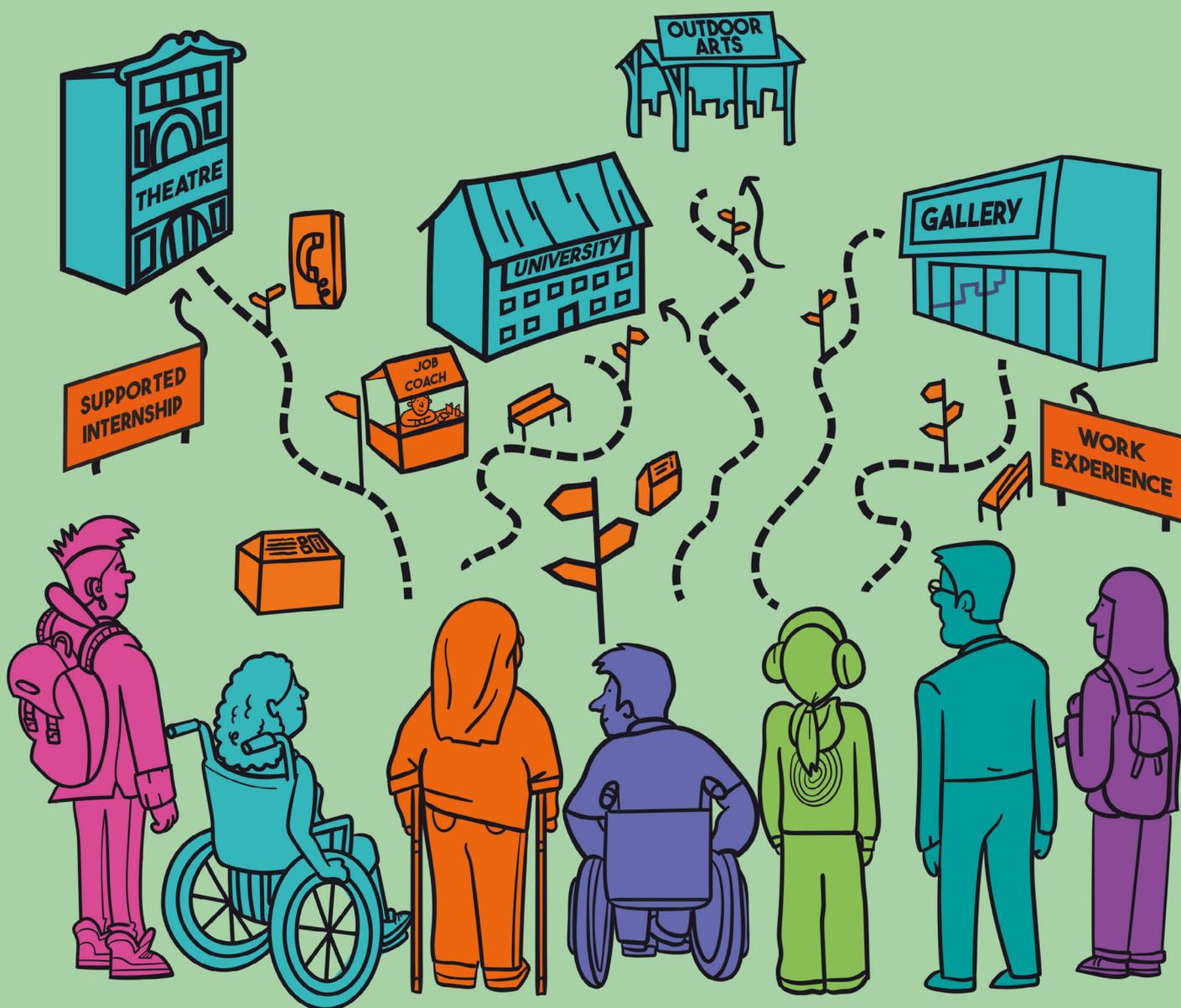


# Inclusive Progression Routes



A toolkit of ideas, insights and provocations to improve inclusive progression routes into the arts for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent young people.

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# About This Resource

**This toolkit is for organisations who want to provide more and/or better progression routes and career opportunities for *D/deaf*, disabled and *neurodivergent* young people aged 16-25 in the cultural sector. It is an invitation to come together and discuss, question and rethink inclusivity with respect to possible pathways and work experience placements.**

If you are responsible for work experience in your organisation, this resource can help you to instigate conversations about access with your colleagues. We are using the term 'work experience' as a shorthand for training programmes, work trials, paid and voluntary roles, one-off opportunities, placements and other development pathways.

