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Understanding Disabled People as Audiences 2012-13

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Introduction

Shape is a disability-led arts organisation that for over 30 years has been working to improve access to the arts and culture for disabled people as audiences.

Shape supports disabled audience members to access arts and cultural events across London. This is accomplished through Shape's Audiences services and by supporting organisations in the arts and cultural sector to develop their audiences, and improve access for disabled people at their venues. 2012-13 was a unique year for Shape as we successfully achieved funding to support our Audiences services in celebration of the Cultural Olympiad.

This is Shape's first annual report looking at audience behaviour and audience development in 2012-13, within the context of Shape's Audience services. The aim of this report is to help organisations better understand disabled people as audiences, the barriers they may face and how they access the sector. It is intended to encourage organisations to think about how they can remove barriers to disabled people as audiences, in order to provide a more inclusive arts and cultural sector - working towards Arts Council England's goal that more people experience and are inspired by the arts. Shape aspires to see disabled people more engaged as audiences. We do this through developing arts opportunities for disabled people with the least engagement and by supporting arts and cultural organisations to be even more focused on attracting disabled people as audiences.

There are both social and economic arguments for organisations to engage even more effectively with disabled people as audiences, particularly in these times of increased emphasis on quality of life, social inclusion, building inclusive environments (as best practice, not just compliance) and diversifying income generation in the arts and cultural sector.

Access to art and culture plays a pivotal role in enriching people's lives. DCMS's Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport Adult and Child Report 2011-12¹ confirmed: "in relation to most DCMS sectors there is a significant association between... cultural engagement and subjective happiness. This lends support to the view that culture... improve[s] people's quality of life when measured by subjective well-being" and "engagement with a wide range of cultural activities including heritage, arts and museum and galleries [is] associated with significantly higher levels of subjective happiness."

Many disabled people are excluded from experiencing arts and culture due to the barriers society places on them. Around a third of disabled people experience difficulties in accessing public, commercial and leisure goods and services.

According to The Office for Disability Issues², there are over eleven million people with a limiting long term illness, impairment or disability in the UK. The prevalence of disability rises with age and around 6% of children are disabled, compared to 15% of working age adults and 45% of adults over state pension age. This percentage is set to increase dramatically over the next few decades, as UK demographics shift towards an increasingly older population.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taking-part-the-national-survey-of-culture-leisure-and-sport-adult-and-child-report-2011-12>

² <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/disability-statistics-and-research/disability-facts-and-figures.php>

In DWP's 2013 report, 'Fulfilling Potential - Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today'³, it states that "disabled people's spending power in the UK is estimated to be at least £80 billion a year".

With the world's attention last year on disabled people's access to cultural engagement during the Cultural Olympiad; combined with the aging population and subsequent growth of the spending power of disabled people, there is increased impetus for arts and cultural organisations and commercial venues investing in and committing to the development of an inclusive society, where all people can participate in arts and cultural activities equally, independently, with choice and with dignity.

Methodology

This report is an analysis of the behaviour of disabled people as audiences who engaged directly with Shape's Audiences services during 2012-13.

We have reviewed Shape's Audience member behaviour through monitoring, evaluating and analysing their experiences in accessing arts and cultural events. Information has been collected through Shape's databases, research and analysis of the sector, and feedback from members and volunteers. It is therefore a snapshot of activity and not necessarily representative of the engagement patterns of other disabled people accessing the arts in London. It includes a profile analysis of the beneficiaries with whom Shape works and barriers they face in accessing the arts and cultural sector. It does not include data on those under the age of 16.

The Shape Audiences service is entirely responsive to our members' booking requests, rather than prescribing a limited programme of select art forms, which is why we work more with some venue types more than others – and so the diversity of venues and art forms described in this report reflect the tastes and interests of our membership group. The service has worked with a wide range of venues across varied art forms and cultural activities during 2012-13 including gallery exhibitions, museum exhibitions, theatre shows, musicals, music, dance, multi-media installations and more.

Shape promotes the Social Model of Disability as it frames disability as a social construct. Disability is created by physical, organisational and attitudinal barriers, which can be changed and eliminated. The Social Model of Disability was devised as a direct challenge to the prevailing notion of disability as an individual medical 'problem' with the focus on what the disabled person couldn't do because of their impairment. This approach, known as the 'Medical Model of Disability' was shown to be static and unhelpful, but is still used by many arts and cultural organisations across London. The Social Model takes the focus away from impairment and places responsibility on government, organisations and individuals across all sectors of society, to identify and implement constructive changes to remove barriers and increase access.

Key findings

Organisations have made great strides in improving their access provisions in recent years; however there are still barriers excluding disabled people. Further improvements can be made to help build a more inclusive arts and cultural sector.

Disabled people still face preventable barriers in accessing arts and cultural events, including transportation issues, price of tickets, lack of information and support at venues. In 2012-13, many of these barriers were removed by Shape's Audiences service.

³<http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/docs/fulfilling-potential/building-understanding-main-report.pdf>

In our analysis of the arts and cultural sector's access provisions, we found that organisations' access schemes vary in their support for disabled people as audiences. This included variation in their application processes; request for proof of disability; concessionary rates policies and in the support organisations are able to provide when a disabled person attends their events.

With regards to the application processes, Shape compared this to the process for students completing a National Union of Students (NUS) form to be eligible for student discounts. Students can fill in one NUS form to receive a card, and every venue accepts it, however if disabled people want to be eligible for concessionary tickets or support from a venue's access scheme, they need to complete lengthy application forms for each venue and they have to prove their disability to each organisation in the process.

