



improving deaf and disabled people's  
access to live music

[www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk](http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk)  
@attitudetweets

# State of Access Report 2018

## Ticketing Without Barriers

Examining the access booking experience for Deaf  
and disabled music fans

April 2018



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

#StateofAccess

# Contents

---

Foreword .....	1
About Attitude is Everything .....	2
History of the State of Access Report.....	3
Focus of this report .....	4
What is 'Access Booking'? .....	5
The Access Booking Survey .....	6
Key findings.....	8
Context .....	10
Before booking .....	15
Venue access schemes .....	15
Proof of access requirements .....	16
Access information .....	19
Booking methods .....	20
Booking face-to-face.....	20
Booking by email.....	20
Booking by phone .....	21
Booking online. ....	26
Beyond simple sales .....	30
Booking for a party.....	30
Pre-sales.....	30
VIP and artist meets .....	32
High demand events .....	30
Gift vouchers.....	34
Resales .....	34
The impact of bad experiences .....	35
Conclusion.....	36
What customers need .....	37
Our vision for access booking.....	38
The Ticketing Without Barriers Coalition.....	40
Beyond live music.....	42
Share this report.....	43
Follow Attitude is Everything .....	44
Acknowledgements .....	45

---

## Foreword

---

UK Music is committed to working with Attitude is Everything and being a part of their continuing mission to make live music accessible to all.

We are proud to have supported the publication of this report and encourage the whole of the live music industry to follow those who have already played their part in making sure their venues and events are open to everyone.

In 2017, along with the UK Live Music Group, we were delighted to endorse Attitude is Everything's Charter of Best Practice as the industry standard for live music accessibility. The Charter has been supported by more than 100 musicians, with over 130 venues and festivals gaining awards so far. Attitude is Everything and its fantastic Chief Executive Suzanne Bull MBE have done brilliant work to improve the experience of Deaf and disabled music fans.

However, it is clear that there is far more to be done to tear down the remaining barriers that still stand in the way of Deaf and disabled fans getting the most out of live music events. There needs to be a concerted effort across the industry to look at ways we can work together to drive forward positive change.

That's why we are supporting Attitude is Everything's move, announced with the launch of this report, to bring organisations and companies together to start a cross-industry conversation around the booking of access requirements such as Personal Assistant tickets and accessible seating.

The Ticketing Without Barriers Coalition will examine ways of devising a unified approach to access booking that benefits everyone – fans, artists, venues, events, ticketing companies and promoters. It's crucial that this new Coalition is much more than a talking shop and becomes pivotal in pushing ahead with a shared plan to usher in real change across the industry.

I urge everyone across the industry to join UK Music and Attitude is Everything in seeking to provide Deaf and disabled people the best possible access booking experience.

No one should be denied the right to experience a live music event. We should not rest until we can ensure equal access for everyone. Please do everything you can to support Attitude is Everything.



**Michael Dugher,  
CEO of UK Music**

# About Attitude is Everything

---

Attitude is Everything improves Deaf and disabled people's access to live music by working in partnership with audiences, artists and the music industry.

Having begun as a pilot project in 2000, we are now a fully independent charity and Arts Council England Sector Support Organisation, supporting venue and festival organisers to understand legal obligations, and implement best practice solutions to deliver reasonable adjustments. Our ethos is that Deaf and disabled people should be able to be as independent as they wish to be at live music events.

Mystery Shopping is the cornerstone of our work. Our dedicated team of Mystery Shoppers are Deaf and disabled music fans who continuously report back on the accessibility of UK music venues and festivals. In early 2018 we expanded the project with the launch of a new online portal and increased capacity to engage with the hundreds of Deaf and disabled people who lend their time and lived experiences to support our work. In addition to this, we also run a festival volunteering project, recruiting around 50 volunteers each year.

We channel feedback into our Charter of Best Practice, a framework with which to examine all aspects of making a venue or festival as accessible as possible. Structured around a progression route through Bronze, Silver and Gold awards, the Charter was recognised by the UK Live Music Group in 2017 as the 'industry standard' when it comes to live music accessibility. Over 150 venues and festivals have gained awards, with many more having benefitted from historic and ongoing advice.

In 2017, we launched the Grassroots Venue Charter, in order to tailor our work to assist small independent venues facing unique challenges. In November 2017 we published a DIY Access Guide for bands, artists and promoters to further support access to music at the grassroots level. We also announced our new Attitude Champion model in 2017, enabling us to apply the principles of the Charter of Best Practice to diverse organisations in a position to influence others.

In recent years, we have run campaigns to promote our cause, from the artist-focused Music Without Barriers social media campaign, to the guidance-backed Access Starts Online campaign to promote the value of access information. Our CEO Suzanne Bull MBE leads on our ongoing Parliamentary-level work to raise awareness of live music accessibility, and in 2017 was announced as the DWP's Sector Champion for the Live Music Industry.

Finally, we continue to grow our commercial services via the ongoing delivery of Disability Equality Training and Access Consultancy supporting major outdoor events and venue construction projects. Over 6800 people working within the live music industry have now received our training.

# Timeline

---

## 2011

The first State of Access Report, published in November 2011 and launched by Matthew Hancock MP in the House of Commons, led to debates in Parliament and meetings with Ed Vaizey MP, then Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy. The report culminated in a set of aspirations centred on access provision being promoted and enforced via the licensing process.

## 2014

The second State of Access Report was published in January 2014 and launched at the Roundhouse in London. Its call to action focused on ticketing and access-related bookings, with the central aspiration being development of a system to provide universal proof of disability for access provision-booking purposes, and thus the implementation of equality of access when it comes to online ticket bookings.

A major outcome of that report was the formation of the STAR Accessible Ticketing Working Group, a coalition of ticket retailers, venue and festival organisers and Attitude is Everything to work towards the creation of online access booking for Deaf and disabled music fans.

## 2016

The third State of Access Report was published in February 2016 and launched at Bush Hall in London. This report revisited many topics highlighted in the previous two reports, with central themes being the importance of access information provision, the benefits of treating accessibility as an extension of customer service, and the need for facilities to be fit for purpose.

The major outcome of this report was the launch of the Access Starts Online campaign, which provides venues and festivals with simple guidance on how to create access information.

## Focus of this report

---

For this report, we have decided to focus our attention on the key customer service issue that impacts the ability of Deaf and disabled people to access live music – the experience of seeking to pre-book reasonable adjustments in order to meet access requirements.

In our 2016 State of Access Report, we asserted that access depends on customer service.

This has never been more the case, as venues and events across the UK put in place an array of access provisions whilst needing to control access to these via pre-booking.

This report is designed to offer a snapshot of how these models are currently working, sharing best practice case-studies, and teasing out what still needs to improve.

In doing so, we will examine what barriers can arise when accessibility has been considered and adjustments put in place, but is then subject to the gatekeeping process of having to be booked.

We have decided to narrow our attention in terms of the scale and nature of the venues and events that this report is concerned with.

Our focus is:

- Single day outdoor concerts.
- Medium to large music venues and arenas.

In addition to this, the target audiences for this report are:

- Events and venues with in-house ticketing departments.
- Events and venues that utilise third party ticketing partners.
- Ticketing companies that provide services to events and venues.

'Reasonable adjustments' are changes to policies, procedures or the physical environment that remove barriers that might place Deaf and disabled people at a substantial disadvantage when seeking to access something on an equal basis to non-disabled people. The Equality Act 2010 states that service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

'Access requirements' are the changes a Deaf or disabled person needs in order to access something on an equal basis to non-disabled people.

# What is 'Access Booking'?

---

Access booking is our term for the advance booking of certain reasonable adjustments that relate to the allocation of tickets, seating and/or limited space within a venue or event space.

## What needs to be bookable?

Deaf and disabled customers often require one or a combination of the following things when seeking to access live music:

- A ticket/seat for a Personal Assistant (PA) to provide support in order to attend.
- Tickets/seats for multiple Personal Assistants in certain circumstances.
- A wheelchair-accessible space or a location to transfer onto a seat.
- A step-free seat.
- A seat with a maximum number of steps to reach it.
- Access to the best location to access British Sign Language interpretation, captioning of lyrics or audio-description.

It is the booking of these core reasonable adjustments that this report is concerned with.

## Other access requirements

There are a wide range of additional access requirements that people might need to discuss with a venue or event, and make arrangements for that are currently outside of the realm of 'access booking' as defined above.

These include:

- Bringing medical equipment or medications.
- Bringing an assistance dog.
- Bringing specific food or fluids.
- Gaining early entry to avoid crowds or become familiar with a space.
- Being guided to a seat.
- The ability to come and go during a performance.

# The Access Booking Survey

---

In a departure from previous reports where we used Mystery Shopping data, we decided to frame this report solely around the findings of our first national online survey of Deaf and disabled music fans. The Access Booking survey, which was live from 20th December 2017 to 28th January 2018, gave the public the opportunity to share their good and bad experiences and the personal impact of going through the process of attempting to book access to live music.

We targeted the survey at Deaf and disabled fans who book their own tickets and access, and those who book on behalf of family members or the people they support.

