

Forward

Midlothian

Disabled People

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Edinburgh International Festival

Its one of the most exciting calendar events of the year for Edinburgh and the Lothian's. As August draws closer I do look forward to choosing some random event but for disabled people planning also comes in to the plans before you can book. The questions, is it wheelchair friendly? Is the venue accessible? Is there a disabled toilet.? The list goes on. Living here I want to be part of buzz and excitement the festival brings. At previous venues I've not always been able to go to event due to it not being disabled friendly.

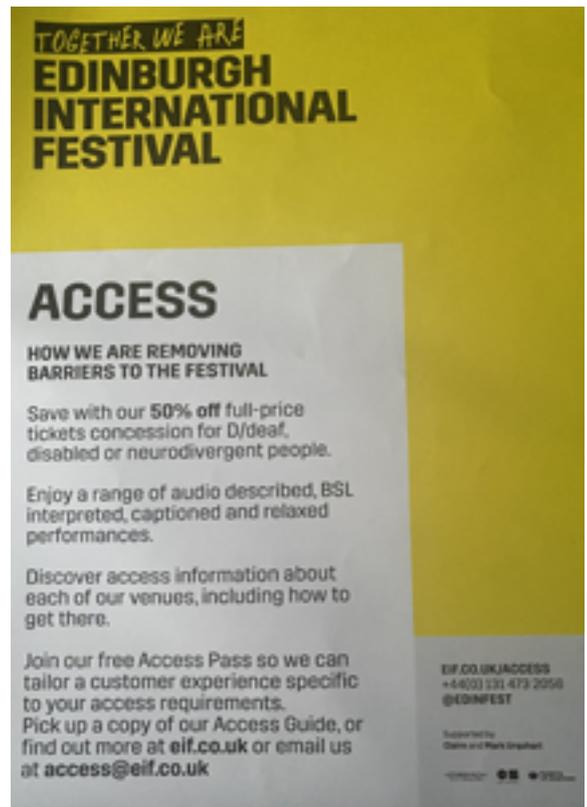
This is where Callum Madge comes in to it. Accessibility at Edinburgh International Festival. Callum first joined the team just over a year ago, but he comes with over ten years experience of working with people with a disability and mostly covered theatre and arts for disabled people.

His vision going forward.....Seeking to build on the legacy in increasing access to the festival that was first started in 2019 with the introduction of the first Festival Access Guide. Callum is looking to increase the number of disabled audiences who engage with the festival and to increase the offer of accessible performances and events available. By doing this *Widening the definition of disability of the festival users. Previously D/Deaf and disabled, now to be D/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent.

- Reducing financial barriers for disabled audiences and altering concession from 30% to 50% off full price tickets. This will also include free essential companion tickets for anybody who needs them.
- The access guide - a printed guide containing access information about each venue, listings, information and accessible events, and other useful information relating to access.
- The access pass - this is a free membership for disabled community. This will allow configuring to each persons festival account, with specific access requirements. This will allow box office and venue staff to be aware of the individuals information and will stop repeated booking requirements for every interaction.
- A increase in the number of the types of seats that are reserved for members of the access pass. It will include seats with additional legroom and aisle seats. These seats will only be able to be booked by members of the access pass to ensure people who need them are able to book them.
- A increase in the number of accessible performances and events from last year - including the festivals first ever BSL interpreted concert.
- A production with integrated BSL using an interpreter and a deaf performer, and integrated creative captions.
- The festival is hosting an event for disabled artists, in parallel with the production of Hamlet performed by a cast of people with Downs Syndrome.

On behalf of Forward Mid and myself we fully support these positive changes that will allow the disabled community to go to events with a new outlook on the festival and have the knowledge that there will be a more wider scope of choice for us.

Forward Mid and Callum would love to hear from our readers of any stories you have of the festival whether its a positive or negative story and if you have ideas or suggestions we can pass on to Callum please get in touch with us by email, social media or phone.



I'm now off to apply for my access pass and look what I can go to this year.

