

A decorative flourish consisting of several parallel, flowing lines that curve and sweep across the page, framing the text.

YEWANDE 103

ACCESS RIDER
NOTES

ABOUT US

Yewande 103 nurture tender, compassionate encounters with creativity. Founded in 2020 by Alexandrina Hemsley and co-held with producer Nancy May Roberts, we are one of the UK's only Black, disabled, neurodiverse, survivor and artist-led dance organisations.

Our work firstly lives in our bodies. Our form of embodied activism is responsive and adaptable rather than resting in specific genres.

We are passionate about enlivened, sensitive, caring and inclusive frameworks to ensure we meet our purpose to transform the landscape for people of colour with long term health conditions.

We offer these notes and access rider template as part of this undertaking to help creative workers articulate access needs.

Yewande 103 Team

we welcome

BY ALEXANDRINA HEMSLEY

I am offering this template and guiding comments from my lived experience as a person of colour with invisible disabilities. I have been navigating contracts, institutions and employment conditions since 2009. I began using an access pack in 2017/8. I receive Access To Work but negotiate access costs not covered by Access To Work with organisations and partners. This is not always a smooth process as doing so frequently precipitates two, intertwined negotiations.

Firstly, these conversations uncover where/how the institution has either purposefully excluded disabled artists or carries unexamined, ableist biases within their frameworks; both financial and interpersonal.

Secondly, because of power differences between the salaried institutions workforce and artist/producer freelancers, it is exposing for freelance creative practitioners to advocate for the working conditions they need to do their work.

Add in the emotional labour of explaining not only a marginalised reality but repeating justifications of support, and the undertaking is daunting and frequently exacerbates health vulnerabilities.

notes

I also offer this open pack to acknowledge that not everyone with access needs is in receipt of Access To Work and not everyone with access needs necessarily identifies as disabled. There are alternative ways people with long term health conditions may choose to identify, e.g. neurodivergent or neurodiverse.

It is worth noting that a lot of organisations mainly add 'Do you have a disability?' on their monitoring forms and this can cause alienation, doubt and feelings of being left out of conversations, a lack of recognition and at times, makes it harder to access resources meant to support people with access needs.

"Neurodiversity is an essential form of human diversity. The idea that there is one "normal" or "healthy" type of brain or mind or one "right" style of neurocognitive functioning, is no more valid than the idea that there is one "normal" or "right" gender, race or culture.

The classification of neurodivergence (e.g. autism, ADHD, dyslexia, bipolarity) as medical/psychiatric pathology has no valid scientific basis , and instead reflects cultural prejudice and oppresses those labelled as such.

The social dynamics around neurodiversity are similar to the dynamics that manifest around other forms of human diversity. These dynamics include unequal distribution of social power; conversely, when embraced, diversity can act as a source of creative potential."

THE NEURODIVERSITY PARADIGM, BY NICK WALKER

My hope is that a document such as this could provide a framework to begin articulating needs and encourage the sensitivity and institutional, financial support vital for working environments and relationships in our sector to be caring and inclusive. I do this to lighten the load of advocating for the practices which will best help you do the work you wish to do, and to give an indicator that being held to account by supporting and respecting boundaries of access needs in relation to work environments are the responsibility of institutions, in shared dialogue with the artists they employ or wish to employ.

This access rider aligns itself with an intersectional and social model of disability. The model is informed by naming that:

“...people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people’s attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can’t do certain things. The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers disabled people more independence, choice and control.”

SCOPE

You can find out more about the social model of disability on this [Inclusion London webpage](#).

It is crucial to address the origins of ableism within structural racism and white supremacy. The racial hierarchies intrinsic to the historical constructing/pathologising race, and legalising institutional racism, deemed Black people to have less intelligence, to be less capable of fully and equally participating in (white) society. Indigenous cultures were decimated in the name of 'civilisation' in still untold massacres.

The present-day undervaluing of and threat to BIPOC life cannot be kept separate or parallel to understandings of disability. Racism and ableism are rooted and entwined together.

The whiteness of the disability arts sector (which has not yet fully examined or enacted structural change to address discrimination), and racism within other social contexts, e.g. within accessing appropriate medical care, are significant barriers for BIPOC with access needs. The compounding effects of having these multiple, marginalised identities cannot be understated.

Additionally, white-led arts organisations need to take extra consideration of the privilege and biases they are enacting, when interpreting a BIPOC's access needs and deciding for themselves how to support that person's needs.

- *Have someone else you trust to talk through and write this with you. This could be a professional or a friend/family member.*
- *Take some time (and breaths) to think through a day where most things have gone or felt wrong in terms of access while at work - e.g. pain levels, negligence, conversations that were challenging or felt excluding.*
- *Think carefully through what was debilitating and what communications and practical procedures would have helped if they had been put in place and available. This can be a challenge - hence having a companion to write this with you or for you.*
- *If helpful, anchor in your lived experience and value. It is your right to have accessible work in a safer space.*

tips

Writer, educator and community organiser for disability justice and transformative justice Mia Mingus coined the term 'Access Intimacy' which I leave here as an encouraging hope for solidarity:

"Access intimacy is that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else "gets" your access needs. The kind of eerie comfort that your disabled self feels with someone on a purely access level. Sometimes it can happen with complete strangers, disabled or not, or sometimes it can be built over years. It could also be the way your body relaxes and opens up with someone when all your access needs are being met. It is not dependent on someone having a political understanding of disability, ableism or access. Some of the people I have experienced the deepest access intimacy with (especially able bodied people) have had no education or exposure to a political understanding of disability."

MIA MINGUS ACCESS INTIMACY, INTERDEPENDENCE AND DISABILITY JUSTICE, APRIL 2017

Take heart,

Alexandrina x

This access rider open template has been created in partnership with Dance4 and with support from Disability Arts Online, Battersea Arts Centre, Siobhan Davies Dance, Independent Dance, The Place and Sadler's Wells.

With special thanks to Rebekah Ubuntu, Vijay Patel and Nina Mühlemann, who each provided invaluable feedback on the access rider. I originally worked on my own access rider with Veionella Spaine

End note:

Access To Work is an HMRC government grant available in England, Scotland and Wales to support disabled people at work. Disability Arts Online have created [a fantastic guide to the Access to Work rules](#) and official guidance, with specific advice for the arts and cultural sector. More information on access riders for artists and other examples of access riders can be found on [Access Docs For Artists](#)

thanks