

Addressing disability in galleries in Scotland

Report by **engage Scotland** to the Scottish Arts Council
as part of the European Year of Disabled People 2003

Research by Heather J L Smith and Kirsty Lorenz

with many thanks to colleagues in the gallery and disability sectors,
including disabled artists and gallery visitors,
without whom this report would not have been possible.

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Preface

A1. The Scottish Arts Council commissioned **engage** to research provision for disabled people in the gallery sector in Scotland and to make recommendations to the Scottish Arts Council to inform their response to the European Year of Disabled People [EYDP]

A2. The findings and recommendations indicate considerable positive progress in addressing the needs of disabled people and artists, but also key areas where improvement is possible, and indeed necessary, particularly in the context of the rapidly-approaching full implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act.

A3. This report is based on:

- a questionnaire mailed to galleries
- focus groups including disabled artists and disabled gallery visitors
- Steering Group guidance and comment

36 galleries and other arts organisations responded to the questionnaire (78% of the sample of 46). 25 people were involved in the 3 focus group sessions.

A4. This research project was devised and co-ordinated for **engage** by Heather J. L. Smith, with specific assistance from Kirsty Lorenz in leading and inputting from the focus group discussions. This document is an edited summary of a fuller report by Heather J. L. Smith to **engage**.

A5. **engage** is grateful to all who have contributed to this process, as listed elsewhere, particularly:

- Heather J. L. Smith – research and main research report
- Kirsty Lorenz – focus groups and focus group report
- responding galleries and arts organisations
- disabled colleagues and disability organisations
- focus group participants
- Steering Group members.

A7. **engage** is also grateful for the opportunity to work with the Scottish Arts Council in addressing this important issue, and looks forward to playing its part in promoting full access to galleries and gallery programmes by disabled people and artists.

Terminology and Definitions

Disability – the definition of disability throughout this research is an inclusive, social model, including social impact of the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by organisations which make insufficient provision for disabled people, and thus exclude them from effective mainstream participation. Disability is taken to include 'everyone who has a physical, sensory or mental impairment which significantly affects their day-to-day activities - including people with heart diseases, diabetes, severe disfigurement, depression, schizophrenia, dyslexia, epilepsy, Downs' syndrome and many other types of impairment.'

'EYDP' is the European Year of Disabled People

'DDA' is the Disability Discrimination Act

'WAI' is the Website Accessibility Initiative.

'**engage**' refers to **engage**, the professional body for gallery educators, artist educators, and other gallery staff

'Disabled artists' refers - for the sake of this report - to artists with disabilities, while sensitive to the fact that individual artists with disabilities may or not wish to refer to her/himself as disabled. **engage** notes that it is essential to respect the views of individual artists with disabilities on whether they wish to be referred to as disabled artists or not.

'Disability awareness' training refers to disability training to promote understanding of and sensitivity to disability issues in general, rather than specialist disability training to address specific disability needs or issues in particular.

'Arts organisations' is here used to include art galleries, arts centres, and other visual arts bodies showing art and/or offering visual arts services to the public.

Acknowledgements

As indicated above, **engage** is grateful to all who have contributed to this process, as listed below, particularly:

- Heather J. L. Smith and Kirsty Lorenz
- focus group participants
- Steering Group members.
- responding galleries and arts organisations.

Focus group participants

Juliana Capes, artist

Kara Christine, Artlink, Edinburgh

Julien Crispin, Project Ability, Glasgow

Elizabeth Gibson, Project Ability, Glasgow

Susan Grant, Peacock Arts Centre, Aberdeen

Keir Hardy, People First/Highland User Group, Inverness

Michael Hughs

Kay Jacobs

Mandy Kennedy

Muriel Matheson

Karen Mcleod, The National Deaf Children's Society, Glasgow

Lyndsay Mitchell, SENSE SCOTLAND, Glasgow

Kerri Moogan, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow

Graham Morgan, People First/Highland User Group, Inverness

Stephen Riley, participant at Project Ability, Glasgow

AnneMarie Robertson

Astrid Shearer, art.tm, Inverness

Brian Sinclair

Rhona Smith, Choices, Aberdeen

Ian Stewart, People First/Highland User Group, Inverness

Bertha Walker, City Art Centre, Edinburgh

Helen Watson, Education Department, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh

(and member of **engage** Scotland Development Group)

Neil Woody, People First/Highland User Group, Inverness

Steering Group

Kara Christine, Artlink, Edinburgh

Stewart Coulter, The ADAPT Trust, Glasgow

Linda Jones

Rebecca Marr, **engage** Scotland Development Co-ordinator

Muriel Matheson

Tracy Morgan, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh
Sue Pirnie, Visual Arts Officer, Scottish Arts Council
Fiona Powell
Valerie Robertson
Bertha Walker, City Art Centre, Edinburgh
Helen Watson, Education Department, National Galleries of Scotland,
Edinburgh

Responding galleries and arts organisations

Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen
An Lanntair, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis
An Tobar, Tobermory
An Tuireann, Portree, Isle of Skye
art.tm, Inverness
City Art Centre, Edinburgh
Collective Gallery, Edinburgh
Collins Gallery, Glasgow
Crawford Arts Centre, St Andrews
Dick Institute, Kilmarnock
Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee
Edinburgh Printmakers, Edinburgh
Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, Edinburgh
Falkirk Museums, Falkirk
Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh
Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow
Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow
Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries
Harbour Arts Centre, Irvine
Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow
Inverleith House, Edinburgh
Iona Gallery, Kingussie
The Centre, Glasgow
McManus Galleries and arts organisations, Dundee
National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh
Paisley Art Gallery, Paisley
Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen
Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney
Project Ability, Glasgow
Shetland Arts Trust, Weisdale, Shetland Isles
Stills Gallery, Edinburgh
Street Level, Glasgow
Taigh Chearsabhaigh Museum and Arts Centre, Lochmaddy, North Uist
The Changing Room, Stirling
Transmission Gallery, Glasgow
Travelling Gallery, Edinburgh

Executive summary

Introduction

D1. This report is to the Scottish Arts Council, to consider these findings and recommendations, and how far the Scottish Arts Council can play its part in supporting and promulgating them.

D2. Some of these recommendations are directly to the Scottish Arts Council about its own work. Many relate to the work of galleries and other organisations where the Scottish Arts Council potentially has a critical role in influencing or guiding organisations to address such issues.

D3. **engage** asks the Scottish Arts Council to consider these recommendations and how best it can encourage or assist appropriate action across the sector, and indeed in relevant partner organisations such as local authorities and higher education. While many of the recommendations are in fact underpinned by the DDA, and so potentially enforceable through it, this report has been developed with disabled people and arts practitioners rather than by reference to the Act.

D4. Since commissioning this report, the Scottish Arts Council has been developing its own plans and some of these overlap with recommendations below. Rather than omit such recommendations these are shown in order to lend support where relevant.

D5. The research undertaken by **engage** is of a sample of galleries and of individuals, and further consultation and research is vital to ensure that any resultant action by the Scottish Arts Council is appropriate and effective.

Background and Brief

D6. The Scottish Arts Council commissioned **engage** to research provision for disabled people in the gallery sector in Scotland and to make recommendations to the Scottish Arts Council to inform its own policy development and its role in the gallery sector in promoting appropriate responses to address disability issues.

D7. This report focuses primarily on visual arts organisations and their venues, and access by disabled people to these venues and their exhibitions. Gallery programming and the challenges facing disabled artists were not the main focus, though some findings and recommendations relate to these.

D8. **engage** is a lead professional association in the gallery sector, in the UK and internationally, established to promote understanding of and access to the visual arts through gallery education. **engage** has nearly 100 members in Scotland in 40 galleries, arts centres, and other related organisations, and its Scotland programme, **engage** Scotland, is funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

Methodology

D9. **engage** Scotland advertised for a consultant to devise and co-ordinate the research for this report, and Heather J. L. Smith was appointed. A Steering Group was formed including disabled people, representatives of disability organisations (including Artlink and ADAPT), and gallery staff including a curator.

D10. It was agreed that the main research would be through a questionnaire with telephone follow-up, and through a series of focus groups commenting on the questionnaire results and other issues. The questionnaire (with 44 questions), and the focus group agendas, were both developed in consultation with the Steering Group and other colleagues.

D11. 36 galleries and other arts organisations responded to the questionnaire (78% of the sample of 46). The proportion responding was felt to be representative, but likely to give a more positive picture of attitudes to disability, as those more sensitive to disability issues would be those most likely to return the questionnaire. 25 people were involved in the 3 focus group sessions.

Key findings

D12. The findings from the questionnaires and focus groups in this report include responses on:

- Training
- Access audits and policies
- Consultation
- Education and interpretation
- Participation

D13. Key findings include:

positives

- 44% employ staff with disabilities
- 71% have exhibited work by disabled artists
- 30% have involved disabled workshop leaders
- 74% have car parking and level access to the gallery

- 70% consider timing and travel issues when planning for disabled people
- 78% market through disability networks or organisations
- 70% of respondents have run outreach events for disabled people
- 75% respondents consult with disabled people or organisations

negatives

- Less than 10% offer Braille signage, BSL guiding, large print interpretation material
- 68% do not offer a printed 'Access Guide'
- 85% did not (or did not know if they did) use WAI guidance for their website design
- 17% of Directors have had disability awareness training
- 28% of 'Front of House' staff have had disability awareness training
- 92% of organisations do not have an 'Access Officer' or designated staff member
- 42% have not had a 'Access Audit' in the past five years
- Nearly 25% do not consult with disabled people or organisations
- 22% do not market through disability organisations

Key recommendations - general

D14. Recommendations have been formulated in response to these findings. These have been grouped under the following headings.