The survey was shared by a wide array of organisations and networks across the UK, including STAR, UK Music, Scope, Disability Wales, Euan's Guide, Epilepsy Action, The Brain Injury Hub, NUS, Spinal Injuries Association, Shape, Disability Horizons, Wheels for Wellbeing, Sound Connections, VocalEyes, Inclusion Barnet, Birmingham Sight Loss Council, Exeter Deaf Academy, Pocklington Trust, Shine, Performance Interpreting, Shaping Our Lives, Deaf London, Arthritis Research UK, Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea and Disability Arts Online.

## Demographics

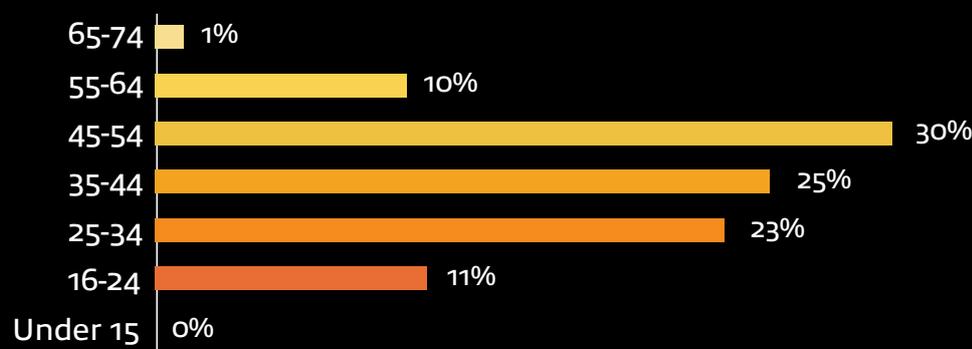
### Participants

349 people completed our Access Booking Survey:

- 293 Deaf and disabled people (84%)
- 56 people who book access on behalf of a Deaf or disabled person (16%)

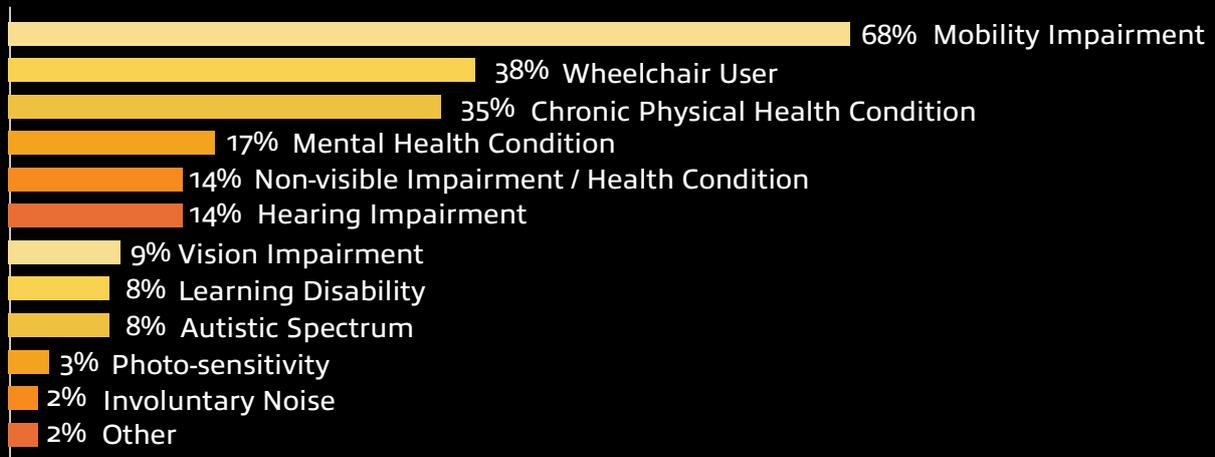
We asked people who book on behalf of others to complete additional demographic questions on behalf of those people, so the following results illustrate the demographics of the 349 Deaf and disabled people represented in our Access Booking Survey data set.

### Age

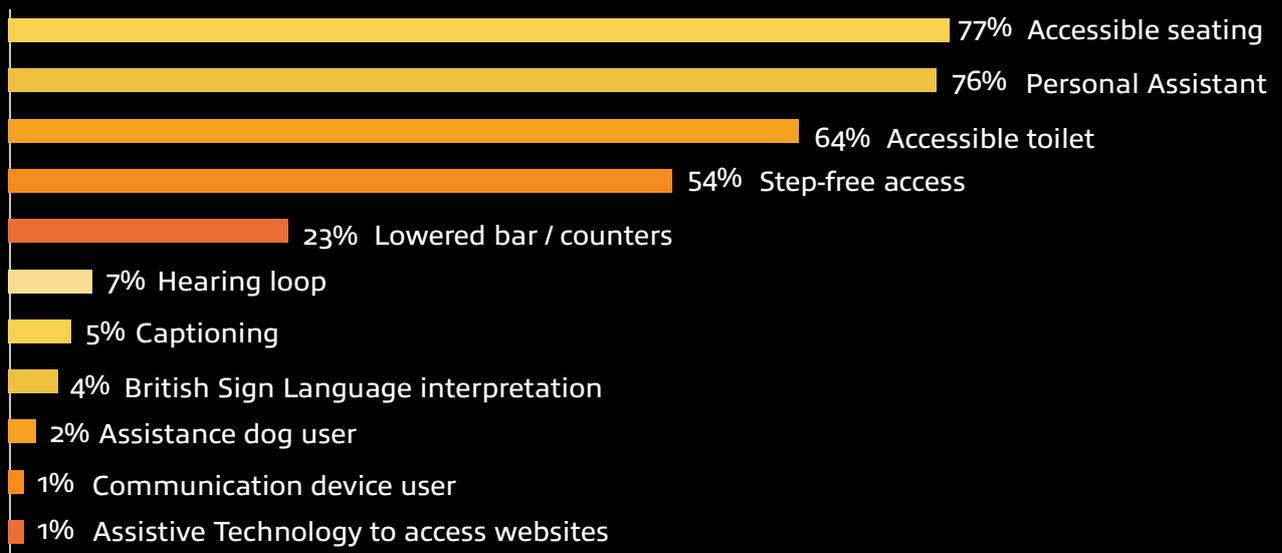


---

## Impairments and health conditions



## Access requirements when booking tickets and attending live music events



## Relationship with Attitude is Everything

31% of participants were Attitude is Everything mystery shoppers and/or festival volunteers.

69% of participants had not volunteered with Attitude is Everything previously.

---

## Key findings

In a small survey of our Mystery Shoppers commissioned for our 2014 State of Access Report, 95% of respondents said that they had experienced issues when booking access to live music events. 83% said that they had been put off buying tickets as a result. 88% said that they had felt discriminated against and 47% said that they have considered legal action.

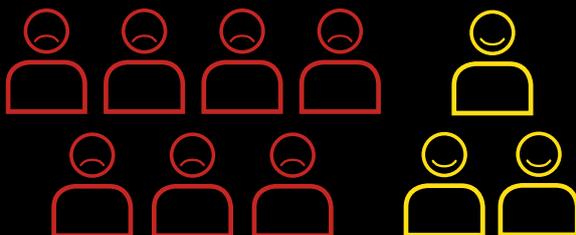
For this report, we asked questions that echoed the 2014 survey, in order to gain a sense of the overall picture when it comes to people's experiences of attempting to book access. Whilst being unable to draw direct comparisons, we can note a positive shift in what people have reported this time around, despite the majority still reporting significant issues.



4 out of 5 people had experienced problems booking access



79% had been put off buying tickets for a gig due to difficulty booking access



73% of people had felt discriminated against when trying to book access



1 in 10 have considered legal action

11% of people having considered legal action is still significant. We believe this could be higher if not for the significant barriers that exist when it comes to pursuing legal redress. These include the lack of public education regarding legal rights, financial cost, lack of support to pursue claims, barriers inherent in the process of filing claims, and the mental health impact of having to fight for basic access and equality on a continuous basis across all areas of life.

---

## Public perception of the situation

We asked people if they felt that the situation for Deaf and disabled customers when booking access for live music had changed in the last four years:



## Value to the industry

On average, the 349 Deaf and disabled people represented in the Access Booking Survey had:



This represents £250,000 of income for the live music industry.

3.3 million Deaf and disabled people go to live music events every year.

## Context

---

Before we delve deeper into our survey findings, it is important to place them in context.

### **A strong foundation**

The two aims of our 2014 report were to work with the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers (STAR) to establish a working group to examine the access booking process, and to support the development of a proof of access requirement system to facilitate this booking. Both of those aims have been achieved and serve as a strong foundation to build upon.

### **The STAR Accessible Ticketing Group**

The STAR Accessible Ticketing Group has met over the past four years as members have worked on developing their customer service models. The culmination of this group's work was the publication by STAR in 2017 of 'Making Ticket Sales Accessible for Disabled Customers – A Best Practice Guide', written by Nimbus Disability. This guide explores the legal context, issues relating to point of sale accessibility, and evidencing disability. This report is designed to complement that guide by shining a light on the impact of not meeting the needs of customers wishing to book access, and identifying the areas that require further development across the industry.

Download the guide here: [www.star.org.uk/accessibleticketingguide](http://www.star.org.uk/accessibleticketingguide)

“In response to the 2014 State of Access Report, STAR formed its Accessible Ticketing Group to discuss obstacles and solutions to improving ticketing for disabled people. These discussions with ticket agents, systems providers, venues and promoters have helped promote change and led to the publication of our Accessible Ticketing Guide in 2017. There is still much to be done and we therefore welcome the Ticketing Without Barriers Coalition to help bring about further significant and necessary improvements.”

