



ARTIST DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVE COLLABORATION:

The systemic barriers to independent and sustainable career opportunities for learning disabled and autistic artists and how we might begin to dismantle them

Research based on the work of Access All Areas' Artist Development Programme
Written by Elinor Keber in consultation with Access All Areas and Liselle Terret

ACCESS ALL AREAS

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INTRODUCTION



Access All Areas¹ creates award winning, disruptive performance by learning disabled and autistic artists. Based in Hoxton, East London, our mission is to create a world where the creative expression of learning disabled and autistic people is authentic, powerful and valued. Our creative programmes are designed to enable people to gain access to quality performance training and community provision in London. This includes our Performance Making

Diploma² in partnership with the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (winner of The Guardian's Student Diversity Award, 2015³). Access All Areas works with artists creating a new generation of performance makers who devise their own work that is often autobiographical, often provocative and creates a new learning disabled aesthetic that Lynn Gardner states "*has the power to change theatre.*"⁴

PREFACE:

An introduction from Nick Llewellyn, Artistic Director of Access All Areas and Liselle Terret, neurodivergent artist and academic from University of East London:

This '*Artist Development and Creative Collaboration Pack*' written and compiled by Elinor Keber brilliantly articulates the systemic barriers to independent and sustainable career opportunities for learning disabled and autistic artists and offers guidance on how we might begin to dismantle them.

We believe that the marginalisation of learning disabled and neurodivergent people is a human rights issue in a society that has historically depoliticised disability whereby their 'other-ing' becomes a deeply embedded and accepted part of our society. These artists have a right to access the performing arts and indeed to have the same chance of becoming leaders of the industry. We are committed to enabling this, to calling out and challenging the systematic discrimination that still exists within our performing arts industry. We need to position this as being about identity politics, and we urge performing arts organisations to take responsibility in enabling this for these marginalised people who continue to experience daily abuse and discrimination based on their very identity and way of being in this world.

Our journey began when we started to interrogate the distinct lack of visibility and career progression experienced by the artists who graduated from the Access All Areas/Royal Central

¹ <http://www.accessallareastheatre.org/>

² <https://www.cssd.ac.uk/course/performance-making-diploma-learning-disabled-autistic-adults>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2015/mar/19/student-diversity-category-award-winner-and-runners-up>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2014/dec/11/learning-disabled-theatre-diploma-lyn-gardner>

School of Speech and Drama Theatre-Making Diploma that we formed in 2014 due to systemic barriers within theatre and television.

In 2015, Access All Areas performer, Cian Binchy co-devised '*The Misfit Analysis*' a semi-autobiographical solo performance based on Cian's experiences of autism that began as a 15 minute showcase at the end of the diploma programme. Access All Areas worked as director, producer, tour booker, marketing and PR, financial management, supported applications to Access to Work and aided Cian in finding creative collaborators and enablers. The show became a one-hour production, was performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival⁵, taken on a UK wide tour and to Mexico with the British Council. Without Access All Areas multi-role intervention, Cian would have been unable to realise the production due to a lack of a support infra-structure.

We know that the Arts Council's Creative Case For Diversity⁶ is recognizing the need for the performing arts sector to develop structures for supporting disabled artists. However, even with the increase in initiatives and opportunities such as Unlimited⁷ and Ramps On The Moon⁸ there is still a distinct lack of representation of learning disabled and autistic artists. Our artists often have difficulties with independent living, communication and managing daily tasks. Also barriers to building networks due to social isolation can be a major factor in an industry that often prefers to work with who they already know. We want to challenge the industry with regards to the possibilities for 'reasonable adjustments' in any artist development scheme and in how the industry can genuinely develop new artists' careers after the initial development period ends.

The Arts Council's *Elevate* programme has enabled Access All Areas to challenge these barriers head on. We have been able to support our graduates with employment plans and through one particular strand, the Performance Company, a group of 12 artists committed to making ensemble and solo performance. We partnered with Live Art Development Agency, Arts Admin, London Theatre Consortium venues BAC, Soho Theatre and Lyric Hammersmith, and consulted with peer organisations including Mind the Gap and Heart n Soul.

We would like to thank Elinor Keber for her skill and expertise in compiling and writing this invaluable document that we sincerely hope will have an impact in repositioning learning disabled and autistic adults in our performing arts industry. Elinor has led this project for the past several years developing a strategy for us to use in our future artist development work whereby asking our theatres to become as accessible as possible to garner these talented artists' careers for the long term. Thank you also to Liselle Terret from University of East London who has also been instrumental in asking those tricky questions and supporting the Elevate programme.

THE GUIDE AND ITS AIMS:

This guide has been compiled as a summary of the work undertaken by Access All Areas over a two year period in connection to its Artist Development programme⁹. During this time, Access All Areas has worked alongside the members of its Performance Company, producers, creative collaborators and other industry peers in order to explore the systemic industry barriers that may prevent independent and sustainable career opportunities for learning disabled and autistic

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/aug/28/the-misfit-analysis-edinburgh-festival-review-pleasance-courtyard-cian-binchy-autism>

⁶ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/how-we-make-impact/diversity>

⁷ <https://weareunlimited.org.uk/>

⁸ <https://www.rampsonthemoon.co.uk/>

⁹ Access All Areas' Artist Development programme: <http://www.accessallareastheatre.org/artistdevelopment/>

artists, as well as the structures, relationships and networks that might be developed within the wider industry in order to begin to dismantle these barriers at their source.

This work has taken place alongside and in close connection to the development of several new companies and solo projects supported by Access All Areas and three member venues of the London Theatre Consortium. Each company or solo project was given an intensive, supported research and development period at one of these venues: the Lyric Hammersmith, the Soho Theatre or Battersea Arts Centre.

The work undertaken also sought to explore the definition and responsibilities of the creative collaborator, particularly in connection to the potential this role may have in helping to bridge the gap in support created by an artist's separation from a company such as Access All Areas. An in depth exploration of the role of the creative collaborator can be found on pp25-33 of this guide, with specific definitions on p31.

The aim of this guide is to offer reflections on the processes explored during this period of research, as well as to provide practical information for artists, producers, directors and creative collaborators in order to assist the development of future projects and companies. The guide also offers information to those peers within the wider industry interested in gaining a greater awareness of systemic barriers and in expanding and developing the accessibility of their own platforms, projects or programming in order to increase the engagement and presence of learning disabled and autistic artists.

It should be noted that, while many of the quotations within this guide have been credited, others are presented anonymously in order to allow for personal privacy in connection to individual access requirements.

A PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE:

Although the work undertaken throughout the project has been contextualised from many perspectives, the information presented within this guide is from a pragmatic and industry based standpoint and the language adopted reflects this.

For example, for many of those working and practising within the field of learning disability led theatre, there is a strong objection to the defining of roles such as that of the creative collaborator. These definitions may not only restrict the flexibility and evolution of a working relationship, but may also suggest a very particular one way dependency to its dynamic, not in keeping with the reality of the experience of a creative collaboration. However, the practical logistics of the wider industry, particularly from a business and financial point of view, mean that the ability to name and define this support role is currently a necessity. You can neither secure access specific funding for an unnamed role nor expect the provision of a suitably experienced and skilled candidate without a definition.

While a long term aim should certainly be to support the industry in the dismantling of barriers to the point at which these definitions and distinctions become redundant, this guide recognises that this goal is yet to be achieved. As the guide is practical, so must the language be. In order to facilitate this, a glossary of terms can be found on p8.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY INDEPENDENCE?

In November 2018, artists and representatives from several learning disability led theatre companies met to discuss the aims and development of this project as well as to consider the answers to questions raised along the way¹⁰. One question raised on the day was that of the word ‘independence’.

It was important to many of the artists and representatives present that the use of this word should be contextualised; no artist, whether disabled or non-disabled, works entirely independently. Every artist, creative and theatre professional is reliant on the work of others to fulfil their own career aims, even for those exclusively creating solo projects. In the widest sense, the artist relies on the producer to secure funding and opportunity; the producer relies upon the venue to provide the space and means for a performance to take place; the venue, ultimately, relies on the audience to attend and experience the performance. Smaller, interpersonal examples of dependence happen constantly and could be anything from reassurance and emotional support, to an exchange of creative opinion, to being offered the email address that is the key to unlocking an opportunity.

However, for the purpose of this guide, ‘independence’ is utilised practically and logistically within the context of the wider industry. An ‘independent opportunity’ should be considered as a project or platform that happens away from the support structure, knowledge and awareness of a company such as Access All Areas. To switch the perspective, a call for independent and sustained opportunity for learning disabled artists is actually a call to the wider industry to dismantle barriers in order to allow equal ‘dependent’ opportunities for all artists.

WHAT IS SUPPORT?

Likewise, it is important to acknowledge that the support given within a successful creative relationship is never one way, whether this be emotional, practical or performative. Artists and creative collaborators alike reported that the most integral dynamic to any relationship for them was that of exchange, and that the creative collaborator’s practice is often at least as challenged, developed and improved as that of the artist.

This guide places the practical journey and development of the artist and their career at its centre. So, whilst it is certainly acknowledged that it is a reciprocal interaction, ‘support’ is used in reference to the fulfilment of the requirements specified in an individual’s access plan as well as the creative collaborator’s (or other’s) role in assisting in the dismantling of systemic barriers.



¹⁰ ‘Access All Areas at LADA’ held at the Live Art Development Agency on 22nd November 2018 with representatives from Mind The Gap, Dark Horse, Open Theatre and Access All Areas in attendance.

A GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

TERM	DEFINITION
Access/Support Plan	'Access plan' refers to a document created using person-centred planning (PCP) ¹¹ that aims to gather together as much information as possible in pursuit of providing appropriate individualised creative support and in order to meet the requirements of all access needs.
Artist	Within the context of this guide, 'artist' refers to the learning disabled or autistic artist unless specified otherwise. The terms performer, creative and actor are also used within the same frame.
Autistic	'Autistic artist' is utilised over 'artist with autism' to reflect the importance of the individual's neurodiversity within their creative identity and process. This is for clarity within the guide and should not be taken as reflective of the self-identity of all artists with autism.
Creative Collaborator	Within the guide, 'creative collaborator' is used as an umbrella term for all those working within a creative support capacity unless otherwise specified. This umbrella term includes creative collaborator with or without access support, creative support worker and creative enabler. An in depth exploration of the role of the creative collaborator can be found on pp25-33 of this guide, with specific definitions on p31.
Individual Barriers	This term refers to the barriers faced by an artist specifically in relation to their own access requirements.
Learning Disabled	'Learning disabled artist' is utilised over 'artist with learning disabilities' to reflect the importance of the individual's disability within their creative identity and process. This is for clarity within the guide and should not be taken as reflective of the self-identity of all artists with learning disabilities.
Neurodivergent	This term is defined as including, but not restricted to, those with autism, Aspergers, ADHD, Tourette's, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, PTSD and bi-polar conditions ¹² . Within the guide, a distinction is made between neurodivergent and learning disabled artists in order to acknowledge the difference in access barriers and requirements.
Non-disabled	The non-disabled artist identifies as not having a disability and as neurotypical.
Systemic Barriers	This term refers to the barriers embedded within the systems and structures of the industry as a whole, e.g. the inaccessibility of application processes.

¹¹ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities/a-to-z/p/person-centred-planning-pcp>

¹² For more in depth definitions of 'neurodiversity' and 'neurodivergency' please see: <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/awareness/neurodiversity/>



KIRSTY ADAMS

EXPERIENCE: *Fix Us*, The BareFace Collective (R&D at Lyric Hammersmith, Rich Mix/Pleasance London/Vaults).

