

Reasonable adjustment and effective co-commissioning

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Disability Discrimination Act 1995

British Sign Language Act 2022

DEAF & PROUD

Equality Act 2010

Disability Rights
Inclusion

Be happy, be yourself!

Some Disabilities Are Invisible

People get frustrated when I don't hear

Layers in
Far Kio

"I'm not looking for pity, I'm an
artist's to be blind." "Ask before
the world independently every
me as an artist. Loss of
qualified than you." "Why are you
take a moment and think about
me?" "The gallery spaces that are
filled with barriers the access of
lost, isolated and excluded." The
artist when it comes to disability
access. Whereas theatre and
embraces as far as working with
the art world hasn't even got
disabled art is not in fashion yet.
disabled artists work with normal
understand." Despite so many
history being influenced by the
art world forever, today's generation
Why is my lived experience and
valued because I'm an openly
painter is liberating. It's the
feelings and memory to guide
direct access to the rich and under
in other words the imagination
way I create and the philosophy
and what I bring to it. I think it has
authentic way." "My world is beautiful
richness with my hand crafted." "Being
and the world is a clean and beautiful
life?" "People underestimate me, or
to see what skills I have to offer." "For
in people's attitudes towards me
talk to me, once they notice my
and signed in front of behind, rather
another barrier. Because when

About Peterborough Presents

Peterborough Presents is one of 39 Creative People and Places (CPP) programmes working in places where evidence suggests that people, on average, are less likely to be involved in arts and cultural activities. With funding from Arts Council England, Creative People and Places aims to support, discover, and learn from how people can take the lead in choosing, creating, and taking part in brilliant creative experiences in the places where they live.



Peterborough Presents is hosted by [Nene Park Trust](#) and governed by a consortium of organisations who work together in supporting and delivering the programme - [Metal](#), [Eastern Angles](#), [Creative Lives](#), [Peterborough City Council](#), [Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service](#) and Nene Park Trust.

Further details can be found at <https://www.peterboroughpresents.org/about-us>

Peterborough Presents works with communities, artists, and a range of voluntary and community organisations to create fun, diverse and relevant art, and creative opportunities across the city. The programme began in 2015 with a focus on city-wide projects before moving to a more targeted, approach in smaller, 'hyper-local' areas. This increased the focus on areas where engagement in creative activities was particularly low based on audience and participant data. The hyper local approach is complemented by a wider range of delivery activity on more of a thematic or Peterborough-wide level which support and showcase people's sense of pride and creativity from across the city.

Co-commissioning within the context of Reasonable Adjustment – a case study

This case study provides analysis of the process and impact of co-commissioning activities in the context of the Reasonable Adjustment programme delivered by Peterborough Presents during 2023. It covers the roles of the partners and artists involved in planning, shaping, and helping to deliver the programme, analysis of what worked and what didn't, the specific professional and personal impact on those involved, and the impact on respective organisations, practice, and the Peterborough Presents programme more widely.

For the purposes of this case study, co-commissioning is defined as the process of collaborative activity in the development and implementation of creative activity. Collaboration itself is often described as revolving around, if not limited to, sharing decision making, and ultimately power. However, when discussed in the context of the Reasonable Adjustment programme (outlined below) and the specific experience of co-commissioning in the context of the d/Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent (DDN) community and DDN creatives, this case study also highlights the role of partners, artists and the Peterborough Presents team in terms of engagement, facilitation, hosting, and participation.

Background to, and aims for, Reasonable Adjustment

The Reasonable Adjustment programme was a creative project with and for DDN people in Peterborough which provided a wealth of learning and a range of success points and emerging outcomes in terms of both project processes and outputs.

Reasonable Adjustment references the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act with aims to celebrate and raise awareness of the lived experiences of the DDN community in Peterborough. It incorporated an artist residency, a research residency, an exhibition in the city centre, an artwork trail around Peterborough, events and activities, printmaking, zine making, scratch building, a fashion show, and gaming. It culminated on International Day of People with Disabilities in December 2023 and engaged around 5,800 people.

