

RNID Cymru's response to Communities and Culture Committee members further questions: inquiry into the accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales.

You talk of the variation and quality of local authority cultural services and activities provided across Wales. Could you describe your experience of dealing with local authorities in trying to improve access to cultural activities?

In our own experience of dealing with local authorities and access to cultural activities, accessibility has on the whole has been reasonable. RNID Cymru from time to time conducts hearing loop checks in local authority areas; already this year we have been to Barry in the Vale of Glamorgan, and Swansea. These checks involve RNID Cymru volunteers visiting service providers (including shops, local government and arts venues) and ensuring that they have working and maintained hearing induction loops, and that staff can operate them. In Barry and Swansea, most venues that were visited were of an acceptable standard. However, there were some venues that provided loops but didn't have them switched on. Unfortunately we do not have the capacity to undertake a full Wales wide audit.

Some issues that have been raised within local authority venues, which include theatres, cinemas and leisure centres, have been the lack of functioning hearing loops, late cinema showings of subtitled performances and a lack of deaf awareness amongst venue staff. RNID Cymru is very concerned that with the impending cuts looming above local authority budgets, that factors affecting accessibility will not be prioritised over other budget areas. RNID Cymru believe that the ability to access high quality cultural activities is essential to leading a full and independent life.

You both refer to transport limitations impacting on access to cultural activities. Do you have any experience of good practice in transport providers and venues working together to benefit those reliant on public transport, or vice versa of obstructive relationships?

RNID Cymru is not aware of any good practice of work between transport providers and venues working together for benefit of those reliant on public transport, or any obstructive relationships. But this isn't to say that one or the other doesn't occur.

RNID Cymru strongly believes the onus lies with venues to ensure that more of their performances are shown at more accessible times. Far too many signed or captioned performances are shown late at night, making them inaccessible to people with hearing loss. These performances need to be shown earlier, to ensure more people are able to benefit from them and when there is plenty of public transport available. RNID Cymru would like to see venues and transport providers working together to ensure that their programming timetables are delivered around transport providers timetables to ensure people with hearing loss are able to access more and more performances at such venues.