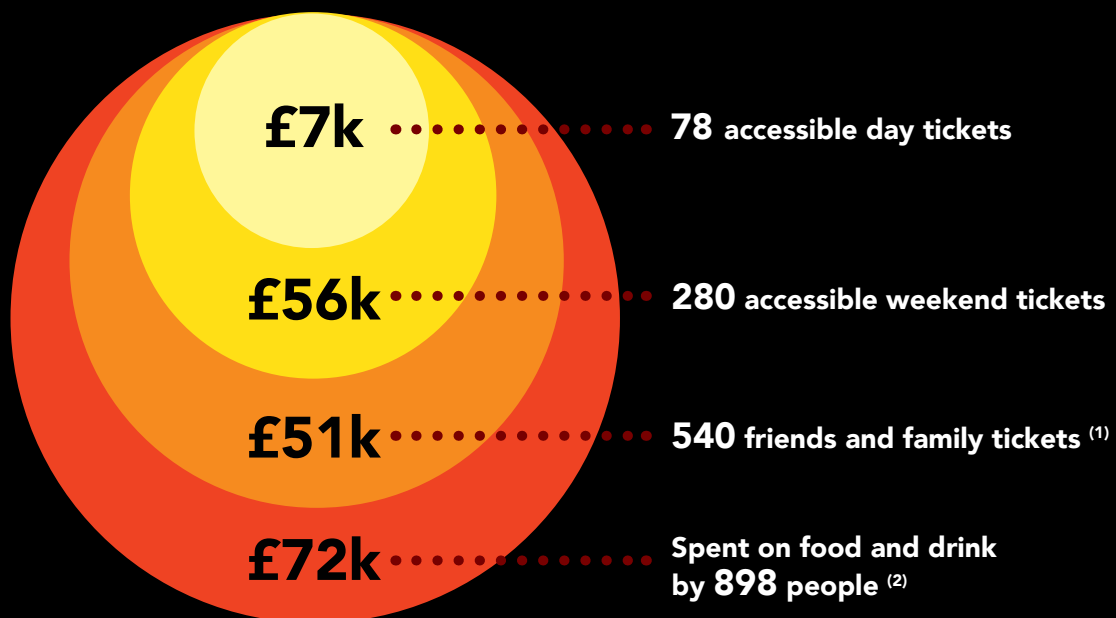
with
viewing platform

without
viewing platform



Economic impact of disabled people
attending **READING** festival

2012: **170** tickets **111%** increase 2013: **358** tickets



= £187k

(1) Based on 255 tickets sold to friends and family accompanying disabled people & 285 Personal Assistant tickets provided at no cost

(2) Based on £80 average spend on food and drink per person at festivals according to MSN/Gigwise survey in 2013

Foreword

2013 has been a year of change for us.

Ground Control emerged as its own business entity three years after coming to life as the in-house production arm at brand agency Ear to the Ground. We've taken on new events and new staff and we've seen unprecedented growth in the profile of some of the festivals we have worked with since inception. As a result, Ground Control has had to adapt and develop and we feel all the better for it.

One of the biggest catalysts for developments was our partnership with Attitude is Everything since Autumn of 2012. They provided us with feedback on what it was like to be a Deaf or disabled customer at a Ground Control produced event and provided practical advice and guidance on how we could improve our accessibility. With that, we worked towards signing up the Charter of Best Practice and embarked on a journey led by Attitude is Everything. Our team were trained in disability awareness and we learnt how everything from the festival site to the website could be designed in a way to make them more accessible without having an impact on their functionality and feel, and for little or no cost. This learning spread through the business and beyond - to our partners, our suppliers and the promoters we work with.

It's clear from the findings in the State of Access Report that ticketing is a big issue for disabled customers, which is why it was so valuable to be able to work with Attitude is Everything to fine-tune our ticketing policies to ensure they were as inclusive as possible.

In Autumn 2013, a year after our first introduction to Attitude is Everything, we received news that our four major festivals - Parklife, Live From Jodrell Bank, Kendal Calling and Festival No 6 - had all been awarded the Bronze level of the Charter of Best Practice, demonstrating that the measures we had put in place had made a real difference to the independence of disabled customers who invested in our events. It was incredibly gratifying; not just as a vindication of the work we had put in but also to know we had made a genuine difference to the experience of our festival goers.

In 2014, with the help of Attitude is Everything, we're going to continue to work within the Charter of Best Practice to make improvements and aim for the next level, and we're very much looking forward to it.

Jon Drape,
Managing Director, Ground Control



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.

Having begun as a pilot project in 2000, we are now a fully independent charity and part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio of Organisations. We encourage events producers to go beyond the legal obligations set out in the Equality Act and implement best practice, providing a fair and equal service to their Deaf and disabled customers.

We support the music industry to understand Deaf and disabled people's access requirements at music venues and festivals by building equality into the strategic process. The ethos of the Charter is that Deaf and disabled people should be as independent as they want to be at live music events.

The Charter is a bespoke service offered exclusively to the live music industry and the award is in 3 stages - Bronze, Silver and Gold. Each stage details the criteria for improvements and advises on how to achieve them. We support music venues and festivals to create a realistic action plan in order to work through each level of the Charter and aim for the Gold award, by demonstrating an on-going commitment to improving accessibility and achieving best practice.

Over 70 venues and festivals have already signed up to the Charter of Best Practice, adopting it as an industry standard for accessibility at live music events and agreeing to be mystery shopped by our team of Deaf and disabled volunteers. Their detailed feedback on accessibility is then passed onto management, so that any potential issues are identified and practical solutions are suggested. We also offer Disability Equality Training and undertake Access Audits to advise on changes that may be required.

The Mystery Shopping project is the keystone of our work. Our dedicated team of Mystery Shoppers are Deaf and disabled music fans who report back on the accessibility and overall experience at UK music venues, clubs and festivals, in return for free tickets and travel. This is vital for identifying each venue's strengths and areas for improvement.

Our many successes to date include working with Festival Republic and Ground Control on all of their UK festivals, supporting Academy Music Group and National Arena Association venues to sign up to our Charter, and working with London Borough of Tower Hamlets to use the Charter of Best Practice as an event standard for all festivals taking place in Victoria Park.

Our 'Access Toolkit: Making Outdoor Arts Events Accessible to All' was awarded the London 2012 Inspire Mark, and we worked in partnership with Greater London Authority and London Legacy Development Corporation to make the Cultural-Olympiad and the legacy of the Games as accessible as possible.

Purpose and methodology

The State of Access Report allows Attitude is Everything to publicly examine the detailed feedback that we receive from our Deaf and disabled Mystery Shoppers about live music events. By analysing the mystery shopping reports, we can identify trends and issues that Deaf and disabled people are facing when trying to access gigs at UK music venues and festivals.

The first State of Access Report was published in November 2011 and launched by Matthew Hancock MP at the House of Commons. The findings led to a series of debates in Parliament, and meetings with Ed Vaizey MP, the Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, with whom we are now working to create a set of event standards across the arts and culture sector with the 'Beyond the Ramps' group.

This year's report builds on the successes of the last report and focuses on our Mystery Shoppers' experiences at festivals as well as venues. In addition to the mystery shopping reports, we have conducted further research into two specific areas of interest: accessible ticketing and captioning at live music events.

The State of Access Report is based on 228 mystery shopping reports 40 questionnaires and 13 interviews, collated between April 2011 and March 2013. There were 159 reports discussing access at UK venues, 46 of which referred to a venue that is signed up to the Attitude is Everything Charter of Best Practice. A further 69 reports examined the accessibility of UK festivals, of which 16 contained feedback relating to a Charter festival.

Our team of Mystery Shoppers are asked a series of questions about their booking and arrival experiences, as well as what facilities were in place, the attitudes of the staff, and general feedback about their experience of the event as a disabled customer. They are also asked to provide ratings for a number of aspects of their experience, including the website, booking, accessibility, staff attitude and the overall enjoyment of the event.

Our diverse team of Mystery Shoppers represent a cross section of Deaf and disabled music fans with a wide range of access requirements, so many of the events will not have been wheelchair accessible. However, the events selected for review are suggested by our Mystery Shoppers, and are therefore more likely to be weighted towards more accessible venues where those access requirements will be met.

We have decided not to focus the attention of this report on comparing the current set of data to that from the State of Access Report in 2011. The sample of venues and festivals in which the mystery shops took place was completely different, and individual Mystery Shoppers are likely to give varied results depending on their own access requirements, therefore it didn't seem worthwhile for us to make the comparison.