MY CAREER GOAL: To create performance that tackles the subject of emotional abuse. To perform at major theatres such as the National Theatre.



CIAN BINCHY

EXPERIENCE: *The Misfit Analysis* (Lyric Hammersmith/Vaults Festival/Pleasance Edinburgh), *Madhouse Re:exit* (Shoreditch Town Hall/Brickworks, Barton Arcade), *The Level* (ITV).

MY CAREER GOAL: To create more solo shows tackling a range of topics. To collaborate with a range of experienced artists to explore my craft.



HOUSNI HASSAN (DJ)

EXPERIENCE: *Madhouse Re:exit* (Shoreditch Town Hall/Brickworks, Barton Arcade), *Not F**kin' Sorry* (RVT/Electric Brixton), *Welcome To DJ's Space* (Unlimited Festival).

MY CAREER GOAL: To perform around the world and learn from different artists who influence my work. To continue creating experimental theatre.



TERRY HUGGETT

EXPERIENCE: *Madhouse My House* (film – Access All Areas), *Visions of Me* (R&D and BAC).

MY CAREER GOAL: To start my own company with my creative partner. To develop *Visions of Me* and take it to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. To work with Jess Thom.



ZARA JAYNE

EXPERIENCE: *Fix Us* (Rich Mix/Pleasance London/Vaults), *In Touch* (National Theatre), *A Blind Bit of Difference*, *Not Disabled Enough*, *Holby City* (BBC), *Damned* (Channel 4).

MY CAREER GOAL: To increase awareness of Charge Syndrome and of climate change. To publish poetry/novels/an autobiography, to write scripts.



DAYO KOLEOSHO

EXPERIENCE: *Madhouse Re:exit* (Shoreditch Town Hall/Brickworks, Barton Arcade), *Everyday DayLee* (R&D at BAC), *Doctors* (BBC), *Holby City* (BBC), *Election* (Theatre 503), *Damned* (Channel 4).

MY CAREER GOAL: To continue devising new work and acting on screen. To act in a TV soap and in America.



STEPHANIE NEWMAN

EXPERIENCE: *Joy* (Theatre Royal Stratford East), *Not F**kin' Sorry* (RVT/Electric Brixton/WOW at the Southbank Centre/Take Up Space Cabaret at the Royal Court Theatre)

MY CAREER GOAL: To be on Eastenders.



LEE PHILIPS

EXPERIENCE: *Fix Us* (Rich Mix/Pleasance London/Vaults), *Everyday DayLee* (R&D at BAC), *Eye Queue Hear* and *The Trial* both with Access All Areas.

MY CAREER GOAL: To continue working with the Bareface Collective and to take *Fix Us* to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and on tour. To develop *Everyday DayLee* into a full length performance.



IMOGEN ROBERTS

EXPERIENCE: *Madhouse Re:exit* (Shoreditch Town Hall/ Brickworks, Barton Arcade), *Joy* (Theatre Royal Stratford East), *Casualty* (BBC), *VIP!* (Hoxton Hall), *A Sense of an Ending* (film).

MY CAREER GOAL: To continue acting for theatre and TV and as an author. To work behind the camera. To work in Hollywood in the future.



CHARLENE SALTER

EXPERIENCE: *The Misfit Analysis* (Rich Mix Arts Venue/The Shark/on tour), *Casualty* (BBC), *Doctors* (BBC), *Madhouse My House* (film – Access All Areas), *The Crazy Factor* (RCSSD), *Never Give Up* (RCSSD).

MY CAREER GOAL: To be a role model and advocate for other learning disabled actors. To create my own political work.



EMMA SELWYN

EXPERIENCE: *Not F**kin' Sorry* (RVT/Electric Brixton/WOW at the Southbank Centre/Royal Court Theatre), *My Hands and Feet are Wiggling* (Steakhouse Live), *#binariesbegone* (R&D at BAC), Spectrum Award finalist.

MY CAREER GOAL: To continue developing *#binariesbegone*, and to take over the live art industry.



ADAM SMITH

EXPERIENCE: *Spared* (Tramshed Theatre), *Not F**kin' Sorry* (RVT/ Electric Brixton), *Princess of the Graveyard* (Stratford Circus), *It's My Move* (national tour), *Listen Up Doc* (Houses of Parliament).

MY CAREER GOAL: To further explore burlesque and incorporate this into my solo work. To challenge perceptions about people with disabilities.

THE PERFORMANCE COMPANY

A SEPARATION FROM THE CREATIVE PROCESS:

It must be understood that the creative process was not under examination during the development of this guide. And purposely so. A necessary acknowledgement is that important and exciting work is constantly being created by exceptional learning disabled and autistic performers.

Of course, an artist's relationship with a creative collaborator or producer is certainly inextricably linked with their creative process, and an individual's support requirements may include some facilitation of this. However, the questions raised throughout this guide pertain to the systemic barriers that inhibit or prevent the independent development and dissemination of this work and the structures and relationships we can explore in order to support independent and sustained opportunity.



THE LEAD VOICE:

Despite this separation from the creative process, an imperative of the work undertaken was that the lead voice remain that of the artist at all times, and that any structures developed advocate for this voice as their primary aim.

Over a series of workshop sessions starting in June 2017, discussions

were facilitated with the members of the Access All Areas Performance Company regarding their experiences of professional performance and creative collaboration, as well as their own professional development and how they might best be supported in future independent career opportunities.

WHY WE PERFORM:

In order to add some context to discussions and to aid in the facilitation of more complex topics regarding barriers and creative support, the members of the Performance Company were asked to explore their personal reasons for pursuing a career in performance: why do you perform, what do you enjoy?

Answers given included:

- The enjoyment gained from entertaining an audience
- The opportunity for *"self expression and experimenting, and [because performing] builds people's confidence"*
- *"The opportunity to challenge people's opinions on a certain area"*
- As a method of channelling anxiety
- The enjoyment of the innate risk factor - *"[Performance is] like a tightrope. Because, when you're on a tightrope, hopefully you've done a lot of practice and got your balance right, but there's still risk that you might fall over."*

INCLUSION AND PRESENCE:

As with any new company or production, an ability to successfully articulate the work on offer is of crucial importance when attempting to secure funding or development and performance platforms. This guide places an integral emphasis on this articulation being led, or at least guided, by the learning disabled artist or company members. The related barriers are explored in 'The Producer'.

As an exploration of this, the members of the Performance Company were asked to consider the benefit to the industry as a whole of the increased inclusion and presence of learning disabled creatives.

A main point raised by many in the group was the importance of having their voices heard. This was developed further by one company member who expressed the way in which performance can challenge assumptions, both personal and societal:

"[It's] raising awareness of intersectionality. Because [...] there's still a massive assumption that only men can be autistic. And that autism and sexuality, in fact disability in general and sexuality are two mutually exclusive things. But there are so many other different beliefs and personality aspects that are sometimes not associated with disability. And I think that if you can get the opportunity to make people aware that you exist and that these things exist, that's imperative."

INTERACTION:

Interaction with the audience was something important to all company members, whether through direct participation or just through the nature of live performance.

Company members explained that this interaction was important because:

- of its ability to unsettle
- of its ability to connect
- *"it makes them think more about who we actually are. Because we're artists and because once they see us perform, they will remember us. And that's quite important."*
- it allows your message to be active and direct; *"It makes me want to show them 'hang on a second, look I'm here, I'm alive, I'm human.'"*



BARRIERS:

The members of the Performance Company were also asked to discuss the prospect of moving forward with independent careers away from Access All Areas and the fears they may have had about that.

A primary concern for many of the company members was in relation to getting to know new colleagues, staff members and environments, including:

- New communication styles and misinterpreting what people mean
- How new people might react to the performer's work and how they may feel about this

- *“There may be some opportunities where you might be working with a different company, and not working with people you’re used to working with. And obviously it can be a great opportunity to get to know a different company. At the same time it might be quite worrying because it’s a new company which maybe you’ve never worked with before so you might not necessarily know their structure and how they do things.”*

Other barriers raised related to the support currently provided by Access All Areas and the prospect of its absence: a lack of support organisationally such as help with schedules and timings, a lack of career support and advice, a lack of emotional support.

THE CREATIVE COLLABORATOR:

Over the course of several workshops company members explored and discussed the concept of the creative collaborator and the role the performer would want them to take in a career opportunity away from Access All Areas.

The ideas given fell broadly into three categories: creative, access, administrative.

CREATIVE SUPPORT

- Help with the development of a piece, including things like structure
- Being a sounding board for ideas
- Developing a creative partnership with the artist
- Developing a creative exchange; *“you can learn from them and they can learn from you.”*
- Assistance with script work, such as character building.

ACCESS SUPPORT

- Support with travel arrangements (especially to new places. e.g. for auditions)
- Organisational support
- For long term projects, having scheduled meeting times to talk through ideas and worries
- Assistance with structure and scheduling
- Emotional support.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

- Support with personal financial administration including invoicing and claiming expenses
- Support with performance financial administration including performance budgets
- Research assistance
- Support with administrative phone calls
- Support with booking tasks.

ADVOCACY AND AUTONOMY:

Advocacy and autonomy were topics raised regularly by the members of the Performance Company, not as a subsection of support, but as integral to every aspect of the role of the creative collaborator.

Autonomy of decision making and the creative collaborator’s understanding of this was of great importance. One company member explained that, although he might ask a creative collaborator

to make phone calls for him, the decisions being made before or during the calls should always be his. For example, if the performer was researching additional spaces to rehearse in or perform at, he would make the decision and the creative collaborator would simply make the phone call to book. The creative collaborator, in this instance, is a personal assistant.

When discussing how they might like their creative collaborator to support them inside the rehearsal room, the suggestions offered by the company members were almost exclusively connected to the advocacy of their voices, ideas and requirements. They explained that it was important for the creative collaborator to be someone they could trust with their ideas as well as someone who could be their advocate in regards to both their work and their access needs if necessary.

THE 'PERFECT CREATIVE COLLABORATOR':

In a practical exercise, the company built the 'perfect creative collaborator' from scratch, each adding to it an attribute they felt was necessary and explaining why. The attributes suggested by company members included:

- Being a good listener in order to be able to take the lead from the artist
- Having great communication and verbal skills: *"I want this person to have great voice skills because I haven't"*
- Having a sense of humour: *"I want this person to be able to have a laugh with me because that makes me feel safe"*
- Having flexibility: *"I would like my creative collaborator to be someone who can act as a guide and give reassurance"*
- Having administrative skills to assist with organisation and liaison with venues
- Being able to adapt their contact/communication style to suit the artist, e.g. using skype instead of emailing
- Having an understanding of individual access needs in order to be able to support in the best and most appropriate way
- Being able to read personal signs and cues in order to be able to advocate for breaks or time to calm down.



KEY POINTS:

- I. The learning disabled artist's voice is the lead voice.
- II. Autonomy of decision is vital.
- III. Advocate for the artist's voice above all else.
- IV. Theatre by learning disabled artists has the power to challenge assumptions as well as theatrical form. Embrace this.
- V. Barriers to the industry can be both systemic and individual.
- VI. Support requirements may be creative, pastoral or administrative.

THE PRODUCER

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE:

A large proportion of the learning disabled performers, artists and creatives in pursuit of either independent performance opportunities or the independent development of their own work have been trained by, have performed with and are supported by learning disabled theatre companies.

