

# International Day of Disabled People, Leeds For All Event Report Created by William Merritt Centre & Forum Central

1st December 2020 - 4th December 2020

## Background

International Day of Disabled People (IDODP) is an annual awareness day. In Leeds, the event ran a bit differently in 2020. Due to the unprecedented challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to host a face to face event. For some the pandemic has given us the chance to become more connected, for others we've never felt more isolated. So William Merritt Centre (WMC), Forum Central (FC) and the planning committee arranged Leeds For All - a week of accessible, online, live, on demand and at home activities to keep people connected. From discussions to dancing, boxing to baking, there was something for everyone.

A space for celebration, reflection, connection, acceptance and challenge.

Leeds for All gave organisations and individuals the opportunity to showcase and celebrate. It included films, performances, workshops and exhibitions. 300 people attended the live events, 1,144 people viewed our films, activities and workshops on YouTube and 612 individuals engaged in the offline/website activities. Leeds City Council ward Councillors and the LCC Equality Hub kindly part funded the programme of events.

The event was planned in 10 weeks by a core group made up of representatives from organisations supporting people with a wide range of impairments, both sensory and physical as well as learning disabilities and autism.

Please find details of the Planning Group Members below:

Advonet, Leeds Disabled People Organisation (LDPO), Arts, Health and Wellbeing Network, Leeds Hearing and Sight Loss Service, DeafBlind UK, Leeds Society for Deaf & Blind, Forum Central – Volition, MESMAC, Healthwatch Leeds, People in Action, Leeds City Council Museums & Galleries, William Merritt Centre and Leeds City Council - Equality Hub

Activities and Events

Live Events – 13 Live Events 300

Delegates

Please find a full list and further information on the Live Events below:

Opening & Welcome - The official opening was led by Cllr Kevin Ritchie - Ward Councillor and Disability Champion, Geoff Turnbull - Equality, Communities, Leeds City Council and Phil Gleeson - Trustee of

Volition & FC, with performances of music and dance from People in Action

Watch the Opening and Welcome by following the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMKV2ay9rag&list=PL7p8TfCuepMeeUTd5yrdQ7nsroGpnYOh3&index=28>

William Merritt Centre, Technology & Toys - An introduction and Q&A to WMC Technology and toys services.

Watch William Merritt Centre, Technology & Toys webinar by following the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6HM5VK9TOU&list=PL7p8TfCuepMeeUTd5yrdQ7nsroGpnYOh3&index=29>

People in Action, Stay Active - Online accessible fitness session.

Forum Central, Accessibility of Public Spaces - A round table discussion focusing on Public Spaces, Feeling

Connected and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on disabled people in Leeds, held in partnership with Leeds Involving People and Leeds City Council.

Carers Connections, Introduction to Autobiographical Writing - Including discussions, shared experiences formally or creatively; encouraging disability awareness helping people feel seen and valued.

Watch Carers Connections, Introduction to Autobiographical Writing by following the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zh8o32ijv7o&list=PL7p8TfCuepMeeUTd5yrdQ7nsroGpnYOh3&index=30>

Sense, Boxing Fitness - Fundamentals of Boxing session, mixed with a cardiovascular workout.

Mesmac, Sing - a - Long with Sage - Tessa Smith from the Sing It Out Project hosted a wellbeing singing session that

gave participants the opportunity to sing age old classics, with Jo from Age UK Leeds teaching Sing and Sign to celebrate IDODP.

Deafblind UK, Sensory Loss, Accessibility Workshop - Session aimed at encouraging providers to increase accessibility, empowering individuals to access services and social opportunities with success and confidence (Covid & beyond).

Purple Patch Arts, Disco - A fabulous Disco, playing upbeat classics that got everyone moving and grooving!

Forum Central, Employment Discussion - A round table discussion focusing on Employment, Feeling Connected and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on disabled people in Leeds, held in partnership with Scope and Department for Work & Pensions.

