



## Factory International Access Policy

*This policy was updated in June 2025. It will be reviewed and refreshed annually, with the next review due in June 2026.*

### About Factory International and our access work:

Factory International delivers a year-round programme of innovative dance, theatre, music, visual arts, performance and digital commissions at Aviva Studios. We also run Manchester International Festival (MIF) – the festival of brand-new artistic work that has captivated our city since 2007. We invite communities from Manchester and beyond to meet, exchange ideas, learn new skills and have their say through our free Factory Academy training programme, Artist Development programmes, International Training, Learning Programmes, Forums and Community Partnerships.

At Factory International, we believe in enabling everyone to share in what we do on an equitable basis, with dignity and respect, and we aim to offer a high-quality accessible experience for everyone.

As such, we work hard to ensure that accessibility is a thread that runs through everything we do, through every part of our organisation, and through every stage of the development of our projects.

Our work on this is led by our dedicated Access Manager, but accessibility is part of everyone's job here. We are committed to an embedded approach.

We understand disability through the Social Model (although we know that this has some limitations) and as such, we acknowledge that it is our collective responsibility – with our partners and collaborators – to make our work and our spaces accessible for Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, and chronically ill people.

We are committed to listening to and learning from the lived experience of disabled people, and to testing new approaches that support us to continually refine and improve accessibility across our organisation.

As part of this commitment, we have adopted an Access Policy as laid out here.

For the purposes of this document, 'disability' is understood in its broadest sense and – as a minimum – covers all the impairments and conditions within the scope of the Equality Act (2010).



## Key aims:

We understand that there will always be more to do to make our work accessible to all of our visitors, artists, and staff. We recognise that we'll make mistakes and get things wrong along the way, but the key aims below support us to ensure we're always working towards an approach to access that aligns with our mission and values. Our key aims are as follows:

- Ensure everyone can access and enjoy Factory International events and/or work, collaborate, participate or volunteer with us on an equitable basis.
- Work first to remove (and avoid creating) systemic barriers to participation for disabled people. If removal is not possible, we will provide a range of structures, adjustments and options to deliver equitable access.
- We will work to create an environment where disabled people feel as valued and have as positive an experience of Factory International as anyone else.
- We will create systems to ensure disabled people are fairly and authentically represented across our artistic programme, our workforce, and our governance structure.
- At Factory International, accessibility will be seen as a creative opportunity and as an additive to exceptional performance. We will actively encourage our collaborators to explore and integrate new access approaches within their work.
- Accessibility will be understood as a guiding principle in our everyday thinking and embedded in all areas of our organisation.
- Disabled people will not be treated less favourably by Factory International for a reason relating to their impairment or neurodivergence than others for whom that reason doesn't apply.

## How we are working to achieve these aims:

### Organisational planning and strategy:

Accessibility and disability representation are firmly embedded in our Business Plan, with a particular focus on:

- Exploring accessibility as a creative practice.
- Creating accessible productions consistently and working with our artists to innovate new forms of accessible work.
- Authentically representing disability across our artistic programme.
- Providing equitable employment, training, and artistic opportunities for disabled people.
- Establishing Factory International as an example of best practice for visitor accessibility, both digitally and in person.



Progress against our strategic objectives in these areas are regularly reviewed by our Board.

Disability Representation is also represented with specific targets in our Equalities Action Plan and our Sustainability Action Plan. Alongside this, we are part of three major external benchmarking programmes, [Attitude Is Everything's Live Events Charter](#), [All In's Access Scheme](#), and the UK government's [Disability Confident](#) scheme, which help to provide a basis for our work on accessible visitor experience and accessible recruitment and workplace culture respectively.

In addition to this strategic grounding:

- We have a dedicated, permanent **Access Manager** role – this role works strategically to embed accessibility in all that we do across the organisation and to develop delivery frameworks for our access workstream.
- We have developed an **Access Action Plan** to help us continually improve accessibility and disability representation across Factory International. This is reviewed regularly by our Executive Team.
- We have a **Disabled People's Engagement Group** which was established in 2019 and has members local to Greater Manchester with a diverse range of lived experience of disability. The group is facilitated by Breakthrough UK and meets at least four times per year to provide advice and guidance to Factory International about how we can make all aspects of our work more accessible to disabled people.