During a collaborative day of workshops and discussions¹³, staff representatives from two such companies, Access All Areas and Mind The Gap, discussed the perpetual problem that they face of the 'bottlenecking' of talent. Artists move through training and creative development before joining the professional company, with many developing their own creative ideas and practices along the way. Both companies are then restricted in the support they can give to the development of individual projects because of their own limited time and resources, leading to a 'bottleneck' of artists ready for independent opportunities but prevented by the barriers of the industry and the lack of support provision this career move might mean. Those artists, who might otherwise pursue independent opportunities, remain with the company which, in turn, results in a lack of space for new artists.

Both companies advocate for a similar process for supporting an artist in the pursuance of individual and independent projects. This is illustrated by the model utilised by Access All Areas as part of Artist Development:



The end goal of this process relies on the building of key relationships and networks which assist the performer in the dismantling of systemic industry barriers and, should it be required, in the provision of suitable support.

An increase in producers, whether freelance or in house, with a keen understanding of industry barriers, access funding, support and provision, was identified as a key factor in the pursuit of this aim. This section attempts to touch upon some of the areas of additional knowledge or expectation that have been highlighted as being of use to those producers interested in – but new to – providing or supporting increased and sustainable opportunities for learning disabled and autistic artists.

¹³ May 2018 – Collaboration day between Access All Areas and Mind The Gap exploring creative collaboration and independent support structures held at Mind The Gap, Bradford

PARITY AND DISPARITY WITH THE WIDER INDUSTRY:

It is important to acknowledge that there is a certain parity of experience for new and emerging performers, creatives and actors across the industry as a whole. There is a much vaster number of those with the ambition, drive and potential to create theatre than there are opportunities. Emerging companies and performers are universally restricted by the funding and resources available to them.

However, a vital difference is in the artist's ability to access the opportunities that are available, both initially and with sustainability. For example, available funding, while restrictive to all, reinforces the barriers faced by an artist with additional support requirements. From a perspective of larger social importance, the majority of those artists and companies trapped in a cycle of 'always emerging, never emerged' do still see themselves represented in positions of power within the industry; on stage, as writers and directors, within executive teams. This is not the case for many marginalised groups, including those with learning disabilities.

THE PRODUCER:

Access All Areas connected with and gathered information from many producers over the course of the development of this guide, including through co-hosting two producers' workshops¹⁴, with the intention of:

- Disseminating an understanding of the barriers faced by learning disabled and autistic performers within the industry
- Exploring the ways in which a producer, alongside creative collaborators, may assist the performer in dismantling these barriers
- Igniting an interest in supporting independent and sustained opportunities and increasing the presence of learning disabled and autistic performers within the industry
- Forging connections between performers, producers and creative collaborators that may lead to ongoing professional relationships.

WHAT I WANT TO GAIN:

Producers at early workshops were asked to explore what they hoped to gain from their participation. Their aims included:

- To be given a vocabulary
- To find the personal confidence to engage with learning disabled creatives
- To learn how to facilitate different methods of communication
- To be given the tools to improve accessibility for audiences and artists
- To explore how creative collaborators and producers can start a dialogue and help to push things forward
- To learn about funding issues and how they might be tackled.



¹⁴ April 2017 – Workshop freelance & emerging producers, co-hosted by Arts Admin; 'Neuro Diversity and Performance'

October 2017 – London Theatre Consortium producers' workshop co-hosted by Battersea Arts Centre

INDUSTRY BARRIERS:

It is important to gain an understanding of the systemic barriers within the theatre and performing arts industries that play a part in preventing the creation, development and dissemination of work by learning disabled creatives.

Broadly speaking, it is possible to divide these barriers into three categories: the invitation to create, the process of creating and the legacy of the creation. Please note that some, if not all of these barriers are applicable to situations in which the learning disabled artist is engaged as a performer or actor rather than just as a creator of an independent piece. It should also be noted that these barriers are those directly in relation to the producer, and not necessarily those within the creative process.

THE INVITATION TO CREATE

- Fully accessible development and performance platforms are very rare
- A certain knowledge of the industry or an ability to access particular resources and networks is often required in order to gain knowledge of platforms, even of their existence
- Even when the knowledge of an opportunity is acquired, there are often multiple barriers to the application process
- Learning disabled and autistic performers are rarely considered for characters not specified as disabled
- Even when a character with learning disabilities appears within a script, there is a tendency for non-disabled performers to be cast.

THE PROCESS OF CREATING

- There are many assumptions made about the accessibility of negotiating the day to day realities of the devising or rehearsal process, which can limit planned provision
- The 'reasonable adjustments' required to ensure the accessibility of a career opportunity for learning disabled creatives are often less tangible than for others
- There can be a lack of understanding regarding the scope and variety of the requirements of a learning disabled performer, which may limit provision
- The needs of a performer may require adjustments or provisions that incur additional costs for which a budget is not available.

THE LEGACY OF THE CREATION

- Extending the life of a project beyond initial development or performance also often requires a certain industry knowledge or ability to access particular networks
- There can be a prevailing attitude that a performance by or with learning disabled creatives is not 'right for our audiences', which can restrict booking opportunities
- There can be the incorrect assumption that the work on offer is that of a community group or amateur company, which can restrict booking opportunities
- Touring, for example, often requires quick get ins and technical rehearsals, which may prevent adequate settling in time and limit the work necessary
- The financial implications of providing support and access provision for a performer or company spending an extended period away from home may be much higher.



INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS:

In addition to the barriers that could be categorised as systemic, many artists, though certainly not all, face barriers connected to their personal access requirements.

Although the coordination and provision of day to day support may fall more traditionally within the remit of those in a support centred role, it is of huge benefit for a producer to have an

understanding of the way in which individual access needs can be supported as well as the flexibility to effect the connected reasonable adjustments within scheduling, contracts, payment and other arrangements.

BARRIERS AND THE PRODUCER:

How can the producer support the dismantling of both systemic and personal access barriers? In addition to the ability and knowledge to secure additional funding and tap into access specific resources, having a producer with a general awareness of access requirements as well as a more specific knowledge of company requirements is a massive asset in making sustained and independent opportunities possible. Whether this be liaising with a venue to secure access provisions or advocating for a more accessible application process, the producer can bridge much of the gap in support that may be felt when a learning disabled company or performer separates from the structure and safety net of a company such as Access All Areas.

PLATFORMS:

The increasing presence and agency of projects, platforms and organisations such as Ramps on the Moon, Unlimited and Elevate reflect the real appetite for work created by disabled, including learning disabled, creatives. However, there is still little provision outside of these areas, particularly for those with more complex or multiple barriers to the industry.

During research with producers, two main questions emerged regarding the accessibility of existing research, development and performance platforms:

- How can we support an artist or company in accessing an inaccessible platform?
- How can we improve the integral accessibility of our own existing platforms?



The possible solutions proposed by producers during these discussions overlapped to a high degree and could be divided into three sections:

BEFORE THE APPLICATION

- How is the information regarding the platform advertised? Does it require access to particular networks or an acquired industry knowledge? Is the information available in accessible formats, such as easy read?
- Is there any active outreach undertaken to engage with and encourage applications from under-represented artists? Does this include learning disabled and autistic artists?

DURING THE APPLICATION

- In which formats are the application and any supporting materials available? e.g. easy read
- What formats are on offer in terms of submitting the application? Is it possible to complete a supported application/application via telephone/video application?
- If these formats are not on offer, can they be made available?
- The primary aim must be to maintain the clear voice of the artist during the application – do all formats utilised ensure this is upheld?

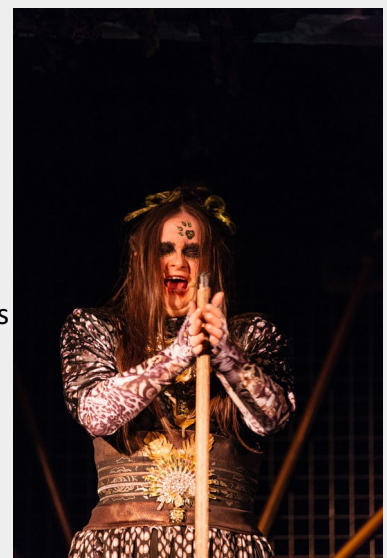
AFTER THE APPLICATION

- What additional provisions are on offer to those who may require them during the development, rehearsal or performance process? i.e. is there an access contact, is there a quiet room?
- What resources are on offer that may assist with organisational, administrative or acclimatisation requirements? i.e. a travel guide, accessible schedule formats.
- Is there a legacy to the platform? Are artists asked, for example, to join a network?

FUNDING – ACCESS:

Funding and, specifically, sources of funding for personal access support were a primary topic of interest during discussions with producers across the entirety of the project. Under the guidance of Access All Areas' Executive Producer, Patrick Collier, as well as through presentations by Arts Council England representatives, an aim has been to spread an awareness and understanding of two central sources of personal access funding: Access To Work and Arts Council Project Grants Access Support.

'Access Funding In Brief' can be found in Appendix 1. Links to information guides from both funding sources, including easy read formats, can be found in Appendix 2, 'Useful Links'.



BENEFITS:

It is vital for those producing work with or offering employment to artists or performers with learning disabilities to have a clear understanding of the effects that both pay and access support funding can have on any benefits they may be in receipt of. A miscalculation in hours worked or earnings made could result in a benefits sanction against the individual, or even total loss of a benefit income. Even if all permitted work is correctly calculated, an individual could find that future benefits are delayed if the earnings have not been properly reported to their Disability Employment Advisor at the DWP.

Access All Areas' guide, 'How Do I Work As A Freelance Artist Without Losing My Benefits?' can be found as part of the 'Creative Collaborator Toolkit' detailed on p32. Further information surrounding benefits can be found in Appendix 2, 'Useful Links'.

BENEFITS AND PERMITTED WORK – IN BRIEF

- Disability living allowance (DLA), Personal independence payment (PIP) and other non means tested benefits are not affected by work or earnings.
- Employment and support allowance (ESA) and income support are among the benefits that are affected by work; some 'permitted work' is allowed.
- 'Permitted work higher limit' allows for up to 16 hours work per week and earnings of up to £125.50 per week, rising to £131.50 in April 2019¹⁵.
- 'Supported permitted work' is work supervised by someone employed by a public or local authority or community group which finds or provides work for people with disabilities.
- 'Supported permitted work' allows for earnings of up to £125.50 per week, rising to £131.50 in April 2019, but without a restriction on number of hours per week. Earnings may be averaged over 52 weeks. However, the individual's Disability Employment Advisor must provide written confirmation of this allowance.
- Universal Credit is not subject to permitted work limits. An individual's UC award will be reduced for every £1 earned over their 'work allowance'. Supporting an individual in reporting earnings to their work coach can help to prevent any mistakes in the amount of the reduction or the length of time it is applied.

THE ETHICS OF SUPPORTING MONEY MANAGEMENT:

There are many ethical issues that must be acknowledged and understood by anyone providing access support in relation to payment, benefits or personal money management. Whether between artist and producer or creative collaborator, there must not only be an assurance of complete trust and privacy, but also an understanding and constant acknowledgement of the artist's leadership and ownership within this transaction of support.

To add further complexity, an individual providing support in this capacity must understand when and how to step in to prevent a potential financial issue (e.g. by advocating for fair pay or for a payment schedule to avoid benefit sanctions) without overstepping these boundaries of trust and privacy. For an artist with more profound access needs in this area, the individual may also have to negotiate the additional ethical issues arising from the need to communicate directly with those who provide financial support to the artist in their everyday life.

