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Blind to the Facts 2023

Executive Recommendations

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Recommendations

1 Accessing venues and workspaces

Whilst venues typically provide some information online, this may not always be accessible or complete. All venues and workplaces (this might include schools and all public performance spaces) should develop a complete source of information about their venue/workplace covering key areas of importance to BVI people including:

- Public transport options to the location
- Car and taxi instructions for arrival, drop-off, and parking (including details or disabled parking spaces and charges)
- Walking instructions from local bus/train stations
- Description of entrance and exit locations, and details regarding the nature of entrances and exits (e.g., automatic doors, revolving doors)

For those travelling alone, support entering a building may be required. A contact number to arrange this prior to arrival should be provided.

1.2 Access and inclusion as markers of quality

Given the challenges still experienced by BVI professionals, it appears that access and inclusion still appear to be treated as non-essential. As one venue representative highlighted in the current project, access and inclusion should be seen as markers of quality, enabling representation of different groups in different musical and cultural spaces and workplaces.

An initiative run by individuals with lived experience of sight loss directed by an organisation such as the IVO should work with all relevant locations to ensure working practices and physical environments meet the needs of BVI professionals.

This should be an accredited scheme and should cover:

- Recruitment or audition processes
- Recruitment materials
- Software and technological requirements
- Physical environments
- Provision of information (e.g., about a venue/workspace and about upcoming jobs and opportunities)

1.3 Initiatives to support greater inclusion of BVI professionals

Mentoring schemes which enable networking opportunities for BVI musicians should be set up by large promoters, producers, agents and record companies. These should be supported by organisations such as UK Music, the BMF and the Musicians Union. The work of Attitude is Everything has made significant progress in the accessibility of venues, and their Beyond The Music initiative is working to ensure that aspiring and active industry professionals with access requirements can forge careers in the industry. Promotion of this initiative to BVI professionals may increase awareness and access to support. This could be done directly

through IVO or other organisations, of whom participants were commonly members (e.g., RNIB, the Musicians Union). All music organisations should be encouraged to reach out to BVI people, all disability organisations should include the specific requirements of BVI people, and all diversity initiatives should address BVI-specific needs.

A database of volunteers who can act as sighted guides would help to provide essential support.

1.4 Marketing and PR training for BVI musicians

BVI musicians would benefit from support and training in how to present themselves as a public persona and through social media. The survey highlighted a lack of confidence and skill in communicating with the public in person and through social media. Sight loss organisations could provide one-to-one training or workshops in these areas including support in setting up an EPK to assist in promotion.

1.5 Partnerships between the cultural and the sight loss sector

Venues or employers in the music industry should consult the sight loss sector (e.g., local sight loss charities) to increase their understanding of the experiences and needs of BVI people. This would help to reduce discrimination and many of the barriers highlighted (e.g., increasing accessibility in key areas such as recruitment, information accessibility, and venue accessibility). These partnerships could facilitate collaborative events and bring BVI performers and audience members into a greater number of musical spaces.

1.6 Shared resources for employers/providers

A handbook of best practice relating to all aspects of accessibility for BVI people should be produced and shared within the music industry (e.g., venues, employers, agencies, event organisers etc.). This could be used alongside training workshops which raise awareness of the needs of BVI professionals.

1.7 Tailored information relating to Access to Work

It is essential that Access to Work improve its application process, including the accessibility of information and forms. There is also a need for information targeted towards self-employed, freelance BVI professionals working in the music sector. A collation of relevant information for this group may help to ensure the scheme is accessible to all eligible BVI musicians. This could be made available through, for example, RNIB's Music Advisory Service and/or other sight loss charities.

1.8 Locating BVI musicians

BVI musicians noted the challenge of identifying work opportunities, and employers highlighted the difficulty in reaching these individuals. A roster of BVI musicians and other professionals could be a valuable resource. This Should be hosted online by BMF and promoted via email to venues and organisations.

1.9 Networks and peer support

The BMF needs to expand its capacity to be able to list upcoming opportunities.

There needs to be a central repository of links to support and networking groups of BVI professionals, covering different areas of professional involvement e.g., music education, production, performance etc. Information on how to join these channels could be advertised via BMF, via sight loss charities, and musical organisations such as the Musicians Union.

1.10 Recommendations from BVI professionals other BVI professionals or aspiring professionals

- Be proactive in communicating needs clearly to others
- Make use of an Access Rider (a document that states the requirements of an individual)
- Provide feedback on accessibility to venues, organisations, and employers (individuals and organisations are unlikely to improve in areas such as access and inclusion without both positive feedback and areas for improvement being highlighted).