Jonathan Brown, Chief Executive, Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers

### **Proof of access requirements**

A proof of access requirement system has also been established since the launch of the 2014 report, with input from members of the STAR Accessible Ticketing Group. The Access Card, developed and delivered via a social enterprise set up by Nimbus Disability, has been publicly accepted as a form of proof by 181 live events venues (including music, theatre and sport) and a total of 359 diverse businesses across the UK so far, with over 10,000 Deaf and disabled people signing up. The card is also increasingly accepted at a wide range of other venues that have not yet informed Nimbus directly. Only two ticket companies formally accept the card at the present time – The Ticket Factory and Ticketmaster.

---

## Emerging best practice

As we will highlight in the body of this report, there are multiple examples of best practice that have been developed over the past 4 years across the live music industry. In many cases, STAR members and our own Charter venues have been at the heart of positive developments, serving as examples for the wider industry. Participants of our survey named over 70 individual music venues and festivals who they felt had delivered an excellent service in terms of facilitating access booking. This is a testament to the good work currently being done across the UK. People also highlighted good work being done by venue chains, theatres and football clubs.

The main reasons given for praise were:

- The existence of an access scheme
- Accepting the Access Card
- Being able to book access online
- Choice and number of accessible spaces available
- Flexibility when booking access
- Friendly and understanding phone line staff

The following venues and events were praised by customers in our Access Booking Survey:

Academy Manchester	Kings Place	Royal Festival Hall
Apollo Manchester	Koko	Royal Opera House
Arena Birmingham	Leeds Town Hall	Sage Gateshead
Barbican	Liverpool Echo	Southbank Centre
BBC Radio 2 Festival	Liverpool Echo Arena	SSE Arena Wembley
Birmingham Symphony Hall	Liverpool Philharmonic	SSE Hydro Glasgow
Boiler Shop	London Stadium	Symphony Hall Birmingham
Borderline	Lowry	The Art School Glasgow
Brighton Centre	mac Birmingham	The Assembly Halls
Brighton Dome	Manchester Albert Hall	Tunbridge Wells
BST Hyde Park	Manchester Apollo	The Brighton Centre
City Hall Sheffield	Manchester Arena	The Cliffs Pavilion Southend
Colston Hall	Manchester City	The Eden Project Live
Craven Cottage	Metro Radio Arena	Sessions
Echo Arena Liverpool	Newcastle	The Lowry
Edinburgh Fringe Festival	Millenium Centre Cardiff	Tramshed Cardiff
Edinburgh International Festival	Motorpoint Arena Cardiff	Tunbridge Wells Forum
Electric Brixton	Motorpoint Arena	Twickenham Stadium
Ethiad Stadium	Nottingham	Union Chapel
First Direct Arena Leeds	O2 Academy Brixton	Waterfront Norwich
G Live	O2 Academy Islington	Watford Colosseum
Genting Arena	O2 Ritz Manchester	Wembley Stadium
Ground Control Events	O2 Shepherds Bush Empire	Wireless Festival
Hammersmith Apollo	Plymouth Pavillon	Wolverhampton Civic Hall
Hampden Park	Principality Stadium	Wylam Hall
Islington Assembly Hall	Roundhouse	
	Royal Albert Hall	

---

## Negative press

Over the past few years we have tracked what seems to be a growing issue for the industry - music fans feeling disgruntled with ticketing systems, and this leading to bad PR and reputational damage.

In an age of social media, it does not take much for a negative customer experience to turn into a PR issue, transformed from an individual complaint into negative press that impacts customers, venues, events and artists. This certainly applies when people encounter issues when attempting to make access bookings.

Here are some quotes from recent headlines:

**Disabled fans 'missing out' after ticket website changes**

**FAILING DISABLED CUSTOMERS**

**Disabled fans struggle to get tour tickets after spending up to seven hours on hold**

**'YOU'RE NOT DISABLED': Woman snubbed in ticket row wants to 'live without judgement'**

Nothing puts people off more than stories of alleged poor customer service and discrimination. Beyond the issues that people may experience, we are deeply concerned about the impact of bad press on the decision making of potential Deaf and disabled audiences. The current drip-feed of negative stories concerning access bookings for major shows often paints an overly-simplified picture that does a disservice to both Deaf and disabled people and the music and ticketing industries.

## Barriers and perceptions

Whilst this report examines negative customer experiences, it would be remiss of us to not also shine a light on some of the hidden realities faced by the industry that feed into these experiences. Whilst disabled people can certainly still face discrimination when seeking to access live music, in some cases the reality is more complicated, involving multiple parties including non-disabled fans abusing systems set up in good faith.

As we will show, many disabled people have encountered significant barriers when seeking to book access. At the same time, there are cases where there is a perception of discrimination that might not match a reality hidden from the public. The factors that lead to these perceptions need to be tackled by the industry as seriously as removing the very real and often entirely avoidable barriers that remain.

---

## A recipe for confusion

Booking tickets for live music can be confusing. Booking access can be doubly confusing.

In 2018, customers find themselves dealing with a complex landscape when it comes to booking tickets for bigger shows. There are many examples of companies working hard to simplify processes. However, taken as a whole, the diversity of systems and policies put in place by different venues and ticketing companies simply sows confusion:

- Different venues and events having their own evidencing policies.
- Tickets being sold by multiple companies, but only one of them handling access bookings.
- Third party ticket websites not signposting where to make access bookings.
- Access telephone lines and email enquiries going straight to third party access booking handlers rather than to venue or event organisers.
- Customer service staff for companies handling access bookings not being aware of other ways of booking.

## Terminology

Another component of customer confusion is the terminology used to describe bookable access.

Across the industry, 'disabled tickets', 'access tickets' or 'accessible tickets' are increasingly advertised and bookable, which is in one respect a very welcome trend but also confusing. These advertised tickets usually refer to a very specific reasonable adjustment - a space in a dedicated area of step-free seating or wheelchair-accessible spaces, or in the case of outdoor events, a space on a viewing platform. Some single day outdoor events and venues package this bookable space with an automatic additional space for a PA, others don't. PA tickets themselves can be referred to as 'Carers Tickets', 'Free Tickets for Personal Assistants' and 'Essential Companion Tickets', to name three variations. We advocate the use of 'Personal Assistant Tickets'.

Due to venues and single day events having set capacities of accessible seating positions (a debate in and of itself), these spaces can often sell out, resulting in ticketing pages stating that 'Accessible Tickets' have sold out. With priority often given to 'Access Tickets' in online information, it can be hard to determine what to do if you simply require a PA in a standing crowd when tickets are still on sale.

When there is a lack of clarity, customers take this to mean that an event has placed a hard limit on the number of disabled people who can attend, especially if they land on the ticketing page first and see 'Access Tickets sold out'. The end result is confusion, customers missing out, and a very real sense of being discriminated against. Beyond this, the simple fact that venues and events use different terms for the same thing creates additional, unnecessary complication for customers that we wish to work with the industry to remove.

---

## Lack of flexibility

Another common issue that we wish to support the industry to overcome is the lack of flexibility often 'hard-coded' into access booking systems. A classic case was highlighted by our survey:

“Staff said that I needed to pre-register to claim a PA ticket, but became utterly flummoxed when I said I didn't want a PA ticket, just to be safe [on a viewing platform]. They couldn't work out how to do it!”

Changes in requirements concerning ID can also have an unintended impact on Deaf and disabled customers:

“For some venues you need to give the name of the person and carer when you book as this goes on the ticket and you have to take ID. This can be months before the concert, and sometimes you don't know who the carer will be that far in advance.”

Another topic that needs to be examined by venues is the process by which 'accessible seating' is classified. Having a very rigid system for this and for the allocation of PA tickets can lead to the choices of Deaf and disabled fans being limited, and what 'accessible' space there is being taken up unnecessarily:

“Some venues have seats I've identified as accessible [for me] - but they aren't available to me because they aren't designated as accessible. Even if I manage to book them, I'm denied a PA ticket because the seat isn't classed as 'accessible'.”

The impact of this type of policy is people simply being unable to attend:

“[I was told that] I could only get a free carer ticket if I used the wheelchair platform but the tickets for that were all booked so I could not attend the gig in a local venue.”

## Dancing around the Equality Act

Finally, with respect to meeting the legal duties of service providers according to the Equality Act 2010, there remains a mixed picture across the live music industry.

Many venues and events have moved beyond basic reasonable adjustments to improve access for customers in impressively creative and collaborative ways.

On the other hand, there are venue and event organisers now being left behind as they continue to enact outdated and potentially discriminatory policies that impact the ability of Deaf and disabled people to access the paid-for services they provide.

## Before booking

---

### Venue access schemes

82% of people surveyed said that if a venue or event had a system that allowed them to pre-register access requirements in order to speed up the access booking process, they would sign up. Only 2% said they would decline, the remaining 13% being unsure.

When we asked people if they were members of any existing schemes:

- 46% of people said that they were members of at least one venue access scheme.
- 54% had not signed up to any yet.

Data protection-compliant access schemes are enshrined at the Silver level of our Charter of Best Practice for good reason. They enable customers to agree to have a record of their details and access requirements stored, along with the date on which they submitted evidence. In setting this up, the need for customers to resubmit evidence and requirements each time they book (and for organisers to process this) is removed.