For more information surrounding suggested areas of training, please see 'Training' on p33.

¹⁵ Information correct as of January 2019.

BARRIERS TO FINANCE AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT:

Successful funding applications for Arts Council Project Grants, for example, usually require a specified bank account for funds to be paid into under a company name or the name of a designated lead artist. For many learning disabled artists, this is not a barrier, but for others there may be profound access barriers in relation to money management. For others it might be essential to avoid receiving large amounts of project funding into a personal account because of the serious detrimental effect it may have on any means tested benefits they are in receipt of.

This is an access need recognised by Arts Council Project grants. Arts Council guidance in this area states that they are able to accept a bank account registered to a name different from that of the applicant when this is an *“individual whose finances are handled by a third party due to the applicant’s disability – applicants must provide a signed letter of confirmation or a certificate showing Power of Attorney”*¹⁶.

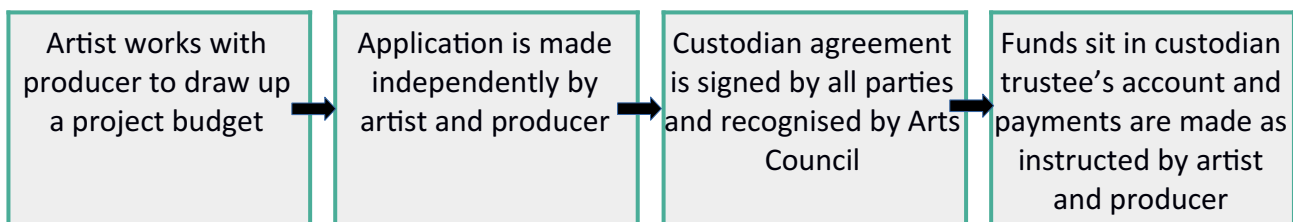
CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES:

During the day of collaboration, Mind The Gap shared information about the role they have taken as custodian trustees in order to support artists and performers undertaking independent opportunities where there might otherwise be a serious barrier to the project in relation to financial or budget management.

In the role of custodian trustee, an artist may engage a company or individual to manage project funds in order to:

- Ensure all income and expenditure is accounted for appropriately by suitably qualified personnel
- Take responsibility for ensuring that all money is spent on that for which it is intended.

The custodian trustee should have no decision making power in relation to how resource allocations are made but do have a responsibility to step in should a decision breach the conditions of the funding agreement.



ARTICULATING THE WORK:

As discussed in ‘The Performer’, all support structures should place the learning disabled performer or company members at the centre. This is as true of the articulation of the work as it is of the creation of the work itself. However, the ability to articulate the work in the style required for platform and funding applications can prove a barrier for some performers.

¹⁶ Further details can be found in the ‘Bank details – Guidance and form’:

https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Bank_details_guidance_form_May18.pdf

Successful applications often require embellishment and a subtlety of exaggeration around project accomplishments or aims. This may prove a barrier for a creative who has a tendency, for example, to be very plain speaking and factual.

Although there should be reasonable adjustment for this, as with many systemic barriers, it is an adjustment that is difficult to articulate.

Support might involve providing assistance with the overall style of an application while ensuring that the central voice and leading content remains that of the performer or company.



MARKETING AND THE ARTICULATION OF THE WORK:

Across the development of the project, producers were presented with the challenge to carefully consider how to articulate confidently the work on offer to venues.

In specific relation to booking tour venues, a common barrier has been that those in charge of booking or scheduling are often too aware of the 'difference' and may use this as a point of rejection. For example, this is not what they normally book. They may feel they do not have the audience for it and that it is therefore too much of a financial risk. How can the work be articulated in order to overcome this issue?

In a workshop with producers, Creative Collaborator Jess Mabel Jones spoke about embracing this difference as a benefit and using it to excite interest. She explained that the work can be extolled as radical; as avant garde; that it both looks and feels different and that audiences will therefore experience it differently. There may be some among a venue's traditional audience whom it will not attract, but it will bring many first time visitors.

*"Aesthetically it's interesting. By making work accessible it looks different, it feels different. People come to it and experience it in a different way. [...] It's about disability as well, it's seeing disability on stage [...] Seeing difference on stage has huge implications, it not only makes people understand that they could be in that position themselves one day, it makes people understand [and think] 'oh hey, I know someone who's disabled'."*¹⁷ Jess Mabel Jones

¹⁷ Taken from a discussion with Jess Mabel Jones as part of the Arts Admin producers' workshop in May 2017

Duckie¹⁸ Producer Simon Casson further exemplifies the power of embracing and articulating diversity to potential audiences in his reaction to NOt YoUr CiRcUs doG's performance of 'Not F**kin' Sorry'¹⁹ at Electric Brixton in December 2016:

*"The ensemble was so beautiful; personal, political, sexy, wild, punk, vulnerable, tough and so very fresh. [They] broke down the fourth wall and encouraged Revolt into Style. The style and sensibility was Sandra Bernhard meets The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle. From confessional to spectacle: smoke, sequins, stropiness and sexuality. Learning Disabled people are often labelled as fragile and vulnerable and yet here they were on stage, powerful bodies, glamorous, provocative, looking a million dollars telling us all (the 'normals') to f**k off! Like Leigh Bowery at this same venue in the 1980s or say early punk gigs or The Divine David at his most provocative, the audience literally didn't know what to do with themselves"* Simon Casson



Advocate for the importance of seeing diversity and disability on stage. Advocate for how so many more of your audience will identify with this than you could imagine.

*"And by extension, [how a venue is] then saying that theatre is for you, to everybody. That theatre is for you if you have autism, if you identify as learning disabled. That this is a welcoming space because you're paying money to see a peer at a very high skill level."*²⁰

Patrick Collier

MARKETING MATERIALS:

A very high importance should be placed on the production of marketing materials to a professionally high standard.

As mentioned previously, there is a systemic barrier in connection to the assumption that work by learning disabled creatives is amateur or part of, for example, a community project. The marketing material must, therefore, reflect the high quality and professionalism of the work on offer. Most venues will have their own marketing strategies, but a high quality marketing package should be created as early in the process as possible with images and descriptions that venues can utilise.

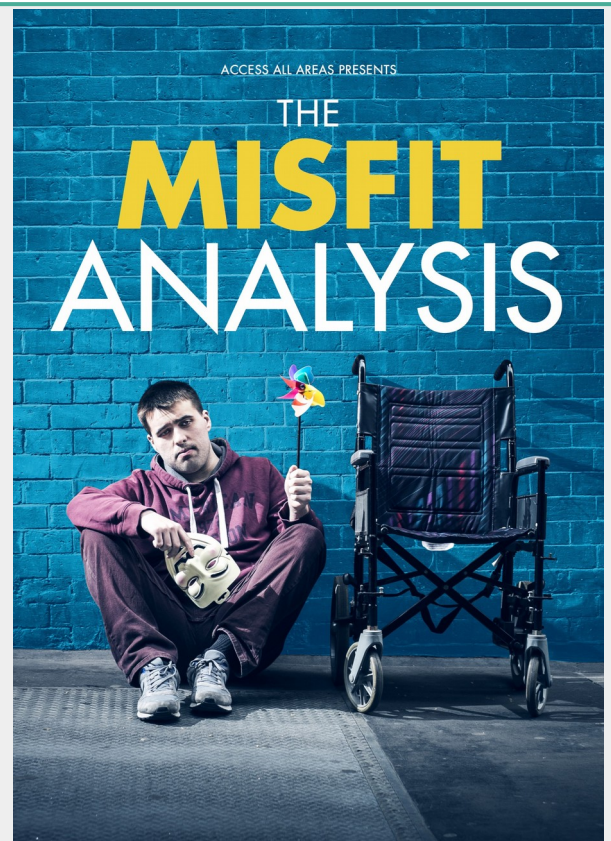
¹⁸ <http://www.duckie.co.uk/>

¹⁹ See 'Case Study 2' on p35

²⁰ Taken from a presentation by Patrick Collier as part of the Arts Admin producers' workshop in May 2017

KEY POINTS FOR PRODUCERS:

- I. Understand the systemic barriers and advocate for change.
- II. Help to forge new networks and establish new relationships whenever the opportunity presents itself.
- III. TIP – Create a list of access provisions (or ‘access rider’) that can be given to venues ahead of time. Use this to start a dialogue.
- IV. Make or advocate for the small changes within a platform that will open up its accessibility.
- V. Get to know access support funding.
- VI. Gain an understanding of benefits and permitted work.
- VII. Allow the articulation of the work to be artist led.
- VIII. Marketing materials must be high quality and reflect professionalism.



THE CREATIVE COLLABORATOR

Much of the work undertaken during the development of this guide was in pursuit of the answers to three questions:

- 1) What is the role and potential development of the creative collaborator in supporting independent and sustained career opportunities for learning disabled and autistic performers away from the support structure and 'safety net' of learning disabled theatre companies?
- 2) How might the role of the creative collaborator, with its many facets, be defined in order to allow for a clearer understanding of the role to be offered to the industry?
- 3) What are the ways in which new creative collaborations can be established, particularly those with an integral access support element?

The potential solutions were sought through discussion and exploration with performers, through experience-based feedback from current creative collaborators, as well as through the constant development and analysis of the role of the creative collaborator during three periods of research and development at the Lyric Hammersmith, the Soho Theatre and Battersea Arts Centre as part of Access All Areas' Artist Development Programme (see 'Case Studies' for more details).

Whilst it continued to be vital for the performer's voice to remain central in this exploration, it also became important to include experiential input from the creative collaborator in order to allow for a clear distinction between the 'experience of being' and the 'experience of using'.

FINDING A CREATIVE COLLABORATOR:

Access All Areas connected with peer learning disability theatre company, Mind The Gap, to collaborate in a day of workshops and discussions exploring creative collaborator and the support structures required in order to increase independent career opportunities and the presence of learning disabled and autistic creatives within the industry²¹.

As part of the day, artists from Mind The Gap²² were asked to consider how they might find and decide upon a creative collaborator to work with should they require one for a new project. The artists discussed three options for their potential search: group audition, individual audition and 'headhunting'. Although interviews were discussed as being included in each of the options, there was agreement between the artists from Mind The Gap that, for them, the creative and performance abilities of the candidate were of utmost importance as, should a piece evolve to require the creative collaborator to take a performance role, they would need to be confident that this was possible.



²¹ May 2018 – Collaboration day between Access All Areas and Mind The Gap exploring creative collaboration and independent support structures held at Mind The Gap, Bradford

²² Information on Mind The Gap Artists can be found at: <http://www.mind-the-gap.org.uk/about/artists/>

GROUP AUDITION

- An audition would allow the artist to see *“how [candidates] cope and how they express themselves”*.
- Warm up games would be used to see how the candidates work with one another as well and with the artist.
- A concern about this format was that candidates may try and outshine one another, which would not give a clear representation of suitability.
- A possible solution was to start with a group workshop, before narrowing the field down and interviewing the final two or three candidates individually.

INDIVIDUAL AUDITION

- Some artists felt that it would be better to meet and audition candidates individually.
- It was believed that the individual audition would make it easier to judge the strength of each candidate more effectively.
- One worry about individual meetings was that *“people can wing interviews”*; it is not always possible to judge a person’s suitability from one meeting.