Watch Ella's Employment Story by following the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj4FH Eneogs&list=PL7p8TfCuepMeeUTd5yrdQ7nsroGpnYOh3&index=31>

Advonet, Friendships Relationships and Sexuality Quiz - Accessible quiz to give a taster session of their self-advocacy workshops for LGBTQ+.

Jointly Hosted by Space and Sage, Poetry Event - LGBT Women's Space and Sage hold poetry evenings. Participants could choose to read their own poetry, to read poetry that inspires them or they find of relevance, or to listen to others and contribute.

LDPO, Strategies for Disability Activism in The Post-Covid World - A panel discussion about what strategies for activism the disabled people's movement can develop going into a post-COVID

world and how we can work with other activist groups such as Black Lives Matter Watch LDPO, Strategies for Disability Activism in The Post-Covid World by following the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uk16NzMKIwQ&list=PL7p8TfCuepMeeUTd5yrdQ7nsroGpnYOh3&index=32>

Pre-recorded Activities – 25 on demand videos available on YouTube 1,144 views Follow the link below to watch the on demand videos:

<https://youtu.be/sDXa6z8-DiY>

Please find a list below of all the on demand videos available:

Ascendance, Dancing with Parkinson's

Cranmer Scheme Cooking Guidance

Driving Mobility Introduction

Forum Central ALaDDIN Film

Leeds Directory Introduction



Leeds Hearing & Sight Loss Service Yoga Session

Leeds Mencap Imagine if

Leeds Mencap, The Great Big Sing Along  
People In Action, Pia Presents..

Purple Patch, Dance Move Workshop

School of Rock And Media, Britain's Got Talent

Sense Arts, Ink Blowing

Sense Arts, Making Sounds at Home Workshop

Sense Arts, Poetry Workshop

Sense Arts, Seated Inclusive Dance Workshop

Sense Arts, Sound Bath Workshop

Specialist Autism Services, Autism Mythbusting!

Specialist Autism Services, SAS Art Exhibition

Specialist Autism Services, Snake and Mouse

The Advonet Group, Citizen Advocacy Film

The Advonet Group, People's Parliament Film

William Merritt Centre, Introduction

Yorkshire Dance, Dance Class

Association of Blind Asians, Visually Impaired Young Service User Story

Association of Blind Asians, Story of Migrant Visually Impaired

Website/Offline activities - 6 activities 612 Engagements recorded

Please find a list of all the Website/Offline activities below:

Advonet, Colouring Activity.

Healthwatch Leeds and Leeds Museums and Galleries, Day In The Life.

Access Healthwatch Leeds and Leeds Museums and Galleries, Day In The Life by following the link below:

<https://healthwatchleeds.co.uk/our-work/inclusion-for-all/>

Leeds Autism Aim - The Advonet Group, Coronavirus: Autistic Stories.

Access Leeds Autism Aim - The Advonet Group, Coronavirus: Autistic Stories by following the link below:

<https://healthwatchleeds.co.uk/our-work/inclusion-for-all/>

Leeds Society for Deaf & Blind People, Activity Baking Pack

Love Arts, Love Arts Exhibition.

POSSIBLE ALL ALONG - Online Exhibition by Disabled Artists in Leeds

Access the POSSIBLE ALL ALONG Exhibition by following the link below:

<https://possibleallalong.co.uk/>

## Accessibility

Throughout the planning process, there was a focus on making the online programme of events as accessible as possible. It was an event organised by disabled people, for disabled people, which aimed to set a 'new norm' standard and awareness of digitally inclusive public events. Steps taken included:

A detailed programme of events was created accessible for screen readers and autistic individuals.

Plain text, braille and audio description versions of the programme were available for individuals with additional needs.

All pre-recorded films on YouTube had subtitles, 10 had British Sign Language (BSL) and 1 video had audio description.

There was a dedicated individual available offering technical and event access support to both delegates and exhibitors throughout the week.

The event team were fully briefed and had an information pack each.

Completion of an Accessibility survey was requested when booking live events to ensure everyone's needs were catered for.