### Everyone benefits

The benefits of having an access scheme are multiple, and extend beyond the benefits to customers – although these are profound:

“You know they’re thinking about access and disability as part of their customer service”

“Not having to repeatedly submit information of proof of disability is a massive time saver.”

“AMG have an excellent service [that] speeds the process up and takes away any anxiety that someone may decide I am not entitled to what I need.”

Beyond customers, the customer service, audience retention and back-end administrative benefits for venues and annual events are obvious.

---

## Proof of access requirements

We have elected to use the term ‘proof of access requirements’, in place of ‘proof of disability’, because the former more accurately reflects what we are truly talking about when it comes to access to live music.

The concept of ‘proof of disability’ is a complicated and loaded one, that all too often ends up being reduced to whether or not someone is in receipt of particular benefits. There is also the lingering notion that people can be ‘registered disabled’, with businesses across the UK still asking for proof of this, despite it being a long defunct system that originated in the early 1970s and effectively ended with the arrival of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

### The live music context

In terms of the music industry, it is reasonable to request proof of access requirements when providing a reasonable adjustment that has a cost attached – such as providing a ticket for a Personal Assistant.

There is now a well-established framework with which venues and events should seek to determine if someone has a valid claim to such adjustments, enshrined in our Charter of Best Practice, and mirrored in STAR’s ‘Making Tickets Sales Accessible for Disabled Customers’ guide.

Beyond individual venues and events getting up to speed with evidencing disability and putting systems in places such as Access Schemes, a key arena for industry innovation in this area is the recognition of an external proof of access requirements card scheme that organisers can accept in place of having to process the bulk of evidence gathering themselves.

### The Access Card

“**[It’s] made life so much easier at the venues that I go to regularly.**”



19% of people who completed the Access Booking survey held an Access Card.

---

---

The Access Card, developed and delivered via a social enterprise set up by Nimbus Disability, currently costs £15 and is valid for three years. The scheme translates member's access requirements into symbols that indicate the reasonable adjustments they require. The long-term aspiration is to find a sustainable funding model which removes the cost to members.

As highlighted earlier in this report, the Access Card has been publicly accepted as a form of proof by 181 live events venues (including music, theatre and sport) and a total of 359 diverse businesses across the UK so far, with over 10,000 Deaf and disabled people signing up.

### Other schemes

Another highly successful scheme that is exclusively focused on access to live arts in Wales is the Hynt Card. This is an Arts Council of Wales-funded initiative managed by Creu Cymru in partnership with Diverse Cymru. Hynt is a free membership card that currently entitles holders to a ticket free of charge for a personal assistant or carer at participating theatres and arts centres in Wales. Launched in March 2015, the scheme now has over 10,000 members and 40 participating venues, who invest in the scheme in return for training, branding, administrative benefits and access to learning trips to other venues.

The third major scheme in the UK that caters to cinemas only is the CEA card, set up in 2004 by the UK Cinema Association. This card also focuses on individuals obtaining a PA ticket. Around 90 per cent of UK cinemas support the scheme from the large national chains to smaller independent operators, with over 135,000 people currently holding a card. The CEA card costs £6 and is valid for one year.

### The benefits to consumers

The benefits to music fans of a proof of access requirements card are best illustrated by the following quotes about the Access Card from the survey:

"I don't have to disclose personal information every time."

"It's good for people who do not have or do not want to give out benefit letters. It also means I don't have to give out confidential or personal documents like doctors letters as proof."

"[I have not been able to] obtain a blue badge, but have mobility issues that would prevent me from attending music events without access to disabled toilets, no queuing and other issues. The Access Card has given me the evidence needed to obtain these and I have now been to various events that would otherwise have been impossible for me."

---

## Online integration

“The Access Card has been amazing, I just wish more venues linked with them for online bookings.”

It’s clear to us that there is massive potential for online integration of a UK-wide proof of access requirements card at the point of purchasing tickets and booking access. Some work has been done towards this over the past four years.

### The Ticket Factory API integration of Access Card

“The Ticket Factory (TTF) is dedicated to improving the customer experience through technological innovation. We were approached by the NEC Group’s Genting Arena and Arena Birmingham to develop a service that would improve the ticket booking experience for disabled customers. A pioneering partnership with Nimbus Disability followed, allowing disabled customers to book tickets online with ease through TTF’s website using their Access Card. This provides a seamless booking experience and negates the need for disabled customers to call the agent and arenas’ contact centre and share personal medical details over the phone to verify their access requirements. TTF’s integration of the Access Card’s nationwide data into its technology systems generates an instant understanding of each customer’s access needs. In 2017/18, we processed nearly 5,000 access bookings for NEC Group Arena events using this technology.”

Richard Howle, Director of Ticketing, The Ticket Factory

## One card for everything

We are of the firm opinion that Deaf and disabled consumers ultimately need a single, free (funded), universally-accepted and cross-sector proof of disability scheme, which captures the nuances of people’s access requirements and includes people who do not receive disability-related benefits. This wish was shared by many in the Access Booking survey:

“The issue is that I have got about five cards for different venues and a separate one for the cinema. Two cards I had to pay for. There should be just one card system that is universally recognised by every arts, culture and sports venue, cafe, restaurant etc - basically everything you want to do. Then life would be easy!”

At the same time, it is important that the industry continues to accept other forms of evidence, and not make access bookings solely dependent upon joining a card scheme.

---

## Access information

ACCESS **STARTS** ONLINE



“One big problem is finding out HOW to book - info is often hidden away and not obvious.”

In our 2016 State of Access Report, we focused in on the critical importance of comprehensive access information for Deaf and disabled customers. We published guidance on what to include as part of our Access Starts Online campaign. Two years on, this topic is as relevant as ever.

76% of people completing the Access Booking Survey had been put off booking tickets due to lack of access information about a venue or event.

Access information and access booking go hand in hand. As well as being a key part of customer decision making and confidence building, it doubles as essential information for internal and external ticket sales staff. When there is a breakdown of information, everybody is impacted.

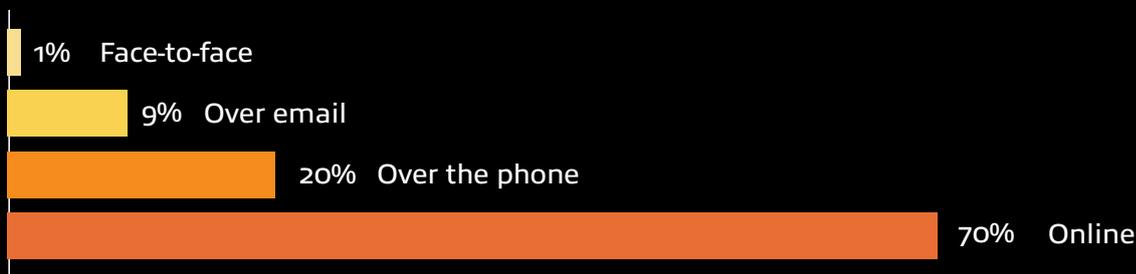
An issue that needs to be collectively addressed by the industry is the way in which the availability of information can depend on the customer ticket-buying journey.

All online locations selling tickets to a venue or event should be signposting people to access information and flagging up how to make access bookings. This is particularly important where there are multiple sellers but only one handling access-related ticketing, and an example where business competitors need to signpost to each other for the benefit of fans.

## Booking methods

---

If given the option, survey respondents said that they would prefer the following method for booking access:



### Booking face-to-face

We will not focus on face-to-face booking in this report. However, venues and events with physical box offices do need to consider the physical and sensory accessibility of these locations, discussion of which can be found in our Charter Toolkit.

### Booking by email

**“[With] an email I can print off confirmation of my requirements and instructions from staff.”**

47% of people reported having faced problems booking access via a venue or event’s access email address.

It goes without saying that customers value confirmation of their ticket bookings. This is even more the case when it comes to access booking. Whilst email is primarily a means of communication in the booking process, it can play a crucial role, particularly when making bookings over the phone is not accessible to people.

Despite email being the preferred means of communication for some people, things don’t work out well for customers when systems break down and this isn’t taken into account:

**“Access info is not always available and can be difficult to find online. One time when I found the access information, the instruction was to contact the access enquiries by email or phone to make an access request. I mentioned in my email that I’m Deaf and unable to use the phone. In their response, they provided one option which was to phone the arena’s access team to book the tickets.”**

---

As with phone lines, for access bookings to be dealt with effectively over email, there needs to be a rigorous approach to ensuring that staff are fully briefed on this method. If not, the result is poor customer service:

“I tried to book tickets through an email address (as the venue’s own website said to as an alternative to calling up the expensive access line), only to have a member of staff call me in confusion because he had no idea about accessible seats. I explained what the website said and he did book my seats in the end, but he didn’t know that was part of his job, and he couldn’t recommend the best location [to meet my needs].”

We have also been contacted by fans who have contacted an event about access, thinking they were reaching out to the organisers, when in fact their emails have gone straight through to a ticketing company handling specific forms of access booking – for example the ticket allocation for a viewing platform. If third parties are dealing with all access enquires on behalf of an event or venue, they need to be able to answer all questions and signpost when people have other access booking needs that they cannot handle.

## Booking by phone

“When staff are well informed, it is good to speak to someone on the phone to confirm my access requirements are understood. Speaking to someone on the phone is a good gauge of how ‘access savvy’ a venue and its staff are. Speaking to a friendly and helpful member of staff makes me feel confident in attending.”

