



SPIRIT OF 2012
INVESTING IN HAPPINESS

MAKING EVENTS WORK FOR EVERYONE



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Gaetano Iannetta, Amy Finch,
Katie Baldock

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INTRODUCTION

Spirit of 2012 was established in 2013 with a £47 million National Lottery Community Fund endowment to continue the pride and positivity that people felt across the UK following the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In recent years, the UK's events landscape has made significant strides to become more inclusive for disabled people. Events like the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games set ambitious inclusion goals, publicly addressing barriers to participation. In a series of roundtables and focus groups conducted over the past year, Spirit of 2012 heard from event organisers and the public, who were generally positive about the changes that had been made over the past decade, with many examples of improvements and best practice. Yet we still have a long way to go before disabled and non-disabled people are able to participate in events in the UK as equals.

Whilst awareness of the need for inclusivity and access is high, reality has yet to catch up.

This report brings together Spirit of 2012's insights and learning from a decade of funding projects that have fuelled community pride, positivity and wellbeing, getting tens of thousands of people more active, creative and connected in their communities. Many of the projects and organisations we funded have had inclusion at their heart, with disabled people and

non-disabled people taking part together as audience members, participants, volunteers and staff.

This report sets out insights, advice and recommendations for government, arms-length bodies, franchise holders, event organisers and delivery organisations on how UK events can be designed and delivered to be more inclusive, as well as how they can help foster a more inclusive society.

Events can be powerful tools to promote inclusion. They are collective experiences which can put us into contact with people we may otherwise not encounter, creating an environment where people can be included together, as a part of friend groups, families and crowds. When they have inclusion at their heart, events can bring disabled and non-disabled people together to engage in meaningful ways. To achieve this, events must be intentionally designed to be accessible, diverse and inclusive from their inception through to their legacy.

Our ambition is for an events sector where inclusion is the norm, and is built into the fabric of events, rather than being bolted on during its delivery. This involves allocating proper budgets to support disabled participation at every level – from those planning and making decisions, to volunteers, staff and audiences. It involves consultation, feedback and data analysis as well as a commitment to continuous improvement. More consistent application of the best practice set out in this report would raise the bar and begin to deliver a more equal and fulfilling experience for all.

The latest estimates from the Department for Work and Pensions' Family Resources Survey indicate that 16.0 million people in the UK had a disability in the 2021/22 financial year. This represents 24% of the total population.¹ Scope estimates the total spending power of families with at least 1 disabled person to be £274 billion a year². Disabled people represent a significant part of the UK and it is crucial that the events sector recognise this. Events bring investment, which can be used to build long-lasting infrastructure to facilitate inclusion.

About the language in this report

Spirit's funded projects use the social model of disability, a conceptual framework that focuses on how societal and environmental factors contribute to creating barriers for disabled people, rather than attributing disability to an individual's impairments or medical conditions. The model emerged as a response to the medical model of disability, which places the emphasis on the individual's limitations and medical needs. The social model seeks to shift the focus from "fixing" an individual to addressing the systemic barriers that hinder their full participation and inclusion in society.

Whilst this provides a crucial perspective, many feel its focus on societal factors can sometimes overlook individual preferences and needs. It is important to recognise that not all individuals will experience disability in the same way.

In practice, many disability advocates and researchers opt to integrate both the social and medical models of disability, or use other theoretical frameworks such as the radical model, which acknowledges that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the full range of challenges faced by disabled people.

Throughout the report we have attempted to apply the social model, whilst also sharing

a variety of ways disabled and non-disabled people discuss these topics and reflect on their experiences in everyday language. This includes some discussion of "hidden disabilities", a contested term that fits more with a medical framing of disability. We would welcome feedback on how we can continue to improve our approach to the topics discussed in this report.

Background to this report

Inclusivity is at the heart of Spirit's funding strategy and our Theory of Change. Over the past decade, Spirit of 2012 has funded many projects which have aimed to facilitate the participation of disabled and non-disabled people as equals. Some have involved co-production with disabled people, or have been disability led, or both. This report draws on evidence from those projects – you can find out more about them and read many of their evaluations in full at www.spiritof2012.org.uk.

In January 2023, Spirit of 2012 published the final report of its Inquiry into the Power of

Budgets should be designed with access and inclusion costs in mind from the very start of the planning process.

Events to leave lasting social and economic legacies. The report recommended that greater attention must be paid to who benefits from events and who is left out: event organisers should explicitly set out how they will reach and remove barriers for groups of people who are traditionally less likely to participate, and, where possible, act on emerging attendance data to address gaps in participation. Organisers should undertake inclusion audits to ensure that disabled people are able to attend, and should make reasonable adjustments where necessary.

This report expands upon the work of the Inquiry, bringing together evidence from Spirit of 2012 funded projects, and makes a series of recommendations specifically about inclusion for disabled and non-disabled people. The report also builds on the thematic review of our inclusion work produced by independent evaluators, Renaisi, in 2022.

Methodology

The report draws on evidence and evaluation from Spirit of 2012 funded projects. Each grant holder received ring-fenced funding to conduct evaluation, many contracting an independent evaluator. For readers interested in more detailed findings from specific projects, full evaluations can be found on the Spirit of 2012 website. The report seeks to collect and present evidence from two focus groups, which were conducted in August 2023. The focus groups brought together groups of disabled people

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to better understand their experiences and attitudes towards a range of events in the UK.

Finally, the report draws on a series of three roundtables: in September 2022, funded and hosted by Spirit; in April 2023, funded by Spirit of 2012 and hosted by Leeds 2023; and in November 2023, hosted by Bradford 2025.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Event organisers and funders must ensure that inclusivity is embedded in the design and vision for an event from the very start - it is more effective to build it in from the beginning than it is to bolt it on. Event organisers should include disabled people in the team organising events, including in leadership and governance roles. It is crucial that the whole team involved in planning and delivering an event is committed to delivering it inclusively.
2. Event organisers must consider the full journey of participation to make events truly inclusive, rather than just the event itself. This includes the marketing of an event, travel to and from it, as well as follow-up consultation and reflection. Organisers must communicate access provisions of an event clearly and in an accessible form.
3. Event organisers should ensure that event staff and volunteers receive training on disability awareness, etiquette, and assistance techniques. This training should extend to disability equality and ableist training, identifying and challenging the structures that create and maintain barriers to disabled access and participation.
4. Event organisers should engage in reflective practice throughout the lifecycle of an event, creating a feedback mechanism for disabled attendees to input at any stage, and using that feedback to improve both the event itself and any future events. If increasing inclusion is a stated aim of the project, the evaluation needs to measure the extent to which it has been achieved.
5. Where events use volunteers, event organisers should engage and support disabled people to volunteer, funding high-quality volunteering opportunities. Volunteering contributes to better health and wellbeing outcomes, and promotes social connection.
6. Making all of these recommendations a reality requires adequate funding at every stage. Funders should make delivering on inclusion commitments part of their grant conditions, but must back this up by providing sufficient resource to do this well. Funders must recognise the opportunity presented by events: the costs of equal participation vary depending on existing infrastructure, context and individual need, but sufficient ring-fenced funding can create long-lasting improvements to inclusion in host locations. The investment an event brings can be used to build infrastructure and implement access standards that carry on beyond the event.