Consider yourselves the agents of change: provocateurs who will trigger positive change across your organisation. It's a shared endeavour.

The toolkit has been informed by existing research, lived experience and a myriad of people who have generously given their time to share their insights and recommendations.

It won't give you all the answers, but we hope it will be food for thought and offer ideas and prompts to inform your thinking.

**You will find information, questions and activities about:**

- **Frameworks and models, including the social model of disability.**
- **Reviewing and developing your offer.**
- **Advertising your offer.**
- **Recruitment.**
- **Facilitating work experience, and progression routes.**

**The contributors include:**

- **Disabled/neurodivergent young people (Cultural Ambassadors).**
- **Schools and colleges.**
- **Access champions and advocates.**

At the end of this toolkit you will find a glossary of any terms highlighted in ***bold italics*** within the document.

# Our Starting Point

In the recent [Disability Report \(2022\)](#) by [Creative Access](#), 88% of disabled people who work in the arts said that the two biggest barriers they faced in developing their creative careers were:

- **Employers' understanding of reasonable adjustments and how they can support disabled employees to do their job to the best of their abilities;**
- **Awareness of disability issues amongst non-disabled colleagues.**

How can cultural organisations minimise and ultimately remove these barriers?

## The Social Model Of Disability

The social model of disability was developed over 40 years ago by disabled people and their allies. The model shows that people are disabled by the society they live in (rather than being disabled by a difference or impairment), and this applies beyond restricted access to a building to social attitudes that contribute to prejudice and exclusion.

**"Everyone knows that we need wide doors, we need a ramp. We might need signers or stenographers, or other access needs, but what about the psychological needs?"**

**– Aidan Moesby, Artist**

[Shape Arts](#) has created [this short animation](#) about the social model of disability. For more information, [Inclusion London](#) has written [this helpful overview](#).

## Activity – Putting The Social Model Of Disability On The Agenda

In a team meeting:

- **Watch the Shape Arts video and look through the overview from Inclusion London. With your colleagues, discuss your understanding of the social model of disability.**
- **Have an open discussion with the team using some of the questions below:**
  - » ***"How aligned is your organisation to the social model of disability, e.g. in your language and in your hiring practices?"***
  - » ***"Are there physical barriers in your programme or building which you are unable to remove?"***
  - » ***"What are the attitudinal barriers that your organisation needs to remove?"***