All of the ratings given by Mystery Shoppers were out of 10. We also analysed some of the data based on the capacity of the venue or festival and categorised them as Small, Medium and Large. The criteria we used to arrange our data was as follows:

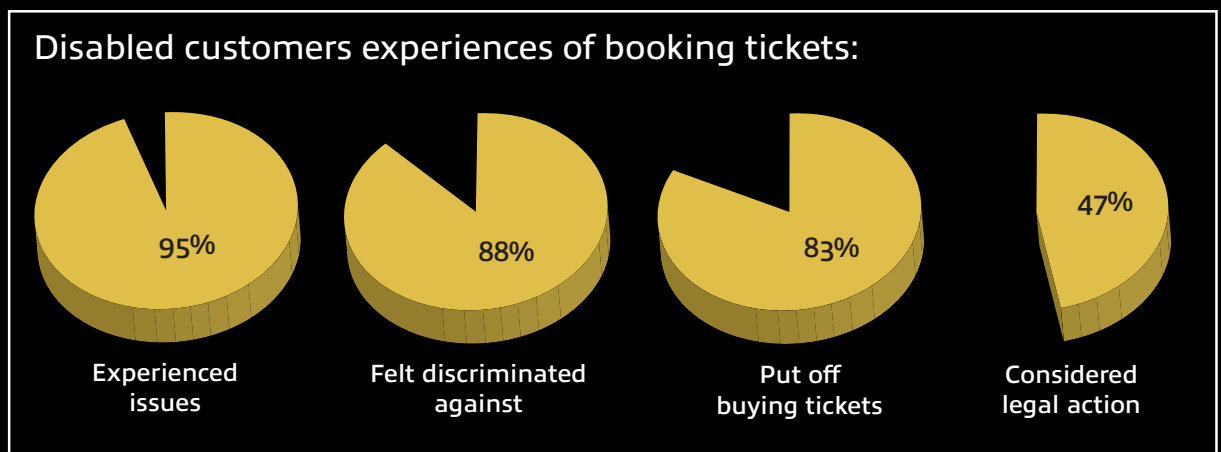
	Venues	Festivals
Small	0 – 499	0 – 9,999
Medium	500 – 5k	10k – 30k
Large	5k+	30k+

Accessible ticketing

The issue that our Mystery Shoppers most commonly reported was the inequality of ticket booking systems, which do not allow Deaf and disabled customers to purchase tickets in the same way as non-disabled people.

Our findings echo those presented in a recent [Trailblazers](#) study, which reported that 64% of young disabled people considered buying tickets to be the biggest barrier to accessing live music, and 77% considered themselves to be at a substantial disadvantage to non-disabled customers.

When we asked our Mystery Shoppers in a questionnaire focusing on ticketing, 95% of respondents said that they had experienced disability-related issues when booking tickets for live music events. 88% said that they had felt discriminated against because of an inaccessible booking system and 47% said that they have considered taking legal action as a result.

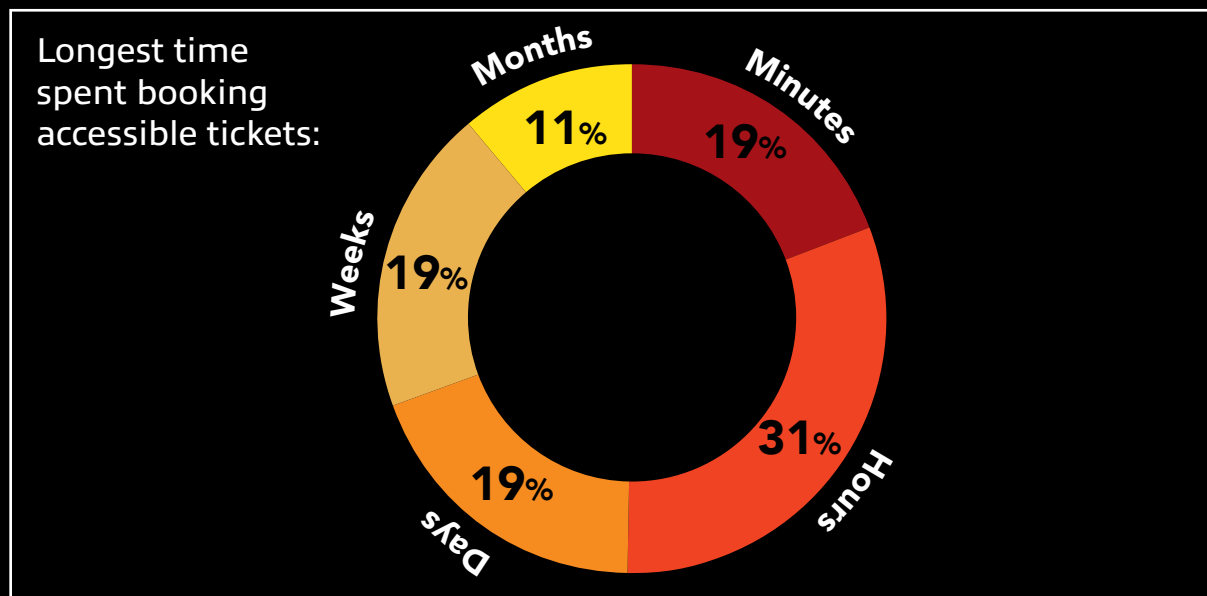


Large-scale festivals are leading the way in this area of accessibility, proving that it is possible to provide a fair and equal service to all customers when purchasing tickets to live music events.

Festivals such as Glastonbury, Festival Number 6, Reading and Leeds, let customers purchase their tickets using any of the available options, before applying for free Personal Assistant tickets and registering for the accessible facilities once tickets are confirmed. Organisers will then ensure that the capacity of the accessible campsite and viewing platforms will be suitable to cater for Deaf and disabled audiences.

Unfortunately this practice is far less common when purchasing tickets for gigs at venues, where there will often be a separate phone line for accessible tickets, regularly only operating during office hours Monday to Friday, rather than allowing potential customers to book online with everyone else.

83% of our Mystery Shoppers said that they had been put off buying tickets because of inaccessible booking systems and when asked how often this had happened, several said “too many to count” and one said “at least 100 times”.



When asked who is to blame for inaccessible tickets systems, 83% blame ticketing agencies and 88% blame the venues or festivals themselves.

The reported issues included limited booking options, limited availability of both tickets and reliable access information in advance of the event going on sale, as well as having to prove eligibility for accessible tickets for every purchase.

75% of our Mystery Shoppers wished to purchase their tickets online, compared to only 25% who were happy to purchase by telephone and email.

To paint a picture of the scale of the problems faced by Deaf and disabled music fans, here is a cross-section of the feedback we received highlighting each of the issues with the current booking systems in place across the music industry:

Limited booking options

Not being offered the same range of ticket buying options:

“ I would like disabled people to be given a choice about how they book their tickets. Equal provision needs to be given to those who want to book tickets online either through convenience or because of impairment. ”

Not being able to book tickets online:

“ There is no freedom, flexibility or choice to buy tickets how and when I want. I work full time and am unable to spend what can often be two hours on the phone to book tickets. If I was able to book tickets online just like everybody else this would make my life a lot easier and there would be less chance of the tickets being sold out. ”

Unable to access pre-sale tickets and limited access to secondary ticketing markets:

“ It is almost impossible to book accessible tickets through pre-sale or priority booking services, so you don't get an equal level of service. ”

Being forced to phone a telephone number to book

Telephone lines always engaged:

“ It was difficult to get through to the accessible phone line. When I did get through after 10 minutes the only 4 pairs of tickets available for the wheelchair spaces had already sold out. ”

Premium telephone rates:

“ When booking tickets, you have to ring a special 0844 number which isn't available 24/7 like the online booking site is. ”

Telephone is not accessible to everybody:

“ I am deaf and partially sighted and can't use a standard telephone, so when phoning for tickets I use TextRelay service. Often lines are engaged and by the time I get through I am often sat in a place where I can't see the concert. ”

Telephone lines only open certain hours, sometimes not at evenings or weekends:

“ If there is a dedicated phone line or email for access, then it is not open 24 hours a day like other booking services so sometimes they take ages to get back to you and by then the whole gig is sold out. ”

Limited tickets available

Viewing platform and wheelchair spaces being sold out, even when there are tickets still available to non-disabled people:

“ Many venues still have a very limited number of wheelchair spaces compared to the total number of tickets available. I've experienced situations where the wheelchair spaces have sold out even though there are lots of 'normal' tickets still on sale - even at outdoor events. Very frustrating! ”

Information in advance

Access information not clear in advance of tickets going on sale and not responding to access enquiries:

“ I recently purchased tickets online to attend a gig in London. Throughout the whole process of buying tickets, it was not explained to me that the venue was not accessible. I am now left with two tickets that are non-refundable. ”

Not knowing if accessible tickets are available and how to book them:

“ I was trying to purchase wheelchair accessible tickets for Stereophonics the second they went live but every single person passed me to someone else or hung up! They didn't have a clue how to cater for the needs of disabled guests and I missed out on the gig of the year! ”

Proof of disability

Being asked to prove your disability over and over again:

“ I've had issues where I've had to send in numerous forms and doctors notes to prove I am disabled before I can buy tickets, and the other extreme where disabled tickets are available to the public without having to prove their disability, so when general tickets sell out, people buy disabled ones. ”

Limited options of proof available:

“ For a music festival, I was asked to provide a letter from my doctor to prove my disability - my DLA letter or Freedom Pass was not adequate. I did not wish to waste NHS time so I didn't bother. ”

The most commonly requested form of proof is a 'receipt of Disability Living Allowance letter'. But not all disabled people claim this, and they might still require access to facilities and a Personal Assistant in order to receive an equal experience of a live music event.

When we surveyed 10 of the UK's leading music venues to check on their accessible ticket buying policies, the majority of them were providing different services to their disabled and non-disabled customers. Only 2 allowed online purchasing of tickets, one of the options available to all of the non-disabled customers and the preferred option for our Mystery Shoppers, with the rest providing a telephone number with limited opening hours.

Koko in Camden, a venue signed up to the Charter of Best Practice, allowed customers to purchase tickets using any of the available options, and then contact the Venue Manager by telephone or email to discuss access requirements, arrange a Personal Assistant ticket and access to the viewing area.

The Southbank Centre have a procedure in place which allows Deaf and disabled customers to register their access requirements in advance, so they only have to prove their eligibility once. Then they can purchase the tickets they desire by telephone, in person or through their website. Using the online booking system, Deaf and disabled customers can select their preferred space from the seating plan, including a range of wheelchair spaces, or step-free access to aisle seats.

“ I would like to see enough wheelchair tickets to meet demand for each event, with a dedicated booking facility (phone and online) to correctly allocate tickets and offer advice to customers. ”

“ I often have difficulty booking access tickets for high profile events, as they usually sell out in the first 5 minutes, and there is hardly ever an option to buy access tickets online. It usually says for access tickets call this number and it is almost impossible to get through. I have often missed out on tickets because of this process.

I recently purchased tickets for a gig that was likely to sell out immediately, and surprisingly there were access tickets available to purchase online. But it was confusing because it was listed as a 'Wheelchair Space + Personal Assistant' ticket. I did not select this option as I needed a seat not a wheelchair space, but I still needed a Personal Assistant. I ended up buying 2 full price tickets for £90 each as I didn't want to miss out, and there was no time to enquire.

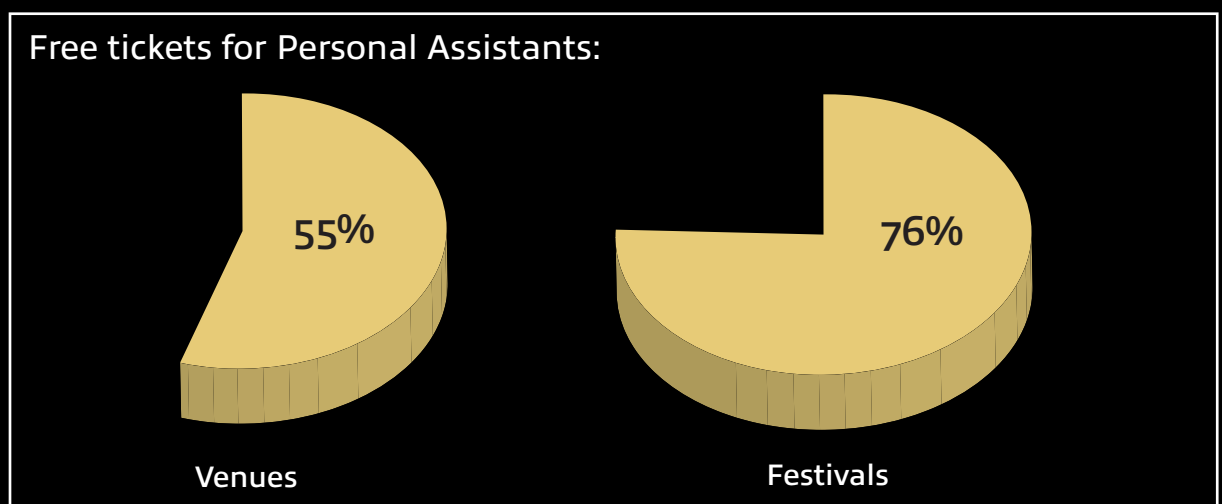
So far, the only venue that has got it right is the Roundhouse in Camden. I purchased 2 tickets by emailing the access address and told them my requirements (aisle seat, no stairs). They booked me the relevant seats and that was that. I didn't have to talk to anyone on the day, I didn't have to go to a special section, I just walked in. There was no queue so I went to my seat and watched the show. That is as simple as it should be. ”

Free tickets for Personal Assistants

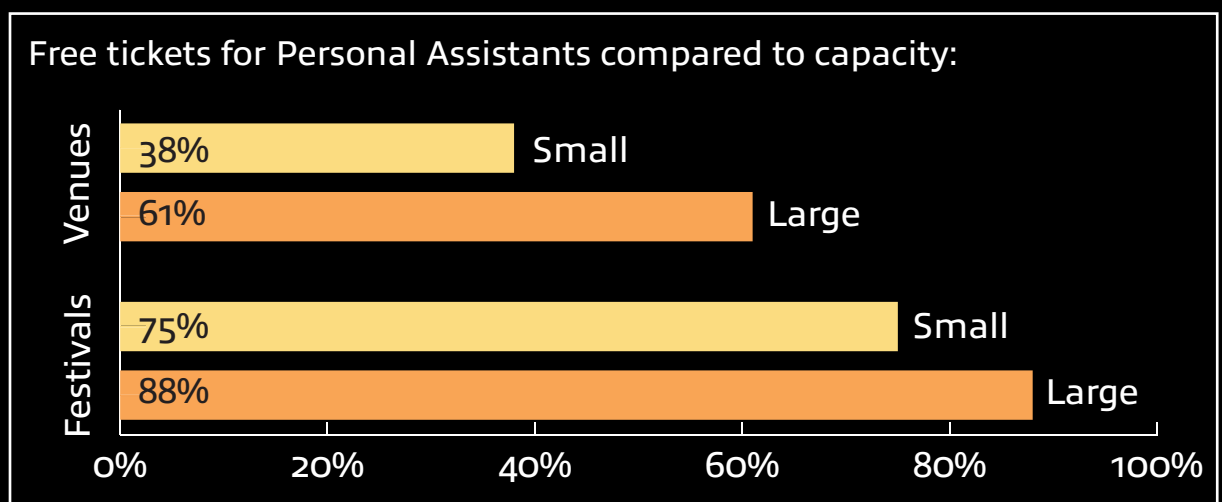
By implementing a policy that allows Deaf and disabled people to be accompanied by a Personal Assistant free of charge, events organisers are ensuring that access requirements can be met without additional cost to their disabled customers. A Personal Assistant attends each event in order to facilitate an equal experience, and waiving the cost of their attendance is a suitable reasonable adjustment.

“ I emailed the venue directly about free Personal Assistant tickets and they came back straight away with information about access facilities. They were very very helpful and I was pleased with the result and information received. ”

However, just 55% of the venues mystery shopped were offering free tickets for Personal Assistants, with festivals faring better with 76% implementing this policy.



There is a clear correlation between the capacity of the event and whether or not they offer free Personal Assistant tickets, with just 38% of small venues operating this policy, compared to 61% of large venues. Similarly, free Personal Assistant tickets were only available at 75% of small festivals compared to 88% of large festivals.



It's clear that large-scale festivals are leading the way in terms of offering free Personal Assistant tickets and that smaller grassroots venues and festivals are yet to catch on. There is an obvious correlation between smaller venues and festivals providing less facilities for Deaf and disabled people due to limited resources, so when access requirements aren't being catered for, that is likely to be happening across the board, including accessible policies.