PRINCIPLE ONE: USE EVENTS AS A CATALYST TO ACCELERATE INCLUSION



Issues around inclusion are complex and wide-ranging in the UK, and events cannot singlehandedly solve them. However, they do provide an opportunity for progress and can be drivers for positive change. They do this by:

- stating clearly their mission to be inclusive and accessible
- increasing awareness and understanding of inclusive practice
- increasing the visibility of disabled people in public life.

The biggest events of recent years have all set out a bold vision for inclusion as part of their overarching ambition.

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games stated that it would be “the Games for Everyone”, while the vision statement for the UK & Ireland Euro 2028 bid is “Football for all, Football for good. Football for the future”, which includes a promise to develop a more inclusive game. This can galvanise change by addressing barriers to participation, with partner organisations needed to put action plans in place to meet that ambition. For major events, part of the way this ambition is realised is through significant injection of money into a specific place, including money for capital improvements at public venues, and the public realm more broadly. These are opportunities to make costly access changes that might otherwise be out of reach.

London 2012 sought to be the “most accessible games ever”, and in doing so, created a step change in disability inclusion that outlasted the Games. It established a set of inclusive design principles, which continue to be used and updated by the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and beyond. In 2021, the Global Disability Innovation Hub (GDI Hub), itself a Paralympic legacy project,

set out to retrospectively codify London’s disability inclusion model. Its twelve-step model was developed with a panel of expert stakeholders who were involved in the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

The GDI Hub is an Academic Research and Practice Centre accelerating disability innovation for a more just world. It is based at UCL, but operates in 60 countries, with more than 70 partners, having reached more than 34 million people since launching in 2016. The GDI Hub is the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) first ever Global Collaborating Centre on Assistive Technology.

The GDI Hub continues to share the learnings and knowledge developed in the legacy of the London 2012 with cities and communities around the world – both those hosting and bidding for future major sporting events, and governments and countries looking to apply models of change to create inclusive futures.

Events provide an opportunity to increase the capabilities, knowledge and understanding of employees and volunteers when it comes to inclusive practice. This knowledge can be embedded into organisations, with staff taking it into their next role. In many cases this involves inclusion specialists passing on knowledge onto the wider arts and heritage and sporting sectors.

This is evident in several Spirit-funded projects.’ The evaluation report for Stopgap’s *Seafarers* project notes that “As a direct result of *Seafarers*, there are new inclusive dance classes running from September 2019 involving the Stopgap trained dance teachers” and that “there is an emerging network of dance teachers who support each other....to maintain a level and ambition of inclusive dance delivery.” Similarly, the Head of Education at South London Gallery, Sara Cofflis, noted that “Oasis had such a depth of knowledge and a really careful and



Kindly replicated with the permission of the GDHI Hub.

astute awareness of how to embed access in everything that you do. I think we really leant on them at times, and I really valued how forthright they were about challenges to us to provide a higher level of support than we've ever achieved in the past. This is definitely something that I'd like to continue to fight for across everything that we do." For Stockton ARC, the events and performances delivered as part of Cultural Shift gave them dedicated time and resource to make "meaningful change" across the organisation, rewriting their artistic policy and ensuring that disability equality was a core value at ARC. These changes were brought about by specific, multi-year funding for, and a relentless focus on, inclusion.

At our sector roundtable in Leeds, attendees argued that event organisers need to be trained in social model and person-centred practice, and that this knowledge should be spread to all staff, not just held by an inclusion specialist. These sentiments were echoed in our focus groups, with attendees arguing that more could be done to improve the training of staff and volunteers.

Many of the disabled people that we heard from over the course of this research, either directly or from the accounts in our funded projects, noted that in some cases, even if they were able to attend an event, this was not possible without excessive administrative work in advance. They pointed out that in some cases, the joy of attending an event was associated with the freedom to do so at short notice.

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– focus group attendee

Where disabled people are confident that their needs will be addressed without this administrative burden, the impact can be profound. Sometimes this was about the clear ethos and values of the event as much as it was any practical accommodations. One woman in the focus group spoke about Pride parades, and her confidence that the event's clear values meant she knew she would be welcome. In our grant funded projects, participants also spoke about the atmosphere of welcome and sense of ease:



"As a disabled person I am used to my body and mind feeling like a problem in public spaces, to standing out and causing extra faff and anxiety around me. I attended every Making Routes event with a confidence and sense of safety that I very rarely feel. What you have created over the last three days, and the months of work behind this was something precious and powerful."

– Jess Thom,
artist working on Making Routes,
Oasis Play

"I can communicate perfectly when I'm with Beacon Hill Arts. It's an environment where I have things in common with people. They

understand what I'm looking for and what I want to do. Beacon Hill Arts is on top of the pyramid. It's the easiest place to go, to be with people who have similarities to me."

– young filmmaker,
participant in Viewfinder,
Beacon Films

To translate ambitious visions for inclusion into reality, event organisers must take on the administrative burden, so that confidence and a sense of safety is not something that Jess and other disabled people "rarely feel", but a standard part of their experience at events.



PRINCIPLE TWO: USE EVENTS TO INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN PUBLIC LIFE

One of the main ways that events can increase inclusion, and change perceptions, is by increasing the visibility of disabled people in everyday life.

This is particularly, though not exclusively true, for major televised events. Writing in his role as a critical friend to the Birmingham 2022 Cultural Festival, Andrew Miller explains why media representation matters:

Despite accounting for 20+% of our national population, disabled people have remained largely under represented and invisible. There is still a tendency in society when confronted with disability to look away, to avert a direct gaze. And this aversion can also be found in mass media. Cameras rarely focus on disabled participants at major events or arrivals on red carpets, preferring to relay the normative to audiences at home.⁵

The Paralympic movement has a particular role to play here – a megaevent with a global reach of over 4 billion people, it provides an unparalleled opportunity to increase the visibility of disabled people in the media and in broader public life. The British Paralympic Association's ten year strategy to 2032 sets out a strategic objective to use sport to make "real and sustainable change in the lives of disabled people in the UK".

Our Inquiry report, published in January 2023, found a broad consensus that the London 2012 Paralympic Games marked a turning point in attitudes to disabled people. Some 70% of people agreed that the London Games had a positive impact on attitudes to disabled people (71% among disabled people). Only 6% of people disagreed. The same polling also showed a real need to increase awareness of disability, suggesting that the public had quite a narrow frame of reference for thinking about what it means to be a disabled person. Half of respondents believed they did not know a disabled person, while 83% felt that there needed to be more awareness of "hidden disabilities". The Paralympics provides some role models for disabled and non-disabled people, and increases the prominence of disabled people in public life. Any sportsmen and women who compete in the Games for their country are national heroes, and we should celebrate their stories and achievements.