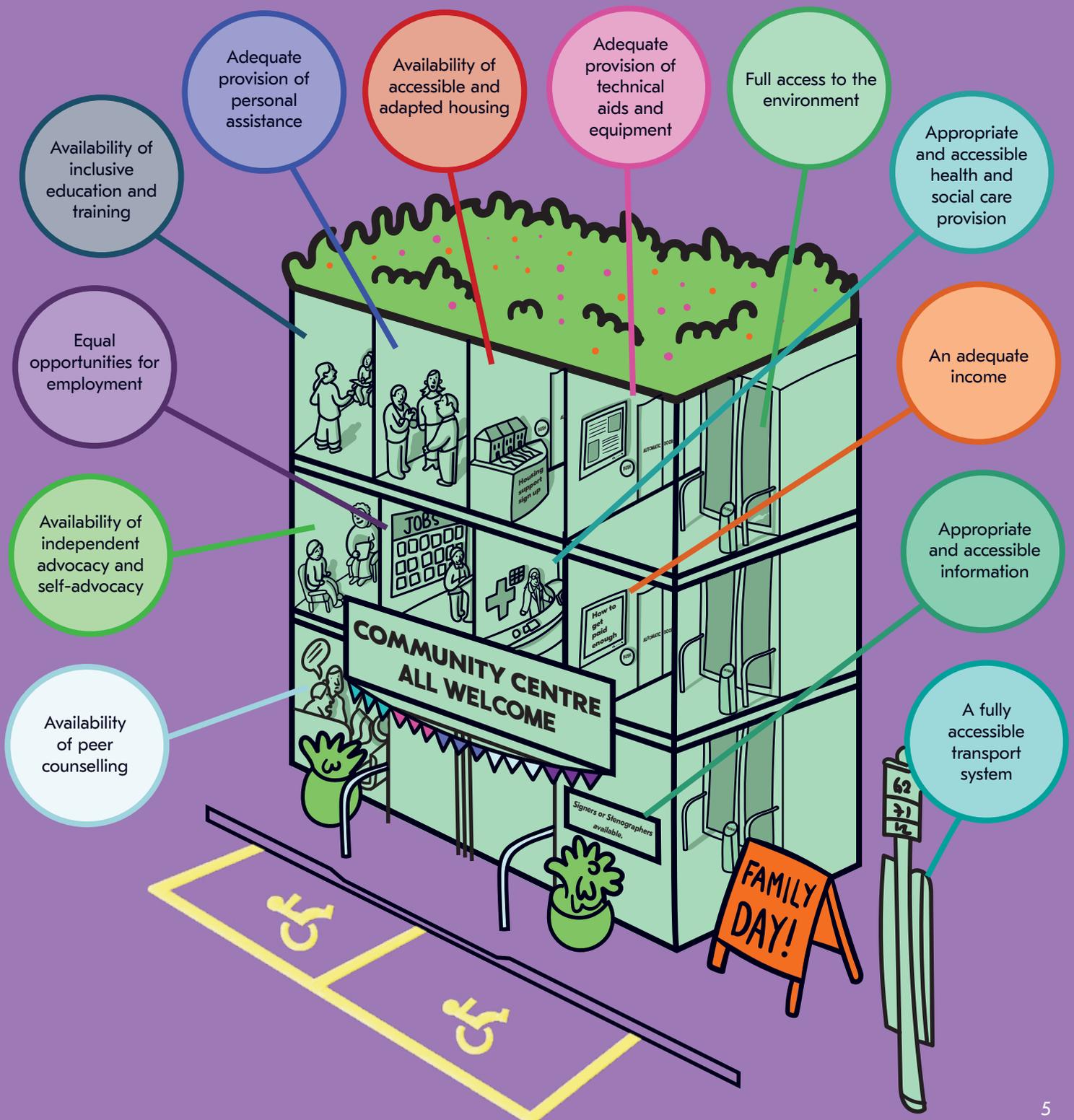
## Young People & Their Support Circle

It's important to recognise the support systems that may already exist in the lives of the young people who access your work experience opportunities. Some may come to this opportunity through school or college and be supported through their education provider's work experience programme. They may have an [Education, Health and Care Plan](#) in place or be receiving [SEND](#) support.

Some young people may be supported through organisations such as [AFK](#) and have a [job coach](#). Parents and carers may also be the primary support for a young person accessing your work experience opportunity. There may also be cases where a young person has fewer or no support systems in place. Each individual is different, but these support systems can be useful for ensuring that the young person is able to fully access these opportunities.

Refer to your borough's [Local Offer](#) as well as [BASE: British Association for Supported Employment](#) as good starting points.

# The Social Model of Disability



# Young people and their support network



# Reviewing your offer

## What Do You Want To Do And Why Do You Want To Do It?

What are your genuine motivations for wanting to rethink and redesign your work experience opportunities?

## Challenging The “Tick Box” Mentality

Interrogate this desire to ensure that it doesn't become a tokenistic venture; a quota to fulfil or a box to tick.

- **What does a more accessible work experience offer bring to your organisation?**
- **In what ways can working with a D/deaf, disabled or neurodivergent young person contribute to the artistic vision of the organisation?**
- **How would it affect specific projects and practice?**
- **How aspirational and sincere is your offer?**
- **What assumptions are you making about the young person?**
- **How can you work with other institutions such as schools and colleges to support pathways to employment?**

## Is Your Offer For Everyone?

When designing your work experience opportunities, you may already have a targeted group of young people in mind who are already engaged in the arts and have a clear idea of the kind of roles they want to explore.

What about those who are not engaged in the arts?

**Some questions to consider here might be:**

- **Is your work experience offer only accessible for those who already have experience in the arts?**

- **How can you make the offer more engaging for those who do not think the arts are for them?**
- **Are there any transferrable skills that relate to this role?**

Some of the young people who contributed to this resource spoke about a feeling of alienation or anxiety: “How do you apply for work experience if you don't know what the role is, or what the role means?”. There is an opportunity for the cultural sector to help bridge this gap, by adapting how work experience opportunities are designed and presented. This could be done through highlighting the skills that will be used and developed in the role (e.g. developing leadership skills, team-building, problem-solving) rather than relying on the job title alone which can often feel daunting to a young person (e.g. Learning & Participation Trainee).

- **Is the job title clear and reflective of the role on offer?**

**“We are challenging deeply entrenched inequalities experienced by disabled people at all levels in the arts and in wider society, so it really isn't enough to just to say ‘hey we want to work with more disabled people, look how fair we are’”**

**– Vici Wreford Sinnott,  
Creative Lead on Cultural Shift**

# Matthew James

Cultural Ambassador



## It's OK To Make Mistakes

**"I need to know it's ok to make mistakes and to understand how I can learn from it and do it differently next time"**

**– Matthew James, Cultural Ambassador**

Wherever you are in terms of diversifying your work experience opportunities, mistakes will be made! Identify what went wrong, understand why it went wrong, and adapt. Changing your organisation's attitude to risk and being comfortable with learning to do things differently were cited by contributors as essential for openness and innovation.