Subtitles were available on all live zoom sessions and 9 live sessions had BSL.

Exhibitor packs were circulated to all live exhibitors including hosting guidelines and guides on communication tips for talking to people with visual impairments, people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people with autism.

### Event Promotion

The event was promoted widely using email, websites, Eventbrite, bulletins and social media via FC, WMC, member and partner organisations. A press release by Leeds City Council and WMC was sent to the disability press and an article was published in the Yorkshire Evening Post.

We were unable to supply any printwork due to the Covid-19 pandemic so we relied heavily on digital promotion.

Read the Yorkshire Evening Post article by following the link below:

<https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/people/leeds-all-will-showcase-disabled-peoples-achievements-3045567>

An event was created on Eventbrite to promote and manage live event bookings, which reached 2,965 page views and 261 bookings. 300 people attended the live events in total (not all live events were promoted via Eventbrite). There was also a dedicated IDODP webpage which had 1,049 views. A highlights video is also being created so we can continue promotion of the event throughout the year.

An advert for the event was displayed on the big screen in Millennium Square on

the content loop, twice hourly between 9am and 10pm for 2 weeks prior

### Social Media:

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and government restrictions, we relied heavily on social media to promote the event as we were unable to use normal means like displays in public spaces and printwork. In total we reached 118,034 individuals with 1,743 engagements across WMC & FC social media channels.

### Key Themes & Learning

#### Positives:

Host more sessions and promote regular sessions that are available throughout the year, people really enjoyed the opportunity to be social and connect during the pandemic. Delegate feedback: "Please do more, this community has been extremely isolated under covid-19, events like these help them reach each other"

People were really pleased with the steps we took to ensure the event was accessible. Delegate Feedback: “It was as accessible as it could be, given the circumstances” “It was still tiring for me as it was virtual but it’s the first time I have seen BSL available which was great. The live captions always need a bit of thought but I am used to that :D”

The on-demand content and event recordings on YouTube give us the opportunity to continue sharing useful films and promote IDODP throughout the year.

With limited time and resources we pulled together a varied, accessible programme of events and content with 45 activities and sessions available for people to get involved in both online and offline.

Through the help of the planning group, we learnt a lot about creating accessible



artwork and set a standard for accessible marketing materials.

The event gave all parties involved the opportunity to raise awareness of their important services through promotion and creating partnerships within the planning group. Hosts of sessions gained an average of 6 contacts.

The extra support from Forum Central's Member Support Worker Daisy really helped in bringing together the event.

The Employment discussion led to a response to the disability enquiry creating tangible strategic recommendations.

The technology worked well with only one person having difficulty accessing a session.

A member of the WMC/FC team available to support sessions and arrange bookings really helped to relieve pressure from hosts and keep the sessions running smoothly.

## Delegate Feedback:

“A good balance between serious points and more light-hearted, entertaining content. A good showcase for disabled performers”

“Radical anti-capitalist messages from the disabled community were incredibly inspiring”

“Amazing. The speakers were fantastic and so inspirational”

“Great variety and so inspiring”

“It was very informative but had a relaxed atmosphere which was nice” “Great mix of events, something for everyone”

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## Exhibitor Feedback:

“It was a great event. Despite Covid-19 - thank you to all the organisers”

“Thank you, a wonderful event with great marketing behind it. Very well organised

and really enjoyed being part of it. Always tricky to get engagement on film work - perhaps live stream events would attract more people but harder to coordinate. A platform to host the films could be explored in the future. I wonder how we could engage our own groups more? So has a wider public engagement. Brilliant festival thank you and we really loved being part of such strategic work”

“Fern, Rachel and co were really easy to get hold of and communicate with” “Great foundation for future events, engagement and developments.”

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“A varied audience attended my session and all were new contacts”

“Lots of great publicity. Contacted International Relations Officer at LCC – made a connection to involve international partners of Leeds 2021 next year.”