## Visitor experience and operations:

- We programme a variety of types of accessible performance (including but not limited to captioned, audio-described, relaxed and BSL-interpreted presentations) both in-person and online, across our commissioned programme.
- We work with our commercial, music, and brand partners to ensure their approach to event delivery aligns with Factory International's expectations for visitor access.
- We provide up-to-date access information about our venue and events on our website.
- We conduct regular access audits of our venue, ensuring our spaces remain compliant with relevant Building Regulations and codes.
- We offer discounts for disabled people, and free Personal Assistant/Essential Companion tickets where required – we do not ask for 'proof'.
- We offer wheelchair spaces and access seating as needed across all our events.
- We have a dedicated access telephone number 0161 817 4531 (open 10am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday) and email address ([access@factoryinternational.org](mailto:access@factoryinternational.org)) where visitors can contact us to book tickets, ask questions about our events, or share access-related feedback about our building, events, or festival.
- We have an Assistance Dog Policy and welcome assistance dogs at Aviva Studios.
- We provide ongoing training in disability and access awareness to our staff and as part of our volunteer and freelancer inductions.



- We have a team of Access Champions within our Front of House Team who receive an additional level disability awareness training provided by our local disabled-led community partners.
- Through compulsory onboarding sessions, we ensure that all staff are aware of this Access Policy and can answer queries about access at Factory International.
- We are working to offer online booking for all our visitors, across our entire programme of events, and for all types of tickets (including Access Tickets). Where this is currently not possible, we have a dedicated Groups and Access Ticketing Coordinator who manages access bookings and ensure the whole Ticketing team is able to confidently answer questions and concerns from bookers with access requirements.

## Workplace and workforce:

- We are a Disability Confident employer and regularly review the accessibility of our recruitment and employment practices.
- Wherever possible, we offer interviews to all disabled applicants who demonstrate that they meet the essential criteria during the application process.
- We encourage all new starters to complete an 'About Me' form, a mechanism where they can make requests for reasonable adjustments and share with us other information that can support us to deliver an accessible workplace.
- We facilitate workplace needs assessments as required, and support employees through the Access to Work application process as needed.
- We ensure that accessibility is a key topic in our induction and onboarding process for new starters, with a dedicated access induction session delivered by our Access Manager compulsory for all.
- We provide ongoing training in disability and access awareness to our staff.
- We provide up to date access information about our main workplace in the form of an Access Statement.
- We have an active Disability Representation Working Group that any member of staff can join. This group is part of our wider Equalities workstream and exists to provide an empowering space and mutual support for Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, and chronically ill staff as well as to provide challenge, debate and learning around disability representation in the organisation.
- Our Access Manager maintains a knowledge hub of access resources for all staff to draw on and advises on accessibility best practice across all workstreams.

## Artists and the artistic programme:

- We identify at least one access innovation project per year – a commission that will in some way explore new technologies or methodologies to create accessible work.



- We offer dedicated Access Innovation funding at R&D stage to enable artists to develop their thinking around creative and integrated access.
- We have an inclusive casting policy with specific goals around disability representation, which we ask all artistic productions to use.
- We provide detailed access information about our front and back of house spaces at Factory International as part of our technical specifications and our Artist Liaison process.
- We use accessible audition spaces and rehearsal rooms as standard and can provide accessible accommodation and travel plans as required.
- We encourage the sharing of access riders access documents to help us ensure that appropriate support is put in place for artists and creative teams working with us.
- We are developing an R&D Access Policy to support the access needs of artists in the earliest stage of making work with us.
- We are developing an access agreement process as part of our Commissioning Framework to ensure that artists and creative teams understand our baseline expectations around accessible performance, and that we collectively agree to deliver them in the way that best suits each production.