### Activity – Reviewing your offer

Using the [‘Reviewing Your Offer’](#) template with a colleague, respond to the questions and map out your current offer. Working with a colleague from a different department on this would enable you to collate and assess knowledge cross-departmentally.

In the third column of the template, start to think of how your offer could be developed to make it more accessible to a D/deaf, disabled or neurodivergent young person. You may need to consult with other members of your team to get their input (e.g. someone responsible for marketing the opportunities).

Once you have completed the review, identify what the short, medium and long-term changes could be to achieve a more inclusive work experience offer. Long-term changes may involve further input and development from senior leadership and other sources.

For a different way into this conversation, you could try an ice-breaker such as finding an object that symbolises or reflects your work experience offer. Give this ‘treasure hunt’ a two-minute time limit and don't overthink it: the most random items can be useful for stimulating creative reflection!

Or work with images using the following activity:

### Activity – Storyboarding your offer

Using the [‘Storyboarding Your Offer’](#) template:

- Choose either three pre-existing images of your work (these might be photos of your projects in action) or draw images which tell the story of your organisation (who you are and what you do).
- Then choose three images which describe and tell the story of your work experience offer.
- Under each photo write a sentence which describes the image.

Alternatively, or in addition to the above, you could ask young people who work with you to write, draw or describe their experiences in the template. These records could then become a rich bank of case studies to share with future work experience candidates.

# The recruitment process

## Advertising Your Offer

Below are some useful things to consider when creating the job description and advertising your job offer.

## Strip Away The Jargon

Be mindful of how alienating work-related language can be. Can you write the job description for someone who has no prior knowledge of the organisation or the role? The young people we consulted would like to see the information presented succinctly in bullet points, addressing questions such as “What skills can I develop?” and “What tasks will I be doing?”

- **What are the essential things you need to say?**
- **What is going to be the clearest way to say it?**
- **How can you present the role in terms of skills that could be developed (e.g. leadership, teamwork, communication)**

## Activity – Skills-Driven Job Description

Using the ‘[Skills-driven job description](#)’ template, break down the specific skills that the young person will explore and develop, alongside tangible examples of how those skills will be used. Add a picture or photo to support understanding and communication. Think about whether the young person will need to be able to demonstrate these skills already, or whether these can be developed as part of the opportunity.

## Acknowledge The Barriers and Highlight The Support

Within a job description it’s important to be open and transparent from the start. Some environments and situations can be altered and some unfortunately just can’t.

On the other side of this, be clear with what support you can offer the individual. What provisions do you already have in place? A buddying scheme, for example, or an employee assistance programme? Also ensure you include your inclusion and diversity statement and be clear that you understand and are happy to discuss the need for reasonable adjustments. This signals that your organisation consciously welcomes candidates with different identities and thinking styles.

## Accessible Application Process

Review your application process and consider the alternative ways somebody could apply for the work experience opportunity. These options may include a video or an audio recording of them talking about themselves and their interest and suitability for the experience you are offering.

If you have downloadable forms, a word document is better than a PDF so that a candidate can adapt it to their needs (e.g. resize or change the font).

## Additional Recruitment Tools

When curating the job advert, consider what else you can include to help clarify and bring the opportunity to life. Also consider if there are any other ways you can format the information so that as many people as possible can access the advert.

- **Do you have any videos that showcase your organisation and the work that you do?**
- **Do you have any interviews or recordings of people in your organisation talking about their work?**
- **Are you able to have the information audio-described or captioned?**
- **Could you create an Easy Read version of the job advert?**
- **What resources could you create for future work experience opportunities?**

## Activity – Easy Read Guide

Using short, jargon-free sentences and photographs or pictures, create an Easy Read style document outlining the information provided in the job description and advert. You can see examples of Easy Reads [here](#).

If you don't have the capacity or expertise to create your own Easy Read documents, we would recommend connecting with an organisation such as [CHANGE](#), though this would be a paid-for service. Some organisations, such as [Access All Areas](#), also offer Easy Read training so that you can create Easy Read documents in-house.

[Unlimited](#) have created an Accessible Marketing guide which you can access [here](#).

## Target Your Recruitment

You've created your job description but how can you ensure it reaches your target audience? Consider seeking out organisations, charities and groups who aren't familiar with the cultural sector and/or what you do. What would attract their user groups and make them feel confident that your opportunity will be worthwhile, supported and relevant?

