

Disability Access Card Scheme Research
Final report prepared for Arts Council NI

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Key insights: An executive summary

Introduction

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland commissioned Perceptive Insight Market Research to undertake a programme of consultation with disabled audiences and Northern Ireland based arts venues to support and inform the development of a UK-wide Access Scheme for disabled audience members. The aims of the study were to establish demand for the scheme, scope the developmental role of the scheme and test operational elements of the scheme.

Methodology

In summary, three online workshops with arts venues and festival organisers, and three focus group discussions and an online survey of 89 potential users were carried out. The research took place during March and April 2022.

Key findings and recommendations

Reaction and response to the scheme

- Venues and event organisers have retained a favourable view of the scheme from the initial feasibility study, with participants mentioning how having a card that is eligible for all venues makes it simpler for both the users and organisers. However, organisers also recognised the initial rollout of the scheme may pose issues.
- Through the qualitative discussions, potential users expressed a positive view of the scheme, but also were concerned about the limited scope of the card. With many potential users facing access barriers in other provisions, they felt that it could be used in many other situations, wider than just the arts.
- Responses to the online survey also indicated potential users would be in favour of the scheme, with 81% supporting the idea of a UK-wide Access Card Scheme and a further 18% indicating that they were 'not sure'.

Key issues with the scheme

- Venues and event organisers expressed the view that there would need to be a comprehensive buy-in and a standardised approach from all organisations for the scheme to be successful. This would require having one centralised database that would allow users to register their needs once, with all venues in the scheme having access to the relevant information. This, however, poses issues around GDPR and compatibility with the venues' current software platforms. Potential card users also recognised that not all venues are able to provide the same level of access and support due to limitations with the premises.

- Organisers raised the issue of determining eligibility for the scheme. Many venues operate their own access schemes but there are differences in whether or not evidence is sought for the user to be eligible to access this support. Venues favour a 'light touch' and not having an overly bureaucratic process for proving eligibility. They recognise that users with hidden disabilities may not have formal evidence which could lead to discrimination. However, three quarters (76%) of the respondents to the online survey were in favour of the scheme requiring users to prove their eligibility.
- Other potential issues to be considered for the scheme include the need for an all-island approach so that cross-border visitors are not excluded from the support, and extending the scheme to performers and artists that work at the venues.

Current provision and uptake

- Venues have varying approaches to providing support for visitors with disabilities, with some maintaining a database of individual needs and others providing provisions on request. These provisions are also not uniform across all venues, partly due to limitations with the premises. Accessible toilets, lifts and seating are frequently available along with complimentary companion tickets, with larger venues also able to provide adaptations to space to accommodate attendees and audio descriptions or sign language for some performances, which may be too costly for smaller venues to implement.
- Service users referred to the JAM Card, which allows those with learning difficulties to indicate their needs in a discreet way, and The Cinema Association Card, which ensures people with access needs or disabilities will receive the essential support required as well as receive a complimentary ticket for a companion.
- 36% of respondents to the survey are registered for additional support with a venue, with buddy tickets and accessible seating the most frequently mentioned support. Two thirds (66%) did not participate in any card access schemes.

Validity and relevance of 2020 findings

- Views amongst organisers around online booking, eligibility and the benefits of the scheme for people with disabilities were consistent with those given in the 2020 study.

Change in demand for the scheme since the pandemic

- Attendance at performance venues and events has fallen since the pandemic. 81% of respondents to the online survey said that they attend events less often due to Covid, with 89% having attended a venue at least once in the 12 months prior to the pandemic. However, there are signs that attendance may return to pre-pandemic levels, as 79% expect to go to a performance venue at least once in the next 12 months.
- Venues and organisers shared optimism about the demand for the Access Card Scheme despite concerns about the return of vulnerable audiences to performances. However, over half (51%) of respondents to the online survey indicated that they were not at all confident or only slightly confident about returning to performance venues. Therefore it may still be too early for venues to accurately determine how demand has changed since the pandemic. Also, a lack of performances during the pandemic has meant that there

has been reduced opportunity for memberships to be renewed, meaning that internal databases may be out-of-date to some extent.

- Participants in the potential users focus groups raised the point that demand for the scheme should not dictate its implementation, as the most important thing is that support is available when needed. It was also mentioned that having this scheme would provide users with greater awareness of the support on offer in the venue, which would in turn make them more willing to attend a performance or event.

Barriers to accessing arts venues and events

- Potential users of the scheme recounted positive experiences with accessibility at events and venues, such as clear signage, professional staff and the introduction of Zoom Digital Programming during the pandemic. However, they have also encountered several barriers when accessing venues and events. One such barrier was in relation to the difficulties of booking online, with audio description often not available and limited options for registering their accessibility requirements.
- One individual, who is deaf, must rely on others to attend any performances as a lack of funding means venues are unable to provide an interpreter to communicate and translate hand signing. Another participant mentioned that subtitled showings of movies are not immediately available and have limited showings throughout the day. These cases demonstrate how those who are hard of hearing, deaf, visually impaired or blind experience more complex barriers and require more specialised support.
- There are a range of barriers that may not be immediately obvious to venues that were raised by participants. These include attitudinal barriers and different or problematic communication with venue staff. Some participants had experienced a negative attitude from staff members, with stereotyping and a lack of understanding of their condition.

Accessibility challenges for venues

- Despite the range of provisions they currently offer to disabled audience members, venues are aware that they face challenges in catering for all access needs, and in particular for those who have more complex requirements. These include adapting the accessible seating while working with limited space and accommodating those who require two wheelchair spaces or who have wheelchairs which may not fit in the lift.
- When booking venues, event organisers also experienced issues with finding information on the accessibility provisions. They also have to make case-by-case arrangements for those who require additional support due to the lack of a central registration database.
- Participants in the potential users focus group mentioned that older venues often have few adaptations in place to meet the requirements of those with a disability. As such venues may be in a listed building, there is currently no possibility for these adaptations to be made.

Approaches to operating the scheme

- One of the issues around operating the scheme is whether or not a fee should be required to join it. Two thirds (65%) of respondents to the online survey thought the card scheme should be free, compared to 20% who would be prepared to pay. This view was shared by event organisers and venues, with one participant in the focus group saying that any request for a donation may deter people from the scheme and place pressure on those who are struggling financially.
- Venues and event organisers were also reticent about financially contributing to participate in the scheme due to the limited funding or support they receive.
- Venues and event organisers thought that the local councils and organisations like Tourism NI and the Public Health Agency should be involved in promoting the scheme to ensure uptake.
- Potential users of the scheme proposed a number of ways to ensure the scheme would operate successfully, with mandatory disability awareness training and the appointment of an Equality Access group by local authorities and councils mentioned. Participants in this focus group also discussed what the application process should involve to ensure that the scheme is fully inclusive and accessible, and whether the card should be physical or electronic.

Introduction

The following section summarises the background to and approach taken to consult, support and inform the development of a UK-wide Access Scheme for disabled audiences within arts venues.

Background

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, in partnership with Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Wales and the British Film Institution (BFI) are collaborating to develop a new Access Scheme for disabled, D/deaf and neuro-divergent audiences that supports their return, post-pandemic, to arts venues.

The Access Scheme has been identified as a key government priority in the UK Cabinet Office's Disability Strategy published earlier in 2021 and intends to build on an existing scheme currently operating in Wales entitled Hynt; more information can be found at <https://www.hynt.co.uk/>.

The case for launching a UK-wide Access Scheme is supported by a feasibility study collectively commissioned by the UK Arts Councils and the BFI which found support from both disabled people and arts and cultural venues. The feasibility report was completed in 2020, pre-pandemic. While the overall findings of the report supporting the launch of a UK-wide scheme remain valid, additional consultation is required to establish the needs of local disabled audiences.

Aim of the research

The overall aim of the research was to complete a programme of consultation with disabled audiences and Northern Ireland based arts venues to support and inform the development of a UK-wide Access Scheme for disabled audience members in order to establish demand for the scheme in the current post-pandemic context and provide an understanding what is currently on offer.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the scheme were:

- To document reaction and response towards the scheme from the perspective of venues / users and non-users;
- To identify what key issues would need to be addressed to enable the scheme's roll out within a NI context from the perspective of venues / users and non-users;
- To gather insight from audiences / non-audiences with a range of disabilities and a broad geographical spread including both urban and rural area;
- To understand what is currently on offer and what the uptake is likely to be;
- To test whether the findings of the 2020 feasibility study are likely to still be valid and relevant in a post-pandemic environment;

- To establish how/if demand for the scheme has changed since the pandemic started;
- To explore how the scheme can help improve access for individuals with a range of access needs (e.g. via an online portal for patrons, training and a tiered accreditation scheme for member venues/organisations);
- To understand the range of barriers for users in accessing arts venues and events;
- To understand the challenges for venues/orgs in making performances and events accessible; and
- To gather information and test different approaches to operating the scheme in order to ensure the product is accessible and user-friendly.

Our approach

This section details our approach to undertaking the project. In summary, we undertook three online workshops with arts venues and festival organisers, and three focus group discussions and a concise online survey with potential users of the scheme. The paragraphs that follow provide an overview of the key tasks that were involved in delivering this research.

