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Performing Arts

Here you can find out about the Performing Arts and the different services that are available to you whatever your disability may be. You can also find out about accessibility and alternative ways of viewing performances.

There is also a section that deals with getting involved in the performing arts.

PERFORMING ARTS

Getting involved in the performing arts

The performing arts cover a number of activities including music, dance, theatre and mime. There are many ways to participate including workshops, classes and joining a performance company.

Performing arts and disability

There are many organisations and charities throughout the UK that work with disabled people. Some are run by non-disabled professionals and others by disabled people and often a mixture of both.

Performance organisations work closely with education, visiting schools and running clubs after school and during holidays. Some also tour across the UK.

Their aim is to promote a positive view of disability and challenging people to achieve their goals.

Getting involved

You can look nearby for these organisations as they are usually run locally. They may organise regular performances, workshops and training programmes for people of all abilities from different backgrounds. In some cases participants may be involved in the planning and direction of performances while some organisations specialise in involving those with specific impairments.

Performing arts for deaf or hearing impaired people

There are many different performance venues across the UK. There is a range of different sizes of venues which have to comply with the Equality Act. Smaller venues though are not necessarily expected to make the same level of 'reasonable adjustments' that larger venues may have to make.

Signed and Captioned performances

Many theatres and other venues offer performances supported by BSL interpreters or are captioned.

You can find out about signed or captioned performances through the venues booking staff, website, recorded phone messages or in their brochure.

You may also have the option to book by textphone.

Induction Loops

An induction loop is a system that reduces background noise to help you hear more clearly. This system also gives the option to be set-up with a microphone to help those with a hearing aid to listen to conversations more easily – especially in noisy places.

Most venues now have induction loops, whether they are infrared, induction or both. Make sure you check beforehand that the venue you want to visit supports this system.

Since 1 October 2004, places of entertainment and leisure are obliged by law to make sure the induction loop or infrared system is working properly and that staff know how to use it.

In some venues you will be offered amplified sound and/or headsets to borrow. This is often the case in larger concert halls.

Below is a link to information regarding induction loops and infrared systems:

http://www.rnid.org.uk/information_resources/factsheets/equipment/factsheets_leaflets/inductions_loops_a_guide.htm

Support and assistance dogs

If you have an assistance or support dog you should contact the venue in advance to make sure they give you adequate seating. You may sometimes find assistance dogs are not allowed into the auditorium but your dog should be looked after throughout the performance.

Facilities for disabled customers

Many venues now offer discounted or even free entry schemes for

companions or carers of disabled customers.

Most places have limited facilities on offer, for example wheelchair spaces in the auditorium. You should always check and book this in advance.

Finding out more information

There are other ways to find out about information regarding facilities and supported performances. Most venues now have specific information on their website for disabled people.

If you are living in London, The Society of London Theatre provides information about assisted performances and venue access on its London Theatre Guide website.

<http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/access>

Accessibility

Since 1 October 2004 public places are required by law to make their premises accessible. This can include ramps, accessible toilets and seating facilities and even alternative entrances for wheelchair users.

There are some older buildings that have restrictions to what they can change especially if they are a listed building.

Seating arrangements

Venues now have to provide an area for wheelchair users but may also limit the amount of facilities on offer, for instance the number of wheelchair spaces in the auditorium.

It is sometimes required that a non-disabled person accompany a wheelchair user. This may be the case when assistance is needed to

transfer you from your wheelchair to the seat at the venue.

Some venues have low-level counters at the box office. It is therefore a good idea to contact the venue beforehand to check their facilities.

Audio description

Many theatres and other venues now offer performances in audio description. This is a service where the action, scene changes and the actors' or performers' body language is described in addition to the dialogue. You can listen to live commentary through a headset provided.

Make sure you reserve this beforehand when making your booking. Again venues will be able to let you know about their performances with audio descriptions through their staff, website, recorded phone messages and brochures.

Information in alternative formats

Many large venues now offer information to blind or visually impaired visitors in alternative formats such as large print programmes.

You may also find description notes before a performance begins which helps to 'set the scene'. You may also receive this information in the form of an audiotape, in Braille or large print. Signs which are easy to read are being introduced across the UK.

The layout of some venues may also be in Braille on top of other information such as menu bars. You may also sometimes find textured floors to assist you in finding your way around.

Shape Arts

Has a range of services for audiences and artists. For example, the Shape Access Card that enables you to book directly with the venue

and no 'proof of disability' or access questions need to be answered. Shape are able to provide Access Assistants at certain cultural venues and exhibitions, contact Shape for further details.

Telephone: 020 7424 7330

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Website: www.shapearts.org.uk

This fact sheet is one of a series, providing information and advice on a number of topics.

HAD.ORG.UK FACTSHEETS:

Fact Sheet 1	Blue Badges
Fact Sheet 2	Utilities
Fact Sheet 3	Wheelchairs
Fact Sheet 4	Accessible Public Transport
Fact Sheet 5	Voluntary Transport
Fact Sheet 6	Holidays
Fact Sheet 7	Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard Schemes
Fact Sheet 8	Motoring
Fact Sheet 9	Aids & Adaptations
Fact Sheet 10	Welfare Benefits
Fact Sheet 11	Direct Payments
Fact Sheet 12	Education & Learning
Fact Sheet 13	Sports
Fact Sheet 14	Visiting Places of Interest
Fact Sheet 15	Access to Shops, Cafes and Everyday Services
Fact Sheet 16	Leisure at Home
Fact Sheet 17	Performing Arts
Fact Sheet 18	Concessionary Travel
Fact Sheet 19	The Care Act 2014
Fact Sheet 20	A General Guide to Housing Benefit
Fact Sheet 21	Housing Benefit for Disabled Students
Fact Sheet 22	Universal Credit

HOUSING MATTERS:

1	General Guide to Housing Benefit
2	Homelessness (Out of Hours) Emergencies
3	10 Rights of Private Tenants
4	Applying as Homelessness (Priority Need)
5	Private Tenants: smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
6	The Right to Rent
7	Rent Increases : Assured Shorthold Tenancies