Further details on the exhibition can be found in a [zine](#) with more details on the wider project available on the Peterborough Presents website ([Reasonable Adjustment | Peterborough Presents](#)).



Co-commissioning in the context of Reasonable Adjustment

CPP projects and programmes held up as examples of good practice are often built upon collaboration between different partners. Indeed, the rise of co-commissioning or collaboration is often described as helping to transfer the 'balance of power' from creative practitioners and arts organisations to a broader range of actors and influences.

Co-commissioning brings resources and expertise closer together to help to form a more holistic approach to delivery. Importantly therefore, the description of partners should not only revolve around local people or participants and CPP staff, but also the artists and wider partners including community representatives, sector, or thematic groups, or businesses able to contribute to the effective identification, production, enjoyment, and impact of creative experiences.

The value of co-commissioning, especially within the context of CPP, is widely viewed as the creation of a more culturally relevant, and therefore accessible, impactful, and meaningful experience. Reasonable Adjustment was able to harness the lived personal and professional knowledge and experience of partners with very specific and relevant perspectives of the challenges faced by the DDN community and the ability to facilitate access to clients and contacts able to contribute to, and benefit from the programme.

The role of the commissioning panel

Crucially in terms of co-commissioning, the Reasonable Adjustment programme was shaped and driven through a collaborative approach involving a community commissioning panel of partners representing the DDN community, service providers, as well as creative partners and the extended Peterborough Presents team. These partners not only provided valued input to the programme, but in many cases access to DDN communities across Peterborough to contribute directly to the creative process.

Community Panel members



“The commissioning panel worked well with people given the right amount of support in order for them to feel comfortable in helping to shape the project.” (partner)

“It’s personality and inspiration coming together” (partner)

Whilst many commissioning panels will fulfil a role concentrated on decision making and project management, the Reasonable Adjustment programme benefited from a group willing and able to go beyond offering their knowledge of DDN issues or creative expertise. The programme gained significant added value from a group of dedicated people with the knowledge, ability, and desire to also help in practical terms, (e.g., ensuring accessibility and inclusion in programme processes).



“Deaf kids don't see themselves as disabled so they needed a targeted workshop” (partner)

From sitting on interview panels, to volunteering at the exhibition, to taking part in workshops with artists, to representatives from Scope, Disability Peterborough and Peterborough & District Deaf Children's Society facilitating access to the DDN community through their groups, both the quality of the programme outputs, and the overall experience of panel members was enhanced.

“Fae acknowledged the challenges faced by people with chronic conditions and how to reach out to them that a lot of people wouldn’t recognise. A lot of the time we want to turn up to things but we can’t always manage it.” (partner)

“It was good at accessing established groups with captive audiences”
(partner)

“A lot of deaf people in Peterborough are hidden away” (partner)

“People representing different disabilities offered different perspectives. I saw things from different points of view” (partner)

The scale and scope of the involvement of partners in all aspects of the programme is reflected in the positive experiences of partners on the commissioning panel. Members have taken a wealth of learning away from the method of working, the opportunity to work with a range of partners, and the management of the group, (i.e., partnership working, communications and transparency).

As a result, suggested improvements to the co-commissioning element of the programme were limited to a need to hold more sessions in the afternoon to cater more for people with health and caring needs, and a need to market the work more effectively, potentially highlighting gap in partner expertise. Moreover, there were frustrations amongst partners that their limited capacity hindered their ability to do even more to add to the success of the programme.

The impact of co-commissioning activity informing the Reasonable Adjustment programme

Partnership and shared expertise

The commissioning panel highlighted the benefit of people with experiences from across the DDN community coming together to support the Reasonable Adjustment programme. The impact of the composition of the group and their actions reflects the diversity of knowledge and experience within the group in terms of not only disability, but in working with and supporting the DDN community from creative and community perspectives.