- Policy/Planning/Consultation
- Making a visit
- Staffing and Training
- Marketing and Audience Development
- Disabled Artists

D15. Below is a summary of key points, however it is necessary to refer to the full recommendations for more detailed specific action points.

D16. As stated above, this report is to the Scottish Arts Council, but many recommendations relate to gallery policies and programmes – and indeed other organisations such as training providers and art colleges - which the Scottish Arts Council has an important role in influencing through signposting, guidance, and funding. Some recommendations may need further research and consultation.

D17. Key overall principles include:

D17.1. Policy/Planning/Consultation

All organisations should embrace the needs of disabled people including disabled artists at all levels within their organisation, and should take an active role in promoting the means and opportunities for disabled people and artists to play an equal part in the visual arts. This commitment should be based on ongoing consultation, and integrated in key policies and strategies, with sensitivity to the demands on disabled people for such consultation roles and the need to recompense for such input.

D17.2. Making a visit

All organisations should take all possible steps to ensure full physical access to existing venues, exhibitions, and education and interpretation provision and activities, and in addition should address the specific needs of disabled people and artists for specialist advice and support.

D17.3. Staffing and Training

All organisations should develop a staff culture of awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of disabled people, as staff members, visitors, and artists, through regular disability awareness training and including appropriate recruitment practices.

D17.4. Marketing and Audience Development

All organisations should take into account the specific needs of marketing to disabled people, making appropriate use of disability networks and organisations.

D17.5. Disabled Artists

All organisations should play an active part in promoting equal access to opportunities for exhibitions and for professional development, sensitive to issues about whether individual disabled artists wish to be referred to as disabled or not (see references on this issue elsewhere).

D18. All of these principles are central to addressing disability, and the Scottish Arts Council has a crucial role in promoting these principles, through:

- reviewing its expectations of funded organisations to reinforce organisations commitment to the above principles
- considering and developing new funding to address specific additional expectations
- promoting and developing its existing advice and signposting to facilitate good practice
- fostering debate and exchange within the sector to promote commitment and good practice
- helping bring key issues to the attention of relevant campaigning groups, eg specific problems for disabled artists dependent on disability benefits

D19. Key actions deriving from these principles include:

D19.1. Policy/Planning/Consultation

All organisations should

- review policies, strategies and action plans to ensure they are doing all they can to address the needs of disabled visitors and artists, putting in place mechanisms for regular annual review
- consider the need for an Access Officer or designated staff member to monitor, offer advice on, and champion disability issues
- ensure policies, strategies and action plans are developed through consultation with disabled people and/or organisations, putting in place mechanisms for ongoing consultation

The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above through:

- its expectations of and agreements with funded organisations
- developing information and signposting through a pack and checklist (as proposed) and database
- additional funding as appropriate (as proposed) and appropriate promotion of this

The Scottish Arts Council should also consider:

- instigating a programme of consultative peer-led seminars to build awareness and 'common cause' amongst visual arts and disability organisations and practitioners (as proposed)

D19.2. Making a visit

All organisations should

- commit to regular professional access audits of public and staff areas, at least once every three years
- consider and address issues of internal and external access, including where applicable parking, level access, and other travel issues
- provide relevant guidance and advice to disabled visitors, in advance publicity, through an Access Guide, and by designated staff
- ensure a positive welcome through an inviting entry area and staff, with appropriate facilities including an Access Guide and loan wheelchairs
- develop education and interpretation provision for disabled visitors, including training for workshop leaders in working with disability, and adopting appropriate media such as large print and audio for interpretation material

The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above through:

- its expectations of and agreements with funded organisations
- developing information and signposting through a pack and checklist (as proposed) and database, in particular ensuring up to date information about professional auditors and access issues
- additional funding as appropriate (as proposed) and appropriate promotion of this

The Scottish Arts Council should also consider the important benefits of Artlink's ArtAccess volunteer escort scheme in Edinburgh and the Lothians, and how this might be extended more widely, particularly in the light of research by The Audience Business.

D19.3. Staffing and Training

All organisations should:

- review their equal opportunities and staff development policies in the light of the above, putting in place appropriate recruitment procedures to ensure equal access for disabled applicants to staff and freelance positions
- ensure all staff receive professional disability awareness training at least once every three years, and that specified staff (responsible for overall policy, recruitment, exhibition planning, education/interpretation, dealing with visitors) have access to relevant specialist training at least annually
- include training for workshop leaders including artists in their policies
- include disabled trainers and local organisations in delivering training

The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above through:

- its expectations of and agreements with funded organisations
- developing information and signposting through a pack and checklist (as proposed) and database, in particular ensuring up to date information about disability networks and organisations for recruitment, and about professional trainers and training organisations
- promoting additional funding which is already earmarked for disability training needs

The Scottish Arts Council should also consider the benefits of leading a sector consultation - involving galleries, other arts organisations, and disabled artists - to help define training needs and stimulate provision.

D19.4. Marketing and Audience Development

All organisations should:

- develop marketing strategies to reach disabled potential visitors, integrated within ongoing marketing, and informed by the fact that carers and support workers can play an important part in decisions to visit
- include reference in all marketing to alternative media (eg websites, audio, phone advice) offering advice for disabled people
- ensure all website design conforms to WAI guidelines

The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above through:

- its expectations of and agreements with funded organisations

- developing information and signposting through a pack and checklist (as proposed) and database, including promotion of relevant disability networks/organisations to facilitate marketing , and the WAI/guidelines
- additional funding as appropriate (as proposed) and appropriate promotion of this

D19.5. Disabled Artists

All organisations should:

- publicise exhibition opportunities through disability networks and organisations, and support this by offering relevant advice (by an Access Officer or designated staff member) to facilitate access
- ensure their education and interpretation provision allows disabled artists to advance their own professional development too
- ensure (as above) that workshop leaders and artists, whether disabled or not, are trained to integrate disabled participants within ongoing workshop provision

The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above through:

- its expectations of and agreements with funded organisations
- developing information and signposting through a pack and checklist (as proposed) and database, including promotion of relevant disability networks and organisations to facilitate publicity to disabled artists, and relevant training providers
- additional funding as appropriate (as proposed) and appropriate promotion of this

The Scottish Arts Council should also consider:

- supporting development of mentoring schemes – working with relevant organisations such as Artlink and Project Ability - to assist disabled artists in accessing exhibiting/professional development opportunities
- developing and promoting a database of disabled artists in Scotland
- promoting policies in the arts which are sensitive to artists' individual views on identifying themselves as disabled
- supporting disabled artists' needs for access to professional training and for appropriate benefits regulations

Further research

D20. This report did not specifically explore the need for further research as part of its questionnaire and focus groups. However, arising from the findings and recommendations the following are proposed as potential research needs, though some of these may be covered in the development of a guidance pack and checklist being considered by the Scottish Arts Council:

D20.1. Policy/Planning/Consultation

Many organisations have developed different sets of policies (eg Access, Equal Opportunities, Education), with differing effectiveness in identifying disability and equal opportunities issues. Associated with this is the potential role of an Access Officer or designated staff member to monitor and champion disability issues. There is a need for research to identify models of good practice so that organisations can learn from these.

Many organisations have developed different approaches to consultation, some relying on personal contact, others establishing Access Advisory Groups. Again there is a need to identify and share good practice.

D20.2. Making a visit

There is a wide variety of responses to the needs of disabled visitors for specific advice and guidance on making a visit, for example Access Guides and Braille signage, and for appropriate interpretational tools, for example large print and audio information. There is a need for research to explore the whole range of possible needs and responses, and to identify models of good practice and priorities, in order to help organisations respond effectively.

D20.3. Staffing and Training

Similarly, there is a need to identify the different types of professional training available and how these may be grouped or shaped to meet organisations' own training strategies. Some organisations advocate internal 'cascade' training, and there is a need to examine how effective this is and how it can best be supported through external training input.

D20.4 'Marketing and Audience Development' and 'Disabled Artists'

Colleagues suggest these areas also require further research.

The Scottish Arts Council's developing plans to address disability

D21. In addition to commissioning this report, and other research to contribute to their Disability Policy, the Scottish Arts Council is already working as follows in response to EYDP:

- the Scottish Arts Council has launched a special fund for projects to support good practice in 2003/4 and 2004/5
- the Scottish Arts Council's Professional Development Fund, to support individuals' own professional development, has been extended to prioritise disability

- the Scottish Arts Council is holding a series of 3 seminars and a major conference to promote discussion and focus attention on disability
- the Scottish Arts Council has set up a working party to inform EYDP
- the Scottish Arts Council is developing updated or new guidance material, including updating information on disability organisations and disability training providers, and considering the need for new guidance on visual arts interpretation
- the Scottish Arts Council's staff are all undertaking disability awareness training in 2003-4, through different pilot training models, which will enable staff to offer more informed advice to clients
- the Scottish Arts Council continues to develop access guidance for building development funded under 'Capital Projects'

D22. The Scottish Arts Council's involvement in EYDP aims at the following key outcomes:

- collating UK examples of good practice in programming/promotion from
- identifying barriers to engagement: as audience, and as participant
- opportunities for development in Scotland, including a pilot 'venue/promoter development guidance pack' for Scottish Arts Council-funded organisations (covering programming, promotion, audience development, customer care etc.)