One commonality between the venues' access schemes was that they are unlikely to be able to provide one-to-one support for disabled people in getting to and from events, and are unlikely to be able to provide one-to-one support during their visits. This is why support like Shape's Audiences service is valued, as it breaks down barriers to transportation issues, provides support at events and offers companionship at events to support those who are most isolated – a service that most organisations are unable to find the funding to provide. In response to these findings, Shape aims to work with more organisations on how they can integrate and adapt this type of service into their access schemes.

In 2012-13, Shape's Training & Access services provided support to organisations developing their audiences, and found a trend in the type of training and access services being requested. There was an increase in requests for training sessions on Customer Care (relevant for customer service for disabled people and good business practice); Accessible Marketing (relevant for ensuring that an organisation's publicity and marketing techniques are as accessible as possible) and Organising Accessible Events (relevant for developing a checklist for how individual organisations can improve access to their events for disabled people). Shape also saw an increase in requests for Walk & Talk Access Audits, whereby Shape's Access Auditors meet with a representative from a venue, reviewing the accessibility of premises and their staff awareness of disabled people's needs, to improve the venue's access for disabled visitors.

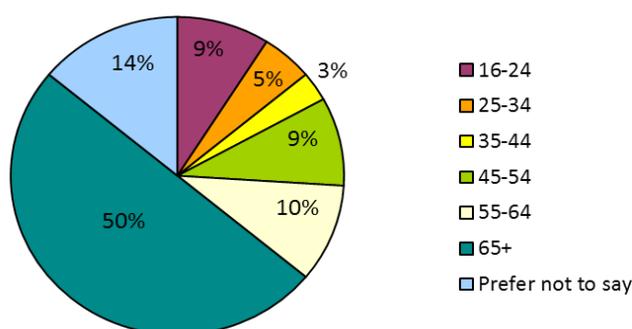
We will continue to provide our Training & Access services to organisations to build a more inclusive arts and cultural sector.

Disabled People as Audiences – beneficiaries’ profile

Shape supported a wide range of beneficiaries in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and access requirements. Beneficiaries were from Shape’s Audiences membership service and from the disability and community groups with whom Shape works. In 2012-13, Shape worked with 3,632 disabled people to attend 755 events across London. The following information is an analysis of the behaviour of disabled people as audiences who engaged directly with Shape’s Audience services during 2012-13. This information is not necessarily representative of the engagement patterns of other disabled people accessing the arts in London.

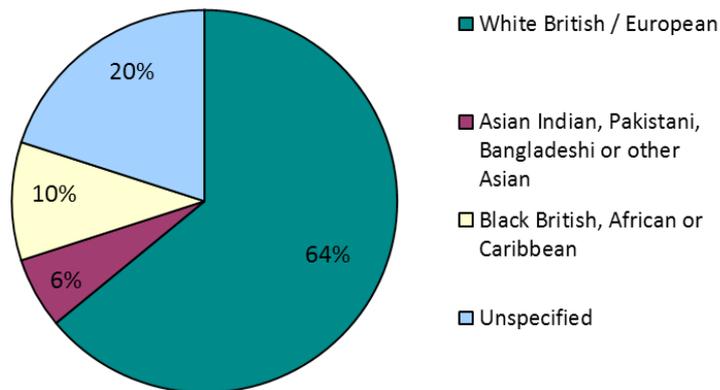
There were a range of ages amongst beneficiaries, however, the majority were older people - as they were often the most in need of support having acquired impairments later in life, and may be more isolated. Half of the disabled people Shape’s Audiences team worked with were over 65 years old; with a further 10% aged between 55-64; 12% aged between 35-54 and 14% aged between 16-34. The Shape Audiences membership service has not worked with individuals under the age of 16.

Disabled People as Audiences: Age Range



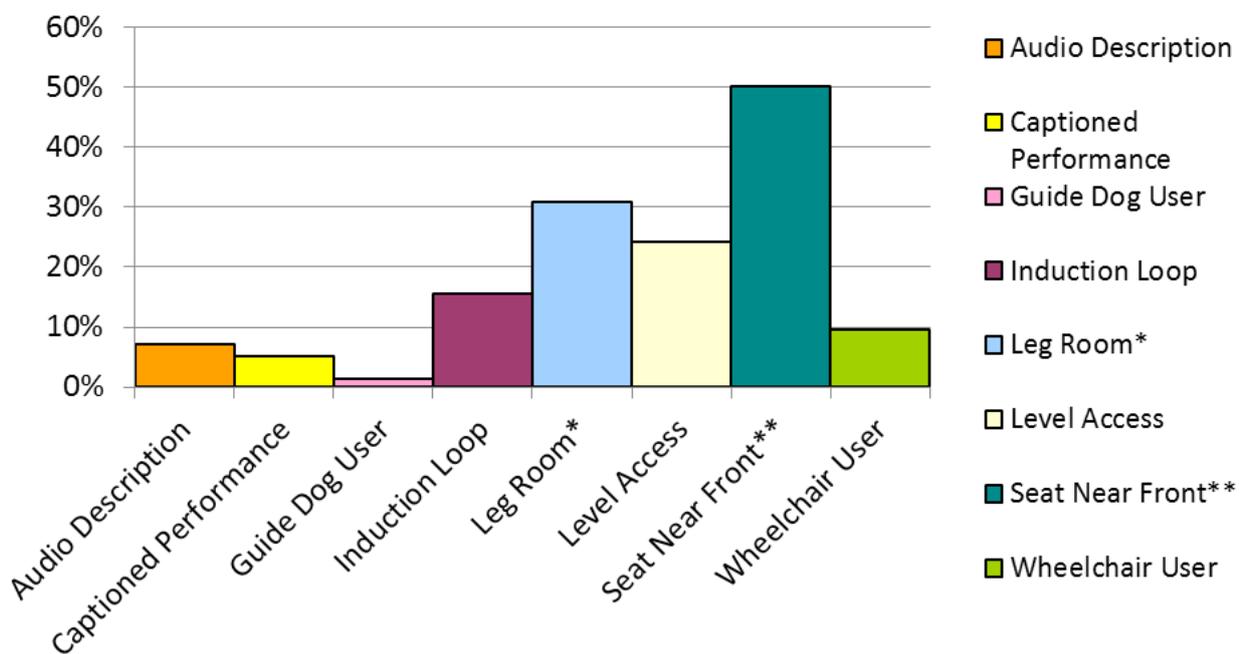
Around 63% of those for which Shape recorded their gender are female, with 27% male. Reaching right across London’s diverse boroughs, Shape supported individuals from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. Of those, 64% describe themselves as White British or European, 10% state that they are Black British, African or Caribbean, whilst 6% stated that they were Asian Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other Asian.

