

I LOVE MUSEUMS BUT THEY DON'T LOVE ME

Age and Disability
Arts Access
Info Sheet

www.adiarts.ie

www.ageandopportunity.ie



This Info Sheet presents the opinions of arts venues and older people, including those who also identify as people with disabilities, in how to better engage with older audiences. It has been developed by Age & Opportunity, the national organisation working to enable the best quality of life for us all as we age, and Arts & Disability Ireland, the national development and resource organisation for arts and disability. The two organisations have an interest in improving access to the arts and serve a shared intersection of older people and people with disabilities. This Info Sheet will help venues to engage with audiences across those demographics.



Audience and performers at *Love Song Part 1*, Communities of Dissent at the Abbey Theatre, as part of the Bealtaine Festival 2022. Image: Tony Kinlan.

Venues

Arts venues across Ireland contributed their existing approaches and identified their needs in improving access to the arts for older people.

Venues providing arts for older people and people with disabilities have identified a shared need for:

- Support in developing policy and methods to ensure inclusivity
- Information on inclusive communications
- Better models to engage with intersectional audiences
- A holistic view; older people and people with disabilities are not only audiences but also can be staff, volunteers, artists, etc
- Capacity to improve accessibility of buildings and services
- Training across teams to improve inclusivity
- A network of organisations working to improve inclusivity.

“How do we classify older? 50+? Retirement age? Late 70s?”

“We offer bespoke programmes for people with additional needs.”

“There is a need to rethink the idea of intersectionality regarding older people and people with disabilities.”

Audiences

Audiences of older people, including some who identify as people with disabilities, contributed their experiences of accessing arts in venues, and were asked what venues could do to improve their experience.

Older Audiences have identified:

- Issues with Accessibility of venues – some can't cater for powered chairs, seating is often segregated, parking is regularly an issue, and accessible transport not always available
- Diversity of offering and programming leads to new interests
- Satisfaction with offering during COVID-19 pandemic
- Online programmes mean people will try something new
- Venues offer a place to socialise as well as a programme of events.

“I love Museums but they don't love me – due to their inaccessibility and costs.”

“There's an assumption that you're not able because you're old.”

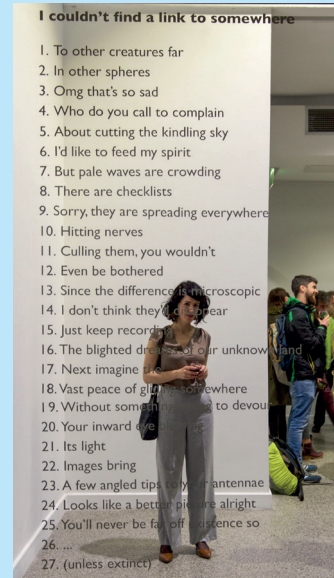
“The Arts suddenly became accessible.”



Audience members at the *A Different Republic* seminar, in The LAB Gallery, 2017. Image: Louis Haugh.



Oh - Infamy - we eat electric light, Emma Wolf-Haugh and Iarlaith Ni Fheorais at the Oonagh Young Gallery as part of the *Ulysses 2.2* series of artistic experiments to celebrate the centenary publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, 2022. Image: Louis Haugh.



Artist Suzanne Walsh, *I couldn't find a link to somewhere, A Different Republic* launch at The LAB Gallery, 2017. Image: Peter Varga.

Older Audiences would like to see:

"Don't want specialised programming. Don't want to be put in a box."

- Universally designed accessible buildings – in particular seating and toilets
- Accessible seating to be integrated and not segregated
- Appointed and trained accessibility officers at venues
- Clear communications, signage and information on how to access the venue as well as about the artworks/programme
- Marketing and engagement through: community groups, printed materials, WhatsApp Groups, emails and e-newsletters, FitLine, social media, TV and radio, event listings websites and word of mouth through local authorities and community groups
- A hybrid model of online and at-venue programmes
- Support to connect older people to the online arts programmes
- Accessible price points.

"Outreach from the venues, not just to groups but also to individuals."

Older Audiences have suggested:

"We want to choose. We are interested in everything."

- Diversity of programming with a choice on offer rather than bespoke programmes
- Access monitored and user tested by older people and people with disabilities
- Venues should engage with groups to understand their needs
- An older people and disability-led Advisory Group for venues.

"There's a lot of box ticking going on, but it's important that someone takes on the responsibility of checking access services at venues."