

## Ever Dundas – Access Rider

I'm a disabled author based in Edinburgh and I use the social model of disability, which you can read about here:

[www.shapearts.org.uk/news/social-model-of-disability](http://www.shapearts.org.uk/news/social-model-of-disability)

I'm chronically ill and symptoms include chronic pain and energy impairment. My conditions fluctuate, so there may be days I have more energy than others (however, activities can very easily exhaust me (and may cause a flare-up), so I still need to be careful on 'good' days).

I can usually take part in events if I manage timings and travel. By managing and pacing activities, this can prevent flare-ups and in the long run can help me do more. It means I can do my job without causing myself harm.

The below access points help me to do this.

If you have any questions, please get in touch: <insert-email-address>

### My access requirements

#### **Fees:**

Writers should be paid (decently and promptly) for their work. As a disabled writer with an energy impairment my time is precious and it's difficult to earn a living, so being paid for my work is even more important. I will only very rarely do work for free (e.g. occasional charity events).

#### **Questions In Advance/Meet-up:**

I have cognitive difficulties (commonly called 'brain fog' or 'fibro fog') and can struggle to concentrate when exhausted and in pain. To help with this, it's useful for me to have questions in advance of doing an event or interview. Having the questions at least a week in advance is ideal, or two days at the most.

It can also be useful to meet up (either online or in-person) with the Chair and/or panel in advance to discuss the format of the event and get to know each other beforehand.

**Step-free Access:**

While I can sometimes manage stairs, this isn't always the case. So if there's lots of stairs at the venue, there needs to be a lift. Event organisers must make sure the lift is in working order before the event. This is also in solidarity with other disabled authors and audience members (wheelchair users, and those with impairments that mean they can't use stairs).

**Seating:**

I can't stand for long periods, so I'd need a seat. I can't perch on high chairs. Comfortable seating with good back support would be ideal and would help minimise chronic pain.

**Noise and Light:**

I'm sensitive to noise and light (they can cause a flare-up). During breaks, I may need to use noise cancelling headphones for a bit if I'm struggling with noise, and I sometimes wear sunglasses indoors if I'm struggling with bright light.

**Quiet Room:**

Have a low/warm-light quiet room with spaces to lie down. (this is not the same as a green room). This is more relevant for events such as festivals, where I might want to spend more time and attend other events. But it's also useful for one-off one hour events, especially if I'm travelling there and back the same day (although, this obviously depends on the distance – I might be able to get the train to and from Glasgow, for instance, and do a 1 hour event, plus signing/socialising, but to make it easier on me and help prevent a flare-up, a space to lie down after travel and after the event is useful).

If I'm running a workshop (which are usually longer than regular events and take a different kind of concentration) I'd definitely need a space to lie down before and after.

**Quiet Room Alternative:**

A festival I attended didn't have a quiet room so they provided me with the funds to book a nearby hotel, so I could go there to lie down. This meant I could attend other events that day after a rest. I could then stay the night and rest instead of travelling home the same day, which likely helped prevent a flare-up, and meant I had less recovery time post-event.

**Timings:**

I'd prefer events didn't take place in the morning, if possible.

**Breaks:**

Most events are 1 hour, but if it was longer (say, if I was running a workshop), adequate breaks need to be built in (for both in-person and online).

**Accommodation:**

Because doing events and travelling is exhausting for me, I need a lot of rest and recovery time. If non-disabled authors could travel there and back in one day, I might not be able to, so would need overnight accommodation.

Depending on the travel involved, plus doing the event(s), I may need 2 nights accommodation instead of 1 (to allow for adequate rest and recovery time).

**Travel:**

Even if you think the venue/hotel is close to the railway station, for example, I may not be able to walk the distance and will require a taxi. I may need to get a taxi as an alternative to, for instance, tube travel. Given this is an access need for getting to the event, it would be good if the event organiser can cover the cost. When taking part in events, disabled authors shouldn't have to incur costs that non-disabled authors wouldn't.

**Covid safety:**

Include Covid safety details on any information advertising the event I am involved in. Ask audience members to wear masks (if not exempt) and request they take a LFT before the event (have these available at the event for those who can't afford them). Have sanitiser available. Have good ventilation (windows open).

**Hybrid (in-person and online):**

Provide a remote attendance option for myself/other authors/the Chair, and audience members.

Due to chronic illness (and/or concerns around Covid safety), I may not be able to take part in an in-person event, so having an online/hybrid option means I'll still be able to take part (I've taken part in a few very successful events where some members of the panel have appeared online while others have appeared in-person).