Workshops with venues and event organisers

Working with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland we identified three categories of arts venues and event organisers, which included:

- Core funded venues;
- Festivals; and
- Other and local council art facilities.

Three workshops were organised, one with each category of provision, and conducted via video conference.

Focus groups with potential users

With support from University of Atypical and the arts venue, Black Box, we undertook three focus group discussions with potential users of the proposed Access Scheme. Two of the discussions took place in-person and the third discussion was undertaken by video-conference. The duration of each discussion was approximately 1.5 hour.

Online survey

In addition to the qualitative discussions, an online survey was undertaken with potential users of the Access Scheme. A concise questionnaire was designed, which took approximately five minutes to complete. The content of the questionnaire covered the following topic areas:

- Frequency of attending arts venues and festivals;
- The number of different arts venues that they attend;
- Which card access schemes, if any, the respondent currently participates in;
- Their views of card access schemes for people with disabilities;
- The likelihood of applying to a card access scheme for the arts;
- Their willingness to pay for a card access scheme.

An online version was set up and the link sent to arts venues, University of Atypical and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, who were asked to issue it via email to those on their databases who have a disability. The Arts Council also promoted the survey on their social media platforms. A total of 89 responses were received.

Views of venues and event organisers

In this section we summarise the views expressed by those representing venues and event and festival organisers in relation to the proposed Access Scheme. The section is structured under the following headings:

- Initial reaction to the Access Scheme;
- Key issues to be considered;
- What is currently being offered;
- Challenges for venues and organisations in making performances and events accessible;
- Likely demand for the scheme; and
- Views on the operation of the scheme.

Initial reaction to the Access Scheme

At the commencement of the three workshops with venues, event organisers and local councils, the intention was to gather their initial reactions regarding the Access Scheme and whether perceptions of the scheme had changed since the initial feasibility study, which had been conducted prior to the start of the pandemic.

Taking into account the events that have occurred during the last two years of the pandemic, such as closure of venues, restrictions, and several adaptations to enable audiences and those with vulnerabilities to return, the primary reaction to the Access Scheme remained favourable, with the concept generally welcomed by all workshop participants.

We generally have a positive view about the scheme. We deliver a wide range of community arts programmes, we work with people of all disabilities and anything that improves the quality of treatment and access to the arts is perceived as a major benefit.

It does make better sense having a central register so the individual can use the card across several venues instead of having to register in each venue or provision. So, having a scheme like this, I can see the benefit of it. It seems very simple to me, and if it works and can also take a burden off the venue and staff, it could potentially provide additional benefits.

I think it is a brilliant idea being able to obtain such information centrally. This would mean that the person with a disability or with extra requirements does not have to keep repeating their needs as the organisation would have that information stored in advance and shared to them once the ticket for the performance within the venue is acquired.

However, throughout the discussions, participants posed many questions and highlighted a number of issues regarding the roll out and operation of the Access Card Scheme. These issues are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The scheme is definitely something worth pursuing, however you need to make sure to keep it simple to begin with and then build upon it as you cannot do too much too soon.

Key issues to be considered

Success of scheme depends on comprehensive buy-in

Despite the venues, event organisations and local councils sharing positive overall feedback towards the scheme, many participants commented and agreed amongst each other that, for the roll out to be effective, all venues, councils and organisations would need to be a part of the scheme and share a common approach. A standardised approach across all venues and events would provide a greater, potential benefit to people with disabilities and improve the chances of implementing a successful card scheme.

The current idea of the card scheme is perceived as a great opportunity to make art venues more accessible, however this will be more successful when the buy-ins are from everybody, from venues to local authorities.

Online booking systems and complex needs

While participants recognised and welcomed the benefits of being able to make an online booking for those with additional support needs, they stressed the continuing necessity to have alternative ways of booking, to cater for those with more complex requirements and for those who have difficulty completing online bookings.

They commented that online booking is most suited where the additional support requirements are related to access needs, for example, for a person who may need wheelchair access and seating within the venue for a companion/buddy to accompany them.

A number of the workshop participants highlighted their expectation that an individual's requirements would be stored on a central database. This could then be accessed when a booking is made, for example, through an accessibility card number, and the support arrangements and adaptations could be provided based on that information. This would reduce the extent to which the individual would have to repeatedly explain their requirements.

However, they emphasized that individuals would still require a choice of methods to contact the venue to provide further clarification if needed.

We see the benefit and reasons of going online, but I do feel there is more and should be more options for people to book the events. We had people book and then ring up, providing their access number and requesting greater accessibility for their more complex needs.

We would have attendees who may need an access to a plug during the performance, so that is where things like booking online does not work. Therefore, having a telephone booking option is important as speaking to an individual works better in terms of making more complex adaptations.

Compatibility with online booking software

Participant highlighted that there are a wide number of booking and ticketing systems being used by venues and organisers in Northern Ireland. They questioned how the Access Scheme database would operate to take account of the various software platforms that are being used. They stressed that ensuring the systems can integrate is essential for effective scheme roll out. They also emphasised that any solution used should follow strict GDPR compliance to ensure each individuals information is strictly protected.

Having a joined up scheme where you can register and record the disability and needs on one form and then just being able to provide a membership number upon booking without needing anything else, and the venue knowing what the needs or adaptations are, would be great, it would be very good to have information like that.

It would make sense if the venues had something like a plug in or an add on. We obviously all have different systems and providers, therefore it would be easier if we could just log in to the add-on or plug in and then incorporate it in some way.

Eligibility criteria

Most of the venues and organisers that we spoke to operate some form of an access scheme. Some of these schemes appear to be quite informal in nature, with the provider making adjustments when contacted, sometimes without asking for supporting evidence. Other venues have more formal provision, such as buddy/companion schemes, and maintain a database of contacts.

When asked how the proposed scheme should be implemented, the general consensus was that it should not be overly bureaucratic with applicants having to provide extensive information and form filling to prove eligibility. While it was recognised that some people with disabilities will have formal evidence of their need, such as PIP or Blue Badge entitlement, there may be others, especially those with hidden disabilities, who do not have this formal or up-to-date evidence. By way of example, one participant expressed the view that having to obtain a GP/doctor's letter for the application could be viewed as too officious.

It was acknowledged that the introduction of a central database would help to reduce some barriers for people with disabilities and make the registration process easier. A central scheme would also have the added benefit that venue and event employees would no longer have to ask for sensitive health information; rather staff would only need to know what support to put in place for the attendee. This was viewed as particularly beneficial in smaller towns and rural areas, where the applicant is more likely to know the venue staff. Participants also highlighted how the new Access Scheme could reduce any potential indirect discrimination that might come from inexperienced staff making decisions on suitability for support.

We do not check; we tend to take the person's word that they are eligible. So, having a scheme like that would be a benefit so you know people will not abuse the system that there is in place.

We have taken a light touch on checks. We did not ask people to provide documents and the reason for this was our disabled members said they found it embarrassing to bring their letters and prove it in front of the staff.

In our opinion, eligibility checks should be something light touch. A person should not have to go through great extent to prove a lot about their medical information to qualify for the scheme.

Potential for misuse

The issue of misuse of the scheme was highlighted by a number of participants. This was particularly the case in relation to the companion/buddy scheme. Some venue and event organisers disclosed that they suspected that, on occasion, their scheme had been used inappropriately. This was viewed as a potential issue, particularly when the number of companion tickets is limited by contract with the tour organiser. However, other venue and event organisers challenged whether or not misuse of the scheme was widespread, and

whether safeguards were necessary. A number of participants suggested introducing a form of ID with a name, photograph and a date of birth could help to overcome the issue.

Majority of our service users with disabilities are honest when registering to the accessibility memberships, however you would still get the odd person that may have got the Access Scheme number and has given it to someone else on the evening of the performance.

The argument of misuse really bothers me because systems, they are not abused. People are always worried about it being abused, but in reality, they are not. Things should be put in place on a trust basis.

Data protection

The workshop participants stressed the importance of GDPR compliance and questioned how much personal information would be shared through the scheme.

One participant explained their worry that all staff would be able to access the designated software and acquire information that is private and sensitive. Therefore, they emphasised the need for restrictions on the database and limitations placed on the information provided.

Participants discussed having a card number that would be associated with the UK-wide Access Scheme for disabled people, which highlighted the type of support required rather than the type of disability.

All-island approach

During the discussion, workshop participants highlighted the importance of ensuring the scheme eventually has an all-island approach. Many venues in Northern Ireland welcome attendees from across the border, which also includes people with disabilities and support needs. One of the participants shared that their venue attracts approximately 30% of their customers from Republic of Ireland (ROI), whereas others disclosed that they have seen an increase of attendees from across the border during the Covid pandemic, when NI had less restrictions compared to ROI.

We have a large amount of people coming from across the border who are on our access programme.

Having a joint approach throughout the island of Ireland and linking Art Council of NI and Art Council of ROI, I would be very much in favor of doing so and leading on that, making the disabled person venue accessibility easier for both sides.

What is currently being offered

Those who took part in the workshop were asked to describe the accessibility schemes they offer to people with disabilities and individuals with a range of access needs.

