

Access to Literature Report

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October 2022



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Contents

1. Introduction	3
a. What is access?	4
b. Context	4
2. Executive Summary	6
3. Methodology	8
4. Findings and analysis	10
a. Focus Groups - the Retreat	10
b. Surveys and Focus Groups	12
c. Emerging best practice	20
5. Impact learnings - the Retreat	21
6. Recommendations	22
a. Audit, engage and act	23
b. Systems change across the sector	25
7. Conclusion	27
Appendices:	28
Appendix 1: A Note on Language	28
Appendix 2: Reasonable Adjustments	28
Appendix 3: Survey data: deaf and disabled writers, creative producers, audiences	29
Appendix 4: Survey data: literature organisations	32
About	34
Acknowledgements	35
Resources	36

The *Access to Literature* Report is available in the following formats:
Executive Summary: text (.doc and .pdf), audio, BSL video, Easy Read
Full Report: text (.doc and .pdf), audio, BSL video
Case Study: text (.doc and .pdf), audio, BSL video, Easy Read

These formats can be accessed at: <https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/projects/cruptic-writes-x-spread-the-word/>

1. Introduction

“Everyone is in a state of suspended disability and the stigmatised idea that we have around disability or care is ridiculous when you realise and understand that we are all going to require care, help, support, accessibility of some sort, at some point in our life.” Retreat participant

“Care? I’m being kind of flippant but it’s so frustrating to feel like you’re a box being ticked for ‘diversity’ and that’s where the caring stops.” Writers’ survey respondent

The *Access to Literature* Report presents the first national picture of the barriers deaf and disabled people experience in accessing the literature and publishing sectors as writers, creative producers and audience members.

It reports on the findings of the research carried out by Spread the Word and CRIptic Arts between June and October 2021. This research took a mixed methods approach consisting of focus groups and surveys with both deaf and disabled people and literature organisations. It was inspired by an online deaf and disabled writers’ retreat that prioritised access requirements run by CRIptic Arts and Spread the Word, and the lessons we learnt from that experience. The research objectives were to:

- Understand the barriers to access in the literature sector for deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences, and how these might be addressed;
- Baseline the demand and need for more accessible opportunities, and potential for further research in this area;
- Identify the support and upskilling needs of organisations to make their programmes more accessible/increase awareness about access;
- Identify best practice on access and inclusion among literature organisations and networks.

We hope that this report will start to build an evidence base to support change, opening up a wider conversation regarding access and inclusion in the not for profit literature and publishing sectors as well as with funders to support more opportunities for deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences.

The *Access to Literature* research and report have been made possible through support using public funds by Arts Council England.

Jamie Hale and Ruth Harrison

a. What is access?

An event that has been created to be accessible is an event that does not disadvantage deaf or disabled people from participating. The disadvantages deaf and disabled people face can be quite broad and diverse.

We work from the *social model of disability*¹ which says that people are disabled by the barriers they face societally, which are imposed on top of the limitations that may arise from some underlying conditions. Organisations and spaces have the obligation to eliminate those barriers and make themselves as accessible as possible to all deaf and disabled people.

They must be designed so that people can access them without experiencing additional disadvantage or negative impact on their conditions. All information provided should be provided in a way that equally meets the needs of all participants, and that there should be clear solutions to remedy problems that arise with accessibility.

The access provisions that may be required are quite broad, ranging from British Sign Language interpreters and wheelchair access to providing information in plain English or further in advance than is the organisational norm. It might also require an approach to scheduling or event design which is flexible to meet the needs of conflicting access requirements. It is important to add that no event can be described as 'fully accessible' without knowing the access needs of the people who are attending it.

See Appendix 1: **A Note on Language** on page 28

See Appendix 2: **Reasonable Adjustments** on page 28

b. Context

There are 14.6 million² disabled people in the UK in 2021, representing 22% of the total population. 21% disabled people are of working age - 1 in 5 of the population. The total spending power of families with at least 1 disabled person is estimated at £274 billion a year.

Disabled people have higher life costs than non-disabled people. After housing costs, the proportion of working age disabled people living in poverty is 27%. Which is higher than the proportion of working age non-disabled people at 19%.³ This is before the impact of the current cost of living crisis.

¹ <https://www.shapearts.org.uk/news/social-model-of-disability>

² <https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures/>

³ <https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures/>

The COVID pandemic has disproportionately affected and continues to affect deaf and disabled people. With the sector ‘back to normal’, for many deaf and disabled people, a return to pre-pandemic practices means a decrease in accessible provision. Workshops and events are returning to being ‘in person’, at a time when many are still shielding following the pandemic. This also means a return to events without physical access provisions or autocaptions, and in places where transport can provide a further barrier.

In 2020, Jamie Hale and Spread the Word ran the first free online deaf and disabled writers’ retreat in the UK, with a focus on making it accessible for the participants. The retreat included BSL interpretation throughout, and had notable facilitators including Anne Finger and Raymond Antrobus, and covered fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. This retreat was a response to the pandemic and aimed to create a space that centred deaf and disabled people. The partnership between Jamie Hale, CRIptic Arts and Spread the Word has continued through running the UK’s only sustained free and accessible online space for deaf and disabled writers and poets, the CRIptic x Spread the Word Salon. In September 2022, with partners, they launched the UK’s first Disabled Poets Prize⁴. The majority of this work has been unfunded.

Whilst a literature review was out of scope for this report, there appears to be very little UK based data and research on deaf and disabled writers, creative practitioners and audiences experiences of and engagement with literature activities and opportunities across the not for profit literature and publishing sectors.

From *Arts Council England’s 2020-21 Data Report*⁵ literature National Portfolio Organisations (regularly funded organisations) report 16% of their audiences and 7% of their workforce are deaf and disabled people. No data appears to be available on disabled led literature organisations. The Royal Society of Literature’s *Room of My Own*⁶ showed that 74% of writers who are disabled or have a long-term health condition have a lack of income (compared to 67% of non-disabled writers or who do not have a long-term health condition).

The Publisher Association’s annual *Diversity Survey of the Publishing Workforce*⁷ shows that 13% disabled people are employed in the sector. In Cat Mitchell’s *Access Denied: Disability, Employment and the UK Publishing Industry*⁸ 40% of disabled publishing job seekers found a publishing industry event inaccessible. No data on deaf and disabled writers published by the industry appears to be available.

⁴ <https://disabledpoetsprize.org.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-data-report-2020-2021>

⁶ <https://rsliterature.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RSL-A-Room-of-My-Own-Report-19-June-2019.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.publishers.org.uk/publications/diversity-survey-of-the-publishing-workforce-2021/>

⁸ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Or4VsdnLhFCcgOPZrp59HDLZWFzWAPly/view>

2. Executive summary

“Don’t expect people to come to you without demonstrating seriousness of wish to engage with our community / communities.” Writers’ survey respondent

The *Access to Literature* Report presents the first national picture of the barriers deaf and disabled people experience in accessing the literature and publishing sectors as writers, creative producers and audience members.