‘HEADHUNTING’

- *“I would actually just like to do a talent search myself”*.
- Artists felt that this option would allow them to watch potential candidates performing their own work, to learn about their style and ways of working, and to then approach them about a collaboration.
- This option also included approaching potential creative collaborators whom the Artist knew or had worked with previously; *“If it’s a project I believe in, I want people I know will be good for that project, rather than it be a random selection of people that don’t know my style.”*
- *“I want to already know their quality and reliability.”*

As discussed in ‘Case Studies’, all three of these methods were utilised by Access All Areas Performance Company members during the search for creative collaborators as part of the Artist Development R&D residencies. The particular focus of the search varied greatly from company to company and artist to artist with some focusing on the creative background and expertise of the candidate, and others on the candidate’s awareness of access requirements and their ability to provide appropriate support. However, all three methods provided an opportunity for the artist to explore the potential of the collaboration itself.

THE ROLE:

With the aim of constructing a clear definition for the role of the creative collaborator, as well as exploring its potential for development, current creative collaborators were asked to discuss their experiences as well as define how they position themselves within the context of a project.

Something unanimously agreed upon, and almost immediately mentioned by all, was the varying nature of the role. Just as the access requirements of each artist are completely individual, so too is the creative relationship between all members of a company, and so is the nature and circumstance of each project. The role of the creative collaborator is never the same from opportunity to opportunity and it is, therefore, a movable target in terms of description. One

absolutely fundamental characteristic of the role, for that reason, is its necessity for flexibility and adaptability.

Something else alluded to by most is that a main aim of the role is the levelling of the industry playing field. Creative Collaborator Lesley Ewen explains this as the act of *“bridging the space between the artist and, for example, the venue”*²³.

When asked to describe the role, Jess Mabel Jones explained, *“So, my work [...] is fluid and flexible. And at any time I can be a support worker, a collaborator, a director. I can be a facilitator throwing in ideas to help [...] generate material. [...] It’s a cool role for me because it’s different each day.”*²⁴ For Rhea Heath, the role is inextricable from the idea of collaboration; *“the types of partnerships I want to invest in are where skill swaps are at the forefront of anything else.”*²⁵ This idea of a kind of knowledge exchange was something heavily echoed in discussions with the members of the Performance Company.

CREATIVE VS SUPPORT:

The perceived balance between ‘creative’ and ‘support’ was something that differed completely from person to person. Some of those working in the role defined themselves as a creative first and support second, whereas others explained their position as being almost purely support, with their creative background simply assisting in their ability to understand, adapt and appropriately respond to the requirements of the situation.



THE FACETS OF THE CREATIVE COLLABORATOR:

In the process of defining the continually shifting role of creative collaborator within a specific situation, a useful tool became the exploration of its various facets independently of one another. In this way, it was possible to define some facets as universal, others as flexible, and others as relevant only to some artists and specific projects. The facets explored included the creative, the support worker, the facilitator, the administrator, the collaborator and the advocate. This list is by no means definitive, but has proved useful in the creation of job descriptions, as well as an aid in clarifying the skill set desired of a creative collaborator by a performer or company.

As with any professional company, the ability to define the specific role of each of its members and, therefore, their relationship to one another can be incredibly beneficial to its smooth running. Within the context of a learning disability led theatre company, these definitions provide everyone with a clear understanding of the boundaries of the role, should that become necessary, which in turn assists in protecting the autonomy of the artist’s voice.

THE CREATIVE:

As raised by the Access All Areas Performance Company, the Mind The Gap Artists and by those working in the role, it is a necessity for a creative collaborator to have a creative background within the performing or performance arts industries. The provision of creative collaborators is

²³ Taken from a presentation by Lesley Ewen as part of the LTC producers’ workshop at BAC in October 2017

²⁴ Taken from a discussion with Jess Mabel Jones as part of the Arts Admin producers’ workshop in May 2017

²⁵ Taken from an interview with Rhea Heath in September 2017

enhanced and improved by the inclusion of those from a myriad of specialities, and those recently working with performers from Access All Areas have had backgrounds in circus, burlesque, drag, ‘traditional’ theatre, comedy, performance art and screen acting, to name a few.

Although it is certainly vital for a creative collaborator to have a creative background, the way in which this experience is used could be seen as being on a sliding scale, from acting as the co-creator of a devised piece at one end, to using their knowledge purely to support within a specialised environment at the other. We might view points on this spectrum as:

CREATIVE COLLABORATOR	CREATIVE SUPPORT WORKER	CREATIVE ENABLER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead creative voice remains that of the artist • May share in the creative process with artist • May share in the creative risk • May be a co-creator, a creative partner • May take a performance role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative voice is definitively that of the director or artist • May have creative input but without a creative voice • Advocates for the artist’s creative ideas • Supports and facilitates the creative process • May help to shape ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses specialised knowledge to support within the creative environment. I.e. on set for a film/TV shoot • Facilitates the creative process. i.e. relaying direction, supporting script work, taking notes • Has no creative input

There may also be uncertainty about the creative role in some circumstances. Unless entering into an acknowledged collaboration or partnership, whilst the creative background is a necessity, the creative role must not be assumed and may remain an ongoing discussion between performer, director and creative collaborator.

THE SUPPORT WORKER:

‘The support worker’ was an area in which potential development was highlighted in the pursuit of sustained and independent career opportunities away from the safety net of Access All Areas and similar companies.

The access support requirements of the members of the Performance Company are currently overseen by the access manager of Access All Areas. As well as coordinating the day to day access and pastoral support of any company members engaged in work with Access All Areas, the access manager has also provided support coordination for company members engaged in outside career opportunities. An aim has been to explore the potential of the creative collaborator in bridging the gap that may result from a separation from Access All Areas (or a similar company).

Although the creative collaborator should certainly never be privy to any sensitive or personal information outside the remit of the project in question, an area of development has been to explore the way in which a creative collaborator may take over support coordination for a project or company as well as continuing support on a day to day basis according to the needs of a performer. This could include:

- Taking over the co-creation, with the performer, of project specific ‘work with me’ documents
- Ensuring that all support provisions are in place ahead of rehearsals or performance
- Working with a company or venue to support a performer in the creation of an access plan should they not have one in place

- Making travel arrangements as required
- Scheduling support meetings or 'check ins' as appropriate to the performer's requirements and the barriers of the opportunity
- Providing any supporting resources ahead of a project according to the performer's requirements.

Access requirements are completely individual and person-centric and so no list can be exhaustive. However the day to day role of the 'support worker' may include:

- Supporting travel
- Supporting lunchtime arrangements
- Understanding any triggers the artist may have in order to eliminate occurrence where possible and provide support when required
- Providing appropriate emotional support
- Acting as a scribe or providing script support
- Checking on required additional provisions, such as quiet rooms
- Providing communication support.



Photo courtesy of Ali Wright / www.aliwrightphotography.com²⁶

THE FACILITATOR:

In this context, 'facilitator' is being used in connection to the creative process and not the creativity itself. For many performers and in many situations this facet is completely unnecessary; for others it may be vital in dismantling the barriers within a rehearsal room or performance environment.

Simply put, this facilitation is the recognition and adjustment of anything that may prove a barrier to the creative process. This might mean:

- The re-articulation of directions, concepts or ideas within the room in order to make them more accessible
- The recording or noting of exercises or ideas in order to assist with content connection and the development of the devising process
- The ability to engage with the creative style of the artist in order to ask questions or make suggestions that may spark new creative ideas
- The ability to recognise the space that an individual may need to process and articulate an idea simply in order to ensure it is provided.

THE ADMINISTRATOR:

Another facet that became a focus of development within the context of the aims of the project was 'the administrator'. When speaking to the Performance Company, a large proportion of the ideas expressed about how they, either as a company or as individuals, might like a creative collaborator to assist them were either administrative or organisational. Among these suggestions were:

- Assistance with personal or company organisation

²⁶ Photo courtesy of Ali Wright / www.aliwrightphotography.com or via social media tags - Instagram: @aliwright_photographs/Facebook: Ali Wright Theatre Photography/Twitter: @aliwrightphoto

- Making phone calls on behalf of, but under the complete direction of the artist
- Assistance with financial tasks such as invoicing or organising budget spreadsheets
- Preparing or reformatting schedules
- Liaising with producers, venues, etc. to ensure that all necessary provisions are in place.

Should a project or company have a producer attached, or should an artist prefer to undertake administration independently, these tasks will not usually fall within the remit of the creative collaborator. However, for those companies without a producer, and for those artists requiring this support, it can be of great advantage for a creative collaborator to have administrative skills. These may be used to undertake tasks under the instruction of the artist (as personal assistant), to support an artist in their own completion of the task, or to take on responsibility for a specific administrative role.

An understanding of funding applications in connection to access costs (such as Access To Work and Arts Council access grants) as well as a knowledge of benefits and the restrictions on permitted work may also prove beneficial. However, it is certainly not a necessity for all those working in a creative support capacity to have administration within their skill set.



THE COLLABORATOR:

It should be reiterated for clarity that 'creative collaborator' is being utilised as an umbrella term for roles including creative support worker and creative enabler.

'The collaborator' facet is of great relevance in certain situations and of utmost importance to some artists, creative collaborators and directors alike.

Although there is obviously the need for all creatives and members of any company to have an ability to collaborate, in this instance it refers to a situation of shared creative involvement. In this scenario, although the lead voice should still be that of the learning disabled artist, the creative collaborator could be considered a co-deviser, or possibly co-performer; there is a shared artistic risk.

THE ADVOCATE:

As discussed by the members of the Performance Company, the most vital facet of the work of the creative collaborator could certainly be argued to be that of 'the advocate'. Like 'the creative' it is an integral aspect of the role whatever the situation or project. The pathways of this advocacy may be numerous; however the aim is much more easily specified.

The creative collaborator, above all, must be an advocate for the voice of the artist.

As Access All Areas Artistic Director, Nick Llewellyn, expressed, creative collaborators are *"not just there supporting you, they're there supporting from your own agenda, they're supporting you in the kind of theatre you want to make."*²⁷

²⁷ Taken from a group exploration of the creative enabler during an Access All Areas Performance Company session in June 2017

This advocacy will and should take many forms but may involve:

- Advocating for the artist within a rehearsal room by ensuring their creative voice is heard
- Ensuring schedules and breaks are adhered to
- Advocating for the reasonable adjustment of, for example, technical get in procedures within a venue to ensure adequate time to settle into a new space
- Advocating for the autonomy of the artist through the repositioning of power within a conversation if necessary
- Advocating for matters surrounding payment, money and funding
- Articulating the work of the company or artist using their words
- Speaking up and taking matters to the relevant staff member or authority when the artist feels there to have been an ethical breach of any of the above
- Constant advocacy for the voice of another above your own is an essential attribute for a creative collaborator.