While some venues maintain a database of individuals with support needs, others operate on a more ad-hoc basis, putting provisions in place when requested. As described previously, some operate on a 'light touch' basis without asking for supporting evidence, whereas others have more formal arrangements in place.

There are a range of accessibility options and supports provided by the venues. However, the provision is not uniform across all venues; those who took part in the workshops described how they are constrained, to some extent, by the age and facilities of the building, access to skills such as audio transcription and signing, and funding. The most frequent types of support on offer included the following:

- Complimentary companion/carer tickets for performances/ buddy schemes;
- Accessible seating;
- Hearing loop systems;
- Designated wheelchair spaces;
- Wheelchair ramps for outside events;
- Accessible lifts;
- Accessible toilets; and
- Routine and regular disability awareness staff trainings.

Some venues are able to offer a greater range of accessibility and adaptations options. These tended to be the larger venues, which have repeat performances of events. The support offered includes the following:

- Audio description/sign language for some performances;
- Relaxed performances, relaxing screenings, or quiet rooms;
- Adaptation of space for attendees who may not be able to sit on a seat or in a wheelchair space;
- Close-by power sockets available on request;

Some participants highlighted that it is difficult to find skilled people who can caption performances. It was also emphasised how British and Irish sign language performances are rarely offered, both due to the difficulty of acquiring individuals offering sign language services as well as the service being expensive to provide.

Some venues also offer workshops and programmes for people with a range of different disabilities; these include:

- Dementia friendly dances;
- Regular disco club nights for people with learning disabilities;

- Regular sensory disco for young children and their family; and
- Programmes involving music creation and recording for adults with learning disabilities.

Workshop participants highlighted the varied nature of support they need to provide, as the access requirements not the same for every individual. For example, one participant described how they put arrangements in place so that an attendee is able to lie flat during performances. Another recalled having to find a seat close to an electric socket for an attendee and, while this is a fairly straightforward accommodation, sufficient detail is not provided for those booking online. Each of the workshop participants agreed that being accessible, adaptable, and flexible is not only about the requirements of the space, but also about the attitude of the venue, staff, and the team in terms of communication with people who require those adaptations.

They stressed the importance of communication with audience members, so that those with access needs are aware of what to expect before arriving to the venues, so that they can decide whether its suitable for their needs. It was highlighted that the onus is on the venue to make sure the information provided is clear to people with access needs, as well to show obvious willingness and commitment towards accommodating people with disabilities.

We had an individual who is blind, visually impaired and wanted to go to five events that in terms of audio description cost us £1000.

Sign language performance could cost around £800 and for us, as a venue, we do not have that kind of money to offer sign performances.

Challenges for venues and organisations in making performances and events accessible

Although the venues and organisation offer a range of adaptations for people with disabilities, they acknowledged that they face many challenges in ensuring accessibility for all, and especially for those with more complex requirements. Examples of the more complex issues that venues deal with include:

- Accommodating people who may need two wheelchair spaces;
- Large wheelchairs that do not fit into the customer lifts; to overcome this issue requires the attendee to use the goods lift, which is not ideal;
- Adapting the accessibility seating to allow the attendee to lie down during the performance, while working with very limited space;
- Strong lightning during performances which potentially can trigger epilepsy;

- Ensuring people with neurodiversity have been provided with information in advance of their visit in terms of lightning and sound and what it would be like in the auditorium.

To accommodate more complex needs it is important to have that information in advance of the performance to make it work for the attendee or provide an alternative.

I have been contacted by a parent whose child has neurodiverse needs asking whether there is a possibility for loud music to be lowered down. This is an example of something that we have no control over and cannot adapt such request to the individuals need.

Our space is flexible in terms of access need, but sometimes where the individual is not necessarily going to be sat on a seat or wheelchair, then it is brainstorming what is the next best possible solution. These things need communicated, and this currently could not be done online.

Event organisers, who book venues and outside spaces for their events, described some additional challenges they face in ensuring accessibility. These included:

- A lack of available information about accessibility provision when choosing a venue;
- Limitations on accessing car parking for outdoor events;
- Limitations on being able to provide early access and exit from outdoor events;
- Contracts with tour operators setting limits for companion seats;
- Not holding a central database of those who require additional support, thereby having to make arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

Likely demand for the scheme

Overall, the concept of the Access Card Scheme was welcomed positively by venues and event organisers and, while there is still some uncertainty about the return of vulnerable audiences to performances, they felt that there would be demand for it. Some of the larger venues indicated that prior to the pandemic they had 700 to 1,000 members on their stand-alone access scheme.

Around 1% of our tickets are for either personal assistance or people with access needs, so it is quite low.

If people out there knew they only had to complete one form and that it would cover them for all the venues, then I think the willingness towards the scheme would be definitely greater.

Participants were asked if they had observed any changes in their access scheme membership or overall attendance changes due to the

pandemic. It was acknowledged it is still too soon to give an overall accurate answer, however the venues and organisations highlighted a degree of hesitancy amongst disabled audiences in attending their events.

Some workshop participants said that they are currently in a period of flux with their own schemes. This is because their memberships are renewed every three years, and due to the pandemic and lack of performances, some of these memberships are yet to be renewed.

We see some changes in vulnerable groups attending our events; it seems they have a softly, softly approach to returning to our venues.

We have noticed people, who may have an underlying health condition, are being more reluctant to come back.

There are some of our users, who would be here every single day, and we have not seen them since the start of the pandemic, particularly elderly. I guess they are nervous about coming back.

Despite the current situation relating to the pandemic, some participants expressed the view that demand will grow, and more people will attend the events or programmes. They felt uptake of the scheme will increase as people begin to feel safer in the current circumstances.

People want to be able to go out and engage with others, and if there is anything that helps to remove some barriers that people may face, it is going to be welcomed.

Views on the operation of the scheme

Workshop participants were asked for their views on how the proposed Access Scheme could be made accessible, easy to acquire, as well as user friendly for potential users.

Cost to the individual and donations

Part of the discussion focused on whether the card should be free-of-charge or if an option for a donation should be made available. With regards to the monetary factor, there was general agreement that the Access Card should be provided free-of-charge to people with disabilities and access needs. The point was made that the person requiring access support pays for their ticket and should not have to make an additional payment for the card.

One of the participants suggested that a donation should not be included as an option as it could deter people from the scheme, as well as placing pressure on those who are struggling financially. On the other hand, another participant suggested that a small fee might be appropriate if it was reinvested into providing additional support services.

My initial thought is that it should be free and if there was a charge against it, there would need to be well documented benefits for paying for it.

I think people would be happy to pay a small fee for the card, as the money collected from the card could go towards paying for added initiatives to make the rollout a success. For example, venue staff training including front of house and security staff.

The workshop participants further debated the idea of charging for companion tickets or the idea of providing a donation for the ticket, again mentioning that the money raised could go towards something else that could impact on disabled access standards. Following the discussion, however, it was concluded that in order to make the scheme more accessible and user-friendly, the venues need to ensure they do not put any additional financial pressure on the individuals as this could potentially discourage service users from attending the art performances.

We should not be forcing carers to pay for the companion tickets because I imagine a lot of people living with disability and their carers are under a lot of financial pressure?

Cost to the venues and event organisers

With reference to costs, the workshop participants were asked if their venues and events would be prepared to make a financial contribution in the future to participate in the proposed scheme. The local council providers said that they could not commit to this as the decision would be the responsibility of the council to make. The smaller venues and event organisers highlighted that they operate with limited financial funding or support, therefore any expectations towards paying for the proposed Access Scheme from their own funds would not be ideal and would discourage venues from being a part of the scheme. Therefore, for the scheme to be successfully adopted across all venues, the approach to rolling it out must ensure that it is also financially accessible to the venues. Any charge could lead to discouragement from joining and consequently negatively affect the venue participation.

Any costs involved and expected from the venues to become a member of the scheme becomes a barrier for us in joining the scheme. It will then defeat its purpose in the first place, as venues would be reluctant to become a part of it.

I do not think art provisions should pay any kind of fees for something that we can continue to use (own scheme) and do what we are doing and do not see an issue with it.

Widescale adoption of the scheme

In order to realise the full potential of the proposed scheme, and maximise ease of use for potential users, workshop participants stressed that it should be extensively adopted by as many users and events as possible. Indeed, some of the participants discussed and questioned if the card could be used more widely, for example, in council run leisure centres and for non-performance based arts venues.

They recognised that some venues and events may need additional assistance to take part in the scheme, to ensure a sufficient and consistent level of accessibility support, particularly in relation to staff training and system upgrades.

Providing art provisions with additional support from Arts Council once they sign up to the scheme, could support the venues in more effective scheme delivery to people with access needs, making the scheme more straightforward and accessible.

Compatibility with current booking and ticketing software

As mentioned in the key issues, participants were concerned as to how the Access Card Scheme would fit with their current booking and ticketing system. They stressed that the software would need to seamlessly integrate with the wide range of software that is being used across venues and by event organisers, in order to achieve the successful widescale adoption of the scheme.

Promotion of the scheme

Participants commented that to ensure uptake of the scheme it must be well advertised and promoted among people who may benefit from it. The workshop participants shared some ideas of how such advertisement could be implemented and who should also be involved in promoting the scheme to people with disabilities; these included:

- Marketing the scheme within the venues through posters and ads;
- Including local councils in the advertising and promotion of the scheme on their platforms;
- Linking with other organisations, such as Tourism NI, Public Health Agency and local community groups, to advertise and market the Access Card Scheme.