It reports on research carried out by CRIPTic Arts and Spread the Word between June and October 2021, using surveys and focus groups with both deaf and disabled people and literature organisations. The research topics were scoped during an online deaf and disabled writers’ retreat run by CRIPTic Arts and Spread the Word.

For deaf and disabled writers and audiences, the research identified barriers to accessing literature and a demand and need for more accessible opportunities. For literature organisations, there was a need and demand for more knowledge, support and training. Both deaf and disabled people and literature organisations identified barriers associated with costs and available funding for access provision and we found limited evidence on emerging best practice.

It is to be noted that there was low engagement by the literature/publishing sectors with the online survey despite extensive promotion.

The **research themes** to come out of the data were:

- Barriers to accessing literature
- Funding and earning a living
- Creative opportunities
- Co-production

The **research findings** show that deaf and disabled people feel a fundamental sense of exclusion from the literature sector as writers, creative producers and audience members.

70% of deaf writers and creative producers said that lack of paid opportunities and 63% events taking place in inaccessible spaces were the main barriers to accessing literature and progressing their creative careers, with 56% the cost of participating in literature activity.

“Development opportunities for disabled writers are sometimes offered by organisations who you know have a mostly tokenistic interest in it.” Writers’ survey respondent

Both deaf and disabled writers and audiences said that there was a lack of understanding from organisations that they have a duty in law to make reasonable adjustments.

There was a demonstrable need from deaf and disabled writers for more: publication opportunities (69%); bookings by festivals and venues (61%) and opportunities to enter prizes (56%).

There was also a demonstrable demand from deaf and disabled audiences for more literature activity from and featuring deaf and disabled writers: events run by festivals and venues (73%); books being published (69%) and more prizes showcasing and promoting their work (67%).

89% of literature organisations rated their understanding of making work accessible to deaf and disabled writers and audiences as low or average, and the main barriers to making work accessible were cost and awareness of access issues.

56% of literature organisations have never worked in partnership with disability organisations; 33% never having consulted deaf and disabled people and only 11% of organisations have provided staff and board training on inclusion and access.

Deaf and disabled people were clear that co-creation and co-production were the solutions to addressing a diversity of access needs and building greater understanding and engagement across the sector.

“If people could see access as liberating and creative. We need an attitudinal change. There are conflicting access needs so we need to continually be having conversations.” Writers’ focus group participant

Both organisational and sector level actions are needed which recognise the systemic access and disablist barriers faced by deaf and disabled people to bring about change.

At an organisational level these include auditing current practice, engaging deaf and disabled people and taking action to be compliant with the law to ‘make reasonable adjustments’ and ensure that literature events, career development opportunities and content do not exclude deaf and disabled people.

At a sector level, we are calling for a deaf and disabled-led charter for change which includes investments into collaborative conversations, further research, and a campaign with associated resources and training to embed access into literature organisations’ policies and practices and work. Setting a target of 20% published writers and literature sector employees being deaf or disabled by 2030 supported by a programme of sustained development opportunities for deaf and disabled writers and creative producers.

3. Methodology

We researched the experiences of deaf and disabled writers and creative practitioners in the literature sector alongside literature sector organisations. We deployed a grounded research approach, meaning that we built knowledge through the data we gathered from deaf and disabled writers and literature organisations. Looking at the themes to emerge from the research rather than starting with a theory and testing it with our research subjects.

Our datasets encompassed both quantitative and qualitative data. Predominantly quantitative data was captured in online surveys for both practitioners and literature organisations/publishers and qualitative data through focus groups, again for both practitioners and organisations. The research topics that set the parameters for the research were scoped during an online deaf and disabled-led writing retreat. These were then tested in the subsequent surveys and focus groups. The research period was between June and October 2021.

The **online retreat** for deaf and disabled writers of poetry, fiction and/or scripts ran between Thursday 29 July and Sunday 1 August 2021. It was promoted as an open call by application between 4 June and 7 July 2021, 38 deaf and disabled writers applied, 14 were selected (the original target was 10) from across the UK.

As part of the retreat, there were **two focus groups** on Sunday 1 August 2021 led by external facilitator, poet and disability rights activist Daniel Sluman. The questions addressed were:

- 1) What do deaf and disabled writers, producers and audiences need to access literature events and what are the barriers to progressing as a writer;
- 2) What had been the experience of retreat participants of the access provisions we had put in place.

The learnings and themes from these focus groups then informed **two online surveys**, one targeted at deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audience members and one for not for profit, voluntary and commercial literature organisations/publishers. Both surveys ran through SurveyMonkey and were promoted to our target audiences between 24 August and 11 October 2021.

The surveys tested people's experiences of access to literature and the barriers for deaf and disabled people to progress as a writer and/or producer. We received responses from across the UK:

- 1) Deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences: 68 responses of which 96% were writers or poets and 10% creative producers. 67% are attendees at literature events.
- 2) Not for profit, voluntary and commercial literature organisations/ publishers, 9 responses received.
 - a) 33% of respondents were leaders of charity organisations, 33% volunteer led organisations and 33% commercial business.
 - b) 22% Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations and 44% were in receipt of funding from Arts Council England.
 - c) Respondents' primary areas of work: 67% events, 55% workshops, 44% festival/publishing and 33% writer development/prizes.

Despite very proactive promotion, including direct and targeted mail outs and social media, and extending the survey deadlines, the response from the literature sector is extremely low. From a research perspective such low responses would not have been included in the results. However, given the paucity of research into deaf and disabled writers' access needs to engage in the literature sector, we have included sector survey contributions.

Informed by the themes identified during the retreat focus groups and building on the emerging findings from the two online surveys, we ran **two qualitative focus groups** to test these results, one for deaf and disabled writers and creative producers and one for literature organisations/publishers. Both were open to practitioners and organisations from across the UK by self-selecting sign up. Jamie Hale and Vici Wreford-Sinnott, Artistic Director, Little Cog⁹, facilitated each group.

The focus group with deaf and disabled writers and creative practitioners asked what is working well at the moment and what participants would like to see improve in future. It took place on 7 September 2021. 15 signed up, with 10 participants. Everyone was a deaf and disabled writer or creative practitioner. All participants were paid.

The focus group with literature organisations asked about their current practice and priority needs for upskilling staff and volunteers. It took place on 24 September 2021. 10 signed up, with 7 participants. Leaders of organisations funded by Arts Council England, grassroots/voluntary and commercial organisations (who run events, workshops, development opportunities, publishing programme, festivals).

⁹ <http://www.littlecog.co.uk/>

4. Findings and Analysis

This section presents the findings and analysis starting with the research scope identified in the deaf and disabled writers' Retreat focus groups and building evidence through two online surveys (practitioner/audience and sector) and the focus groups (practitioner and sector).

a. The Retreat focus groups

The Retreat focus groups identified both needs and barriers deaf and disabled writers experienced within the literature sector and those they had experienced while participating in the online retreat. We wanted to learn the lessons from participants in a writer development opportunity where meeting a variety of access needs had been our focus, mindful that access is not usually the main priority in literature development planning.