D23. As indicated above, some of this report's recommendations overlap with Scottish Arts Council plans and rather than omit them these recommendations have been included to indicate support.

Next steps

D24. **engage** intends this report to inform the Scottish Arts Council's role in addressing disability issues in the gallery sector as part of EYDP. **engage** believes this report's findings will be useful to the sector and supported by it.

D25. This report will be presented to **engage** members at an informal seminar and circulated to **engage** members in galleries and arts centres across Scotland. Recommendations will be discussed by the **engage** Scotland Development Group, and will inform forward planning and training provision.

D26. The report will be presented to the Scottish Arts Council and the arts sector more widely as part of a Scottish Arts Council seminar for EYDP.

D27. Comment and feedback is invited, to **engage** Scotland and/or the Scottish Arts Council (contact details above). Suggestions about dissemination and implementation are welcomed.

The report makes a number of recommendations for arts organisations, including the Scottish Arts Council, to consider. These are listed below, and will be considered along with the findings from other key pieces of research and feedback from our seminar and conference programme during the EYODP, and incorporated into a final published report in summer 2004.

E. Final recommendations

E1. This is a full list of all recommendations arising from the questionnaire findings and the focus group reports. Selected key points are highlighted in the Executive Summary.

E2. Policy/Planning/Consultation

E2.1 Aim

All visual arts organisations should address the needs of disabled people, alongside those of other sections of the community, at all levels, including Chief Executive, and Board and/or Management Committee, levels. Arts organisations should take an active role in promoting the means and opportunities for disabled people – as artists, as staff, as visitors – to play an equal part in the visual arts.

This should be rooted in consultation, including stated policies and strategies, developed in consultation with the community and relevant disability organisations, to promote awareness of and sensitivity to disability issues, and action plans to meet the needs of disabled people, on an ongoing basis.

E2.2. Standard

It is recommended that all visual arts organisations develop and state appropriate policies, strategies and action plans, addressing specific issues as stated below.

It is recommended that these policies, strategies and action plans be subject to review at the highest level in each organisation, on a regular annual basis.

These policies, strategies and action plans should foster and embrace ongoing consultation with relevant disabled people, and specialist disability spokespeople and organisations locally, regionally and nationally.

E2.3. Obstacles

Key obstacles indicated in the research for this report include:

- lack of strategic commitment to disability on an ongoing, holistic basis
- lack of effective ongoing consultation
- lack of focused responsibility for disability issues within the organisation

E2.4. Action

E2.4a. All organisations should

- review existing policies, strategies and action plans to ensure they are doing all they can to address the needs of disabled people
- put in place stated policies, strategies and action plans and mechanisms for regular annual review
- consider the need for an Access Officer or designated staff member to monitor, offer advice on, and champion disability needs

E2.4b. All organisations should ensure policies, strategies and action plans are informed by and developed through effective consultation with relevant specialist disability spokespeople and organisations locally, regionally and nationally, and consider how best to build consultation into structures through as appropriate:

- effective evaluation and feedback systems
- an Access Advisory Group or groups
- regular consultation forums for local individuals/organisations

E2.4c. The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above, in particular:

- review their expectations of and agreements with organisations seeking funding, particularly core-funded organisations, to address disability issues throughout their programmes, over and above existing requirements for equal opportunities policies to include reference to disability
- consider how their information services (eg the 'AC10' Helpdesk guidance) facilitates organisations' development to meet the needs of disabled people, and whether an online database might be useful
- consider the benefit of any additional specific funding to help 'kick start' such development where appropriate

E2.4d. The Scottish Arts Council should also consider how best to foster commitment to disability issues across the sector as a whole, by

- promoting its commitment to addressing disability issues
- instigating a programme of peer-led seminars to build awareness and 'common cause' amongst arts and disability organisations and staff
- creating an annual award scheme with the Good Gallery Guide

E2.4e. Professional advice and training organisations should

- Consider how they ensure disability issues are kept at the forefront of their and their members/networks programmes

E3. Making a visit - access to the venue and exhibitions

E3.1. Aim

All possible steps should be taken to facilitate physical access to venues and exhibitions, within the constraints (for some) of 'Listed Building' status. This is not only fundamental to the functioning of a public arts venue in the 21st century, it is also a requirement of the DDA's final stage to be implemented in 2004.

All possible steps should also be taken to address parallel issues of travelling to a venue (and associated costs), and to provide appropriate interpretation material, as these can be major obstacles for disabled people.

E3.2. Standard

It is recommended that all venues should therefore have an active, ongoing commitment to reviewing their facilities and operations, with professional advice as necessary. This needs to be embraced in policy and strategy statements as above, and should include consideration of, and action plans to address

- buildings and facilities
- availability of information about buildings and facilities
- advice and assistance about reaching the venue
- appropriate interpretation/education provision

This should consider staff as well as visitor needs.

It is recommended that all venues conduct a physical access audit with professional advice at least once every three years.

E3.3. Obstacles

Key obstacles indicated in research for this report include:

- uncertainty of how best to address disability issues in arts organisations
- uncertainty about where to get professional advice
- lack of designated staff to advise disabled audiences
- concerns about how to fund improvements in buildings and programmes

E3.4. Action

E3.4a. All organisations should commit to regular professional access audits of their building and facilities, at least once every three years, and to

implementing as far as possible any recommendations, including, as well as more obvious needs such as lift access:

- internal navigation aids
- sufficient gallery seating

(As training is also a key issue – see below – it may be appropriate for training strategies to be considered alongside, or indeed as part of, the audit process.)

E3.4b. As well as internal provision, organisations should consider and address issues of external access including car parking and level access routes, and travel advice or assistance for those with mobility issues.

E3.4c. Organisations unable to fully address access issues due to ‘Listed Building’ status may need to consider how this affects perception of commitment to accessibility and how they communicate this to audiences.

E3.4d. All organisations should produce Access Guides for visitors (and those thinking of visiting) on facilities and provision for disabled users of the venue and programme; and staff should be designated to offer advice in advance and on arrival. Organisations should ensure an accessible and welcoming entry area and staff, offering relevant information and advice, with, wherever appropriate, loan wheelchairs easily available at the main public entrance.

E3.4e. All organisations should consider and address interpretation needs of disabled visitors through appropriate media, including

- large print – which should be available in all venues
- and
- Braille
 - audio guides
 - BSL trained staff – wherever possible.

Appropriate provision has been a requirement of the DDA since 1999.

Organisations should also consider the possibilities through new technology of more flexible and/or more interactive interpretation material.

E3.4f. All organisations should consider, as appropriate, arrangements for disabled people, particularly individual disabled people, to access activity programmes such as practical workshops.

E3.4g. The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above, in particular

- how to encourage or require organisations funded by the Scottish Arts Council to address the above issues.
- how best to promote or develop its existing information on professional auditors/advice organisations, including the Scottish Arts Council’s ‘AC10’ guidance as mentioned above (ensuring this includes appropriate reference to the Centre for Accessible Environment’s National Register of Auditors, and other listing sources such as Resource)
- how to support organisations through instigating or developing ‘checklist’ type guidance on the above (the Scottish Arts Council is now

considering a 'checklist' for arts organisations' to support access advice information, and **engage** welcomes this.)

- how to prioritise and publicise relevant funding, and the benefit of any additional specific funding to help 'kick start' such development where appropriate. (Subsidised access audits are now being considered by the Scottish Arts Council, and too the implications of the DDA for the Scottish Arts Council 'Capital Projects' fund, and **engage** welcomes this.)

E3.4h. The Scottish Arts Council should also consider the benefits of Artlink's ArtAccess volunteer escort scheme in Edinburgh and the Lothians, and how this might be made available more widely

E3.4i. Professional advice and training organisations should consider how they can support the above through specific further research and training, in particular:

- Action-research on developing fully accessible education and interpretation provision
- Training on implementing fully accessible education and interpretation programming

E4. Staffing and Training

E4.1. Aim

It is important that visual arts organisations develop a staff culture of awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of disabled people at all levels and in all parts of the staff body, large or small, embracing the social model of disability, in order to:

- offer a positive welcome to disabled visitors
- inform public programming including exhibition design
- input to any new building developments from the outset
- inform recruitment and the workplace environment

E4.2. Standard

It is recommended that all visual arts organisations ensure they are actively promoting any employment opportunities – including freelance opportunities - through disability organisations and networks as appropriate.

It is recommended that all venues should have an active, ongoing policy commitment to disability training including

- regular disability awareness training for all staff
- specialist training for key staff dealing with overall policy, with recruitment, with exhibition planning, with education/interpretation, and with the visiting public

It is recommended that:

- all staff undertake disability awareness training at least once every three years
- specific key staff should be able to access additional specialist training on an annual basis

While 'cascade training' may help deliver or support this aim, for instance through an Access Officer or other designated staff member, external input from professional trainers is seen as the best way to ensure awareness of policy developments and disability thinking more generally.

E4.3. Obstacles

Key obstacles indicated in research for this report include:

- difficulties of influencing recruitment practice in large organisations
- lack of funding for training
- lack of staff time
- lack of information about trainers

E4.4. Action

E4.4a. All organisations should review their equal opportunities and staff development policies in the light of the above.

E4.4b. All organisations should ensure they have in place appropriate procedures and budgets for promoting employment opportunities (including freelance) to facilitate response, for instance

- adverts and job details in large print
- express commitment to support disabled applicants

including promotion through disability organisations/networks.

