

Young Audience Sector Research

A review of the Scottish Young Audiences sector to identify the access barriers that artists experience when working or aiming to work in the sector:

How can a new network or membership group/collective be created to best serve its members and the sector?

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“The reality is, I’m too expensive to employ due to my access stuff. It’s an elephant in the room. I see it. I feel it.” - Artist

Introduction

This research was commissioned by the Young Audience Group with funding from Creative Scotland.

The Young Audience Group is a collective of organisations and freelancers who have been meeting informally since 2018 to advocate for and raise awareness of the young audience sector. The collective is comprised of the following organisations and individuals:

- Action Boat
- Barrowland Ballet
- Catherine Wheels & Shona Reppe
- Curious Seed
- Frozen Charlotte
- Imagine
- Independent Arts Projects
- Lyra
- Scottish Theatre Producers
- Starcatchers
- Visible Fictions

Research Outline

This is the next stage in targeted research commissioned by the Young Audience Group following the recommendations of the initial research by Vickie Beesley in 2023.

This research and report specifically focuses on engagement with freelance artists and practitioners who identify as having protected characteristics. Including those from Global Majority, Disabled, Neurodivergent, D/deaf, Chronical Illness, Visually Impaired and LGBTQIA+ communities. This research also recognises and identifies intersectional barriers of inequalities and marginalisation experienced by communities and individuals. Including, but not limited to, socio-economic factors such as income and social deprivation that intersect with protected characteristics.

Research Objectives

The core objectives for this research are:

- Review the Young Audiences sector as it currently exists through an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion lens

- Engage with a diverse range of artists, those who have but also crucially those who have not worked within the sector, to understand their experiences and the barriers they may have faced in developing work in this field.
- Exploration of options to identify a structure that will support open access, diversity and parity of voices across the sector.

Intended Research Outcomes

Objectively lead research and consultation was conducted for the Young Audience Group to begin to understand the following:

- Develop a strong understanding of how a more inclusive, diverse and equitable network can be created and sustained in the sector.
- How the Young Audience Group can create a network or membership group/collective that would best serve its members and the sector.
- How the young audience sector could set up a system that would be sustainable, equitable and self-led.
- How the new network or membership collective could meet all the needs and priorities of the sector.
- Provide support so the Young Audience Group can be better placed to strengthen the sector.
- Build understanding more broadly across the arts in Scotland and advocate for work to bodies such as Creative Scotland.

Research Method

Creative Access Outreach and Engagement Programme

Reviewing Vicky Beesley's initial report findings and recommendations regarding "*voices missing from research*" it was decided that a **caring and nurturing Creative Access Outreach and Engagement Programme**, enriched with **trauma informed practice** was needed in design for delivery of this work. To permit optimal engagement and feedback from participants.

Research shows that inequality is complex, and experiences are individual to a person and their own circumstances and perspectives. – which is also fluid and ever changing. These are never uniform or the same as someone else's experience from the same marginalised community group, who may also experience inequality. All access barriers are unique and multifaceted and can often be laced with negativity or trauma. This must be taken into consideration when asking direct questions and feedback to gain and understanding of access barriers stemming from inequalities.

To support this, it was important that a research method was undertaken to ensure people felt **safe, supported and comfortable** to share their experiences openly and honestly. That was strong yet flexible in delivery, to allow both anonymity and agency in conversations, feedback and connection. People needed to feel heard, respected and in control at all points. This was ensured by the planning, design and delivery of a Creative Outreach and Engagement Programme.

This programme was designed to include a **variety of nurturing meeting and connecting opportunities. Which were individually chosen, altered and tailored with participants, to include support and provision for their own:**

- **Access requirements**
- **Sensory requirements**
- **Wellbeing and mental health requirements**

The Creative Access Outreach and Engagement Programme will be discussed in depth throughout this report.

Who took part?

This engagement model focused on making marginalised people **feel safe, valued and respected, using a trauma informed approach -which takes a significant time (physical, emotional and admin!)** To build trust, connection and confidence to gain intricate and genuine feedback. A small and diverse pool of **14 individuals were sourced, focusing on intersectionality**. All participants identified as being part of Global Majority, Disabled, Neurodivergent, D/deaf, Chronical Illness, Visually Impaired and LGBTQIA+ and/or working-class communities. A breakdown of equalities data detailing participants protected characteristics can be found in the Appendix of this report.

It was identified that **no black people from the Global Majority took part in the initial research in 2023**. Therefore, connecting with black artist/practitioners and professionals was made **priority** in this research. This will be discussed in more detail throughout the *Next Steps* stage of this report.

A wide range of people working and not working in the young audience sector took part in this research opportunity. This included artists, writers, advocacy workers, facilitators, theatre makers, dancers, choreographers, producers, directors, performers, community artists, play workers, youth arts workers, community engagement professionals, Audio Describers, BSL interpreters and Live Captioners.

Artist from all over Scotland took part in this research, including those living and working in rural, central belt and areas identified as most deprived by SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). Data concerning artists location can also be found in the appendix of this report.

It is important to note that that completion an equality forms by participants for this research was optional, with only 64% completing this. Therefore, the data from these forms are not accurate evidence in demonstrating whom took part.

Summary

Purpose

The research, commissioned by the Young Audience Group and funded by Creative Scotland, explores barriers to access for artists—particularly those from marginalized communities—in Scotland’s Young Audiences sector. It also investigates how a new network or collective could support inclusivity, equity, and sustainability.

Key Findings

Access Barriers: Significant barriers exist for artists with protected characteristics (e.g., Disabled, Global Majority, LGBTQIA+, neurodivergent). These include racism, ableism, mental health strain, freelance instability, and lack of accessible opportunities.

Sector Shortcomings: The sector is described as unconsciously ableist and systemically racist, lacking in emotional and financial support. Structural issues contribute to artist burnout, inconsistent work, and exclusion.

Networking Issues: Existing networking models are inaccessible, neuro-normative, and culturally exclusive. Many marginalized artists feel isolated or unwelcome.

Access Needs Misunderstood: Artists noted that their needs—especially around neurodivergence, disability, and cultural identity—are often overlooked or poorly supported.

Lack of Entry Routes: Many artists not currently in the sector cited unclear pathways, elitism, and risk of retraumatisation as key deterrents.

Recommendations

1. Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP): Embed TIP across the sector and network from the outset to avoid retraumatisation and support psychological safety.

2. Access Support: Build systems that provide long-term access accommodations, including well-being officers, and flexible engagement methods.

3. Inclusive Network Design: Model the new network on structures that value care, support, community, and interdependence—like natural ecosystems (“Wood Wide Web”).

4. Training and Awareness: Provide regular anti-racism, anti-ableism, and neurodiversity training for all stakeholders – in various formats and contexts!

5. Sustainable Funding & Practice: Secure financial stability for both the network and participating artists, ensuring access needs are met consistently and equitably.

6. Digital Inclusion: Ensure any digital platforms used are fully accessible and mindful of online safety concerns raised by marginalized communities.

7. Strategic Year 1 Plan: Prioritize relationship-building, listening, community care, and participatory planning before solidifying the network's structure.

8. Priority Strategy: Continued Research to inform Year2: Actions to support and increase Global Majority artists practitioners and organisations within the new network, and Scottish Young Audience Sector overall.

Conclusion

The current Young Audience sector is not inclusive or sustainable for many marginalized artists. For meaningful change, **systemic restructuring is required**—starting with care-centred, trauma-informed engagement, and inclusive design. Any new network must be dynamic, responsive, and truly representative.

Desk Research

Ongoing Activity

Analysis of existing knowledge and information, regarding artists experiencing access barriers within the cultural sector nationally and internationally was continuous throughout this research. Details of these resources and articles can be found in the appendix.

Relevant Arts, Culture & Play Networks

Exploration of existing arts, cultural and play networks were researched to identify a structure that will support open access, diversity and parity of voices across the sector.

Finding and identifying arts and cultural networks that specialised in supporting marginalised community groups was a focus in desk research.

The following networks were found to have beneficial qualities in which the Young Audience group could learn from:

- ASSITEJ
- PIPA
- BAME Network
- Disabled Artists Networking Community
- We are Here Scotland
- Smart Play Network

A brief analysis of each network's **internal organisation structure** was carried out via website analysis, and some face to face meetings with staff who are in paid roles in various capacities for these networks.

Website platform analysis also allowed a 'face value' perspective of each network and what they have to offer its members/potential members on initial contact. **A 'face value' perspective should be taken into consideration if there are any plans to host the new network via a website or social media.**

Key takeaways were identified as possible **supportive elements** which could inform the new networks structure to support its members, marginalised members in particular. These will be explained in reference to each network.

Networks

ASSITEJ -An international body consisting of two separate networks that unite individuals around the world who make theatre and performing arts for children.

Supportive Elements of ASSITEJ include:

- Website
 - Inclusive tool functions/ tabs on website:
 - *Change Language* accessibility customisation widget embedded on website
 - *Advocacy* tab (*included resources and signposting*)
 - Callouts for different funding pots
 - Newsletter sign-up option
 - Policies & Protocols
 - Governance

Key Takeaways

Membership fee is required by ASSITEJ to enable members to access its network. This should be considered **unsupportive structural element** which would create an access barrier for many marginalised community members if YAG were to consider this also.

Funding:

- Co- Funded Network (European Union & Danish Arts Foundation)

Online Platforms used:

- Website – with links to join subgroups (via *Facebook* groups -not open access)
- Social Media Platforms: *Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn*

Network structure consists of:

- International & Regional Network (clusters of national centres)
 - *Board* -presidents of its members meet online ever second month.
 - *Council* - Board Members from members organisations meet once a year online.
 - *General Assembly*- all members meet once a year online or in person at events organised by organisations.

Initial analysis shows quite a **complex network structure** – which members may find inaccessible in understanding what the network is actually offering. With regards to digital inclusion and accessibility, the website does have some but not many

accessible qualities. However, overall navigation of the website is very overwhelming, and deep searches are required to find things. This is an access barrier for many.

More research is needed to understand this network.

[PIPA – Parents & Carers in Performing Arts](#) -Advocating for parents and carers working within the performing arts sector.

Supportive Elements of PIPA include:

- No Membership fee for Freelancers
- Website:
 - purpose build
 - easy navigation
 - separate spaces for freelancers and organisation
 - *Members Toolkit* Tab
 - *Partners Sign-in* Tab
 - *Freelance Hub* (includes resources, support, blogs)
 - *Policies* – Inequality specific family friendly
 - *Values displayed (Empower, Collaborate, Transform & Amplify)* – Explains how they do this in relation to protected characteristics at the forefront of all its work.
 - “*Our Networks Shared Agenda*” displayed agendas created in collaboration with members.
- [Disability Confident Committed Employer](#)
- Research Projects -ongoing
- *PAYE roles, Trustees, Ambassadors*, (organisation capacity building)
- Newsletter sign-up option

Key Takeaways

- Membership Fee only for Organisations and Partners
- Social Media Platforms: *Facebook, Instagram & LinkedIn*
- *Charter programme* for Organisations/Partners (Income Generator)
- Funding: *National Lottery, Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, Charity Commission for England & Wales*

PIPA is a good example of network supporting a clearly identified/defined marginalised group – carers/parents. This is evident in its resources. It appears strong and detailed in its support on initial glance. More research however is needed to determine the level of consideration taken in supporting intersectionality of all protected characteristics.

BAME Network – set up by Edinburgh Council as part of its city-wide *Inclusive Edinburgh* strategy. It aims to act as a voice for Black, Asian, and white ethnic minority employees; engage in dialogue with senior management across the organisation to ensure that the voices of these communities are heard, and that action is taken.

Supportive Elements of the BAME Network include:

- No Membership Fee
- Paid opportunities shared by its members via Gagglemail, distributed in a weekly newsletter direct to members inboxes.
- *PAYE (council staff)* employed to manage network activities/admin/planning.

Key Takeaways:

The *BAME Network* **structure is facilitated by an ongoing city-wide engagement programme via strategic partnerships that is artist responsive**, builds confidence and skills that will progress careers in the arts and cultural sector, and support artist retention in Edinburgh/Scotland.

Engagement programmes have been developed to support artists and practitioners from the **Global Majority**. With some engagement programmes further addressing and **supporting specific intersectional inequalities and protected characteristics experienced by Global Majority groups**.