It was important to have an external facilitator to support an open and wide-ranging conversation. We applied a thematic analysis to the transcripts from the conversations to identify the following four top level, and interconnected themes:

- Barriers to accessing literature
- Funding and earning a living
- Lack of creative opportunities
- Co-production

"The multiplying effect of loneliness when dealing with disability or illness." Retreat participant

Barriers to accessing literature

Many of the writers identified barriers around the support they need to navigate the industry and the challenges of finding support from people and organisations that understand their access requirements, especially around energy limitations and neurodivergence.

Some of the contributions raised were:

"The wheelchair becoming all and all seeing, assumptions are being made as to what it is that you need when, for each person it will be very different things." Retreat participant

"You can't take a carer if the course is full." Retreat participant

“Especially in the case of cognitive disabilities, being aware of the limitations of my condition is in essence a prerequisite to knowing what I need.” Retreat participant

Funding and earning a living

“Being disabled and young it might be expected that I won’t be paid because the gig is seen as an opportunity. But as a principle, not ok.” Retreat participant

The topic of money came up frequently, as might be expected, from both the point of view of there being a lack of investment in supporting tailored access needs and the difficulties faced by deaf and disabled writers to earn a living through writing.

Creative opportunities

“Making my way into the writing community is really difficult, there is no ongoing support or community and I’ve been writing for 2 years.” Retreat participant

Very much linked to the difficulties of deaf and disabled writers earning a living is the lack of creative opportunities for this group. This was articulated both from the perspective of finding appropriate support to develop a career, such as finding accessible residencies and suitable mentors, and available commissions. The latter was cited as being linked to the stigma surrounding deaf and disabled people’s writing being seen as therapeutic.

“Disabled people’s writing is perceived as something therapeutic and there are a lot of great things done there, but the tendency is to put disabled writers or writers with long term health conditions into that slot.” Retreat participant

Co-production

“Deaf awareness in theatres and institutions, publications, magazines, etc... No consultancy in place in order to genuinely welcome people in.” Retreat participant

Participants called for more consultation, co-creation and co-production with deaf and disabled writers to understand the intersectionalities of creative practitioners and audiences. They called for greater dialogue and involvement in the planning of literature events and opportunities so that access needs were better understood and supported.

“The need for intersectionality and understanding how intersectional we all are. As artists and creatives we all have at some point in our lives, needs and wishes and hopes, so the option to articulate what we need, and the nuances is important outside of just ticking the boxes. We need to use our voices and co-produce, and speak to our discomfort.” Retreat participant

- The **impact learnings from the Retreat** can be found on page 21.
- The **full Retreat case study**, including the access provisions put in place, can be found at: <https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/projects/cruptic-writes-x-spread-the-word/>

b. Surveys and external focus groups

Having scoped the parameters of the research through the conversations with retreat participants, we went out to the literature sector and deaf and disabled writers and audiences to corroborate, challenge and build on their inputs.

Barriers to accessing literature

“No information about accessibility means that it's inaccessible.” Writers’ survey respondent

The surveys identified the majority of deaf and disabled writers are continuing to engage with literature activities online. 70% of deaf and disabled writers and audiences are accessing literature activities online and only 16% in person. However, organisations are running 67% of activities in-person, 56% online and/or hybrid.

“Prior to lockdown and the normalisation of holding events online, I lacked opportunities to participate in cultural events, writing and learning opportunities, and networking with other people in a safe way that did not threaten my health and wellbeing. Then I tasted the freedom and opportunities online - now the gradual (or in some cases sudden) withdrawal of online opportunities is harder than pre-lockdown.” Writers’ survey respondent

The top four barriers (above 50%) to accessing literature activity for **deaf and disabled writers and creative producers**, outside of paid work (which was the top barrier) and cost (see **Funding and earning a living** page 16) are:

Events/workshops taking place in inaccessible spaces (online and/or in person)	63%
Lack of understanding (by the organisation) of adjustments that need to be made	59%
Not clear who to contact to ask questions about support available	53%
Lack of clear information on accessibility (of events/workshops/opportunities)	51%

“I don't want to be restricted to a deaf ghetto. It needs to be seen as the norm to build in accessible practices for all performances, talks and workshops, as far as humanly possible. And the norm to see deaf and disabled writers both leading and taking part.” Writers’ survey respondent

The survey findings also showed barriers to engaging with literature activity due to: pacing of work in workshops/events (42%); lack of breaks at workshops/ events (36%); tight deadlines for delivery of work (36%); workshop and reading materials not being provided in advance (32%) and lack of accessible transport to venue (27%).

“Lack of relaxed performances or relaxed events. Schedules that are too full and intense and don’t allow for differing energy levels. A fear that my difficulties reading and writing fast will be judged.” Writers’ survey respondent

When considering **deaf and disabled people as audiences** for (as opposed to participants in) literature events, the top three barriers (above 50%) to accessing literature activity outside of cost (see **Funding and earning a living** page 16) are:

Lack of clear information on accessibility (of events/workshops/opportunities)	60%
Lack of understanding (by organisation) of adjustments that need to be made	60%
Events/workshops taking place in inaccessible spaces (online and/or in person)	59%

At 40%, the lack of clarity on who to ask questions about support available was also a significant barrier.

The survey findings also showed barriers to engaging with literature activity due to: lack of breaks at workshops/ events (42%); workshop and reading materials not being provided in advance (29%) and lack of accessible transport to venues (24%).

43% of deaf and disabled audience members and 39% of deaf and disabled writers and creative producers said that organisations not putting in place reasonable adjustments is a significant barrier.

“One of the things I’ve always struggled with is, people want to know in advance, understandably, what poets are going to perform, but often poets are responding to the audience and they don’t want to know what their set is. That’s an interesting tension isn’t it? When you want to make sure it’s accessible but also you want to make sure your artists are able to perform in a way that they want to perform.” Literature organisations’ focus group participant

Over half the **literature organisations** (56%) do not have an access policy. While 89% of literature organisations rated their and their teams’ understanding of making their organisation’s work accessible to deaf and disabled writers and audiences as low or average.

11% always provide workshop/reading materials in advance and trigger warnings (verbally/ on materials/ in communications), access list for pre-booking and ensure accessible online communications.

Only 12% always provide transcriptions. 33% always provide captioning, build in regular breaks to workshops/events and provide access information for event activity as standard.

Only 12% of literature organisations have a website compliant with access standards, with 15% of deaf and disabled writers and creative producers and 19% of deaf and disabled audiences finding signing up for or booking literature activity inaccessible.

Improvements were seen when asked about proactively asking for information on access needs where 44% always get information from artists/ participants on access needs and provide free space for personal assistants. 56% always have wheelchair access.