“ I only found out about free Personal Assistant tickets after becoming aware of Attitude is Everything and now I ask venues when booking as the majority do not publicise this, and some make you jump through hoops. ”

Staff Attitude and Disability Equality Training

Mystery Shoppers gave staff an average rating of 7.6 at venues and 7.7 at festivals, which are higher than the respective ratings for the website, booking procedures and access facilities, indicating that although access requirements aren't being fully met, music industry staff are going some way to offsetting this with their attitudes towards Deaf and disabled customers.

Invisible Disabilities

CASE STUDY

Some of the Mystery Shoppers have disabilities that are not visible, and therefore not immediately obvious to venue and festival staff. Not all of our Mystery Shoppers are wheelchair users, but they still have access requirements. We had reports of both positive and negative staff attitudes towards these 'invisible disabilities'.

“ I was not allowed on to the viewing platform in front of the main stage because the Steward told me that “The viewing platform was only for people in wheelchairs”. I had a long conversation with him about how he is wrong about this and that viewing platforms can also be for people with other disabilities such as MS and Epilepsy. I spent a lot of time having to explain myself just because I didn't 'look' disabled. ”

“ Staff at the Hammersmith Apollo seemed considerate and aware. They helped straight away without me having to go through the humiliation of explaining my situation, which is not normally the case, as my disability is not always visible. ”

“ I have limited mobility but do not use a wheelchair. Sometimes my disability is not immediately obvious and I often have to experience embarrassing situations where I have to explain my health problems to a stranger. For example, I cannot stand in a queue, but the people I need to speak to are usually busy dealing with hundreds of people and don't have time to listen to individual needs. I have to explain my personal needs in front of a queue of people and sometimes they do not even believe me! ”

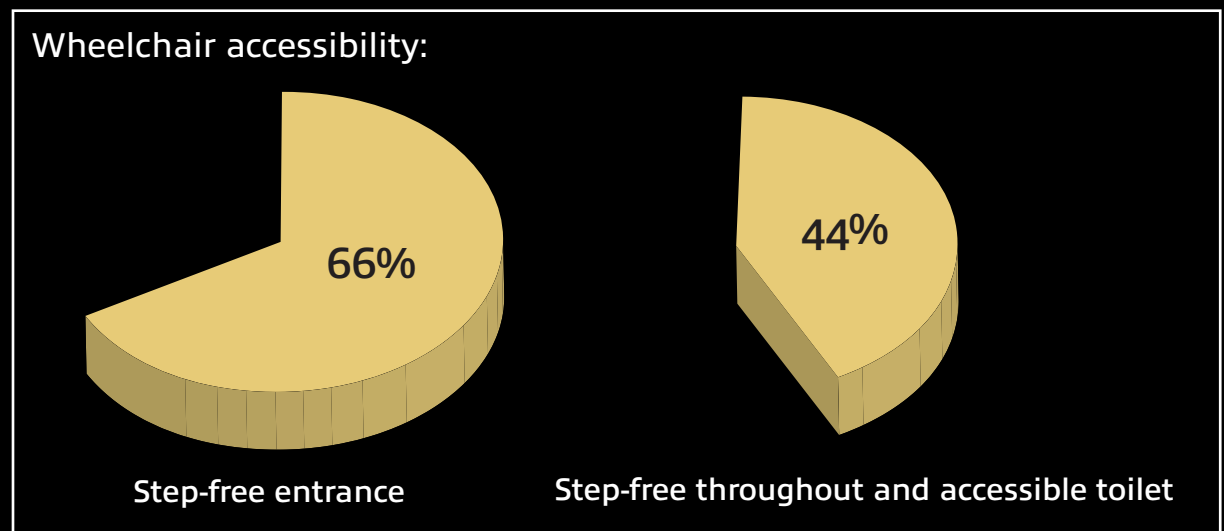
Mystery Shoppers felt that 59% of all venue staff and 76% of all festival staff would benefit from Disability Equality Training. However, at venues where the staff were rated 5 or below, 87% recommended training and at festivals where the staff were rated 6 or above, 66% still recommended Disability Equality Training, proving it can be useful to maintain standards as well as to improve them.

“ You can often work around physical barriers if people are willing to help. Sometimes the attitudes of staff and punters can be more of a hindrance than your actual disability. I would like to see events organisers take up Disability Awareness Training and a zero tolerance attitude to disability discrimination at events. ”

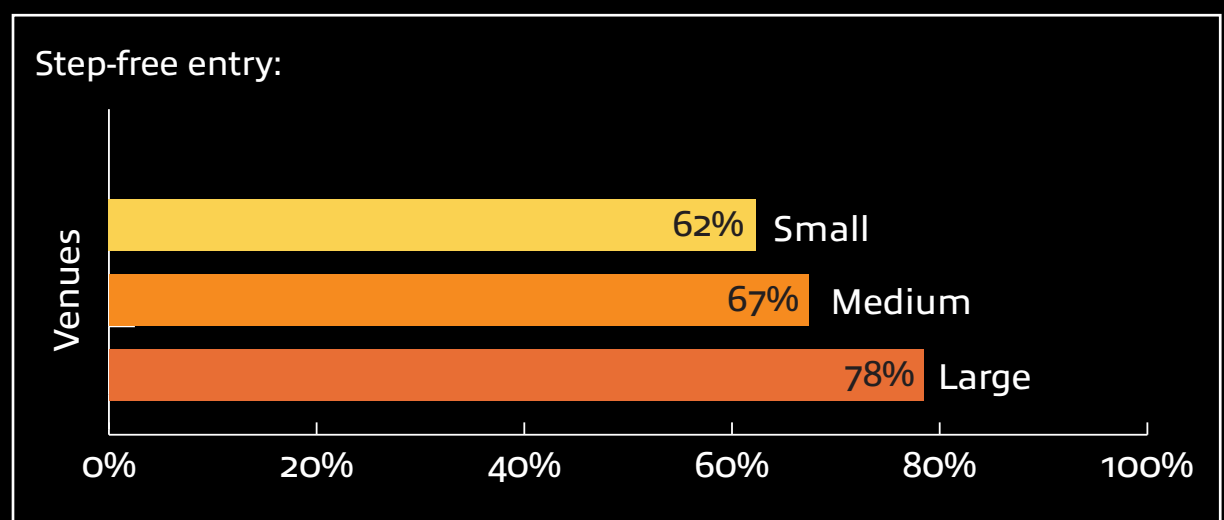
Gaining access to the event

Step-free entrance

Mystery Shoppers reported that 66% of the venues they attended had a step-free entrance, but just 44% of the venues visited had all three key components of physical access: a step-free entrance, step-free routes to all areas of the venue, and at least one functional accessible toilet.



Larger venues were more likely to be providing step-free entry to their gigs, with just 62% of small venues, 67% of medium venues and 78% of large venues having a step-free entrance into the venue. Large venues are more likely to have the resources available to make alterations but are also having to contend with old and potentially listed buildings such as the Royal Albert Hall and O2 Academy Brixton, and therefore need to be creative about providing step-free access.



“ I walk with a stick, and am generally not great with stairs and crowds, but I really wanted to see Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, so I bought tickets. My partner/carer was very stressed about how I would cope with the sell-out crowd and the stairs for our seats in the Circle. She was worried I would have to leave before the concert even started.

We queued in the street, and when I realised the queue went around the building, I decided to approach someone on the door, as I didn't want to be exhausted before it even started.

I was so pleasantly surprised by the response, well more than pleasantly. The staff member ensured I got up the few steps fine, got our tickets scanned in, and then realising we were in the circle, got them stamped for access to the accessibility area.

Then she escorted my partner and myself to the area, and ensured we were settled and happy before she left. The staff in the accessibility area were also very courteous and helpful throughout the night.

The accessible area was so well located. I felt like I was part of the mosh pit but I didn't have the stress of being surrounded and jostled. I had a really clear view of the stage.

I hadn't been to live music concerts in several years because of the perceived accessibility problems. Thanks to this experience, I shall look for more live concerts to go to. ”

Blue Badge parking

Just 35% of the venues mystery shopped had Blue Badge parking available, compared with 70% of festivals. Whilst festivals generally find it easier to provide parking for disabled customers due to the likelihood of open spaces, limited parking can be overcome by advertising where the nearest Blue Badge spaces are located in close proximity to the event space and by clearly describing the distances involved.