These include the following programmes:

- ***Governance Programme***- skills training for Global Majority artists to gain board member skills.
- ***Music Encounters*** – local audience outreach/community engagement.
- ***Stage 4 Life*** -Tech training in Theatre and Film programme for young people from the Global Majority via partnership with *EFFS*.
- ***Amplify Pathways*** – women under age 25 from Global Majority communities in music – talent retention initiative.
- ***Pathways to Creative Careers Edinburgh*** – Global Majority young people outreach.

Other key takeaways include:

- No Website/ social media platform used to support members

- Operates with a closed Facebook group and newsletter only
- Not a dominant role in the city and has created lots of grass roots opportunities for Global Majority artists and practitioners.
- Funded by *Edinburgh Council, Diversity & Inclusion Fund*.

The *BAME Network* is a **positive example of an engagement and outreach programme** being developed to respond to the needs of Global Majority artists and practitioners in a specific geographic location in Scotland. By **providing active ongoing networking and development opportunities exclusively to Global Majority artists and practitioners**.

Disabled Artists Networking Community -(DANC) is a community of disabled majority artists working in TV and the arts. DANC is part of TripleC, a key gateway organisation for deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent (DDN) people's access to the arts and screen industries. DANC works with and brings together professional disabled artists and key decision/change makers in the industry to take a solution-focussed approach.

Supportive Elements of DANC include:

- No Membership Fee
- Suitable for early-career to fully established artist
- Bespoke website
 - Made in consultation with focus groups with access requirements
 - Accessibility Customisation Widget embedded on website
 - Access website Tab – pending Audio, BSL & Easy read functions
- Newsletter with opportunities emailed weekly to members
- *Talent Finder Database* for employers seeking DDN artists – due 2026

Key Takeaways:

- Network hosted by Triple C and its website
- Large team -PAYE *TripleC* staff manage Network
- *DANC* structure includes: Steering group with sub-groups
- Extensive Programme of events, masterclasses and workshops – **Fee unknown*
- Social Media Platforms: *Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube*
- Funding: *DANC is part of Triple C. An Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation* funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and ScreenSkills.

DANC is a positive example of a network being hosted and managed by a National Portfolio Organisation - an arts and culture organisation in England that receives regular funding from Arts Council England. The NPO status allows these organisations to contribute to the national arts and cultural landscape by providing a backbone of creative and cultural provision across the country.

We Are Here Scotland – Community Interest Company with an aim to amplify the voices BPoC (Black People and People of Colour) Creatives who reside in Scotland with opportunities to share their work, connect with each other, and have their voices heard within the wider art community.

Supportive Elements of We Are Here Scotland include:

- No Membership Fee
- Website (purpose built) includes:
 - Global Majority Artist Directory Search Function
 - Mental Health Resources Tab
 - Global Majority Mental Health and Wellbeing Research project
 - Research Projects- ongoing
 - Newsletter sign up option for members
 - Audio & Podcast resources (additional formatted supportive resources)
 - Events – Free and travel reimbursed to members
 - Strategic Partnerships with third sector non arts/arts organisations supporting marginalised communities. Including:
 - Age Scotland
 - Luminate

Key Takeaways:

- Network structure -CIC (a limited Community Interest Company) which operate to provide a benefit to the community they serve.
- Team: Creative Industry professionals and Freelancers
- Social Media Platforms: Instagram, LinkedIn, Blue Sky
- Funding: Creative Scotland, Council funds and public donations

We Are Here Scotland is **a positive network example of a CIC structure** – to purposely benefit community rather than private profit. **With innovative resources** being used to support Global Majority artists and practitioners directly, as well as actively support the diversify the arts and cultural sector in Scotland.

Smart Play Network (Scotland) - work to ensure that play services across Scotland are supported and valued via network members, training programmes and the delivery of successful projects.

Supportive Elements of Smart Play Network include:

- Membership Options – Free or Advanced (Organisation and Schools £40 annual payment)
- Website (purpose built) includes:
 - Members Area Tab
 - Resources linking to Right of the Child UNCRC: in Scotland

- Free extensive resource download Library - Research, Articles, Creative ideas...
- Free Online Play Discussion Tabs/Channels – Targeted topics
- Direct Networking channel – to connect others in the sector
- Toy Library – materials & resource sharing within the sector
- Training & Events Tab – with various formats of training opportunities
- Calendar Format show casing all events clearly for its members to book
- Newsletter
- Policies and statements
 - Large team - salaried Staff & Trustees

Key Takeaways:

- Training & Events *discount price, course bundles, workshops, e-learning, online, in person play sessions.
- Community Project Programmes
- Funding: Charity Registered – funded by Scottish Councils, networks and organisations withing the Early Years/Play Sector

Smart Play Scotland is a **positive example of a network balancing professional and fun resources, support and training for its members!** Demonstrated by more images and creativity illustrated on its websites. Offering many creative and fun resources in different formats, that support its members at all career stages, in all working areas of the play sector to engage in optional free or advanced membership opportunities. This feels in context for the Play Sector and within parts of the Young Audience Sector also. A feeling and sense of **‘Fun’** was a key network characteristic expressed from research participant feedback in 2023.

Concerns: Online Platform Inequality and Unsafe Community Spaces

Accessible Social Media, Communications and Marketing

Desk research and participant feedback highlighted marginalised groups, particularly LGBTQ+ communities of feeling unsafe, unwelcome and targeted by specific online platforms. Trans, Neuroqueer, and Black artists and practitioners all **raised concerns regarding which online platform/s the new network would use to hold space**, share information and promote itself. **This is a direct concern due to the inequalities existing within online platforms such as:**

- X (formerly Twitter)
- Facebook
- Messenger
- Instagram
- Whatsapp,
- Reality Labs
- Threads

Other than X, all platforms are owned by Meta.

Some artist and practitioners, working and not working in the sector, **reported that they had chosen to leave these platforms or were pausing activity using them.** This was due to Meta changing its Equalities and Inclusion policies, safeguarding issues and misinformation sharing concerning marginalised communities.

Artists who had left these popular online platforms noted that this decision had been a difficult one, as **leaving had an adverse impact on finding jobs development opportunities and promoting their work.** Therefore, impacting growth, development and financial opportunities.

Most organisations in the sector use these online platforms to advertise callouts and opportunities currently. Some organisations have actively moved to other online platforms but also remain in more established platforms – such as Instagram and Facebook.

Online platforms also raised **the issue of ‘generational use’** and social media platform preferences, typically defined by a person’s generation or age. For example, Facebook being typically used by Baby Boomers and Gen X. With Millennials and Gen Z typically using Instagram and Snapchat.

Artists and practitioners raised concern regarding which online platform the new network would use. Suggestions of platforms and feedback concerning this included:

- Finding Alternatives – “*More ethical is a better start*” - practitioner
- It important who owns its – Meta/X not being favoured.
- [Discord](#)
- [Slack](#)
- [BlueSky](#) – has AI prompt to add Alt Text for VI communities - not all do.

Alternative Network Structures

Nature Networks: “***Wood Wide Webs***”

“Every tree is valuable to the community”

The Hidden Life of Trees, Peter Wohlleben

A brief research period went into analysis of “*Wood Wide Webs*” natural networks to discover if such networks could aid the new networks learning regarding:

- Exploration of **alternative** options to identify a structure that will support open access, diversity and parity of voices across the sector.

Nature networks refer to the interconnectedness and communication systems found within the natural world, spanning from **microscopic interactions to large scale ecological connections**. One of these includes the “wood-wide-web”.

The wood wide web is the communication between plants and trees through their roots, the **complex interactions** of bacteria through quorum sensing, and even broader ecological networks **connecting diverse species and habitats**.

For example - **A Forest**.

The complexities of a forest’s, wood wide web's structure, mirror those that can also be found in the young audience sector. It's a space that is shared by many diverse beings, used to grow, thrive and survive. All at different stages of (career) development, each all with individual constructions and constraints – access barriers and inequalities.

The structure of a wood wide network **focuses on continuous communication and support to all within its ecosystem to flourish**. This is carried out in an intricate and complex way – an example of how a multifaceted network structure can thrive.

Key elements of this network include:

- **Slow pace** – working together to ‘plan’ and build a future. Creating conditions that allow everything/everyone to grow. Healthy/ happy being more productive.
- **Communication** – talking/listening and resource sharing/ exchange– nurturing and looking after neighbours!
- **“Mother Trees”** – and Kin recognition – older larger trees supporting offspring.
- **Social and Care for others** – Sharing things because they need each other!
- **Friendships** - interconnection to keep each other alive/ interdependence - connected and help neighbours.
- **“Exchange Nutrients”** – skillsets. Nourishes ‘competitors’ in ecosystem and creates a protective environment that everyone looks after each other.
- **Community** - Support each other when they need it. Branches for each tree never grow overly thick so as not to overshadow others!
- **Community & Social Security** - ‘Equalisation through the roots’ gaps disrupt the soil environment. So ‘wealth’ is shared at root level. – knowledge, resources, etc. Each tree experiences different growing conditions, but photosynthesis is all the same- i.e. we all need the same basic raw ingredients to grow.

The Importance of Wood wide Web networks:

Forest health - The Wood Wide Web plays a crucial role in maintaining the health and resilience of the ecosystem – **its sector**.

Ecosystem functions: The interconnections of plants through the wood wide web highlights the complex and cooperative nature of ecosystems.

Research and understanding: The wood wide web is an area of ongoing research – people are still exploring the full extent of its influence on plant communication, resource, sharing and forest ecology.

Key Takeaways:

Learning from wood wide web networks, like forests, can nurture the sector in a more holistic manner to:

- Develop a strong understanding of **the importance of communication and construction of complex ecosystems** – the landscape of the young audience sector, currently.
- Create a network that is **inclusive and best serves in diverse members**.
- Set up a system/structure that is **sustainable, equitable and self-lead in parts**.
- **Provide support** to those who need it at times, to **strengthen** the sector and **keep it in good health!**
- **Learn, form partnerships and research** to be actively and continuously understand the changing landscape and access barriers within the sector, for a **healthy and sustainable network** to be made.

Recommendations:

What is meant by ‘self- led’? This characteristic is specified in the Young Audience Groups research objectives regarding the networks structure. The YAG need to address this before a network structure is decided. **Support** is a vital access requirement/provision that enables marginalised people/ artists and the next generation, to enter, remain and progress within this sector – and thus the new network!

It is therefore recommended that **support is embedded within the networks structure**, to be inclusive and best serve its members. This should be facilitated in a manner of ways. However, regarding its online presence more research is needed to ensure **digital inclusion**.

Initial recommendations include the following: however more **research and specialism knowledge is needed** if the network decides to create a website for its members.

For digital inclusion the YAG need to consider:

- **Purpose built website** in accordance with website and mobile app accessibility regulations.
- **Consultation** from working groups (disabled, D/deaf, neurodivergent - dyslexic, visually impaired ESL...) regarding practical website accessibility before, during and after website is made!
- **Accessible Website Audit** - from consultation working groups.
- **Screen Reader Accessibility** consultation and implementation (desktop & mobile compatibility)
- Include **visual representation of protected characteristics** on website – this should be the bare minimum regarding anti-racism and anti-ableism work.

Social Media Platforms and Communication

The new network needs to **carefully consider** which online social platforms it uses to communicate with its members. This needs more research and consultation work with marginalised communities, and ‘led- organisations’ to navigate this decision correctly.

It is advised that multiple social media platforms should be used by the network to communicate with its members, to reach and include more members.

In marketing, alternative methods to written text should be considered for inclusivity and accessibility. Such as illustrations, easy read, captioned videos -should be considered to support different learners and learning styles.

Trauma Informed Practice (TIP): Toolkit

“Trauma has no boundaries with regard to age, gender, socio-economic status or ethnicity, and represents an almost universal experience across the countries of the world.- Research exploring the distribution of traumatic events based on gender, age, ethnic background and socio-economic status has shown that traumatic events are more frequently experienced by people in low socio-economic groups and from black and minority ethnic communities” (Hatch & Dohrenwend, 2007).

The Trauma Informed Practice Toolkit (TIP) was developed by the Scottish Government in 2021 to support the ambition to provide Scotland's workforce with clear, tangible examples of where trauma informed practice can successfully be embedded across different sectors; to enable transformational change in society. It helps ensure services **within all sectors practice and deliver in ways that reduce barriers and prevent**

further harm or re-traumatisation for those who have experienced psychological trauma or adversity at any stage in their lives.

