

## Case Studies

The following two examples show how arts organisations have been able to successfully improve access to their venues. The results have been beneficial for the organisation and beneficial for people with disabilities. The examples are taken from research carried out in the United Kingdom and published in the Arts Council of England's *Access: Guidelines for Marketing to Disabled Audiences*.

### Derby Playhouse

Derby Playhouse reported a marketing success after they began providing sign interpreted and audio described performances. The theatre already had good access for people who use wheelchairs and an infrared hearing system. Fifteen headsets are available for audio description.

Despite having very little previous contact with visually disabled people, the Playhouse contacted 'talking' newspapers and local associations for the blind. All were keen to disseminate information and those who responded were offered discounted tickets for themselves and a companion.

Over the first five described performances a total of 30 people with sight disabilities and their companions attended, yielding a profit on the test period of 70 pounds over expenses. Numbers increased steadily over the test period, and at the same time the audience for sign-interpreted performances climbed from 4 at the first show to 75 people with hearing disabilities at the latest.

This case study demonstrates that, even with limited resources, results can be obtained in a comparatively short period of time, given committed staff and effective liaison with outside organisations. There are plans to extend marketing of the audio description service over a wider geographical area and the theatre is confident that numbers will increase as more people find out about the service.

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### **The Royal Theatre, Northampton**

The Royal describes their policy towards visually impaired people as a major success story. They started by providing spoken introductions to performances once a month and these gradually developed with the support of the local blind association. Braille and large print notes are provided and blind visitors are given a tactile tour of the set and stage along with a brief introduction of the plot and characters.

Each month a piece is recorded for the local talking newspaper and each month at least 25 people book for the evening through the blind association, more arriving independently. The theatre's success has led to them now providing fully audio-described performances.