

◀ See a Voice ▶

A VENUE GUIDE TO ASSISTED PERFORMANCES CONTENTS

1. Introduction
 - What is See a Voice?
 - What is Audio Description?
 - What is Captioning?
2. CEO / Programmer
 - Venue contract with See a Voice
 - Programmers Responsibilities for assisted performances.
3. Access Coordinator
 - Check list for organising an Audio Described performance.
 - Access Coordinator's Responsibilities for Audio Described performance.
 - Template agreement for Audio Describers.
 - Information sheet for Audio Describers.
 - Check list for organizing a Captioned performance.
 - Access Coordinator's Responsibilities for Captioned performance.
 - Template agreement for Captioner.
 - Information sheet for Captioner.
 - Audio Describer's and Captioner's Code of Practice.
 - Rates 2007.
 - Rates 2008.
 - Rates 2009 (to be confirmed).
 - Hub Clash Diary.
 - Feedback.
 - Key documents reference sheet.
4. Marketing
 - Marketing & Box Office Responsibilities for assisted performances.
 - Marketing Guidelines.
 - Joint Marketing Tools.
 - Audience Development.
 - Box Office Issues.
 - Key documents reference sheet.
5. Box Office
 - Guidance notes for Box Office Managers
 - Key documents reference sheet.
6. Front of House
 - Front of House Responsibilities for assisted performances.
 - Key documents reference sheet.
7. Technical

- Technical Responsibilities for assisted performances.
- Technical Equipment & Troubleshooting.
- Audio Description Technical Guide.
- Captioning Technical Guide.
- Key documents reference sheet.

8. Assisted Performances Customer Care Guide

9. Key Documents

- Guidelines for producing audio materials.
- Guidelines for a touch tour.
- Guidelines to caption unit placement.

10. Notes

◀ See a Voice ▶

What is See a Voice?

See a Voice was set up by VocalEyes and STAGETEXT using money from Round 8 of the Treasury's Invest to Save budget and from Arts Council England through Grants for the Arts. This three year project is designed to enable venues to offer more good quality assisted performances and to increase attendance levels in theatres by deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, blind and partially sighted people.

Between October 2006 and December 2009 See a Voice will be establishing groups of venues working together in twelve areas across England. These areas are to become hubs of activity, programming and promoting assisted performances.

See a Voice will purchase equipment to be shared among the theatres in each hub, and train the theatre technicians in its use and maintenance.

See a Voice will work with venues to identify potential audiences for assisted performances, and help them to develop joint marketing and audience development initiatives.

See a Voice will recruit and train new audio describers and captioners in each region.

What is Audio Description?

Audio description in theatre is a live verbal commentary providing information on the visual elements of a production as it unfolds. From sets, props and costumes, to actors' facial expressions and movements across the stage; the description is delivered during the quieter moments of a performance. It gives only essential information that a visually impaired (VI) person might miss. In some venues a touch tour of the set may be available before the performance starts.

How is an audio description script prepared?

Each description is prepared by two describers working as a team. They watch a production, study the script and/or score and, using a video or DVD of the production, write their description.

There are two parts to their preparation. First, the describers will take notes during their first visit to a performance in order to prepare a description of the set, costumes, characters and style of the piece. This information is recorded and sent out to bookers in advance of their visit.

Secondly, away from the theatre, they prepare their live description script using a video/DVD recording of the play. Visual information has to be succinct and in keeping with the piece, so it is imperative that the describers become as familiar with the production as possible. Audio describers have to decide which information is crucial to the understanding of the piece, and find the right words to sum it up. They have to reflect the mood of the performance and time their delivery to fit with dialogue, music or sound effects.

Once the script has been prepared, there will be a "dry run"; a live rehearsal of the description in the theatre. Ideally this is video recorded with the audio describers' voices mixed in with the stage sound, allowing the audio describers to fine-tune their script before final delivery.

How is the description delivered?