It focuses on five key principles:

- **Safety**
- **Trustworthiness**
- **Choice**
- **Collaboration**
- **Empowerment**

With an awareness that this toolkit misses the sixth principle included in Gov UK working definition of Trauma Informed Practice (2022):

- **Cultural Consideration**

To move past cultural stereotypes and biases based on -gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, geography, race or ethnicity by:

- offering access to gender responsive services
- leveraging the healing value of traditional cultural connections
- incorporating policies, protocols and processes that are responsive to the needs of individuals served

Trauma research highlights that **those with protected characteristic experience trauma more frequently**. This is important for the sector, and the new network to understand and address with appropriate support embedded from the start. If it is to set up a system that is sustainable and ensures marginalised communities can access the sector and the new network.

“Neurodiversity and trauma can significantly overlap, leading to complex challenges in understanding and addressing both. - Neurodivergent individuals, including those with autism or ADHD, may be more vulnerable to trauma due to sensory sensitivities, social difficulties, and communication challenges.” - Dr Abi Hooper (2025)

Recommendations:

It is strongly recommended that **Trauma Informed Training and Practice should be priority in initial planning stages of the new network structure and be embedded throughout.**

A Trauma Informed practice should be the foundation and baseline for the new network and embedded throughout all its activity for the young audience sector. Beginning with those working within organisations which form The Young Audience Group.

An awareness of this practice should continue to inform all network activities in the future and should be shared with others within areas of sector at all levels. TIP should also be incorporated into all future engagement programmes, events and strategies in a multidisciplinary manner.

This will **support all outlined objectives from the YAG**, intended in the delivery of a new network for those working or not yet working in the sector.

This will further implement YAG objective to:

- **Develop a strong understanding of how a more inclusive, diverse and equitable network can be created and sustained in the sector.**

Research

Creative Access Outreach and Engagement Programme

This programme was designed with **access, sensory, wellbeing and TIP embedded** throughout.

Facilitated by several meeting and engagement opportunities implementing:

- **Access provision**
- **Sensory provision**
- **Wellbeing and mental health provision**
- **Safety - (physical, mental, financial)**
- **Trustworthiness**
- **Choice**
- **Collaboration**
- **Empowerment**
- **Cultural Consideration**

This was facilitated in the following manner:

Outreach and Connection

Initial outreach work focused and embedded **safety** and **trustworthiness** from the start. Contacting people with **cultural consideration** at the forefront, being understanding and respectful to diverse perspectives, communication styles, and work



habits. Giving transparent information about the research project and its outcomes. Treating people with respect, listening to their needs to develop **trusting** relationships and interactions.

Access Budget

An access budget was in place to make people feel **safe, empowered** and build **trustworthiness** to enable and support people to take part in this opportunity.



This was available to support childcare, travel, BSL interpreters, language interpreters, captioners, sensory resources, and other provision which made this opportunity accessible.

Fee

A fair fee, **financial safety/security** was given to artists/practitioners in exchange for their time and contributions to research findings. In addition to this a separate **wellbeing fee** was included for artists/practitioners to access aftercare provision post outreach engagement/meetings. Enforcing **empowerment**, respect and **safety**.

Engagement Formats & Offerings

A variety of nurturing and creative options were offered to research participants to enable meaningful connections for each to contribute individual feedback, within their own comfort levels and access needs. A **choice** of meeting and engagement styles were offered. Giving opportunities of **empowerment and safety** to participants to choose, **collaborate**, and change bespoke engagement formats. To create options that were right for them and provided appropriate provisions for **access, sensory, wellbeing** and **mental health** requirements.

“I felt cared for and that people are interested” – Artist

This format was **detrimental** in supporting artists/practitioners to feel **safe** -physically, emotionally and financially. To be at ease and to openly and honestly discuss their experiences within the sector. Particularly for those whose life experiences may have included varying levels of trauma, due to intersectional inequalities.

The bespoke design for each meeting aimed to create safe environments, on individual terms, and avoid re-traumatization and stress response behaviours -that impact, stunt and shut down positive and successful interactions and collaborations.

A variety of paid 1.5hr -2hr meetings were offered, with location and time chosen by participants.

These included:

- In-person (indoors, outside, home based...)
- Online (face-to face/camera off)
- Non face –to face (Phone, voice notes, video notes, emails, postal)

Offered in the following formats:

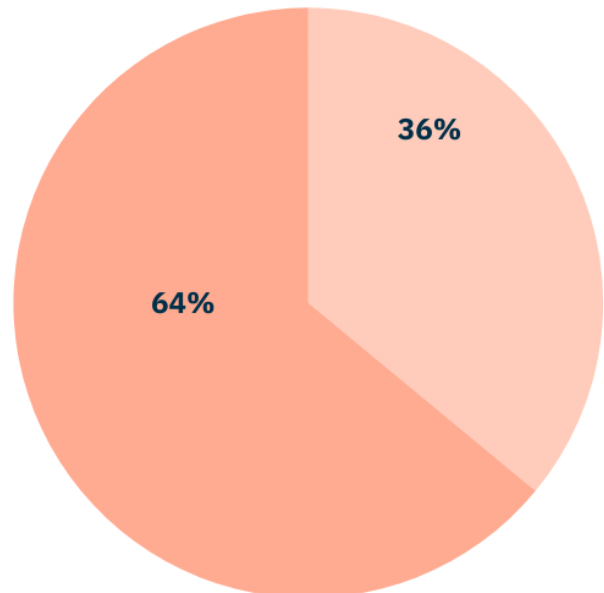
- **Brew and Blether - in-person** (walking/sitting/indoor/outdoor)
- **Brew and Blether- online** (tea/hot drink postal packages)
- **Play surgeries - in person /online** - materials supplied
- **Mark Making surgeries in person/online** - materials supplied
- **Breakfast meetings with breakfast** - in person
- **Breakfast meeting with breakfast** - online with breakfast box sent in advance
- **Child Friendly Locations** -Play Park/outdoor/soft play meet ups
- **Play Packages** - for participants with child/ren caring responsibilities whilst meeting in person/online.
- **Wild Swimming and lunch**
- **Fire Talking** - talks around fires at beaches/woodlands/home gardens
- **Non-Face to Face opportunities** – phone/ postal packages/writing/voice notes/video recordings.

Engagement meeting environments chosen by artists/practitioners



 In Person meeting

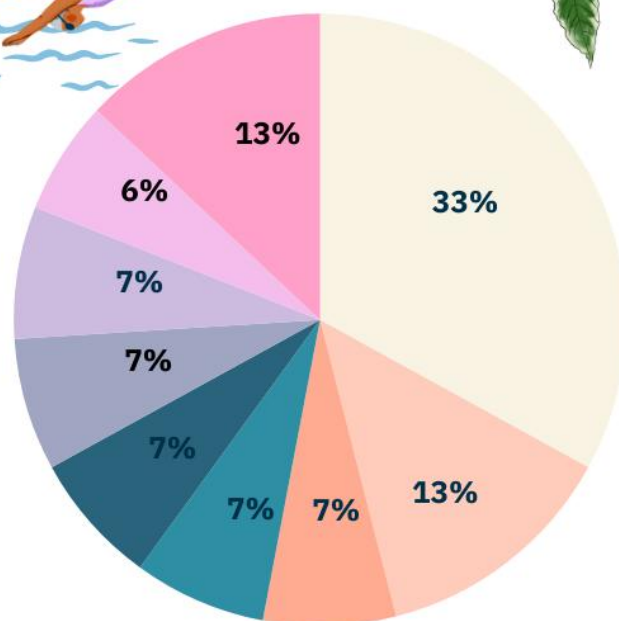
 Online meeting



Engagement meetings chosen by artists/practitioners



-  Brew & Blether with home postal sensory well-being meeting box
-  Brew & Blether with home postal coffee & cake box
-  Brew & Blether with home postal coffee & cake box
-  Brew Blether and walk in nature
-  Brew Blether in café and walk in nature
-  Cafe breakfast and chat - quiet setting
-  Cafe lunch and chat - quiet setting
-  Beach: Cold water swimming & Fire
-  Online Chat -camera off



Findings

The State of the Sector Via an Access Lens:

Feedback from Artists/ Practitioners Working in the Sector

The general census of artists and practitioners participating in research felt the young audience sector - organisations and individuals, lacked the awareness and understanding of the multiple access barriers attached to being an artist/practitioner from a marginalised community group, working in this sector. With overall **concern that there is a lack of capacity and money in the sector to create a supportive, inclusive and accessible network model**. With little hope that one could be facilitated, self-led nor sustained.

“The new network really needs to think hard about how the sector is at the moment, and what its offering is for people in it. What are we offering? Do people already struggling really want to enter a struggling sector, which is not a financially, emotionally or supportive community?”

- Practitioner

Burnout

Artist/ practitioners from marginalised groups experiencing intersectional barriers of inequality, described emotions of **deflation and burnout** attached to working in this sector. Expressing *“burnout is common”*, being built into its structure and believing that this is the “norm” in freelance life. With the sector giving the impression that *“a stressful way of living is sustainable.”* Freelancers described competitively chasing contracts, and pots of funding to try and remain working in the sector. With timely, inaccessible and unpaid application and recruitment processes, with inconsistent out-comes – resulting in *“financial feasts or famines”*. This is affecting artist retention in the sector, and in Scotland with some marginalised artists reporting they will eventually **have to leave the sector** altogether.

Love

Immense amounts of passion, skill and dedication to the sector was captured from this research. By individuals expressing excitement and creativity when describing and summarising creative projects, and potential ideas. Hope for structural change within the sector and the overall the creative arts sector being a frequently mentioned desire. With the want and need for opportunities and development within the sector being mentioned by all.

Impact on Mental Health

All freelancers, artists and practitioners felt the stressful sector landscape impacted their mental health, poorly. With disabled, neurodivergent and D/deaf artists/practitioners with access requirements, expressing this strongly. Artists and practitioners agreed more support was needed within the sector, in particular mental health and wellbeing support. D/deaf artists mentioned they had no knowledge of where to go to access mental health support, within and out with the sector.

Lack of Support & Development Opportunities

“Promotion/increase in money” - this isn’t recognised in the sector for growing and developing professionally.

Artists and practitioners within the sector all mentioned support and opportunities were needed in many formats, styles and areas to enable them to work better, develop and improve. However, there was a lack of “knowing” regarding, where to find support, and opportunities, and what was currently available in the sector for individual needs.

Inconsistent Work and Money Provided by the Sector

Artists reported a lack of long-term/ permanent, paid work and opportunities – to sustainably live financially secure, and for professional development. The lack of paid long- term contracts/opportunities particularly impacted disabled freelancers. With unpredictable and inconsistent gaps in employment resulting in government benefit entitlements being applied for, reduced, sanctioned or stopped.

Artists with caring and childcare responsibilities also reported inconsistent contracts prevented them from accessing permanent childcare – with adhoc childcare options being very rarely provided in childcare settings. Lone parent artists, with no family support, also acknowledged this as *“extremely challenging to be in this sector”*.

Inconsistent Access Management from Organisations

Many artists and practitioners felt organisations within the sector were not synced up, finding resources, opportunities, artists work, and particularly surrounding access management of artists, inclusive language, best practices and projects.

“It’s hard to find and know this sector” –Artist

Disabled, neurodivergent and D/deaf artists/practitioners with multiple access requirements repeatedly reported complex challenges to work in the sector. Often, deflated by continuously championing for what they needed to work in it. Many reported how this impacted negatively on their mental health.

Others reported ending conversations or relationships with organisations in the sector, as they considered themselves to have “*too many barriers*”, knowing their access needs can't be supported.

“The reality is, I’m too expensive to employ due to my access stuff. Its, an elephant in the room. I see it, I feel it.” - Artist

The following reasons for this were stated:

- lack of awareness
- lack of staff
- lack of staff consistency /high turnover
- lack of staff capacity
- lack of budget to support
- continuous, similar conversations regarding access needs not being met

Artists and practitioners **expressed that access needs to be considered as a whole organisation's role** – not just fall on one person in the team.

Unconscious Ableism/ Racism/ Classism in Practice and Language

Artist addressed both the unconscious ableism and racism embedded in the structure, practice and language of the sector. With the belief that some organisations need more training on this.

