



ACCESSIBLE RECRUITMENT

A REPORT FROM MAKING ROUTES

SLG

**BATTERSEA
ARTS CENTRE**



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CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary	p02
2. Introduction to Making Routes	p02
3. Overview of recruitment process	p03 - 06
4. Reflections and adaptations	p07
5. Positives	p08 - 09
6. Challenges	p10
7. Conclusion	p11



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the artist recruitment process developed through the Making Routes project, focusing in particular on the elements that made this process accessible to disabled artists.

The aim of this report is to share knowledge and good practice with regards to the development of an accessible recruitment process, with any organisation or individual for whom this information may be of interest.

2. INTRODUCTION TO MAKING ROUTES

Making Routes is a unique creative partnership between Oasis Play (Oasis), Battersea Arts Centre (BAC) and the South London Gallery (SLG) funded by Spirit of 2012. The three organisations are neighbours, joined by a single bus route. Making Routes aims to bring adjacent communities together, place children and young people at the centre of an ambitious creative partnership as co-collaborators and ensure that disabled people are visible, valued and fully included in community and cultural life.

In October 2017, Making Routes culminated in a three-day inclusive festival programmed by children and young people across all three Making Routes venues. This event showcased the creative outputs of the project and the talents of its participants.



3. OVERVIEW OF RECRUITMENT PROCESS

In 2016, Making Routes commissioned eight disabled and non-disabled artists to deliver regular inclusive arts activities, creative encounters and cultural events utilising their experience in three distinct forms: visual arts, play and performing arts.

Initially the recruitment process was divided into five phases:

- 1) Pre-recruitment agreements
- 2) Artist callout
- 3) Shortlisting
- 4) Inspiration days
- 5) Artist proposals
- 6) Selection and recruitment

Pre-recruitment agreements

The Making Routes team made three pre-recruitment agreements.

1. It was agreed that the recruited cohort would represent a balance of:

- Disabled and non-disabled artists (50/50)
- Genders (male/female/other)
- Artists with a background in play, performing arts and visual arts
- Artists of different ages and at differing stages in their careers

2. It was agreed that Making Routes would adopt a broad understanding of disability, encompassing physical impairments, learning disabilities, neurodiversity and mental health conditions.

3. It was agreed that Making Routes would understand disability using the social model*.

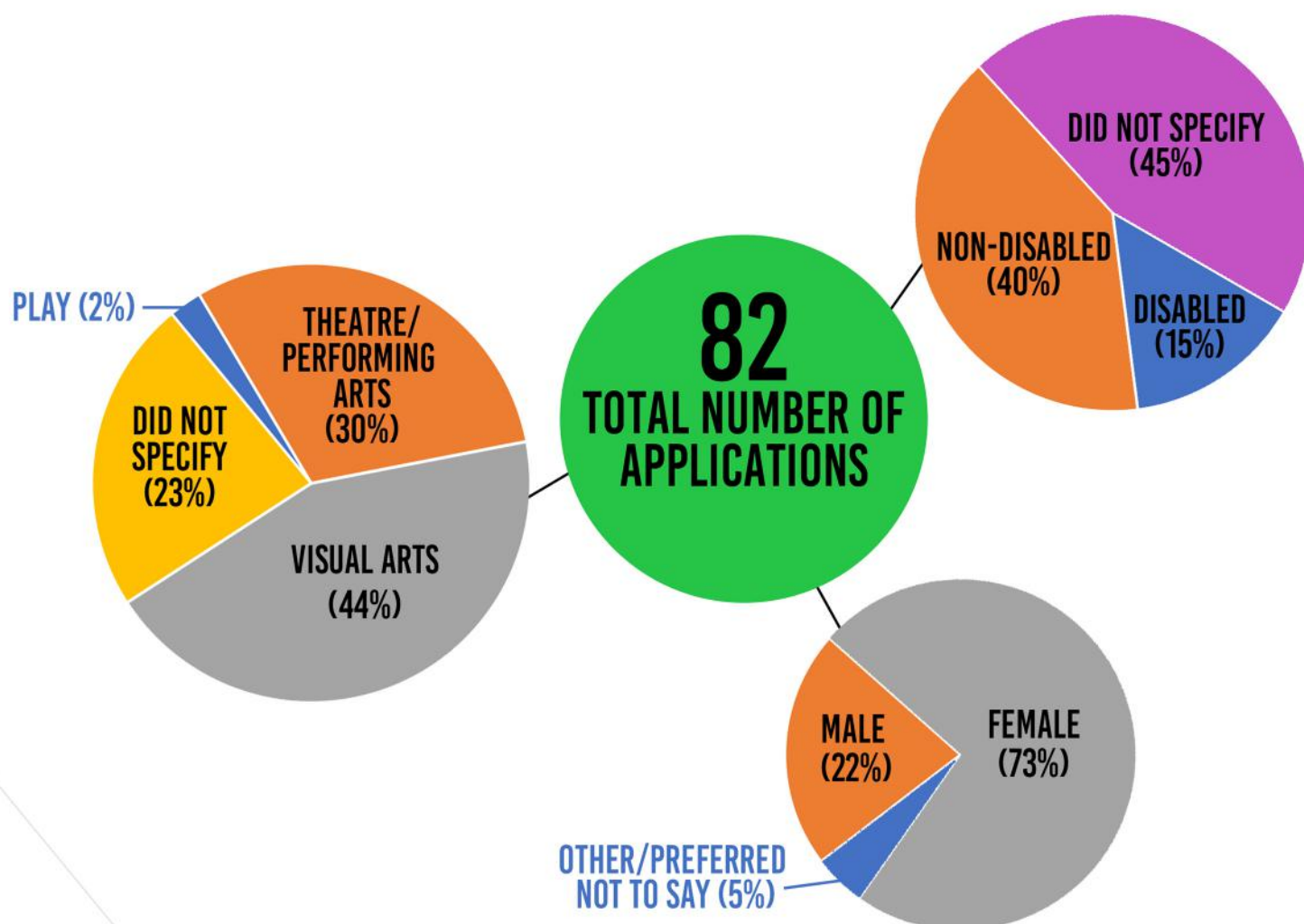
*The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference' (www.scope.org.uk).