We had an attendee who could benefit from our scheme; however, they were not aware they could be a part of this membership due to them not being from Belfast but from a more rural area.

Once all the issues that are highlighted here, will be ironed out, then we are fully in favor of it.

Views of the potential card users

Three focus group discussions were organised with individuals who were potential users of the proposed Access Card Scheme. The focus groups provided an insight into the possible positive aspects that the Access Card Scheme could offer as well as highlighting current barriers relating to accessing venues and event, which the card scheme could potentially help to overcome.

Initial reaction to the Access Scheme

One of the objectives of the research was to obtain the initial reaction of potential card users regarding the proposed Access Scheme. The early and primary reaction towards the concept of the Access Scheme was generally positive, albeit pending answers as to how it might operate. Indeed one of the initial reactions was to question why the scheme would be limited to only performance venues and events, and whether it could be extended beyond the arts. The participants stressed that individuals with disabilities and access needs experience barriers wider than just performance venues. Furthermore, participants confirmed that there is a definite need for the proposed scheme, pointing out that there is much more that could be done to improve access for people with disabilities to arts venues.

I cannot understand why it is only for theatres and art centres. Why is it not for all the venues?

Organisations that do education outreach should also be covered by the scheme. And it should go beyond venue based activity in terms of theatre, drama, and music, and look at much more diverse range of art forms, including craft.

It is important to look at the scope of it in terms of arts form. The scheme seems to be focused on theatre performances, but there is an awful lot of activity that happens outside the performance theatre type of venues such as art galleries that do not have performances.

On further discussion, it was acknowledged that if the scheme proved to be initially effective and successful for arts venues, by demonstrating that it helped to overcome the barriers people face when accessing art venues and also supported the venues in adapting their accessibility provision, it could be similarly modelled into other settings that people with disabilities also attend.

Current experiences

Group participants were asked to describe the types of barriers and obstructive issues they face when accessing arts venues. The discussion also referenced the positive experiences that they have encountered when accessing arts venues and the steps taken to accommodate a range of accessibility needs.

Positive experiences

Participants began by sharing their positive encounters with venues and sharing their experience of the good practice. The type of access support that they highlighted included:

- Friendly, approachable and helpful staff;
- Wide, accessible space;
- Dedicated quiet space for time out;
- Clear signage to the nearest exits that are not obstructed;
- Providing two types of leaflets, one with regular font and other with a large print;
- Provision of clear information on the accessibility provision at the venue;
- Introduction of Zoom Digital Programming (classes/workshops) during Covid to keep the communities connected;
- Continuation of Digital Connection, ensuring accessibility and adaptability to workshops for people staying in the comfort of their home;
- Certain theatres providing provisions for learning, training, and creative opportunities for performers with disabilities or access needs;

Some participants also informed us that they are currently working with venues to provide access maps and social narratives.

Participants noted that it was usually the larger venues that are able to provide more accessible venues and support. This was in part due to having repeated performances rather than one-off shows, meaning they had more opportunity to put support in place such as audio-description and signing.

Some highlighted the inaccessibility of many smaller venues, in particular privately owned businesses such as pubs which have performances, and which have particular restrictions due to the age and layout of their building.

Barriers to access

Despite there being some positive experiences, participants outlined an array of problems and barriers that they experienced when trying to gain access to art venues and events. Some of these issues focused on the booking process and included:

- Booking online being problematic for people who require an audio description;
- Booking online being problematic for those who need more than just an accessible seat;

- Issues for acquiring a carer/companion ticket through online booking.

There is no option for audio description for online booking, so nine times out of ten I must go through booking office to have my accessibility needs reported and adapted for the event.

As I need my legs out during performances, I cannot book such tickets online as I cannot select the seat I need. I must go through the box office. It leads it to being a separate process for people needing to report their access needs. Not everybody is treated in the same way and not everybody's needs are met in the same way.

Apart from facing issues with the online booking systems and having to go through several means of acquiring an accessible ticket, participants were of the view that there should be a range of methods available for those who want to book tickets. They acknowledged that there are people who would rather speak to a person and explain their needs, and others would rather to have an easy option of arranging everything online. Although, if the online system lacks the appropriate facility to report people's access needs during the booking process, then it can create a barrier for those who have difficulty communicating or who may not feel comfortable speaking and sharing their information with a member of staff.

Other issues that were highlighted related to several barriers within the venues that impact people who are visually impaired, have loss of sight, are partially deaf or deaf. Among the issues highlighted were:

- Lack of audio description/signing provision in the theatres, meaning that people have limited choice of when they can attend;
- Lack of induction systems that can link to individuals hearing aid;
- Difficulty communicating with staff;
- Lack of adaptations for people who may be visually impaired or deaf to attend an event when suits them;
- Lack of availability of ISL/BSL interpreters.

It was clearly highlighted that those who are hard of hearing, deaf, visually impaired or blind experience more complex barriers and require more specific and specialised adaptations rather than the more common access support that venues offer, such as an accessible seat or a companion ticket. Participants stressed that there is a gap within the provision, compounded by a lack of deaf art interpreters and those who could train other interpreters to make performances more accessible.

Many people who are deaf historically did not like to go to the theatres. Also now, it feels like they are not really a part of this, they are kind of excluded. They would look at the website to book and attend events, but there is no selection for either BSL or ISL.

Due to no induction systems and not being able to link my hearing aid, I cannot get directly involved in discussions even when trying to overcome this by using an app on my phone. The live transcript on my phone is not always accurate for the loop system.

The main issue for people who are deaf, or blind is a concern that their access needs would not be met. There is a tendency for places to think only about a physical access and it stops there. There are a lot of venues stating they are fully accessible, but they cannot possibly know they are unless they know everyone's requirements and needs.

Further issues that were pointed out by the participants include the physical barriers that people with disabilities encounter when accessing art venues. Some of these issues were not just 'front of house' but also impacted those with disabilities participating in performances. They included;

- No backstage accessible toilets and showers;
- Some standing only performances or events, which don't provide places for wheelchair users;
- Wheelchair users being seated in corners, far away from the stage.
- Venues, which have very restricted access: eg steps making it impossible for a wheelchair user to access;
- Backstage generally is very rarely adapted to accommodate access requirements for disabled artists;

They have an excuse of some venues being listed buildings so nothing can be done. There must be a discussion with the Historic Environment Division in NI making them understand that there is an issue and more open approach would be beneficial.

Individuals who have experienced physical barriers within the variety of venues, have also expressed that before going to an event or performance, it can feel overwhelming at some stages without having information and awareness of what is awaiting them in terms of access.

As a disabled person I want to be able to go out and not have to worry about how am I going to make it upstairs. Will I be able to make it downstairs without falling and banging my head? The information must be out there.

A number of additional barriers were also discussed and included:

- Attitudinal barriers, particularly in relation to hidden disabilities;
- Different treatment when paying for the event ticket;
- Different/side entrances for people with disabilities;
- Problematic communication;
- Lack of braille on leaflets or information brochures; and
- Impact of lighting and sound.

A number of participants referred to the negative attitude they have experienced from venue staff when attending an event. One participant recounted how some people were poorly treated by front-of-house staff when trying to acquire a companion ticket. Another recalled the behaviour of some security staff in terms of stereotyping and labelling them as being under the influence of alcohol.

People are still experiencing a level of attitudinal barrier in terms of being entitled to the additional companion ticket. It seems venues are being hesitant to either market it properly or to treat people with respect when they refer to it.

He had to go round the back to the service entrance. The days of the disabled entrances around the back should long be in the past.

The lights within the LED strip have been flickering and I had to leave the room. I got this terrible pain. Everyone agreed that this LED lightning is a real issue.

Some buildings have changed their lightning and it has made a difference. I can sit in a place, concentrate, and take information in without being affected by LED lightning.

Some of the participants were keen to stress the extensive energy that they expend when trying to overcome some the obstacles that are in place. They welcomed any additional support that would make the process easier for them.

On the nature of a physical, sensory, neurodiverse, emotional disability, there tends to incur a huge emotional, psychological and energy cost when trying to overcome barriers.

Key issues to be considered

Scope of the scheme

Participants were asked for their views on any potential issues that might need to be addressed as the proposed Access Scheme is rolled out. The overall scope of the scheme was again highlighted, with participants suggesting that it should not be limited to theatres and art performances.

Venues, like art galleries, that do not have performances, but they have got people who want to come along and take part in the learning programmes or attend art workshops, this is where the scheme should also be extended to.

Essentially when an individual wanted to go out for the night, they were not restricted to art venues, but could have also gone for dinner or a drink after. Their access needs would have applied across the journey on the night out.

Therefore, it was concluded that any scheme should be built with scalability in mind, so that it has the potential to be rolled out to include other types of venues.

Consideration for artists with access needs

A further key issue that was raised involved the Access Scheme being extended to artists who have disabilities or access needs. It was highlighted that when a performer with access needs works for a production, they must record their needs each time they attend different venues. Therefore, it was suggested the Access Scheme should also consider the needs of disabled performers and other production personnel.