“More understanding from people in the writing industry that disabled people may not be how they expect writers to be, and that they need to make Reasonable Adjustments.”

Writers’ survey respondent

The experience of deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences in engaging with literature activities is reflected in the findings for organisations where there is a significant lack of deaf and disabled awareness and understanding of their duty to make reasonable adjustments in an anticipatory manner and what this looks like practically.

There is an appetite for greater support to improve access amongst literature organisations. 78% of literature organisations said they would welcome best practice guidance; 67% training specific to literature organisations and peer to peer learning and 56% ‘how to’ guides.

“Even if you want to do your own research there is a need to constantly be slightly ahead of it and it would be lovely to have a place to at least find resources, at least to be set on the right path.” Literature organisations’ focus group participant

In the retreat and across the surveys and focus groups, deaf and disabled writers were calling for clear information about accessibility provisions, a greater awareness and openness of access needs. They want there to be a clear point of contact, ideally someone who is disabled or someone who has been trained so that conversations about access are easier and feel ‘less awkward’. It is important to make materials available in a range of formats and consider the timings of an event or workshop. There were also calls for inclusive language and the recognition of invisible impairments, including energy limiting impairments and neurodivergence. Writers and audiences feel that it can be more difficult to ask questions and ask for reasonable adjustments to support invisible impairments.

“For me, an accessible literature event has three aspects: 1) collaboration, with disabled people in designing and planning the event 2) representation, of disabled people in the content of the event, and then access, online and in person and 3) lots of details: live captioning, BSL, schedule breaks, a system of turn taking, quiet zones etc.” Writers’ focus group participant

For organisations, there was an admission that access needs were often not well understood and there were calls for more information and training. There was recognition that support was needed to improve communications and design to make workshops and events more accessible, including taking the lessons learnt during Covid into future hybrid events.

The industry’s primary concerns about how to provide access were around cost and knowledge level not at a systems level, suggesting a priority need - and desire - for industry training and development.

From the survey, emerging themes on responsibilities of funders, monitoring/ targets and intersectionality were raised:

“Stop funding groups and events held in inaccessible venues.” Writers’ survey respondent

“Require more monitoring information showing how groups attract and work with deaf and disabled communities.” Writers’ survey respondent

“I am thinking about how the Arts Council have an environment policy. Is there something like that for access? Organisations around the country are so different, not just in size but in make up and audiences so there would not be one thing that would fit everyone, but couldn’t there be guidance on these and targets that you have to reach in order to receive money from us or to be considered a viable artistic endeavour in this time?” Literature organisations’ focus group participant

“Understand intersectionality better and that being disabled is often not our only identity.” Writers’ survey respondent

Funding and earning a living

“Costing needs to be more equitable, and no awkward processes for exemptions. I don't want to have to ask how to get an exemption when it's been advertised but it isn't obvious how to claim, for example.” Writers' survey respondent

69% of deaf and disabled writers and creative producers said that the lack of paid work was their main barrier to accessing literature and progressing their creative career.

56% of deaf and disabled writers and creative producers and 52% of deaf and disabled audiences said that the cost of attending or participating in literature activity was a barrier.

“Cost is such a major factor for people who are often surviving on benefits.” Writers' survey respondent

19% of deaf and disabled writers and creative producers and 14% of deaf and disabled audiences said that the additional costs for personal assistants was a barrier.

“I would struggle to travel alone, yet it's expensive to hire a PA [Personal Assistant], not to mention onerous and scary if you have never done it before.” Writers' survey respondent

Building on the challenges of accessing literature activities and aligned to a lack of availability of support for deaf and disabled writers to earn a living through their writing.

“I think more opportunities need to be created which focus on nurturing disabled writers in all aspects of their careers, not just polishing their manuscripts for publication. How to manage a portfolio career, how to pitch, how to write blurbs and queries, how to network. Also mentoring by disabled authors, showing the ropes.” Writers' survey respondent

Literature organisations' attitudes to funding access and investing in deaf and disabled writers and audiences were explored in the focus groups and free text questions in the survey. The intersectionality between funding and access provision was summed up by one respondent as a 'chicken and egg' situation.

“For us there are many small steps we could and should be taking, but we are not always aware of best practice. We're also conscious that there are bigger and more costly steps we need to take in order to be fully accessible (e.g. BSL interpretation at all our events). For these steps it's a bit chicken-and-egg in that in order for us to apply for an uplift in funding to cover these additional access costs we'd need to demonstrate an audience exists for them, yet without spending that money (and presumably doing so over a period of time) we won't generate that audience.” Literature organisations' survey respondent

Cost was cited as a direct barrier by other contributors, particularly those from small organisations and reflecting that the literature sector is, generally, not well funded.

“Literature is very grassroots isn’t it? It’s very under-funded. So how do you make sure that a sector like that, which doesn’t have massive pots of money, knows what can be done?”

Literature organisations’ focus group participant

“How impossible it can be as a grassroots collective, whether or not disabled people are members, because you are reliant on people working as volunteers or in free venues. It is almost impossible to build access in. Because it’s not affordable and they don’t have the resources to plan. I think that this is a reality that we will continue to hear about.” Literature organisations’ focus group participant

Topics of concern for writers, creative producers and audiences centred on the additional costs incurred as a deaf or disabled person as barriers to participation and engagement. There was an overall expression that organisations were not doing enough to level the participation playing field nor to support the careers of deaf and disabled writers or audience members’ engagement. From an organisational perspective, it was both a lack of funding to support access which was compounded by many feeling that they didn’t know enough about what access provision should be in place. From both perspectives there was agreement that literature, as a sector, tends to be underfunded.

Creative opportunities

“I’ve been shortlisted for a few literary awards. And it was great! But that was it. It didn’t lead to anything. I want linking up with agents and publishers. I was back on my own again with no help. I’ll keep trying, but feel it won’t lead anywhere.” Writers’ survey respondent

There was a strong call for more visibility at, and opportunities to participate in, literature events with public audiences. 73% of deaf and disabled audiences want more deaf and disabled writers’ events run by festivals and venues and 61% want more opportunities to be booked by festivals and venues.

More publication opportunities were also called for. 69% of deaf and disabled writers want more publication opportunities and 69% more books being published by deaf and disabled writers. Deaf and disabled writers also want chances to earn a living beyond publishing. 47% of deaf and disabled writers and creative producers want more commissioning opportunities.

“As for opportunities, they are oversubscribed, not specifically for disabled people, and tend to only serve a handful of the best writers, who get shipped off for publication whilst the rest are left to struggle on without mentoring or support. We need to see a lot more focus on

nurturing disabled writers and ensuring their stories get published." Writers' survey respondent

"Still a lot to be done around getting disabled authors published. Who actually gets published? Publishers – we've got one disabled story already/chronic illness memoir just like this. Would start to have impact in other ways. Really hard even if you have got an agent (and got through the barriers)." Writers' focus group participant

Prizes were also popular. 67% of deaf and disabled audiences want more prizes showcasing and promoting work by deaf and disabled writers and poets, and 56% deaf and disabled writers want more opportunities to enter a prize.