Reliability of access information provided

Just 56% of venues and 53% of festivals provided reliable access information in advance of an event, meaning that nearly half of the 228 events attended were providing inadequate information to their Deaf and disabled customers.

“ I would really like to see all venues listing accurate access information on their website. It doesn't cost anything and makes our lives so much easier if we know what to expect. ”

Mystery Shoppers who gave a high rating to a venue's website also said that the information about the venue matched reality better than those with a lower website rating.

Reliable and comprehensive access information in advance of an event is absolutely crucial for Deaf and disabled customers to make an informed decision about whether or not their access requirements will be met at a live music event.

If our Mystery Shoppers rated the access facilities at a festival 5 or lower, only 48% said that the quality of access information provided prior to the event was reliable, compared to 63% at festivals rated 6 or higher. This demonstrates that events that provide better accessibility on the ground also tend to describe their overall level of access better. Events with less advanced levels of accessibility have an equal, if not greater, responsibility to fully describe the presence or lack of facilities.

Wheelchair users make up only a small proportion of Deaf and disabled people, which means that it's just as important to provide detailed access information even if a venue or festival is physically inaccessible.

Live from Jodrell Bank

CASE STUDY

“ Access information was available on a dedicated 'access info' page on the website and the booking system was very straightforward. You purchased your ticket online and then downloaded the access form, which you posted or emailed to the organisers.

We arrived by coach and the wristband exchange and access info tent was set up in the car park, just a few metres away from where the coach dropped us off. The tent was staffed by two very knowledgeable and friendly members of staff who gave us a map and pointed out all the accessible facilities and also offered a mobile number to call if there were any problems when inside.

Within the festival I asked numerous Stewards about the whereabouts of the accessible facilities and all were able to tell me exactly where everything was situated. It was very well organised, with good access facilities and plenty of Stewards.

Booking system: 10/10.

Customer service: 10/10.

Staff disability awareness: 10/10. ”

Access around the event

Step-free access throughout

Only 51% of the venues that were mystery shopped had step-free access throughout the building, meaning that wheelchair users and people with limited mobility were potentially unable to access all areas of the event and receive an equal experience to non-disabled customers at the remaining 49%.

“ Getting into the venue from the street was step-free, however to get to the bar and gig room you had to go down 5 steps. Overall the venue could be more accessible without too much effort, as once down the first 5 steps it is all on one level. ”

Festival sites are unlikely to have stepped access routes in order to get around the site, although we do expect festivals to ensure that bars, concessions and cash machines are all wheelchair accessible. Festivals with tarmacked paths and hard-standing access routes scored better than those that didn't, especially at events blighted by poor weather conditions.

“ Hop Farm is the most accessible festival I have been to. The best part is that it is flat and that there are tarmac paths in places so getting around in a wheelchair was pretty good, even if it was wet. ”

Toilets

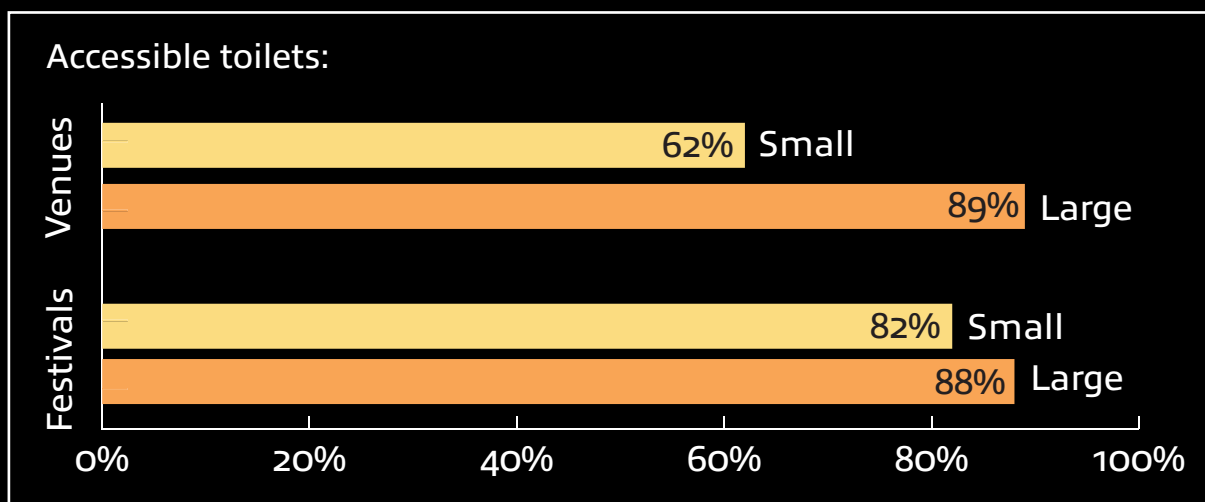
Mystery Shoppers reported that there was an accessible toilet at 75% of the venues, and 83% of the festivals that they attended. However 55% of the festivals did not provide an accessible toilet at each stage, potentially leading to long distances to reach the nearest facility.

“ There were disabled toilets near most stages, but they weren't secure and therefore everyone used them and they became disgusting. ”

As festival organisers provide accessible toilets on a more frequent basis, securing toilets is becoming more and more of an issue. Festivals such as Glastonbury utilise combination padlocks to keep unstaffed accessible toilets secure, whilst also trying to make the best use of staff available by placing accessible toilets within the stewarded viewing platform enclosures and positioning toilets in secure areas such as welfare and some backstage areas.

“ The toilets at WOMAD were consistently clean and kept stocked with essentials and Stewards were on hand all the time to help if necessary - but never in a patronising way. ”

There is a clear correlation between the capacity of the event and the likelihood of finding an accessible toilet, with 89% of large venues and 88% of large festivals providing accessible toilets compared to just 62% and 82% of small venues and festivals.



Merchandise, bars and food stalls

Just 22% of the venues mystery shopped provided lowered counters, compared with only 8% at festivals. Not providing concessions at a wheelchair accessible height is poor customer service and potentially lost revenue for the music industry.

“ All of the food and drink areas had poor access. Either the counters were too high or the inside area was too tight to be able to navigate a chair. I wasn't able to get to the bar due to the crowds. When buying food I had to reach up quite high to pay and get my food which resulted in my dropping bits of food on me. ”

Accessible campsites

38% of the festivals mystery shopped had a dedicated accessible campsite, and 26% also provided wheelchair charging points. However, some festivals don't have any campsites at all, such as city-based festivals like Lovebox, Parklife and Wireless.

As well as wheelchair charging points, we would expect accessible campsites to be well located in close proximity to the entrance, car park, welfare and entertainment and provide accessible toilets, showers, and water points as well as having staff on hand to assist with putting up tents.

“ The disabled campsite was right next to the main stage area so there are no long pushes to contend with and on the campsite there was a charging tent with Stewards, plenty of disabled toilets, a water point and even an accessible shower. ”

Shambala Festival

CASE STUDY

“ The festival staff were all friendly and willing to help where they could, but also good at ensuring the facilities were only used by those who needed them.

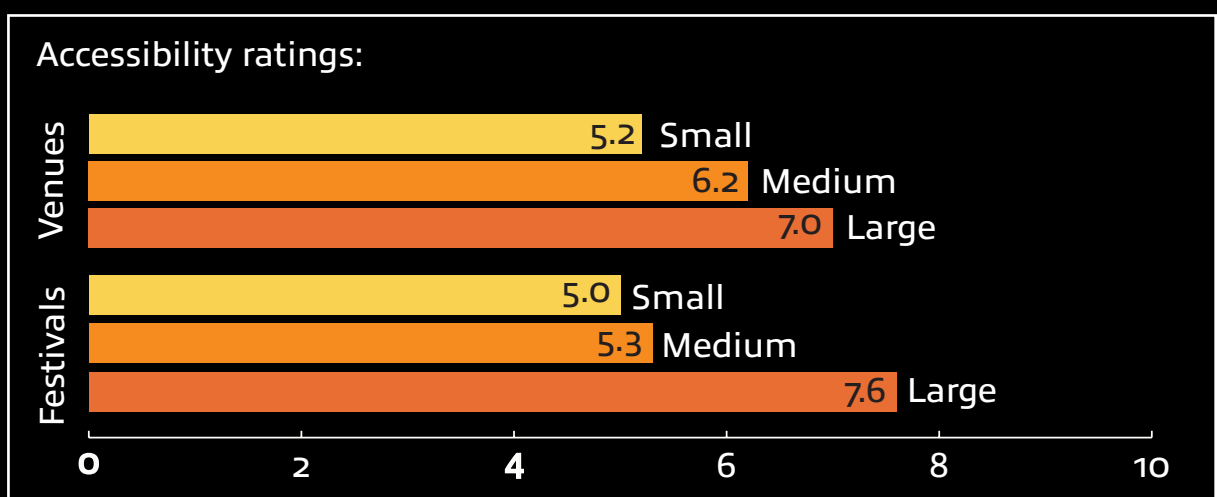
The website was very informative and clearly designed with clear access information, so I knew how to book my tickets and that I would be able to phone up to obtain a free ticket for my Personal Assistant. They were friendly and it was an easy process. I felt that the festival had made some considerable effort around access.