By Sheree

Community Ticketing Initiative

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is one of the greatest celebrations of arts and culture on the planet, and a unique platform for creative freedom. Every year in August, performers come from all over the world to showcase their work in Edinburgh.

The Fringe Society is the charity that was founded by artists to nurture and uphold the Fringe's values of inclusivity, experimentation and imagination. We support artists to bring work to the festival, help audiences navigate the programme, and celebrate the Fringe's values all around the world.

Community Ticketing Initiative

We want everyone to feel part of the Fringe, including local audiences who might otherwise be unable to attend. The Community Ticketing Initiative (CTI) provides free Fringe tickets for people in and around Edinburgh; these tickets

are generously donated by Fringe artists, companies and venues. CTI was previously known as the Children and Young People (CYP) ticketing scheme, and was renamed as it expanded in 2023 to allow both eligible children and adults to take part.

In 2024 CTI tickets have been ringfenced for those who live in Edinburgh or the Lothians and are either at risk, vulnerable, marginalised or isolated, or experiencing additional barriers to attending

the festival. The tickets can also be used by the recipient's family, carer, staff or friends to accompany them to see a show



Eligibility criteria

CTI tickets are intended for people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to attend the Fringe. Ticket recipients must live in Edinburgh or the Lothians and fall under one of the following categories:

- affected by mental health issues of themselves or a family member
- affected by disability or impairment of themselves or a family member
- a carer

To check what shows are supporting and have available tickets please visit edfringecti.online.
red61.co.uk/

To apply for free tickets please contact :
Lesley Kelly

✉ : info@mvacvs.org.uk

☎ : 0131 663 9471

Disability and Childbirth

I have long term health conditions and physical disabilities and last year I decided to have another baby despite swearing not to after my first 18 years ago. As I am nearing 40 I realized I am not done yet. It was a decision met by mixed feelings from the people close to me and ended up with some cutting contact with me out of disapproval and others coming back into contact to celebrate new life.

My fiancé and I started this journey by spending several months prepping with my doctor changing medications to pregnancy friendly ones and ensuring I was as healthy physically and mentally as possible. All in all I had a better pregnancy than I expected with minimum sickness and little complications. In fact, it was the best I felt in years. I am told that some peoples conditions can ease during pregnancy perhaps due to the hormones or the stem cells. I have mixed feelings on this after being told some of my conditions are lifelong and will never improve, only to have pregnancy prove them wrong. With this information well known by medical professionals I wonder what is being done to find out what causes this and ways to use this to improve peoples health?

Although people had reasonable concerns about how we would cope with a newborn alongside my health concerns I feel people failed to see how in some ways disabilities could bring positives. For example I have a sleep disorder and I am used to broken and little sleep so a newborns sleep schedule bothers me less than it might a healthy person who is used to a solid 8 hours. My life is already adapted to ensure I can live a regular life and so adapting to a baby isn't as hard as it might be for more able bodied people. A baby is always a huge change but disabled people can be good parents too.

My labour was straight forward apart from the epidural not working and my daughter was born fast. The back labour pains were excruciating and reminded me of days bed bound with back spasms. Unfortunately, the day after her birth my daughter was take to neonatal where it was discovered she had a heart condition and she was taken to Glasgow for an operation while I was kept in Edinburgh in the maternity unit and ICU as I also took a turn for the worst. I was released from my hospital ward after 10 days and was finally reunited with my daughter. She had to remain in Neonatal while I went home and ended up being released after 25 days.



Despite this difficult start she is now 4 and a half months old and is going from strength to strength. It has been a roller coaster of a journey but one I do not regret.

By Tamzin

Alternative Publications

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Forward Mid newsletters are available in large print on request from Eric Johnstone ☎ : 0131-663-9471 or ✉ eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk write to him at MVA, 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1AE with your request. Electronic copies can be found on www.forwardmid.org.uk. The latest Firefox browser has the reader symbol 📖 in the address bar, click and select narrate from left menu. The latest Safari Browser has the reader symbol **Reader** but does not read aloud. These only work on websites without errors. If you require help please contact Forward Mid and we will arrange to help you.

Edited by Iain Tait for Forward Mid