There are also artists, if the card is extended to the artists and them being able to just let the venue know about their card, so they do not have to go through all access formality before their own performances in different venues each time, I think it would be a good idea to include them.

Standardised provision across venues

A further issue relating to the roll out of the scheme was the variation in provision across venues. There was an assumption that any venue that is allowed to participate in the scheme would meet a defined standard both in relation to accessibility and the training of staff. There was concern raised about venues or organisations becoming a part of the scheme and not sharing a common accessibility adaptation.

If they were to do the card scheme, it must be universal. Every staff member should undergo the same training, all facilities should be the same, the overall access must be the same everywhere.

It was highlighted that not every venue or organisation could provide the same level of adaptation for their buildings, rooms, or facilities to provide a standardised level of provision. Therefore, adapting to such a universal approach could be problematic, especially for venues based in older buildings that do not have appropriate access or do not have the means to introduce new adaptations.

Furthermore, it was also stated that some organisations may not necessarily be able to adapt to a universal approach due to being “homeless”, meaning they tend to depend on the venues where their events take place to have facilities in place.

Therefore, the key issues to be addressed include both managing the expectations of Access Scheme users in terms of what can be provided, and consideration of the actions that will be needed to improve provision to an appropriate standard, to allow venues and event organisers to participate in the scheme.

Eligibility

Participants were questioned on their expectations as to who would be eligible to participate in the scheme and what would be appropriate in relation to eligibility checks.

It was generally accepted that anyone who needed support to attend venues and performances should be able to join the scheme.

In relation to eligibility, those who had more formal documentation, such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP), confirmed that they would be happy to provide this type of information. They stressed the need to keep the application process simple, keeping in mind that some applicants may have issues with form-filling.

However, the issue which attracted most discussion around eligibility was in relation to those that might not have recent documented proof of their access requirements. Some of the group participants highlighted that those with learning disorders and hidden disabilities are less likely to obtain disability support or other benefits, particularly if they are in employment, meaning they would not have formal up-to-date proof to include with their application.

... I did not have proof of being a disabled person. I had to pay all the fees, but it could have been free for me if I could have proved that I was disabled. As I do not have any certificates or any paper, I must pay for that all.

Attitudinal change

Participants were keen that the Access Scheme concentrates not only on physical access barriers but also helps to address attitudinal change, as well as change in the culture of organisations to be more inclusive, respectful, and comprehensive towards people with a range of disabilities, including deaf, blind, and neurodiverse. They highlighted the need to ensure that staff training is included within the scheme.

People feel excluded, they do not feel like that they have got access. Proper access. The card is only one element of the solution. Another part of the solution is the change of attitudes within the organisations towards people with wider range of needs.

What is currently being offered

Participants were asked if they were aware of, or members of, existing support schemes. Various schemes were referenced during the discussion and included the following:

- A number of participants made a reference to the JAM (Just a Minute) Card on several occasions, which has been designed by the NOW group, to allow people with learning difficulties to indicate their needs or requirements in a discreet way;
- They also discussed the sunflower lanyard for those with non-visible disabilities, although they felt that this may have been exploited to some extent by people who did not want to wear masks during the Covid pandemic;
- Participants further described schemes they use or are a member of which are provided by their local council arts venues and other arts providers. Some participants were members of more than one scheme; and
- A small number of participants also referred to the cinema scheme. The CA (Cinema Association) Card is run by the trade body for cinemas and any individual who is a member of the scheme can present their card, which will ensure that those with access needs or disabilities will receive the support required as well as receive a complimentary ticket for a companion.

In my local council area, any event that you go to you can register beforehand and can get a buddy card, meaning you can use a leisure centre, use the art centre, theatre space and bring someone with you.

Likely demand for the proposed scheme

Participants were asked whether there would be a demand for the scheme and a willingness among those needing access support to use the card.

In general, the reaction from participants was that it should not just be a question of demand relating to the numbers that will use the scheme but one of creating equity of access for those who need the additional support. Participants stressed how equal access and respect must be there at all times, and not just when someone presents their Access Card. However, if there is a nationwide card available that supports people with disabilities and their needs, it is perceived as an additional benefit, although, the support should be available despite any proposed scheme.

It is not about if you get two people with disability through the door in a year or ten years, the access needs need to be addressed throughout.

The demand does not really matter, let it be one person or 500 people, it is an equal planet. Therefore, that one person with a disability needs to be treated exactly the same as 20,000 people without disability.

Me and my partner would not go out to places because there is always a chance both of us could not be catered, and a card like this could almost open that for us through informing what facilities are available or what accessibility is in place.

Views on the operation of the scheme

Group participants shared their views on the operation of the scheme and what they recommended should be initiated within for the scheme, to ensure it is fully equipped in supporting the needs of people with disabilities. These ideas included:

- Mandatory disability awareness training for staff;
- Local councils appointing an Equality Access Lead/Group to influence the authority and venues;
- Cost of administering/managing the card.

Mandatory disability awareness training was discussed on several occasions throughout the focus group discussions. This was to ensure that a standardised service is provided across venues and also to address cultural/attitudinal issues relating to people with disabilities.

I think there should be a requirement for the organisations or the venues, when signing up to be the part of the Access Card Scheme, there is something like a training requirement must be fulfilled.

It was suggested that local councils could appoint an Equality Access Lead or a group of people with disabilities into the councils as well as the venues. Such an individual or group would be responsible for consultations between councils and venues, providing insight into

access, disability and needs and also provide suggestions and concepts of how to make different social settings inclusive for everyone.

The Equality Access Lead would not only be there to provide ideas and make recommendations regarding what modifications or adaptations are needed, they would be there to influence the council to implement the modifications and make the access available for all individuals.

There was a group of disabled people who worked alongside venues, and they would have consulted, they would have fed in their ideas, given good and bad points and it worked very successfully.

One of the councils has appointed an equality access lead person and they were fantastic in changing the mindset in the council. The local art venue under that council has been much more accessible than any other council area.

Lastly, a question was raised regarding the operational and management costs of the scheme. Group participants viewed these potential costs as a barrier, discouraging venues from participation in the Access Scheme and thus, without comprehensive buy-in, negatively impacting on those with support needs.

Application process

The application process was identified as needing to be easy, quick, and accessible. There were a range of suggestions shared by the participants in terms of the application process being fully inclusive for everyone with range of needs. The suggestions have included:

- BSL/ISL translation for people who are deaf;
- Large font;
- Audio description;
- Simple language;
- Step by step instructional video to take applicants through the application process.

The participants shared their concern regarding some individuals with more complex needs may have difficulties in applying for the scheme if the application process is not designed to be fully inclusive and adapted to a range of needs.

Before I apply, I am a bit concerned. So, for example, if a deaf person was going to apply, would there be a BSL/ISL translation of how to apply? As obviously English would not be their first language, so it is something to bear in mind.

Communication can be a barrier, so it is important to use a simple language that can be understood instead of using jargonistic language and process that not everyone will

Participants discussed the form of the actual Access Card and what is provided to applicants. Several forms of the card were considered, both physical and electronic. However, with both types of forms, a number of barriers were highlighted:

Having an electronical card might not be accessible for people who are blind, visually impaired or for someone who cannot embrace the technology.

If it was a card, would it be the size of a bank card? Would there be enough room on it to cover the needs? Or would it need be certain size so Braille can be put on it?

A physical card may not cover all the accessibility needs due to the size, therefore having something like a QR code could cover everything that individual would need.

Participants concluded that there should be a number of ways of accessing the card, due to both types of form having accessibility restrictions.

Eligibility criteria and card fee

Participants were questions as to what would be appropriate, in terms of accessing eligibility for the Access Scheme.

Some participants indicated that the venues they have attended did not required any additional proof before providing accessible support. Others were unsure as to what might be appropriate. It was suggested that the Equalities Commission could provide support relating this matter, due to the topic being sensitive and private. However, on probing, participants confirmed that they would not have an issue providing evidence from their PIP entitlement or any other benefit related to their disability when applying to the scheme card.

A letter from the General Practitioner (GP) was also been considered, however it was thought not to be a suitable or appropriate method to prove individuals' disability. Participants said that letters from GPs usually come with a fee, and therefore, expecting an individual with a disability to acquire a letter that had to be paid for, was deemed as inappropriate and unacceptable.

There would be concerns about this idea. It could be a problem to expect someone to go to their GP and request a signed form to prove their disability. It is just totally contrary.

Overall, the participants agreed that if it is necessary to provide some kind of documentation, it would be more appropriate to provide PIP or other benefit documentation rather than asking a doctor for some kind of documentation that could come with an additional fee, which could be a burden for some.

Scheme promotion

The participants signified that the scheme requires a major PR campaign that is rolled out across every sector of disability in order for people to become aware of it. It should additionally be made clear that the scheme is a UK-wide scheme and that the scheme adopts a universal approach across every venue.

They recommended that the scheme is well advertised and promoted on the social media platforms, where people can share, like and comment giving it more publicity and possibly greater reach to people that could be potential users. However, they stressed that it is also important to not limit the roll out to social media platforms but to target other designated places where people with disabilities can see the scheme marketed. It is also vital to include people who may be visually impaired or blind through advertising it on TV ads or radio ads, so it can reach everyone equally.