“Peterborough Presents pulls small organisations together” (partner)

“Creativity has been really welcome and I think it’s improved us hugely as an organisation” (partner)

This, in turn, was amplified by the rarity of projects focusing on DDN issues and needs benefiting from such a coordinated and representative group with services or projects often limited to specific disabilities as a result of funding or capacity constraints.

“You get used to being left out of things” (partner)

The breadth of the commissioning panel also generated efficiencies of scales, reducing duplication of effort whilst aligning expertise with tasks and enabling partners subject to limited time, funding, and ultimately capacity to ordinarily influence a programme such as Reasonable Adjustment.

“What’s been really nice is it’s also been a fantastic way to engage other organisations and individuals in and around the DDN community in Peterborough, bringing them all together because we are quite a disparate group.” (partner)

“Reasonable Adjustment has brought people together. There’s been such a gap in Peterborough when it comes to disability advice, disability support ... there’s lots of charities that support people, but there’s no cohesion. There’s a little bit of this and a little bit of that. This Reasonable Adjustment project ... has seriously brought the community together, who have collectively gone, we need this and we need more and we are going to do more. So, it’s kind of given the groups and individuals in, in and around Peterborough, a confidence that I’ve not seen before here in Peterborough and that’s all because Peterborough Presents have kicked this off.” (partner)

Quality of programme outputs

The shared knowledge and vision of the commissioning panel and alignment of partner strengths with programme aims was highlighted in the creative process and quality of the outputs. These reflected both the shared and unique challenges facing different members of the DDN community in Peterborough. Indeed, the process of involving relevant partners in the commissioning process, including recruitment and selection of artists, added an additional layer of meaning to the programme and stimulated a wealth of added personal, strategic, political, and thematic value to the outcomes generated for participants, visitors, and partners.

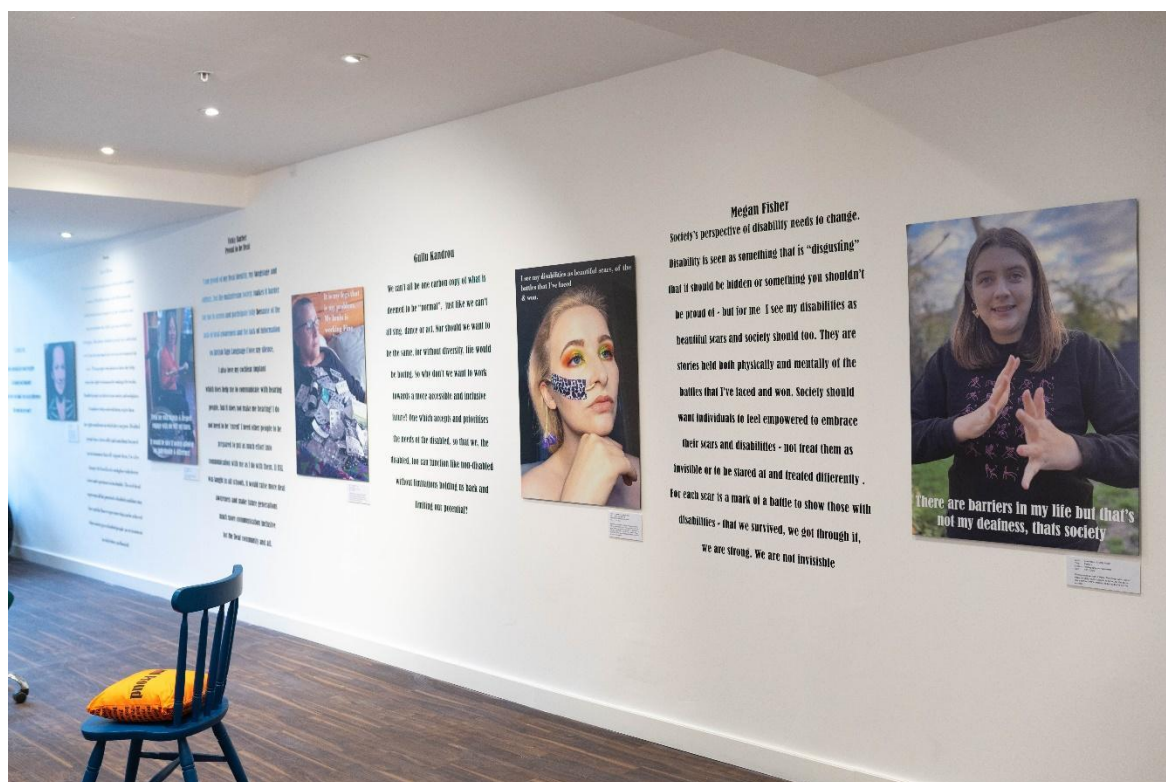
“People told me that the success of this exhibition was that it was person centred. It had the collective voice of the DDN community.” (artist)

