

# HEADLONG'S JUSTICE PLAN

## DISABILITY

At Headlong it is our firm belief that making great art is inextricably linked with the pursuit of justice. We are acutely aware of the intersectionality of Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people in terms of ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation. As we tackle structural inequality at Headlong, the intersectionality of justice will be present throughout our planning.

This is our **Justice Action Plan: Disability** and is the second part of our wider Justice Action Plans at Headlong, our Justice Action Plan: Race can be found [here](#). We continue to work on plans related to LGBTQI+ communities, sustainability, women and class.

Headlong embraces the [Social Model of Disability](#). This is a way of understanding disability wherein people are disabled by inaccessible surroundings and attitudes, rather than by their impairment. According to Scope, 19% of working aged adults are disabled - approximately 1 in 5 people. Our employment and programming records since 2017 show that we are not currently serving this community fully in any area. The below plan is a working document for how we will begin to tackle this structural inequality at Headlong.

For the purposes of this document, 'disability' encompasses people who identify as Deaf, disabled or neurodivergent and recognizes the intersectionality throughout. As the language and terminology surrounding disability and ableism are constantly evolving, this is a working document and will remain under review as we learn and grow.

Headlong would like to thank [Graeae](#) for their time and work in helping us create this document and for consulting on our continued learning and development in regard to disability.

### 1. Transparency

We have published the data we hold on the people we have worked with as far back as we have access, and it will remain on our website permanently.

Going forwards we will publish each year's data. You can see this data here: [www.headlong.co.uk/ventures/justice-plan-disability](http://www.headlong.co.uk/ventures/justice-plan-disability)

This Justice Plan will also remain on our website.

### 2. Who is making shows at Headlong?

Since 2017 no board members and no core team employees have identified as being disabled. Headlong has collaborated with and commissioned several disabled artists in the past but much more work needs to be done.

Actions:

- With immediate effect, on every play we lead produce there will be disabled representation in the creation of the show.
- We will collaborate with our casting directors to increase the number of disabled actors we see for every show in a concentrated effort to provide more opportunities in mainstream storytelling for disabled artists and performers.
- By the end of 2022 there will be disabled representation on Headlong's board.
- It is our goal that by the end of 2022 there will be disabled representation on our core staff team.
- Any disabled candidate who meets the minimum criteria for any post advertised at Headlong will be invited to meet with the interview panel.
- We will continue to evolve our recruitment language and processes to ensure disabled people feel encouraged to apply. As a starting point, every application pack will be available in a range of formats including captioned BSL, large print, screen reader friendly and Easy Read, and candidates will be invited to apply in the format of their choice.
- We will always ask what access requirements people have at the point of interview, audition and employment and commit to meeting them.
- We will ensure that there are always the appropriate financial provisions to support any access requirements.
- We will move offices in 2022 and ensure the new office is accessible for wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments. We commit to working with an access consultant during this process.
- We recognise the importance of building relationships with partner venues re programming accessible performances and we will advocate for the employment of audio describers or BSL interpreters who are consciously cast in consideration of the demographic and culture of the show's cast and characters.
- We will ensure there is an appropriate access line written into all core and project budgets and we will commit to supporting disabled employees with Access to Work applications where applicable.

### **3. What stories are we telling?**

- With immediate effect any disabled character will always be played by a disabled performer.
- We will commission a disabled writer within the next 12 months and going forward at least one full commission every 3 years will be by a disabled writer (we currently commission 4 plays a year).

- Where there are multiple short commissions in a single year, at least one of those will be by a disabled writer.
- Next year (2022) we will R&D an idea that uses access as a creative tool, thinking about the “[aesthetics of access](#)” and how this can inform our creative practice going forward.
  - We will share our learnings on the “aesthetics of access” with every creative team we work with on future shows from the outset, with the aim that at least 20% of our touring shows will embrace elements of access creatively going forward.
  - All goals in this document will also be applied to our community work.