When it comes to support for writers and creative producers, 49% said they want more industry networking opportunities and development programmes led by deaf and disabled writers and producers. 46% want more 1 to 1 mentoring and accessible resources (e.g. getting an agent, careers in literature). 44% want more workshops led by deaf and disabled writers and creative producers and 41% more residencies.

Just under half (46%) of deaf and disabled writers and 40% of audiences said there was a lack of activity near where they live.

"For anyone who accesses literature in different ways for example listening to audio books or writing by dictating or using Alternative and Augmented Communication there's very very limited content and very, very limited consideration given." Writers' survey respondent

The conversation in the focus group for literature organisations prompted one participant to reflect:

"I think that how you create equity in access is a wider issue of how the arts work in terms of churning out products and the expectation on what needs to be delivered. We might all need to switch that mindset. What happens when you really place access and wellbeing in the centre of the way that you work? It probably means we can't operate in the way that we do now. We constantly expect more and more for less and less. So that's a big shift to say 'to make the way we work really accessible we need to slow right down'." Literature organisations' focus group participant

Co-production

"I'm really tired of feeling like a box to tick for organisations who don't actually think about accessibility beyond really obvious things. And often not even that. There needs to be more of a dialogue with disabled writers and audience members, and with a wide range of people."

Not all disabled people have the same access requirements, and there needs to be a much broader approach.” Writers’ survey respondent

The survey asked literature organisations if they were working in partnership with disability organisations or consulted with deaf and disabled people. 56% of literature organisations have never worked in partnership with disability organisations. No organisations said they always consulted with deaf and disabled people, 33% said they never consulted.

Only 11% of organisations have provided staff and board training on inclusion and access and 67% have never run training.

Acknowledging the small numbers of survey respondents, the results still reveal how little access needs of disabled people are actively considered.

In the focus group, literature organisations debated whether this lack of prioritisation of access provision might be a reflection of a wider diversity problem in the literature sector.

“We could bring this down to an issue of diversity in the arts sector, because if you’re having as an organisation to rack your brain on how to be more accessible, then there aren’t enough disabled people on staff. This shines the light on maybe that lack of representation equals the inability to cater to wider audiences.” Literature organisations’ focus group participant

The deaf and disabled writers and audience members were clear that co-creation and co-production were the solutions to addressing a diversity of access needs and building greater understanding and engagement across the sector in an open and responsive manner.

“Work with more disabled writers so that a variety of experiences are shown and people don’t have to become representatives for whole groups.” Writers’ survey respondent

“Actually involve people part of the disabled community in events and event planning, actively seek input from disabled voices and don’t assume or infantilise us. We are disabled adults, not helpless babies.” Writers’ survey respondent

The writers’ focus group investigated how access co-production with deaf and disabled people might be part of the creative process.

“If people could see access as liberating and creative. We need an attitudinal change. There are conflicting access needs so we need to continually be having conversations.” Writers’ focus group participant

c. Emerging best practice

The survey asked deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences for examples of good practice when literature organisations have met their access needs by making reasonable adjustments in an anticipatory manner. The following examples show that there is emerging good practice in the literature sector. Currently it is not well publicised so other literature organisations/publishers do not benefit from the learnings.

"[Library's] online events, including creative writing events where detailed information is shared before an event, including rough timings/breaks/activities. They offer contact opportunities before and after the event. They do an excellent introduction about the structure of the event and the technology used. They offer subtitling/captions on booking, and they have a relaxed approach to being on or off camera for participants. They also accommodate special requests." Writers' survey respondent

"[Festival] tried hard to be good for access online, promoting screen sharing of poems and captioning, and organising a day to discuss how future events can be more equitable." Writers' survey respondent

"[Literature organisation] has been good for me. Their programme and information enabled me to arrange carers/support well in advance of the [event]." Writers' survey respondent

"A lot of the things [literature organisation] are doing. Online versions of in-person workshops, access lists, sending materials well in advance, etc." Writers' survey respondent

"I won an award which involved doing a reading. I could tell from the title of one of the other readings that it would be very triggering. I emailed the coordinator and asked if they could make sure that my reading was before, not after the potentially triggering one, and if I might be able to read a copy of the potentially triggering one in advance so it didn't come as a surprise. The organiser arranged this. She also checked in with me on the day and said she would accompany me if I needed to leave. This meant it was all fine and a great experience." Writers' survey respondent

"I am doing a residency at [literature organisation]. My health is complex and at the last minute my GP advised me not to attend in person. The literary manager was brilliant. She was understanding without being intrusive. She rearranged everything easily without making me feel like it was an issue. It's not just what is done practically, it's how easy it is to speak up and how we are treated when we do." Writers' survey respondent

"I've found [publisher] really helpful - they're publishing one of my stories and I had to get my payment split up into increments to comply with the terms of my Permitted Work"

agreement. They were really flexible and didn't bat an eyelid. I'm terrified of being looked down on every time I have to disclose being on ESA and Permitted Work so I really appreciated that understanding.” Writers' survey respondent

5. Impact learnings - the Retreat

“Access is an intention. As a disabled person I realise that no space could ever be fully accessible to everyone, but the commitment we are making is to reach as far as possible to meet everyone's access needs and create a space which is open and welcoming to all. This Retreat is somewhere you could come to us about an unmet need, and where access provision needs are seen as crucial to the work.” Jamie Hale

Fourteen deaf and disabled writers came together at the end of July 2021 for the online retreat. Hosted by Jamie Hale, the Retreat comprised three creative workshops, three guest artist workshops with readings and three captioned industry insight films from Vici Wreford-Sinnott, Artistic Director, Little Cog, Julie Farrell, a writer, critic and activist and Aliya Gulamani, Junior Commissioning Editor, Unbound. The convenors also ran a session on finding and applying for funding. All the workshop leaders, artists and industry practitioners were deaf and disabled creative professionals. The Retreat was co-produced and managed by CRIptic Arts and Spread the Word.

Generally, we received positive feedback from participants who really enjoyed the Retreat and its possibilities, especially for people for whom it was the first time they had taken part in a disability-led space, for the sense that “you're not alone.”

As convenors, we also learnt valuable lessons on how to make events, and the industry, more accessible to deaf and disabled writers. Writers said they wanted:

- More opportunities to get to know one another, including a 'meet and greet' session, chances to learn from one another's creative practice and how others manage access barriers. Practically they suggested more small groups and breakout rooms.
- Advance documentation which included a sheet on what would be covered in each session, with a traffic light system for intensity and any triggering content, advance sights of any images and text to consider, and all exercises written out and available in advance.
- Workshop facilitators to flag any potential triggering content and for convenors to have a plan in place to manage any required aftercare.
- To be told explicitly that it was OK for them to work with their cameras off.