ROLE TYPES AND DEFINITIONS:

TITLE AND DEFINITION	FACETS
<p>CREATIVE COLLABORATOR WITH ACCESS SUPPORT - Works within devised theatre projects and may work as a creative equal within this process. Acts as deviser/director/facilitator as required in order to support the artist's development of ideas and the shaping of the performance. Maintains a focus on advocating for the artist's creative vision. Provides access support and understands an artist's needs from their access plan.</p>	<p>The Creative The Support Worker The Facilitator The Collaborator The Advocate (The Administrator)</p>
<p>CREATIVE COLLABORATOR WITHOUT ACCESS SUPPORT - Works within devised theatre projects and may work as a creative equal within this process. Acts as deviser/director/facilitator as required in order to support the artist's development of ideas and the shaping of the performance. Maintains a focus on advocating for the artist's creative vision. Does not implement any of the artist's access plan.</p>	<p>The Creative The Collaborator The Facilitator The Advocate</p>
<p>CREATIVE SUPPORT WORKER - Works within theatre projects with a clear director who has overall say in the direction of the performance. Provides access support from access plan and supports the creative process. The creative support worker must understand their role in supporting and advocating for the artist's creative process but also in working with the director and relaying direction back to the artist.</p>	<p>The Creative The Support Worker The Facilitator The Advocate (The Administrator)</p>
<p>CREATIVE ENABLER - Works within TV and film. Uses pre-written scripts to support the actor in understanding the intonation, characterisation, actions and intentions of the writer. Helps to relay directions from the director on set. Understands access needs and supports where necessary.</p>	<p>The Creative The Support Worker The Facilitator The Advocate</p>
<p>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - Works alongside the director to assist direction and to liaise with creative support workers where necessary.</p>	<p>The Creative The Collaborator The Advocate</p>

JOB DESCRIPTION AND TOOLKIT:

Over the course of the three supported Artist Development R&D periods, these facets were used in order to create and develop a working job description for the role of the creative collaborator. This job description was designed with a built in adaptability that would allow it to be edited and adjusted to suit the individual nature of each artist, company and project.

An example job description can be found in Appendix 3.



A further resource developed over the course of the project was that of the 'tool kit' for creative collaborators. This has the aim of providing those working in a creative support capacity with a set of resources that may aid them in preparing and coordinating appropriate support provisions during independent projects or within outside companies. The toolkit includes:

- Template 'work with me' document
- Template access support plan
- Template invoice
- Template 'easy read' rehearsal call sheet
- Template artist risk assessment
- Access All Areas guide, 'How Do I Work As A Freelance Artist Without Losing My Benefits?'
- Useful contacts in case of incident or safeguarding issues.

For further enquiries about the Creative Collaborator Tool Kit, please contact Access All Areas.

'WORK WITH ME' DOCUMENTS:

'Work with me' documents support artists in identifying and articulating information about their individual access requirements that they would like other company members to know about ahead of working together. Each requirement is accompanied by further information regarding how the artist would like to be supported, as well as whom within the company might provide this support. The requirements included could be in relation to emotional support, access support, administrative support and possible triggers, but could also be in relation to diet, travel or money management.

It is vital that the completion of 'work with me' documents is artist led, but they might be written with support from a creative collaborator or other company member.

During a day of collaboration in November 2018²⁸, many artists and company members present advocated for 'work with me' documents becoming a company wide practice. This practice would recognise not only the individual ways of working of each company member, whatever their role, but also the fact that support is offered and received in all directions within a successful creative relationship; it is not and should never be a one way transaction.

²⁸ 'Access All Areas at LADA' held at the Live Art Development Agency on 22nd November 2018 with representatives from Mind The Gap, Dark Horse, Open Theatre and Access All Areas in attendance.

TRAINING:

Despite and because of the fluid and flexible nature of the role of the creative collaborator, there are certain issues related to ethics, advocacy and support that can become particularly complex and therefore problematic for a creative collaborator and artist to negotiate together. Training in these areas may prove very beneficial, if not vital, for anyone working in a creative support capacity. This could include training in:

- ensuring the artist remains the lead within a creative collaboration or project and understanding the related ethics
- providing creative advocacy for an artist if required
- advocating for suitable access provision
- advocating for autonomy of decision and understanding the related ethics
- advocating for reasonable adjustments to 'standard' procedures, i.e. technical procedures
- the ethics of providing support in relation to pay, benefits and other financial matters
- safeguarding and major incidents; how to make reports and to whom
- co-creating support documents alongside artists
- discussing limitations and establishing professional boundaries
- self-monitoring the balance of a creative collaboration.

For further information about training opportunities, please contact Access All Areas Consultancy²⁹.

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE:

Regardless of the requirements of an artist or the specifics of a project, any individual entering into a role in a creative support capacity should be subject to an enhanced DBS check³⁰.

It is not usually possible for an individual to apply for their own DBS check, only employers can do this, though there are some exceptions for those who are self employed and whose work falls under the remit of a local authority or governing body³¹. However, once an employing organisation has applied for a DBS check, it is possible for an individual to register with the DBS Update Service³². The online Update Service reduces the need for freelance workers to have multiple checks and offers the opportunity for annual auto-renewal.

²⁹ <http://www.accessallareastheatre.org/consultancy/>

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

³¹ <https://cbscreening.co.uk/news/post/how-do-i-apply-for-a-dbs-check-if-im-self-employed/>

³² <https://secure.crbonline.gov.uk/crsc/apply?execution=e1s1>

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY ONE

R&D VENUE AND DATE:

Lyric Hammersmith, Nov 2017

COMPANY NAME: The BareFace Collective

PERFORMANCE TITLE: *Fix Us*

COMPANY MEMBERS:

- Three performer/devisers - Kirsty Adams, Zara Jayne, Lee Philips
- One director/devisee - Paloma Oakenfold
- Two creative collaborator/devisers - Tom Palmer, Gemma Smith



COMPANY HISTORY: The formation of the company was supported by Access All Areas through Performance Company sessions during which the performers were introduced to the director. The company and director met for several sessions ahead of the R&D period to generate ideas.

COMPANY DYNAMIC: The company work as an ensemble and collective with shared input into the creative process but with the lead voice remaining that of the performers.

FINDING CREATIVE COLLABORATORS: The performers led interviews and group workshop auditions supported by Access All Areas. Creative collaborators were chosen by the performers and offered a position with the company as a result.

PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTION: *"Bareface presents 'Fix Us' - a funny, defiant outrageous new show. Our story explores the lives of three stage personas, whose confidence is seemingly at odds with the actors' autobiographical selves. A super hero, a sex-crazed diva and a steam punk drug dealer emerge as figments of our actors' imagination. Real-life inner anxieties clash and combust with flamboyant outrageous alter-egos. But how much do these imaginings come from the world of fantasy? And how much comes from the heart and soul of the actors themselves? As the story settles we'll soon find their real selves to be just as wild, wicked and wonderful as the characters they portray."*

COMPANY EVOLUTION: The company met for several workshops ahead of the R&D week. Company roles and responsibilities were allowed to evolve naturally according to individual strengths and interests with all roles revolving around the creative process.

SECURING A PRODUCER: The company secured interest from several producers as a direct result of the R&D showing. Several candidates were interviewed and a producer was secured.

INDEPENDENCE: The BareFace Collective runs independently from Access All Areas. Activity is driven by performers. Platform and funding applications are undertaken jointly by the designated lead performer and the producer, with input and support from other members of the company. Any funding secured is overseen by the designated lead performer and producer.

CHALLENGES: The Bareface Collective have chosen to embrace and utilise the challenges they faced within the devising process to develop and inform their own creative style and practice. This has included an exploration of repeated and recorded dialogue. Away from the rehearsal

room, the company have supported one another with some organisational challenges by developing a solid communication structure between all members. Looking forward, the company anticipate possible challenges in connection to the complexity of the technical requirements of a larger scale production, such as navigating prop plots or taking cues from lighting or sounds effects.

BEYOND THE R&D: The BareFace Collective have since performed iterations of *'Fix Us'* at Rich Mix and Pleasance Islington. They have secured Arts Council Project Grant funding for further development and will be performing at the Vaults in January 2019³³. They also plan to take *'Fix Us'* to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

SOCIAL MEDIA: The Bareface Collective can be found on Twitter - @TheBFCollective.

CASE STUDY TWO

R&D VENUE AND DATE: Soho Theatre, Feb 2018

COMPANY NAME: NOt YoUr CiRcUs doG

PERFORMANCE TITLE: *Not F**kin' Sorry*

COMPANY MEMBERS:

- Six performer/co-devisers -
Barry Churchill, Katy Cracknell, Housni 'DJ' Hassan, Stephanie Newman, Emma Selwyn, Adam Smith
- One director/co-deviser -
Liselle Terret
- Three creative collaborator/co-devisers -
Patricia Hitchcock, Heather Johnson, Elinor Keber



COMPANY HISTORY: The company was established through the members' work with Access All Areas. The concept for *'Not F**kin' Sorry'* originated from a piece devised as part of the Exit Festival for the diploma programme at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in June 2016. Interest was secured, with Duckie Producer Simon Casson inviting the company to develop the piece further in order to perform to an audience of 1500 at Electric Brixton in December 2016. Due to this interest, the company officially formed in Autumn 2016 and, before its R&D period, a shorter version of piece was also performed at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern.

COMPANY DYNAMIC: NOt YoUr CiRcUs doG is a collective led by six learning disabled and neurodivergent performers.

FINDING CREATIVES COLLABORATORS: The creative collaborators have supported the company since initial development of the piece at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in June 2016.

PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTION: *"'Not F**kin' Sorry' is a Punk Rock, in-yer-face, subversive and re-appropriated 'freakshow' cabaret that is confrontational, loud, sexy and angry, and throws back the discrimination constantly experienced by learning disabled and neurodivergent people."*

INDEPENDENCE DURING R&D: Creative collaborators, mentored by Access All Areas, took over responsibility for the co-creation of support documents with the performers, e.g. 'Work With Me', and coordinated all travel and day to day support requirements. Access All Areas remained on hand for consultation.

³³ <https://vaultfestival.com/whats-on/fix-us/>

PROGRESS DURING R&D: The company explored the inclusion of darker and more factual elements (such as recordings of political interviews) and allowed this to effect a stripping back of the glamour of the cabaret in order to find new depths and potential development arcs. The piece was extended from 10 to 25 minutes and many other ideas were generated with the potential of extending to a full length performance.

BEYOND THE R&D: The R&D week sharing of 'Not F**kin' Sorry' gained further interest for the piece and the company. An all-female adaptation has since been performed during WOW festival at the Royal Festival Hall and for the 'Taking Up Space Cabaret' at the Royal Court Theatre. The full piece is scheduled for further development and a run at the Soho Theatre in late 2019.

SECURING A PRODUCER: Access All Areas assisted the company in their search for a producer in June 2018. Despite industry interest, connecting with potential producers unfamiliar with the company proved to be a barrier. Candidates were actively sought by the director and creative collaborators. The interview panel included representatives from each company role and from Access All Areas. A producer was secured who is now actively leading on applications.

INDEPENDENCE: NOT YoUr CiRcUs doG continues to be partially supported by Access All Areas. This support includes mentoring and consultation in regards to access support and producing routes and with Access All Areas to act as custodian trustee for any funding secured. Although the long term aim is for the performers to take a central leadership role within the running of the company, there have been challenges in facilitating this dynamic and, at current, the director and creative collaborators remain the driving force behind company activity.

CASE STUDY THREE

R&D VENUE AND DATE: Battersea Arts Centre, Oct 2018

ARTIST NAMES & PERFORMANCE TITLES:

- Terry Huggett - 'Visions of Me'. Creative Collaborator - Lynnette Betts
- Dayo Koleosho and Lee Philips - 'Everyday DayLee'. Creative Collaborator - Lesley Ewen
- Emma Selwyn - '#binariesbegone'. Creative Collaborator – Sophie Crawford

HISTORY: Members of the Performance Company were asked to submit project proposals for development during the R&D period at Battersea Arts Centre. The chosen submissions undertook a period of development ahead of the R&D period as part of the Advanced Performance Making Diploma for adults with learning disabilities at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

FINDING CREATIVE COLLABORATORS: A call out for creative collaborators was issued by Access All Areas. Individual interviews with an audition aspect were held by each artist/duo supported by a representative of Access All Areas. Interviews were led by artists with representatives acting in an administrative capacity only, unless asked to do otherwise by the artist.