Disabled People as Audiences: Ethnicity



The access requirements of the beneficiaries were wide ranging. They included specific seating for individuals with visual or hearing impairments, sufficient leg room, ramp or lift access for those with mobility issues, one-to-one support for individuals with learning disabilities or dementia, audio description, use of venues with hearing loop systems and captioned performances.

Shape Audiences: most common access requirements that present barriers



Graph reference:

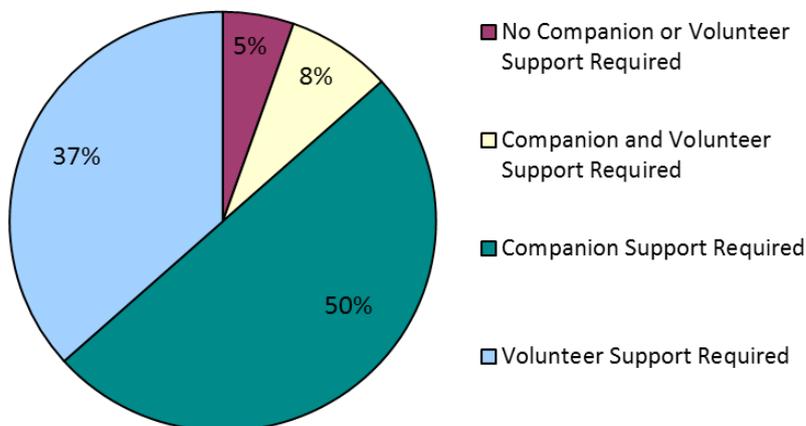
* Reason for “Leg Room” may be: mobility, walking stick user, etc.

** Reason for “Seat Near Front” may be: visual, hearing, mobility, navigation, etc.

(This graph does not add up to 100% because beneficiaries may have more than one access requirement)

Of the events coordinated in 2012-13, 95% of bookings requested volunteer and/or companion support (accompanied by a friend or family member); 50% of bookings requested companion tickets and 37% of bookings requested volunteer or volunteer driver support.

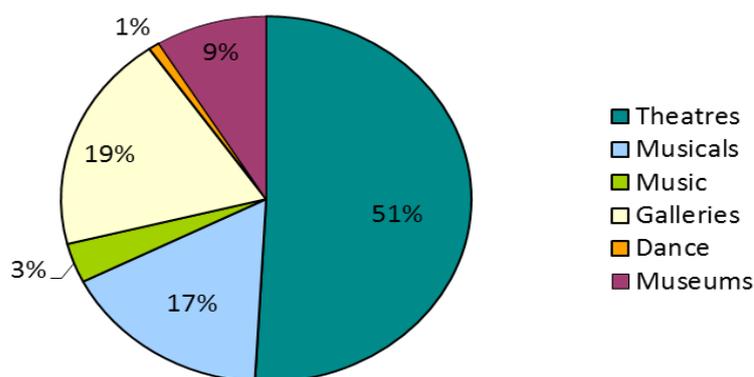
Disabled People as Audiences: Additional Support Required



Disabled People as Audiences – audience behaviour

In 2012-13, Shape worked with 111 arts, cultural and heritage organisations across London, of which 51% were theatres, 19% were galleries, 17% were musical theatre venues, 9% were museums, 3% were music organisations and 1% were dance organisations (N.B some organisations provided more than one genre i.e. the Barbican, National Theatre). For a full list of organisations Shape worked with, please refer to Appendix one.

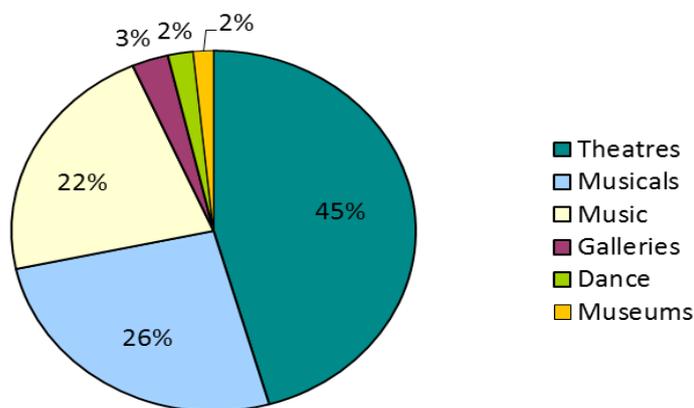
Shape Audiences: Bookings by Art Form



We received the majority of booking requests for theatres with 45% of bookings in this genre, we received fewer bookings for museums and dance with 2% of bookings in each genre. Musicals, Music events, Galleries accounted for 26%, 22% and 3% respectively.