- An acknowledgement that meeting some access needs may conflict with someone else's access needs. For example, short breaks were difficult for some writers to get going again while others found long breaks inaccessible.
- Provide both social and structured opportunities for participants to connect and learn from each other.
- Build in sufficient time to ensure access provisions can be put in place, for example, participant arranging for a carer, and be clear on the format that information needs to be received from guest artists so it is accessible for all participants.

Retreat participants agreed that the most effective way to design accessible writing development opportunities was to do so alongside deaf and disabled writers. They called for greater co-design and more co-production.

“Really wonderful to be part of a group. I feel lucky to be in a group with kind and caring people. It has been great.” Retreat participant

The full **Retreat case study**, including the access provisions put in place, can be found at:

<https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/projects/cruptic-writes-x-spread-the-word/>

6. Recommendations

“I need someone to help me navigate the publishing world. To be honest, a publisher gave me a book contract and I didn't sign because it was too daunting. And I got an agent, but they gave up on me. Then I gave up. I'm going to try again, but honestly as a working class disabled person with no formal education who has never had a job, it's like asking me to climb Everest with no training or equipment.” Writers' survey respondent

This early stage research shows that deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences are fundamentally excluded from the literature and publishing sectors.

Both strategic and organisational level interventions and actions are needed which recognises the systemic access and disablist barriers faced by deaf and disabled people to bring about systems change.

There is a need for the not for profit literature and publishing sectors and funders to work collaboratively with deaf and disabled people to dismantle barriers by providing structured investment into: further research, sustained opportunities for deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences and information, advice and guidance resources.

From our experience in the wider sector, it is clear literature organisations and publishers are in breach of their legal obligations under the Equalities Act to make reasonable adjustments in an anticipatory manner. There is an immediate need for them to ensure they understand their obligations and put access and disabled-led co-production at the heart of their work.

Therefore, we have produced two sets of recommendations. One looking at the practical steps that literature organisations can take in their own organisations both internally and through co-production with deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences. In this we have considered low, mid and higher resource interventions. The second looks across the sector to consider the systems that need to change so that literature is inclusive to deaf and disabled people.

These recommendations draw on both the *Access to Literature* research and from CRIPTic Arts and Spread the Word's experiences of modelling what 'good access' provision looks like by running literature events and designing development opportunities for deaf and disabled writers.

a. Audit, engage and act

Audit

"Make accessibility more of a default, rather than the more usual 'contact us if you have access needs.'" Writers' survey respondent

Audit your organisation to provide internal research and analysis on representation and access, to assess:

- Current access and equalities policies;
- Number of deaf and disabled people at all levels of your organisation including staff, trustees, freelancers/ artists, volunteers;
- Level of budget given to access provisions in existing organisational budgets and funding applications;
- Accessibility of processes, for example, contracting, commissioning, payments, communication, meetings, planning, timeframes, bookings, evaluation;
- Accessibility of the spaces, venues and online platforms you use to deliver your work and work with partners;
- Accessibility of your content, formats and forms.

Engage

"Build an Accessible Practice Group made up of committed representatives from a range of organisations plus representatives from the deaf and disabled communities - to share good

practice and educate themselves on what is needed and how to achieve it - and listen properly!" Writers' survey respondent

Take a deaf and disabled-led **co-production** and **whole organisation approach** and committing to being clear about your intent with your organisational **approach to access**:

- Involve deaf and disabled people in your audit and the findings of your audit;
- Create processes to ensure you are actively listening to deaf and disabled people on an on-going basis about their experiences of engaging with your organisation as writers, creative producers and audience members, paying them for their time;
- Build partnerships and connections with disabled-led organisations;
- Make a public commitment and statement on your approach to access and the provisions you can make, clearly stating what you are and are not providing;
- Provide:
 - Events, workshops and opportunities online, in person and hybrid;
 - Deaf and disabled people with clear information on the access provisions you have in place for each event, workshop, opportunity or product;
 - Deaf and disabled people the means to communicate their needs to you, for example through an access rider, to ensure reasonable adjustments can be made;
 - Flexibility in your booking processes, for example, providing space for two carers, to provide for individual need rather than a tick box approach to access;
 - Accessible application processes for opportunities, for example, video applications including in BSL, audio, questions in advance;
 - Content in accessible forms, for example, BSL, large font.
- Provide a clear, named lead for access and their contact information.

Act

"Can we actually have more dedicated organisations devoted to this. At present there aren't enough. More of us, more pressure we can bring to bear on authorities and more of us can enjoy literary and literature events." Writers' survey respondent

Put in place **sustained, accessible and representative literature activity**:

- Search for deaf and disabled writers and creative producers through social media and connecting with disabled-led organisations and networks;
- Employ deaf and disabled writers and creative producers across your work as, for example, facilitators, readers, performers, speakers, organisers, staff members etc.;
- Run disabled-led commissioning and development opportunities for deaf and disabled people;
- Communicate your access expectations to the non-disabled writers, creative producers and partners you work with which they need to adhere to;

- Ensure access provisions and disabled-led co-production work are provided for across your budgets, for example, projects, communications, programming, training and included in any funding application budgets or commissioning budgets with partners;
- Invest in deaf and disabled people as employees;
- Invest in disabled-led training on disability and requirements for staff, trustees, non-disabled freelancers/ artists and volunteers;
- Work with experienced disabled access consultants and consultancy organisations to understand how to effectively embed access within single projects and across your whole organisation.

b. Systems change across the sector

“Don’t expect people to come to you without demonstrating seriousness of wish to engage with our community/communities.” Writers’ survey respondent

Developing a **charter for change** committing to structured investment to dismantle the barriers disabled writers, creative producers and audiences face, through:

- Convening **collaborative conversations** between deaf and disabled people, representatives from the literature and publishing sectors and funders to inform and identify current barriers and co-producing potential solutions.
- Investing in **further deaf and disabled led research** into:
 - The not for profit literature and publishing sectors to establish a comprehensive evidence base on: delivering access provisions, the need for minimum standards, funding arrangements, accessible opportunities and emerging best practice;
 - Deaf and disabled people’s needs, intersectionality, and experience of engaging with literature as an audience member and as a writer/ creative producer progressing their creative careers.

“Anyone getting any funding should have to tie in disability based accessibility.” Retreat participant

Supporting the literature and publishing sectors to make change by **investing in a free and accessible resource and campaign** similar to Arts Council England’s Environmental Programme with Julie’s Bicycle¹⁰ led by deaf and disabled people to increase knowledge and awareness and drive impacts and action, including, but not limited to:

¹⁰ <https://juliesbicycle.com/our-work/arts-council-programme/>

- Information, advice and guidance on legal requirements on providing access provisions, co-production, communication, funding, budgeting for access and minimum standards of access for organisations with a wide range of budgets;
- Foregrounding best practice in the sector;
- Support from experienced disabled access consultants and consultancy organisations in understanding how to effectively embed access not just within single projects, but across organisations;
- Training deaf and disabled people in the skills, experience, and sector knowledge to work as expert access consultants for the literature and publishing sectors;
- Collaborative networks, leadership and peer exchange;
- Collaborative events and workshops.