270 people had booked access over a phone line (77% of respondents).

71% felt that they had experienced issues when doing so.

Booking access over the phone is the primary method offered to Deaf and disabled fans at the present time. Whilst this remains the case, there are a number of issues that still need to be ironed out by the industry as a whole, set against beacons of best practice.

### The preferred choice of some...

“I always use the phone as my preferred method to ensure my needs are understood.”

1/5 of people said they would prefer to speak to a person over the phone when booking access, demonstrating that online booking should never be the sole means of booking access.

This relates to another key intervention any venue or event can implement to improve customer service for Deaf and disabled people – the allocation of a designated team or person to deal with access enquires:

“On the whole I think speaking to a designated department at the venue is brilliant. You feel more secure about the facilities being available when you arrive.”

---

## Significant barriers for others...

Booking over the phone was accessible for 76% of respondents, but posed a variety of barriers for the remaining 24%.

Some of the personal reasons given for finding phone lines inaccessible included:

- Having a hearing impairment and/or issues with assistive technology when interacting with numbered dial pads or voice command options.
- Having a neurological impairment that results in difficulty composing speech.
- Health dictating the time at which it is possible to make phone-calls on sale days.
- Speaking on the phone being a serious trigger for a mental health condition.
- Phone conversations demanding extensive recovery time afterwards.
- Lack of confidence due to a communication impairment.
- Health conditions making holding a phone or dialling numbers painful.

People also reported being anxious about being judged about access requirements, having had bad experiences previously that put them off future attempts:

“My medication can have a profound affect where speaking to someone I can become confused and sound “drunk”. This has resulted in me being told I was a crank call and having the line cut.”

“I use the Text Relay service for Deaf people but often get staff who just hang up the call - so frustrating.”

“I have Tourette’s syndrome and can’t access many voice automated systems. I also experience unpredictable reactions from phone operators.”

“I was in the access booking line queue for over 45 minutes. Once through to an operator, my stammer had significantly worsened and I was hung-up on by the call taker within 20 seconds as she stated she could not understand me. I believe this was due to my difficulty in forming my words after a long period in the queue and could, and should, have been alleviated with patience on the part of the call-taker - especially in light of the call being on the dedicated disabled access booking line.”

The end result of people facing the sometimes unavoidable barrier of having to book by phone is them missing out on seeing their favourite bands:

“I have trouble trying to find the right things to say to people at times over the phone. It can mean missing out on good tickets for big events which means I often just don’t bother with them.”

11% of people who participated in the Access Booking Survey had considered legal action. The main reason people gave was having to use a phone line to book when standard tickets were available online.

---

## Trying to get through

“Continual engaged sound means lots of calls.”

63% of people reported having been on the phone for over 30 minutes at least once.

On big sale days, all fans trying to buy tickets can face long periods on hold or having to repeatedly redial. As we highlighted above, there are various reasons why this in itself might pose significant access barriers for many people.

On top of this is the perception of unfairness that arises when people are given the impression that there is single access phone line being operated versus a whole call centre for general tickets. We think the industry could be more vocal about the way these lines are staffed to alleviate these concerns.

There is also an elephant in the room rarely taken into account in press coverage of people having issues booking access over the phone – the significant issue of non-disabled people phoning access lines at times of high demand, impacting the experience for Deaf and disabled fans.

### Ed Sheeran’s sell-out 2018 tour

“When Ed Sheeran’s 2018 tour went on sale on 8th July 2017, Ticketmaster experienced its busiest ever day selling one million tickets across Europe. During the sale many fans were so desperate to get tickets that they incorrectly and unfairly called the accessible ticketing line after finding it online. This resulted in over 85,000 calls to the Access Line during the course of the day, and over 26,000 made in the first hour. The network was unable to cope with this level of demand and there were disruptions to the service. We did everything possible to ensure we were providing accessible tickets to those who needed them in a fair way. This meant calling some fans back and rejecting ticket requests from those that did not need accessible tickets. As well as providing a free telephone number for access bookings - a policy since 2012 - Ticketmaster has online forms that customers can fill in to request tickets. These are prioritised and tickets put on hold on a first-come, first-serve basis. To operate these systems, we have an extensive team of specially trained subject matter experts that have been with the business for many years. We believe that having disability-aware staff with extensive knowledge of access information for all events and venues is crucial.”

Andrew Parsons, Managing Director, Ticketmaster UK

## Call preferences

We asked survey participants to imagine their local arena was consulting on its access booking phone line. The results reveal a complicated picture.

---

49% said they would prefer to wait on the line in a queue to speak to an operator.

51% said that they would prefer to give their phone number and join a queue to receive a call back.

Given this split, we think venues, event organisers and ticketing companies should examine how to implement call-back options for all access booking lines, as this is currently a rarity.

### SSE Arena Wembley call back system

“Our call back system was set up over 7 years ago, when there was no other option but to call the venue to make an access booking. The system means that the customers are not hanging on the line waiting for an operator - although customers now have the ability to book wheelchair-accessible spaces online via our website if they wish to. With our voicemail system, the customer leaves us a message and we call them back in the order that they have called. It means that we can dedicate additional time, as required, to assess the customers’ needs within the venue and allocate the most suitable seating for them. The voicemail can be adjusted, if needed, to let customers know that certain seating for an event is sold out, or to provide event information regarding sales. We aim to make the booking process as easy as possible for all of our customers.”

Lyn Dicks, Deputy Ticketing and Box Office Manager

### Premium lines

A common theme in bad press related to access bookings has been people having to book access via ‘premium’ phone lines. The situation with regards to phone line charges is a complicated one. Some venues, events and ticketing companies use ‘premium’ lines, others use local rate numbers, and a third group provide free-phone lines for access bookings.

53% of people said that they had been required to call ‘premium’ phone numbers.

6 people reported having had a bill of over £20 following an access booking.

If general tickets can be booked online without having to call, and calling a line with charges is the only option for access bookings, Deaf and disabled people end up incurring additional costs that non-disabled people don’t have to worry about. It is for this reason that we urge the industry as a whole to adopt a free-phone policy for access telephone numbers. In doing so, we understand that there are follow-on questions to tackle, such as how to prevent non-disabled people accessing those lines at busy times. We wish to work with the industry towards solutions to this problem. Facilitating online access bookings is part of the answer.

---

## Issues once speaking to someone

Getting through is only half of the story when it comes to making an access booking over the phone. Sometimes getting through can be the end of the journey:

“I’ve been told to ring back before [when] access tickets had not been registered on the venue’s system [despite tickets going on sale].”

It should be standard practice in 2018 for access bookings to go live at the point of tickets going on sale.

As highlighted previously, informed customer service massively impacts the experience of Deaf and disabled fans when they get through on the phone and there are many venues, events and ticketing companies getting this right.

However, our survey found that 47% of people had experienced staff on the phone contradicting online access policies:

“Saying they don’t recognise the Access Card when their online policy says they do.”

“Three different staff members all told me different things”.

Issues can also arise if third-party sellers are not equipped with relevant access information:

“Lack of understanding, unable to explain system to get PA ticket from venue as they can’t supply... Many also do not have information to hand as to whom to contact.”

“[I was] told a venue was accessible only to find no one had told booking staff of building works.”

Some people also reported issues relating to basic disability awareness and terminology – easily rectified with Disability Awareness Training:

“I have been asked if I’m ‘registered disabled’ and what my ‘disability’ is. It is often assumed that I am a wheelchair user or have a mobility impairment.”

“I called to say I needed to make an access booking. The question that followed was: “Are you a walking disabled?” I was a bit stunned by the question. When I eventually said yes after some awkward conversation, [they said]: “Some of them walk, some don’t - you can’t tell what it is when they can walk...”

Yet again, the end result of these avoidable communication issues are predictable:

“Some staff have not known how to book accessible tickets or log access requirements. On a couple of occasions this has led to [me] being unable to access tickets at all.”

---

## Booking online

“It’s so much better! Much fairer, faster and easier to do.”

STAR’s Best Practice Guide on making ticket sales accessible points out that ‘most major ticket sellers for entertainment now see well over 90% of their transactions online’. We strongly agree with STAR that ‘there now needs to be a focus on giving disabled customers the same opportunity of choice’.

“I have missed out on tickets for a few gigs recently as I sat on hold for over an hour, yet my wife sitting next to me was online and able to get non-accessible seating tickets easily.”

With 70% of our Access Booking survey participants saying they would prefer to book access online, it is time for the whole industry to make this happen as comprehensively as possible.

The key things that we think should be bookable online in 2018 are:

- Wheelchair accessible spaces, transfer positions and step-free seating.
- PA tickets / seats in any location.
- Locations for hearing loop / BSL interpretation / captioning / audio description.

In order for this to be achieved, Access Schemes need to be in place. Integration of schemes such as the Access Card also have the potential to play an important role in facilitating this next level of customer service.

“Good experiences have mostly come through systems that accept the Access Card as it has my unique requirements on it. When I do it this way I feel like I have the same experience as everyone else.”

## Independence

We know that when booking shifts online, the ability of people to independently book tickets increases dramatically:

“It would be useful to be able to just book online [myself] and not have to ask my husband to make the call for me, and explain my needs, every time I want to book a concert or a show.”