However, many disabled people, researchers and campaigners have also pointed out the flaws in using the Paralympics to increase visibility and change perceptions. Professor Silk, Principal Investigator of a Bournemouth University project into the cultural legacy of the Olympics, explains: "How people with disabilities are treated in everyday life is influenced by the way that they're portrayed in the media, but there is very little evidence to explain exactly how the visibility of para-sport athletes makes a difference to the everyday lives of people with disabilities."⁶

Susie Rodgers, gold-medal winning Paralympian and Spirit of 2012 Board member between 2014 – 2022, is keen for more event organisers to understand some of these complexities:

I do believe that sport plays a certain role in celebrating resilience, persistence and determination in both the Olympics and Paralympics and in the latter, to challenge perceptions on disability. Sport is not the answer to every problem in the world, as we all know, but it plays a big role in representation and competition between nations, underpinned by a core set of values to make the field of play as fair as possible. However, whilst these large-scale events are powerful throughout their duration, capturing the inspiration from athletes and the Games themselves, and translating this into wider society, requires us to view the Games not as a means to an end by winning medals for countries, but as a wider catalytic opportunity to inspire positive change and cohesion in society. Disabled people are amongst the most marginalised globally and frequently live in poverty due to compounding discrimination and barriers to their equal participation. Whilst attitudes may shift because of the Paralympics, more needs to be done at country levels to support the inclusion of all people with disabilities into work, society and beyond. This is where legacy is an integral part for countries hosting events such as the Olympics and Paralympics.



Yet across our funding, we found many examples of participants and audience members describing how events and performances made them move away from a framing of disabled people that focuses on the “can’t” rather than the “can”.

For the past ten years, Spirit of 2012 has funded the Get Set programme alongside Sport England – with our funding supporting programme delivery in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the later iterations of the project. Developed by Everfi for Team GB and Paralympics GB, this education programme provides teachers and parents with resources and lesson plans in the run up to Olympic and Paralympic Games. In its 2014 iteration, Road to Rio, 83% of students felt that there had been a positive change in perceptions of disabled people because of the programme; while 59% of teachers believed there had been an improvement in student perceptions. Get Set works by providing a flexible set of curriculum ideas and resources for teachers to use and adapt, so not all schools will be deploying



the programme to change perceptions of disability. But it is striking just how few opportunities there are to foreground the experiences and achievements of disabled people, as well as challenging topics like ableism, within the curriculum.

The Paralympics offers a way to approach this wider topic – and many of the teachers and students taking part in Get Set used this as an opportunity for richer learning. One teacher, feeding back on their use of the resources, explained: “A lot of our children had not heard of the Paralympic Games, some did not even realise that people with disabilities could take part.” The teacher notes that their students are Primary 1 (age 5) – just forming their ideas about who can and cannot take part in sport, or in wider society. They were echoed by a secondary school teacher who noted, “The Paralympic resources definitely helped with pupils’ perceptions of disability as many are just oblivious to it and how it impacts our community.” It is also important that the resources work for young disabled people themselves, whether they are in a mainstream or specialised setting. Anna Scott-Marshall, ParalympicsGB said “understanding inclusion through the lens of Paralympic sport and the experience of ParalympicsGB athletes has been shown to be incredibly effective in both shaping attitudes and behaviours in school and at home.” Evidence from Get Set, and other work we have funded, suggests that many young people have very limited exposure to disabled role models and/or conversations about disability and ableism meaning that these interventions make a meaningful difference.

As an integrated competition, and by programming para-sport and non-disabled sport at the same time rather than as separate mega events, the Commonwealth Games offers a way of increasing the visibility of disabled people. The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Opening

Ceremony featured *Critical Mass*, an inclusive mass cast of 16-30-year-olds from across the West Midlands. While featuring disabled dancers in mass casts was not new, in the London 2012 ceremony they had largely been highly trained, professional dancers. While increasing opportunities for disabled professional artists is still crucial (and overlooked), the purpose of *Critical Mass* was to create a completely inclusive volunteer cast, and feature them prominently in the Opening Ceremony and other flagship moments of the festival.

The evaluation report notes: “The overall audience engagement figures for this event [the Opening Ceremony] far surpassed all other Critical Mass performances, with a 5.2 million television viewers peak. Critical Mass played out to a global audience and was directly referred to by commentators. However, there was still a sense that this could have gone further. In the 442 seconds that the Critical Mass ensemble were on stage, 89 seconds of screen time was reserved for their performers.... This was a disappointment for performers, but we also question whether this was symptomatic of wider missed opportunities for greater press exposure for the project and its participants.”⁷

One of the most significant ways we can increase visibility is to ensure that disabled people are represented at all levels of an event – from leadership, to staff, to volunteer, to participant. There is a wealth of evidence that when people can see “people like me” taking part in activities, they are more likely to believe they themselves can get involved. Spirit has seen this work time and again across our funding.

For example, from 2016 to 2018, Spirit of 2012 funded the Southbank Centre to expand their Women of the World programme to five UK Cities: Norwich,



Bradford, Perth, Exeter and Cardiff. Across the events, 16.2% of the audience identified as disabled –significantly more than the 7% average at other Southbank programmes. The team identified several reasons for this success, including that the programme itself was designed by disabled and non-disabled people together, with 10 – 19% of the speakers at each location also identifying as disabled.

Event volunteering schemes for Hull and Coventry Cities of Culture, and Edinburgh’s Festival City Volunteers all thought carefully about their promotional materials, case studies and advocates to ensure the experiences of disabled people featured prominently. In research into the volunteering experiences of disabled people funded by Spirit, Kim Donohue et al. stress that the initial application process is “one of the most important steps to making volunteer opportunities accessible”, and urge that organisations pay more attention to these entry points.⁸ The Critical Mass Playbook suggests developing an Easy Read Welcome Pack, including a manifesto that sets out details for the project, and reassures people (and their carers, if appropriate) that their needs will be met.⁹

However, our funded projects have also problematised the idea of visibility from a variety of angles. Inherently built into the idea of visibility is that it is somehow obvious to audiences or potential participants that someone is disabled, and potentially that this is a fixed aspect of someone's identity. Of course, not all disabilities are immediately obvious, and indeed under the social model someone may be disabled in some circumstances but not others.

The Critical Mass team found that the inclusive nature of the project, with everyone able to participate as equals, meant that for some people, their identity as a disabled person was less prominent within the project, "I liked it because I was [name], the dancer and not [name], the boy with autism. I felt included. A lot of people who know me only know me with autism. It was nice to go somewhere where I was one of the rest of the group." Nonetheless, the evaluation report stated that many participants believed the "socio-political importance of their collective contribution to the performance" – including that "dance is for everyone" and "chang(ing) people's perceptions of what dance could be" was the highlight of the project.