Shambala is a great festival but there are not many disabled people attending at the moment. The accessible campsite holds 40 people and there were only 4 wheelchair users. The festival could be encouraged to do some targeted marketing to disabled people. ”

Overall accessibility ratings

Our Mystery Shoppers rated their overall accessibility experience at an average of 5.7 for all venues and slightly higher at 5.9 for festivals. Outdoor green space festivals start with a blank canvas each time and therefore find it easier to improve their access facilities, but generally only have one chance to get it right each year.

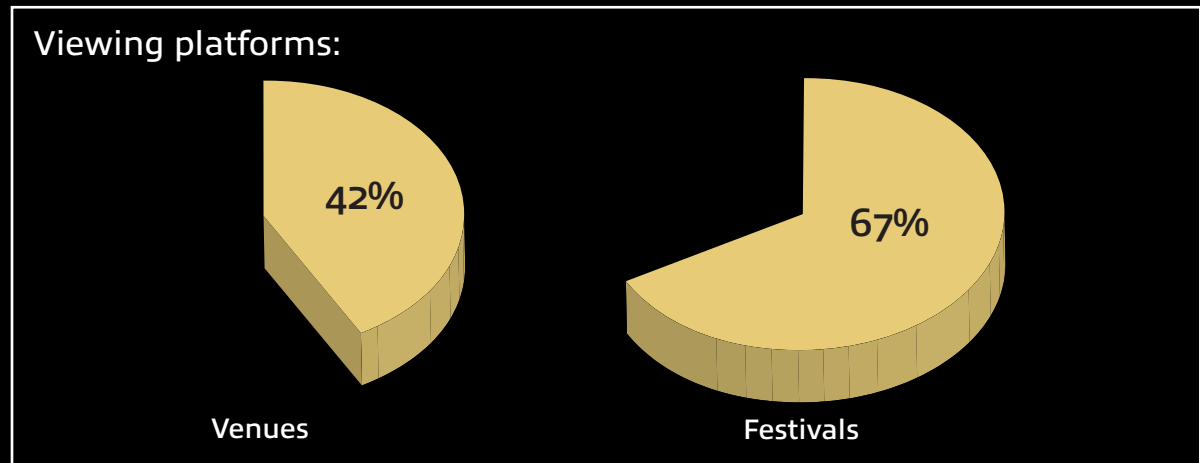
Our Mystery Shoppers rated the access at large venues and festivals higher than small and medium sized events. Large-scale festivals scored highest with an average rating of 7.6, followed by large venues at 7; medium events scored 6.2 and 5.3 respectively; with small venues scoring 5.2 and small festivals with the lowest accessibility ratings of 5 out of 10.



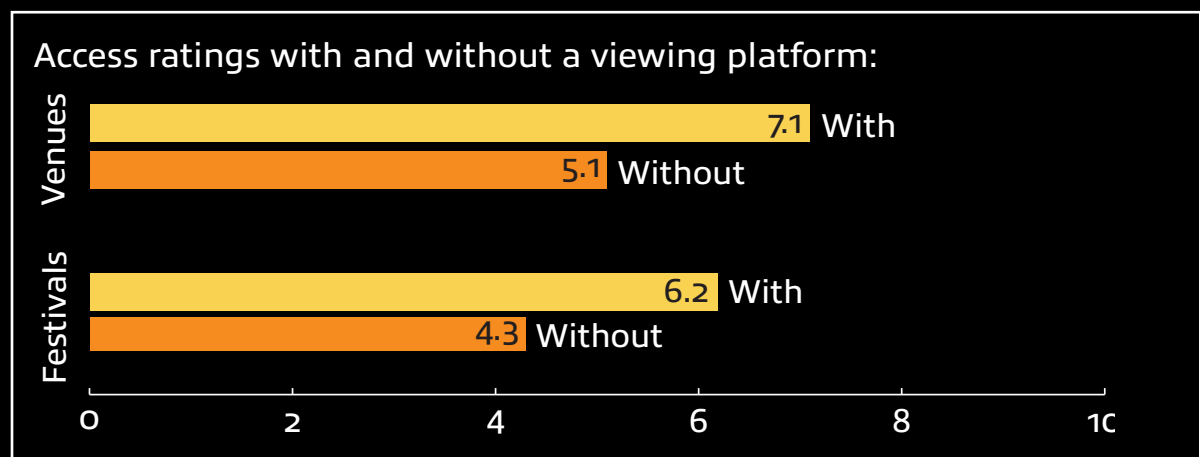
Accessing the performance

Viewing platforms

42% of venues and 67% of festivals had viewing platforms or areas for their Deaf and disabled audiences to watch the show, allowing a clear sightline of the performance so that they receive an equal experience to non-disabled customers who can access the whole event space in order to find an acceptable viewing point.



The average access rating for venues with a viewing platform or area is 7.1, compared to 5.1 without. Similarly, the access rating at festivals falls from 6.2 to 4.3 when there is no platform present. The viewing platform is probably the key factor that influences both the accessibility ratings from our Mystery Shoppers, and overall enjoyment of the event.



“ I was in the front row of the platform, it was amazing. Stewards wouldn't let anyone block the ramp or sit on the barriers, and were really helpful and attentive which added to the atmosphere. This was the hugest viewing platform that I had ever seen at the main stage with a great view of the stage and the whole of the crowd. It was a tremendous sight to be greeted with! ”

The placement of the viewing platform is key to its success, and probably the reason that festivals scored lower on their average access ratings even when there was a platform present. Sometimes there is a balancing act between getting the viewing platform close

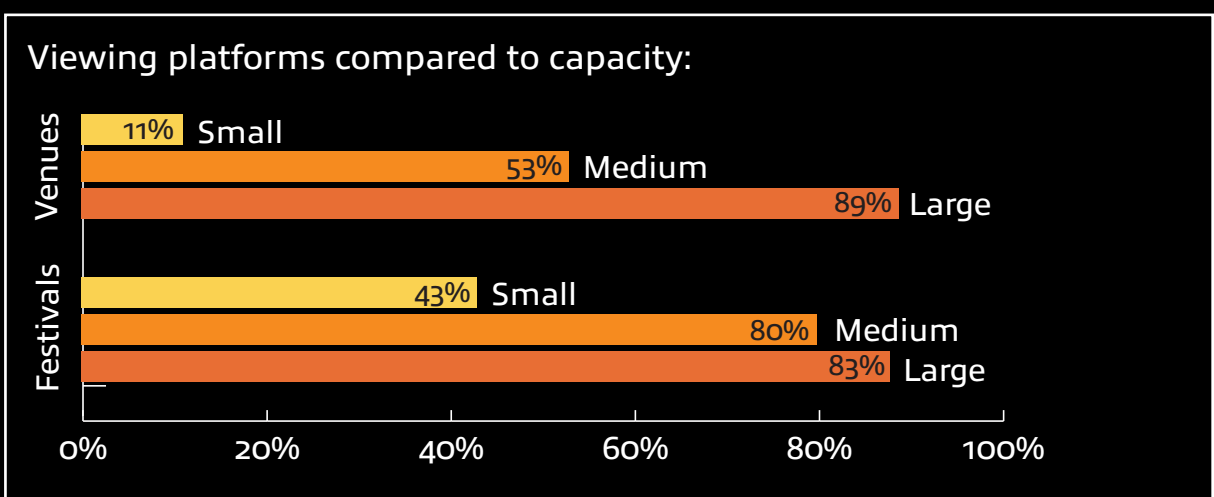
enough to the stage to give disabled customers a great view, but close enough to pathways to provide good access. Both Glastonbury and Reading Festivals have implemented a second viewing platform at the main stage so that both preferences can be catered for, as well as accommodating the increased demand for accessible facilities at live music events.