At the same time, it is essential that ticketing websites themselves are designed to be user-friendly and accessible to facilitate independent use. The industry makes considerable use of splash pages and pop-ups with images overlaid with embedded text – design decisions which render information effectively invisible to some users using assisted technology:

“Websites for ticket booking are often not accessible for people with vision impairments or for those using magnification or screen readers. This is partly down to the amount of pictures, advertisements, tables and diagrams which are used.”

---

## Customer confidence

“If it all worked, I would go back much more in future.”

Our Access Booking Survey demonstrates that whilst a significant number of Deaf and disabled people are prepared to trust online systems, there is still work to do to increase consumer confidence. This will only be successful if venue and event access information and briefing of staff on the ground is watertight, ensuring that customers experience a hassle-free experience at the event that matches the ease of booking online.

We asked survey participants to imagine they were going to a venue they hadn't been to before that allowed them to pre-register their access requirements and then book access and tickets entirely online, without speaking to anyone.

45% of survey participants said that they would feel confident that their access needs would be met on the night, dependent upon resources such as high quality access information.

Only 6% felt that they would have very low or no confidence, which is encouraging.

Whilst in the short term online access booking is likely to be restricted to certain access provisions, there is no reason why this could not be opened up in the future as systems become more customisable and the trust of Deaf and disabled fans is gained.

The following quotes illustrate the concerns people have currently, particularly when their access requirements are more complex than simply requiring a PA or accessible seating position:

“I wear a Cochlear Implant and prefer to [sit in a particular location in relation to] the stage, so without having any communication directly with the venue that can be difficult to determine.”

“Going to a gig [is a] one-off, so if something isn't suitable, my daughter doesn't have the option of going somewhere else. The experience is totally ruined and a complete waste of time. We cannot take that risk. We need to be 100% sure that her access requirements will be met.”

“No two people have the same access needs therefore the online system would have to be very detailed or allow lots of free text to ensure the individual access needs are understood and supported.”

What is very clear is the central role of clear and accurate access information in facilitating online booking:

“If an event had access info [that] was very comprehensive online, I would be confident. However, some venues have hardly any access information on their websites and do not engender as much confidence in me in terms of access needs.”

---

Regardless of the mode of booking, Deaf and disabled customers need confirmation of access bookings. Online systems are tailor-made to provide this automatically, but in many cases, people said they would prefer a member of staff to ‘manually’ confirm a booking to provide extra reassurance:

“Online booking is the new normal. So long as confirmation was received, I’d trust it.”

“I like the reassurance of knowing not just the seat location but the access to it, which I have never seen online. If this was included I would be totally confident.”

“This would be the quickest and easiest way to book. A receipt of the requirements that I had registered, to take with me on the night would make me feel fully confident.”

“I would expect to be able to book a ticket, and then for someone to call me [to confirm].”

### Signalling an inclusive ethos

Setting up online access booking is one of the ultimate ways in which a venue, event or ticketing company can signal to Deaf and disabled music fans that they are actively inclusive and mindful of the need to provide an equal service:

“I think I would be very comfortable [with online access booking], as the venue [would] seem to know what they are doing. Also it is easier for me not to speak to someone on the phone, so perfect really.”

“If they have this already integrated into their system, it means they have looked at this issue and so hopefully would have the facilities required.”

“It would show that they’ve thought about the fact booking via phone or in person is completely inaccessible to a lot of disabled people and that we should be able to book online like everyone else, which would make me more confident in their ability to follow through on the night.”

### Roundhouse on their online access booking system

“Having worked with Attitude is Everything to become a Gold venue, accessible online ticketing was a high priority for us. We are committed to ensuring our venue is welcoming to all and fair access to tickets, including an online booking system, is part of that. Wheelchair users can book online using the ‘select your own seat’ function on our website and once the booking is complete we email the customer to let them know what they have booked. We direct them to our online access information and arrange blue badge parking if it’s needed. We are continually striving to improve our offer and are looking forward to developing our online booking functionality in the near future.”

Claire Griffin, Head of Operations, Roundhouse

---

## Massive potential

The potential for integrating access booking into online systems cannot be underestimated.

Beyond PA tickets and seating locations, there is now a tremendous opportunity for the industry to push things forward by building upon existing online seating plans and providing additional information for every seat on sale in a venue, such as number of steps to access the seat, and the distance to the nearest accessible toilet. Everyone would benefit, including those who might not require a position in a dedicated wheelchair-accessible location, helping to free-up the often limited space set aside for dedicated step-free 'accessible' seating positions.

We know from speaking to venues and ticketing companies that many have plans to develop their services in this direction. Technological change does not happen overnight, and with the best intentions, companies cannot instantly shift to facilitating online access bookings to the extent that they might wish. We are, however, hopeful that Deaf and disabled music fans will encounter significant upgrades in their online booking experiences in the near future given the commitment that already exists across the industry to make improvements.

## The four pillars of access booking

**"I have never managed to buy a ticket solely using an online system. It has always involved follow up emails or telephone conversations to complete the process."**

To conclude this section, it is clear that companies need to examine the 'four pillars' of access booking – face-to-face, email, phone and online – and ensure that all are as accessible as possible, and interchangeable according to the needs of individual customers.

Flexibility and customer service is key:

**"The Roundhouse is very good. I booked a ticket to see a singer there a while back, and their website allowed me to specify that I had access requirements. Very shortly after that someone sent me an email explaining that the ticket I had booked was in the stalls and asked if, given my disability, a different option would be more accessible. I was given options and nothing was assumed. It was really very good and I had a good time on the night knowing that everything had been taken care of."**

As we have shown, there are a variety of customer preferences when it comes to booking. It is therefore essential that a 'whole system' approach is taken to ensure seamless customer service. This includes accounting for the various ways access can sometimes be bookable for the same show, and ensuring that internal and external staff understand policies.

## Beyond simple sales

---

The basic transaction we have focused on in this report involves an individual disabled person booking access for an event, which might include booking a personal assistant ticket or a specific seating arrangement to meet their access requirements.

However, there are a range of other scenarios that need to be considered, if Deaf and disabled people are to be granted equal access to everything when it comes to ticketing.

### Booking for a party

“If I’m going with a friend, I have to buy my tickets and theirs in two separate transactions.”

As we pointed out in our previous State of Access Report, people go to live music events in groups, and that includes Deaf and disabled people.

People want and need to be able to book their access and tickets for other members of their party at the same time. This is particularly important for Deaf and disabled parents:

“[There is often an] inability to understand that some disabled people have children. I was given an accessible seat and a PA seat but they wanted my 6 year old to sit the other side of the area. [The only other option was to pay] the highest seat prices for all three of us as only the front row had accessibility in addition to the accessible area.”

### High demand events

“I’ve given up trying to go to high demand events.”

73% of people had felt discriminated against when trying to book access for a high demand event.

As touched on earlier, it is this issue that has catapulted access booking into the public eye in recent years. Whilst the ‘15 minute sell-out tour’ has become embedded in the coverage of high profile sales as an impressive feat to be marvelled at, we think the resulting experience for all customers is less than ideal, and particularly so for Deaf and disabled fans needing to book access along with their tickets. We need the industry to work towards better solutions.

The issue of non-disabled people phoning access lines they find on websites is a big one that clearly needs to be tackled. Bespoke pre-registration systems for customers with access requirements might be one option to explore:

“If you could register your access needs and then receive “priority” alerts when your desired seating preferences were available before tickets were available on general release that would be really great.”

---

If such systems were implemented, they would need to take into account those people who might come across an ongoing sale after a deadline to pre-register access requirements had passed, and ensure there was no risk of discriminating against them in the process.

With this in mind, we think another concept worthy of discussion across the industry is the notion of shifting to pre-registration and lottery systems for all customers for big sales.

## Pre-sales

“I had a pre-sale code for a particular event and was told it was only for “normal” tickets and wheelchair access was on a first-come first-served basis on the day of sale.”

55% of people had faced problems booking access through a pre-sale or early-bird scheme.

Pre-sales are another important area of ticketing where access can be overlooked, potentially contravening the Equality Act 2010 by placing Deaf and disabled people at a disadvantage.

This issue can be compounded by the issue of being unable to book for a party:

“You are unable to purchase standard and accessible tickets on the same order. This is of particular concern during a presale event as the booking systems are programmed to accept the pre-sale link only once. I have missed out seeing [one of my favourite artists] because of this.”

## The role of artists and promoters

“I always sign up for pre-sales for my favourite bands and I have only ever been able to get accessible tickets on one occasion. Pre-sale tickets are usually released by the band/promoters through only one ticketing vendor. Accessible tickets are often held at another vendor or the venue and not available to purchase through whichever pre-sale vendor that has been used.”

Pre-sales are one of the key areas where we need promoters and artists to take responsibility, liaise with venues and events, and ensure that access booking is facilitated.

If a Deaf or disabled music fan purchases something or joins a fan club to support their favourite artist and access a pre-sale, this should be acknowledged by allowing them to participate on an equal basis and arrange for their access requirements to be met:

“I’ve had more than one occasion where I’ve been part of a fan group and early bird tickets have gone on sale and I’ve called the venue and not been able to book access because the early pre-sale on the computer hasn’t listed access tickets. All the while, other fans are buying their tickets.”

“I’ve had pre-sale codes [after having bought an] album, only to be told that disabled [people with access requirements] can’t use them.”