These debates are highly familiar to Jo Verrent, Director of Unlimited. Unlimited was created as part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, to celebrate the work of disabled artists. Their mission statement reads: *"Unlimited shall commission extraordinary work from disabled artists until the whole of the cultural sector does. This work will change and challenge the world."* Spirit awarded two grants to Shape Arts to support Unlimited between 2013 – 2020, totalling £975 000. Several of the commissions funded through the project directly engaged audiences with some of the issues around representation and disability, such as Sop, whose work entitled [You are already here](#) produced "a series

of events investigating the changing state of being chronically ill' which "aims to reject the binary of 'sick' and 'well' and look at what just 'is'". Artists funded through Unlimited also explored this topic through a variety of panel discussions, not least at the Southbank's flagship biannual Unlimited Festival. In 2022, Unlimited became a standalone organisation and Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation. Jo's view is that "we have to let artists be artists – they will have many different responses to the issues of identity, all of which are valuable and insightful. There is no binary 'right' or 'wrong' here. This is especially true in the light of Covid 19, where 60% of all deaths have been disabled people. The new wave of individuals with Long Covid (currently 1.9 million people, 2.9% of the population) typify this range of perspectives at its most extreme – some happy to embrace disability terminology, others less so. We can't and shouldn't force people to perform their identities for our purposes – it has to be a willing choice."

Louise Wildish, Director of People Dancing, writes about the "complex issue of public reaction and response to projects or performances that include, or have been created by, disabled people". In a comment piece for Spirit of 2012 in Spring 2022 she asks "Whether the work is seen as equal to that of non-disabled creators/participants, how do we fully express the work of disabled people led by disabled leaders, and does the work output or quality matter over the experience/engagement? If we truly want to change perceptions of public and audiences, high quality work in its broadest form will support change."

We have to let artists be artists... We can't, and shouldn't force people to perform their identities for our purposes.



DISABILITY INCLUSION IN SPORT EVENTS:

A CASE STUDY OF THE UCI CYCLING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS BY DAVID MCGILLIVRAY, WITH EMERGING FINDINGS FROM THE FESTIVALSCONNECT PROJECT



Over the last decade, colleagues from the Centre for Culture, Sport & Events (CCSE) at University of the West of Scotland and the School of Kinesiology at Western University, Canada, have been involved in [research](#) on the role of sport events as a catalyst for change for disabled people. We have conducted comparative research on two types of sport events; those where para-athletes are integrated in the event programme (Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games) and those where para-athletes compete in a separate event (the 2015 Toronto Parapan Am Games). In this work, we have demonstrated that while these events represent an opportunity to shift the dial on disability awareness, changing attitudes towards disabled people, and providing more opportunities for disabled people to participate in sport and physical activity, they do not represent a panacea. In line with the findings of this Spirit of 2012 report, our research has shown that for disabled people to benefit meaningfully from the investments associated with sporting events, clear strategies, political will and, crucially, financial resources need to be in place to maximise the temporary excitement generated during the event. In our work we have recommended that event organisers and their host city partners need to more effectively 'leverage' events to deliver on already-existing commitments to improve the lives of disabled people, building on legislative commitments

(e.g. the [UK Equality Act](#)), embedding inclusion into event planning and delivery as a *duty* rather than an option among many.

There is evidence that event organisers are making progress in embedding inclusion in their planning and delivery, illustrated in the following short case study of the inaugural [UCI Cycling World Championships](#) (CWCs), a 'mega' cycling event that took place in Glasgow and Scotland in August 2023. This was an integrated cycling event with disabled and non-disabled athletes participating in the event schedule alongside each other. Using the four sections headings for this report, we can see how the CWCs built inclusion into planning and delivery processes.

Events as a catalyst for change

The CWCs explicitly set their commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion, including how they would reach and remove barriers for groups of people who are traditionally less likely to participate in the form of their [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Pledge](#). In 2022, the CWCs employed a Diversity and Inclusion Advisor to work with groups defined as having protected characteristics in the UK Equality Act to produce the EDI Framework. This framework was then translated into a series of practical actions including internal training for senior staff, the UCI CWCs Board and volunteers.

Consultation and engagement with representative stakeholders (the community group) was undertaken to ensure the framework was fit for purpose and included the voice of those intended to benefit. In delivery, they also worked with [Euan's Guide](#), a prominent Scottish disabled access charity to develop appropriate guidance around the appropriate language to use when working with disabled people and firming up criteria for accessibility audits of venues and facilities being used for the CWCs. Finally, the policy-led nature of the CWCs has been leveraged to generate additional resources that are being directed towards organisations supporting disabled people to participate in cycling, including the [Glasgow Tandem Club](#).

Visibility

The CWCs, as an integrated event, provided a platform for para-athletes to share the elite sporting stage with non-disabled athletes. In the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, para-cyclists competed on the same programme as their non-disabled counterparts in front of sell-out audiences. On the streets of Glasgow, handcycling team relay races excited audiences on the final day of the Championships just before the women's road race. The CWCs EDI advisor also worked with the marketing and communication team to develop their media and social media plans from an inclusive perspective, ensuring the visibility of paracyclists on both television and online.

Inclusive design and delivery

Our research highlights some limitations in the relatively late involvement of the EDI advisor in the CWCs, only being able to make a real difference in the year leading up to the event. However, in the later stages of planning, there is clear evidence that the event was delivered with inclusivity and accessibility in mind. The aforementioned accessibility guides, and spectator information materials were co-designed with Euan's Guide and then built into the activities of event delivery partners. Representation of disabled people within strategic positions within the CWCs was absent and lack of time meant that wider community engagement with disabled people was not as meaningful as the organisers would have liked. Importantly, the EDI function was not core to the governance arrangements from the start which reduced the potential impact of this work. The Scottish government had an 'EDI Champion' on the main UCI CWCs Board but some of this good practice was implemented a little too late to affect change in all aspects of planning and delivery. The absence of a dedicated budget to deliver on EDI Framework commitments also limited what could be achieved.

 [@Fest_Connect](#)



PRINCIPLE THREE: INCLUSIVE DESIGN AND DELIVERY



Events should be designed to be inclusive from their inception for the best outcome. To achieve this, event organisers require a solid understanding of who is at risk of being excluded and how any potential barriers can be addressed.

This can be achieved by ensuring that disabled people are meaningfully represented in the organising committee, at governance level in staff or Board roles, as well as in consultant and advisory capacities. Organisers and funders of cultural and sporting events must also ensure that accessibility is adequately factored into the cost of running an event, allocating this into the budget at design stage. While those delivering the event should produce a budget that accounts for these costs, funders can use their leverage to enforce this within their own eligibility criteria for events they are supporting. This would ensure that a project receives adequate funding to cover accessibility requirements and it also sets a standard in reinforcing that this is a priority. Critical Mass is a recent example of how events can be designed with participants at the heart of the project from inception. As described in previous chapters, this ambitious mass participation project approached the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games as an opportunity to design an inclusive dance project for those who usually face barriers to participation in cultural and sporting events. The project engaged 242 disabled and non-disabled participants, with 45% of participants identifying as disabled, neurodiverse or having a long-term health condition. 29% of staff members identified as disabled, neurodiverse or having a long-term health condition. The playbook produced upon concluding the project provided insights on how an inclusive environment can be

created, with mapping around the delivery process and what organisers should consider. Inclusion Champion, Rachel Liggitt, notes the importance of being 'strategic rather than reactive'¹⁰ when planning sessions. This can be achieved by being aware of the assets and limitations of a space and organising the event around how the audio and visual would work for a range of participants. Other considerations were around preparing and training the delivery team appropriately, considering how the event can be structured to meet various needs, with enough room for any flexibility needed on the day itself.