“The biggest publishers have the greatest ability to nurture disabled writers in a holistic way on earning a living as a writer. I'd love to see such a thing specifically for disabled people, run a couple of times a year, where more people are supported.” Writers' survey respondent

- **Setting a target** of 20% of published writers and literature sector employees being deaf or disabled by 2030.
- Committing to working in partnership with literature organisations, **investing sustained time and funding** over 3-5 years, to develop and run learning and development programmes for deaf and disabled writers to achieve these targets. which:
 - Offer accessible and targeted outreach to deaf and disabled writers, including in British Sign Language;
 - Equip deaf and disabled writers with the skills and knowledge to work within the industry;
 - Equip industry organisations with the skills and knowledge to work with deaf and disabled writers;
 - Build and nurture deaf and disabled writers in a long-term manner.

Conclusion

“If we put access at the centre of how we work, I think we’d have a more resilient sector ultimately.” Literature organisations’ focus group participant

Through *Access to Literature* we have heard the voices of deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences in the first national picture of the barriers they face in being able to participate in literature. Staff in literature organisations also presented the challenges of facilitating access provision. There was a shared agreement and understanding of the barriers from both perspectives.

Key to progression in the literature sector is understanding how to embed access as the default across systems, processes and work from events to development opportunities to content, but more broadly how to engage deaf and disabled people throughout the process, in paid roles that create a more representative diversity in organisations and the wider sector.

The next stages will be to test the themes and recommendations that have emerged from this research with the sector, funders and deaf and disabled people to open up a dialogue on how, collectively, we can bring about a more accessible and equitable literature sector for deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences.

Appendices

Appendix 1: A Note on Language

When speaking of disabled people, it is important to identify them as “disabled people” rather than “people with disabilities”. This is because many disabled people identify that whilst their body/ mind may differ from the ‘norm’, being disabled is the active process which society enacts on people when access barriers are erected in ways that prevent deaf and disabled people participating on full and equal terms.

We have spoken of deaf and disabled people in this report. This is in accordance with a range of discussions with deaf and disabled people, where Deaf (with a capital D) is being used to identify Deaf BSL signers specifically, with ‘deaf’ as an umbrella term for Deaf signers as well as other hard of hearing people (or ‘people with hearing impairments’). We have separated ‘deaf’ out from ‘disabled’ to identify that many Deaf signers see themselves as part of a cultural and linguistic minority, rather than as disabled people.

Beyond that, we use the word ‘disabled’ in an inclusive way to identify anyone who faces disablist barriers in their daily lives. This includes neurodivergent people, Mad people and people experiencing mental distress or mental health problems, blind and visually impaired people, people with physical or motor impairments, and people with cognitive or learning impairments or differences. We have chosen to say this, instead of “disabled and neurodivergent” in recognition that neurodivergent people are, and always have been, central to the disabled community, rather than an external group.

Appendix 2: Reasonable Adjustments

There is a legal obligation to provide a degree of access for disabled people when you are offering services to the public.

According to the Equality Act 2010, disability is defined as a condition ‘having a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on one’s ability to do normal daily activities’. Organisations have the duty to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to prevent disabled people being placed at a ‘substantial disadvantage’ when accessing services.

The term ‘reasonable adjustments’ is not well defined but refers to adjustments that are *feasible* for the organisation to make. This engages with limitations such as structural or financial constraints, but the expectation is that these adjustments will be made.

There is an ‘*anticipatory requirement*’, which means that you cannot simply wait for deaf or disabled people to come to an event before adapting it, you are expected to make reasonable adjustments to make it accessible ahead of time.

There are barriers to all aspects of the literature sector where reasonable adjustments are not made. These barriers may include:

- *Physical barriers*, including a lack of wheelchair access to audience area or stage, a lack of public transport connections, or a lack of appropriate toilets (for example, adapted toilets, or changing places toilet);
- *Information barriers*, including information not being provided in accessible formats, for example, without BSL interpretation, with visually distracting organisation, poorly formatted electronic documents, videos without captions, or confusing language;
- *Attitudinal barriers*, which occur where people use their beliefs or perceptions of deaf and disabled people to (intentionally or unintentionally) behave towards deaf and disabled people in a discriminatory fashion (for example, assuming that they would only ever be attendees rather than organisers or creatives, assuming that their work would always only be personal and therapeutic, or treating providing adaptations as doing someone a favour);
- *Organisational barriers*, barriers which occur within the structure of an organisation or event, for example, requiring applications in a written format rather than a video format being an option, registration for events requiring a specific procedure which can be difficult to understand, or requiring people to attend a specific number of sessions regardless of their personal requirements.

Appendix 3: Survey data: deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audiences

As a writer and/ or creative producer

Types of accessible activity would like to see more of	
Publication opportunities	69%
More deaf and disabled writers being booked by Festivals and venues	61%
Prizes showcasing and promoting work by deaf and disabled writers/ poets	56%
Industry networking opportunities	49%
Development programmes led by deaf and disabled writers/ poets/ creative producers	49%
Commissioning opportunities	47%

Accessible resources on for e.g.: getting an agent, careers in literature	46%
1 to 1 mentoring	46%
Workshops led by deaf and disabled writers/ poets/ creative producers	44%
Residencies for D/deaf and disabled writers/ poets/ creative producers	41%
Sustained and local workshops/ spaces for deaf and disabled writers, poets and readers	37%
Reading and performance events for deaf and disabled writers/ poets	35%

Barriers to accessing literature opportunities	
Lack of paid work (for deaf and disabled writers)	69%
Events/ workshops taking place in inaccessible spaces (online and/ or in person)	63%
Lack of understanding (by the organisation) of adjustments that need to be made	59%
Cost	56%
Not clear who to contact to ask questions about support available	53%
Lack of clear information on accessibility (of events/ workshops/ opportunities)	51%
Lack of ongoing support or community	47%
Lack of activity near where I live	46%
Delegitimising of work (i.e.: seen as therapeutic)	44%
Pacing of work in workshops/ events (i.e.: too much being covered in too short amount of time)	42%
Lack of breaks at workshops/ events	41%
Organisation not putting in place reasonable adjustments	39%
Tight deadlines for delivery of work	36%
Workshop and reading materials not being provided in advance	32%
Lack of accessible transport to venue	27%
Lack of spaces/ additional costs for personal assistants	19%
Trigger warnings not being provided (for traumatic material)	19%

Inaccessible sign up/ booking processes	15%
Not giving information in multiple formats	8%
Organisations not knowing how to work with BSL interpreters	8%