This ownership of the creative process and outputs amongst partners was enhanced by participants -both organisation and service users, being actively involved in producing creative content. People identifying as DDN appreciated the focus on their own lived experience and opportunity to highlight related challenges through the Reasonable Adjustment programme.

“There is something about this Reasonable Adjustment project that has a power behind it, that has been different to other projects ... and the people of Peterborough who are members of the DDN community have loved it in a way that seems different to all the other stuff, and that they love all the stuff that Peterborough puts on. It’s really interesting when you watch people talking about it, there is an energy to it that’s different.” (partner)

“It was amazing to see people finding inspiration and role models among the portraits and poems created by DDN individuals.” (artist)

“You could see the exhibition was curated by a disabled person challenging society's perceptions of disability” (partner)



Co-commissioning legacies

The programme, and specifically the collaborative approach to developing and showcasing the content, has contributed to a variety of individual, organisational, and creative legacy impacts. Importantly, there is consensus that these outcomes would have been less apparent in the absence of the co-commissioning approach to the Reasonable Adjustment programme.

Crucially in terms of legacy outcomes, the more people and organisations involved in, benefiting from, and observing positive processes and results emanating from co-commissioning, the more likely it is that the good practice and learning observed in the approach will be replicated.

“You end up with a better way through co-commissioning” (partner)

The impact on organisations involved in the co-commissioning of the Reasonable Adjustment programme is characterised by increased awareness of partners’ service and knowledge areas and increased partnership working to achieve outcomes aligned with the needs of the DDN community. Examples include the Community Connection Coordinator – East of England for the RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) signposting colleagues in other areas to the benefits of collaborative working with CPP programmes and subsequently providing strategic input as an associate member of the Peterborough Presents consortium.

“People normally don't expect much. The work has provided a legacy in terms of something that we can build on.” (partner)

More widely, Peterborough Presents now attend the Peterborough Visual Impairment (VI) Forum¹, a group run by and for blind and partially sighted people which aims to bring local VI people and partner organisations together to maximise knowledge of complementary services and opportunities. Peterborough Presents has also initiated a series of workshops in partnership with Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) as part of its Disability Forum project. By recognising the need for greater awareness of the access issues raised by the Reasonable Adjustment programme amongst smaller community organisations, a package of complementary resources including the skills and knowledge of the Peterborough Presents’ Access Coordinator has been developed to provide informal advice, guidance, and a forum for sharing good practice in order to enhance service provision for the DDN community.

“It’s a way of small organisations thinking about access more. Some are doing great things already; others were afraid of doing things wrong. This offer enables people to acknowledge good practice and get inspiration from it.” (partner)

On a creative level, the co-commissioning approach to the Reasonable Adjustment programme is judged to have influenced the emergence of a desire to use creativity to

¹ [Peterborough Information Network | Peterborough VI forum](#)

influence change. By galvanising awareness and collaborative energy around a shared target outcome, Reasonable Adjustment has realised a growing awareness of the role of creative approaches to achieving wider strategic, organisation, and social aims and objectives.