Co-creation was not only a factor in ensuring that Critical Mass was designed with an inclusive lens, but also that the participants found the experience enjoyable and rewarding. Despite the positive experiences gained from Critical Mass, there was some hesitancy from participants when questioned on whether they would continue to participate in other dance projects in future. This was due to a lack of assurance that other opportunities would be truly inclusive. This shows how the needs of many people who would otherwise engage in cultural and sporting events have not historically been well met, and that while many organisations set out to be inclusive and promote the event as such, delivery does not always match aspiration.

"Unfortunately, I feel inclusion is sometimes just a tagline and groups do not have that understanding. Critical Mass clearly had that understanding which is why I continued with it."¹¹

Asking participants directly what they need to take part can help reassure them that the event is inclusive, and it can save the team from facing challenges and obstacles later down the line, once the project has

begun. In a commissioned British Council report, *'Time To Act: Two Years On'*, it was found that only 49.8% of arts organisations across the EU had a dedicated access budget to adopt and implement inclusive policies or activities.¹² The report concludes that organisations with a dedicated budget generally will be more accessible for disabled artists and audiences.¹³ Critical Mass had a dedicated access budget, which anticipated what participants might need ahead of time.

Critical Mass had already thought about adjustments before we had to ask them for it. Whereas in society now, you have to explain before you get the adjustment.

Some access requirements are much more costly than others and there must be a range of considerations when putting together a budget. Accessibility is not purely about installing ramps or hiring a BSL interpreter. It could mean providing quiet spaces at events or having technology capable of informing event attendees of any schedule changes in advance that would require them to adjust their plans. There is also staffing, consultancy and advisory groups to be factored in at development and design stage, particularly if the event is to be co-produced. It is problematic if disabled people who are not part of the staff or Board are frequently asked to contribute specific lived experience to the design of a project without reimbursement, therefore a project that requires a large time investment by disabled people needs to account for this in its budget.

22% of the overall budget for Critical Mass was allocated to participant support and disability access. This included a core

support worker team, additional support workers and costs specifically dedicated to disability access. There was a dedicated budget for transport, hardship support and BSL interpretation. With inclusivity in mind, straightforward and short sign-up forms were produced so that potential participants were not put off from becoming involved at the recruitment stage. However, this caused issues later on: the team lacked data which could have usefully informed the budget as the project developed. Organisers must carefully balance what information is useful without deterring participants by asking for too much.

From 2014 to 2017, Spirit of 2012 funded British Red Cross's Inspired Action, a project designed to remove barriers for young disabled people participating in volunteering. Project organisers found that the ring-fenced access budget was underspent – but knowing it was there in a centralised pot, freed volunteer managers across the organisation to know that they would have the resources there to meet the needs of prospective volunteers as they arose.

With *Get Out Get Active*, Activity Alliance has developed inclusive activities so disabled and non-disabled people can be active together, recognising a supply gap in activities that disabled people can do with their families and friends.

Activity Alliance has argued that engagement beyond those with more 'established voices' is vital to inclusive practice. If only those individuals who have already spoken out are listened to, this again excludes those who are furthest away from getting involved and from gaining an understanding of what the barriers are for those people. In a report commissioned by Spirit of 2012, Renaisi highlighted how some Spirit grantees reflected on the tendency

to generalise disabled experiences, where organisations assume that consulting one group of disabled people means capturing the opinion of the whole spectrum of disability.¹⁴ Effective co-production must take on board the broad range of lived experiences and perspectives of disabled people and come up with creative ways to reach those least engaged. This could involve forming partnerships: reaching out to organisations or local groups, such as schools, hospitals and charities can be a good way of engaging new participants. In their guide to co-production, Disability Rights UK set out practical tips, including the need to integrated new voices highlighting the importance of input from those who are not already active.¹⁵

It works very well in the work that I do to have everyone's perspective and things that you wouldn't necessarily think about at the time. So, I think it's a really good idea. I think it's probably going to be difficult for some to do because there's such a varying degree of disabilities, you can't cherry pick the disabilities you want to look at, so you have to think about how you are going to get the wider spectrum... you can't cover everything.
- focus group participant.

In focus groups conducted for this report, disabled members of the public were broadly positive about the potential of co-creation to improve the inclusivity of events – though unsure whether they would want to be involved in event design as intensively themselves. Most people we spoke to had not heard of co-creation before but liked

the idea of it. One contributor, who used it regularly within her own work in public health pointed out that it was often very demanding for those individuals taking part.

People in both focus groups also stressed that it was challenging for a small collection of individuals to represent the wide range of needs and experiences of 'disabled people' as a whole, and so co-creation groups should not replace broader consultation and feedback processes that allowed a greater range of people to input in a less intensive way.

Cultural Shift, a three-year programme of arts activity funded by Spirit of 2012, sought to challenge perceptions of disability through a partnership between ARC Stockton and Little Cog, in the North-East of England. Co-production was an essential element of the work. They approached this by appointing a disabled person to creatively lead the project at a strategic level. Through the work that was programmed, ARC saw an organisational shift towards becoming more inclusive. Staff gained confidence through disability equality training and a greater awareness of access in the building. Through this, access has improved for audience members, with a better booking system that has made it easier for disabled audience members to find the most appropriate seating. Following the project, disabled people have far greater representation as audience members, participants and staff.

There is now more awareness from event organisers that they have a responsibility to meet access requirements for audience members and volunteers than in the past. However, often the onus is still on participants to inform the organisers of their disability or make enquiries on whether their access requirements can be catered for in advance of their attendance at an event. In order to see a real shift, there needs to be better understanding of barriers and

access should be built into the design and delivery of events. In requiring disabled people to undertake these administrative tasks when attending an event, it can be obstructive and off-putting, particularly in requiring them to prove their disability status before adjustments can be made. It also may leave disabled audience members with little confidence that they will be properly accommodated at the venue, which could deter them from attending. In their 2022 access survey, disability access charity Euan's Guide found that 58% of respondents avoid going to a venue if it has not shared its disabled access information, as they assume it is inaccessible.¹⁷ Something as simple as publishing information on access at the venue shows that inclusion has been considered and that it is a priority.

In the Spirit-funded *Inspire 2022* project, UK Youth removed potential barriers in administering access funding by having officers complete and submit the forms, rather than participants. The project included regional officers, who were able to understand and pre-empt unique issues across the region and estimate costs. During the programme, UK Youth's national delivery partners applied for access funding on a case-by-case basis. Applications are processed within two weeks, and could be made multiple times to deal with emerging barriers. Costs included electronic tablets that could be used by young people with sensory issues or who were non-verbal. The tablets also supported staff who are deaf to interact with others who do not understand BSL. There was also funding available for participants who are neurodiverse and require SEND support.