“Loved all the events – wish I could have given them more support and spotlight. Members were super interested in it. 100% Digital Leeds sessions online arts and culture engagement”

“Purple Patch Arts – Zoom disco’s - lots of people have said they want things to continue” Exhibitor Recommendations:

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“how inspirational are we being to the wider community – outside of the disabled community. Wider promotion could reach outside of the disability spectrum.

Facebook advertising to wider audience. Promotion we relied on WMC. – Though we did have YEP article and we did have

the millennium Square and LCC promotion. Earlier wider promo the better to increase wider promo.”

Feedback:

Average survey responses have a 5-30% response rate. The delegate feedback response rate was 8.7% which is lower than we would have wanted and in future we would consider including feedback polls as part of live Zooms to encourage a richer response. Exhibitor feedback response rate was much better at 35.7%.

Delegates were invited to leave their feedback via a digital anonymous survey: 173 delegates were emailed and a link was shared on social media, 15 responded.

Delegates rated the event overall at 4.7 out of 5

When asked if delegates would recommend the event to friends, family and colleagues it scored 4.4 out of 5

Delegates rated the accessibility of the event at 4.4 out of 5.

Please find details below about how delegates heard about Leeds For All International Day of Disabled People 2020

38% email, 24% other organisation, 19% social media, 15% word of mouth, 4% Eventbrite, 0% website and 0% millennium square screen.

Exhibitors were invited to leave their feedback via a digital anonymous survey: 38 Exhibitors were emailed, 8 responded. Exhibitors rated the event overall at 4.1 out of 5

Exhibitors rated the format of the event at 4.1 out of 5

Exhibitors rated the accessibility of the event at 4 out of 5

Exhibitors rated the range of delegates at 3.4 out of 5

Exhibitors rated the communication with William Merritt Centre and Forum Central at 3.4 out of 5

100% of exhibitors said they would take part in IDODP again.

General consensus from discussion based sessions:

As well as having a celebratory focus, Leeds For All gave us the opportunity to challenge and address some of the ongoing issues impacting disabled people in Leeds and nationally, and particularly to consider the impact of Covid and on isolation and connectivity.

With that in mind, we held 3 discussion based sessions throughout the event, hosted by, Forum Central which included:

Employment:

Organised by Forum Central in partnership with Scope and Workcoach Simon Cox from Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) in Leeds. This session

featured the viewpoints of organisations working with people to provide employment, support and training. Highlighted some of the work being done in the City as part of the Employment Task Group for Learning Disabilities, led by Volition, Forum Central and members and the challenges people face. Summed up by Ella who pre-recorded her journey of seeking employment and poem which highlighted the impact of the challenges and struggles she faces.

Watch Ella's Employment Story by following the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj4FHEneogs&list=PL7p8TfCuepMeeUTd5yrdQ7nsroGpnYOh3&index=31>

This session then discussed the recent DWP inquiry into the Disability Employment Gap and formed part of the Collective response submitted to the Government in late December on behalf



of Forum Central and its member organisations, which is looking at the follow questions:

1. What has been the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on disabled people's employment?
2. What improvements could be made to support unemployed disabled people?
3. What would you hope to see in the Government's National Strategy for Disabled People?
4. How should DWP look to engage disabled people and the organisations that represent them in formulating the Strategy?

Accessibility of Public Spaces:

Organised by Forum Central in partnership with Leeds Involving People, who run the Access and Usability Group for Leeds and Leeds City Council Colleagues from Transport, planning, Connecting Leeds and access. This

session included a tour of the current developments happening across the city, ways for people to get involved in ongoing engagement and consultation and a discussion based around the impact of Covid on accessibility.

Strategies for Activism:

Led by Leeds Disabled People

Organisation, we had over 50 people in attendance and a 2 hour discussion based session with 7 key speakers from across the country. It was a really inspiring, thought provoking event which created lots of links and discussions which we plan to continue to build on across the Forum Central Specialism networks with members to highlight the intersectionality and issues so prevalent and important.