VISIONS OF ME:

"Terry draws his audience into the forever moment of a bodiless persona full of hope for a new world – only to be brought crashing down to the painful reality of life as a disabled person. The piece is inspired by Beckett as well as the hopes and struggles of living with a disability in a seemingly uncaring world."

BEYOND THE R&D: Terry has been programmed to perform as part of the Homegrown Festival: Occupy at Battersea Arts Centre in March 2019³⁴. He and Creative Collaborator Lynnette Betts are in the midst of planning and researching for the next stages of development for *'Visions Of Me'*. They are exploring the piece in connection to visual and fine art and are researching potential 'flash' performances in public spaces. They are also preparing their first project funding application.

EVERYDAY DAYLEE:

"Lee and Dayo are forever in love. Well, they are in love with the idea of love, but sadly it has never worked out. They've been hurt before, and it hurt real bad. Two guys with learning disabilities go on a quest to imagine their future meeting the right partner. But what stops us from being stuck in a forever loop of rejection?"



BEYOND THE R&D: Lee and Dayo have been programmed to perform *'Everyday DayLee'* as part of both the HomeGrown Festival: Occupy at Battersea Arts Centre in March 2019, and the Autism Arts Festival in April 2019³⁵. They have continued their partnership with Creative Collaborator Lesley Ewen with an aim of performing at scratch/open mic nights and of exploring the possibilities of using aspects of the piece in isolation.



#BINARIESBEGONE:

"It's 2068 at the 50th anniversary exhibition of the #binariesbegone movement. Join Sylvie as they bring us into the historical gendered world of 2018 where girls will be girls and boys will be boys and where diversity is not yet an outlawed term. What an archaic world that was. We're now thankful that the revolution really did equalise our everyday relations and difference is no more."

BEYOND THE R&D: Emma has been programmed to perform *'#binariesbegone'* as part of both the HomeGrown Festival: Occupy at Battersea Arts Centre in March 2019, and the Autism Arts Festival in April 2019³⁶. Emma has continued working with Creative Collaborator Sophie Crawford and together they have an aim to develop *'#binariesbegone'* into a full length piece with the intention of seeking a platform at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and in venues across London.

³⁴ https://www.bac.org.uk/content/45220/whats_on/whats_on/shows/homegrown_festival_occupy

³⁵ <https://autismartsfestival.org/portfolio/everyday-daylee-by-dayo-koleosho-and-lee-philips/>

³⁶ <https://autismartsfestival.org/portfolio/binariesbegone-by-emma-selwyn/>

REFLECTIONS

ESTABLISHING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS:

As discussed throughout this guide, various methods for establishing new relationships and creating stronger networks were utilised in support of the three Artist Development R&D periods. These methods of engagement could be categorised as either direct or indirect.

PRODUCER ENGAGEMENT	
DIRECT	INDIRECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers were engaged directly via call outs, job adverts and direct approach. • These approaches had the benefit of offering a specific professional opportunity. • Direct engagement asked for a clear opt in to the project by the applicant and therefore had a higher success rate. • Direct engagement allowed for artist led interviews and established the artist/producer relationship as key. • Engagement tended to be limited to those with previous experience of working with learning disabled artists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers were engaged indirectly via workshops and R&D sharing. • These approaches were very successful in raising interest, awareness and knowledge. • Indirect engagement had a greater impact in engaging with those interested in learning disability led performance but with no previous experience. • These approaches had less success in securing producers as they required no specific commitment. • Engagement was not directly between artist and producer.



CREATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Creative workshops aimed at exploring new relationships between learning disabled and non-disabled artists proved incredibly beneficial in establishing new and ongoing creative partnerships and collaborations. Relationships that required more of an integral support aspect, such as a creative collaborator with access support or creative support worker, were better established by processes that more overtly stated and recognised specific support responsibilities. This included artists engaging with individuals already known to them, as well as more formal job adverts and call outs. Artist led interviews allowed the key relationship to be established as between artist and creative collaborator, despite the interview being facilitated by, for example, Access All Areas.

INDEPENDENCE AND SUSTAINED OPPORTUNITY:

A key learning point from the Artist Development R&Ds as well as from collaborations with companies such as Mind The Gap was that independence, using the context established in 'Introduction', does not present itself in the same way in all situations.

For some, the independence of a project or a company has required nothing more than the opportunity to connect and some space in which to develop. For others, independence has involved establishing the support structure within a company or project that might otherwise be found through Access All Areas. For others, a natural position seems, at this point, to be that of an independent but supported company.

For most, the life of a project or company has only truly taken off after the engagement of a producer with an awareness of access barriers and the knowledge to tap into connected resources. This once again shows a clear parity with the wider industry and reflects the need of any emerging artist or company to connect to those within producing structures who really 'get' their work and understand how to support their specific creative requirements.

UNRESOLVED BARRIERS TO INDEPENDENCE:

In addition to the recognition that independence needs a flexible definition, individual to the requirements of an artist or project, it must also be recognised that some barriers to independence remain unresolved.

The establishing of creative support relationships and of certain support structures has easily allowed the space necessary for some artists in the Artist Development programme to take a central leadership role and become a driving force behind the future of their project or company. Within other companies and projects, despite ongoing support and facilitation with the aim of enabling artists to take control, the driving force has resolutely remained that of the director, producer or creative collaborator.

There are, of course, many factors that may play a part in this, including the necessary acknowledgement of those artists with more complex and multiple access requirements for whom taking a central role in the life of a company may require a greater level of support and ongoing facilitation. It is also important to recognise the part that an artist's personal ambition, and even personality, plays in their desire to take a leadership role within a company or to actively engage in seeking future project platforms or opportunities.

However, to allow these factors to entirely explain this variation would be not only damaging to future development, but also ethically very problematic. Despite the industry relationships established and the support structures put in place, the societal marginalisation of people with learning disabilities continues to have a deeply pervasive and detrimental effect on the disempowerment of many artists to inhabit positions of leadership, even within projects of their own creation.

This further reinforces the need for peers within the wider industry, particularly those in senior and executive positions, not only to dismantle the systemic barriers within their own platforms and programming to create equality of opportunity for learning disabled and autistic artists, but also to actively engage with these artists and to support their empowerment in fully inhabiting these opportunities.

STRUCTURES FOR LONG TERM PROJECTS:

A key point of interest running parallel to the development of the role of the creative collaborator has been that of 'best practice' structures and company procedures for the increased sustainability and success of longer term projects and tours.

Artists, producers, creative collaborators and industry peers were asked for their experiential reflections on this question and best practice suggestions included:

COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES

- Clarity of communication proved vital for many company members, whatever their role.
- Designated communication methods helped to avoid confusion and to alleviate stress.
- Communication methods could either be cross company (i.e. a group chat using an app), or adapted to suit individual requirements.
- Communication structures worked best when they were decided upon as a group and adhered to for all professional communication.
- It was important for all company members to be able to raise concerns about communication structures.

COMPANY 'MANIFESTO'

- The diplomatic and artist led creation of a company contract, ethos or manifesto allowed for the claiming of a shared identity and aims.
- A company manifesto enthused company members and gave cohesive drive and purpose.
- A company manifesto allowed the opportunity to define roles and responsibilities to cement the artist's voice as the lead voice.

SUPPORT STRUCTURES

- For projects in which an access support provision is required, preparation meetings between the artist and creative collaborator helped in providing clarity of support and allowed for artist led discussions about advocacy, autonomy and boundaries.
- Both artists and creative collaborators reflected that co-creating project specific 'work with me' documents allowed for a better understanding and provision of support needs.
- Performance Company artists advocated for creative collaborators having hard copies of 'work with me' documents and access plans at hand during rehearsals and performances.

EXPECTATIONS AND LIMITATIONS:

During a day of collaboration, representatives from Mind The Gap and Access All Areas discussed the importance of working together within an independent project to define professional relationships as peers, be that just as artist and creative collaborator, or within a larger company set-up. This exploration might include discussions regarding the expectations placed on each member of the company as well as the limitations of these expectations.

For example, a director may place an expectation upon performers and other creatives concerning the need for script or research work outside of designated work hours. Performers and creative collaborators may advocate for placing limitations on this expectation in order to support individual access requirements. Likewise a performer and creative collaborator must be able to discuss expectations of support as well as limitations. As professional colleagues, is support limited to within working hours? Are there some expectations outside of these hours? What are the limitations to these expectations? How might these limitations affect support during extended periods away from home?

An example given by a member of the Performance Company was that in the future, they might choose to work with their creative collaborator in order to place an agreed limitation on communication about work, outside of work hours, specifically in order to support a need for proper rest.

Discussions surrounding expectations, limitations and boundaries can sometimes be challenging and require a lot of trust between the participants. Some discussions might involve all company members while others are one to one. The co-creation of a company manifesto or contract can be very useful in setting out whole company expectations and limitations as well as exploring how to support one another if they are ever broken.

SUPPORT ON TOUR:

In November 2018, artists and representatives from several learning disability led theatre companies met to discuss the aims and development of this project as well as to consider the answers to questions raised by the work undertaken³⁷. One topic of discussion was that of best practice suggestions for support whilst on tour. The ideas and recommendations were numerous but could be split roughly into three categories: company preparation, day to day support, and venue expectations.

COMPANY PREPARATIONS

- A company might make a tour plan for their time away including discussions about mutual respect and boundaries, social time vs alone time and how everyone might help one another to deal with homesickness and being somewhere unfamiliar.
- Daily plans might be prepared by a producer or creative collaborator to let all company members know what will be happening each day. This could include information about where to be, what time to be there, any additional events and who the main contact is that day in case support/advice is required.

DAY TO DAY SUPPORT

- Day to day support might include any support required by a company member due to being away from home that is in addition to the access, emotional and pastoral support provided during rehearsals or home based performances.
- This might be provided by a creative collaborator, producer or artist.
- Day to day support might include support with cooking, familiarisation with new accommodation or support with travel in a new city.

VENUE EXPECTATIONS

- 'Venue expectations' are everything that might be asked of a venue in order to support a company's time there.
- This could include the chance for a familiarisation visit or the provision of familiarisation resources if the venue is too far away to visit.
- Other provisions might include additional technical time or space to use as a quiet room.
- A company might develop an 'access rider' to supply to venues ahead of a tour visit for clarity of company requirements.

³⁷ 'Access All Areas at LADA' held at the Live Art Development Agency on 22nd November 2018 with representatives from Mind The Gap, Dark Horse, Open Theatre and Access All Areas in attendance.

REFLECTIONS:

Through a series of interviews, discussions and presentations in November 2018, artists, producers, creative collaborators and industry peers were asked to reflect on their experiences over the course of the project, as well as on the questions that were yet to be answered.

A commonality between all artists was the optimism they shared about the creative journey they had undertaken as a part of the Artist Development programme, and the determination they had to progress their projects further, seek funding and forge a space in the industry for the work to be shared.

Other artist reflections were understandably unique and reinforced the necessity for all structures and best practice suggestions to have flexibility and adaptability. One artist shared that her preference in the future would be for relationships with creative collaborators to evolve naturally, with no formal structure in place, while another said he would choose to use a much more detailed job description with complete clarity of support requirements to avoid any confusion about what the role entailed.

