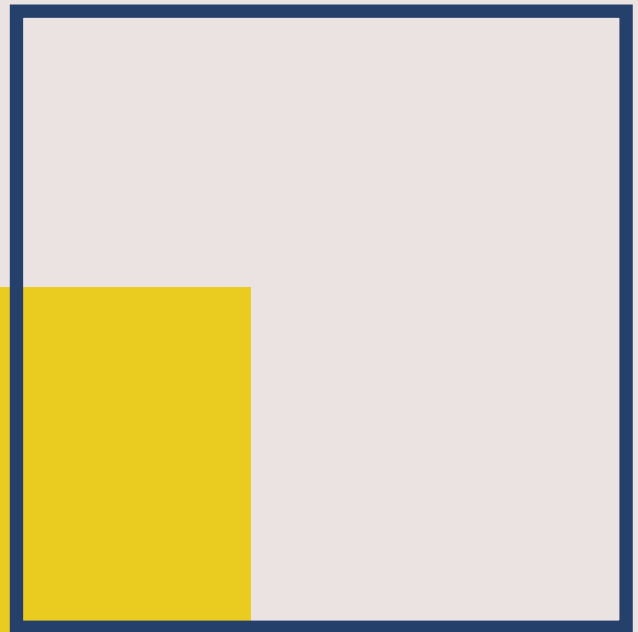


Working with Disabled Illustrators



Introduction



We want to help you engage effectively with all illustrators. In a recent survey we learnt that many disabled illustrators did not feel able to engage with commissions because reasonable adjustments were not being made. So, in partnership with Goss Consultancy, we have created this guide.

Finding the best illustrator for the job is your most important criteria. These suggestions of small changes will open your brief up to a wider pool of talent and increase the opportunity to find the best illustrator for the job - who may happen to be disabled.

Everyone benefits from inclusive design: people watching videos on noisy trains need subtitles, and clean design aids readability for all. Around a billion people worldwide (that's 15% of the global population) have some form of impairment.

Not all disabilities are obvious and not all disabled people identify as such. By adapting your processes to ensure accessibility you will give opportunities to those with 'hidden' disabilities, such as people on the autistic spectrum or people with diabetes.

This simple resource looks at three areas:

- Tips to open up your commissions to all
- Some ideas for working effectively with disabled illustrators
- Some tips around general communication and etiquette.

This is a very simple document, giving some useful pointers.

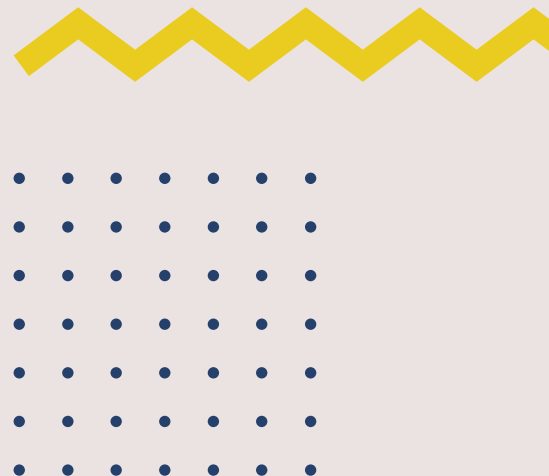
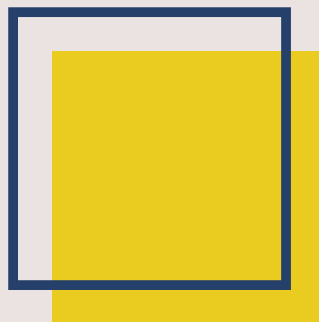
Links at the end to get more detail from specialist organisations.

What is accessibility?

Ensuring accessibility means ensuring processes and services can be accessed by everyone – whether they are disabled or not. This creates an inclusive environment from which everybody benefits.

What are reasonable adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are changes over and above what you normally provide which are made to avoid disadvantaging disabled people. The changes might be physical (e.g. ramps or improved lighting), or procedural, (e.g., extending timescales or using different formats.)