Whilst the examples so far in this chapter have been primarily focused on specific events, there are also some significant examples of national programmes in the arts which are improving access on a wider scale.

Disability Rights UK's Access Card scheme provides disabled people with an easy means of communicating their access needs to event organisers and venues

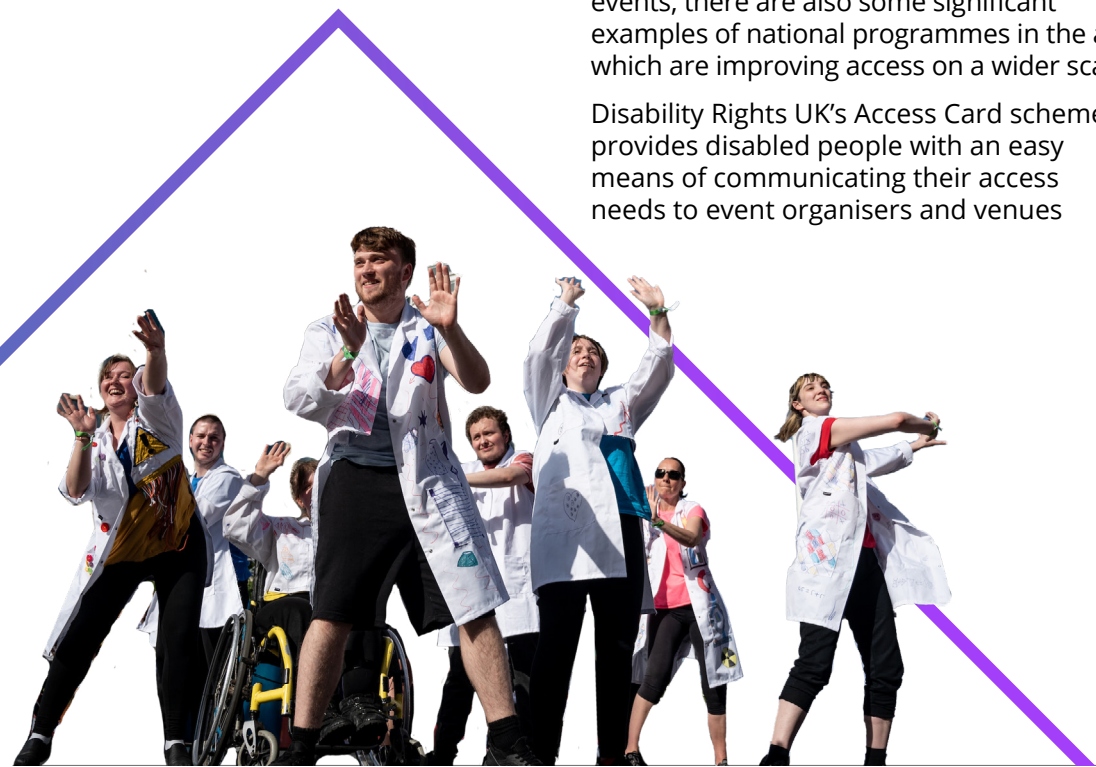
ahead of their visit.¹⁸ Arts Council England has announced a [new scheme, All In](#), that will help improve access for disabled, D/deaf and neurodivergent audience members attending creative and cultural events. This follows their 2020 – 2030 strategy, which states the intent to work with venues to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose and able to meet the needs of their communities. This is a digital membership scheme which individuals can join at no cost, providing details of their access needs just once, so that these requirements are centralised and participating venues have the information at hand when a ticket has been purchased. As part of this, ACE will also develop a website where audience members can find information on accessible performances and the access provision of venues. Resources will be developed for venues to support them with service provision and training. This scheme is being guided by an Advisory Group of disabled, D/deaf and neurodivergent members. There is real potential for this to be scaled and duplicated across other sectors, such as sporting events, if successful. The scheme should also help reveal common themes in the obstacles faced by participants and the adjustments that venues and events must prioritise in order to eliminate these barriers. By undergoing an extensive consultation process and feasibility study before launch, ACE are continuing to consult with disabled audience members to ensure the scheme will fulfil its objectives. In Wales, a central website – [Hynt](#) – (passage) developed by Arts Council Wales, contains details of accessible performances in venues across Wales, such as BSL interpretation, dementia friendly, and autism friendly. It differs from the ACE access scheme, in that the primary focus is on provision of free tickets for disabled people who require a personal assistant or carer to attend performances.

It is now possible to witness an exchange at the bar in BSL or book a ticket to work by a disabled artist as a matter of course. Disabled people are visible throughout the operation and programming of the building.¹⁶

Attitude is Everything offers a Live Events Access Charter, an industry standard for access provision, designed to help live music organisers build disability equality into all aspects of their venue or event. Music events or venues can receive a Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum award, based on the steps they have taken to offer good access to their audience members. As part of gaining membership with the Charter, venues must commit to terms including engagement with disabled audience members, ensuring that staff undertake Disability Equality training, and making a written commitment. Over 200 venues and events have now received an award, with the scheme receiving endorsement from UK Music's 'Live Music Group' and the UK Government.¹⁹

These schemes allow event organisers to collaborate with industry bodies to better reach disabled audiences and demonstrate their commitment to making events more inclusive.

By working with disabled people to remove barriers, providing training to their staff, and approaching their events with inclusive design, this offers practical solutions and a meaningful plan for engaging with disabled participants and audience members. Events themselves provide the impetus and funding to accelerate this process.



PRINCIPLE FOUR: MEASURE WHAT YOU TREASURE



One of the most significant challenges in using events to improve perceptions of disability is in measuring impact to identify whether these changes have been successful. This needs to happen on two different but related levels: first, we must evaluate to what extent the event itself is inclusive, and what difference taking an inclusive approach has made to audiences, participants, volunteers, staff, and organisations taking part. This is largely a question of collecting attendance data and feedback and having the time to reflect on it. Whilst this sounds simple, in reality it is fraught with difficulty, as event organisers will know.

The second level of analysis is about understanding the ways a particular event, and events in general, can contribute to a more inclusive society. This has been the subject of some excellent academic research, including by the Centre for Culture, Sport and Events at the University of West of Scotland.²⁰ However, it is often overlooked by event evaluations themselves – as with similar outcomes like events “bringing people together”.

In establishing our founding Theory of Change, Spirit of 2012 set out a specific outcomes pathway for the ways in which events can improve inclusion, with the intention of gathering evidence related to both the inclusiveness of events themselves, and these wider societal issues. This Theory of Change is included at the end of this report.