- **Who are the people you want to reach and where are they?**
- **What spaces/organisations will these people already be connected to?**
- **What other organisations can further support or champion your opportunity?**

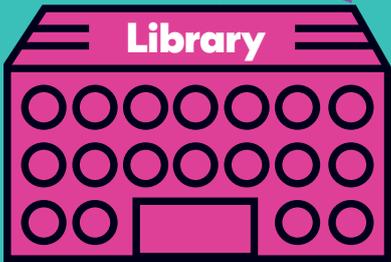
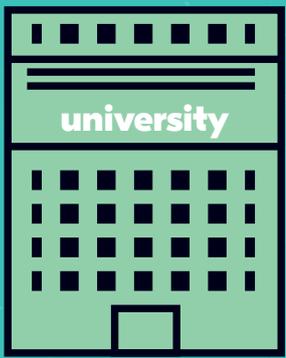
### Activity – Reviewing your offer

List any of the following that exist in your local area:

- **D/deaf centres**
- **Disabled charities/groups**
- **Community centres**
- **Schools**
- **Colleges**
- **Universities**
- **Libraries**
- **Disability arts companies**
- **Cultural partners**

You can also contact your borough's [Local Offer](#), which lists opportunities for disabled young people.

Consider all these as potential champions who will advocate for you and share your opportunities with their service users. Get to know them, and make sure they understand who you are and what your work experience offer entails.



# Local Champions



# Inviting Candidates For Interview

If you decide to interview potential candidates, how can you make this a positive, accessible and supported experience?

## Are your questions:

- Understandable and free of jargon?
- Relevant to the person and their experience?
- Fair and accessible to those with little experience of the cultural sector?
- Worthwhile, leading to genuine information exchange?

## Our contributors also recommended the following:

- Send the questions and details of the panel in advance. You can explain that these are consistent for everyone though you can make reasonable adjustments and ask additional questions where appropriate for clarification.
- Invite the candidate to bring a supporting advocate (e.g. job coach, family member).
- Give time and space for the candidate to respond.
- Be prepared to write down the questions, repeat them and paraphrase them.
- Be mindful of the power dynamic. How many people will be on the panel? Can the interview panel include someone who is D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent?
- Be aware that unconventional body language or apparent lack of social interaction skills don't automatically indicate lack of interest or suitability.
- Offer support with travel and expenses, including for time spent preparing for the interview.

## Work Trials

**"As a learning-disabled person, I would like it if before I applied for work experience, I would go for a taster experience or go to an open day... go visit the organisation, meet the people, try out some tasks to see if I like it or not, or see if it will be a good fit for me or not."**

**– Matthew James,  
Cultural Ambassador**

Offering practical, hands-on tasks can be more accessible than a standard interview process, which some candidates may find difficult. A work trial can show whether the job is a good fit for both employer and employee. This could take place over the course of a day or a few hours but it gives candidates an opportunity to show their skills rather than explain them.

For both interviews and work trials, reiterate the message that this is a place for exchange and encourage candidates to bring their own questions.



# Supporting Young People During Placement

## Signpost Access To Work

[Access to Work](#) is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support if the person has a disability or long-term physical or mental health condition. This fund can be accessed by young people who are 16 and over and can be used to cover everything from travel costs to a BSL interpreter.

## Needs And Access *Riders*

These are great for capturing information about someone's access and needs. They provide a considered and detailed list of what might be needed to support someone without assumptions and guess work.

### Activity – Needs and access riders

Using the '[Access Rider](#)' template, gather information including:

- What the candidate needs to work at their best.
- What you can put in place to ensure the young person is fully supported in their role.

You may wish to add or remove sections from this rider to make it more appropriate for the young people you are working with and your offer.

## Help With Travel

Travel can be a daunting experience, especially as this may be the first time the young person has travelled independently, or with a support worker.

- Can you help mitigate any fears they may have?
- Could you offer them a travel plan?  
What would this entail e.g. a photo map?
- Could you arrange to meet them at a particular place on their journey?
- Can you offer financial support or subsidy for travel?
- Have you established if the young person has Access to Work funding?
- Do you have photos or a virtual tour of your space, so they know what to expect on arrival?

This is also helpful to consider for the recruitment process when inviting candidates to interview or a work trial.

## Offering Meaningful Tasks And Opportunities

The young people we spoke to reflected on prior experiences, and “feeling like a spare part” was a common reflection. There was a lack of meaningful opportunities on offer.

