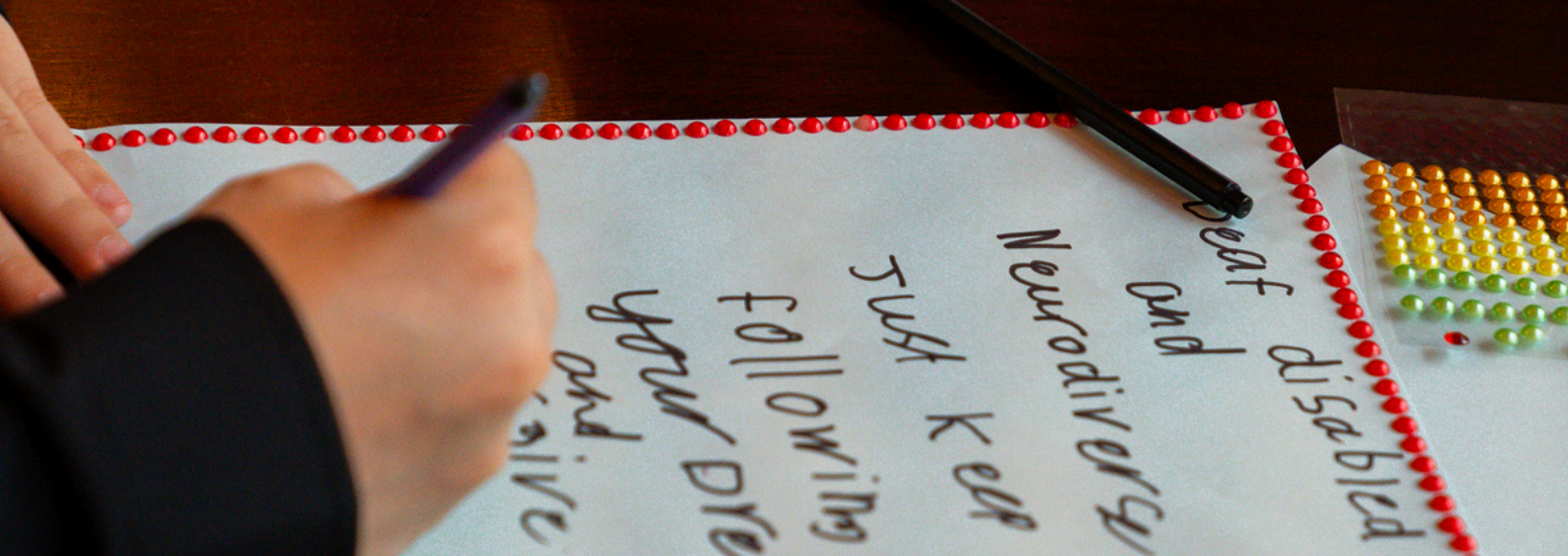
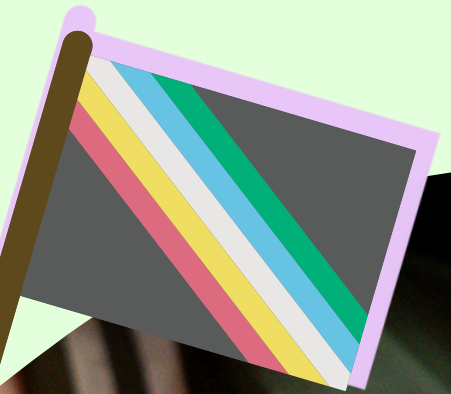


How to use:

The Access Manifesto



A step-by-step guide for implementing
accessibility in the Arts

What Is the Access Manifesto?

The Access Manifesto: A New Chapter for the Arts is a call to action for arts organisations, venues, and leaders to revolutionise the accessibility of the arts. Written by Maisy Gordon and Ayzah Ahmed, this manifesto is rooted in the voices and experiences of young Deaf, disabled, and neurodiverse artists and activists. It offers a practical, step-by-step guide to help arts spaces become more inclusive and accessible for all.

Why it is so important:

In March 2023, young people from Liverpool, London, Leeds, Chester, and Manchester collaborated with 20 Stories High and Graeae to attend workshops and be a part of creating the show: High Times And Dirty Monsters. This project highlighted the ongoing barriers faced by young Deaf, disabled, and neurodiverse individuals within the arts. The Access Manifesto was born from these experiences, aiming to inspire and guide change within the arts sector.