The service has not only supported disabled people booking tickets; but has also provided volunteer support and coordinated trip support to venues that are free at the point of entry, such as many galleries and museums – as well as paid-for exhibitions at those museums and galleries. However, Shape continues to receive fewer requests to attend these sorts of art forms than theatre arts, from our particular membership group. This is not necessarily representative of the tastes of all disabled people attending arts and cultural events, outside of Shape’s Audiences services membership.

Shape Audiences: Bookings by Venue Type



In contrast, the disability groups and community groups Shape supported were more drawn to attending exhibitions, with 80% of groups going to museums and galleries, 16% of groups going to musicals, 6% of groups going to theatre and 21% of groups going to dance, music events, festivals or other events.

Disabled People as Audiences – barriers faced

Shape’s Audiences service provides direct support to disabled people who have a number of different access requirements that present barriers, and as a result contribute to individuals feeling isolated and unable to participate in arts and cultural activities.

As part of our 2012-13 evaluation survey, members were asked what the main barriers were that they needed support overcoming. Of those surveyed, 57% highlighted transport as an issue and that they didn’t feel confident using public transport.

‘I am severely disabled (balance problem and impaired spine) and cannot go on public transport. I need an escort from door to door and at organisations.’
- Shape Member

This was also evidenced through Transport for London’s launch of its Single Equality Scheme⁴ in March 2012. Transport for London’s report confirmed that 11% of Londoners said that information provision is a barrier to them using public transport more often, and that “some bus driver behaviour is considered poor, particularly when dealing with disabled, deaf and older people”⁵.

⁴ <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/corporate/single-equality-scheme-2012.pdf>

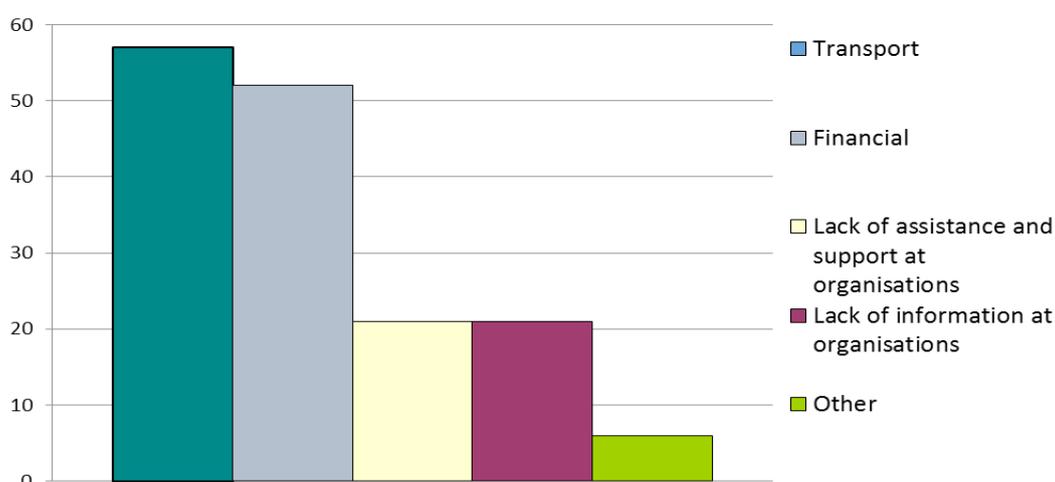
⁵ <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/corporate/single-equality-scheme-2012.pdf>

Furthermore, in relation to wheelchair space on buses, they reported that “passenger feedback indicates an ongoing issue with the use of this designated space” and confirmed that, “while priority should be given to wheelchair users, the space is frequently occupied by people with buggies and standing passengers. This can cause particular tensions between passengers and bus drivers”⁶.

Our evaluation survey also demonstrated that 52% of disabled people felt financial barriers are a problem with the price of tickets often too expensive for individuals on low incomes.

Meanwhile, 21% of respondents said that lack of assistance and support at venues was another main barrier; whilst another 21% stated that there was a lack of information in accessible formats being provided by arts and cultural organisations.

Most common barriers disabled people face in accessing the arts and cultural sector



Additional feedback from disabled people regarding their experiences at venues:

‘There is a lack of accessibility info inside the venue.’

‘Old theatres don’t have enough leg room.’

‘A large number of disabled people live alone, travel with extreme difficulty and attend organisations alone. Yet most organisations do nothing to encourage solo visitors. There is too much emphasis on attending in groups/ with family e.g. discounted group tickets.’

⁶ <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/corporate/single-equality-scheme-2012.pdf>

Shape's Audiences Service – removing barriers

In 2012-13, Shape aimed to assess and understand the barriers disabled people face when accessing arts and cultural events. With our Audiences service, we provided one-to-one access assistance and support to break down these barriers. This is a service that many organisations are unable to find the funding to provide.

This is why funding to support services like Shape's Audiences is so important, as it provides essential one-to-one access assistance and works closely with arts and cultural organisations to arrange accessible tickets and gives venues feedback on disabled people's experiences at events.

Disabled people confirmed that they used Shape's Audiences service in 2012-13 as opposed to contacting organisations directly because they often found the variation in venue's access schemes confusing, and found it difficult to complete lengthy access scheme application forms.