Artist callout

An open callout for expressions of interest was disseminated through the networks of the three Making Routes organisations as well as disability arts organisations including: Unlimited, Graeae, Attitude is Everything, Stopgap Dance, Disability Arts Online, Access All Areas and Heart n Soul. The callout asked artists to:

- Outline any specific support requirements
- Present an initial residency idea
- Provide an overview of their approach to working collaboratively with children and young people
- Outline their experience of disability and working with disabled people
- Describe how the project would help inform or develop their current practice
- State if they identified as disabled

From this callout Making Routes received eighty-two applications, detailed below.



Short listing

Each partner organisation cast a vote of Yes, No, or Maybe for each applicant. These results were then tallied and used as the basis for the shortlisting process. The Making Routes project team, which included disabled and non-disabled staff from the Making Routes organisations, worked together to refine the applications from eighty-two to twenty-eight artists, of which 25% were disabled, 65% were non-disabled and 10% did not say.

Inspiration Days

The twenty-eight shortlisted artists were invited to attend two paid inspiration days across the three Making Routes sites.

The purpose of the inspiration days was to:

- Give artists the opportunity to meet each other and the team
- Visit and tour the three Making Routes settings
- Ask questions about the project
- Meet children and young people from the organisations
- Learn more about inclusive play work, visual arts and performing arts practices
- Inform the artists' initial ideas and contribute to their project proposals
- Ensure that artists were given the opportunity to discuss their ideas and practice face-to-face with the Making Routes team
- Ensure the Making Routes team had the opportunity to meet the artists in person

Sixty-one people attended the inspiration days; including the shortlisted artists, collaborators and support workers, guest speakers and the Making Routes team.

Artist Proposals

Following the inspirations days, twenty-two artists/collaborations made written proposals to the project. The proposal asked artists:

- If they identified as disabled
- To describe their idea in a way that could be understood by a child
- To describe what each of the three Making Routes settings could offer their idea
- To outline how they would make their idea inclusive
- To summarise how their idea had changed since attending the Inspiration Days

Selection & Recruitment

As before, each partner organisation cast a vote of Yes, No, or Maybe for each applicant. These results were then tallied and used as the basis for the final selection. The selection process was informed by the artists' initial ideas, existing skills and practice, their proposals and their input to the Inspiration Days.

Though the focus of the Making Routes recruitment process was to ensure that disabled and non-disabled people were equally represented in the final cohort, the selection process also ensured that different ethnicities were represented - acknowledging that in some situations non-white artists may face similar barriers to accessing opportunities as disabled people.



A photograph of two children climbing a wooden play structure with vertical slats and colorful handholds. One child in a brown jacket is higher up than the other in a red jacket. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the play area.

4. REFLECTIONS & ADAPTATIONS

Below are some of the key reflections and adaptations that were made during the recruitment process to ensure that disabled and non-disabled artists were given equal opportunity to apply.

Second Wave Recruitment

During the 'Selection and Recruitment' process the Making Routes team identified that the applications received did not fully reflect the broad understanding of disability set out in the pre-recruitment agreements. This was a key moment in which the Making Routes team recognised that something in the recruitment process

wasn't working, identified what the problem was, and collectively agreed how to change the process to rectify this by adapting the process to meet the shared interests and agreements of the project.

It was highlighted that learning-disabled artists were under-represented in the final set of proposals. As there is an established group of learning disabled children and young people who access Oasis through the Oasis Inclusion Project (OIP), the team wanted to ensure that learning disabled artists were represented in the final cohort. This was particularly significant to the team who agree that the visibility of disabled people in creative and professional roles can create important role models for disabled and non-disabled children and young people.

The Making Routes team agreed to recruit an initial six artists (two disabled and four non-disabled) and that a second wave of recruitment – open specifically to disabled artists – would be undertaken to ensure the cohort reflected the agreed diversity principles. It was also agreed that outreach for the second wave of recruitment would be targeted specifically towards learning-disabled artists.