#### 4. Who is Headlong making shows for?

As a touring company without a building, we have limited access to audience data. However, we are aware that our work does not reach enough disabled audience members. We have a lot to do to ensure our work speaks to disabled audiences and to make our external communications, website, social media and marketing campaigns fully accessible.

Actions:

- Every show and in every venue, we tour to, will have at least one captioned or BSL interpreted performance, and scripts will always be available in advance for Deaf audiences.
- We will have a conversation with each venue we visit on the practicality and commitment of a relaxed performance for each production.
- Every show and in every venue, we tour to, will have at least one audio described performance.
- We will never work with venues that do not have designated access and space for wheelchair users for audiences. We will not work with venues who are not open to reasonable adjustments for backstage access.
- When we relaunch our fully accessible [AAA level compliant](#) website by 2023, we will offer information about our events in a range of formats, such as Large Print, screen reader friendly and Easy Read.
  - We will make sure our trailers are captioned and audio described.
  - All our social media will be:
    - Captioned, if video content.
    - Audio described, if video content.
    - ALT text built in on all graphic content on all social media platforms.

#### 5. Who is reviewing?

We recognise that the theatre critics of the mainstream media are majority non-disabled. Actions:

- We will be proactive in inviting a wider circle of critics to all our opening nights.
- Whenever possible we will promote disabled artists in press opportunities.
- We will ensure publications with a majority disabled readership are invited to each opening night.
- From 2022 every opening night will be signed or captioned, and audio described.

## **6. How will Headlong support the next generation of disabled artists?**

Actions:

- We will commit to working with at least one Origins artist every two years who identifies as disabled.
- We have improved the recruitment process for the Origins scheme in consultation with Graeae and will continue to review it.
- We will do our best to commit to meeting any disabled artist that contacts us at Headlong. We will commit over the next 12 months to reaching out to one disabled freelance practitioner a month.
- We will not run any open access community sessions, workshops, or focus groups in a physical space which has inaccessible surroundings and attitudes. Where this is not possible, we will run these sessions in an accessible digital space.
- When recruiting freelance practitioners to support Headlong to deliver community projects, we will meet the same inclusive recruitment commitments outlined in this document. We will prioritize intersectionality, and we will push the agenda to ensure we are actively creating more opportunities for disabled practitioners.

## **7. How will Headlong better support employees going forwards?**

- Accessibility of office: we will make sure the new office has an access audit and we will work with access audit experts to inform the process.
- We will review how we support disabled employees and freelancers at Headlong, especially on tour, from both a practical and pastoral perspective and develop a debrief/ check in process for each of our shows.
- We are constantly reviewing our complaints procedure at Headlong so that it better serves all our employees as well as having safe, discrete reporting options.

## **8. How will we hold ourselves accountable to these actions?**

We will ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are allocated for this action plan to be carried out effectively. We are currently:

- Have a dedicated time during weekly team meetings to tackle any production related Justice issues.
- Hold internal weekly justice meetings to scrutinise and come up with solutions for possible exclusion and the systemic structural issues that may allow biases to be perpetuated within our processes and projects.
- Collaborate with external consultants who have expertise in structural justice reform to review best practice. We have collaborated with Graeae for this document.
- Provide training opportunities for staff and the board designed to combat ableism. We have begun this work with Graeae.
- Regularly invite board members to attend Justice sessions.
- Ensure that Justice is kept at the top of the agenda at all levels at Headlong and continue to discuss ableism, structural inequality, and justice at every board meeting. A staff member from the Justice Working Group attends every board meeting to contribute to the discussion.
- Are rigorously reviewing our recruitment processes and will ensure with immediate effect that at least one recruitment panel a year has disabled representation.
- Are working to embed into all of our projects an approach to evaluation and monitoring that prioritises SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) analysis and supports the ongoing review of long-term procedures and our Justice goals.