Inclusive language was expressed as needing “*more work*” in the sector. Particularly regarding protected characteristics, where negative connections with phrases and words linked. Particularly relating to ableism and racism were considered common within the sector. For example, “*Blind to it*” and “*Black- listed*”.

Unconscious racism and classism where also considered present in the sector.

Addressed by Black Global Majority artists, explaining they considered organisations to **lack cultural knowledge and awareness** linked to different arts practices and cultural heritage. Black artists detailed panel experiences as being predominantly white.

Impacting and influencing panels final decisions to not programme work from experienced Black and Global Majority artists specialising in particular arts practices. Regarding it as “inappropriate”, with classism also aiding selection and cultural considerations and awareness not being present.

Racial and ableist bias were also mentioned by artists to be current throughout the sector.

Networking

Networking or *'knowing people in the sector'* was regarded by all research participants to be an important thing. People recognised that this is something that the sector needs to improve, particularly for people who describe themselves as introverted or having complex personalities.

“Outgoing, friendly and confident personalities feel like an important characteristic in this sector to build connections and grow – gain opportunities.” - Artist

Marginalised artists and practitioners reported networking events and opportunities as inaccessible. These are explained in more detail throughout this report.

Disabled, neurodivergent, Visually Impaired, D/deaf and chronically ill artists reported that their **disabilities and access needs impacted on socialising and communication** –often going against neuro-normative networking behaviours. I.e. - eye-contact, chatty....

“I may come across as rude, reserved or arrogant in social normative settings” - Artist

At networking events, there was a general feeling from artists that **access provision was basic, “just for show” and tokenistic.**

“Access is never thought all the way through an event. Which appears very tokenistic, especially when events are promoting or discuss their enhanced work – for disabled /PMLD audiences! Which ironically makes attending inaccessible for disabled/neurodivergent/D/deaf/visually impaired and chronically ill artists making enhanced work!” -Artist

Feedback from Artists/ Practitioners Not Working in the Young Audience Sector

Artist and practitioners within the **following contexts**, currently not working in the young audience sector were asked why they didn't work in this sector. Identifying the access barriers which currently prevent them working or wanting to work in the sector.

This included artists and practitioners who currently:

- work with young people/children/babies already in different cultural settings/sectors (play, youth, adult)
- work in other child settings/programmes/organisations
- have not been a Lead Artist in the Young Audience Sector

Reoccurring access themes fell under the following topics:

- **Vulnerability - Access being considered with Risk**
- **Dominant Capitalist Neurotypical & Ableist Structures**
- **Hierarchy of Artistic Practices**
- **No Clear Route to Enter the Sector**

Vulnerability - Access being Considered with Risk

Artists and practitioners currently not working in the young audience sector raised concerns centring around what would be classed as *Re-Traumatisation* based on the Trauma Informed Toolkit and its practice. Expressing concerns that they are not sure the sector can support their needs and therefore would:

“feel vulnerable being in this sector.”

- Artist not working in Sector

This feeling was particularly strong from marginalised artists that considered themselves as having **“too many barriers”** – therefore expressed they don’t/can't work in the sector if you have lots!

Dominant Capitalist Neurotypical & Ableist Structures

Risk – was a reoccurring thought in relation to supporting access within this sector. With it also being described in relation to funders, programmers and venues reluctance

to support the research, development and programming of sensory theatre, enhanced performances or cultural experiences for disabled and PMLD audiences.

Artists expressed neurodivergent creative models did not mesh with capitalist neuro-normative performance structures in particular. Highlighting the following neuro-normative characteristics that don't support, but prevent PMLD/neurodivergent audiences to attend or be part of this sector:

- Fast
- Bums on seats –physically and to make money!
- Big audiences
- Same or familiar models being used

“Accessible/ enhanced performances are seen as risky – but this element of risk is often perceived by a neurotypical opinion and expectation of what a theatre model for this audience is.” - Artist not working in sector

Risk and lack of understanding for what audiences accessing sensory and enhanced performances needed were prevalent in research feedback.

“Often what neurodivergent audiences (stimming bodies/minds) need are outside of normative constraints of capitalist models of production-

Audiences being on the periphery is ok! Performers are not the most important thing in the room (!) individuals in this audience can have a different point of focus. Which is exciting and should be learned from!”

-Artists not in sector

Neurodivergent artists considered the sector to have a **dominant neuro-normative and ableist perspective of making work for children**. With engagement styles seen and respected from a very neurotypical lens throughout the sector. A concern for many neurodivergent artists and practitioners that this will continue throughout the new networks structure and events and opportunity models.

Capitalist neuro-normative /ableist structures, working styles, processes and engagement styles were considered a profound access barrier, particularly from neurodivergent artists and practitioner. With neurodivergent artists feeling their work would be prevented from being made due to neurotypical expectations and structured panel and application processes.

“It would need to be radically relaxed for me to develop work in the sector. I don’t know if there is any structure or opportunities that would hold that development process for me as an artist?” – Artist not in sector

Hierarchy of Artistic Practices

Artists not working in the young audience sector expressed feeling a sense of hierarchy of artistic practices within the cultural sector. **Feeling it was classists.** With some artists feeling as though they did not fit in within the sector or were not welcome or valued within it.

The performance sector was considered top of the hierarchy, outranking more socially engaged arts practices, such as Community Arts. With community artists feeling “*at the bottom*” of the cultural hierarchy. Community Artists expressed “*taking the brunt of lack of services in the community*” providing artistic trauma responsive programmes as official/unofficial mental health and social prescriptions. However, often not being appropriately or professionally supported themselves with little or no aftercare.

“Community Arts is not valued like Performance Art”

-Artist not working in sector

No Clear Route to Enter the Sector

Artist and practitioners expressed that there were no obvious starting points to get into the sector, and did not know how to begin trying to enter it for work.

Artists expressed there were no opportunities to “*just sit in on a process and engage with work*”, as a ‘soft starting point’ to meet people/collaborators and learn about the sector.

Identifying Access Barriers: In Detail.

Participants were asked the question:

“What are the barriers you currently experience in the sector?”

Access barriers experienced by artists and practitioners have been categorised under the following topics:

- Age
- Application & Recruitment Processes
- Cultural Awareness in Sector, Application & Recruitment Processes

- Caring Responsibilities
- Financial & Disability Benefit Barriers
- Freelance Awareness
- Living in Remote Areas
- Navigating the sector
- Neurodivergent, Disability & D/deaf, Chronically Ill Awareness
- Networking and Connecting with Others
- PMLD / Neurodivergent Audience Awareness

Age

“Entering the sector as a ‘older artist’ at entry level is difficult.” - Artist

Artists described experiences of working with others a lot younger than them, at entry level opportunities as *‘dis-hearting’*.

Application & Recruitment Processes

“There must be more creative ways to get more people to work in this sector!” -Artist

The following access barriers were mentioned:

- corporate recruitment & application methods being used in creative sector
- inaccessible application & callout formats and recruitment processes
- time/energy needed to complete lengthy applications
- lack of awareness for freelancers' work/life balance – deadlines, length of applications and time needed to complete these
- unpaid time to do lengthy/many applications
- unclear sector ‘slang’ - jargon, terms, buzz words, terminology
- no feedback from organisations from ‘rejected applications’
- learning differences –dyslexia/dyscalculia/dyspraxia
- lack of education/confidence
- competitive application process meaning regularly rejected and becoming disheartened to work in sector.

Cultural Awareness in Sector, Application & Recruitment Processes

“What is Entry Level? We need to decide this – to encourage more diverse backgrounds to apply”. – Artist

- unconscious systemic racism in sector
- lack of cultural appropriateness from organisations and gatekeepers in understanding ethnic minority / marginalised community groups and their work.
- programming of work culturally insensitive
- panels being tokenistic and racially bias if not diverse enough.
- inaccessible to English as Second Language artists
- written applications not always appropriate
- unable to do video apps – no knowledge/experience/confidence as a marginalised young person.
- immigrant/refugee status artists and education level/confidence
- no visual representation of themselves in the organisation, or application processes
- family dynamics - family/parents' attitudes to the arts and lack of jobs prospects – not seen as fruitful.

Caring Responsibilities

- inaccessible work models for parents in the sector
- lone parent families
- caring responsibilities as a neurodivergent parent
- cost of childcare
- ADHOC childcare not available in childcare sector
- no family to support childcare
- limited childcare/family support due to ‘Sandwich care’ generation of ‘grandparents looking after grandchildren and Great-Grandparents simultaneously – whilst also working
- having a neurodivergent child and little childcare options

Financial & Disability Benefit Barriers

Financial

- no stability financially in the sector as an artist or freelancer
- Inconsistent rates of pay
- Inconsistent/ temp/project based employment

- working class lower income families/parents/individuals – money is always an issue

Disability Benefits

- having to claim benefits in ‘dry spells’ within the sector
- benefits being cut due to taking on temp work
- benefit cuts overall from government
- PIP and or Back to Work schemes- Impact of disability benefits/support being paused/stopped if taking ad hoc/ freelance temp contracts & work in the sector.
- Universal credit – claiming and being self -employed at the same time is complex, resulting in people not applying, therefore being financially worse off.
- Carers Support Payment - limiting how much work you can take, due to weekly the earning cap.
- Access to Work – is regarded as inaccessible for disabled artists and BSL interpreters as it is too difficult to apply for and doesn’t pay straight away.

Freelancing Awareness

- no financial stability -income/sick pay/pensions
- organisations not understanding the difference in freelancers’ workloads compared to salaried staff
- juggling multiple jobs at once, impacting mental health for very low overall income
- being ‘led on’ about projects and fees
- debuting fees for inappropriate pay for heavy workloads/projects
- -organisations moving times lines which impact on other freelance workload/projects/income, capacity and overall mental health
- lack of understanding for financial impact when timelines are moved or “*half-day fees – it is never half a day's work*”
- unpaid admin time & meetings
- time looking for jobs and opportunities in different places, often whilst still working
- childcare and being a freelancer -financial and mental stress
- competitive sector – not enough work for many applying

Living in Remote Areas

- location of remote living and work opportunities not being there
- travel time to jobs and events
- cost of travel

- not being reimbursed for travel

Navigating the sector

- gatekeeping in the sector
- lack of capacity in the sector to support access needs
- high turnover of freelancing staff within the sector
- difficult to find things you need
- resources are not there to support my professional development

Neurodivergent, Disability & D/deaf & Chronically Ill Awareness

“You are a bother and come with baggage” - Artist

- ‘not having enough spoons’ to navigate the sector as a neurodivergent person
- admin – can take much longer as a neurodivergent person
- lack of respect from orgs regarding admin and time needed to do this
- last minute changes/needs from organisations – very stressful
- moving timelines
- little dyslexia awareness *“I find it difficult to articulate myself”*
- having too many access barriers
- complex health issues
- continuously repeating own access requirements to different and same organisations – *“disheartening and exhausting”*
- neurodivergent behaviours/symptoms seen as problematic with arts practices. i.e.-Time keeping, learning new things, travelling to new places, rehearsal spaces etc.
- no practical support offered for attending events

Networking and Connecting with Others

“I go into these spaces feeling anxious as these characteristics (extroverted) are seen as priority. We need different personalities. My disability makes me un-recognise people, which people might consider me being rude, when I'm not!” Artist

- dominant neurotypical networking options -therefore inaccessible
- mentally exhausting

- ableist and neuro-normative examples of socialising most valued

“Social connections don’t need to be eye contact and words.”-

Artist

- physically/ sensorially inaccessible venues – (small, crowded, noisy!)
- non intimidating/ playful networking styles not offered

“Play is a valuable tool for neurodivergent people to connect.” -

Artist not in Sector

- alcohol – culturally and medically unappropriated
- gatekeeping – leaders in sector dictating spaces and interactions
- little opportunities in rural areas
- BSL interpretation delivery and management being poor
- D/deaf awareness and accessibility not considered properly at in-person and online events
- financially unable to attend networking events
- travel time –particularly for those not living in central belt

PMLD / Neurodivergent Audience Awareness

- engagement models undervalued/misunderstood -small numbers for high impact **rather** than “more bums on seats” ethos.
- different engagement models seen as ‘too risky’ or ‘radical’ resulting in very little support from funders and organisations to create work for this audience.
- *“Culture for Cultures sake”* – funders outcomes impact on creativity

Supportive Actions

To understand:

- How the Young Audience Group can create a network or membership group/collective that would best serve its members and the sector.
- How the young audience sector could set up a system that would be sustainable, equitable and self-led.