Furthermore, the majority of organisations with access schemes work from the Medical Model of Disability (where a disabled person must prove their disability in order to be eligible for accessible tickets), whereby Shape works from the Social Model of Disability, as outlined above, which takes the focus away from impairment and places responsibility on the venue to identify and implement constructive changes to remove barriers and increase access.

That's why we nurtured strong relationships with arts and cultural organisations so that we were able to book accessible tickets on behalf of members, without them having to prove their disability to each venue. Venues trusted our membership criteria and our dedication to supporting disabled people who need help in accessing the arts and cultural sector.

This is an example of some of the feedback received from our members about why they used the Shape Audiences service in 2012-13:

'It's been great knowing that Shape are always on the other end of the phone, I'm always greeted by friendly staff who are flexible and patient with me it makes booking for things a lot easier than explaining my access requirements to venues all the time.'
- Shape Member

Supporting individual access requirements and tackling social isolation

At the time a member registered with Shape's Audiences service, they were requested to advise Shape what their access requirements were, and how these access requirements presented barriers to them accessing the arts and cultural sector. This information was then used to arrange access support to ensure that disabled people's access requirements were met at each event. Access support may have included:

- Reviewing access provisions available at the event, and comparing this to the member's access requirements.
- Assigning a volunteer to support a member during their event and/or provide transport assistance to attend the event.
- Sharing details of the members' access requirements with the volunteer to ensure they were able to confidently support the member.
- Contacting venues to book accessible (and sometimes reduced-priced) tickets for the member and their companions and/or volunteer.*
- Providing feedback to organisations on disabled people's experience at venues.

* Members requested Shape to book tickets on their behalf, as they did not want to provide proof of their disability at each venue they wish to visit. If a disabled person had to prove their disability at every venue, they would need to complete complex registration forms for each venue, which may result in them feeling socially excluded from comfortably accessing the venue.

Many disabled people would not have had the opportunity to enjoy and engage with the arts and cultural sector without Shape providing this support, particularly as the most common barriers faced by disabled people in accessing the arts and cultural sector are transportation barriers, financial barriers and receiving personal support at events. This is why services of this nature require continued funding to support disabled people in breaking down these barriers and receiving the support they need to feel engaged with the arts and cultural sector.

Recent feedback received by the Wellcome Collection confirmed this: "we often get a lot of comments that people find it difficult to get to us from Euston Station. We often try to direct people to Euston Square, but this isn't always easy for our visitors. We have particular difficulty with stations like Euston where people get support at the station, but neither they nor we are able to help them cross the road."

Without services like Shape's Audiences, many disabled people felt socially isolated as they were not empowered to access events due to the barriers society places on them. Tackling social isolation amongst disabled people was particularly important as Shape engaged with a high percentage of older people who were especially vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness, owing to loss of friends and family, mobility or income.

As evidenced in DCMS's report, there is "significant association between... cultural engagement and subjective happiness", therefore, with Shape's work in improving access to the arts and cultural sector, we are able to increase cultural engagement with more disabled people as audiences and improve disabled people's wellbeing by supporting them in engaging with the arts and cultural sector.

This has been evidenced from recent feedback from a member of Shape's Audience service. Karen* contacted Shape recently to say what a wonderful time she had with one of Shape's volunteers who supported her at an event. Karen told us that it was the first time she had left her flat in four years and that she would not have felt empowered to do so without the support of one of Shape's volunteers.

Shape's Audiences volunteer support

In 2012-13, Shape worked to respond to transport barriers and lack of assistance at events with the help of dedicated volunteers who could provide free accessible transport and assistance at events to empower many individuals who otherwise would not normally have had the chance, to get out and about. In 2012-13, Shape worked with 132 volunteers who dedicated 1,669 hours of their time to support the Audiences service.

Our volunteers were interviewed, trained and underwent a Disclosure and Barring Service check in order to be eligible to support Shape's Audiences service. The training provided covered disability equality, practical guidelines on how to support members during events, and emphasised the Social Model of Disability. Led by disabled Trainers, the training was an important aspect of the volunteer engagement process as it ensured that the volunteers felt comfortable and confident supporting disabled people.

When asked why volunteers worked to support Shape, they replied:

'Volunteering with Shape has provided a great opportunity to learn about the range of access issues faced by disabled people, and how vital it is that these issues are addressed so that everyone can participate in the wonderfully diverse cultural events taking place.'
- Shape Volunteer

Of the volunteers we worked with, 38% were volunteer drivers and were able to offer a door to door pick up service for members, whereby they picked up a member up at their home, drove them to a venue and enjoyed an arts event together and then drove them home again. Other volunteers were known as 'access assistants', and were able to meet members at a local public transport station or directly at the event and accompanied them during the event. In 2012-13, through the generous support of our funders, Shape covered the full price of the volunteer's ticket cost and covered the full cost of their travel expenses – which not only eliminated the transport barriers and lack of support at events, but also the financial burden of travel costs for members.

Volunteers received information about member's access support requirements ahead of each event to ensure that they could fully meet the member's needs. They also made contact with members ahead of each event to ensure that members felt comfortable and confident with the support being received, which further removed the barrier of the lack of support disabled people feel they receive at events.

*Name change to protect identity

A Shape Audiences member commented on the volunteer support provided by Shape:

'I have had really kind, helpful volunteers and now have a personal volunteer who is very helpful indeed and has become a great friend.'
- Shape Member

Shape's Audiences events listing

Shape produced an accessible events listing which was regularly updated throughout the year, detailing a variety of reduced priced and free events to help individuals overcome the financial barrier. Although information about events is readily available on websites, social networks, public transport, marketing leaflets, etc., often disabled people are not exposed to the information or are unable to access the information in these formats. For example, older individuals who may not have access to a computer to view information online, or those who are not exposed to marketing on public transport because they are unable to use public transport.

