

The Access Manifesto:

20
STORIES
HIGH

A New Chapter for the Arts



In March 2023, 20 Stories High partnered with Graeae to engage over 60 Deaf, Disabled, and neurodivergent young people from across the UK.

This collaboration emerged from our award-winning show, *High Times and Dirty Monsters*, which highlighted the daily challenges faced by disabled people.

Recognising a need for ongoing activism, Maisy Gordon and Ayzah Ahmed created a practical, step-by-step guide aimed at helping arts organisations and venues take significant strides toward making the arts more accessible for young audiences, participants, and artists.

This is where you come in—we invite everyone to pledge to follow the manifesto and help us make a real change.

We understand that not all points can be met immediately; achieving full accessibility is an ongoing journey.

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With that in mind, we have broken The Access Manifesto into 4 stages:

Find out more:

Watch, read and learn about The Access Manifesto. Share it with your community and help us spread the word.

Assess your current situation:

Use The Access Manifesto to understand what you are already doing, and what needs improvement.

What can be done short term:

What things from The Access Manifesto can you implement in the short term? These could be free and low cost practices that are as simple as looking at your accessibility on social media or changing the font on promotional material to one that is dyslexia friendly.

What can you do long term:

What are the things that will require more time, money and planning? These are things such as lift access or staff training about Neurodiversity. We understand these aims take more time, but identifying them and putting a plan in place to work towards them are a crucial step towards making the arts barrier free to all.

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Here's each Manifesto point broken down into two lists, things you can do for free and things that are paid:

Manifesto Point	Free Actions:	Paid Actions:
Open Doors For All	• Host community input meetings. • Create online surveys for feedback. • Offer suggestion boxes in venues. • Use social media polls to gather opinions. • Make all in house documents dyslexia friendly, large print and screen reader friendly. • Check in with staff about access, inclusion and wellbeing. • Consider your user journey from start to finish for every experience.	• Develop outreach programs for underrepresented groups. • Provide accessible versions of printed materials. • Hire community liaisons to connect with diverse groups. • Fund transportation options for those needing assistance getting to events. • Paid consultation with those who have lived experience of specific characteristics.
Welcoming Spaces	• Set up cosy gathering areas. • Regularly check in with attendees. • Use soft lighting when appropriate. • Organise informal meet-and-greets. • Encourage staff to be available to help. • Consulting with staff about their ideas.	• Train staff with mental health professionals and accessibility experts. • Invest in sensory-friendly furniture. • Provide wellness resources, like quiet rooms. • Hire consultants for creating inclusive environments. • Explore training to support specific conditions/lived experience.

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Manifesto Point	Free Actions:	Paid Actions:
Accessible Places	• Conduct self-assessments of barriers. • Gather attendee feedback on accessibility. • Create clear signage for accessible routes, these could be made in house. • Make sure accessible toilets have alarm cords untied. • Share information about access on social media. • Ask the people you work with for their access rider and look at ways you can support them. • Complete a venue access audit. You can view ours here.	• Hire access auditors for evaluations. • Make physical modifications based on audits. • Install automatic doors for easier access. • Create designated quiet spaces. • Lift and ramp access • Fit a hearing loop • Include braille on signage, lift key pads and around the building. • Make sure backstage areas are accessible.
Representation	• Organise focus groups with diverse communities. • Promote diverse artists online. • Feature local artists from various backgrounds in events. • Open casting to the public. • Include diverse people in casting and interviewing processes. • Look at the diversity of images shared online. • Build authentic relationships with diverse individuals/communities.	• Hire diverse leadership and staff. • Work with local companies to make interviews/auditions accessible. • Fund initiatives for diverse artists. • Collaborate with cultural organisations for representation.

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Manifesto Point	Free Actions:	Paid Actions:
Clear Communication	• Use plain language in all materials. • Change fonts to those that are dyslexia friendly, eg. Arial. • Make your email text size large. • Use a free online colour contrast checker. • Make documents large print. • Create visual aids for better understanding by using free images online. • Caption social media videos through Instagram or Facebook. • Add alt text to social media posts. • Be clear with your communication, actions and instructions to others. • Manage expectations and agree clear deadlines.	• Provide communication workshops for staff. • Hire interpreters. • Develop easy-to-read materials. • Train staff about visual impairment and Deaf awareness. • Provide BSL training to staff. • Fit a hearing loop. • Offer multiple BSL, audio described and relaxed performances. • Offer documents on different coloured paper. • Pay for website accessibility add-ons.

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Manifesto Point	Free Actions:	Paid Actions:
New Ideas	• Encourage community idea submissions. • Share what other companies are doing online. • Get feedback from disabled staff/freelancers. • Create online forums for sharing experiences/feedback. • Educate yourself with free information and resources online. • Develop community outreach initiatives that work to diversify the voices within your organisation.	• Fund pilot projects for inclusive programming. • Bring in experts for brainstorming sessions. • Offer grants for new, inclusive art initiatives. • Support research on best practices in accessibility. • Pay communities for their time and contribution.
Working Together	• Partner with local disability organisations. • Co-host events with inclusive partners. • Share resources among local organisations. • Amplify the work of others – individuals and organisations. • Diversify experience within your team and board.	• Hire consultants for audio description and sign language. • Invest in technology for accessibility. • Create integrated training programs for staff. • Fund accessibility improvements across all programs.

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Manifesto Point	Free Actions:	Paid Actions:
Power In Working Together	• Create accessible feedback forms. • Hold regular community feedback meetings. • Encourage peer-to-peer feedback sessions. • Share outcomes from feedback to show impact. • Promote work from disabled artists.	• Hire a community outreach coordinator. • Develop an advisory board with community representatives. • Fund initiatives that directly address feedback received.

We at 20 Stories High are learning too and access is a vital part of our company's mission. We don't always get it right, but we are always learning and aiming to be better.

Lots of this information is universal and not specific to the arts, we believe that these steps can be followed for all organisations to make a more inclusive and accessible space for employees, freelancers and members of the public.

If you're a Deaf, disabled and/or neurodiverse creative, please feel empowered to share this with organisations, businesses or venues so that they can adopt The Access Manifesto into their practice.

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We would love to see your progress and hear about the impact of the access manifesto in your organisation. Please pledge to follow The Access Manifesto and keep us up to date with how it is going using this Access Tracker:

The Access Manifesto - Access Tracker			Company:													
Manifesto Point	Date:	Aims (3 Months)	Date:	Achieved	Date:	Aims (6 Months)	Date:	Achieved	Date:	Aims (1 Year)	Date:	Achieved	Date:	Aims (2 Years)	Date:	Achieved
Open Doors For All																
Welcoming Spaces																
Accessible Places																
Representation																
Clear Communication																
New Ideas																
Working Together																
Power in Working Together																

Use this guide and tracker to map out and keep up to date with your access aims and share your progress with us.

To pledge, email info@20storiesthigh.org.uk

To share your Access Tracker, contact Maisy:
maisy@20storiesthigh.org.uk

If you need any support, please contact
info@20storiesthigh.org.uk