Depending on the circumstances/reasons, I may turn down an event that doesn't provide an online option for both authors and audience.

I'd like events to have at least the basics of hybrid provision, even if it's as simple as pointing a phone and livestreaming.

This is a fantastic guide on hybrid event provision:

[www.spreadtheword.org.uk/being-hybrid-a-cheap-and-easy-guide-to-hybrid-events-for-the-literature-sector](http://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/being-hybrid-a-cheap-and-easy-guide-to-hybrid-events-for-the-literature-sector)

### **Number of Events and Timings:**

I would struggle to do events over consecutive days. I'd likely need at least 1 or 2 days in-between (depending on travel/accommodation, and what other work I have on, I might need longer).

### **Dietary Requirements and Allergies:**

I'm vegan. I'm allergic to various foods; if this is relevant to the event, get in touch with me for more information).

## **In Solidarity (with fellow disabled people)**

### **Advertising:**

Disabled people's first contact with the event may be through advertising, and you can win or lose potential disabled audiences here.

When advertising the event I'm involved in, including on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, include the event access details; disabled people shouldn't have to hunt for this information or phone/email to enquire about it – it should be readily available.

Include access details on the event page itself and/or a prominent access page on your website outlining access details (such as: is the venue wheelchair accessible, is it step-free, is there a lift, do you have a hearing loop, will BSL interpreters and live captioning be available, and so on). Provide a means to get in touch about access (both email and phone).

The [Inklusion Guide \(inklusionguide.org\)](http://inklusionguide.org) can help with this.

If you're posting flyers online, including Alt Text descriptions of the images. Include Alt Text for all photos and gifs used when advertising the event on social media. If you're using videos to advertise the event, ensure they're captioned.

Capitalise the first letter of each word within a hashtag, so screen readers don't read it as one big, jumbled word (this also makes it easier for everyone to read). This should also be done with your twitter name.

This is a useful accessible marketing guide: [www.shapearts.org.uk/News/accessible-marketing-guide](http://www.shapearts.org.uk/News/accessible-marketing-guide)

### **Step-free Access:**

Ensure the venue has step-free access. I'm not a wheelchair user, but I won't do events in venues that aren't wheelchair accessible. The toilets must be accessible too.

### **Sound & Mics:**

The authors and Chair must all use mics, no matter how small the venue/audience. Some disabled people may not be able to hold mics, so ensure the mics are clip-on lavalier mics, or there are mic stands.

### **Tickets and Fees:**

I don't want anyone to be excluded for socio-economic reasons, so if there's a fee for audience members attending the event, ideally it should be Pay What You Can. If not, provide good concession rates (and don't ask for proof) and provide some free spaces for those who otherwise can't afford tickets (again, don't ask for proof). Provide free tickets for personal assistants/companions (and make this easy to book).

It's worth setting up a 'Sponsor A Ticket/Pay It Forward' button on your ticket purchasing page, where people can sponsor a ticket for someone facing socio-economic barriers.

### **Inclusive Programming:**

If the event is a panel, I'd prefer it wasn't an all-white panel. It would also be great to have other disabled authors on the panel, fellow queer authors, trans authors, and working class authors.

### **BSL and Captions:**

I'd prefer to do events that have BSL interpreters, and if livestreamed/online afterwards, it should be captioned. Auto-captions aren't ideal – there's a lot of mistakes, so hire a professional captioner. (If you're providing live captioning and BSL, advertise this widely and reach out to your target audience).

## Going Forward

If you'd like all your events to be more accessible in future, make sure to plan and budget for access from the very beginning of event planning. There are some resources below that can help with this.

## Resources

As mentioned above, this is an excellent resource on hybrid provision:

[www.spreadtheword.org.uk/being-hybrid-a-cheap-and-easy-guide-to-hybrid-events-for-the-literature-sector](http://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/being-hybrid-a-cheap-and-easy-guide-to-hybrid-events-for-the-literature-sector)

This resource outlines equipment useful for hybrid provision:

[www.reddoorpress.co.uk/pages/keep-festivals-hybrid](http://www.reddoorpress.co.uk/pages/keep-festivals-hybrid)

The Inklusion Guide to making literature events accessible will be available in a range of formats from 25 Aug 2022. Keep an eye on our social media and sign up to our newsletter for updates: [www.inklusionguide.org](http://www.inklusionguide.org)