



improving deaf and disabled people's
access to live music

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State of Access Report

Executive Summary

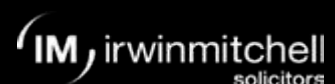
A survey of UK live music accessibility

February 2016

#StateofAccess



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Foreword

“ Glastonbury has always prided itself on being an event that is open and inclusive. In 2005 we realised that we needed help to improve our offering to Deaf and disabled customers to ensure that this was the case, so we reached out to Attitude is Everything for their advice and guidance. A decade on, we now welcome more than 600 Deaf and disabled customers to each festival, alongside having over 100 Deaf and disabled crew members working on the event itself. We are also very proud to have become the first camping festival in the UK to be awarded the Gold standard of the Charter of Best Practice.

Our work with Attitude is Everything has shown us that making the festival a place everyone can enjoy is not just about ensuring the site has accessible infrastructure that is fit for purpose. It is also vital that festival goers can easily access clear information about how to buy tickets, what facilities are available onsite and how they can arrange for the necessary support in order to be able to attend. This principle applies to any event and it is for this reason that I urge all venue and festival organisers to ensure that they provide high quality and comprehensive access information based on the guidance of Attitude is Everything. ”



Emily Eavis, Glastonbury Festival

Purpose and Methodology

The State of Access Report is intended to provide a biennial snap-shot of the live music industry when it comes to accessibility and inclusion for Deaf and disabled people. The aim is to highlight areas of good practice and progression, whilst at the same time reflecting upon the barriers that Deaf and disabled people continue to face.

The 2016 State of Access Report is based on a total of 280 mystery shopping reports returned from venue and festival visits, collated between April 2013 and March 2015.

To bolster this report, Attitude is Everything commissioned a survey to assess the prevalence and quality of access information across venues and festivals beyond those mystery shopped. This survey covered 251 venues and 135 festivals, and included high profile, large-scale and commercial as well as smaller, independent and grassroots venues and festivals.

In addition, the report references several other bespoke surveys commissioned by Attitude is Everything as well as a number of external studies and reports.

Key Points

Access Relies on Information

“ I’ve often thought about going to events at the venue, but decided against it as there is no information on their website about access. ”

Access information is the gateway for many Deaf and disabled people when it comes to gauging whether or not a festival or venue might meet their access requirements. Our online survey of 386 venues and festival websites revealed that 65% offered some access information. However, of these 250 venues and festivals, only 26% provided content rated as ‘good’. 52% of all the venues and festivals surveyed provided poor information or none at all.

A survey of independent venues revealed that only 31% provided some access information. Of those who did provide web content, 50% were rated as ‘poor’, meaning that in many cases only a sentence and email address was provided. This highlights the disproportionate number of small and independent venues that currently fail to provide quality access information.

Access Covers the Basics

“ The festival has a lovely atmosphere, all the staff seem more than willing to help out or find someone who can. The accessible facilities and services made the experience even better. ”

It is essential that basic access facilities are fit for purpose. This includes design, location, and effective stewarding, but also extends to facilities being advertised in the first place. For example, the presence of an accessible toilet was advertised by 61% of venues, whilst mystery shoppers reported that 88% of venues had one or more available on the night.

Facilities are often labelled and advertised as ‘accessible’, whilst not being fit for purpose on the ground. Whilst 80% of ‘accessible’ campsites featured dedicated stewards, only 64% featured power charging for wheelchair and scooter batteries or medical equipment and 40% did not provide accessible shower units.

Access Includes the Whole Experience

“ When I go to a concert I want to have the whole experience. I want to go somewhere that I feel valued as a person. ”

All too often, many sensory and cognitive aspects of accessing what a gig or festival has to offer are overlooked. The ‘full experience’ includes accessing the moment of performance, but also extends to the creative ways in which organisers can improve the accessibility of the sensory and cognitive journey that an attendee undertakes to actually experience a performance.

An assisted hearing system in the performance space was reported as being available at 38% of venues shopped, but only logged by mystery shoppers at 10% of festivals. Captioning remains largely undeveloped in the world of live music, with only 4% of venues surveyed advertising the possibility of captioning, and no festivals at all.

Access Depends on Customer Service

“ Although some aspects of the access were good, staff awareness and attitude made it a very difficult venue to access. ”

Interactions with staff can make or break the experience for Deaf and disabled customers. At the same time, the access facilities and policies implemented by organisers are dependent upon well-informed and disability-aware staff in order to render them effective. Investment in training can have a profound impact upon the customer service provided to Deaf and disabled people, and the working practices of venues and festivals themselves. The ultimate positive impact of effective and considerate access-related stewarding is that it encourages disabled customers to return.

Some reports suggested that bad policy and practice can persist for years if unchallenged. Left unchecked, policies and ‘ways of doing things’ can become significant barriers and indeed illegal activities under the Equality Act 2010. All venues and festivals should ensure that they are informed about their duties according to the Equality Act 2010, in the same manner in which other legal requirements for putting on events should be taken seriously.

Access Generates Custom

“ I telephoned [the festival] to ask if I could use my camp chair or if they had a viewing area. They said no and that that if I sat I would cause a hazard. As a result, I said I didn’t want to go to their old fashioned and out of touch festival. I didn’t pay for tickets and the seven friends that would have gone with me didn’t go either. ”

Deaf and disabled people are an incredibly significant consumer group in the UK that make up 1 in 5 of the population whilst making up 15% of live music attendees according to the most recent DCMS Taking Part Survey. According to DWP figures, their household income, the so-called ‘purple pound’, is around £212 billion a year. Consideration of household income is highly relevant when considering the economics of making live music accessible, because it can never be considered to be an issue that solely relates to individual Deaf and disabled attendees. People go to gigs and festivals together, as well as making recommendations to friends and family members.