How to use this guide:

This guide is designed to be a practical tool for arts organisations and venues to implement the principles outlined in the Access Manifesto. Below is a breakdown of each principle with actionable steps to help you make your organisation or practise more accessible.

1. Open Doors For All

Principle:

Ensure everyone can fully engage and participate in the arts, valuing every voice.

Action Steps:

- **Conduct a Community Audit:** Engage with local Deaf, disabled, and neurodiverse communities to understand their needs and experiences.
- **Inclusive Programming:** Design programs that cater to a diverse audience and creative team. Ensure that events are welcoming and accessible to all.
- **Feedback:** Establish regular feedback sessions with these communities to continuously improve accessibility.

2. Welcoming Spaces

Principle:

Create spaces that prioritise well-being, especially for those with neurodiverse and mental health needs.

Action Steps:

- **Training for Staff:** Provide training on mental health, neurodiversity, and disability awareness to all staff members.
- **Sensory-Friendly Spaces:** Designate areas within your venue that are sensory-friendly, with low lighting and quiet zones.
- **Informal Gatherings:** Host relaxed and informal events where attendees can feel comfortable and supported.

3. Accessible Places

Principle:

Ensure that all aspects of your venue, from front-of-house to backstage, are fully accessible.

Action Steps:

- Access Audits: Partner with accessibility professionals to conduct thorough access audits of your venue.
- Barrier-Free Design: Address physical barriers such as stairs, narrow doorways, and inaccessible bathrooms.
- Accessible Technology: Install assistive technology such as hearing loops, captioning devices, and accessible websites.

4. Representation

Principle:

Representation matters—ensure diverse voices are visible on stage, backstage and in leadership roles.

Action Steps:

- Inclusive Hiring: Make sure job opportunities are accessible and candidates are given what they need to attend with confidence. Make sure you are casting actors with disabilities in disabled roles but also keep disabled people in mind for non-disabled shows/roles.
- Community Partnerships: Collaborate with organisations that serve disabled communities to amplify their voices in your programming.

5. Clear Communication

Principle:

Foster open and inclusive communication channels.

Action Steps:

- **Accessible Information:** Ensure all communications are available in accessible formats (e.g., dyslexia friendly, large print, easy read).
- **Engage in Dialogue:** Create platforms (forums, social media, workshops) where disabled individuals can share their experiences and feedback.
- **Use Inclusive Language:** Promote the use of language that respects and reflects the diversity of the community.

6. New Ideas

Principle:

Embrace new methods that amplify disabled voices.

Action Steps:

- **Co-creation:** Work with disabled artists to co-create new works that reflect their experiences and perspectives.
- **Experimentation:** Implement new techniques and technologies that make performances more accessible, such as integrated audio descriptions or tactile tours.
- **Challenge Norms:** Regularly review and challenge traditional practices that may inadvertently exclude disabled individuals.

7. Working Together

Principle:

Collaboration is key to ensuring accessibility in all forms of art.

Action Steps:

- **Collaboration:** Engage with a wide range of disabled communities to ensure that different needs are met.
- **Training and Development:** Provide ongoing training for staff, focusing on accessible practices.
- **Integrated Accessibility:** Embed accessibility features (e.g. sign language interpretation, audio description) into every area of your venue.

8. Power in Working Together

Principle:

Empower the community by actively seeking and implementing feedback from disabled individuals.

Action Steps:

- **Regular Consultations:** Hold regular consultations with disabled audiences and artists to gather feedback and assess progress.
- **Transparent Reporting:** Share your accessibility progress with the public, highlighting successes and areas for improvement.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Commit to an ongoing process of learning and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of your audience.

Your role in Flipping the Script

The Access Manifesto is not just a set of guidelines—it's a call to action. By following these steps, you can help create an arts environment that is truly inclusive and accessible to all. Your commitment to accessibility will not only benefit your audiences but also enrich the entire arts community. Together, we can make the arts a space where every voice is heard, valued, and celebrated.

Now it's up to you. Flip the script. Make the change.



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