When members were asked about the value of the events listing, they said:

'I believe that disabled people should be treated more equally. I pay the same price as other(s) ... so I think there should be more events listings which are accessible.' – Shape Member

Audience Development for Arts and Cultural Organisations

Shape appreciates that it is difficult for organisations to obtain funding to offer a service such as Shape Audiences, however there is still a huge potential for the arts and cultural sector to further engage with disabled people as audiences by making adjustments to the services they already provide.

This is best illustrated by looking at how the access needs of disabled people have been accommodated in recent years and reviewing how organisations can continue to work towards building an inclusive arts and cultural sector.

Following the implementation of the Equality Act 2010⁸, it is now unlawful for organisations to treat disabled people less favourably because they are disabled, and service providers have to make reasonable adjustments in the way they deliver their services. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of accessible events (such as British Sign Language interpreted events, audio described events, and most recently, relaxed performances) and the appointment of Access Officers and Access Managers within organisations to drive forward inclusion.

Disabled people's needs are often considered separately from other groups of people and often after organisations open their events to the public. This results in organisations being reactive to access needs when issues arise, instead of being proactive in seeking solutions to access issues, at the time of developing and organising events. This may lead to increased social isolation for disabled people as they are forced to use separate facilities, or are simply unable to access facilities.

Although there is evidence of improvements to inclusion in the arts and cultural sector, it is good practice and beneficial for arts and cultural organisations to review how they are marketing their access provisions; and make changes to how disabled people access these provisions.

For example, providing accessible events and sharing information about your access facilities (i.e. accessible toilets, induction loops, accessible car parking, etc.) and actively marketing these access provisions will encourage disabled visitors to attend your events.

This requires support from every part of your organisation, from box office and production, to front of house and marketing teams.

Without these adjustments, disabled people will continue to face barriers and feel socially isolated from participating in the arts and cultural sector.

Shape has been working with venues to achieve this. We complement our support of disabled people as audiences by adding value to the audience development work of mainstream arts and cultural organisations. Shape provides staff training, access audits and disability consultancy to help organisations attract and support disabled visitors and help them work towards being more inclusive.

⁸<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Shape's services are already widely respected amongst arts and cultural organisations all across London and the UK, for example, the Almeida Theatre, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Salisbury Playhouse, Royal Opera House and Big Dance.

The following outlines some key tips on how organisations can work with us to continue to work towards building a more inclusive arts and cultural sector. Please contact Shape if you would like more information.

Sharing best practice and effectively marketing access provisions

As many organisations have developed or improved their access provisions, now, more than ever, it's crucial that organisations come together to share best practice and ideas, experiences of dealing with challenges and issues, and hear from others about new approaches about how they can promote their access provisions. Organisations can do this through building their network connections, using online forums and networks, organising and attending sector events and utilising Shape's services.

In our experience of working with venues, we have found that organisations are focussed on their physical access and are failing to effectively promote their accessible events and access schemes through their marketing and communication strategies. As a result, they are missing opportunities to attract disabled people who want to engage with the arts and cultural sector, as often venues do not provide clear information about how disabled people can access their events.

Shape Trainer, Nick Goss, confirmed:

“Venues often underestimate their accessibility to disabled people by focussing only on the physical access barriers, rather than thinking more about the very real opportunities they all have to attract more diverse audiences by being inclusive to all. There is a need to combine enhanced physical access with effective marketing strategies, practices and procedures.

Combining the two leads to greater confidence (of both the venue and disabled visitor) that creates better partnership working and better customer service, as disabled people often emphasise that the more they know, the better choices they can make.”

In addition, without improving the marketing of access provisions, venues can find that accessible performances are not selling, giving a skewed perception of their popularity and demand.

Inclusive thinking should be at the heart of an organisation's marketing and communication strategies. This is only achieved if all marketing materials are routinely provided in accessible formats and marketing strategies include the needs of disabled people. There are a wide range of channels of communication through which this can be achieved, for example through local disability groups, disability press and promotional events.

Providing additional support to disabled people as audiences

We have found that there can be a lack of consistency in the access provision for disabled people as audiences in getting to events, and receiving support at events. This contributes to the key barriers disabled people face in engaging with the arts and cultural sector.

This is why a service that provides volunteer support is so important. The key for providing a successful volunteer service is engaging with and retaining dedicated volunteers; matching volunteers with members with similar interests and who need the support the most; and training volunteers to build their confidence in supporting disabled people as audiences.

Proactive inclusion: working with Access Groups

Many organisations consult Shape only at a point when issues arise and as a result are reactive to problems arising as opposed to being proactive in ensuring inclusivity. Listening to people is a marketing tool as well as a means of service development and monitoring. Access Groups, which could be comprised of representatives from charities working for and with disabled people, local community groups or local disabled residents, can provide organisations with a valuable service by giving them the benefit of their personal and practical experience.

In 2012-13, Shape established an Access Group who played an important role in making sure that disabled people continued to lead and develop Shape's Audiences service. Shape responded to the Access Group's suggestions and feedback and developed its services around their interests and ideas. Shape also used the group's personal experiences at arts and cultural events, and provided this feedback directly to the venues.

Ideally, each organisation would have an Access Group Facilitator who can organise regular meetings to address or anticipate accessibility issues, and who understands the range of access needs represented. A Facilitator would establish how the organisation and the group can work together to assess, improve and raise awareness of the accessibility of the organisation.