Artists and practitioners working and not working in the sector were asked:

“What are the ‘solutions’ to these barriers for you?”

The word 'solution' felt incorrect to some artists and practitioners, giving the impression that access barriers are an 'easy fix' or in a 'fixed state', when often they are complex and in a fluid state. Therefore, **supportive actions** will be used in its place.

The following feedback was given from artists regarding supportive actions the network could consider to best serve its members and the sector.

Creating an Accessible Sector: Artists Feedback

- **Stability!** Financial stability for artists and their practice.
- **Resources!**
- **Solutions for capacity building in the sector**
- **Different models and structures** needed for creative processes of ND, Disabled, D/deaf, chronically ill, and Global Majority artists.
- **Long term investments** from organisations to make work for marginalised audience's - regularly!
- **Good and varied Anti-ableist training** for the whole sector
- **Neurodivergent Awareness Training** -focusing on engagement and interactions
- **Good and varied Anti-racism training** for the whole sector
- **Good and varied D/deaf Awareness Training** for the whole sector
- **Separate access budgets** in all projects/organisations
- Money to research and develop **Accessible Recruitment models**
- **Flexible working models to support childcare/caring responsibilities**
- **Working groups being put together**
- **Development opportunities that connect others**

Other Supportive Actions

Resources were mentioned frequently. The general opinion was that there are resources out there, however they are fragmented throughout the cultural sector and not in one place. This meant artists were unable to easily find resources that may support them.

The most mentioned resources regarding access support currently experienced by artists and practitioners in the sector included:

- Access Rider documents
- Wellbeing Officer

Access Riders

Feedback from artists regarding the use of access riders via organisations was predominantly positive, by those who had used it; however, it was met with **mixed feelings regarding the process and the facilitation of getting this information**. With feedback being varied between:

“It makes me feel like the organisation are being proactive about supporting access.” - Artists

“It’s asking you to highlight that you are vulnerable” - Artist

Therefore, it must be noted some may consider this a re-traumatizing action, which does not align with Trauma Informed Practice. It should also be noted that some consider this document as classist. With it being described by some as ***“a middle -class action that excludes working class artists”***, due to its formal and typically written format, which can be intimidating to some who consider their education poor. Either putting them off completing this or not knowing/considering they have what would be considered ‘access requirements’ from others within the sector.

The administration involved with this supportive document also needs to be considered. From both, artists and organisations prospective.

- Do either have capacity to complete/action this – sustainably and consistently?
- Can organisations in the sector manage access at the limited capacity/budgets there are currently act?
- Can they support this on multiple levels – i.e lots of artists with access requirements that need more time and support from them?

Therefore, **the practice of gaining this information, its format and delivery need to be ongoingly considered dependent on individual person, job (i.e. - duration/project) and organisations capacity and budget – honestly!** It is a supportive tool that should persist but does need care and more research to improve and continuously develop.

Wellbeing Officer

Artist both working and not working in the sector spoke **positively** of their previous contact with Wellbeing Officers throughout freelance projects. Artists felt this created

more consistency and execution of access provision, and bespoke models of working in accordance with individual access requirements and wellbeing needs.

Supportive Signposting

Artists and practitioners mentioned frequently the need for **supportive signposting** to guide them towards appropriate **information and support services**, which may benefit them whilst working in the sector.

Suggestions from artists and recommendations based on feedback include:

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Mental Health support and signposting (24/hr/ free/ sliding scale payments)
- BSL Mental Health Support signposting
- LGBTQI Mental Health Support
- Trans Mental Health Support
- Global Majority Mental Health & wellbeing support (specialist support for black, minority ethnic, asylum seeker, refugee and migrant women)
- Children's Mental Health Resources
- Specialist Children's Mental Health Resources (i.e Trans, Refugee children)
- Bereavement Support
- Suicide Bereavement support
- Mental Health First Aider signposting on site
- Home delivered Support Boxes to support online events and meetings
- Trauma Informed Practice Toolkit
- Knowing your Rights (!)
- Advocacy – for marginalised artists and audiences!
- Peer check-ins – in person/online
- Buddying systems

Financial

- Benefits checker
- Grants finder
- Project funding search engine
- Citizens Advice/legal advice signposting
- Resources for organisations – signposting to utilize Access To Work!
- Self-employment and Tax support
- Unions

Admin Support for Neurodivergent people

- Dyslexia admin support signposting for sustainable freelancing
- Peer support /buddy system/ accountability partners/co-working
- Document Templates
- Funding and proposal application writing support

Documents/Guides/information

- Access Riders/Code of Care - best practice
- Easy Read documents
- 'Getting Started Guide' – *“understanding the sector as a ‘newbie!’”*
- Invoicing templates & guides
- How to make a video application guide
- Child Protection/ Safeguarding Guidance – with trainee/participant mental health support /after care
- Child Consultations – ongoing best practice research
- Sexual Harassment in performing arts sector
- Casting Breakdown examples
- Fundraising support

Family Support Resources

- Lone Parent Family Support
- Carers support
- Childcare

Databases

A strong interest in clear search engines to find the following information was expressed as a supportive action for networking, collaboration and providing access.

- Artist/collaborators – finding other artists, knowing who people are!
- Captioners
- Audio Describer
- BSL interpreters
- Language Interpreters
- Producers

Access Services currently used in the Cultural Sector

To develop a strong understanding of how a diverse network can be developed and sustained, research was carried out to analyse the access services that support **both**

artists and audiences currently within the cultural sector, including the young audience sector.

To do this the following services were researched:

- **Audio Description (AD)**
- **BSL**
- **Captioning**

Feedback was gained from Audio Describers, BSL Interpreters and Captioners using the same research method: Creative Access Outreach and Engagement Programme. Artists who also require this access provision also contributed to this part of research.

Audio Description (AD)

Audio described performances provide live verbal commentary for visually impaired individuals, describing visual elements of a production in pauses between the dialogue. This commentary is relayed through headphones, ensuring the audience can follow the plot, understand action sequences, and appreciate the overall experience. Many theatres also offer pre-performance "touch tours" allowing audiences to explore the set and costumes.

Audio Describers in Scotland spoke about the current use of Audio Description within the performance sector highlighting more research and development is needed in this service.

Audio Describers mentioned occasions in which young people had contacted them to ask about audio describing live music such as Taylor Swift and Harry Styles concerts. Audio Describers were excited and interested to provide AD in these settings and be audience responsive. However, within the young audience sector, audio description could be classed as almost non-existent.

“More work and conversations are needed with VI children! This is a super neglected group.” - Audio Descriptor

Indepth research is needed to understand and identify why this is, however, initial research of AD within the cultural sector can conclude the following reasons why Audio Description is not widely used, even when offered by performances and venues:

Inaccessible websites

- VI audiences are unable to access performance websites, and therefore can't find AD performances
- Booking options for AD performances are inaccessible

Location of AD Performance

- VI audiences are unable to physically travel to venues due to inaccessible travel options or venue locations

Venues

- Venues are not VI friendly
- Venues do not promote or offer AD headsets on site at performance – therefore VI audiences attending don't know it's available.
- VI audiences must ask for headsets – which is an access barrier for some.

Audio Description

- Quality is inconsistent from Audio Describer
- Culturally inappropriate language used -Audio Describers need to be mindful of how they describe disabled people, those with protected characteristics and cultural appropriateness to audiences.
- Lack of creativity and quality in AD performances

Poor AD Technology

- AD headsets are usually, old technology and inconsistently work properly. Loosing trust with this audience.
- Venues do not have the appropriate space to facilitate an IR Audio Description from another room. Technology is old and therefore does not always allow this.

Artistic Disconnect

“In our culture hierarchy sight is top, we don’t have to put this sense of top. AD still puts the perception that this is the top sense of the sense hierarchy.” - Artist

“AD – doesn’t allow you to enjoy the performance or experience in your own way” - Artist

There appears to be a **disconnect** between the current facilitation of audio description and creative process and outcomes expected/ wanted from artists/audiences.

It also raises questions if audio description is the best way to enhance a cultural experience for visually impaired audiences? Is it being done right – is it wanted this

way? Research shows creative possibilities that are currently being used by [theSpace - Using Audio Description and Alt Text Inclusively and Creatively](#).

This could be considered a innovative creative opportunity the Young Audience sector could, explore with visually impaired young people, children, artists and audio describers to develop exciting future work for children.

More money and research are needed to develop this service. Relationships with the visually impaired and blind community need to be actively pursued and strongly developed with more consultation needed from visually impaired/blind artists, producers, director – creatives. More of a collaboration with VI artists and producers/directors and audio describers is needed to make meaningful work for VI audiences in general.

“Lots of people can't see, and don't know or are unable to say. Aging populations, ASN... There is an audience.” - Artist

Creative research and funding needs to:

- Give power to visually impaired and blind artists to develop this access service.
- Facilitate relationship between VI artists, creatives, children, parents and audio describers
- Explore how AD/Touch Tours can be embedded creatively in work from the start and improving access of cultural experiences for VI -audiences' children and parents/carers.
- Ensure the VI community feels valued and invested in properly- financially and emotionally! – Consult, collaborate, listen and respond.

Funding also needs to address and support the technology and venue responsibility which impacts AD performances physically occurring. Supporting and addressing the following areas to enable, support and promote work by VI artists and for VI audiences:

- Highlight visual impairment within the sector
- Implement visual impairment awareness training in the sector
- Invest in Audio Description technology and [share it!](#) In research and development stages opportunities with artists and venues.
- Work with venues to create an accessible working model for [distributing Audio Description headset to audience members in venues that is consistent throughout](#) venues in the sector. For those who want to use this service.

British Sign Language (BSL)

British Sign Language (BSL) is the sign language used in the United Kingdom and is the first or preferred language of Deaf people in the UK. Action on Hearing Loss estimated that, in 2010, approximately 50,000 people in the UK used BSL.

- British Deaf Association

In theatre, BSL interpreters are hired to translate or interpret English in performance for the benefit of audience members with hearing impairments.

Very brief research was initiated to gather feedback to identify the access barriers experienced from D/deaf Artists and BSL Interpreters working in the sector. **This is an area that needs more in-depth research, led by the deaf community in partnership with well-established deaf-led performance organisations and artists/practitioners.** Only then can concise and well-informed recommendations be made which will inform the network how to support and prioritise the needs of D/deaf members.

Conversations and feedback in this initial stage of research included feedback from D/deaf artists and BSL interpreters working in the sector, in the context of BSL interpretation supporting:

- D/deaf artists working in the young audience sector
- D/deaf audiences viewing work in the sector
- BSL Interpreters working and not working in the Young Audience Sector

These should be acknowledged as a starting point and considered in the planning and strategic partnership work in: *Year of Getting to Know Each Other* stage of the new network:

The following topics were raised in conversations and should be addressed and implemented with further research:

Deaf Awareness Training for all the sector

- In aid to tackle D/deaf awareness information being retained due to high staff turnover in the sector/organisations/venues. Which were reported as being repeatedly lost throughout sector working environments. Ensuring D/deaf artists and BSL interpreters don't need to keep repeating what they need.

BSL as an Access Service

- Improving the sectors knowledge of this service – information, BSL interpreters database, etc.

- Improving organisation and sector awareness of prep time needed to translate scripts.
- Awareness and understanding of cost and pricing - being relative to prep time needed to translate
- Organisation and sector funding/access budgets- providing and ensuring affordability via funding and budget planning, sector wide.
- D/deaf BSL Interpreters and Captioners collaborations to improve this service

Access to Work -Government payment scheme

- More sector/organisation awareness that scheme can support paying BSL interpreters.
- Awareness that BLS interpreters report scheme as being unreliable in payment time.

Addressing the Little Programming of D/deaf- led work for Children

- not enough D/deaf performers in Young Audience Sector
- potential partnerships with [RCS and its undergrad deaf performers](#)
- Potential partnerships with established Deaf-Led performance organisations, and youth/children working groups such as [Solar Bear's Deaf Youth Group](#)

BSL Interpretation at Sector Networking Events/ Rehearsals/R&D days

- The planning and facilitation of this service in these different settings needs improved with D/deaf- led consultation. With the implementation of access liaison person overseeing provision at networking and larger events. To ensure continuous evaluation and development.