The construction of the platforms also plays a big part in their accessibility, and we would expect to find the gradient of the ramp no steeper than 1:12, with handrails, kickboards and colour contrasting around the platform as well as a barrier placed at a suitable height so that it doesn't impede the sightlines of disabled customers when seated.

“ The viewing platform had a great position next to the mixer desk in front of the stage. However the barrier in front of the platform was too high so it matched the eye line of most wheelchair users. ”

“ Eye line of the gig was perfect as we were on the balcony level on the front row, so there was no one in front of us. The barriers were clear perspex so this helped a lot too as I am quite short and sometimes find it hard to get a good view over a barrier. ”

The capacity of the event is a huge factor in the likelihood of a viewing platform or area being available, with just 43% of small festivals providing one, compared with 80% at medium and 88% at larger festivals. This gap widens even more significantly when analysing the feedback from venues, with 89% of large venues providing a viewing platform or area, compared to just 53% of medium-sized and 11% of small venues.



Whilst these statistics might not be so surprising, due to the resources available to larger venues and festivals, a viewing area is a really easy policy to implement and doesn't require any structural changes to an event. With a clear staffing policy, access routes and a way to barrier or mark off a designated area, it's easy to provide Deaf and disabled audiences with an adequate view of the performance at no additional cost. This policy is already in place at smaller venues such as West Street Live in Sheffield, and London's Cecil Sharp House and Islington Assembly Halls.

Social vs Accessible Experience

CASE STUDY

Several of the Mystery Shoppers reported that they were separated from their friends or family at live music events because of limited spaces on viewing platforms or in accessible areas. This meant that they had to make a choice between an accessible experience or a social experience.

“ As a wheelchair user wanting to attend a gig with 2 friends, I was told that I was only allowed to be accompanied by 1 Personal Assistant and that my other friend would have to be seated in a different area. Live music is an extremely social experience and this is an example of how disabled people miss out. ”

“ There were three in my party and we were told only my immediate carer would be allowed in the accessible area, so our party ended up being split. I had not been told this beforehand. ”

“ Limiting the viewing platform to one carer per disabled person means that the family, or group of friends, is divided in two. This excludes the disabled person. For the Sunday morning, we chose not to use the viewing platform so we could join our friends. ”

A recent survey by [Trailblazers](#) reported that:

“ Nine out of ten young disabled people said that more inclusive designs, meaning disabled people would be able to sit with more than just one friend or assistant, would make a big difference to their experience of watching live music. ”

Seating

Providing seating for Deaf and disabled people to watch the performance from can be a huge factor in making sure that access requirements are met, and 76% of the venues mystery shopped were able to provide seating.

“ When I arrived all of the seats were taken except for one in a booth facing away from the stage, so I could not see anything. I stood a couple of time to see a bit but it was not easy. ”

If permanent seating is not available, then it helps to have staff pro-actively looking after their customers and offering assistance where necessary.

“ The staff were very friendly at G-Live, with a number of them just wandering around offering assistance. When I got to my seat, it was not there as they thought that I needed a wheelchair space - no problem - in less than 2 minutes they had brought me a seat. ”

Facilities for people with sensory impairments

Facilities such as British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation, captioning and audio description are still uncommon in the music industry, despite being integral for many people with sensory impairments to fully access live music performances.

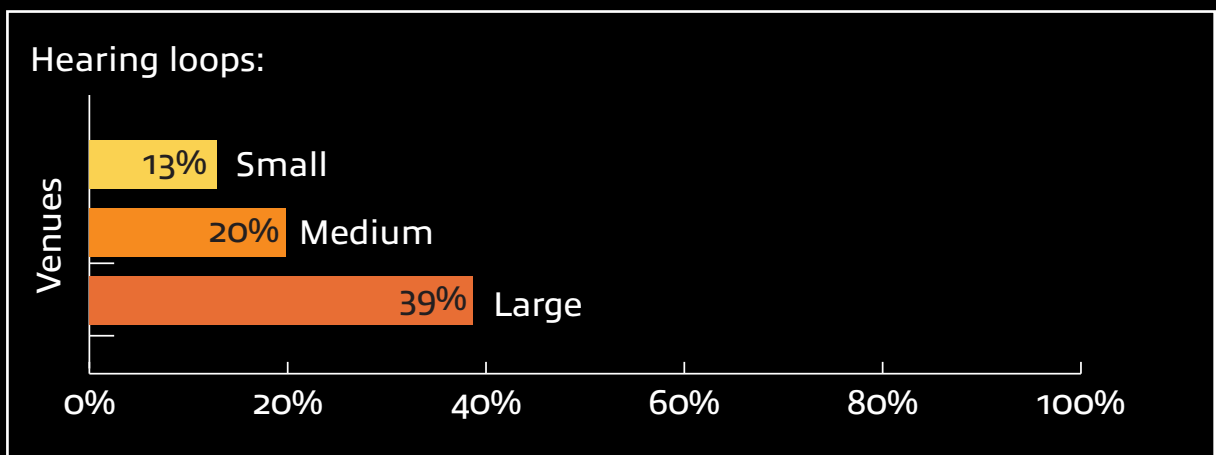
There is currently an upward trend in the provision of BSL interpretation at large events, where the economies of scale make it a more affordable option. Venues such as the O2 Arena and Capital FM Arena Nottingham, both venues who have been awarded the Gold level of the Charter of Best Practice, will provide these services if requested in advance.

Glastonbury and Latitude are both leading the way in this area, installing hearing loops in their tents and utilising the services of volunteer run organisations like Deaf Zone and Hands 4 U to provide BSL interpretation of scheduled and requested performances to large crowds of Deaf people, proving there is a huge demand for this service.

“ I never fully realised the extent of exclusion for Deaf or visually impaired people attending concerts. This is something that Attitude is Everything has made me aware of. ”

Hearing loops or infrared systems

Hearing loops were confirmed to be in place at only 20% of the venues that were mystery shopped; highlighting that this is a key area that needs to be developed in order for people with hearing impairments to receive an equal experience at live music events. Large venues fared better with 39% providing loops compared to just 13% at small venues



Audio description

Facilities for people with visual impairments are becoming more commonplace at street arts events, with the Greater London Authority investing in accessible performances for their Summer Like No Other programme of events to complement the London 2012 Olympic Games, taking their mark from Liberty Festival which has been meeting the demands of Deaf and disabled audiences by providing audio description, captioning and BSL at their events for a number of years.

Organisations such as [VocalEyes](#) have a long and successful history of making theatre performances accessible to people with visual impairments by describing the on-stage action via headphones, and can also ensure that pre-event information and programmes on the day can be audio described.

“ An audio description of the venue prior to buying the ticket would be helpful and also make a valuable contribution to the music industry. ”

The Case for Captioning

CASE STUDY

“ As someone with hearing loss but not great at BSL, I would have loved subtitles or a copy of the lyrics, or even been able to get closer to the band so I can read their lips. ”

According to an [Action on Hearing Loss Report](#) in 2011, 10 million people in the UK have some form of hearing loss, of which only 2 million have hearing aids and therefore benefit from loop systems.

Attitude is Everything spoke to Stagertext and the [I Heart Subtitles](#) blog about why captioning and speech-to-text are needed at live music events.

Captioning can improve people's experience of live music events:

- In a live music setting, lyrics in many songs can be indistinct, which is exacerbated if you are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Lyricists spend time on their lyrics and they are important, sometimes beautiful, political, powerful or terrible, and it's a shame for anyone to miss out on that aspect of the music.
- It's a completely different experience being able to understand the content of a song, as well as its rhythm and the shape of the music.
- The chat between songs can sometimes be as entertaining as the music itself. If you miss it, then you might wonder why all the people around you are laughing and feel left out. Captioning or speech-to-text allows people to know what's going on, be able to get a joke, understand why there's a delay, change in the running order, special guest or an emergency announcement.

BSL interpretation is featured onstage at all Attitude is Everything events as well as being popular at festivals such as Glastonbury and Latitude, but it doesn't cater for everybody with hearing impairments:

- The Department of Health estimates that only 120,000 of the 10 million people with hearing loss use BSL; so whilst interpretation is great for some audiences, it doesn't facilitate everyone. Also lyrics are often abstract, and therefore don't always make sense when translated literally.

-
- Gigs are not often lip-reading friendly in terms of space, lighting and the positioning of the microphones by singer's mouth.