---

We also heard from people who had been assisted by bands, proving that this is an issue that artists care about when they learn about it, and one that can be easily rectified:

“For one event I eventually managed to get in contact with a member of the band who sorted this out for me personally and has ensured that all of their future events now have accessible tickets on pre-sale.”

## VIP and artist meets

“I’ve never been able to attend any meet and greets as they are usually inaccessible.”

Another obvious area that involves promoters and artists alongside venue and event organisers is the growing market for VIP and meet-and-greet packages.

75 people in our survey had faced problems booking access along with a VIP or artist meet and greet package.

### Basic physical barriers

For meet-and-greets to be made available on an equal basis to fans with access requirements, they need to be accessible in the first place. Several people reported examples of this not being the case:

“I’ve never been able to attend meet and greets because the ones I’ve been interested in have taken place in parts of venues that aren’t accessible due to [concerns about] the band being mobbed in the accessible parts. No alternative was suggested.”

Safety was cited in another example:

“We were then told that it was a safety issue to have someone with mobility issues at a meet-and-greet.”

To the individuals involved, these arguments can often boil down to a sense of being directly discriminated against – an issue that needs to be tackled head-on for the benefit of everyone:

“We already had our tickets to the concert and then the meet-and-greet tickets were released. We hurried to get our tickets and were very excited. But we were turned down flat because I use a wheelchair.”

### Information and access policies

Meet-and-greet opportunities need to be promoted with bespoke access information, to ensure that people can make informed decisions. Access policies also need to be carried over, for example enabling people to attend with the support of a PA at no extra charge:

---

“I am keen to purchase meet-and-greets for various events however there is never any access information for disabled people and I’m unsure whether I’d have to pay extra for my carer. Information regarding this at meet and greets would be incredible as in the past I’ve had to miss out as I can’t find any info or any contacts to discuss my concerns.”

There clearly needs to be a policy adopted by every venue regarding how meet-and-greets can be facilitated in a location that is accessible for all fans and integrated with access bookings:

“I was denied VIP tickets as the venue or promoters didn’t know if my disabled access ticket and companion ticket would qualify for the VIP upgrade. As they didn’t know, I was unable to meet my favourite artist and missed out on the opportunity of a lifetime.”

### **Avoidable complexity**

When people do manage to book VIP options factoring in their access requirements, it is often after prolonged and confusing negotiations that would result in many people giving up:

“Trying to access presale tickets with a VIP meet and greet option I spent over an hour on hold to be told I had to ring the venue direct instead. The venue said I had to ring their ticket supplier. The supplier could then only sort out my seats and I had to sort out the VIP element with the venue separately. The venue said this was incorrect and had to cancel the first booking before they could process the full VIP ticket. They were very good and reserved my tickets whilst everything was being sorted out. The whole thing took over a week to finalise.”

### **Adapting the package**

There are several factors that need to be considered when ensuring equal access to VIP packages. Often, specific seating is included, that in many venues might not always be physically accessible. Whilst we encourage and support organisers to address this on a case-by-case basis, much can be achieved by adapting packages to reflect the limitations that may exist in the short-term. If this is done in an honest and customer-focused manner in conjunction with promoters, fans are often very pleased and accommodating:

“Symphony Hall Birmingham bent over backwards for me when I tried to get a VIP meet-and-greet last year. Part of the package included seating which was not wheelchair accessible. In conjunction with the promoters they organised a re-banding of the package to subtract the cost of the accessible seats from those on the front row to compensate for the difference. I was able to enjoy everything else associated with the VIP package as they moved the meet-and-greet area to an accessible area. They also organised a blue badge parking space for me right next to the entrance free of charge.”

---

## Gift vouchers

With multiple companies now offering entertainment gift vouchers, it is essential that the industry ensures that these can be used by all customers, including Deaf and disabled fans needing to book access. Unfortunately, this is currently not always the case:

“I’ve been told I cannot use gift vouchers to purchase tickets because the dedicated booking office specifically asks disabled customers to book through them instead and then refuse to accept the vouchers meaning that I’m unable to spend my birthday or Christmas presents.”

## Resales

“When there has been an event I’m not able to attend, I’m not aware of any way to sell-on tickets to other disabled users. I’ve never tried to get a refund as I assume this wouldn’t be accepted.”

Finally, it is important to highlight the need for the re-selling of tickets linked to access bookings to be facilitated whenever this is an option for other ticket holders. Getting this right is even more important given the circumstances that some fans live with whilst seeking to pay for and access live music:

“I have a higher chance of missing gigs due to a chronic health problem so I worry about buying non-refundable advance tickets as I only get to gigs about half of the time.”

Across the UK, there are venues and events providing excellent customer service when it comes to enabling refunds and resales of access bookings. However, there is still much to do to support the whole industry to adopt best practice policies in this area.

64 people had faced problems re-selling tickets linked to access bookings.

This whole topic centres on fairness, and giving Deaf and disabled fans equal access to all the privileges that non-disabled ticket holders have once they have purchased tickets:

“It’s not fair to apply ‘no refunds’ to accessible tickets. If someone can’t attend [a gig] they can give [the ticket] to a friend normally. But if you have an access booking and [you are] sick or anything then no one can attend and you can’t get a refund AND you can’t resell. This has happened to us and it’s an expensive and unfair way to do it. We can’t just ‘give them to a friend’.”

# The impact of bad experiences

---

Drawing upon data in the Department of Media, Culture and Sport's Taking Part Survey 2015/16, we estimate that around 3.3million Deaf and disabled adults go to a live music event in any given year - approximately 11% of the total UK live music audience. Their experiences and perceptions matter.

Before we end this report with our vision for access booking and how we intend to work towards it in collaboration with the music industry, it is worth considering the impact that bad experiences of booking access have on the perceptions of Deaf and disabled music fans when it comes to venues, events, ticketing companies and artists.

Poor access booking experiences impact everyone.

## Apportioning blame

51% felt that the venue or event would be entirely to blame.

61% felt that ticketing companies (if involved) would be somewhat to blame.

17% felt that the artists performing at the event would be somewhat to blame.

## Lasting opinion

92% said they would be left with a negative opinion of the venue or event.

86% said they would be left with a negative opinion of any ticketing company involved.

18% said they would be left with a negative opinion of the artist(s) they had tried to see.

## Future decisions

81% said they would be less likely to go to the venue or event again.

76% said they would be less likely to book tickets through the ticketing company again.

21% said they would be less likely to see the band or artist live in future.

15% said they would be less likely to buy records or merchandise from the band or artist.

## Conclusion

---

In our 2014 State of Access Report, we stated that if non-disabled people are able to purchase tickets online, by telephone and in person, the same options should be available to Deaf and disabled people.

We still stand by this assertion.

Some people wish to be able to book access completely online, others will always wish to speak to someone on the phone, pop into a box office, or communicate via email.

They all have one wish that anyone working in the music industry should recognise – to see their favourite artists play live.

The focus of this report has allowed us to present the voices of Deaf and disabled fans regarding the single most important customer service issue that impacts them.

By sharing extensive quotes, we hope to communicate a sense of the massive and often un-tapped consumer group that is out there, asking the industry to embrace their custom and recognise what they need in order to be granted an equal service.

There have been significant advances across the industry in recent years. There are also sections of the live event world being left behind by competitors, and failing to make the reasonable adjustments they are legally obliged to provide.

With discussion of ticketing comes the topic of competition - by its very nature the name of the game is to attract customers over competitors and secure their custom.

Whilst we embrace a competitive spirit when it comes to pushing the boundaries of live music accessibility, the key message of this report is that the industry now needs to collectively agree a baseline set of standards when it comes to the implementation of access booking.

We need promoters, managers and artists to join venues, events and ticketing companies in tackling this issue and finding solutions that work for everyone.

Let 2018 be the year in which the industry joins forces to begin a step-change in access booking.

# What customers need

---

When we talk about Deaf and disabled music fans, we include many of our own staff, trustees and all of our volunteers.

As a disability-led organisation committed to sharing the voices of fellow Deaf and disabled people, we are a unique and direct link between the music industry and the 3.3 million Deaf and disabled live music fans that go to gigs in the UK every year.

Following our Access Booking Survey, feedback from 600 Mystery Shops over the past 4 years, and our 18 years working in this field, these are the 5 key things that Deaf and disabled fans have told us they need it comes to access booking:

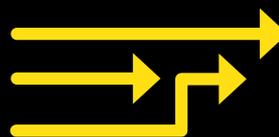
**1** A simple and universal system for evidencing access requirements



**2** Accurate and disability-aware information and customer service



**3** Choice and flexibility when booking tickets



**4** To be able to trust that access requirements will be met



**5** Equal access to everything



# Our vision for access booking

---

## 1. A simple and universal system for evidencing access requirements.

- A single, free proof of access requirements card that can be used across the UK and across all sectors.
- Uniform policy for evidencing access requirements adopted across the industry, as outlined in STAR's Best Practice Guide and our Charter of Best Practice.
- No venue or event referring to the now defunct term 'registered disabled'.

## 2. Accurate and disability-aware information and customer service.

- Uniform standard for access information adopted across the industry, as outlined in our Access Starts Online guidance.
- Uniform terminology for access bookings adopted across the industry.
- Internal and external sales staff familiar with all access booking policies.
- Disability Awareness and Inclusive Communication Training for all frontline sales staff.

