

Initial Recommendations – Barbican

Back in 2013, the Barbican Centre attained a silver level in the [Attitude is Everything Charter of Best Practice](#) which seeks to improve Deaf and disabled people's access to live music across the UK, we would hope to renew the building in a way that pushes this to the gold standard, increasing the offering to people with not only a wider array of physical disabilities but also neurodiverse difficulties, guaranteeing the Barbican's future as one of London's most accessible and sustainably permeable venues.

Since the time of its silver awarding, Attitude is Everything found [that “disabled fans attending live music events up 26% in 2015”](#) and increasing every year, showing that arts and culture venues need to continue to engage in bridging the gap to invite even more audience members in.

“An [Attitude is Everything](#) survey in 2019 found that 70% of artists had withheld details of a health condition or impairment due to being worried that doing so would cause problems and impact a relationship with a promoter, venue or festival. As a result, 2 in 3 have compromised their health or wellbeing to perform live.”

From personal experience as a neurodiverse person in the creative world, I have learnt to mask so I can withstand situations that are uncomfortable so I can be perceived as normal and while this is sustainable for me, the reality is many others with more severe difficulties cannot consume arts and culture in distress, nor should they.

This research shows that while arts venues do offer accommodations when asked, they need to have more of a consistent, robust offer for people with difficulties that don't always require disclosure or “othering” with relaxed performances.

Recommendations:

1. **Offering noise-free, sensory-friendly areas with comfortable seating to help autistics or people with ADHD, who are sensitive to stimulus (both for performers and audience members).** These spaces could offer a toned down artistic experience in a cutoff room and signs explaining what the room is for. [Central Saint Martin's quiet capsules](#) have been a success for their variable usage: available for prayer, personal reflection, health requirements, breastfeeding and rest. [The Liverpool Philharmonic](#) who were awarded Gold by Attitude is Everything also have “respite areas”.
2. **Looking to disabled artists to co-design spaces,** so they are made for and by the people that it will affect. Organisations such as [We'reAllHuman](#) already put creative individuals at the forefront of making inclusive spaces.
3. Many people with neurodivergent conditions need and thrive on repetition, predictability, and clear boundaries to feel 'safe' and in 'control'. **The location of wayfinding signage needs to be consistent throughout the building, tactile letters use of “You are here” maps and an interactive map** – important not just for people who are neurodivergent - is also related to people who are less experienced / confident to ask questions etc
4. **Allowing for more varied wheelchair seating where they can actually see the whole stage, near the front, back and middle.** Liverpool Philharmonic, for example, has several aisle seats in the Stalls that are transfer seats. [Transfer seats have movable armrests](#) for those who would like to transfer out of their wheelchair and can be used by others with limited mobility.
5. **Putting in handrails in the middle of stairway isles and more rows of seating with wider foot room** allows people who may have people with dyspraxia, mobility and coordination problems more comfort when accessing the middle of seating rows.

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The consensus online (shown on Theatre Monkey) is that at most ["all seats up to 5ft 10 or so"](#) in regards to legroom and that doesn't leave space for a passer-by – if [we compare to one of the Southbank's theatres](#) which were awarded the UK's first Platinum award by Attitude Is Everything, the seating is seen as good for everyone.

Aldwych Theatre is a venue that touts handrails in place throughout

6. **Make audio descriptions useful, assistive and above all as interesting** as the performances themselves. [Performances from BLINK Dance Theatre](#) have reaped the creative rewards that come from how creative audio descriptions can open up new experiences to audience members.
7. **Invite performers and bands to discuss any access requirements and, with their permission, make sure relevant venue staff know about them.** This would be a process employing many recommendations from Attitude is Everything's [JUST ASK guide](#), chief among these is having members of the EDI team invited to meet with artists more proactively and give insights into possible reasonable adjustments artists may not be aware they can ask for.