On the day of the audio description, the audio describers need to view the stage either from a sound-proof booth in the auditorium (live) or from a room elsewhere in the theatre via a video link up (remote). The description is transmitted into the auditorium using an infra red or radio system, and picked up via a headset worn by the VI customer.

There is a sound check prior to the performance to ensure optimum sound balance, and clarity of reception in the auditorium.

What is Captioning?

Captioning is similar to television subtitling and gives deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people access to live performances. Captioning converts the spoken word into text, which is displayed on a caption unit, or units, situated on or next to the stage. As well as dialogue, the captions also include the name of the character who is speaking or singing and descriptions of any sound effects. Captioned performances have been found to also benefit foreign visitors and students who are studying the play or learning to speak English.

How is a captioned script prepared?

Captioners need between 40 and 50 hours' preparation and rehearsal time in order to format a script. The best results are obtained when a single captioner prepares and outputs the script.

The current prompt script should be sent to the captioner as soon as it is available. The script should be provided as a Word document by e-mail so that it can be imported into the captioning software.

Once the script has been formatted, it is the responsibility of the captioner to check any script changes with the company or stage manager. Occasional word differences can be accommodated on the night, but whole chunks of text that are different will look like bad captioning.

A video/DVD recording of the production should be made available for the captioner's rehearsal purposes. No unauthorised copying or distribution of scripts, musical scores, video and audio recordings will take place and all materials will be returned on completion of the engagement.

Captioners need to see the production once as a member of the audience to familiarise themselves with the production, and twice from the technical box, to allow for preparation of the formatted script. A light, table, chair and show relay/headphones or natural sound should be provided.

How is the captioning delivered?

The captioner delivers the script live to the unit(s) during the performance.

On the day of the performance the captioner will allow time before the start of the performance to input any last minute corrections and/or announcements into their formatted script.

Where the captioner will sit during the show needs to be agreed with the venue in advance. The captioner must be able to hear the show clearly, whether by natural sound or a show relay, and must be able to see the caption unit(s).

PROGRAMMING RESPONSIBILITIES

AUDIO DESCRIBED PERFORMANCES

When considering at which shows/performances to offer audio description think:

- Will the performance be a matinee or an evening show?
 - The venue must consider that a VI customer may not like, or be able to negotiate, public transport at night.
 - But if you programme all shows as midweek matinees you will exclude VI customers who work.
- Is it going to be possible to get a video at least three weeks in advance of the audio described performance?
 - If you are a receiving house this is a question that should also be directed to the shows producers.
- Is it going to be possible for the audio describer(s) to see the performance at your venue, or another venue, enough times and in time for all the preparation, including writing the pre show/programme notes, which will be recorded and distributed by post to the audience in advance?

PROGRAMMING RESPONSIBILITIES

CAPTIONED PERFORMANCES

When considering at which shows/performances to offer captioning think:

- Is the show scripted?
 - If it is devised or improvised, then this makes it a difficult choice for captioning.
- Is it going to be possible to get a video at least two weeks in advance of the captioned performance?
 - If you are a receiving house this is a question that should also be directed to the shows producers.
- Is it going to be possible for the captioner to see the performance at your venue, or another venue, enough times before the date that you would like to have the performance captioned?

ACCESS COORDINATOR'S CHECKLIST FOR ORGANISING ASSISTED PERFORMANCES

AUDIO DESCRIBED PERFORMANCES

Once it has been agreed to offer an audio described performance:
(only applies to first ever audio described performance)**