Gathering the data to test our Theory of Change proved challenging. We faced issues around collecting accurate information on the number of disabled participants attending an event, as well as in gathering enough feedback on their experiences to draw reliable conclusions. To make matters worse, traditional surveys are not always suitable for some disabled people. Interpreting changes in attitudes from surveys before and after

the event posed another challenge. If fewer non-disabled participants now agreed that “disabled people can lead as full a life as non-disabled people” (a question from the British Social Attitudes Survey), had participating in activities alongside disabled people failed to change narrow perceptions? Or, had this increased social contact made them aware of disabling barriers they had previously not thought about?

From 2016 – 2019, Spirit of 2012 funded Stopgap to deliver *Seafarers*, a £210,000 inclusive dance project to embed inclusive dance practice in eleven locations across Norfolk and Suffolk. The project involved two large scale outdoor productions, in 2018 and 2019, as part of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival. Stopgap is an inclusive dance company and Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. The performances mixed professional non-disabled and disabled dancers, including wheelchair users, with amateur disabled and non-disabled dancers. To measure changes in perception, evaluator Ruth Melville used a wide range of techniques including analysing, both before and after the project, the words that participants associated with disabled people in general, and what barriers might inhibit disabled people from dancing.

Several of our projects also asked participants if and how their views about disability or disabled people changed over the course of the project. At an audience level, in Stopgap’s *Seafarers* project, more than 80% of audiences said that their views of disabled people were more or much more positive after seeing the performance, with the 14% who said that their perceptions had stayed the same, explaining that this was because they already had a positive perception.

The impact of that on the disabled participant's parents is really immense. I think that's very powerful in terms of recalibrating what might be possible for their own child who is participating. I think it had never even occurred to them that the people leading might also have disabilities as well.

Such questions are challenging to pose in quantitative surveys, and we recognise that some people may simply find them inappropriate. In their independent evaluation of Spirit's inclusion funding, Renaisi list some of the barriers that have made measuring a change in perceptions a challenge – not least the difficulty of establishing an accurate baseline. As one of our grant holders observed to Renaisi, "It's very difficult to ask somebody whether they are less able than they were before...because then people have to admit that they had a problem with their perceptions in the first place. And I think a lot of people are understandably quite nervous about saying that." The difficulties lead to some events claiming or hoping to have change perceptions without knowing for certain if they have.

These sorts of measures tend to foreground the opinions and attitudes of non-disabled people, rather than the experiences of disabled people themselves. Beacon Films recognised this imbalance when trying to understand their impact on changing perceptions.

"We felt we had to change the 'perceptions of disability' question to one that:

- asked the right people (people who consider themselves to have a disability)
- was understandable for all
- was relevant for all."

Ultimately, the project team decided to measure how positive their participants felt about participating in their community before and after the project.

Understanding the experiences of disabled audience members, participants and organisers about the inclusiveness of the event is vital to understanding progress overall. This begins with attendance data, working out who is missing and why. In the Hull 2017 City of Culture evaluation, it was noted that "Audience data shows that significant progress was made in engaging audiences who are 'limited a little' by a health condition or disability but that more work must be done to reach those 'limited a lot'." This audience was the least likely to say they felt represented by the programme.

It is clear that measuring the success of events in promoting inclusivity poses challenges, but this makes it all the more important that organisers incorporate inclusivity measures into their monitoring and evaluation frameworks, pursuing creative and collaborative methods of data collection.

CASE STUDY

MAKING ROUTES, OASIS PLAY

Making Routes was a three-year inclusive arts project culminating in a three-day festival in 2017. It was delivered through a partnership between South London Gallery, Battersea Arts Centre and Oasis Play.

The team collected survey data that showed 87% of participants felt supported to take part fully in the festival, and that 86% of the young people felt happier because of taking part. The richest learning, however, came from three "puffing and wooling" sessions to explore if and how the project had impacted on perceptions, and reflect on how this might change future practice at all three participating organisations.

Summarising the learning across the three discussions, the report explained:

"Interventions by disabled participants associated with Making Routes revealed the degree to which the festival had managed to create an inclusive, welcoming environment for people who often feel discriminated against or unsupported in public settings. Festival Volunteers and support workers were particularly keen to point out that the festival demonstrated the diverse scope of disabled young people's abilities and it had raised people's expectations about what was achievable. Some participants commented that Making Routes highlighted the necessity for broader social change, and the problem of imagined constraints holding back organisations from being consistently inclusive. They suggested, however, that the programme offered a sense of hope for the future. Non-disabled participants also recognised how the

creation of an accepting, non-judgemental environment benefited everyone."

The findings demonstrate how the process of evaluation can enhance the intended outcomes of the project itself by encouraging reflective practice.

The team also produced a summary of their evaluation methodologies in a separate guide, covering how they had reached a shared understanding of evaluation, created inclusive, visually appealing evaluation materials and established a mixed methods approach.²¹

Other grant holders have sought to understand their impact by looking at organisational change. In Hull, disability and inclusion training was a significant part of the masterclass programme for volunteers. The evaluation explains, "As a result of the training they had attended, nearly half (47%) of all volunteers reported an increase in knowledge and understanding of inclusive language and over a third (34%) were more confident communicating with people who have different types of disability"²².



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most event organisers, funders and participants believe there has been significant progress in the way events are designed and delivered for disabled people over the past decade. These sentiments were reflected in our focus groups, with disabled people expressing broadly positive feelings about their experiences of attending events. However, not everyone is getting the basics right, and we heard much about the need for practical improvements – sufficient accessible toilets, seating, quiet spaces – as well as greater awareness and empathy. But, at least amongst our sample, people felt things were moving in the right direction.

The Government's [disability action plan](#), which was open for consultation in the autumn of 2023, sets out various plans that different government departments have for making this country “the most accessible place in the world for disabled people to live, work and thrive”. Under the DCMS section, events – including the Paralympic Games – feature heavily, as does the Arts Council and BF1's new UK-wide access scheme, All-In. There is clearly momentum for change.

Underrepresentation of disabled people in events at all levels is affected by many things that are outside the control of the sectors and organisers themselves. Access to high quality healthcare, good jobs and disability allowance all indirectly have a role and are largely beyond the scope of this report. We have instead focused on what is within the remit of the event organisers, hosts and funders.

The availability and accessibility of transport, however, was a recurrent theme that is strongly interconnected with disabled people's participation in events. In polling conducted for our national Inquiry into the Power of Events, only 50% of people thought that public transport was usually accessible to disabled people. Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, this country's most famous Paralympian, and a patron of Spirit of 2012, documents the challenges she experiences on trains and buses on social media. Outside of any specific events, improvements to the accessibility of transport are likely to have a significant impact on disabled people's likelihood of participation in national and community events – as well getting to and from work and social activities in general. In the absence of this investment, we have seen event organisers compensate for existing transport infrastructure by putting on special transportation for an event, or factor in transport costs as part of access payments to facilitate participation. Major events can also be the catalyst for that capital investment, leading to upgrades to existing infrastructure that lasts beyond the event itself. Capital infrastructure investment must be used as an opportunity to improve universal design.