Accessible Marketing for D/deaf Artists and Audiences

- Promoting work accessibly for BSL users
- Improving accessible marketing of events to increase reach of D/deaf artists in the sector
- Exploring and evaluating how to do this and develop best practice
- Creating best practices to champion consistency in the sector

Addressing Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion within BSL and BSL Interpretation Sector in Scotland:

- The pool of BSL interpreters is predominantly white, female, straight women.

- Not enough visual representation of race and disability from the BSL Sector. Which also Impacts on the Young Audiences Sector and its visual representation which should enforce **“There I am, therefore, I can!”** ethos – **resulting in** marginalised children **not seeing themselves** in roles like this within this sector.
- Inheritance of racism in BSL language – some signs considered culturally inappropriate
- Active partnerships need to be made with Global Majority BSL interpreters. Such as [*-Interpreters of colour network 2020 – Facebook*](#)

Captioning

Captioning displays dialogue, sound effects and off-stage noises in a text format, normally created by an operator, and can be beneficial for D/deaf or hard of hearing people, people with learning disabilities, some neurodivergent people or also those for whom English is not their first language.

The following different types of captioning are used in the sector:

- **Live Captioning** – unscripted
- **Theatre Captioning** – scripted
- **Open Captioning** – For audience to see. Most inclusive event option
- **Closed Captioning** – For individual use via a device

***Open and closed Captioning** both used at an event is regarded as best practice.

The pool of captioners, captioning performance in Scotland is small. Currently, no funding body holds a central place for captioners in Scotland. Therefore, in Scotland captioners work on a self-employed basis, self-updating their own services.

Brief research was carried out to discover the access barriers for captioners working in the sector.

It is advised that more research is needed, for the new network and the sector to develop a deeper understanding of this service. To fully understand how to support captioners using the new network, and the young audiences that use this service.

Initial feedback should be acknowledged as a starting point and should be considered in the planning and strategic partnership work in: *Year of Getting to Know Each Other* stage of the new network:

Sector Awareness of Captioning Services

- Improvement of sector awareness and understanding of different captioning types

- More sector education of how this service works; currently this has resulted in unpaid captioner labour – editing, formatting not taken into consideration
- Creative Captioning – Highlighting this can be an option but it still needs to be accessible!

Audiences it Benefits

- More sector awareness of how this service benefits lots of community groups.
- Therefore, understanding why more prep time is needed by captioners due to the complexity of access barriers, intersectional inequality barriers, and conflicting access requirements for different marginalised communities - who benefit from this access service.

Addressing the small pool of captioners in Scotland

- Planning in advance for this and its use in the sector!
- Demand for this service outnumbers supply.

Equalities Diversity and Inclusion

- Sector Awareness that access requirements need to be considered for the access service provider also! - i.e captioners, BSL interpreters & Audio Describer

Supporting Scottish Captioners

- Addressing there is no Scottish funding body or online platform that supports people working for this service.
- Beginning discussions on how the new network can support Scottish Captioners to work in the young audience sector – i.e. hosting a space/database for them.
- Championing for more Captioners in Scotland

Summary

It is apparent that all access services come with their own complex access barriers, inclusion and diversity inequalities.

Brief research also concludes that more time and money is needed to support all access services, individually, to develop and improve. This is necessary, as access requirements are fluid and continuously change. Therefore, so should the services which support these. However, this is not the sole responsibility of the young audience

sector to address – this also needs to be done internally within each access services own sector. Particularly, regarding the lack of ethnic and cultural diversity within pools of Audio Describers, BSL interpreters and Captioners within Scotland. Which ultimately bleeds over into the young audience sector regarding under-representation, when using these services.

The sector overall needs more awareness and education about all these services and how each benefit work being made, and creativity! But particularly its audiences and artists it serves. The sector also needs to be mindful that access requirements should be considered always, for everyone – including the person providing the access service. Which needs to be remembered throughout all access planning and provision. More anti-ableist work is needed here.

The young audience sector must continuously advocate for these services, as they enable both their artists and audiences to be included in the sector. To funders and the entire creative arts sector in Scotland.

Sector Re-structure – Starting with the new network

Artists and practitioners working and not working in the sector were asked the open questions:

“What would the ‘ideal’ network look like for you?”

“What are the priorities the new network needs to consider to be inclusive and welcoming?”

To support the learning of:

- Exploration of options to identify a structure that will support open access, diversity and parity of voices across the sector.

There were reoccurring themes, key words and discussions in response to these questions.

With the most frequent themes being **a network that:**

- **Valued Time**
- **Opportunities** - Growth and development were priority!
- **Welcoming** -Socialising, community and support that’s genuine and feels safe!
- **Respects children!**
- **Accessible**

Other ‘ideals’ mentioned for structure, content and presence of the network are all characteristics that can be **categorised in either one, or more key principles of Trauma Informed Practice.**

Artists and practitioners feedback included:

Safety

Welcoming

Support

support from others

Supportive of the Trans community

A place to go

Actively engage with new people coming in

Care

Connection

Trustworthiness

Transparency with plans

Transparency overall – Pay & Support!

“Trust, safety, security – in all manners of the word!”

“Follow up with people”

Consistency

Positive experience

Choice

Closed groups to enable nuance & open groups

Subgroups

Participatory experiences

Play surgeries

Events

Socialising /networking that is child friendly

Meet-ups

Light- touch

Simplicity

Fun

Research opportunities

Not project driven

A space for sensorial work

Collaboration

Network needs to have people in it with lived experiences

More interdisciplinary working examples

Collaborations – artists, organisations, groups, children

New connections

Child consultation

Community feel

“Links with more community arts organisations and artists where relationships with communities and potential audiences have already been established.”

Empowerment

Prioritise Training

Project sharing – know what work is being done in the sector.

“For the people!”

Advocacy

Subgroups for *“groups within marginalised groups”*

Being able to be yourself in a community

“People starting stuff!”

Cultural Consideration

A range of representations

Awareness of biases from each other and organisations

Awareness that everyone is in competition with each other

Connecting in ways that are culturally appropriate and sensitive

Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

It was important throughout this research to gain the childhood lived experiences from adult marginalised artists and practitioners, as children. Although these are historic

experiences of identified access barriers, the learning from this feedback should be considered valuable for the sector when working with marginalised children – as consultants, collaborators and as audiences.

This research should also be used as a strong starting point to inform the sector to create best working practices, for babies' children and young people who are unable to use their voice to articulate their access needs being met. Preverbal, non-speaking, English as a Second language, etc. Reminding the sector to always be child-led in all sense of the word, embed and advocate Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within the networks structure and activity.

Artists and practitioners working and not working in the sector were asked:

“Thinking back to when you were a child, and your access/sensory barriers what would have been an inclusive sector for you?”

Feedback came under the following themes:

- Visual Representation
- More Work in Rural and Deprived Areas
- Filling Programming ‘Gaps’ in Sector
- Children Teaching Adults and Showing they are Valued
- Respecting & Valuing Children’s Engagement Styles – with No Hidden Agenda!
- Social Stories & Trigger Warnings
- Understanding How to be Part of the Sector as an Adult
- Working with Parents
- Awareness Education for Performers

Visual Representation

- Visual representation of marginalised communities on stage!

“More big Black bodies!” -Artist

- Visual representation of marginalised communities in leading roles in the sector, and within rural areas.

“No visual representation of themselves in larger capacities in the sector, and very little in rural areas.” -Practitioner

- D/deaf children being represented more! Including being addressed in performances using BSL.

- Allowing all children to see different representations of people and cultures to understand inclusivity!

“Access needs to be embedded in children's thoughts...” - Artist

- Visually representation but examples that are not always being referenced in performances narrative!
- Gender affirming care – in the context of supporting boys within the arts.

More work in Rural and Deprived Areas

- Artists and practitioners from both rural and areas of multiple deprivation felt like they had been *“forgotten”* regarding being included in cultural experiences. This was regarding very little work touring schools in the highest deprived areas in Scotland. This is still the case currently.

“Children in this area need to be considered a lot!” - Practitioner

“Having a presence in places is a big thing for kids.” - Practitioner

- Rural areas and ex mining towns felt far removed from the sector.

“It's important that they (children) are exposed to those cultural experiences on their own doorstep.” -Artist

“Being a child in rural area and being part of a marginalised community is isolating”- Practitioner

Filling Programming ‘Gaps’ in Sector

- More work for neurodivergent teenagers and families
- More work for D/deaf children and families
- More work to support ethnic minorities and value different unrepresented cultures, such as Traveller children
- More spaces for young people to meet in a cultural and playful way- different models of performance experiences

Children Teaching Adults and Showing they are Valued

- Artists expressed concerns about making sure children felt safe, and secure and valued, to exchange and enable child collaborations.

“It's an exchange! – Artist

- Child consultation/ selection panels in creating work – looking to the play sector for best practice and engagement models.

- D/deaf children being given the opportunity to participate in the sector and contribute to change.

Respecting & Valuing Children's Engagement Styles – with No Hidden Agenda!

- A network that respects Children. Values them. Rewards them for their input and contributions.
- Respecting privacy and boundaries in different participation and engagement styles.
- *“Not everything is a photo opportunity for teachers, parents, carers, funders feedback”*. This should especially be considered when working with pre/nonverbal children and young people. Whose consent is typically gained by proxy.
- Providing different performance styles that respects introverted ‘shy’ children.

Social Stories & Trigger Warnings

- Trigger warnings for kids and parents, using social stories – especially if touring in areas of multiple deprivation, where intersectional social deprivations may impact on lived experiences, wellbeing and mental health.
- Providing these resources so children are empowered to opt in and opt out of these experiences.

Understanding How to be Part of the Sector as an Adult

- More opportunities to speak with performers and people working in theatre in all areas.
- Visual representation at all levels.

Working with Parents

- Educating parents and carers about the sectors work prospects; artists reported that parents were not supportive of careers pursuing the arts when they were children. Artists from the Global Majority mentioned this more in research but overall was a reoccurring access barrier experienced by many artists taking part.

Awareness Education for Performers

- More Disability and Neurodivergent awareness training to sector practitioners to improved childhood experiences being an audience member.
- More Sensorial Awareness Training and knowledge within the sector overall, to improve marginalised children's experiences in venues and performance engagements.

Summary and Recommendations

It is important for the sectors future that it embeds the practice of child consultation, collaborations and policy making with marginalised children.

Much work will be needed to do this, and strategic partnerships and other sectors input and collaboration will be needed to begin this work. Initial research for this work should start by reviewing the play sector, particularly Play Scotland and its working models for best practices in creating play strategies and policies with children, for children. Referring to Including Disabled Children in Play Provision in research.

This work could potentially inform and guide the network to lead a **Children's Creative Access Panel in the future** – facilitated through Play Strategies and Trauma Informed Practice. Which could empower marginalised babies, children and young people to tell the sector what they need and want! This idea should only be referred to in the network's evaluation stage at the end of year 1: *Getting to Know Each Other*.

Next Steps

Marginalised artists and practitioners working/not working in the young audience sector, at all stages of career need to be **supported to be included in the sector and made to feel welcomed into this sector**. This also includes marginalised children and adult audiences – parents/cares. **This is a priority.**

It is recommended that the Young Audience Sector begins its next steps with the strategy:

Year 1: Getting to know Each Other – To Create a Network Together

Strategy

This strategy should be **embedded with a trauma informed practice** and include the following:

- **Salaried Staff roles** - Access and Wellbeing Project Lead, Community Engagement Lead & Administrator
- **Strategic Partnership Engagement Programme**
- **Community & Artist Creative Engagement Programme**
- **Intensive Awareness Training**
- **Rubix Cube Access Panel Model**
- **Equalities Plan**
- **Policy Building and Development**

With an additional Priority Strategy:

Priority Strategy

- To increase Global Majority artists practitioners and organisations within the new network, and Scottish Young Audience Sector overall.