UP TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

- Check the See a Voice hub clash diary for other programmed audio described performances in your area, and any other clash diaries that may operate in your area.
- Book the performances and the audio description equipment on the See a Voice software (you will still need to book delivery of the equipment to your venue with the host venue/storage unit).
- Book the audio describer(s) using the See a Voice list of qualified audio describers.
- Liaise with marketing department to ensure inclusion of assisted performances in season brochure, on the website and in other publicity materials.
- Liaise with Artistic Director / incoming Producer / technical department to ensure that the wireless radiators (part of the audio description equipment) will not be obscured by the set.
- Liaise with box office to ensure appropriate seats are set aside for those using the audio description service eg. be aware that assistance dogs may need to be accommodated and that any ticket discounts have been agreed.
- Liaise with technical department to decide where the audio describer(s) will operate from.
- Liaise with See a Voice to organise a meeting with your Box Office Manager to discuss the capture of box office data for both kinds of performances. **

ONCE SEASON/PERFORMANCE HAS GONE ON SALE

- Issue contract to audio describer(s).
- Liaise with the audio describer(s) to agree when they will receive a copy of the script, a video/DVD of the performance, dates to view the show.
- Liaise with the technical department to arrange a "dry run" for the describer(s).
- Liaise with the technical department and company to organise a touch tour before the performance.
- Liaise with See a Voice to organise training of Box Office and Front of House staff. **

- Liaise with marketing department to ensure audience development activity is taking place.
- Liaise with Box Office to ensure data is being collected re number of VI customers booking for the show.
- Liaise with technical department to arrange delivery of audio description equipment to arrive **two days before** the performance (to allow time for a dry run).

THE DAY BEFORE THE SHOW

- Meet and greet audio describer(s) and ensure time for liaison with Technical/Company Managers re any last minute script / performance changes.
- Ensure arrangements are in place for a “dry run”.

ON THE DAY

- Be available to ensure that the performance runs smoothly and to deal with any last minute difficulties.
- Ensure that Front of House/Duty Manager is fully aware of likely numbers of VI customers and any issues that may arise eg. policy on assistance dogs in the auditorium.
- Ensure that Front of House/Duty Manager will brief all Front of House staff before the performance; especially any new members of staff who may not have received See a Voice disability awareness training.
- Agree any audience feedback to be collected and by whom.
- Liaise with the Company Manager to ensure that company is fully aware of the audio described performance and available for the touch tour.

AFTER THE SHOW

- Record and discuss feedback from audio describer(s) / audience with management team colleagues.
- Liaise with technical department to ensure prompt and complete return of audio description equipment.
- Ensure payment of audio describers’ invoices.

AUDIO DESCRIBED PERFORMANCES - RESPONSIBILITIES

PROGRAMMING

When considering at which shows/performances to offer audio description think:

- Will the performance be a matinee or an evening show?
 - The venue must consider that a VI customer may not like, or be able to negotiate, public transport at night.
 - But if you programme all shows as midweek matinees you will exclude VI customers who work.
- Is it going to be possible to get a video at least three weeks in advance of the audio described performance?
 - If you are a receiving house this is a question that should also be directed to the shows producers.
- Is it going to be possible for the audio describer(s) to see the performance at your venue, or another venue, enough times and in time for all the preparation, including writing the pre show/programme notes, which will be recorded and distributed by post to the audience in advance?

MARKETING AND BOX OFFICE

In advance:

- The assisted performances should be included in your season brochure, flyers, posters, any other printed materials, on your website and in press listings.
- You may also choose to highlight the performances in your covering letter which will accompany the brochure.
- You should have agreed any audience development activity and use the weeks before the performance to publicise the availability of the service. See a Voice will offer support in this.
- In consultation with your technical team, you need to agree what seats should be held back at the box office and these should be marked as such on the box office system.
- By the time the brochure goes out, box office staff should be clear about which performances will be assisted so that they can convey the correct information to people who want to book tickets. All people booking for a performance that will be assisted should be told about the provision in case they would prefer to attend a different performance.
- You should also agree how data is to be collected on the people attending your assisted performances and the number of VI customers specifically booked to use the headsets. See a Voice will offer guidelines and training so that the information collected across the project can be compared.
- Agreement needs to be reached about any discounts that will be offered for people wanting to book for an assisted performance.