You must think of people who are going through sight loss and ensuring it also reaches them through advertisements that can be heard rather than only seen.

Views of the potential card users - customer survey

A short questionnaire was designed in collaboration with the Arts Council and University of Atypical to be distributed to potential users of the card scheme. An online link to the survey was provided to venues, event organisers, the University of Atypical and Arts Council who then distributed it via email to those people on their databases who have a disability. The survey was also promoted on social media by ACNI.

In total, 89 people responded to the survey. This section details the findings from the survey under the following headings:

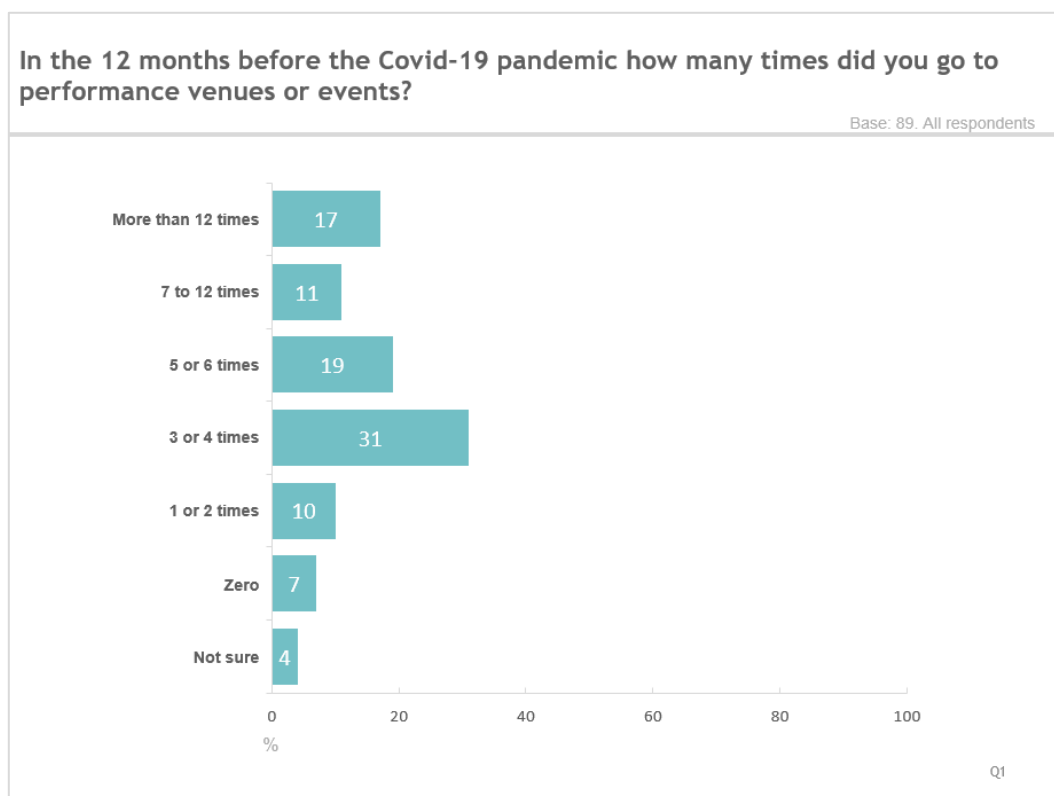
- Attending arts venues and festivals;
- Additional support from venues;
- Access Card Schemes; and
- Views of the Access Card Scheme.

Frequency of attending arts venues and festivals

Respondents were asked how frequently they attended performance venues and events in the 12 months prior to the Covid-19 pandemic (i.e. before March 2020), along with how many different venues they visited.

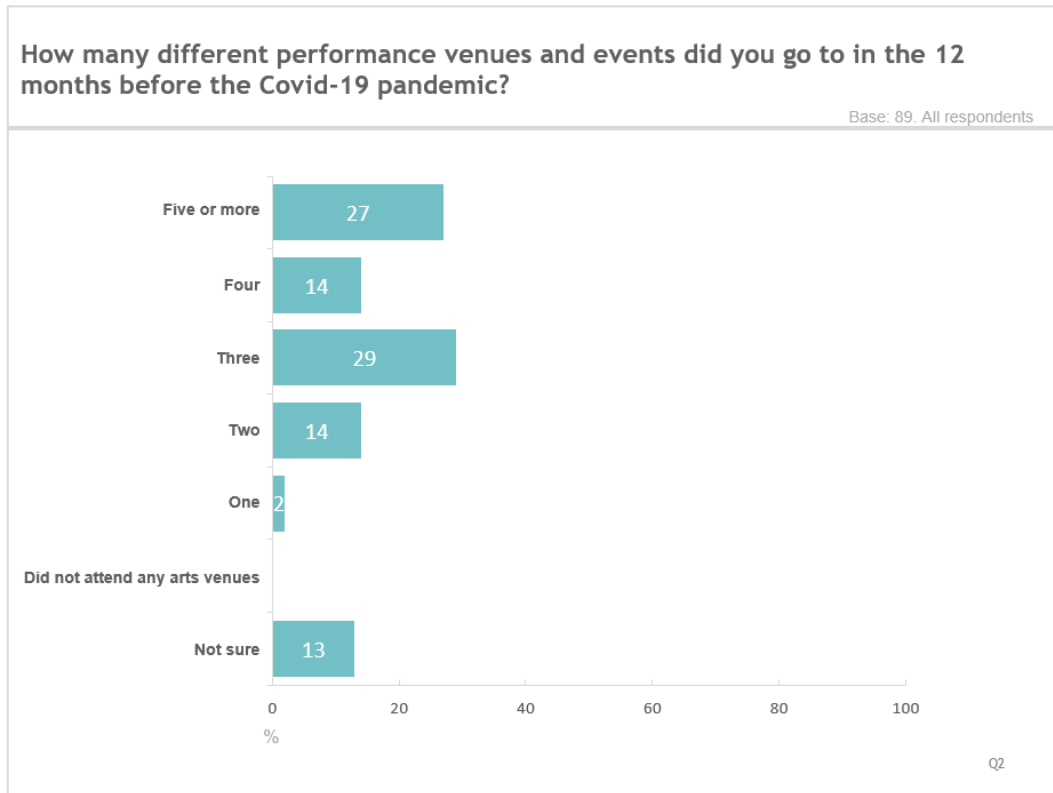
Almost half (47%) reported that, over the course of the year, they attended a venue or event at least five times, including 17% who went more than 12 times. One third (31%) visited a venue three or four times, while 10% went once or twice. 7% did not attend any venues or events in the 12 months prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 4.1 Frequency of attending performance venues and events before the Covid-19 pandemic



The Access Scheme is likely to be most beneficial to those who attend more than one arts venue. When asked about the number of venues they attended in the year prior to the Covid pandemic, the majority said they visited more than one venue (84%), with one quarter (27%) attending at least five different performance venues and events in that year.

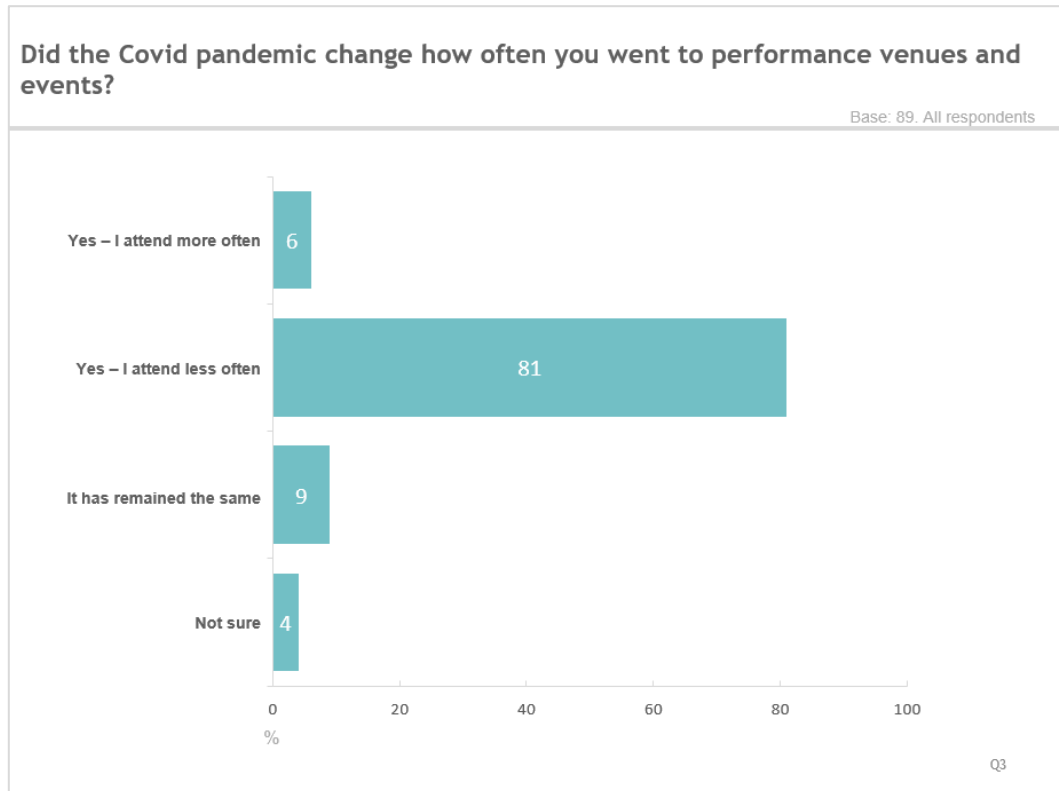
Figure 4.2 Number of different performance venues and events attended before the Covid-19 pandemic



Respondents were then asked how the Covid-19 pandemic has changed their habits of attending performance venues and events, and about their expectations for returning to such events now that restrictions have been removed.