E4.4c. All organisations should ensure they have in place appropriate training provision to meet the above targets:

- all staff to receive disability awareness training at least once every three years
- specified key staff (with responsibility for overall policy, recruitment, exhibition planning, education/interpretation, visiting public) to be able to access specialist training at least annually
- new staff to undertake disability training within induction programmes

Such training provision should include staff cover and sources of training advice (external or internal) as well as budgeting for expenditure

E4.4d. All organisations should, as appropriate, provide training for artists and other workshop leaders to be able to integrate disabled participants within workshop provision.

E4.4e. In providing training for staff planning exhibitions, and working with the public, organisations should ensure training includes disability issues including awareness of:

- people with visual impairment who may need very close study of artworks
- people with mobility issues who may need seating for rest within an exhibition
- wheelchair users who may need artwork to be hung lower

E4.4f. All organisations should consider making use of

- disabled trainers
- on-site 'whole staff' training
- local disability organisations

wherever possible.

E4.4g. As stated previously, all organisations should consider the need for an Access Officer or designated staff member to monitor and help implement the above

E4.4h. The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above, in particular

- how best to promote its existing advice on disability organisations and training providers, while ensuring this does not exclude more local networks and sources of training
- how to encourage or require organisations funded by the Scottish Arts Council to address the above issues, over and above existing policy and budgetary requirements
- how best to promote existing funding allocations for disability training (The Scottish Arts Council currently earmarks £20,000 for disability related training, for individuals and for organisations, and **engage** welcomes this.)
- how best to help organisations understand better the types of training available and to develop effective training strategies

E4.4i. The Scottish Arts Council should also consider the benefits of leading a cross-sector consultation (involving visual arts organisations, disability organisations, training and network organisations) to help define training needs and stimulate appropriate provision.

E4.4j. Professional advice and training organisations should consider how they can contribute:

- developing specific training on recruitment and on training policies
- helping support networking eg for those responsible for recruitment and/or training

E5. Marketing and Audience Development

E5.1. Aim

It is important that visual arts organisations are aware of and take into account the specific needs of marketing to disabled visitors, developing ongoing marketing and audience development strategies that enable disabled visitors to access visual arts programmes

E5.2. Standard

It is recommended that organisations market their programmes through disability organisations and networks, locally and more widely, as an integral part of their marketing mix, being aware that the carer/support worker may be part of the target marketing audience too.

It is recommended that organisations include alternative media, for instance websites (designed to appropriate WAI standards) and audio as an important part of this mix

It is recommended that organisations take into account the potential benefits of consultation and outreach in building links with disability organisations and networks and building ongoing interest

E5.3. Obstacles

Key obstacles indicated in research for this report include:

- lack of knowledge of appropriate marketing channels
- concern about funding implications

E5.4. Action

E5.4a. All organisations should develop marketing strategies to market to disabled visitors and to their carers/support-workers, including:

- marketing through disability organisations/networks
- alternative media such as websites and audio

E5.4b. All marketing should include reference to alternative media such as websites and audio, and to internal and external sources of specific advice for disabled visitors such as the Good Gallery Guide.

E5.4c. All website design and content should be in line with current guidance, for instance WAI guidelines

E5.4d. Organisations should consider, where appropriate, development of outreach programmes to address the needs of local disability groups or individuals.

E5.4e. The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above, in particular

- how best to promote its existing advice on disability organisations and networks, while ensuring this does not exclude more local networks
- how to encourage or require organisations funded by the Scottish Arts Council to address the above issues
- how to support good practice on website design, by providing details of appropriate designers or signposting to the WAI listings, and disseminating new findings such as forthcoming recommendations from the Disability Rights Commission

E5.4f. Professional advice and training organisations should consider how they can contribute relevant training (for instance on website design) and networking support.

E6. Disabled Artists

E6.1. Aim

It is important that disabled artists have equal access to opportunities for exhibitions and professional support, and that visitors are able to enjoy visual arts programmes where no artists are excluded because of their disability.

This should be sensitive to issues as stated above on whether disabled artists wish to refer to themselves as disabled or not, and also to issues about what 'professional status' may mean for disabled artists given their possibly different professional context. (The Scottish Arts Council is aware of these issues and plans to formulate its position on them.)

E6.2. Standard

It is recommended that all visual arts organisations ensure their exhibition policies and programming strategies state commitment to equal access for disabled artists and give equal consideration to work by disabled artists for inclusion in programming.

It is recommended that organisations develop their policies and programmes to address the specific education and professional development needs of disabled artists.

E6.3. Obstacles

Key obstacles indicated in research for this report include:

- difficulties for disabled artists to secure exhibition opportunities
- difficulties for disabled artists to access professional development
- difficulties for disabled artists to participate in galleries' ongoing activity programmes

E6.4. Action

E6.4a. All organisations should develop policies and strategies as above, including:

- publicising exhibition opportunities through disability organisations and networks as appropriate
- offering advice (by an Access Officer or other designated member of staff) to support disabled artists in accessing any exhibition opportunities

E6.4b. All organisations should consider how their interpretation and education programmes can effectively support disabled artists' professional development, working to eliminate situations where disabled artists are less able to develop professionally through lack of access to, for instance, workshops or interpretation material. This should also be a consideration in the development of creative skills for disabled children and young people as potential future artists.

E6.4c. As indicated above, all organisations should as appropriate provide training for artists and workshop leaders, including disabled artists and leaders, to be able to integrate disabled participants within workshop provision. Such skills should be recognised through additional pay and involvement in planning.

E6.4d. Organisations should also, as appropriate, consider their policies on how to respect artists' individual views about whether to be identified as disabled, and how to integrate exhibitions addressing disability issues, as both of these can have particular importance for disabled artists and indeed for disabled people more generally.

E6.4e. The Scottish Arts Council should consider how to foster and support the above, in particular

- how best to promote its existing advice on disability organisations and networks, while ensuring this does not exclude more local networks
- whether it should do more to promote awareness amongst disabled artists and organisations of key funding opportunities, such as the Access and Participation fund (which prioritises those traditionally excluded from the arts), and the new Good Practice fund
- the possibility of developing a database of disabled artists in Scotland
- how to encourage or require organisations funded by The Scottish Arts Council to address the above issues

E6.4f. The Scottish Arts Council should consider how best to support organisations pressing the case for enhanced access for disabled artists to

- art colleges and training opportunities
- individual funding opportunities – for instance 'small grants' - to support disabled artists' professional development, which are not lost, as artists' scholarships can be, in benefit offset. (As mentioned above, the Scottish Arts Council currently earmarks £20,000 for disability-related training, for individuals and for organisations, and **engage** welcomes this.)

E6.4g. The Scottish Arts Council is aware of these issues and is inputting to the work of SUA, **a-n**, Artlink, Project Ability and other key agencies in addressing these issues of pay rates and loss of benefits, and of professional training/CPD to meet the specific needs of disabled artists.

E6.4h. The Scottish Arts Council should also consider how to foster advice and support for disabled artists through, for instance, a mentoring scheme with artists or arts professionals to help them access exhibition and professional development opportunities.

F. Questionnaire results

F1. Introduction

F1.1. These results are taken from responses to a questionnaire sent to 46 galleries and arts organisations across Scotland. 36 responses were analysed, a 78% response rate. This total comprises a large proportion of the relevant visual arts bodies in Scotland and includes national, local authority, university and independent organisations.

F1.2. The questionnaire was specially developed with advice from the Steering Group – which included disabled people and representatives of disability organisations - and the Scottish Arts Council , and results also informed the work of the Focus Groups as below.

F2. Audits

F2.1. Findings

58% of respondents have carried out a Disability Access Audit or Survey in the past five years.

75% of audits carried out included both public and staff areas

57% of audits used a professional auditor.

Reasons cited for not carrying out an audit included:

- **lack of knowledge of relevant auditors**
- **lack of funding**
- **lack of time.**

F2.2. Commentary

F2.2a. The high proportion of organisations with recent audits is positive, and may have been stimulated by the DDA.

F2.2b. However, the corollary is that 42% have **not** done so, which represents nearly half of the sector.

F2.2c. It is also very positive that most audits included public and staff areas, ie the needs of employees as well as visitors, as required by the DDA.

F2.2d. Current thinking is that audits are best carried out by professional auditors. A number of different sources of professional advice were listed (in order of frequency) ADAPT (the most frequently cited), architects, RNIB, Disability Scotland.

F2.2e. Lack of knowledge of auditors should not really be a problem as sources of information exist, such as the Scottish Arts Council 'AC10' guidance, and the National Register of Access Consultants (on the Centre for Accessible Environments website). However the existence of this Register may not be well known. Membership of this Register does not require formal accreditation but those listed do have experience and knowledge of completing Audits; in due course it may be useful to have some system of accreditation.

F2.2f. There may also be misconceptions about the cost of an audit and the impact on staff time.

F3. Policies

F3.1. Findings

91% of respondents have a Disability, Access or Equal Opportunities Policy which specifically addresses disability

75% of respondents cited challenges in working with disabled people, key factors including:

- timing
- funding
- staffing levels
- building accessibility

25% indicated they faced no difficulties in working with disabled people

92% do not have a specific Access Officer or designated member of staff

68% do not have a specific Access Guide leaflet

100% of those with an Access Guide offer it in 'large print'

Only one respondent offers an Access Guide in Braille and only one in Audio

F3.2. Commentary

F3.2a. It is very positive that a high proportion of organisations has a policy statement which explicitly includes disability. This indicates that organisations

have considered disability needs at high level, and are committed to addressing them.