This strategy and programme will:

- Prioritise getting to know each other in the first year at slower and accessible pace of operation, so the membership collective can **build a strong base from which to grow, developing trust, transparency and a culture of listening and taking action.**
- **Provide opportunities** for people working in the sector to come together at events focused on fun, having conversations, listening, and sharing practice;
- Provide **opportunities for young audiences to be present and centred at events**, with their voices and rights being prioritised;
- **Ensure a trauma-informed and accessible approach to all events** so a more subtle and natural networking model is in place, making it more accessible;
- **Plan these events with strategic partners and young audiences** to ensure they are planned and formatted in accordance with different access, sensory and cultural needs;
- Provide a **programme of engagement that has trauma informed practice** at its core;

Salaried Staff Roles

Salaried roles will ensure there is **capacity and a commitment** within the network to **continuously support** artists, practitioners and organisations.

It is Important to note -An Access Consultant should be consulted to advise on accessible recruitment for these roles. To advise and ensure all opportunities are advertised equitably with maximum reach throughout the sector. To ensure equalities, diversity and inclusion in the recruitment process is achieved.

Access and Wellbeing Project Lead

Someone who has a comprehensive understanding of Access, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion and can ensure these values are embedded from the very start of the membership collective, and lead on training across the collective.

Community Engagement Lead

Responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with strategic partners and members and listening and implementing their contributions; and for ensuring the voices and rights of babies, children and young people are always guiding the collective's work.

Administrator

Ensuring capacity to maintain logistics of the membership collective run smoothly.

Strategic Partnership Engagement Programme

Research concludes that the new network cannot be structured until more '-led' organisations within the sector are included and are part of the Young Audience Groups collective of organisations.

A strategic partnership programme needs to be created to ensure a diverse group of organisations across Scotland feed into the membership collective's access, equalities and diversity approach. This includes Global Majority, Disabled, Neurodivergent, D/deaf, Chronical Illness, Visually Impaired and LGBTQIA+ '**led**' organisations working in Young Audience Sector Scotland. Ensuring more marginalised people in leading roles, from these organisations are part of conversations and decision making relating to the networks structure and future.

Strategic partnerships will:

- Capacity build with arts organisations leading on equality and diversity
- Resource building together!
- Encourage awareness and understanding for all marginalised communities; strengthening understanding and learning of different intersectional barriers of inequality for all partners.
- Enable the development of an inclusive and culturally appropriate **Community and Artist Creative Engagement Programme**
- Develop relationships with marginalised artists, practitioners, communities and children
- Inform comms & marketing plans for maximum reach to marginalised communities
- Inform and support plans for **accessible recruitment process** to create a **Rubix Cube Access Panel model**
- Inform an **Equalities Plan** for the new network

- Inform and develop **Policies** for the new network - beginning with a network commitment to facilitating engagement programmes in **accessible spaces only**.
- **Engage in Intensive Awareness Training** improving accessibility practices.

Intensive Awareness Training

Continuous and ongoing equalities training should be initiated with all current YAG members. Training should commence for YAG members prior to the Strategic Partnerships Programme starting.

A range of Intensive Awareness training should then continue and be ongoing throughout *Year 1: Getting to Know Each Other* strategy. Available to all strategic partners, artists and practitioners, to improve accessibility practices and equalities awareness.

YAG organisations and strategic partners should also use this opportunity to request ‘after training aftercare’ or information that will support them to facilitate access practices sustainably at the capacities they are currently working at. – such as Implementation Support Planning from third parties.

“Corporate training often lacks developing a connection. Which is needed for people to be invested in change!” -Practitioner

To support and encourage people to attend training, it is important that training is facilitated in a variety of ways. Including, formal training, creative workshops, performances, interactive play sessions etc. It is also advised that a range of awareness training is provided as part of the Community and Artists Creative Engagement Programme, using PLORK methodology.

Currently artist within the sector facilitate **Creative Equalities Training opportunities**. **This should be utilised and invested in for this strategy.**

Community and Artists Creative Engagement Programme

“Experiencing things together leaves an impact and good levels of connection”. – Artist

This programme should take a similar model to a Community Arts model, – socially engaging, supportive and participant led. Focusing on creative care to ensure different engagement opportunities are designed to welcome and support marginalised community groups and artists and young people to attend.

This Engagement Plan should include the following:

- Training on embedding the voices and rights of babies, children and young people through:
 - sharing case studies from artists, and organisations;
 - developing a collective understanding about why some children’s rights are at risk and what we can do about it;
 - learning about rights-based budgeting and how to implement it on a project;
 - establishing a framework for ongoing sector-wide learning
 - Access, inclusion and diversity training,
 - Sensory Awareness Training
 - Trauma-informed practice training

Further programming activities suggestions should be developed with members and young people. Please see **Appendix** for artists and practitioners CPD feedback on wanted engagement opportunities.

“Networking” that’s not Networking

This engagement model should also **act as an un-official networking tool** giving artists and practitioners in the sector/not in the sector opportunities to connect and collaborate in a nurturing way. Providing numerous light-touch, practical and interactive opportunities – big and small. **This is to support the many artists and practitioners feedback regarding networking being a large access barrier within the sector.**

PLORK

PLORK is a playful term combining **Play** and **Work**, invented by Corita Kent. Which describes:

“the feeling of joy experienced when work and play combine. It represents approaching work with a playful, exploratory, and curious mindset, free from the fear of failure. Essentially, it’s about finding pleasure in the process of creating, while still producing something meaningful.”

-Corita Kent

Work and Play as One

Engagement opportunities for artists and communities should consider being facilitated via a PLORK model. **Starting with facilitating CPD content suggestions**

expressed already by artist's feedback in research. Please see Appendix for details. This is an **important first start, to build trust**; showing artists they have been listened too, and action has been taken by the new network to support their needs.

Programming of these events/connections should always be artist/participant responsive - collaboratively designed and facilitated by paid Community Artists, Play Practitioners etc.

The benefits of using this model will:

- Build trusting relationships -with some of the neurodivergent community in particular due to its play based approach.
- Enable marginalised communities to be included.
- Build membership and awareness of the new network.
- Increase knowledge and skills about the benefits of play and sensory play.
- Aid grassroots collaborations between artists and practitioners.
- Support young people and families to attend engagement events facilitated by the sector.
- Enable PLAY and think like a child- embedding children's right in the sector!

Addressing Social Deprivation in Engagement Models

Disabled and neurodivergent artists described being or had been in social deprivation. Reporting irregular income and poor mental health.

Current economic factors such as cost-of-living crisis and other social economic factors need to be considered for artists to attend and access engagement programmes. The sector's current unstable landscape – irregular, short contract, part-time, limited funding and job competitiveness all fuel this instability for artists.

Therefore, additional social economic factors need to be addressed in the planning of the Community and Artists Creative Engagement Programme:

The following needs to be considered:

- social exclusion/Isolation
- discrimination
- poverty
- unemployment

In addition to PLORK mythology supporting elements of social economic factors, further **community arts approaches** in programme planning should be considered. With events, activities, connections that include:

- social prescribed approaches – “Social prescriptions”
These models are common engagement practices within community arts settings when attempting to connect with audiences who experience social deprivation.
- Personal Health support/budgets/resources
- Access Services - outlined in the *Event Accessibility for Engagement Programme* section of this report.

Socially engaged artists have skills in holding space and agency for marginalised communities, therefore it is advised Community Artists are be called upon, in paid roles to help support this.

Financial Support

Opportunities programmed should also support people to attend financially, to ensure they are never out of pocket. Covering the cost of:

- Time
- Travel
- Food
- Pier/diems
- Childcare and access costs
- Incorporating childcare/ child friendly approach into events

Alternatively, if limited funding is available – travel, food and access cost should be considered – with event/opportunities ‘CPD’ acting as ‘payment’ and value, as a bare minimum.

Event Accessibility for Engagement Programmes

Venue/Engagement Space Access

Event access for all engagement opportunities needs to be **priority in the planning** of both engagement programmes.

It is advised that a **Venue Access Policy should be developed by YAG initially**, outlining only accessible venues to be used for events. Showing the networks commitment for access to its members and future members. This should then be developed throughout strategic partnership engagement work.

In Person and Online accessibility needs to be planned for, so everyone feels **safe** and **welcome** to attend!

Strong accessible events guidance and support is needed in the planning of both engagement programmes and needs to be provided for consistency to gain the **trust** from artists, practitioners and organisations. The planning for this needs to be led by the Access & Wellbeing Lead, in consultation with the Community Engagement Lead. With the added support of consulting with a freelance Access Consultant if needed.

The planning of accessible events for both programmes need to consider the following in more detail:

Access Starts at Home

Access Starts at home for lots of people. Therefore, it is important that events information is available prior to the event date.

Accessible information, in a variety of accessible formats in advance for network members is required.

Access Events Checklists and Timelines

Access events checklists and timelines are needed to ensure accessible venues and access provision is booked well in advance.

Different event templates will be required for different event locations that can be adapted and bespoke accordingly.

For example:

- In-Person
- Online – tech, captioning etc
- Outdoors
- Inside/Location Specific – venues etc.

Access Provision and Resources

The following are recommendations of resources and provisions that need to be considered for programming different events, connects and artists opportunities, of various scales and contents:

- Access Consultant/Liaison
- Mental Health First Aiders
- BSL Interpreters
- Captioners
- Audio Describers
- Decompression Spaces/ Outdoor green space

- Sensory Resources – distributed in advance of larger events
- Prayer Spaces
- Access Booking Services – if performances are being used as a training tool
- Trigger warnings of sensitive content – if required
- Practical support provision - wheelchair access, carparking
- Personal support provision
- Post event support

Accessible Toilets

Toilets are basic but important access requirements that are often forgotten about or overlooked. Events should consider the following:

- Accessible Toilets - Providing spare radar keys if necessary.
- Changing Places Toilets or signposting to nearest one – check this before event!
- Gender Neutral Toilets - Individual stalls will enable inclusive access for all.

It is important to note Gender Neutral Toilets can be regarded as conflicting access provision for specific marginalised communities. As it both **enables inclusivity, and prevents inclusivity simultaneously, for different minority groups.**

This is an ongoing conversation within equalities work, with different communities and organisations having varying opinions and practices. This needs to be managed with consideration and care, throughout the planning of events. In partnership and community engagements care and respect is needed by all surrounding this topic. Which should be addressed openly. Calling on an Access or Equalities Consultant if further support or information is needed.

Rubix Cube Access Panel Model

An Accessible recruitment process should be developed with strategic partners throughout the **Strategic Partnership Engagement Programme** to ensure the diverse and inclusive recruitment for a Rubix Cube Access Panel Model.

Recruitment for members for the Rubix Cube Access Panel should begin at the end of Year 1: Getting to know each other. To ensure a wide range of people have been engaged with and know about this paid opportunity.

The Rubix Cube Model will facilitate a continuous rotating model – like a Rubix Cube. So, an access panel with intersectionality at its heart is established, enabling **many and different** voices to be heard. To address the sector's failings in access and equalities. It will ensure access is embedded into the membership collective, and to ensure deep, meaningful learning across the sector. The panel cannot be tokenistic, and

intersectionality needs to be considered always. A rotating panel will ensure no bias occurs with the same person representing a marginalised community group continuously. The period of rotation should be decided collaboratively throughout partnership work and engagement.

The access panel should be created utilising relationships and connections made via strategic partnerships and engagement with its members, after all engagement events - prior to the end of Year1: Debrief Stage. This will ensure the membership collective has engaged a more diverse breadth of practitioners from across the sector, who will feel more confident and interested in taking part in this panel.

The recruitment process of this needs to be decided with strategic partners, as access to this opportunity will not be as easy for some community groups compared to others. The recruitment process therefore needs to be planned carefully and informed by engagement programme feedback and Access and Wellbeing Project Lead.

Individuals should be paid to participate in this panel, with additional money available for their access requirements and wellbeing. They should also be paid to attend awareness training (disability, D/deaf, LGBTQI, and anti-racism) to strengthen understanding of all marginalised communities and others' access barriers. **This will help the panel members to avoid access bias, to promote inclusive language and transparency and to consider access in a larger context.**

Equalities Plan & Policies

Continuous evaluation and feedback from both Engagement Programmes and the Rubix Cube Access Panel will feed into end of Year 1: Debrief stage.

All feedback will inform the development of a final Equalities Plan and targeted equalities Policies for the networks future work. Showing **transparency in the network's commitment to access plans to its members.**

Priority Strategy:

To increase Global Majority artists practitioners and organisations within the new network, and Scottish Young Audience Sector overall.