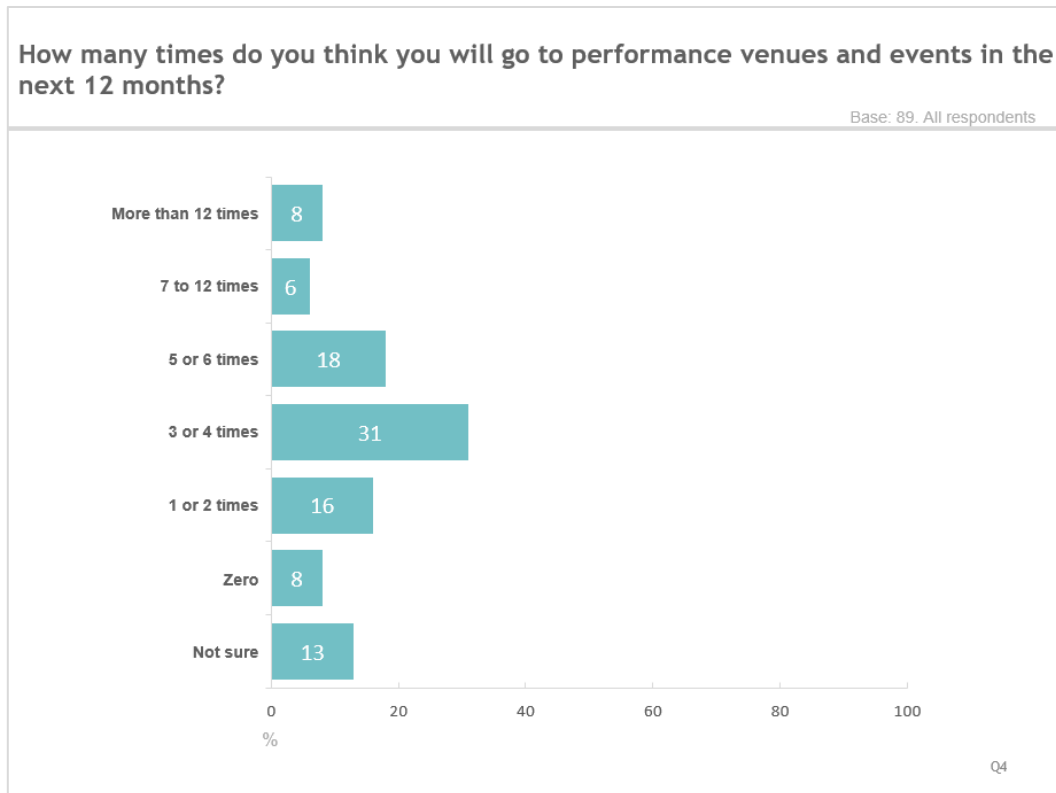
Four in five (81%) respondents reported that they attend performance venues and events less often because of the Covid-19 pandemic, compared to 9% who said their attendance level has not changed and 6% who now attend more often.

Figure 4.3 Attending performance venues and events following the Covid-19 pandemic



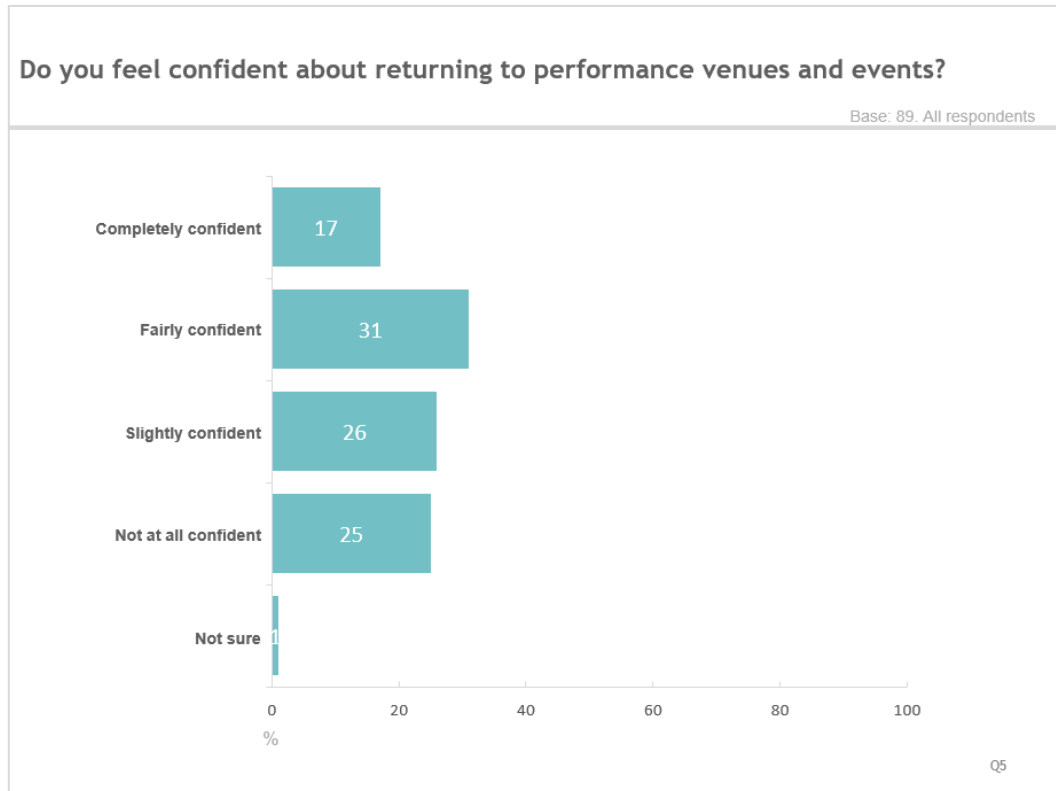
Four in five (79%) respondents anticipate that they will go to a performance venue or event at least once in the next 12 months, compared to 8% who are not expecting to attend a venue and 13% who are unsure of their plans. Of those who think they will attend a venue, just less than half (47%) expect to go between one to four times, while 32% are planning on going at least 5 times. These findings show a slight reduction in anticipated frequency of attendance compared to prior to the pandemic.

Figure 4.3 Expected frequency of attending performance venues and events in the next 12 months



Respondents were asked how confident they feel about returning to performance venues and events now that restrictions have been lifted. Almost half (48%) said they were fairly or completely confident about returning, while a further 26% were slightly confident. One quarter (25%) are not at all confident about returning to performance venues and events.

Figure 4.4 Confidence in returning to performance venues and events

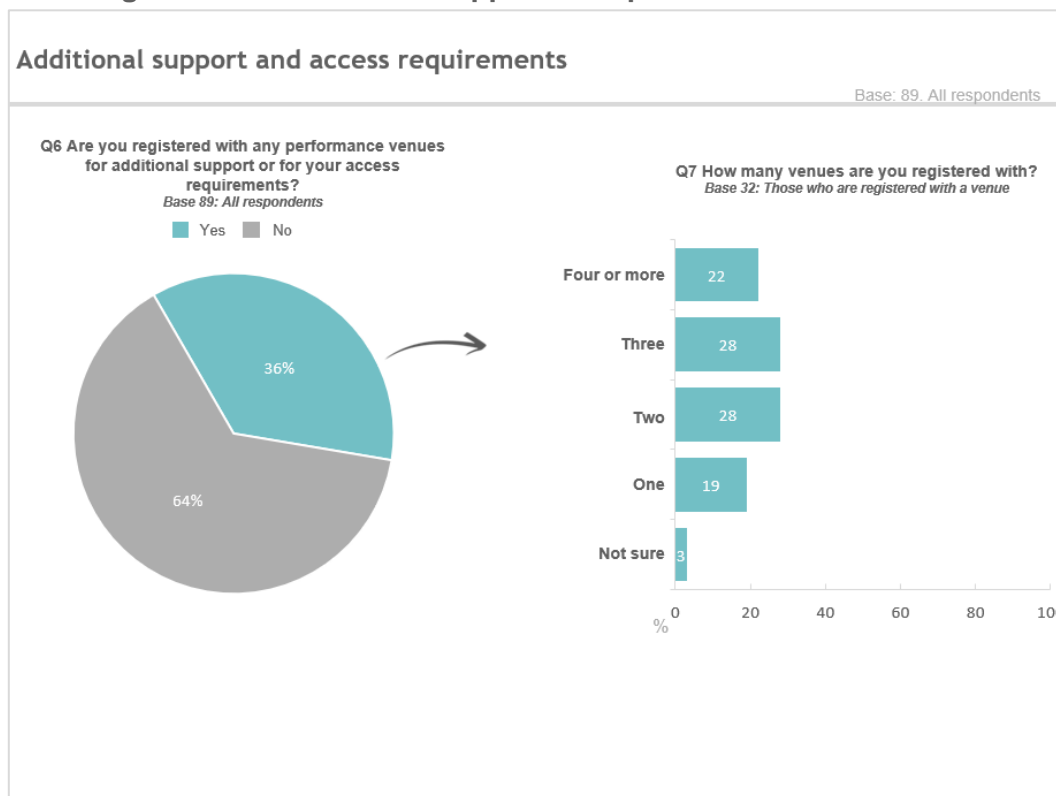


Provision of additional support from venues

Those who took part in the survey were asked whether they were registered with any performance venues for additional support for their access needs. Those who receive additional support were then asked to provide more detail on what this entails.