“This has been an interesting project for us because it’s been brilliantly creative, but it’s also been the first time it’s been that political. And that’s a really interesting concept how you can bring politics and creativity together. It has brought all of these disparate disabled people together, who are collectively feeling more powerful than they have felt in a long time.” (partner)

Partners and participants alike have recognised the value of creative co-commissioning in helping to inspire social change and service improvement for a range of service users. This was encapsulated in the Protest Corner within the exhibition which was made up of three large vinyl prints and references to government policies and laws, combined with protest slogans used in DDN activism.

“Disabled creatives speaking for disabled people makes a big difference”
(partner)

There are also multiple instances of the programme’s role in changing perceptions amongst the public of the challenges and issues faced by the DDN community.

“People either think you can't tie your own shoelaces or you're a Paralympian - there's nothing in between” (partner)

Seats of Change

Seats of Change by artist Fae Kilburn is a collection of 20 chairs produced to display key messages and quotes highlighting the challenges and experiences of disabled people of seating in public places. Originally displayed in a trail around 20 Peterborough organisations, the chairs were donated and have been used to varying effect including as a legacy consultation tool to engage service users by the Dementia Resource Centre.



Anecdotal feedback from parents of d/Deaf children also highlighted the impact of seeing someone like them who is successful as a result of their involvement in the programme as either a participant or visitor to the Reasonable Adjustment exhibition.

“Faye is amazing - seeing someone that is also deaf but also successful raises aspirations. There's nothing they can't do” (partner)

“One of the children was so happy to see their Zine in the window - there were lots of tears” (partner)

In terms of artistic practice, Fae Kilburn has drawn inspiration from the use of a 3D object such as a chair to inform her practice, recognising the value of people identifying with everyday objects that they can relate to in her work. The scale of the outputs, (i.e., exhibition) has also influenced her to look to increase the scale of her future work.

“Participants can take something from physical objects, something that they use or even walk past every day” (artist)

“People are isolated and without peer support which this exhibition started to address” (partner)

The benefits of involvement in the co-commissioning approach to delivering the Reasonable Adjustment programme were also evident on some of the DDN individuals active on the commissioning panel and in supporting the creative process. The impact of involvement in recruitment, programme meetings and workshops has primarily been evident in terms of increased confidence amongst members of the panel with both neurodivergent and physical health problems as the process provided the opportunity to contribute their creative skills whilst helping to raise awareness and tackle some of the problems facing people across the DDN community.

One panel member has grown significantly in confidence from involvement in meetings and leading video workshops to enable her to overcome challenges which formerly lead to isolation and culminated in speaking at Parish Council meetings about local access requirements. Another panel member has grown in confidence sufficiently from her experience of supporting the commissioning process to not only highlight deficiencies in her medical care and argue for reasonable adjustments in health services but also inform her studies with learning from the experience.

“People embracing these chairs was really powerful. I thought that was about the quality of the work, the quality of the concept of the project, the quality of communicating with people and taking them with us through that project. (Peterborough Presents team)”

“It gave me the confidence to keep fighting discrimination. I realised I was not on my own and there were other people pushing back.” (partner)

Learning and reflection

Key areas of guidance to replicate the positive experiences of co-commissioning from the Reasonable Adjustment programme include:

Diversity of partnership

- Involve a representative and knowledgeable range of partners including participants and community members.

Sharing and boosting expertise

- Multiple partners offer a range of perspectives, experiences, skills, and knowledge to inform better decision making, planning, and delivery.

Efficacy

- By reducing duplication of effort across partners and aligning expertise with tasks, co-commissioning can result in more effective and efficient working practices.

Changing established working practices

- The co-commissioning model can help to overcome the funding and delivery drivers 'forced on' Third Sector partners, (e.g., increased competition for fewer funding opportunities) that do not naturally encourage collaborative working.

Organisation, data sharing and partnership working

- Reasonable Adjustment has benefited from quality partnership working.

Fully engaged and representative partners

- 100% commitment and active participation from all partners is integral to maximising the benefits of co-commissioning.

Minimising or removing barriers to participation

- In line with the ethos of the Reasonable Adjustment programme, successful co-commissioning will reduce any physical, confidence, practical, or procedural barriers to achieving a shared objective.