## 3. Choice and flexibility when booking tickets.

- The following bookable online:
  - Wheelchair accessible spaces, transfer positions and step-free seating.
  - PA tickets / seats in any location.
  - Locations for hearing loop / BSL interpretation / captioning / audio description.
- PA tickets bookable for any location within a venue or outdoor site.
- Call-back options integrated into access booking lines.
- Whole party booking available when booking personal access.
- All seating options include information about distances and steps before confirmation of booking.
- Access booking systems integrating online, email and telephone booking preferences.

---

#### 4. To be able to trust that access requirements will be met.

- Access booking available as soon as tickets go live.
- Dedicated access staff contactable via phone and email.
- All venues and annual events operating data protection-compliant access schemes to enable people to submit evidence once to be held on record for a set period of time (3 years recommended).
- Access bookings managed in-house wherever possible.

#### 5. Equal access to everything.

- PA tickets bookable by any Deaf or disabled person who requires one.
- Accessible seating priced in line with lowest seat prices in a venue.
- All access booking lines use free-phone numbers.
- All pre-sales, VIP and artist meet up tickets include the ability to book access.
- All live music gift cards work with access booking.
- Resales of accessible seating tickets facilitated.
- Pre-registration lottery systems for anticipated sell-out sales, to enable all customers including Deaf and disabled people to avoid jammed phone-lines on the day.

# The Ticketing Without Barriers Coalition

---

We are pleased to announce a new music industry coalition to get to grips with the issues that Deaf and disabled people still face when it comes to access booking as outlined in this report, and to examine the practical ways of achieving a joint vision for access booking.

The initial members who pledge to join us in working towards real and sustainable solutions to meet the five needs outlined are:

## Umbrella organisations

PRS for Music	<a href="http://www.prsformusic.com">www.prsformusic.com</a>
UK Music	<a href="http://www.ukmusic.org">www.ukmusic.org</a>
Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers	<a href="http://www.star.org.uk">www.star.org.uk</a>
Music Managers Forum	<a href="http://www.themmf.net">www.themmf.net</a>
Featured Artists Coalition	<a href="http://www.thefac.org">www.thefac.org</a>
National Arenas Association	<a href="http://www.nationalarenasassociation.com">www.nationalarenasassociation.com</a>

## Ticketing companies

Ticketmaster	<a href="http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk">www.ticketmaster.co.uk</a>
See Tickets	<a href="http://www.seetickets.com">www.seetickets.com</a>
Ticket Factory	<a href="http://www.theticketfactory.com">www.theticketfactory.com</a>
We Got Tickets	<a href="http://www.wegottickets.com">www.wegottickets.com</a>
alt. tickets	<a href="http://www.alttickets.com">www.alttickets.com</a>
Skiddle	<a href="http://www.skiddle.com">www.skiddle.com</a>
Ents24	<a href="http://www.ents24.com">www.ents24.com</a>
The TicketSellers	<a href="http://www.theticketsellers.co.uk">www.theticketsellers.co.uk</a>
Ticket Web	<a href="http://www.ticketweb.co.uk">www.ticketweb.co.uk</a>
Gigantic	<a href="http://www.gigantic.com">www.gigantic.com</a>
Ticketline	<a href="http://www.ticketline.co.uk">www.ticketline.co.uk</a>
Twickets	<a href="http://www.twickets.live">www.twickets.live</a>

---

## Venue and event companies

Live Nation	<a href="http://www.livenation.co.uk">www.livenation.co.uk</a>
Festival Republic	<a href="http://www.festivalrepublic.com">www.festivalrepublic.com</a>
AEG Presents	<a href="http://www.aegpresents.co.uk">www.aegpresents.co.uk</a>
Ground Control	<a href="http://www.groundcontroluk.com">www.groundcontroluk.com</a>
Broadwick Live	<a href="http://www.broadwicklive.com">www.broadwicklive.com</a>
DF Concerts and Events	<a href="http://www.gigsinscotland.com">www.gigsinscotland.com</a>
IMG	<a href="http://www.imgevents.co.uk">www.imgevents.co.uk</a>
NEC Group	<a href="http://www.necgroup.co.uk">www.necgroup.co.uk</a>
AMG	<a href="http://www.academymusicgroup.com">www.academymusicgroup.com</a>
Southbank Centre	<a href="http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk">www.southbankcentre.co.uk</a>
Echo Arena Liverpool	<a href="http://www.echoarena.com">www.echoarena.com</a>
SSE Arena Wembley	<a href="http://www.ssearena.co.uk">www.ssearena.co.uk</a>
Motorpoint Arena Nottingham	<a href="http://www.motorpointarenanottingham.com">www.motorpointarenanottingham.com</a>
Colston Hall	<a href="http://www.colstonhall.org">www.colstonhall.org</a>
Roundhouse	<a href="http://www.roundhouse.org.uk">www.roundhouse.org.uk</a>
The O2	<a href="http://www.theo2.co.uk">www.theo2.co.uk</a>
Barbican	<a href="http://www.barbican.org.uk">www.barbican.org.uk</a>
Sage Gateshead	<a href="http://www.sagegateshead.com">www.sagegateshead.com</a>
Kilimanjaro	<a href="http://www.kilimanjarolive.co.uk">www.kilimanjarolive.co.uk</a>

The first meeting of this group will be hosted in partnership with UK Music and take place in the months following the launch of this report.

We will report back on the first year of this initiative publicly at the Ticketing Professionals Conference in March 2019.

## Beyond live music

---

Many of the issues that Deaf and disabled people have raised in this report mirror those experienced across other sectors. Indeed, several people shared examples of good practice beyond live music when it comes to access booking. Attitude is Everything is keenly aware of the best practice to learn from and common challenges experienced in other sectors. Whilst our core remit is and remains live music, it has become increasingly apparent that there is significant scope for sectors to exchange ideas and unite around common principles when it comes to accessibility.

The immediate topics that we think deserve a cross-sector conversation are the provision of access information, evidencing access requirements, and the implementation of access booking.

With this in mind, within a year of this report we will convene a new cross-sector group, bringing together interested parties from music, cinema, theatre, heritage and sport.

The following organisations and industry bodies have already pledged to join us:

Arts Council England	<a href="http://www.artscouncil.org.uk">www.artscouncil.org.uk</a>
UK Music	<a href="http://www.ukmusic.org">www.ukmusic.org</a>
UK Theatre	<a href="http://www.uktheatre.org">www.uktheatre.org</a>
Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers	<a href="http://www.star.org.uk">www.star.org.uk</a>
Society of London Theatres	<a href="http://www.solt.co.uk">www.solt.co.uk</a>
Nimbus (Access Card)	<a href="http://www.accesscard.org.uk">www.accesscard.org.uk</a>
Hynt Card	<a href="http://www.hynt.co.uk">www.hynt.co.uk</a>
Vocaleyes	<a href="http://www.vocaleyes.co.uk">www.vocaleyes.co.uk</a>
Stagetext	<a href="http://www.stagetext.org">www.stagetext.org</a>
Signed Culture	<a href="http://www.signedculture.org.uk">www.signedculture.org.uk</a>
Euan's Guide	<a href="http://www.euansguide.com">www.euansguide.com</a>
Shape Arts	<a href="http://www.shapearts.org.uk">www.shapearts.org.uk</a>
Level Playing Field	<a href="http://www.levelplayingfield.org.uk">www.levelplayingfield.org.uk</a>
Disability Co-operative Network for Museums	<a href="http://www.musedcn.org.uk">www.musedcn.org.uk</a>

## Share this report

---

Please help us to spread the word about this report and the help raise awareness of how access booking can be improved for Deaf and disabled fans.

The download link for the report is:

[www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk/SOAR2018](http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk/SOAR2018)

Tweet about this report using @attitudetweets and #StateofAccess

Tweet about the Ticketing Without Barriers Coalition using #TicketingWithoutBarriers

If you intend to quote from this report or wish to use the infographics, please contact [jacob@attitudeiseverything.org.uk](mailto:jacob@attitudeiseverything.org.uk)

## Follow Attitude is Everything

---

Follow us for updates on our work to make live music accessible for all.

Website: [www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk](http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk)

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

 Facebook: [/attitudeiseverything](https://www.facebook.com/attitudeiseverything)

 Instagram: [@attitudeiseverythinghq](https://www.instagram.com/attitudeiseverythinghq)

Sign up to our mailing list here: <http://bit.ly/aiemailinglist>

# Acknowledgements

---

The research, design and launch of this report was made possible by the support of:

**Arts Council England**

**PRS for Music**

**UK Music**

Thank you also to the 349 people who took part in our Access Booking Survey and the organisations who helped us to promote it.

Written by Jacob Adams, Head of Research and Campaigns

Survey design and analysis by Cedrik Kavanagh, Research Assistant

Report designed by Kathryn Corlett - [www.kathryncorlett.co.uk](http://www.kathryncorlett.co.uk)



**attitude**  
is everything

improving deaf and disabled people's **access to live music**

**ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING**

54 Chalton Street  
London NW1 1HS

Tel: 0207 383 7979

Email: [info@attitudeiseverything.org.uk](mailto:info@attitudeiseverything.org.uk)

Company No: 6397532

Charity No: 1121975

**Please contact us if you would like this information in an alternative format**



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

**#StateofAccess**