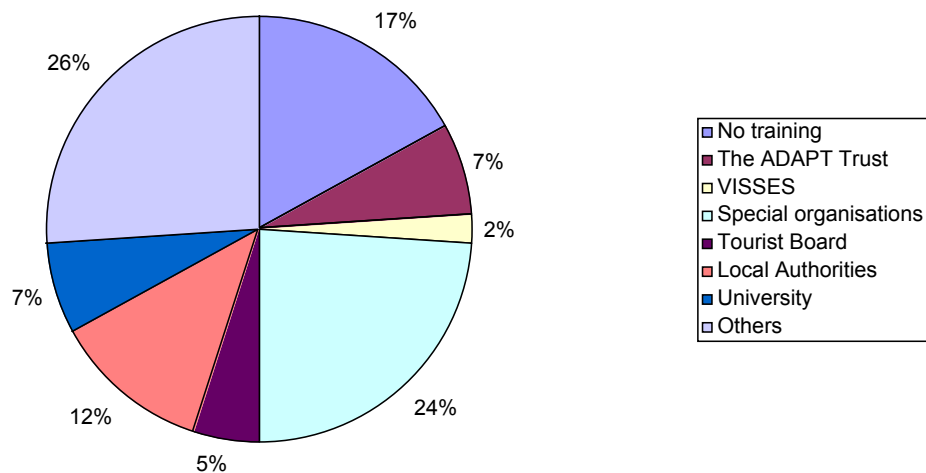
F3.2b. However it is of concern that almost all respondents do not have specified Access Officers or designated staff. For disabled visitors or groups a specified expert contact is known to be important. This figure may in fact exaggerate the position because some staff may have developed expertise which is not officially recognised. But this low figure suggests the potential for disability issues to be given low priority. It also indicates the possible pressure on staff to advise on disability issues alongside their other duties.

F3.2c. It is also of concern that the majority of galleries and arts organisations do not have a specific Access Guide, again something known to be important to disabled visitors or groups. Some respondents include access information in their normal general leaflet, and in fact this can be as good or better.

F3.2d. It is very positive that respondents that produce access guides offer them in large print. However it is surprising that so few offer these in Braille or Audio formats.

F4. Training

Question 8 - Who would usually carry out the training?



F4.1. Findings

75% of respondents had staff that had undertaken disability awareness training; 24% said most staff had undertaken disability training

93% rated this training as very useful or of benefit

Most training undertaken was general; but 39% of the training undertaken focused on the DDA

Other specific training addressed visual impairment and/or website design

Staff undertook disability awareness training from all levels in responding organisations, including:

28% front of house

21% education staff

17% director of organisation

3% museum design staff

3% workshop managers

Lack of awareness of training organisations was the most frequently cited reason for not undertaking training.

F4.2. Commentary

F4.2a. It is positive that 75% of respondents have staff that have relevant training, and generally found this useful. However this means that 25% of respondents were not accessing training.

F4.2b. Take-up of training was inevitably variable in frequency - from 'annual' to 'a while ago' - and in the proportion, and the level, of staff receiving training. Most training was funded from internal budgets (respondents allocated between 0.2 and 5% of budgets to training generally) suggesting a lack of awareness of external (eg Scottish Arts Council) funding. However 52% of respondents augmented external provision by internal cascade training, which may address some of the gaps in paid-for training.

F4.2c. The 39% of training focusing on the DDA is impressive, but given the wide-ranging impact of DDA on all aspects of arts provision it may be important for more staff to receive DDA training (where this is not covered in more general or cascade training).

F4.2d. While the specialist training cited is important, it is disappointing that so few galleries or gallery staff were undertaking the specialist training essential to planning for or working with a full range of visitors.

F4.2e. 16 main training providers were listed, in three types:

1. Parent bodies, in the case of university of local authority galleries;

2. Established independent providers, such as

- The ADAPT Trust
- RNIB
- Guide Dogs for the Blind;

3. Local organisations

However, lack of awareness of providers was cited as a key problem which needs consideration, when information sources do exist such as the Scottish Arts Council's 'AC10' guidance. The nomination of a designated staff member might help this.

F5. Staff

F5.1. Findings

44% of respondents employ staff with disabilities

The main reason given for not employing disabled people was a lack of disabled applicants

30% of those not using the disability press were not in charge of the recruitment policy

F5.2. Commentary

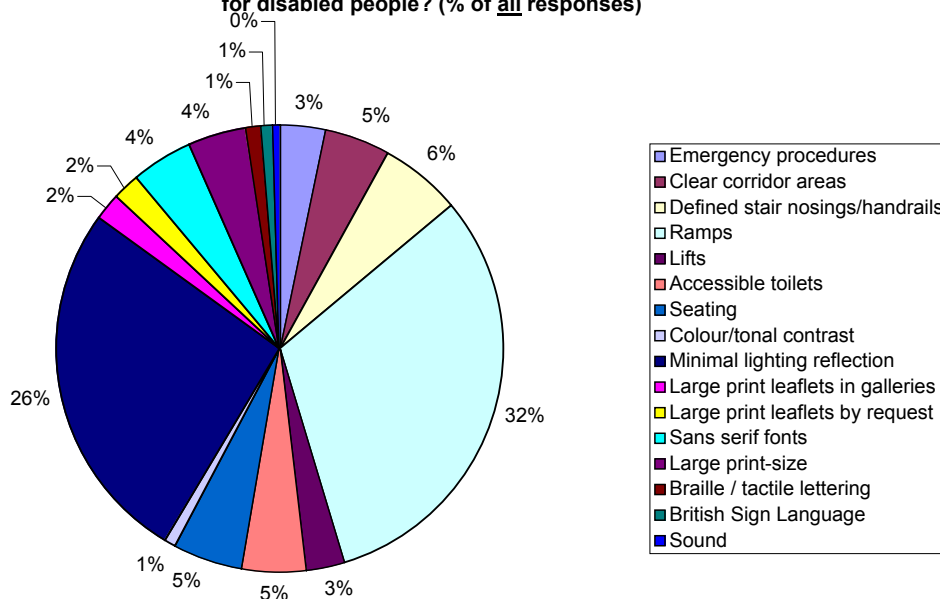
F5.2a. It is impressive that nearly half of respondents employ staff with disabilities, and this may help increase some staff teams' disability awareness and reduce the need for external training on some aspects of disability.

F5.2b. However, for many, galleries and arts organisations are not seen as disability friendly: this information may be useful to addressing this.

F5.2c. On the other hand, the key reason offered for not employing disabled people is lack of applicants, and this would suggest that positive attempts to reach disabled applicants are not being made by many organisations.

F6. Gallery Facilities

Question 17 - Which facilities does your organisation currently have and operate for disabled people? (% of all responses)



F6.1. Findings

Only one of the respondents had an admission charge.

74% had car parking close by, and level access to, the gallery

Most respondents had addressed needs for ramped access where applicable.

Some respondents (10-15%) had introduced one or more of:

- **accessible toilets**
- **seating in exhibition areas**
- **clear corridor areas**
- **appropriate handrails/nosings on stairs**
- **large print size**
- **sans serif fonts**

Few respondents (5-10%) offer one or more of:

- **Large print leaflets in galleries/on request**
- **Braille signage**
- **BSL guiding/warding**

F6.2. Commentary

F6.2a. In the sample surveyed admission charging policy could not be examined. Main physical access needs – primarily for wheelchair users – had been addressed by most respondents.

F6.2b. However other relevant provision was not well developed, as itemised above, including both facilities/practical operational needs, and interpretational support.

F6.2c. While the former of these comes under the final stage of the DDA - ensuring physical access to buildings - to be implemented in 2004, the latter falls under Part III of the DDA, introduced in October 1999. Both are causes for concern.

F6.2d. Expertise and cost were highlighted as reasons for limited provision, however some may in fact depend more on organisational commitment and use of local organisations.

F7. Further Preparations

F7.1. Findings

33% of respondents had made or were making preparations to meet the final phase of the DDA

Most respondents faced difficulties due to the nature of their buildings /'Listed' status

Most respondents could not fund structural changes from internal budgets and needed to seek extra grant aid. The Scottish Arts Council was identified as a key funder.

F7.2. Commentary

F7.2a. While those who already had made or were making preparations deserved credit, it is of possible concern that the majority did not indicate they were prepared or preparing for the DDA Final Stage.

F7.2b. This proportion may be overstated, due to respondents with prior compliance (eg new-build) or unable to comply due to 'Listing'.

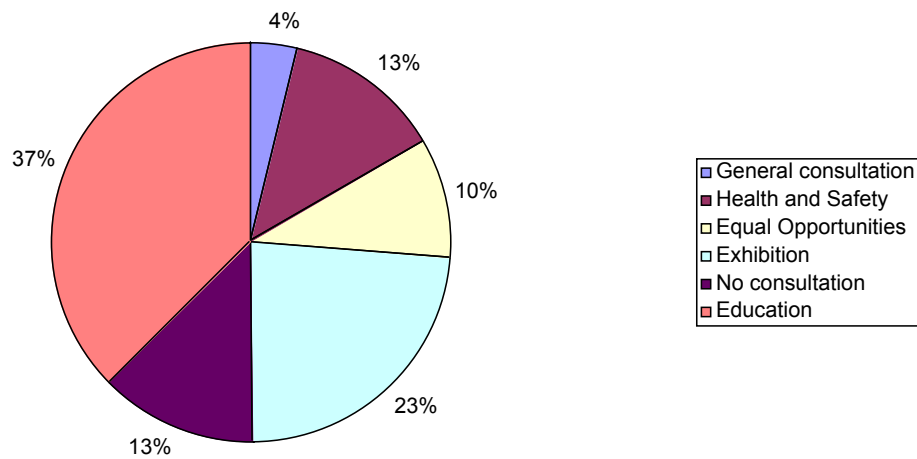
F7.2c. Indeed, 'Listing' was the main reason cited for non-compliance. However, the DDA requires that alternative means of access are provided wherever possible if 'Listing' prevents normal modifications/improvements, and venues should consider their position on this.