“ Captioning and speech-to-text would provide me with a more equal experience to everyone else, and even an enhanced experience in really giving access to the detail in songs. ”

The demand for captioning:

- Captioning is commonplace in the theatre world, proving that if you provide the facilities, people will make use of them.
- The vast majority of people who might benefit from captioning have no idea that it's available.
- There are a lot of people currently going to gigs, and enjoying them, who would get more out of them if only they were captioned.

“ I think the demand is probably hidden. I know about captioning and know it's incredibly useful for me, but have no expectation of seeing it at gigs. I avoid music events for two reasons, I find it very hard to communicate in a dark noisy environment, and I can't access song lyrics at all. Captioned gigs would open up the music for me. ”

Charter of Best Practice

Mystery Shoppers reported that venues and festivals that were signed up to the Charter of Best Practice had more facilities in place and were given higher scores for access, staff, websites, booking and enjoyment.

Overall, Charter festivals outperformed non-Charter festivals in 80% of the criteria that Mystery Shoppers judge their experience on, with the exceptions being criteria such as parking, accessible campsites and charging points, which are probably disproportionately weighted due to the number of day festivals in London that are signed up to the Charter and are therefore less likely to provide these facilities.

Charter venues outperformed those who haven't signed up in 95% of the mystery shopping criteria, demonstrating that Charter status highlights best practice access facilities and policies.

Deaf and disabled customers are twice as likely to find a viewing platform if visiting a Charter venue or festival, with Mystery Shoppers reporting that 100% of Charter festivals and 74% of Charter venues make use of these facilities, compared with 57% and 29% respectively at non-Charter events.

Accessible toilets are also found in 100% of Charter venues and festivals, compared with 66% and 78% of their non-Charter counterparts. Similarly, all of the events organised by those signed up to the Charter were offering free tickets for Personal Assistants, compared with only 66% and 36% respectively at non-Charter venues and festivals.

		Charter	Non-Charter
Venues	Access Rating	7.0	5.5
	Website Rating	7.1	5.9
	Viewing Platforms	74%	29%
	Accessible Toilets	100%	66%
	Free Personal Assistant Tickets	100%	36%
Festivals	Access Rating	6.5	5.4
	Website Rating	6.3	6.1
	Viewing Platforms	100%	57%
	Accessible Toilets	100%	78%
	Free Personal Assistant Tickets	100%	66%

The O2

CASE STUDY

The O2 in London was the first arena to receive the Gold level of the Charter of Best Practice due to excelling in a range of categories, including improving access to emergency evacuation, using infra-red sound systems, providing a fully accessible dressing room back stage and constructing a permanent viewing platform for IndigO2.

“ The O2 Arena seems now to be a venue that people with disabilities can visit with confidence that their needs will be appreciated and looked after. And they have a good dedicated booking line for accessible tickets. ”

The O2 is one of only two venues in the country to have installed a Changing Places toilet, alongside Capital FM Arena in Nottingham. Changing Places toilets have height adjustable benches, hoists and plenty of space to ensure that they are accessible to everyone.

“ A toilet opening might seem like a weird thing to get excited about but having access to one of these is a huge deal to people like me who have to worry and stress-out about when and where the next toilet stop will be. They make life so much easier. ”

The O2 have also invested in Attitude is Everything's Disability Equality Training for both frontline staff and senior management.

“ When I went to the O2 arena, the seats were difficult to access so I stood near an exit. I was then approached by staff who offered me accessible seating and even made provision for me to stand and stretch in the accessible area. The staff saw that I was using walking aids and rather than come to tell me I couldn't stand at the exit their first reaction was to offer me assistance. ”

Conclusions

Attitude is Everything's ethos is to positively encourage the music industry to improve their accessibility to Deaf and disabled customers, to go beyond the Equality Act and strive for best practice.

Our unique expertise originates from the feedback we receive from our skilled Mystery Shoppers and their experiences of live music across the UK. The State of Access Report highlights a number of issues that Deaf and disabled audiences are facing when trying to access live music events, but it also helps us suggest practical solutions and effect change by working in partnership with a range of music industry organisations to implement better facilities and more inclusive policies.

The majority of the barriers that Deaf and disabled people encounter in the live music sector are easily removed by improving disability awareness within staff teams and implementing accessible policies throughout the customer experience. This includes ticketing, free access for Personal Assistants, information available in advance, providing access to the event space and the performance, as well as providing accessible concessions for all customers.

Providing best practice accessibility is part of the overall customer service experience and it's important to remember that wheelchair users make up only 8% of the 11 million disabled people in the UK. Therefore we still have high expectations for events with limited physical access to be providing clear access information and catering for their customer's varied access requirements.

It's clear from our analysis of Mystery Shoppers' experiences that the current ticketing systems in place are often inaccessible and result in fewer sales to Deaf and disabled customers who are unable to purchase tickets. With support from the music industry and ticketing agencies we believe that systems can easily be improved in order to offer a fair and equal service to all customers, irrespective of disability.

There is a strong business case for improving accessibility and opening up live music to an audience that represents one sixth of the UK population. The venues and festivals that we work with improve their access facilities year-on-year and benefit from the additional demand that this creates.

The number of Deaf and disabled people buying tickets to Reading Festival increased over 100% in 2013, with 358 attending compared to 170 in 2012. With friends and family accompanying disabled customers to accessible festivals, there were over 700 people in the accessible campsite, in addition to 78 day tickets sold. Even after providing free access to Personal Assistants, ticket sales relating to disabled customers are in excess of £115,000 before taking into account additional revenue from bars, stalls and concessions.

The State of Access Report clearly conveys the benefits of Disability Equality Training and signing up to the Charter of Best Practice, with the venues and festivals that have profited from our help and guidance outperforming those that haven't in all areas. Awareness of the barriers that Deaf and disabled people face and understanding of the facilities and policies that remove these barriers is key to enhancing the customer experience for all visitors.

The way forward

Attitude is Everything will use the State of Access Report to launch a campaign for accessible ticketing systems to be adopted across the live music industry. We believe that it's possible to improve the current systems in order to provide a fair and equal service to both disabled and non-disabled music fans.

We will work in partnership with venues, festivals and ticketing agencies in order to achieve three specific objectives that will vastly improve the ticket buying process for Deaf and disabled customers:

1. Clear access information available in advance of tickets going on sale
2. Ticket buying options are identical to those offered to non-disabled customers
3. Create a system for a universal proof of disability

The access information available in advance should be comprehensive and allow Deaf and disabled people to make an informed decision about whether an event will meet their varied access requirements. This information should also include details on how to book tickets, register for the accessible facilities, apply for a Personal Assistant ticket, and provide contact details for access queries. All of this information should be available on either the venue or festival website and linked to on the ticket buying webpage.

If non-disabled people are able to purchase tickets online, by telephone and in person, the same options should be available to Deaf and disabled people. This includes access to pre-sale and secondary tickets.

When purchasing tickets online it should be possible to specify what type of ticket is required, such as access to the viewing platform, ground floor seating or an aisle seat, with the capacity for each type of ticket provided to the ticketing agency in advance.

Deaf and disabled ticket buyers should be able to request their Personal Assistant ticket at the same time as purchasing their own, even if they are not requesting the use of accessible facilities such as viewing platforms. Deaf and disabled people who are not wheelchair users should have access to accessible facilities and Personal Assistant tickets if they require it.

We will support the live music sector to work towards a universal system for proving disability, so that Deaf and disabled people who require accessible facilities and tickets for their Personal Assistants can purchase tickets for live music events without having to repeatedly submit evidence before they can confirm their attendance. This could be administrated by an umbrella organisation or a regulator such as the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers in a similar way to the hugely successful Cinema Exhibitors' Association card scheme, or by the ticketing agencies themselves.

Deaf and disabled people would still be required to submit up-to-date evidence to prove eligibility, but once registered, could be provided with a card and a reference number that would allow access to accessible facilities and policies. This could be attached to customers' registration details with each of the ticketing agencies so that once logged in, previously hidden accessible ticketing options become available.

Useful Links

Attitude is Everything

www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk

Muscular Dystrophy Campaign's Trailblazers

www.mdctrailblazers.org

Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers

www.star.org.uk

Cinema Exhibitors' Association card scheme

www.ceacard.co.uk

Changing Places

www.changing-places.org

Pesky People

www.peskypeople.co.uk

StageText

www.stagetext.org

I Heart Subtitles

www.iheartsubtitles.wordpress.com

VocalEyes

www.vocaleyes.co.uk

Deaf Zone

www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk/deafzone

Hands 4 U

hands4uaccess@hotmail.com



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