When it comes to reducing discrimination, events can play a significant role both in increasing visibility and representation of disabled people in public life, and also in providing those opportunities for mixing between people that are essential for understanding and empathy. Of course, events alone cannot eliminate discrimination and prejudice, but can

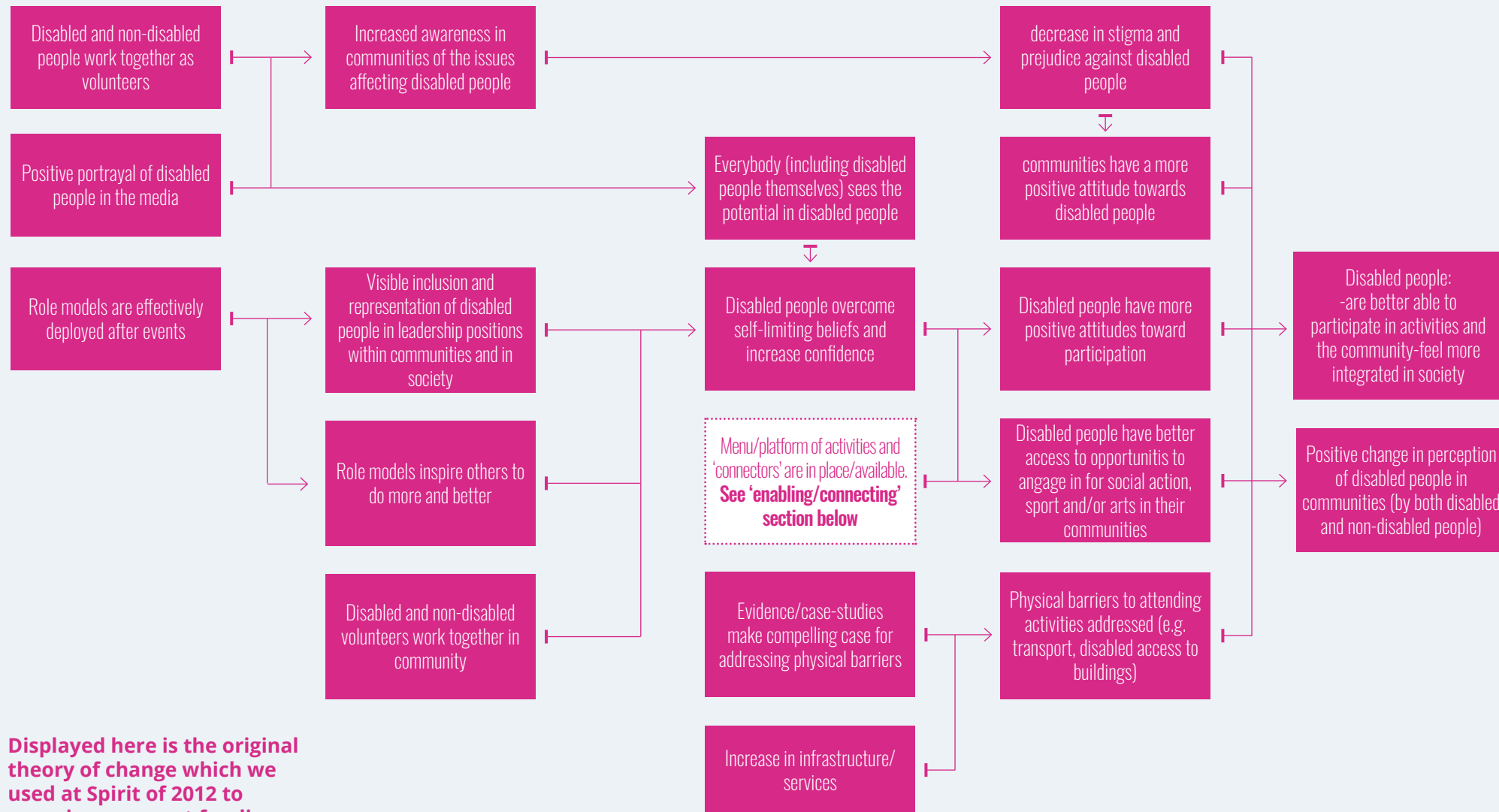
contribute alongside other interventions such as a strong response to hate crime, better regulation of social media, education programmes and volunteer and workplace training. What events do well is galvanise partnership working around a shared goal – so putting increased inclusion as a core outcome from the event can stimulate action across different sectors.

Events can actively celebrate diversity and difference, breaking down barriers to opportunity at every stage, as well as challenging stereotypes and perceptions, as Critical Mass, an inclusive mass cast, recently showed in the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Some events are participatory in nature, fostering a deeper engagement by encouraging those who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to take part to do so, including underrepresented communities.

Recommendations:

1. Event organisers and funders must ensure that inclusivity is embedded in the design and vision for an event from the very start - it is more effective to build it in from the beginning than it is to bolt it on. Event organisers should include disabled people in the team organising events, including in leadership and governance roles. It is crucial that the whole team involved in planning and delivering an event is committed to delivering it inclusively.
2. Event organisers must consider the full journey of participation to make events truly inclusive, rather than just the event itself. This includes the marketing of an event, travel to and from it, as well as follow-up consultation and reflection. Organisers must communicate access provisions of an event clearly and in an accessible form.
3. Event organisers should ensure that event staff and volunteers receive training on disability awareness, etiquette, and assistance techniques. This training should extend to disability equality and ableist training, identifying and challenging the structures that create and maintain barriers to disabled access and participation.
4. Event organisers should engage in reflective practice throughout the lifecycle of an event, creating a feedback mechanism for disabled attendees to input at any stage, and using that feedback to improve both the event itself and any future events. If increasing inclusion is a stated aim of the project, the evaluation needs to measure the extent to which it has been achieved.
5. Where events use volunteers, event organisers should engage and support disabled people to volunteer, funding high-quality volunteering opportunities. Volunteering contributes to better health and wellbeing outcomes, and promotes social connection.
6. Making all of these recommendations a reality requires adequate funding at every stage. Funders should make delivering on inclusion commitments part of their grant conditions, but must back this up by providing sufficient resource to do this well. Funders must recognise the opportunity presented by events: the costs of equal participation vary depending on existing infrastructure, context and individual need, but sufficient ring-fenced funding can create long-lasting improvements to inclusion in host locations. The investment an event brings can be used to build infrastructure and implement access standards that carry on beyond the event.

THEORY OF CHANGE



Displayed here is the original theory of change which we used at Spirit of 2012 to organise our grant funding.

Empowering disabled people

Disabled people are encouraged and enabled to participate more fully in sport, arts and culture, and volunteering. Barriers to participation are reduced, suitable opportunities are available and inclusion becomes the 'default'. Disabled people are visible and active in their communities.

Challenging perceptions of disability

Building on the success of the London 2012 Paralympic Games, people's perceptions of disabled people (including their self-perceptions) is more positive and inclusive- being seen and acknowledged for what they can achieve and contribute to public, and local, life. Disabled people's contribution to sport, arts and culture, and volunteering is recognised and celebrated.

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