F7.2d. Financial implications are also likely to reduce progress to compliance, where difficulty in raising funds may become an excuse for inaction.

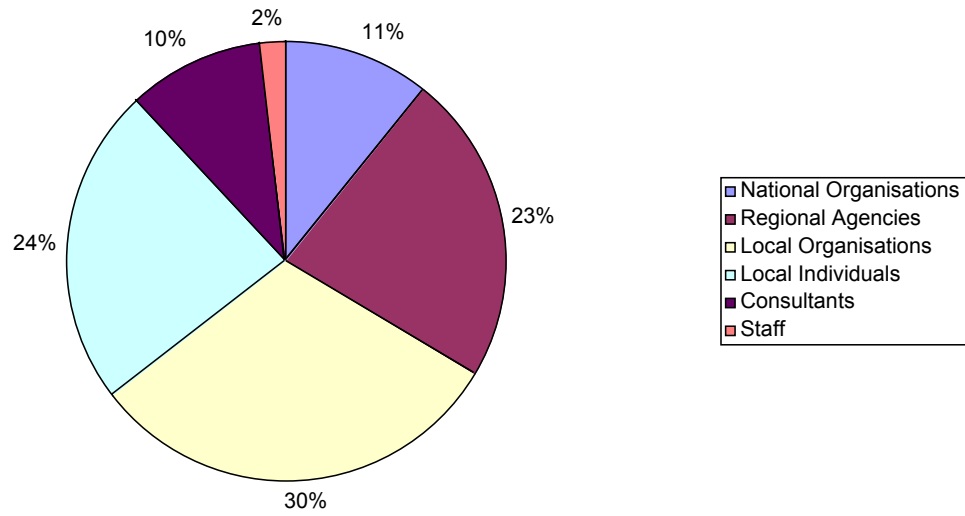
F7.2e. Compliance problems faced by 'Listed' venues may compound the perception of galleries as inaccessible. While a gallery management may be committed to access their venues may embody a different message.

F8. Consultation

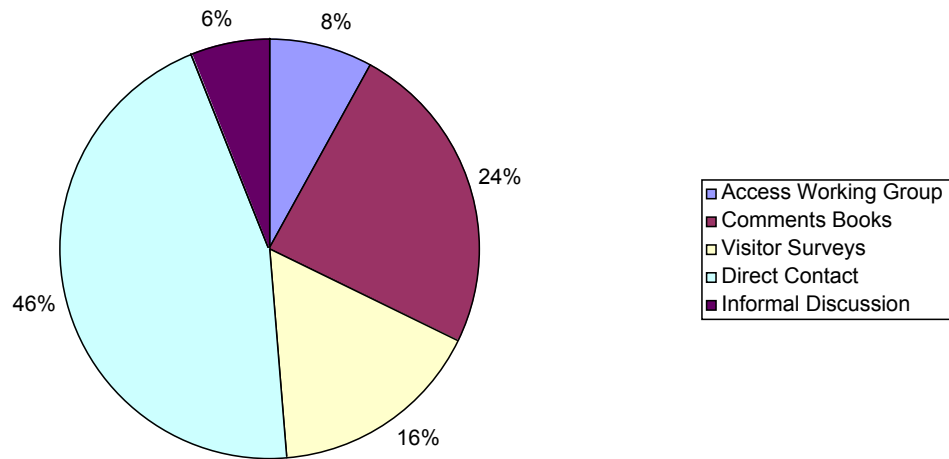
Question 22 - Does your gallery consult with disabled people concerning policies and programming? If so, on which policies and programming is advice sought?



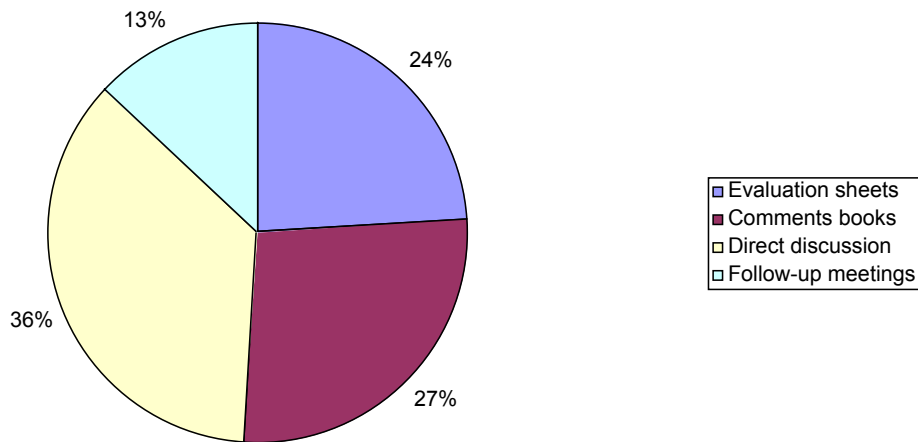
Question 22b - With which organisations is consultation carried out?



Question 25 - Please state by which methods consultation is carried out with disabled people



Question 40 - What provisions are there for people with disabilities to feedback their comments after participating in events?



F8.1. Findings

Nearly 75% of respondents consult with disabled people to inform their policies and programming

74% find such consultation quite or very useful

Respondents consult disabled people mostly on their education and interpretation policies/programmes (50%), and on exhibition policies/programmes (28%)

Respondents consult local organisations most (30%) followed by local individuals (24%) and regional agencies (23%)

Respondents consult primarily through direct contact (46%) followed by comments books (24%) and visitor surveys (16%)

69% of respondents have been approached by disabled people or organisations

Most offer one or more methods for disabled people to feed back comments on gallery programmes, the most popular method (36%) being direct discussion with staff

F8.2. Commentary

F8.2a. It is very positive that a high proportion of respondents are actively involved in a wide range of consultation. A 'culture of consultation' seems to

have developed in the gallery sector. This involves national 'expert' sources, but perhaps more importantly regional and local organisations, and individuals. This 'culture' may be somewhat overstated by a possible link between likelihood to consult, and likelihood to complete this questionnaire. It should be noted that over 25% of respondents do not consult, and this is a cause of concern.

F8.2b. To some extent this may be led by education departments, as education policies and programmes – which in this context could include interpretation policies and workshop programme – are the most frequently consulted on. But as well many galleries have some form of consultation with disabled people on exhibition policies and programmes.

F8.2c. It should be noted that a significant proportion of consultation is through direct contact with individuals and/or organisations, rather than through advisory groups or committees.

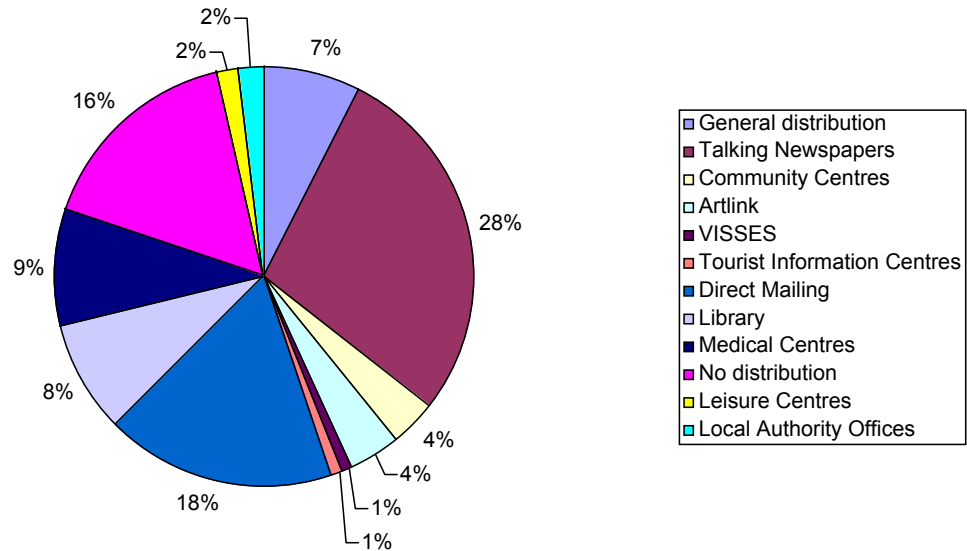
F8.2d. As well as its primary purpose, consultation can be an effective way of building interest and audiences, and of establishing contacts for further research and development of projects and events.

F8.2e. The focus on direct contact may suggest that the most effective process of consultation for a gallery's changing exhibition programme is one of *ad hoc* contact with relevant contacts. Or it may equally be true that galleries find direct contact more effective than committees. However, galleries may need to consider the external message that having an ongoing Advisory Group may offer, in demonstrating commitment to disability issues and identifying a conduit for consultation.