- **What assumptions are made about the young person?**
- **How do you assess the suitability and appropriateness of tasks?**
- **What are the areas of challenge which may stretch the young person and their skill base?**
- **How is their work plan formulated and how does it meet the skills the young person wants to develop?**
- **How does the wider team contribute to the work plan and is everyone aware of the young person’s role? Does the young person have a mentor or work buddy they can go to?**

A starting point for this could be going through the ‘Skills-driven Job Description’ with the young person to identify opportunities for growth and development.

## Timetabling Check-In Points

The “check-in” is a space for the young person to ask questions and touch base on their needs and wellbeing. The Cultural Ambassadors talked about the need for the host to ask clear questions: “How are you feeling today?”, “Is there anything you feel anxious about?” etc. They felt more comfortable with the host instigating the conversation as they don’t always feel confident offering their reflections and responses without an explicit invitation.

The frequency of these check-ins could be agreed with the young person, along with a suggested framework so they know what to expect. A daily reflection task such as a diary could also record tasks, challenges and successes. A journal of the whole experience can be valuable too and can take the form of a written piece, a film or another kind of artistic creation.

## Recording Feedback

Agree with the young person in advance (and involve their mentor/ job coach if appropriate) what tools and frameworks you will use to reflect and gather feedback: forms, films, interviews etc.

# Progression Routes

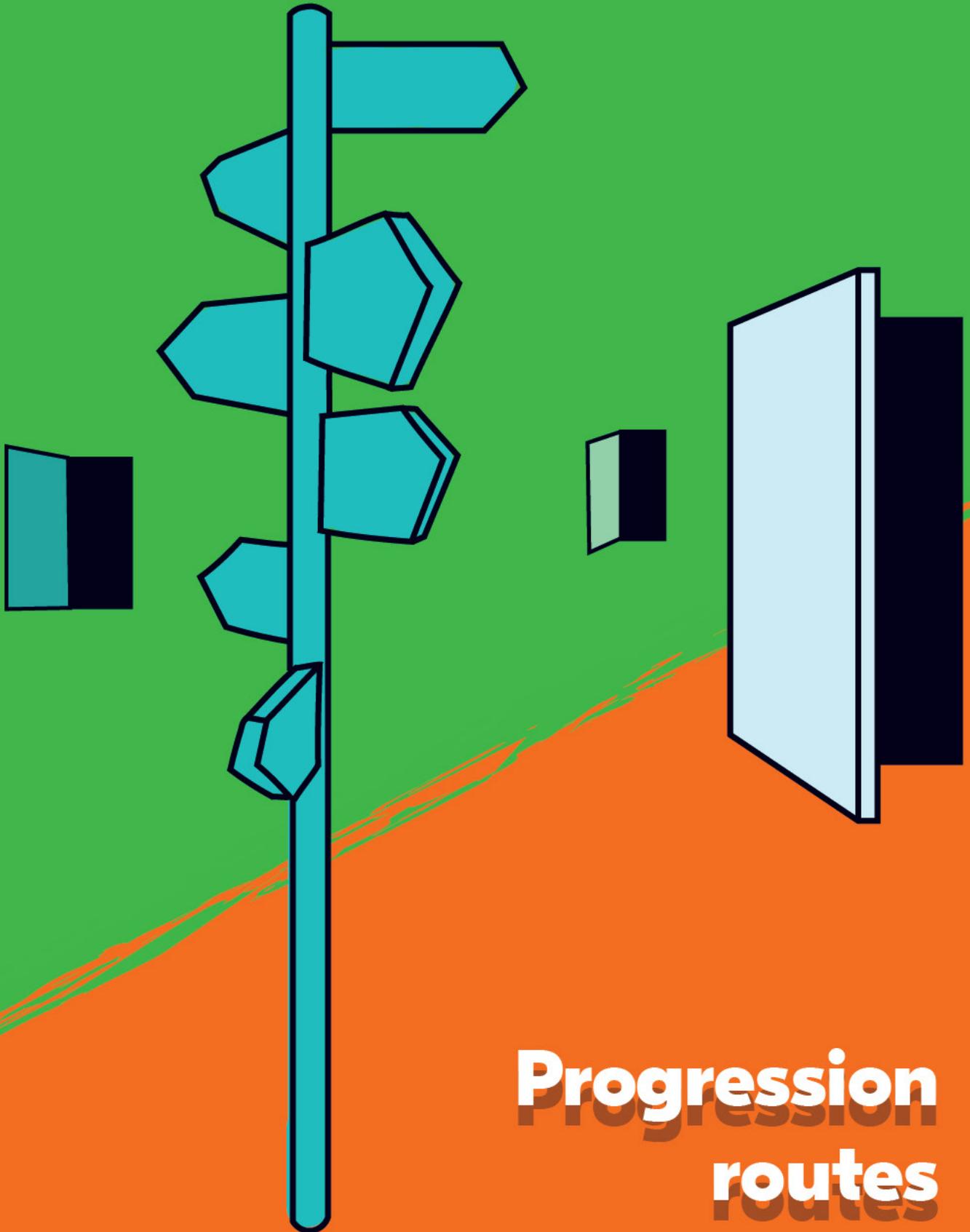
## Looking Ahead: Progression Routes

When the work experience ends, how can the young person's development continue within your organisation or elsewhere?