Several artists were also keen to start taking a very active role alongside producers in completing funding and applications and overseeing project budgets, both for personal career development and to ensure that the learning disabled voice remained the central and leading voice.

ONGOING CHALLENGES:

Although reflections by artists were overwhelmingly positive, there were still concerns about potential barriers to future progression. These included:

- Barriers due to differing communication methods and differing life skills
- Barriers to networking
- The prevailing tendency of the industry to sideline the disabled voice; *"Theatre as a whole still doesn't take voices outside of the cis, white, able bodied male that seriously"*
Emma Selwyn – Access All Areas Performance Company Artist

Reflections by directors, creative collaborators and other company members also highlighted the importance of recognising ongoing challenges. The complete separation from the established structure, and therefore regulation, of a company such as Access All Areas has continued to cause some concern in relation to the monitoring of collaborative relationships and the resolution of any connected issues. That is not to suggest that newly established creative collaborations require formal or constant regulation, but simply to acknowledge that not all professional relationships work immediately, if at all, and that sometimes outside support is required.

The availability of consultation or support from Access All Areas, even if from a distance and never called upon, has proved very beneficial to the security of the newly developing companies and collaborations. Should an artist have a concern about the dynamics of their relationship with a creative collaborator, support is available. Should an incident occur for which a creative collaborator requires additional support, consultation is available.

There remain questions and concerns, both practical and ethical, related to any total separation from this source of support, specifically in relation to smaller companies. Access All Areas continues to be on hand for consultation for all collaborations established as part of the Artist Development programme, with a planned review for each project in order for the provision of sustained support.

CHALLENGING THE INDUSTRY:

During a final collaborative workshop in November 2018 it was unanimously agreed that just as the systemic barriers sit within the wider industry, ultimately so must the solutions.

The aim must not be to support the industry in making greater provision for learning disabled artists, but to challenge and assist the industry in making the systemic changes that level the playing field and provide equality of sustainable opportunity for all artists.

APPENDIX 1 – ACCESS FUNDING IN BRIEF:

ACCESS TO WORK

- This government funding pot is for paid work only. The artist must be paid at national minimum wage or above to qualify.
- Access To work is not performance specific – creative explanations of the support may not be relevant to the application.
- There are many barriers to the application for an individual with learning disabilities.
- The application is very medicalised. It could seem be counter-intuitive but it may be necessary to medicalise physical support needs for the purposes of a successful application.
- Applications for an individual with learning disabilities can be problematic as their requirements may be less tangible and more difficult to articulate than others; a creative collaborator is not a commonly understood support role.
- Think about support requirements and equipment that are simple and easily defined: travel, reading support, organisation/iPads, screen readers etc.
- The term ‘creative collaborator’ is less useful than ‘support worker’.
- An aim should be for Access To Work to provide a salary for a creative collaborator. It will be necessary to justify why the salary is higher than that for standard support work.
- - The work of the individual applying for funding is highly skilled and within a specific environment which requires a specialised knowledge. Therefore...
- - The ‘support worker’ requires a certain level of knowledge about the rehearsal room/a high-paced production environment/the theatre environment, and the appropriate expertise to assist within that environment. The ‘support worker’ therefore needs to be highly skilled in order to provide adequate support.
- An Access To Work application can be submitted from a month before the start of employment but must be submitted before the employment starts.
- It may be necessary for a company or platform to pay for the creative collaborator initially to then receive the funding back from Access To Work.

ARTS COUNCIL PROJECT GRANTS ACCESS SUPPORT

- The Access Support available is in connection to the application for a Project Grant.
- Funding for pre-application support is available, including for a support worker’s assistance in completing an application.
- Any pre-application funding secured is without obligation; it does not matter if the application fails.
- Funding for personal access costs can be included within a Project Grant application.
- The personal access costs are additional to the total project cost being applied for; if the project amount is £14k and the access support costs are £3k, the application will still fall into the under £15k category.
- The purpose of Project Grants Access Support is to “level the playing field”.
- Performance access costs (e.g. for assisted performances) are separate from personal access costs and must be included in the total project amount.
- Applications need to be specific. This may not require the inclusion of specific names but would require the inclusion of specific requirements.
- The specificity required makes speculative requests for personal access costs difficult. E.g. If applying for a Project Grant for a new performance festival, personal access costs for performers could not be included unless performers are already secured.

APPENDIX 2 – USEFUL LINKS:

ACCESS SUPPORT FUNDING

- Arts Council guidance for Access Support and Project Grants:
https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Information_sheets_Access_Support_Project_grants200418.pdf
- Arts Council accessible guides for project grant applications, including easy read:
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/access-support>
- Government guide to Access To Work Applications:
<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>
- Easy read Access To Work fact sheet:
https://www.base-uk.org/sites/default/files/easy_read_atw.pdf

BENEFITS AND PERMITTED WORK

- Government guide to permitted work:
<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/eligibility>
- Disability Rights UK guide to permitted work:
<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/work-people-living-disability-or-health-conditions>

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE

- Government guide to the Disclosure and Barring Service:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>
- DBS Update Service:
<https://secure.crbonline.gov.uk/crsc/apply?execution=e1s1>

COMPANIES AND PLATFORMS

- Access All Areas: <http://www.accessallareastheatre.org/>
- Mind The Gap: <http://www.mind-the-gap.org.uk/>
- Dark Horse: <https://www.darkhorsetheatre.co.uk/>
- Open Theatre: <http://www.opentheatre.co.uk/>
- Heart n Soul: <http://www.heartnsoul.co.uk/>
- Unlimited: <https://weareunlimited.org.uk/>
- Ramps On The Moon: <https://www.rampsonthemoon.co.uk/>
- Daniel Oliver: <https://www.danieloliverperformance.com/>
- Live Art Development Agency: <http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/>
- Arts Admin: <https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/>
- Lyric Hammersmith: <https://lyric.co.uk/>
- Soho Theatre: <https://sohotheatre.com/>
- Battersea Arts Centre: <https://www.bac.org.uk/>

APPENDIX 3 – CREATIVE COLLABORATOR JOB DESCRIPTION:

Context:

[Access All Areas has pioneered a new way of working with learning disabled artists.]

By matching those with multiple barriers to creating and sustaining performance careers with other artists, they can be supported to realise their own creative ideas.

We call these artists Creative Collaborators.]

The Role:

[Access All Areas] is seeking Creative Collaborators to work alongside and to support a company of learning disabled artists during an intensive Research and Development week.

Working with the director, stage manager and producer, the role of the Creative Collaborators will be to provide both creative and practical support within the rehearsal room in order to facilitate each individual company member's creative and professional journey, as well as to support the journey of the company as a whole. They will also be expected to coordinate and deliver administrative, pastoral and access support where appropriate.

Responsibilities:

Creative and Practical -

- To provide rehearsal room support in order to facilitate the creative ideas of each individual company member.
- To use personal experience as an artist to support the professional and creative development of individual company members.
- To gain an understanding of the differing creative requirements of each company member in order to provide individual support as appropriate.
- To advocate for the creative ideas of the company at all times, both in and out of the rehearsal room.
- To provide communication support as required.
- To provide note taking and literacy support as required.
- To ensure that each creative voice is being heard within the devising process.
- To document the devising process in order to support the director and company in realising the creative journey of the piece.
- To provide creative input as requested in order to support the director and company in realising the creative journey of the piece.
- To take a performance role within the process only if required and only if to the creative benefit of the company and piece.
- To maintain an ongoing conversation with the company in regards to their creative and practical requirements and to adapt as necessary.

Administrative -

- To support individual company members as well as the company as a whole in the completion of administrative tasks where appropriate and where required. This may include:
 - Making phone calls on behalf of company members.
 - Assisting with travel arrangements/booking taxis.
 - Assisting with financial tasks where required.

- Assisting with research where required.
- Assisting with rehearsal schedules (and reformatting these where necessary) to ensure that each company member knows when and where their rehearsal calls will be.
- Alongside the stage manager and producer, liaising with venues to ensure the general requirements of the company are being met whilst on site, i.e. Organising where the company may be able to take breaks or have time away from the rehearsal room.
- To maintain an ongoing conversation with the company regarding their administrative requirements and to adapt as necessary.

Pastoral and Access -

- To coordinate and maintain a high standard of pastoral and access support provision.
- To work alongside individual company members in order to gain an understanding of support requirements both inside and outside the rehearsal room.
- To work alongside the company, director and stage manager to ensure that all access requirements, including emotional requirements, are being supported throughout the Research & Development process.
- To advocate for the access requirements of each company member at all times.
- To immediately report any potential safeguarding issues or incidents to the appropriate member of staff or authority.
- To adhere at all times to the pastoral and safeguarding structures of the venue.
- To maintain an awareness of issues of confidentiality.
- To maintain an ongoing conversation with the company regarding their pastoral and access requirements and to adapt as necessary.

Person Specification:

Desirable -

- Experience as an artist/creative/performer within the performance industries.
- Knowledge of disability arts, in particular learning disability arts.
- Experience of working in a creative support capacity or other relevant support capacity. In particular, with adults with learning disabilities.
- Experience of working in a pastoral support capacity.
- Experience of facilitation.
- Demonstrable administrative abilities, including good computer skills.
- Experience with budgeting and finance, or a willingness to learn.
- An ability to place another's creative needs and ideas above those of your own.
- Excellent communication skills and a good phone manner.
- An ability and the confidence to advocate for others, even in difficult situations.
- Excellent time keeping is essential.

APPENDIX 4 – RELATED PUBLICATIONS:

Publications written in connection with the work of Access All Areas and the Artist Development programme:

- Terret, L. (2019) *Conference of Social Inclusion and Education in the Performing Arts 2019 to 2018*, Ministry of Spanish Culture and Inclusion, Spain
- Ledger, S. & Walmsley, J. with Access All Areas (2019) *Re: 'The Madhouse': Working with performance artists with learning disabilities to share the history of institutions and increase public awareness and involvement in activism* in *Global Perspectives on Disability Activism and Advocacy*. Ed. By Johnson, K. and Soldatic, K. Melbourne: Routledge
- Selwyn, E. & Terret, L. (2018) *Defiant Bodies. A Punk Rock Crip Queer Cabaret: Crippling and Queering Emancipatory Disability Research* in Duffy, P., Hatton, C. and Sallis, R. eds, *Drama Research Methods: Provocations of Practice, Bold Visions in Educational Research*, pp 161–180
- Terret, L. (2016) *Re-Positioning The Learning-Disabled Performing Arts Student as Critical Facilitator* in Preston, S. ed, *Applied Theatre: Facilitation Pedagogies, Practices, Resistance*, Bloomsbury, pp 131 - 150
- Mackey, S. & Terret, L. (2015) *Move Over, There's Room Enough: Performance Making Diploma: training for learning disabled adults* in *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* (Volume 20, Issue 4), Taylor & Francis
- White, G. (2015) *Interlude: Eye Queue Hear* in *Applied Theatre; Aesthetics*
- Terret, L. (2009) *Who's got the power? Performance and self advocacy for people with learning disabilities* in *The Applied Theatre Reader*. Ed. by Prentki, T., and Preston, S. London: Routledge, 336-344

Recommended authors of note with related publications:

- Dave Calvert
- Alice Fox
- Matt Hargreaves
- Hannah Macpherson
- Petra Kuppers
- Gareth White