Watch LDPO, Strategies for Disability Activism in The Post-Covid World by following the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uk16NzMKlwQ&list=PL7p8TfCuepMeeUTd5yrdQ7nsroGpnYOh3&index=32>

## Finance & Budget

### The Coordination and Project

Management of the Event was provided jointly by Volition at Forum Central and William Merritt Centre and part-funded by Leeds City Council's Disability Hub, Part of the Equality Hubs for the City, and by the Ward Councillors' Members

Improvements in the Community and the Environment, money, which was gratefully received in support of this important event.

Costs incurred included: Project Management and Support, BSL interpretation for live and pre-recorded content, Captioning, Visual Minute taking, video editing and production and Facebook Live Advertising. The Planning Group gave their time for free in addition

to their daily roles and jobs and all sessions on the programme and speakers in attendance were provided without cost. A considerable effort with mutual aid and goodwill on the part of individuals and public and third sector organisations in the city.

In total the events cost around £4,000 to put on, equating to approximately £90 for each of the 44 events and 0.51p cost per contact, which is incredibly good value for money.

### Next Steps

Leeds For All was a great achievement - it was developed by a key group of enthusiastic and committed people and raised awareness of International Day of Disabled People during a year where we were all isolated and disconnected to some extent. Providing a varied calendar of events both on and offline allowed us to reach out to many people across the city

and encourage celebration, connectivity and discussion. Volition, and the wider Forum Central team are keen to keep the momentum of this up with its members and build on the brand of Leeds For All. In future we would like to:

### Strategic Recommendations:

Hold a rolling programme of regular events throughout the year under the #LeedsForAll brand, organised through Volition, Forum Central's specialism networks for Physical and Sensory Impairment and Learning Disabilities. This will help to highlight ongoing issues and challenges faced by disabled people as well as create opportunities for learning and connectivity amongst both individuals and organisations, with specific focus on Health & Care and related issues.

Encourage and put into place regular mechanisms for feedback from sessions,

coproduction and design across topics of interest.

Utilise learning from the events to highlight the need for accessibility and inclusivity considerations across all of our connections.

Run regular facilitated engagements more proactively throughout the year to keep people moving forward and achieving their potential.

Encourage wider participation and sign up from the wider population of Leeds and from members within facilitating organisations.

Due to Covid- 19 we were unable to promote face to face through group sessions and had to rely heavily on digital promotion which some groups have difficulties engaging with. Utilise both online and face to face opportunities in December 2021 (within current

government guidelines) to provide content which is accessible for all.

### Operational Recommendations:

The link between session hosts and potential new contacts for them as individual organisations was lacking. To improve this, hosts should share their contact details and information in the chat box to encourage delegates to follow up with session hosts after the session.

Stream Zoom sessions onto Facebook to increase reach and awareness of the live sessions.

The Event was a bit fast paced for some. To make the events more manageable we would send an agenda out for each session to delegates and spread the sessions out over a longer period of time rather than having 4 in one day. Delegate feedback: “Bit slower pace. Please” “Fast paced and intense for someone with

chronic fatigue. A lot of information to take in.”

Clear outline for accessible content needed and a designer with experience on how to make accessible content.

Involve more members individually to increase awareness of event.

Don't accept booking forms if they are not completed and have a definite cut off point for content and booking forms.

Increase delegate numbers through segmented messaging and a clearer communication plan.

Send out a questionnaire to potential delegates of the event to see what content they propose and ensure the content chosen for the event reflects this.

Jamboard or survey monkey could be used to gather this information.

Create a list of the planning committee's skills and knowledge (e.g. easy read,



braille, audio description, BSL) to help the planning of the event run more smoothly and utilise everyone's skills.

More planning time with a minimum of 3 months to allow wider promotion of the event to attract more people.

More images for promotion is needed to avoid repetition and if we have more time reduce social media posts to 1 a day rather than 3-4.

There were no requests for a BSL or braille version of the programme. Next year we should work with partner organisations to increase interest from individuals with visual impairments.