

Improving Access for Family Festivals

Sarah Bird – Director, Wild Rumpus

Just So Festival is a weekend camping arts festival for families and we aim to offer the best experiences possible for everyone and to demonstrate exemplary and pioneering access provision, working closely with music charity Attitude Is Everything to go beyond the legal obligations set out in the Equality Act.

We specifically focus on:

- Comprehensive access information, including innovative programme guidelines so families can decide which performances best meet their needs and wishes. We provide large format print, simplified text, pictorial guides, audio versions of our programme and a virtual tour of the festival site
- Free Personal Assistant tickets
- Partnership working with local access organisations (Space Cheshire and Autism Inclusive) who provide safe and friendly chillout spaces for children who require it. We're keen to work with others in the festival and arts sector to help collaborate and share knowledge and best practice.

Perhaps most importantly we feel is that we have an Access Manager who is a point of contact in advance and throughout the festival for anyone with any access requirements to remove any potential barriers in advance of and at the festival itself.

Our comprehensive list of facilities can be access here <http://www.justsofestival.org.uk/accessibility/>

We believe passionately that Access provision should not be extra but integral to Just So Festival and that ticketholders with access needs are entitled to the full experience that other ticketholders get.

In recent years we're proud to have been awarded Attitude Is Everything's prestigious Gold Charter of Best Practice – recognised as one of the most accessible events in the UK. And to have worked with Unlimited to commission and tour 2 pieces of new work by disabled artists for families to try and ensure that our disabled audiences can see themselves reflected back in the performances we programme.

Our focus over the next year will be on continuing to develop our links with local groups – in particular local respite groups to enable them to bring large groups of service users each summer to Just So. We're also hoping to pioneer and promote systems of accessible volunteering – to enable those with access needs to volunteer and gain skills at the festival, alongside their carer.

I think the main shift in our attitude to access provision over the last few years has been to stop seeing it as a tick box exercise and more of a conversation.