Increase the accessibility of your commissions

Widen your pool

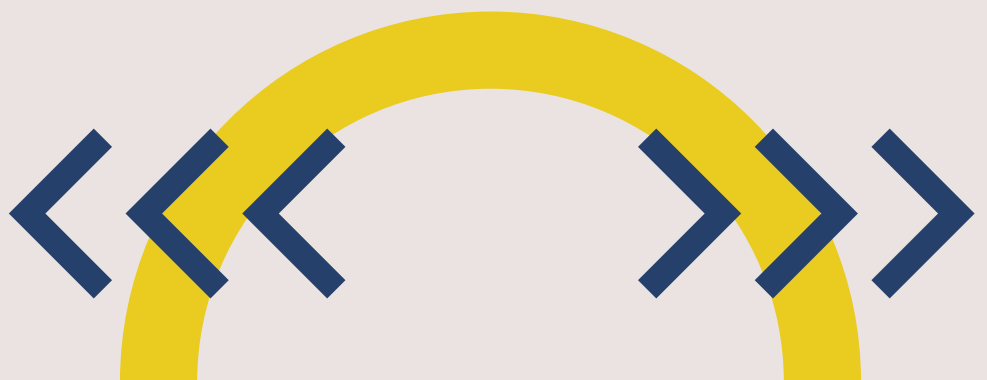
Consider where you source your illustrators from. Consider using artists you have not worked with before, look in places you don't usually look or try a different agency.

Preparing a brief

There are some simple steps you can take to make sure your brief is accessible:

- **Use 12pt font as minimum.** 12pt is the absolute minimum recommended, with 14pt being advisable.
- **Use bold text for emphasis.** Avoid italics and use bold instead. Italics are not accessible for people who have a visual impairment or dyslexia: almost two million people in the UK live with sight loss; 10% of the population have dyslexia. Similarly, avoid serif or 'handwritten' fonts or capitals as they are hard to read.
- **Colour contrasts.** Contrast between coloured backgrounds and overlaid text should be at least 25%. So, no pale colours on a pale background, however great it might look. Think too about colour-blindness and the colours that are most often confused (e.g. red and green).

- **Plain English.** Writing clearly and concisely will enhance the accessibility of your text. Avoid the use of jargon and acronyms wherever possible. The Plain English Campaign provide excellent guides to assist on their website www.plainenglish.co.uk.
- **Formats.** Offer word documents and PDFs as downloads because some screen readers (assistive technology used by those with a visual impairment or dyslexia) can't scan PDFs.
- **Consider audio recording** your own versions as simple mp3 files which can be downloaded from your website.
- **Invite people to ask for different formats without it sounding like a chore.** For example, say 'please ask us for this information in alternative formats' rather than 'this information is available in alternative formats upon request'. Know which alternative formats you can supply, and how long it will take you to produce them.
- **Ask about access.** You should ask about access requirements - but don't make that sound like a chore either! Don't assume what may or may not be needed. Make some suggestions, but be open to other options. The earlier you know, the better you can prepare.



Working with disabled illustrators

Fantastic! You have found the right person to create great work, and that person is disabled. These tips offer a broad overview – but it's always most important to understand the individual's access needs.

- **Preparation.** Share documents well in advance, and make sure they are presented in a format that is accessible (using the guidelines above) to allow time for preparation. If the illustrator requires a support worker or BSL interpreter, they will also appreciate getting information in advance!
- **Communication.** Some illustrators may prefer phone calls to emails or physical meetings. For others phone calls will be a barrier. Likewise the use of Slack (or similar) can work well in some cases but not others. Talk to the illustrator about how best to communicate. Think also about internal systems and processes, for example file naming conventions which may be inaccessible to illustrators who have dyslexia.
- **Administration.** Make sure that details of dates and deadlines, administration and invoicing requirements are provided in writing, in a format that is accessible. Give sufficient time to allow the illustrator to review any legal documents such as licensing arrangements before they need to provide a signature.
- **Flexibility.** Where possible, allow some flexibility for timings and dates. Some candidates will require extra time to plan and organise arrangements.

- **Meetings.** Some disabled people find digital meetings to be more accessible than physical meetings, but the reverse may also be true. Ask the illustrator what method of discussing the project is best for them.

If you require a physical meeting, provide comprehensive instructions about how to get to the venue with details of parking, drop off areas and building access arrangements. Avoid early meetings where appropriate and agree meeting lengths in advance. If you need to alter meeting times or lengths try to give as much notice as possible. Follow up meetings with written summaries.