Access Groups must be sufficiently diverse in their make-up and organisations need to consider the impact of a particular development on people with a wide range of access requirements, including people with physical and sensory impairments, older people, children and people with learning difficulties and their carers or P.A's. It is important that organisations do not place too large a burden on Access Groups, particularly as they generally operate on a voluntary basis. Organisations will need to consider the resources available from the group, and use these accordingly.

As an example, the National Portrait Gallery has been running an Access Group for nine years to provide advice on all aspects of the National Portrait Gallery's services to ensure it meets legal requirements. The National Portrait Gallery's Disability Action Group also works to establish models of good practice and high standards regarding access provision, and reviews existing access and equality policies and provision at the gallery.

The National Portrait Gallery's Learning and Access Manager, Lucy Ribeiro, is the Access Group Facilitator and invites representatives from the gallery's departments to present their department's equality plan or initiatives to the group.

Minutes from each meeting are taken and placed on a shared drive to ensure that the information is disseminated throughout the gallery and to Disability Action Group representatives. Learning from the Disability Action Group is then integrated into the gallery's Equality policy.

Disability equality training for organisational staff

It is important for venues to be confident in their day-to-day dealings with disabled visitors and give them the same high-level customer service that they provide other visitors. Disabled visitors, their friends and relatives, will display loyalty to a venue where their needs are understood and actions are taken to ensure that those needs are met.

Shape's research has evidenced that if organisations receive regular disability equality training, they will feel more confident with supporting disabled people and can integrate access issues as early as possible at every stage of the development, organisation and delivery of events. In our 2012-13 survey feedback from our training clients, 71% said that receiving disability equality training helped staff gain confidence in supporting disabled people, whilst 91% of respondents said that their work would change as a result of attending the training.

This shows the benefits of integrating disability equality in staff training as it can enhance the quality of service staff provide disabled visitors, which can also result in customer satisfaction and bottom line profit.

As a result of the unique way that Shape works with disabled people as audiences, Shape can bring audiences to venues to experience access provisions and Shape can feedback those experiences directly to venues. This is part of Shape's holistic approach to supporting arts and cultural organisations.

Conclusion

Despite many improvements in physical access, disabled people still face preventable barriers in accessing arts and cultural events. Many feel socially isolated from arts and cultural events as they can be unable to travel to venues independently; many do not receive enough support from venues during their visits, due to venues' own resourcing issues or understanding of "best practice" as opposed to legal compliance with accessibility; and therefore many disabled people do not feel encouraged to attend events without support from third-party services like the Shape's Audiences service.

As access provisions across the arts and cultural sector vary, Shape will continue to work with organisations to build a more inclusive arts and cultural sector by encouraging and supporting venues in sharing best practice and effectively promoting their access provision; giving arts and cultural organisations guidance in how to provide additional support to disabled people as audiences; helping mainstream organisations develop their own Access Groups; working with organisation to build their confidence in supporting disabled people as audiences; as well as directly and indirectly supporting disabled people to access arts and cultural events.

Although improvements have been made to access at venues, levels of inclusion vary widely across venues and between arts and cultural organisations - there is still scope for the arts and cultural sector to work towards being more inclusive. In the shadow of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad; and in an economic climate where engaging new paying audiences and diversifying income streams is more important than ever before, there is increased, not decreased impetus for arts and cultural organisations and commercial venues to commit to audience development and diversity - where all people can participate in arts and cultural activities equally, independently, with choice and with dignity.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Organisations Shape Audiences Services worked with in 2012-13

Adelphi	Hampstead Theatre
Aldwych	HSBC Headquarters
Almeida Theatre	Jacksons Lane
Apollo Theatre	Lauderdale House
Apollo Victoria	Lyceum Theatre
Arcola Theatre	Lyric Hammersmith
Arts Theatre	Lyric Theatre Shaftesbury
Artsdepot	Menier Chocolate Factory
Barbican	Millfield Theatre
Bishopsgate Institute	Museum of London
The Bluecoat	National Gallery
British Museum	Natural History Museum
Buckingham Palace	National Maritime Museum
Bush Theatre	National Portrait Gallery
Cadogan Hall	National Theatre
Cambridge Theatre	New London Theatre
Camden Arts Centre	New Wimbledon Theatre
Chickenshed	Noel Coward Theatre
The Churchill Theatre	Novello Theatre
Harold Pinter Theatre	The Old Vic
Conway Hall	The Old Vic Tunnels
Courtauld Institute of Art	Orange Tree
Dominion Theatre	Oval House
Donmar Warehouse	Palace Theatre
Duchess Theatre	London Palladium
Duke of Yorks Theatre	The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology
Dulwich Picture Gallery	Phoenix Theatre
Fortune Theatre	Piccadilly Theatre
Garrick Theatre	The Playhouse
Gate Theatre	Polka Theatre
Geffrye Museum	Portobello Art Gallery
Gielgud Theatre	Prince Edward Theatre
Hackney Empire	Prince of Wales Theatre

Appendix 1: Organisations Shape Audiences Services worked with in 2012-13

Queens Theatre	Toynbee Studios
Regents Park Open Air Theatre	Trafalgar Studios
Richmond Theatre	Tricycle Theatre
Riverside Studios	Unicorn
Rose Theatre Kingston	School of Museum Studies - University of Leicester
Roundhouse	Victoria and Albert Museum
Royal Academy of Arts	Vaudeville Theatre
The Royal Albert Hall	Victoria Palace
Royal College of Physicians	The Wallace Collection
The Royal Court Theatre	Watford Palace Theatre
The Savoy Theatre	Wellcome Collection
See Tickets	Westminster Hall
Serpentine Gallery	Whitechapel Gallery
Shaftesbury Theatre	Wigmore Hall
Shakespeare's Globe Theatre	Wyndham's Theatre
Soho Theatre	Young Vic
Southbank Centre	
St James Theatre	
St Martins Theatre	
St Pancras Hospital	
Swiss Cottage Gallery	
Tate Britain	
Tate Modern	
The Albany	
The Ambassadors	
The Criterion	
The Place	
Theatre Royal Stratford	

Appendix 2: Useful Terms and Definitions

Access

Removal of discriminatory barriers to disabled people's participation in society. Provision of facilities that do not discriminate (i.e. level or ramped access, sign language interpretation and plain English documents).

