

Accessibility for outdoor festivals and live events in Covid-times

This handout was produced in October 2020 and aims to compliment the *Without Walls Access Guide for Outdoor Festival and Events* and Without Walls webinar series.

You can watch the Accessibility for Outdoor Arts webinar here: [YouTube Link](#)

You can download the Access Guide here: [Without Walls Access Guide](#)

Experience GDIF's Digital Access materials online here: [Digital Access](#)

Contextualising this information:

It is useful to acknowledge that we are always on a journey to improve our offer, grow from our learnings, seek advice and feedback from our disabled artists and audiences to improve not only the accessibility, but the quality and creativity of that access. In the shifting of regulations and advice around COVID-19, we are on a journey to ensure an inclusive recovery in the arts as we gradually return to live events.

Introduction to GDIF

GDIF 2020 highlights video: <https://youtu.be/e03shDqky9A>

- 2020 has been a transformative year, spotlighting the huge inequalities in our society.
- It's the 25th year of GDIF – continuing our mission of endeavouring to be accessible and inclusive.
- The programme shifted to offer performances and installations with social distancing, changing how we present work as well as hosting a platform for reflection on the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the importance of the NHS and community togetherness.
- New for this year: Box Office (still free but many shows ticketed) - held aside tickets for Deaf and disabled audiences.

A team approach to Disability Equality and Accessibility

We ran a Zoom Disability Equality Training across all of our staff, Production Managers, volunteers and security team which included a video from a Deaf trainer and a Visually Impaired trainer. This focussed on:

- Social Model of Disability – defining an approach whereby it is the structures and barriers in our society that disable people.
- Communication
- Covid-safe measures e.g.: some sign language and giving directions
- What to look out for and to take into consideration on site.

You can watch GDIF's training videos here:

Deaf Audiences: <https://youtu.be/JQMgFi-Q0EQ>

Visually Impaired Audiences: <https://youtu.be/qY3AGL6MSs0>

Pre-show accessibility

This year all events were free, however, to control capacity most shows were ticketed. With limited capacities, we reserved priority tickets for Deaf and disabled audience members to ensure that there was access to these.

We had our usual BSL and Audio video brochures as well as Easy Read information about the event available online in advance of the events.

Installations and re-working our accessibility for Visually Impaired and Deaf audiences



Covid gave an opportunity to re-examine how we offer audio description over durational performances and across a variety of locations.

The Audio Description was created through a conversation between our Audio Descriptor and each artist. The text was then checked by a visually impaired consultant for clarity. It was then recorded, audio quality edited and uploaded onto our Digital Access page on our website.

On site, we had QR codes onsite to link to our Digital Access page: www.festival.org/digital-access

For installations that were durational such as Gaia and Weavers of Woolwich, we chose to work with Remark! who are a Deaf-led company and therefore employed deaf interpreters for authentic communication.

Audio Tour



In partnership with VocalEyes we provided a Covid-version of a 'Touch Tour'. Which held space for our Visually Impaired audiences to have a bespoke tour of the site, audio description of the set and costumes, and then live, full audio description of the performances as part of our *On Your Doorstep: Greenwich St Alfege Park* event.

We had a holistic approach to providing this tour, through communicating with the audience as to their route to the site, meeting them at the nearest train station and offering information about the local area.

BSL Lullaby



Full Video link: <https://youtu.be/xCikDtHYmhk>

This was created to complement our community lullaby that was curated as part of our performance [Lullaby](#), that cycled through Plumstead at twilight.

This short film is a collage of deaf parents sending their children to sleep, using BSL and creative captioning with a snippet of our community lullaby, curated by Dan Jones and Guy Hughes.

It has been our most successful digital asset at GDIF with a digital audience of around 50,000 across our platforms.

In conversation with Deaf creatives who are parents, we opened a space for this to be created to show authentic communication between Deaf parents and their children.

The resulting project resonated with a sense of community, an importance of being community-led and making space for creativity - also links to being inside over lockdown, to coming outside for the performance...realistic, not patronising, and beautiful.

Options for engagement

As a live event, our focus was on delivering a safe, high quality in-person event to benefit local audiences. We added more sites to our programme, going to (perceived) remote areas, and sites with flat blocks and balconies for audiences to lean over. We added shows to our programme that encourage an 'On your doorstep' performance such as *Lullaby* by Luke Jerram, which cycled directly through streets.

There was more filming of performances so these could be shared online – for example you can view our *In Memoriam* performances with BSL here: <https://youtu.be/e03shDqky9A>

Please have a look at the [Access Guide](#) for detailed information about accessibility at the event. And check out our digital access materials on our website.

Future Learnings:

- Commission and ensure visibility for disabled artists
- Take time to put accessibility onto all of your agendas
- Add accessibility into your budget lines and prioritise this

Further resources:

'We Shall Not be Removed' [7 Principles of an Inclusive Recovery](#)

Data gathered about disabled audiences returning to live events is included in the ['After the Interval' audience survey report](#)

Daryl Beeton's blog for Without Walls, ['You don't have to be disabled to make inclusive work'](#)

Also check out Daryl's [#ADiffWayToThink Mobile resource library](#), a one-stop-shop of thoughts, discussions, toolkits and resources on access and inclusion

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