- **Digital meetings.** Online meeting platforms offer a variety of accessibility features such as subtitling, shared screens and the option to record meetings. Let illustrators know which platform you prefer but be prepared to use a different platform at their suggestion as the add on features available may be better suited to their individual needs. Suggest that the illustrator sets up the meetings so they can do so in the way that best suits them.
- **Contact.** Make sure the illustrator has a specific contact. Ensure this person can be contacted in various ways (e.g. via email, text, and telephone).

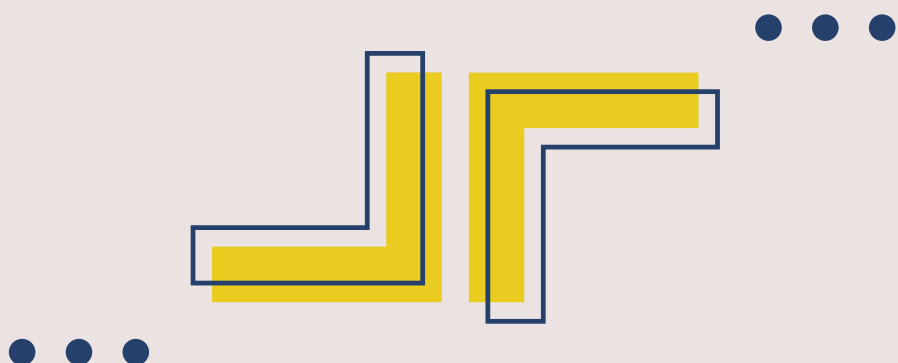


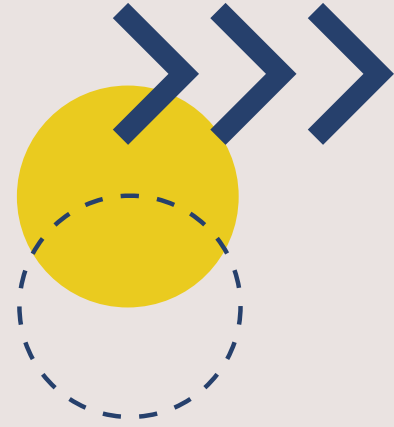
General communication and etiquette

- The Arts community use the term 'disabled person' rather than 'person with a disability'. However, some disabled people may use different terminology, in which case follow their lead and use their language. Remember that intent matters more than the words you use - treating a disabled person just as you treat others is much more important than getting the language exactly right.
- Be sensitive and confident. Remember that the disabled person will know how to manage their own situation but be prepared to offer assistance if asked.
- Do not push a wheelchair without the user's permission. Grabbing or resting on someone's wheelchair is not appropriate.
- When communicating with a wheelchair user, try to seat yourself so that you can talk at eye level.
- Do not interfere with working assistance dogs, it may distract them.
- When talking with someone who has a visual impairment, make sure you say when you are leaving the discussion, so they are aware you are going.
- When guiding someone with a visual impairment, offer your left elbow and let them know when they are near to steps, ramps, railings or doorways.
- Do not make assumptions. Everyone's experience is unique and some impairments are invisible.

During meetings

- Identify the candidate's preferred method of communication and use this during interviews e.g. lip reading, sign language, writing things down etc.
- Use clear language and consider slowing your speech if appropriate.
- Remember body language is not always a reflection of what someone is thinking or feeling. Don't be put off if a candidate doesn't make eye contact, for example.
- Look directly at the candidate when you are speaking to them. Make sure the lighting is sufficient and it is possible for everyone to view each other without any obstructions e.g. hands, flowers, water, computer screens etc.
- If you are using a sign language interpreter, remember to look and speak directly to the illustrator, not the interpreter.
- If you are unsure what someone has said, be confident, friendly and relaxed and ask them to repeat themselves. It can help to repeat back what you believe they said to avoid misunderstandings.
- If you are having problems communicating then, with the illustrator's agreement, ask if someone else can assist you.





Next steps

Many organisations have inclusivity enshrined in their aims and values. Developing a long-term strategy without this foundation can be difficult to sustain and will limit your ability to meet the requirements of the Equality Act (2010).

If you would like to find out more about working with disabled people, developing policies and/or training staff contact:

Shape Arts

www.shapearts.org.uk

Goss Consultancy Ltd

www.gossconsultancy.com

This resource draws on Shape Arts' excellent resources. You can find out more here: ['Organising Meetings and Interviews'](#) and ['An Accessible Marketing Guide'](#).

This simple overview has been developed for [The AOI](#) in partnership with Goss Consultancy Ltd (GCL).