Access Audit

Establishes how well a particular building and service performs in terms of access and ease of use by a wide range of potential users, including people with mobility and sensory impairments and people with learning disabilities.

Access Groups

Informal independent consumer groups, usually of disabled people, who work with local Organisations on a range of matters relating to access.

British Sign Language (BSL)

The first language of Britain's signing deaf community.

Disabled People

Preferred to the term 'the disabled', which is a dehumanising definition.

Disability

Is the loss or limitation of opportunities to participate in society on an equal level with others, due to physical and social barriers.

Hidden Impairment/Disability

Such as dyslexia, epilepsy, diabetes and a wide variety of other conditions; these are recognised in the Equality Act 2010 interpretation of disability.

Hearing Impairment

General term covering all degrees of hearing loss.

Impairment

Is the functional limitation within an individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment such as blindness or paralysis.

Medical Model of Disability

As differentiated from the preferred Social Model – see below.

Sensory Impairment

General term covering visual and hearing impairments.

Social Model of Disability

Is used by the majority of organisations led by disabled people and it defines disability as a societal issue and states that it's society's physical, sensory, attitudinal and behavioural barriers which disable people, not their particular condition or impairment.

Visual Impairment

General term covering blindness, partial sight.

Appendix 3: Contacts & References

Shape
Deane House Studios
27 Greenwood Place
London NW5 1LB

Tel: 020 7424 7330
Textphone: 020 7424 7368
Email: training@shapearts.org.uk
Website: www.shapearts.org.uk/audiencesandtraining

The BBC Ouch Website

This website represents the views and perspectives of the disability world:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/>

Disability Arts Online

Disability Arts Online is a repository of thousands of articles: blogs, news items, reviews, interviews, galleries and creative writing by artists and writers, writing on disability and the arts, which have been published since 2004.
<http://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission (London)

The Commission's role is to ensure people are aware of their rights and how to use them, work with employers, service providers and organisations to help them develop best practice, work with policymakers, lawyers and the Government to make sure that social policy and the law promote equality and use their powers to enforce the laws that are already in place.

Address:

3 More London
Riverside Tooley Street
London
SE1 2RG

Tel: 020 3117 0235 (non helpline calls only)
Email: info@equalityhumanrights.com
Website: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

England: 0845 604 6610 (helpline)
Textphone: 0845 604 6620 (helpline)

Relaxed Performance Project

The Relaxed Performance Project was launched in September 2012 and aims to provide access to creative, safe and inspiring public theatre performances for disabled children, including Autistic Spectrum Conditions and/or learning disabilities and, crucially, their families.

Project partners are Society of London Theatre (SOLT), the Theatrical Management Association (TMA) and The Prince's Foundation for Children & the Arts (Children & the Arts) with generous support provided by the Nancy Lurie Marks Family Foundation. The team is also working closely with partners representing people with additional needs including the National Autistic Society and MENCAP.

For more information please contact Kirsty Hoyle, Project Manager: Kirsty@soltma.co.uk



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Working to build a more inclusive cultural sector

Appendix 3: Contacts & References

Stage Text

STAGETEXT is a registered charity which provides captioning and live speech-to-text services to theatres and other arts organisations to make their activities accessible to people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

Address:
First Floor
54 Commercial Street
London
E1 6LT

Email: enquiries@stagetext.org
Tel: 020 7377 0540
Textphone: 020 7247 7801
Website: <http://www.stagetext.org>

Vocal Eyes

VocalEyes enables blind and partially sighted people to experience the arts through high quality audio-description.

First Floor
54 Commercial Street
London
E1 6LT

Email: enquiries@vocaleyeyes.co.uk
Tel: 020 7375 1043
Website: <http://www.vocaleyeyes.co.uk/>

Additional References:

DCMS Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport Adult and Child Report 2011/12: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taking-part-the-national-survey-of-culture-leisure-and-sport-adult-and-child-report-2011-12>

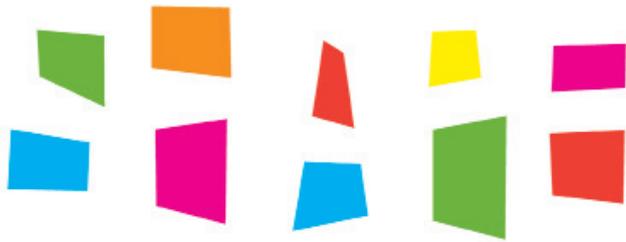
DWP Fulfilling Potential - Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today: <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/fulfilling-potential/index.php>

The Office for Disability Issues: <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/>

Plain English Website: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk>

Equality Act 2010: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Transport for London's Single Equality Scheme: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/corporate/single-equality-scheme-2012.pdf>



Shape Audiences

Working to build a more inclusive cultural sector

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Shape is grateful for the support and generosity of our donors.

If you have questions about this report, its contents or Shape's work, please contact us using the details below:

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