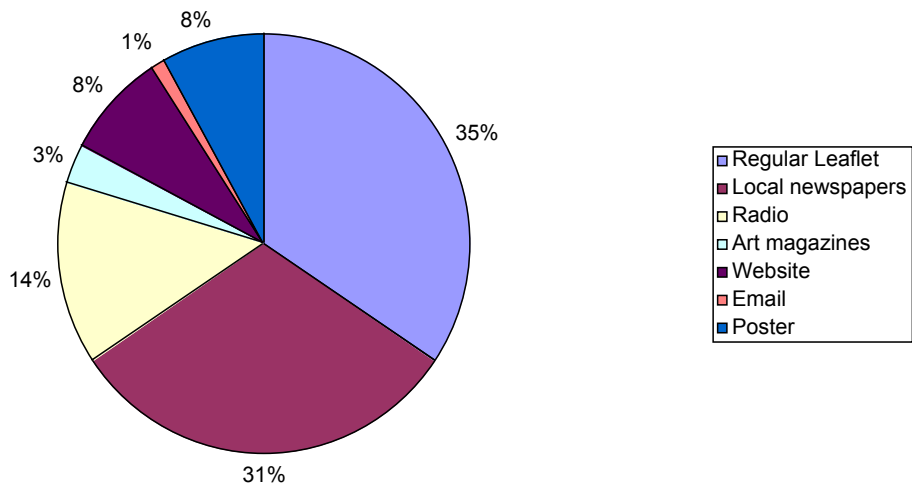
F8.2f. Where consultation was not ongoing, respondents cited lack of time or lack of influence in the organisation. This may reflect on higher priority to consultation given by those in direct contact with the public than by management.

F9. Marketing

Question 27b - Is your gallery advertised with disability organisations or in places where people with disabilities might find the information?



Question 27 - Please state which methods are used to advertise exhibitions and events at your gallery



F9.1. Findings

80% of respondents advertise exhibitions and events through a regular leaflet

70% of respondents market exhibitions and events through local press

44% market through mailing to community centres; 26% market through direct mailing to disability organisations

22% did not market to disabled organisations or in places where disabled people might access information

85%.of respondents did not use – or did not know if they used - Website Accessibility Initiative (WAI) guidelines for their website

F9.2. Commentary

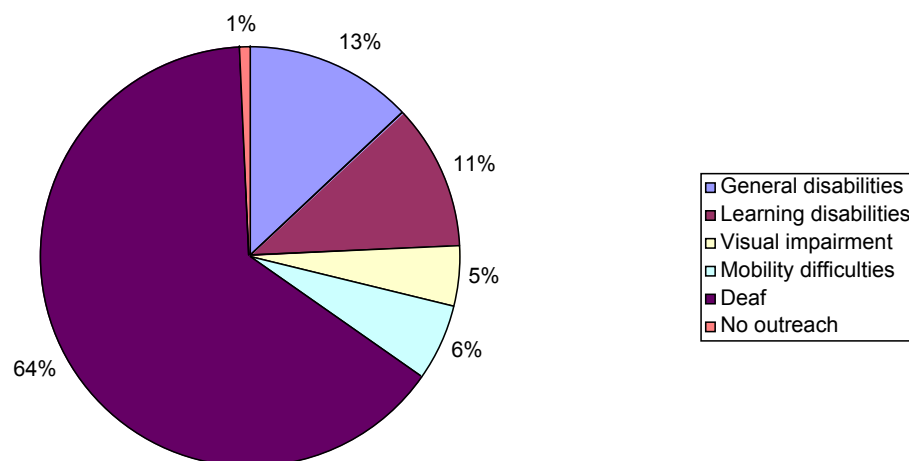
F9.2a. Almost all respondents indicated a clear strategy of marketing locally, through leaflets, press, radio etc. This offers a range of media possibilities for both disabled people and for their carers/support workers, who may be important in planning arts visits and activities. Radio is particularly important for reaching people with visual impairments. However a significant percentage appeared not to make an effort to market to disabled networks or organisations.

F9.2b. Websites also have significant marketing potential, offering particular benefits in reaching disabled people, and their carers/support workers, especially when properly designed to meet visual impairment guidelines and to adapt to 'speech-reader' programmes. However respondents indicated very low awareness of WAI.

F9.2c. Publicity can also be targeted to specific groups through disability organisations – 28% of responses cited Talking Newspapers - and/or community centres. It also offers the opportunity to present access details for disabled people, or signpost where to get more information (eg website, Access Guide, Access Officer).

F10. Participation by Disabled People

Question 34 - What disabilities have people had which you gallery has worked with?



F10.1. Findings

71% of respondents have exhibited work by disabled artists

85% have exhibited artwork by disabled participants in workshop programmes

Over 70% have run outreach projects for disabled people

76% have found outreach quite or very useful in building ongoing contact

30% have used disabled artists as a workshop leaders

F10.2. Commentary

F10.2a. Galleries' responses to questions about the presentation of work by disabled artists or disabled workshop participants are generally positive, with almost all respondents indicating involvement of disabled artists, disabled participants in workshops, outreach work for the disabled. However while such activities are seen as benefiting future relationships, it is not clear that there is a strategic commitment to ongoing involvement.

F10.2b. A factor that affects these figures is the different approaches disabled artists themselves take to their disability, some wanting to disclose this, others wanting to keep it private. This may suggest that the proportion of exhibitions by disabled artists may be understated.

F10.2c. However it is also clear that disabled artists feel they have more limited opportunities to exhibit, feeling that they are less likely to know about opportunities to exhibit, or how to access them. The stated high proportion of disabled artists exhibited may in part be due to inclusion of disabled artists in group shows rather than in their own right.

F10.2d. While the overall picture is positive, further training and policy development may help inform provision. The majority of galleries and arts organisations consider their activities to be appropriate for people of all abilities. However enhanced understanding of disability issues may be important to help realise this aspiration. As well, the majority of disabled people included in outreach have learning difficulty disabilities, and this may need to be reconsidered.

F11. Travel/timing

F11.1. Findings

70% of respondents consider timing and convenience of travel when planning events for disabled people

50% have organised transport to the gallery for disabled people

F11.2. Commentary

F11.2a. These figures indicate a positive concern to meet disabled people's needs when running events. However they also indicate room for improvement where appropriate. Disability awareness training may increase understanding of disabled people's needs and so sensitivity to issues of timing, travel, etc.

F11.2b. Responses indicate that an events programme that involves disabled people has a positive effect on numbers of disabled visitors, though many galleries lack means to ascertain this. Not only can visitor numbers be affected, but also attitudinal barriers are addressed by changing perceptions both of galleries and of disabled people's involvement amongst both disabled visitors and gallery staff

F11.2c. There is a positive commitment to feedback especially through direct personal contact.

G. Focus group discussions

G1. Introduction

Three 2 hour Focus Group meetings were specially convened in February 2003. **engage** is very grateful to participants as listed elsewhere. These were co-ordinated and facilitated by Kirsty Lorenz, with support from Heather Smith.

These reports are edited notes to give a broad representation of the issues raised. Key points have been identified and fed into the report recommendations above. An unedited set of 'semi-verbatim' notes is also available.

A key overall issue was the need for increased consultation directly with disabled people and with organisations who work with disabled people.

Participants included

- disabled people
- disabled artists
- gallery programming staff
- gallery education staff
- representatives from disability arts organisations
- representatives from disability organisations.

Nearly half the participants had disabilities. These included

- mental health disabilities
- mobility problems (including wheelchair users)
- visual impairment (including blindness)
- hearing impairment
- learning difficulties.

G2. Meeting structure and issues

Each meeting followed the same format, using a list of issues and questions circulated to participants in advance. All present were initially asked to make comments on each issue; this led naturally to informal discussion.

The list of issues and questions was:

1. Attending exhibitions In galleries and arts organisations

- Why does a disabled person choose to visit an art exhibition?
- What are the different things that influence this choice?
- What makes this a good or a bad experience?
- How could visiting exhibitions be made easier and more enjoyable?

2. Gallery projects involving disabled people

- Have you been involved with gallery projects for disabled people?
- What was good and what was bad about them?
- How could provision be improved?

3. Exhibitions by disabled people

- Have you seen many exhibitions of work by disabled people?
- Were they solo or group exhibitions? Were they well presented? Interesting? Good to look at?
- Were they different to exhibitions you have seen by non-disabled people?
- How could the situation be improved?

4. Disabled professional artists

- Are there many disabled professional artists?
- If not many, then why not?
- How could more disabled people be supported to become professional artists?

G3. Attending exhibitions in galleries and arts organisations

An immediate response was: 'do contemporary art galleries and arts organisations actually want disabled people in their spaces?'

G3.1. Individual Choice

The reasons for wanting to visit a gallery or exhibition should not be perceived to be somehow different for a disabled person – so reasons include for example interest in art a theme, or an artist; a good café; using the toilets; visiting the gallery shop etc.

Bringing other arts activity into galleries and arts organisations might be especially relevant to disabled people, because of issues of travel etc as below.

The needs of disabled people are diverse and vary according to the nature of their disability.

Feeling vulnerable or low in confidence affects your decision to visit a gallery.

Often disabled people depend upon their carers or support workers to take them to visit galleries and arts organisations. The interest, enthusiasm, resources and/or time of the carer or support worker can therefore be important.

Often disabled people visit in organised groups. A group trip can however offer 'safety in numbers' – disabled people can feel less intimidated as part of a group.

Practical travel issues are very important, including

- actual travel costs
- organising travel
- any support required.