36% reported that they are registered with performance venues to receive additional support. Of those who are registered, six respondents are registered with one venue, nine with two venues, and 16 with at least three venues.

Figure 4.5 Registered for additional support from performance venues



21 respondents (24%) receive a free or discounted ticket through a venue's 'buddy scheme', which allows them to attend an event with a carer. 10 respondents (11%) are eligible for accessible seating, while two respondents (2%) are able to book front row seating. Discounted tickets, early access for bookings, and sensory equipment were also mentioned as types of support that some receive.

Figure 4.6 Type of support received



Respondents in receipt of additional support were then asked how satisfied they were with the support. Almost all (30 of the 32 respondents) said that they were satisfied, with one respondent who was very dissatisfied and one who was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Those who completed the survey were asked if they had any suggestions that would help d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people access performance venues. Improving the overall accessibility of the venue was mentioned most frequently (19 respondents (21%), followed by staff members having more knowledge of the requirements of those who may need additional support. Having more provisions for those who are d/Deaf or visually impaired was suggested by 11 respondents (12%), such as having priority access to seating that allows for lip reading. 10 respondents (11%) suggested having more information on what support is available at venues, and seven respondents (8%) want to see a greater availability of buddy or carer tickets.

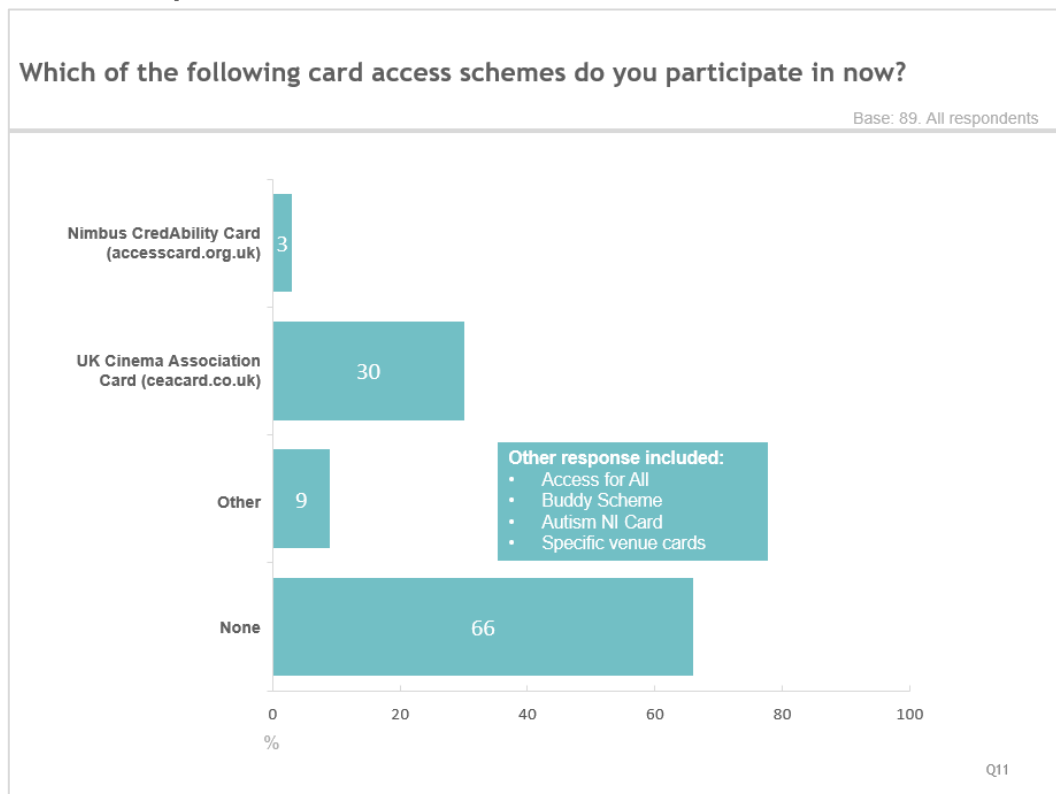
Figure 4.7 Suggestions to help d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people access performance venues



Current participation in Access Card Schemes

Respondents were asked if they currently participate in any Access Card Schemes. 30% have the UK Cinema Association Card, while 3% hold the Nimbus CredAbility Card. Other Access Card Schemes mentioned included the Access for All Card, an Autism NI Card, and cards that the venue offers. Two thirds (66%) do not participate in any scheme.

Figure 4.8 Participation in card access schemes



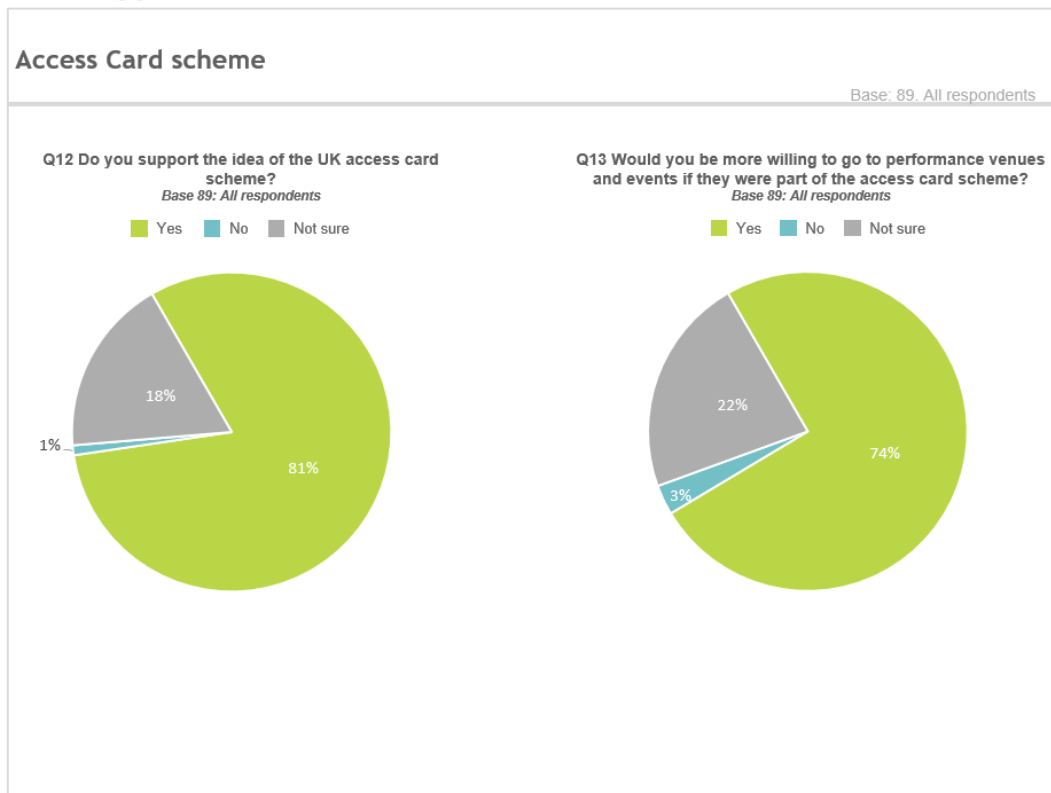
Views on the Access Card Scheme

Respondents were asked about their views of the proposed UK-wide Access Card Scheme which they were informed of at the beginning of the survey. Four in five (81%) said they support the idea of having a UK Access Card Scheme, with just 1% against this.

Three quarters (74%) confirmed they would be more willing to attend a performance venue or event if it was a part of the scheme, compared to 3% who said it would not change the likelihood of them attending.

It should be noted that 18% were not sure if they supported the Access Card Scheme, and 22% were unsure if they would be more willing to attend a venue that was a part of the scheme. This suggests that more information on what the scheme would entail is required.

Figure 4.9 Support for the Access Card Scheme



Respondents were asked whether the Access Card Scheme should be free or if they would be prepared to pay for it, and if potential users should have to prove their eligibility to make use of the Card.

Two thirds (65%) believed the scheme should be free, compared to one in five (20%) who would be prepared to pay for it. 15% were not sure if the scheme should be free or require a fee to avail of it.

Three quarters (76%) stated that you should have to prove your eligibility for the card, compared to one quarter (24%) who thought it was unnecessary.

Figure 4.10 Paying and proving eligibility for the Access Card Scheme