- **As well as the young person, who else could you consult with to support next steps\*?**
- **What progression routes can you offer as part of your existing programme?**
- **How can you support the young person to stay connected to your organisation?**
- **What other organisations or services can you signpost/broker relationships with?**

*\* Consider the support mechanisms already surrounding the young person, especially if they are coming from a school/college or through a charity or community organisation. There would usually be an appointed support/key worker/job coach for the young person and they would play an important role in being part of this consideration.*

# Looking ahead



**Progression  
routes**

# Reflections From The Cultural Sector

In February 2023, we hosted two online sessions which explored how cultural organisations could translate the ideas shared within this resource into action. Part 1 explored the limitations and challenges in their current provision, and Part 2 focused on developing their offer.

In addition to testing the tools in this toolkit, there were rich and insightful reflections from the discussions between the organisations who attended. We have distilled the reflections into a series of top tips.

## Develop a community of kindness:

- **Get to know your community and key stakeholders. Signpost, share, reciprocate.**
- **Be proactive and keep abreast of who's new in your community.**
- **Make sure your local partners know who you are and what you do.**

## Access is the responsibility of everyone in the organisation:

- **Expand your team of allies and share best practice and resources.**

## Small changes lead to big changes:

- **Look at what is already within your power to change and then map out a timeline for further adjustments.**
- **Apply a 'research and development' mindset to your programme.**

## Learn, plan and embed:

- **Don't work on a project unless it has access built into it.**
- **"Winging it" should be avoided at all costs.**
- **Learn from your mistakes and if you are still unsure, ask!**
- **Consult those with *lived experience*; use your partners and stakeholders as sounding boards.**
- **Do less, but do it better.**

## Build in time to reflect:

- **Take time to reflect on an experience before you launch into "the next thing".**
- **Schedule regular check-ins and opportunities to introduce changes.**

## Show more, talk less:

- **Strip back the words/jargon.**
- **Use different tools and media to communicate your opportunities to young people and those they live with (images, videos, storyboards, easy read guides).**

## Avoid limiting your expectations:

- **Don't make assumptions about someone's abilities.**
- **Create an achievable, meaningful and clear set of tasks and opportunities for the young person. Don't just ask them to make the tea!**

# What Next?

**A reflection which came from the CPD sessions highlighted the need to turn ideas into action and prevent a moment of inspiration losing momentum shortly afterwards. Accountability is key, and we encourage you to think of how you can utilise these tools, mobilise your teams, and translate your ideas into achievable actions so that this learning doesn't just live on the page.**

**Some key questions to consider...**

- How will you embed this training into your organisation's practice?
- How will you engage the wider team with the ideas in this toolkit?
- What can you do right now?

# Glossary

## **D/deaf**

*Deaf with an uppercase 'D' is used to refer to people who are culturally Deaf and see themselves as part of the Deaf community. deaf with a lowercase 'd' is used to describe someone with hearing loss.*

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## **Neurodivergent**

*An umbrella term to describe the diversity of the human brain and the different ways it can work. It can be used, for example, to describe someone who is autistic or has ADHD.*

---

## **Lived Experience**

*First-hand experience.*

---

## **Cultural Ambassadors**

*D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent young people who are part of A New Direction's work experience programme in collaboration with AFK.*

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## **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC)**

*A document for children and young people up to the age of 25 which outlines their special educational, health, and social care needs.*

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## **SEND**

*SEND stands for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and is predominantly used in educational settings.*

---

## **Job Coach**

*An individual who provides 1-to-1 support to a disabled person to assist them with employment*

---

## **Easy Read**

*A document which includes pictures and simple language to breakdown information into an accessible, easy to understand format.*

---

## **Rider**

*A document that outlines an individual or group's specific requirements.*

---

# Useful Links & Further Reading

## **Disability Access Riders**

[disabilityarts.online/magazine/opinion/access-rider-open-template](https://disabilityarts.online/magazine/opinion/access-rider-open-template)

## **Language & Terms**

[weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/disability-confident-etiquette](https://weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/disability-confident-etiquette)