Continued Research to Inform Year 2:

“The presence of BPoC people working within Scotland's creative industries are significantly underrepresented. This must change. “

– We Are Here Scotland

The Young Audience Group, need to **acknowledge** the unconscious systematic racism within its own structures. This also needs to be acknowledged overall, within the entire Scottish Young Audience Sector, which also includes public bodies (schools, nurseries, early year settings etc) and the access services which support inclusivity within the performance sector (BSL/captioning/Audio Description).

This research has only scratched the surface regarding identifying the barriers black, ethnic, cultural and faith communities/artists/practitioners face within the sector.

Therefore, it is paramount that more in-depth research is conducted.

It is suggested comprehensive research is carried out by a Global Majority researcher before or during the networks initial Year1: *Getting to Know each other* stage. This research can only be conducted by a Global Majority practitioner with lived experience. It is recommended that a Global Majority lead organisation or existing networks within Scotland, such as [We Are Here Scotland](#) consult on the outcomes needed for this research and support the recruitment process of this opportunity.

Then new network needs to **deepen its understanding** of institutional systemic racial failings within the sector, education system and early years settings within Scotland; which have resulted in the lack of racial diversity and cultural awareness within the young audience sector.

It is advised that that the new network begins to proactively address this with the initial recommendations stated below.

Using these as starting points and developing further initiations from research and feedback collected throughout Year1: *Getting to know each other* stage.

Recommendations to proactively address institutional systemic racism:

- **Research work** – facilitated by a Global Majority practitioner, which should be facilitated in unison with the networks Year1: *Getting to know each other* stage.

This is paramount to:

1. Deepen the network/sectors understanding of the access barriers, life experiences and complex intersectional inequalities (marginalised communities, within marginalised community groups - i.e. Black DDN artists, Black BSL interpreter etc.) Global Majority artists, practitioners and organisations working/not working (but want too) in the sector experiences.
2. Develop and build stronger relationships with artist, practitioners and organisations from Global Majority communities.

3. Enable the network to learn, develop and grow appropriately from Global Majority communities it will be serving and supporting.
 4. Allow the network to understand how to create more accessible opportunities within the young audience's sector for Global Majority artist/practitioners at entry and leading levels.
- **Anti Racism and Cultural & Faith Awareness Training** – continuous training for organisations, individuals, artists and practitioners to acknowledge, understand and take action of structural racism within society, to have a comprehensive understanding of this within the Young Audience Sector. This should be facilitated by offering a variety of training programmes and opportunities to members of the network for free. Training that is at all levels, including bespoke and contextual, to organisations, artists and individuals' artistic practices and its audiences should be provided. For example – Organisations/Artists/ individuals working with early years children (under 5's) being provided Anti- Racist Early Years resources such as [SEEN](#). Benefitting artists working in early years settings with early years audiences. Supporting cultural awareness at all stages of R&Ds community engagement, nursery/school performance touring etc.
 - **Trauma Informed Practice Training (TIP)**- Scottish Government research exploring the distribution of traumatic events based on gender, age, ethnic background and socio-economic status has shown that traumatic events are more frequently experienced by people in low socio-economic groups and from black and minority ethnic communities (Hatch & Dohrenwend, 2007). In Scotland, one in seven adults reported four or more [ACEs](#) (Adverse Childhood Experiences), with those in the most deprived areas twice as likely than those in the least to experience this quantity of ACEs. ACEs have also been shown to be highly correlated with socio-economic disadvantage in the first year of life (Marryat & Frank, 2019). Embedding and promoting TIP throughout the networks practice will promote awareness from all members to understand minority groups, particularly ethnic minority groups, identify as being more likely to experience trauma – therefore a more supportive structure models are needed to enable people who have experienced trauma to reach the assumed 'entry level' within the sector and to feel welcome and included - retain and grow within it.
 - **Partnerships and Community Engagement** – building strong, meaningful and genuine partnerships and engagement opportunities with Global Majority Lead organisations and arts community groups in Scotland. This is vital for individuals and organisations part of the network to become culturally aware and truly understand and retain the access barriers experienced by Global Majority

communities. Keeping these at the forefront of conversations and equalities strategy and development plans in Year1: Getting to know each other stage.

- **Career/Professional Support for Global Majority Artists/Practitioners** – at all career stages. This includes practical (i.e. application writing processes, alternative processes) and emotional support to enter, remain, and grow professionally in the sector.
- **Mentoring/Peer Support** – Providing paid mentoring positions and opportunities for Global Majority artists/ practitioners. Providing people with choice for professional development opportunities, to choose a mentor/be a mentor with someone they feel has experienced the same or similar life experiences, cultural, faith, access barriers or inequalities as them.
- **Career Advising / Awareness Enhancing** -for children, young people and their families. A particular focus on raising an honest awareness of the varied career paths and opportunities within the sector to children, young people and their families from Global Majority communities should be considered. However, more research is needed in this area.
- **Representation of Global Majority Communities** -throughout all levels of the network and sector.This needs to increase in all areas of the sector, but in particular ‘top tier’ leading level roles – i.e. management, and audience facing roles – performer/dancer/musician etc. This is important for the sectors future! A lack of diversity will further impact the next generation of children/ young people/entry level artists wanting too, feeling safe too, and included. ‘Seeing themselves’ in varied roles in the sector.
- **Developing Policies and Network Equalities Action Plans with Global Majority- Lead Organisations, Artists and Practitioners.** -That focus on embedding anti-racism and cultural awareness practice within all areas of the network including its resources, communication and engagement. This needs to be done in collaboration with Global Majority Lead organisations and practitioners.
- **Evaluating and Tracking Progress** - of actions and research in the networks first year is needed. To show network members the progress that has been made in the sector, failings and intended next steps to address these. This evidence will build trust and show Global Majority and marginalised communities that they are being listened too. Strengthening the foundations of the new network.

Appendix

A Guide to Captioning for the Arts, Cultural and Performances Sector in Scotland (2025)

ADICLUS

Audio Description Association Scotland

British Deaf Association

[Clair and Lesley: Creative Access Training -Where's the line?](#)

Gov UK Working definition of Trauma-Informed Practice (2022)

[Including Disabled Children in Play provision \(2022\)](#)

[It's a Mother Fucking Pleasure - Theatre review](#)

[Lets Explore our Rights \(2023\)](#)

Neurodiversity and the cross over with Trauma – Pebbles Webinar by Dr Abi Hooper
(Phycologist and Outdoor Specialist) March 2025.

[Open Up: addressing the barriers facing Black and Black Irish artist's access to funding and opportunities. \(2023\)](#)

Play Scotland

Radical Care Research Report (2023)

SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020)

Spoon Theory

The Black Nursery Manager

[The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate – Discoveries from a Secret World by Peter Wohlleben \(2016\)](#)

The Space: Using Audio Description and Alt Text Inclusively and Creativity – Webinar
March 2025.

The Work Room: [Example of making video/audio application resource \(2022\)](#)

Artists Development/ CPD/opportunities requested by Artists and Practitioners

Artists want more opportunities. They want to be able to find them effortlessly.

- Active ways of including parents in after shows
- Budgets for shadowing
- Child friendly – calling on the play sector to support and facilitate
- Coffee and cake locations to meet people from organisations
- Community meals Eid – “breaking fast together”
- Confidence building and Application support – How to talk about my work – build confidence for POC early entry / how to do a video application
- Confidence building opportunities – for all ages and stages!
- Creative practice knowledge Building & sharing opportunities – with no set outcomes!
- Deaf Awareness training in a venue context – how sound travels, lighting...
- Engagement opportunities with families – parents/carers and children
- Funding for artists to meet each other- making new connections
- Funding for time to ‘think creatively’ be able to create ‘seeds of ideas’ before proposal stage
- Funding to attend disability arts festivals
- Linking with other organisations and networks
- Mentor pairing with someone with same life experiences (!)
- Messaging/ non face to face – self lead
- More opportunities to work in collaboration with children and young people and groups
- Opportunities for artists to develop training for others
- Opportunities for sensory performance sharing/connections into sector
- peer support
- Play Schema Training
- Play surgeries – promoting the value of play and sensory work
- PLAY!
- Playful days! “network” Event – Relationship making with people/objects
- Pop-up places/spaces/walks- connecting and meeting with no agenda
- Pots of research money – accessible CPD opportunities for disabled artists to develop their practice homebased/remotely
- Protected Characteristics training overall
- Safe, small/informal and casual opportunities (not pitching!)
- Seeing performances – paid for

- Sensory awareness training – using in set design and understanding audiences
- Sensory theatre knowledge sharing
- Studio spaces – ‘natural meetings and forms of connections’ *“that’s why you always find me in kitchens at parties”*
- Working with parents

Glossary

Access to Work - A government payment and/or support scheme that can help you get or stay in work if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability.

Back to Work schemes - help Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance claimants move nearer to, or into, work.

Carbon footprint privilege - Carbon footprint privilege refers to the disproportionate ability of certain individuals, groups, or nations to consume resources and emit greenhouse gases without facing immediate or significant negative consequences, often due to their socioeconomic status or geographic location

Carer Support Payment – A monthly government payment you can get if you provide care for someone who is in receipt of a disability payment and meets certain eligibility criteria.

CIC ([Community Interest Company](#))- CICs are limited companies which operate to provide a benefit to the community they serve. The purpose of a CIC is primarily one of community benefit rather than private profit.

D/deaf - In the Deaf community, "Deaf" with a capital "D" refers to a cultural identity, encompassing individuals who use sign language and identify as part of the Deaf community. "deaf" with a lowercase "d" refers to the physical condition of hearing loss, regardless of cultural affiliation or sign language use. The lowercase "d" often describes people who have a hearing impairment but may not be part of the Deaf community or may prefer spoken language.

DDN – Deaf/Disabled and/or Neurodivergent difficulty doing certain everyday tasks or getting around because of your condition

[Disability Confident Committed](#) - The Disability Confident scheme is a three level employers programme designed as a continuous learning journey, encouraging

employers to evolve and improve with every step. It's not about achieving a static level of the scheme; it's about embracing a mindset of growth and adaptation. Resources better equipped to nurture a workforce where every member feels valued and empowered to contribute their unique talents.

ESL – English as Second (or Foreign) Language refers to the use of English by individuals whose native language is different.

Global Majority – A term coined by Rosemary Campbell-Stephens MBE, defining the Global Majority as 'a collective term for people who are Black, African, Brown, dual heritage, indigenous, to the global south, and/or have been radicalized as 'ethnic minorities 'Globally. These groups represent approximately 80% of the worlds population and are set to remain so for the foreseeable future.

IR Audio - In theatre and film, infrared (IR) systems are commonly used to deliver audio description to audiences with visual impairments. These systems transmit audio signals as infrared light, which is then converted back into audio by receivers worn by the audience members. This allows individuals to access live verbal commentary that describes the visual elements of a performance or film.

Neurodivergent / Neurodivergence - encompasses a wide range of neurological differences, including conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and dyscalculia. It's a spectrum, and individuals can experience varying degrees of impact and unique strengths and challenges.

Neuronormative - refers to the societal assumption that there is a single, "normal" or "typical" way of thinking, feeling, and behaving, and that this "normal" way is superior to all other neurological and cognitive differences.

PIP (Personal Independence Payment)- A monthly government payment that can help with extra living costs if you have both:

- a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability.
- difficulty doing certain everyday tasks or getting around because of your condition.

You can get PIP even if you're working, have savings or are getting most other benefits.

Reasonable adjustments - Reasonable adjustments are changes made by employers, service providers, or educational institutions to remove or reduce disadvantages faced by disabled individuals, ensuring they can access and participate in activities on equal

terms. These adjustments are legally mandated by the Equality Act 2010 and are designed to make things more accessible and inclusive.

Social Prescribed Approaches - is a healthcare approach that connects people to activities, groups, and services in their community to address non-clinical needs that impact their health and wellbeing

Systemic Racism - Systemic and structural racism are forms of racism that are pervasively and deeply embedded in systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, and entrenched practices and beliefs that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment and oppression of people of colour, with adverse health consequences.

Touch Tour - A touch tour allows visually impaired audiences to access the set, costumes, and actors of any production

Universal Credit –A monthly government payment to help with your living costs. It's paid monthly - or twice a month for some people in Scotland. You may be able to get it if you're on a low income, out of work or you cannot work.