Alongside the large numbers of Deaf and disabled people who do engage with the world of live music, there are also many people who are disengaged, in part due to the barriers that persist within the industry, and people’s perception of what the live music experience will be like. One significant demographic where this is the case is people with learning disabilities, with 1 in 4 people between 18 and 35 years old never having gone to a live music event.

Access Goes Beyond the Audience

Getting things right for customers goes a very long way towards catering to the potential access requirements of staff, volunteers and artists, and the benefits of having people with lived experience of access requirements on staff and volunteer teams cannot be underestimated.

The idea that artists might have access requirements is often overlooked. Backstage access facilities that might exist are often not maintained, and artists commonly face a lack of creative thinking on behalf of venue and festival organisers when seeking to have their access requirements met.

Conclusions

Our ethos continues to be that barriers can be overcome with collaboration, creativity, and the right attitude. Attitude is Everything firmly believes that the live music industry is moving in the right direction, approaching the tipping point at which consideration of access becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Access information

Excellent customer service for Deaf and disabled people begins with excellent access information. Getting information right can be achieved by any size of venue or festival, regardless of physical accessibility. Whilst most venues and festivals provide some access information, a significant minority provide none at all, and the information contained on these pages is often incomplete or lacking in detail. There is clearly a need for straightforward universal guidance.

Customer service

It is essential for the industry to view the subject of access for Deaf and disabled people through the prism of customer service rather than as a niche topic affecting a few individuals. This demographic is a growing and increasingly demanding consumer group that needs to be catered for, with rights that have now been enshrined for over 20 years following the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Equality Act 2010.

Fit for purpose

All too often, the act of having access facilities appears to constitute a 'ticked box', with apparently little thought given to whether or not they are set up and operated to be truly fit for purpose. When investing in improving accessibility it is in the interests of organisers to take proper ownership of this process and demand that access facilities are designed, maintained and stewarded to be as effective as possible. All of our guidance exists to support organisers with this goal.

Access Starts Online

In order to meet the clearly identified need for universal guidance on how to create quality access information, the publication of the third State of Access Report heralds the launch of Attitude is Everything's Access Starts Online campaign to encompass all UK venues and festivals. This campaign provides a simple guide on how to create high quality access information for any venue or festival.

This campaign was soft-launched in partnership with the Association of Independent Festivals in November 2015 and Independent Venue Week in January 2016, and proved to be highly effective at affecting change.

The need to assist small and independent venues is a key priority, and we will work with industry umbrella organisations to identify the barriers to change that may exist for this demographic and seek to tackle them in partnership.

High quality access information is an achievable goal for any venue or event organiser, including venues that may not be physically accessible. Online access information should be available for all live music events.

Next Steps

In addition to the Access Starts Online campaign, we have identified three additional areas of action:

Increasing Awareness

Having identified the fact that organisers could better cater to the access requirements of people beyond those with physical impairments, we will work with partner organisations to develop a series of research projects and subsequent toolkits that shine a light on the various ways in which events can be made accessible for people who fall within different and often invisible impairment groups.

Extending Training

We will continue to offer open and bespoke Disability Awareness Training sessions for live music industry professionals, whilst expanding the scope and impact of our training to incorporate train-the-trainer programmes and additional modules such as how to make volunteering accessible.

Empowering Organisers

We are committed to future campaigns that bring event organisers and industry providers together to champion the value of ensuring that access facilities are fit for purpose, shifting the concept of 'value for money' from the need to tick a box to the need for invested-in access facilities to truly meet the access requirements of a growing and increasingly discerning Deaf and disabled audience.

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. Having begun as a pilot project in 2000, we are now a fully independent charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

Mystery shopping is the cornerstone of our work. Our dedicated team of mystery shoppers are Deaf and disabled music fans who continuously report back on the accessibility and overall experience at UK music venues and festivals. We channel the feedback received into our Charter of Best Practice and its associated access guidance.

The Charter is now firmly established within the live music industry as a framework with which to examine all aspects of making a venue or festival as accessible as possible for Deaf and disabled people. Over 100 venues and festivals have successfully gone through the process of having Bronze, Silver and Gold awards signed-off via the Charter, with many more having benefitted from historic and ongoing advice and guidance. In 2014 we opened up the Charter to engage with Local Authorities.

We continue to grow our commercial services via the ongoing delivery of Disability Equality Training sessions and Access Consultancy. Over 5,000 people working within the live music industry have now received our training. In addition to these activities, we continue to run a festival volunteering project, recruiting around 50 volunteers each year in partnership with Glastonbury, Festival Republic and Oxfam Stewarding. We also host our annual showcase Club Attitude, in order to demonstrate best practice gig accessibility.



attitude
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Analysis by Aisling Gallagher

Written by Jacob Adams

Edited by Graham Griffiths

Design by Kathryn Corlett

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

54 Chalton Street
London NW1 1HS

Tel: 0207 383 7979

Email: info@attitudeiseverything.org.uk

Web: www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk

Text Relay: 18001 0207 383 7979

Reg Company No: 6397532

Charity No: 1121975



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