As an audience member

Types of accessible activity would like to see more of	
More deaf and disabled writers' events run by festivals and venues	73%
More books being published by deaf and disabled writers	69%
More prizes showcasing and promoting work by deaf and disabled writers/ poets	67%
Reading and performance events by deaf and disabled writers/ poets	60%
Sustained and local activities for deaf and disabled readers (for e.g.: reading groups)	48%
Accessible reading lists	28%

Barriers to accessing literature activity	
Lack of clear information on accessibility (of events/workshops/opportunities)	60%
Lack of understanding (by organisation) of adjustments that need to be made	60%
Events/ workshops taking place in inaccessible spaces (online and/ or in person)	59%
Cost	52%
Organisation not putting in place reasonable adjustments	43%
Lack of breaks at workshops/ events	42%
Lack of activity near where I live	40%
Not clear who to contact to ask questions about support available	40%
Workshop and reading materials not being provided in advance	29%
Lack of accessible transport to venue	24%
Inaccessible sign up/ booking processes	19%
Trigger warnings not being provided (for traumatic material)	19%

Not giving information in multiple formats	14%
Lack of spaces/ additional costs for personal assistants	14%
Organisations not knowing how to work with BSL interpreters	5%

Appendix 4: Survey data - literature organisations

How organisations make their work accessible	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Work in partnership with disability organisations	0%	11%	33%	56%
Consult with deaf and disabled writers/ creative producers	0%	22%	44%	33%
BSL interpreters	0%	22%	33%	44%
Provide staff and Board inclusion and access training	11%	11%	11%	67%
Provide workshop/ reading materials in advance of workshops/events	11%	11%	56%	22%
Access list for pre-bookings	11%	22%	33%	33%
Provide trigger warnings (verbally/on materials/in communications)	11%	33%	44%	11%
Ensure accessible online communications (i.e: alt text)	11%	44%	33%	11%
Provide communications about your work/ opportunities in different formats (i.e: Easy Read)	12.5%	12.5%	37.5%	37.5%
Live transcription	12.5%	12.5%	37.5%	37.5%
Transcriptions	12.5%	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%
Website compliant with access standards	12.5%	37.5%	50%	0%
Captioning	33%	0%	44%	22%
Build in regular breaks as part of workshop/ event timings	33%	11%	56%	0%
Provide access information for event activity as standard	33%	33%	22%	11%
Get information from artists/ participants on their	44%	44%	11%	0%

access needs				
Provide free space for personal assistants	44%	33%	11%	11%
Wheelchair access	56%	33%	0%	11%

About

Jamie Hale

Jamie Hale is the Director of CRIPTic Arts, an artistic development organisation offering development and showcasing to deaf and disabled creatives, and research-informed training to the wider industry. As well as leading creative and practical workshop and development opportunities for deaf and disabled writers, CRIPTic Arts is currently leading research projects exploring minimum access standards in the performance industries, meeting the access needs of performers with high physical access requirements, and on creating a tool to support deaf and disabled people to design their access rider. They have also led training cross-sector, working with organisations of all scales to improve their access provisions. Jamie is also an award-winning poet and one of the 2021-2022 Jerwood Poetry Fellows. Their debut poetry pamphlet 'Shield' was published by Verve Poetry Press, and their first solo show NOT DYING won the Evening Standard Future Theatre Fund Award for Director/Theatremaker of the Year. They currently have a screenplay in development with Channel 4.

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Ruth Harrison

Ruth Harrison is the Director of Spread the Word, London's literature development agency. She has been Director of Apples & Snakes and Programme Manager at The Reading Agency. She leads on Spread the Word's strategy and artistic programme. Spread the Word has a national and international reputation for initiating change-making research and developing programmes for writers that have equity and social justice at their heart. Their research includes *Writing the Future: Black and Asian Authors in the UK Market Place*¹¹ by Danuta Kean and Mel Larsen (2015) and *Rethinking 'Diversity' in Publishing*¹² by Dr Anamik Saha and Dr Sandra van Lente in partnership with Words of Colour and The Bookseller (2020). They run the London Writers Awards for writers underrepresented in publishing, the Early Career Bursaries for London Writers on a low income, the Wellcome Collection x Spread the Word Writing Awards for Black, Asian and Global Majority and deaf and disabled non-fiction writers, the Deptford Literature Festival celebrating Lewisham's creativity and diversity, City of Stories with London Libraries offering free creative writing workshops and events across London, and Runaways with Ink Sweat & Tears and the University of Glasgow.

Website: <https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/>

Twitter: [@STWevents](https://twitter.com/STWevents)

¹¹ <https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/writing-the-future/>

¹² <https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/projects/rethinking-diversity/>

Acknowledgements

CRIPtic Arts and Spread the Word would like to thank the following:

Arts Council England for supporting the Access to Literature research and report.

All the deaf and disabled writers who participated in the Retreat.

All the deaf and disabled writers, creative producers and audience members and literature organisations who responded to the surveys and participated in the focus groups.

The Retreat's guest artists: Julie Farrell, Aliya Gulamani, Matilda Ibini, Stephen Lightbrown, Elle McNicoll, Nadia Nadarajah and Omikemi.

The Retreat's BSL interpreters Amy Hayward, Jemima Hoadley and Michelle Woods.

The Retreat's and external focus groups' facilitators Daniel Sluman and Vici Wreford-Sinnott.

The Spread the Word and CRIPtic Arts' teams, especially Aurelie Coulibaly, Laura Kenwright, Caitlin Richards and Natasha Roe.

Resources

This is a short list of resources to support literature organisations and publishers to start developing their approach to providing access and be active in thinking about the ways they can meet people where they are at.

We Shall Not be Removed: Seven Inclusive Principles for Arts and Cultural Organisations

<https://www.weshallnotberemoved.com/7-principles/>

Shape Arts - social model of disability

<https://www.shapearts.org.uk/news/social-model-of-disability>

Being Hybrid Guide - a cheap and easy guide practical guide to running hybrid events

(CRIPTic Arts + Spread the Word)

<https://cripticarts.org/being-hybrid-short-guide/>

Society of Authors – Authors with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses: How to Create an Accessible Writers Group

[https://www.societyofauthors.org/News/Blogs/SoA-Blog/January-2021-\(1\)/How-to-create-an-accessible-writing-group](https://www.societyofauthors.org/News/Blogs/SoA-Blog/January-2021-(1)/How-to-create-an-accessible-writing-group)

Inklusion Guide to making literature events accessible for disabled people

<https://www.inklusionguide.org/>

Disability Arts Online

<https://disabilityarts.online/>

Coventry UK City of Culture 2021:

Access policy:

<https://coventry2021.co.uk/access/>

Access for Arts and Cultural Organisers: <https://coventry2021.co.uk/explore/access-for-arts-and-cultural-organisers/>

Not Going Back to Normal

<https://www.notgoingbacktonormal.com/introduction>