Many disabled people are living on benefits or a low income. So the entry charges and travel costs are significant. It would be helpful to have some mechanism to claim back visit costs.

Visiting an exhibition often requires a lot of forward planning if you are disabled. As well, it is often unclear who at a gallery to contact for advance advice about special requirements.

In rural areas travel issues are increased.

A disabled people's escort service such as ArtAccess, operated through Artlink (which uses volunteers to help disabled people to attend galleries and arts organisations) was felt to be a very valuable resource and should be available everywhere. However this service only operated in Edinburgh.

Requirements for police checks for escort volunteers could make staffing problems.

G3.2. Physical Accessibility:

A disabled person's choice to visit a gallery is affected by the practical physical accessibility of a building. This includes

- reaching the building
- entering the building
- moving around the building.

For instance, for wheelchair users an entry ramp is not enough if the door is too heavy to open, or if the curb of the pavement is too high.

For those who need a wheelchair on arrival there are in general too few wheelchairs available for use at the entrance. Could this not be an ideal sponsorship opportunity?

However some galleries which have the wheelchair access symbol are not wholly accessible inside.

Legislation to make new buildings accessible should be more strongly enforced. But many gallery and museum buildings are old and listed and this affects the possibility of adapting them to disabled people's needs.

Supermarkets are extremely accessible – maybe there should be more exhibitions in supermarkets.

There are other needs as well as those of wheelchair users: for instance, many galleries have too little seating, for people who get tired.

There should be a more holistic approach to meeting disabled people's needs through:

- adequate early and ongoing consultation with disabled people/organisations to inform building design and operation
- staff training (at all levels) so that these needs are integrated into the design and running of the building.

G3.3. Staff attitudes / availability of assistance and resources

Staff attitudes can have an important effect on the experience of visiting a gallery. It is good to be welcomed and offered assistance.

Disabled people can feel embarrassed needing to ask for help, for special assistance. They can feel like they are 'causing trouble'. So it should be easy to identify appropriate guidance on entering a gallery, for instance, large format text information, audio facilities. This will minimise the need to ask for help.

Sometimes staff are 'intimidated' by people's disabilities, or misunderstand how different disabilities affect people. Staff need to be trained to understand different people's needs and to respond sensitively. However staff do not necessarily know where to access relevant training.

The Scottish Arts Council could provide someone to advise galleries and arts organisations on how to make the building, the artwork and the interpretation material accessible.

A checklist could be provided for galleries and arts organisations to help them think through all the different things they should be considering.

A database of disability and disability arts organisations that could provide advice and training should be available for galleries and arts organisations.

It is impossible to meet everyone's needs but provision can be adapted and it is important to try.

G3.4. Exhibitions and interpretation

There are examples of exhibitions such as *Dialogue in the Dark* which specifically address disability issues. *Dialogue in the Dark* changed people's perceptions and understanding of blindness and visual impairment. There is scope for more exhibitions addressing disability issues.

Curatorial staff should be trained in disability awareness so they select and design exhibitions appropriately. This could help them develop more creative approaches to devising and hanging exhibitions that are accessible. For instance, there could be more artworks to touch, and exhibits could be hung lower for people in wheelchairs.

It is sometimes difficult to know how to 'navigate' an exhibition. There should be greater use of textured floors and other navigational aids.

More attendants and invigilators should develop an extended role, informing visitors about the exhibition or specific works. It would be helpful for disabled visitors if staff volunteered their assistance rather than waiting to be asked.

Visitors with visual impairment may need to get very close to artworks and may take longer to **engage** with artworks. Similarly visitors may need to get very close to interpretation material and may take a long time to read it.

Interpretation material should be available in bigger type formats and/or in Braille.

Audio guides are not often available. Where they are, visitors usually have to follow the exhibition at the pace of the audio information which may not be appropriate. New technology could be utilised to develop more flexible – even cheap and/or disposable - audio interpretation material, and this could be especially helpful for disabled visitors.

Disabled visitors might be helped to **engage** with artworks by more interactive material. However, intellectual accessibility of interpretation material could be problematic – interpretation material was sometimes inaccessible, difficult to understand, pretentious or irrelevant, and this could be a particular issue for disabled people.

However, galleries and arts organisations often lack resources to develop a full range of interpretation material.

G3.5. Publicity and marketing

People cannot choose to visit an exhibition if they don't know about it. Galleries need to give specific thought to communicating with disabled people, both in terms of specific needs and media, and of relevant networks. Carers and support workers should also be targeted as above.

Most publicity material is written and visual. This isn't effective for those who cannot read, or have visual impairment. There should be greater use of the internet to market. With appropriate audio software this can be useful for people with visual impairments.

However, disability organisations can advise how best to communicate with the people they work with. It should be possible to distribute information to disability organisations to be circulated in an appropriate format.

It would be very useful if publicity material could tell disabled people and disability organisations what they specifically need to know about an exhibition, for instance, who it is likely to interest, whether it is tactile and/or interactive, what facilities are available, who to contact about special requirements.

There is a lack of awareness of how the Scottish Arts Council can assist through its lists of galleries and of disability organisations. There may also need to be standard guidance about what disabled people and disability organisations need to know about an exhibition.

G3.6. Gallery projects involving disabled people

Gallery education and workshop programmes do not normally cater for the disabled.

However, disabled people enjoy workshop activities. Everyone was positive about workshops and keen to share stories. Workshops can encourage disabled people to visit the gallery. There is too little integration of disabled people into ongoing workshop programmes.

But workshops are often not accessible to people in wheelchairs, and it can be difficult for an artist to work with a group of people with very different needs. There should be greater support for artists working with disabled people as can be demanding, requiring considerable multi-tasking and people skills.

Needs in the workshop context can be helped by extra staffing, but there should also be more disability training available for artists, better pay structures reflecting such expertise, and a greater recognition within arts organisations of artists' importance in working with disability

Where there are projects for disabled people it is very difficult for disabled *individuals* to learn about and become involved with them. These projects are set up for groups, usually through organisations.

Disabled people often rely on carers/support staff to be interested and make contact with arts opportunities, however carers/support staff often feel they don't have the authority to initiate an arts project on behalf of someone.

Gallery education and workshop programmes often lack funds and staffing in general anyway, so it can be difficult to respond to specific needs.

There is a similar information need about appropriate publicity and marketing to reach disabled people and organisations. There could be greater communication between arts organisations about relevant activity programmes, and about sharing skills and contacts.

G3.7. Exhibitions by disabled artists

'What's my wheelchair got to do with my art?' Different disabled artists have different views about whether their disability is relevant or not.

Some feel it is important that the artwork should be judged for itself not as the work of someone who is disabled. The quality of artwork is related more to the length of time, quality and level of opportunity, rather than an individual's disability.

Others feel it is important to know the context of an artwork when viewing it. For instance, someone with mental health issues visiting an exhibition may find it relevant to know that the artist has a similar background.

Exhibitions of work by disabled people tend to be group shows rather than of an individual's work. Exhibiting work produced through projects was greatly appreciated by participants and provided a good focus for working. However, there are too few opportunities for disabled artists to show their work outside the group project situation.

One curator said that in 6 years she had not seen one application for an exhibition from a (known) disabled artist.

G3.8. Disabled professional artists

As disabled artists often rely on benefits for their subsistence and also to pay for care or support workers, it is therefore also difficult for them to fund their own practice and professional development.

There are a few relevant scholarships but these are hard to find out about. Often disabled artists do not know about, or know how to access, opportunities to exhibit, or to apply for grants, courses etc. A mentoring scheme with artists or arts professionals could help to support an individual's development as an artist and help them to access a wider range of opportunities that are specifically appropriate to their needs/ level/ aspirations.

However, while grants or bursaries may be secured, current rules mean these can be set against their benefits therefore totally undermining the value of this support.

There are perceived to be few professional artists with disability in Scotland – or perhaps this should be understood as meaning there are few professional artists in Scotland *who identify themselves* by their disability.

It could be useful to have a database of disabled artists in Scotland, as in N. Ireland.

However, as stated above, some artists prefer their work to be judged on its own merits and don't like to mention their disability, while others are happy to state their disability, even sometimes to use it to their advantage.

The issue of how to define 'professionalism' for artists is felt to be particularly sensitive to disabled artists who may feel they are less able to access the training, the exhibitions, the income which could define them as 'professional'. Any definitions of 'professional' should take this into account.

There are many issues for disabled artists in education and training. For instance, the school curriculum has a strong academic and written emphasis, so some children cannot secure qualifications in art even though they are visually gifted.

If children/adults with disabilities find it difficult to access art/art activity how are they going to choose to become a professional artist? How can they develop the skills?

As well, it is very difficult for disabled people to access Art College: due to physical access issues (college buildings are not very accessible), financial issues as mentioned above, and tertiary education issues. Encouraging and enabling someone to attend Art College - when it is actually too problematic for them due to these issues - can be very damaging, and needs to be dealt with sensitively.

G3.9. Other Comments

Social deprivation is often more disabling than a physical disability.
Discrimination against disabled people is not exclusive to non-disabled people.

While these focus groups are important, there should be a commitment to greater and wider consultation, involving larger numbers of selected disabled people.

A methodology or body of practice could be identified and provided to help address simple tasks related to disability issues.

There should be more small grants available to disabled people. It needs to be accepted that being inclusive and accessible costs more.

There should be greater vigilance as to whether mainstream funded organisations are really sensitive to disability issues and accessible.

There should be more disability awareness training.