Following the second wave of recruitment a further five disabled artists applied to the project, of which three (60%) were learning disabled.

Flexible Methods of Application

It was highlighted that asking solely for written proposals would create a barrier for some applicants. During the second wave of recruitment artists were given the opportunity to apply using written, audio recorded, photographed or filmed proposals. Many of the second wave artists chose to include photographs and images to support their written applications.



5. POSITIVES

The Inspiration Days

The Inspiration Days allowed the Making Routes project to take the recruitment process 'off the page' and gave artists multiple ways to present themselves, their practice and their ideas for the project. The inspirations days ensured that artists were not recruited on the strength of one area of their application alone, but on the overall strength of their input to the Inspiration Days, initial residency ideas, existing skills and practice and final proposal.

The Inspiration Days acknowledged that disabled artists may face multiple barriers to completing and gaining traditional written/interview commissions and offered a level playing field to all applicants. The Inspiration Days also gave the Making Routes project team the opportunity to meet all the artists applying to the project and network with a broad range of disabled and non-disabled artists across multiple disciplines. In acknowledgment of the overall strength of the artists involved in the inspiration days, sixteen disabled and non-disabled artists, who were unsuccessful in their original applications to Making Routes, have since been offered a separate commission at either Oasis, SLG or BAC.

Paying for everyone to attend the Inspiration Days and providing presentations and knowledge exchange with guest speakers, ensured that the Making Routes recruitment process was of economic and professional benefit to everyone involved. It also ensured that there was greater economic equality between applicants.

‘[THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS] WAS VERY GOOD - IT FELT TRANSPARENT. THE INSPIRATION DAYS WERE GREAT IN ORDER TO AFFIRM IT WAS A PROJECT I WANTED TO PROPOSE SOMETHING FOR’

‘I REALLY APPRECIATED BEING PAID FOR THE RECRUITMENT WORKSHOPS’

(MAKING ROUTES ARTISTS)

Artist Access Budget

An artist access budget was available to artists from the start of the application process. This was used to pay support worker/creative enabler fees for attendance at the Inspiration Days and to support disabled artists with writing, recording or filming their applications. Making Routes spent approximately £2,000 on artist access during the recruitment process.

Commissioning Collaborations with Inclusive Arts Organisations

Two of the Making Routes commissions were given to learning disabled artists working in collaboration with creative teams from inclusive arts organisations Heart n Soul and Access All Areas. Commissioning these artists as collaborations allowed the project to exchange knowledge of inclusive practice with two established organisations. The wider teams at these organisations have shared their knowledge and expertise in devising accessible events, developing multi-sensory approaches to documentation and inclusive approaches to collaborative working.

6. CHALLENGES



Advocacy

Because there were a far greater number of non-disabled artists known to the Making Routes organisations prior to the project, disabled artists were less likely to be advocated for during the recruitment process. Though the call for expressions of interest was shared with numerous disability arts organisations, there was still a much higher percentage of non-disabled artists in the initial applications.

Accessible Outreach Formats

The initial artist callout for Making Routes was not offered in multiple formats (such as easy-read, large format or audio-flyer). Having the callout in multiple formats may have increased the diversity of applicants from the start.

Time

A Lack of time was a challenge at several moments in the recruitment process:

1. Going through the expressions of interest and later the written proposals with a project team spread across three organisations was a lengthy and logistically complicated process.
2. It took time for Making Routes to gain the trust of inclusive arts organisations; this was only achieved through sustained close communication over several months as well as through advocacy from disabled artists and disabled-led organisations.
3. It was important to offer applicants enough time to create their proposals (particularly if a disabled artist needed to arrange support to do so).

7. CONCLUSION

Following the above recruitment process, the final Making Routes cohort of 8 artists represents a balance of disabled and non-disabled artists (50/50), genders, artists with a background in play, performing arts and visual arts as well as artists of different ages and at differing stages in their careers

Six key considerations that Making Routes would suggest when designing an accessible recruitment process are detailed below:

1. Pre-recruitment agreements - Take the time at the start of the recruitment process to define who you are aiming to recruit – referring to pre-recruitment agreements throughout the process is an easy way to see if you are on track.

2. Identify barriers - Ask people with lived experience what the potential barriers to the recruitment process might be: acknowledge these and design your process around them.

3. Time - Time is important: especially if an artist needs to arrange support to make their application or attend an Inspiration Day.

4. Budget for access throughout - Budgeting for access costs during the recruitment process and making it clear that access funding is available is important not only because it is essential for some people to apply, but also as it will clearly communicate to disabled artists that you are in support of their application.

5. Take a multi-sensory approach - Where possible, offer information in different formats (easy-read, large-format, audio flyer, non-text/picture supported). Your applicants are likely to reflect the formats that your commission has been offered in and many disabled artists will not consider applying unless an appropriate format is available.

6. Flexibility - If something isn't working, or hasn't worked, change it.





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RELATING TO MAKING ROUTES