## **Beyond Tick Boxes**

[weareunlimited.org.uk/blog/beyond-tick-boxes](https://weareunlimited.org.uk/blog/beyond-tick-boxes)

## **Ten Top Tips For Accessible Recruitment**

[weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/ten-top-tips-for-accessible-recruitment/](https://weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/ten-top-tips-for-accessible-recruitment/)

## **Report: Disability Equity In The Creative Industries**

[creativeaccess.org.uk/latest/full-report-disability-survey-2022](https://creativeaccess.org.uk/latest/full-report-disability-survey-2022)

## **HR & Employer Resource: Disability Inclusion In Creative Industries**

[creativeaccess.org.uk/latest/employer-resource-disability-equity-uk-creative-sector](https://creativeaccess.org.uk/latest/employer-resource-disability-equity-uk-creative-sector)

## **Navigating Disclosure**

[creativeaccess.org.uk/latest/navigating-disclosure-our-top-tips](https://creativeaccess.org.uk/latest/navigating-disclosure-our-top-tips)

## **Access To Work Guide**

[disabilityarts.online/projects/access-to-work-guide](https://disabilityarts.online/projects/access-to-work-guide)

## **Seven Inclusive Principles For Arts And Cultural Organisations**

[weshallnotberemoved.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Seven-Inclusive-Principles-for-Arts-Cultural-Organisations-working-safely-through-COVID-19-1.pdf](https://weshallnotberemoved.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Seven-Inclusive-Principles-for-Arts-Cultural-Organisations-working-safely-through-COVID-19-1.pdf)

## **Disability-Confident Employer Campaign**

[gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign](https://gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign)

## **Without Walls Access Guide**

[withoutwalls.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Without-Walls-Outdoor-Arts-Festivals-and-Events-Access-Guide-2020.pdf](https://withoutwalls.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Without-Walls-Outdoor-Arts-Festivals-and-Events-Access-Guide-2020.pdf)

## **Supporting Employers: Working with Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

[resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/supporting-employers-working-young-people-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/supporting-employers-working-young-people-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send)

# About The Contributors To This Toolkit

## **Ross Bolwell-Williams (Writer)**

Ross is a participatory artist, creative producer and trainee art therapist who specialises in creating unforgettable creative engagement experiences for children, adults and communities. The work he makes takes place in schools, public spaces, libraries, community centres, arts settings and museums. Curiosity, collaboration and imagination are the cornerstones of Ross's practice, and he strives to connect people to their playful inner child and their own creative genius.

## **Robin Lane-Roberts (Illustrator)**

Robin is a freelance animator and illustrator working mainly with charities, arts and educational organisations. He has over ten years' experience working with people to help them tell their story in the clearest and most engaging way.

## **Jack G Sheppard (Designer)**

Jack is a freelance designer with over seven years experience of working with a range of corporate clients, non-profit organisations and youth charities on print and digital design campaigns. His core interest lies in the combination of type, image and colour to create bold and visually exciting work which also conveys the projects message in a consistent and understandable way.

## **With thanks to the following people and organisations for their insights and contributions:**

- Matthew James (Cultural Ambassador)
- Amy Zenagui (Cultural Ambassador)
- AFK Charity
- Graeae Theatre Company
- Corali
- Digit Music
- Daisy Swift (Wigmore Hall)
- Tom Underwood (Lead Teacher in the Arts, St Philip's School, Kingston Upon Thames)
- Alex Covell (Attitude is Everything)
- David Bellwood (Head of Access, National Theatre)
- Barbican
- The Roundhouse
- Royal College of Arts
- Creative Access
- National Portrait Gallery
- Young Vic
- Lynne Brackley
- Beth Robertson (A New Direction)
- Chloe Randall (A New Direction)



# About A New Direction

A New Direction is an award-winning non-profit organisation working to enhance the capacity and agency of children and young people in London to own their creativity, shape culture and achieve their creative potential.

 [www.anewdirection.org.uk](http://www.anewdirection.org.uk)

 [@A\\_New\\_Direction](https://twitter.com/A_New_Direction)

 [@anewdirection\\_ldn](https://www.instagram.com/anewdirection_ldn)

## Cultural Ambassadors

Over the last three years, A New Direction have been collaborating with charity **AFK** to provide a work experience programme for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent young adults. 2022's iteration of the programme involved nine young people working collaboratively with A New Direction, the I Am Network, artists and arts organisations for sixteen weeks. The Cultural Ambassadors co-designed workshops for schools, consulted with organisations about their accessibility, led a festival project, and supported the delivery of events throughout the festival week.