- If your website has an online booking system, will this allow people to book for the assisted shows i.e. will it provide the discount and offer them the right seats in order to use the headsets?
- If there is also a tour touch available, book this separately (see Box Office guidelines).
- For seating during the performance please ensure:
 - Clear reception of signal to headsets.
 - End of row if patron is accompanied by an assistance dog into the auditorium.
- Ensure that box office staff are fully aware of assistance dog policy and any restrictions on numbers of dog bookings.
- If the assistance dog is to stay outside the auditorium during the performance, Front of House need to know how many they should expect to look after.
- Box office should inform the Access Coordinator of the number of headsets that will be needed for the performance in case more need to be hired in.
- Box office should inform the Access Coordinator/marketing department of the number of introductory/pre-show notes CDs that will need to be produced and sent to customers.
- Box office should feed back all seating information to the marketing department so that everyone is clear as to how many suitable seats are available and when they should be released back onto general sale.

Day of performance:

- While box office staff should have already had awareness training to enable them to communicate more easily with customers with sensory impairments, the Box Office Manager should refresh their memories, especially if there are any new or inexperienced staff on duty.

After the performance:

- Box office should run off a report giving data about who attended the performance. You will need to feed this information back to See a Voice when requested.
- Box office, marketing and front of house staff should get together to discuss the impact of any audience development activity to determine what worked and what didn't. This should feed into future marketing/audience development activity.

FRONT OF HOUSE

In advance:

- The front of house team should already have received disability awareness training to help them provide better customer service to VI audiences.
- Check the duty rota to ensure that there are enough ushers available to help with the touch tour and to look after any assistance dogs outside the auditorium if necessary.

Day of performance:

- Front of House/Duty Manager to liaise with Access Coordinator and box office to ensure that all signage is in place and to discuss any issues eg. assistance dogs.
- New or inexperienced front of house staff on duty for the assisted performance should be briefed and provided with the **Accessible Performances Customer Care Guide (see section nine of this file)**.
- All front of house staff should be aware of where the VI audience is most likely to be sitting and to any late changes in seating.
- Make sure the front of house team have enough time to check that the headsets have been charged and cleaned and that all ushers are familiar with how they should be used.
- Patrons may need support to collect their tickets, headsets and entering the auditorium.
- Once customers are in their seats staff should check that they are comfortable with their headsets, are aware of how to operate the headsets and are receiving the information.
- Ushers should be on hand during the pre-show notes in case customers have problems with their headsets and need to change them. Normally this is a problem with an uncharged battery but may also be a problem with reception, so this will give staff ample time to arrange moving the audience member if necessary.
- Customers will normally raise their hand if they have any problems but it is good for your ushers to also tell customers that this is what they will look for if assistance is required from them.
- At the end of the performances all headsets must be collected and returned to the technical department, who will be responsible for cleaning and returning the complete set of equipment to the host venue/storage unit.
- Your venue needs to think about how to collect feedback from VI audiences; the See a Voice Audience Development Officer will advise you on this.

TECHNICAL

In advance:

- You will need to decide where the audio describer(s) should operate from. They need to have a clear view of the stage, either directly or by video link.
- Discuss with the Access Coordinator what the technical department needs to do in aiding the work of the audio describer(s), for example liaison with the company manager or DSM re access to scripts; obtaining or making the video/DVD recordings essential to the describers' preparation.

Two days before performance:

- The technical equipment should be booked to be delivered two days before the performance. It is up to your venue to arrange collection of the equipment from the host venue/storage unit in time to receive it for your assisted performances.
- The technicians should check on arrival that the equipment is complete.
- The technicians will have received training from See a Voice in how to set up and connect the audio description equipment to where the audio describer(s) will be operating from.
- The technicians should check that all the equipment is working eg. headset reception / batteries charged, in good time before the start of the performance, ideally the day before, so that advice can be sought if necessary and problems can be solved.

Day before performance:

- It is important that a "dry run" takes place as close to the actual performance as possible, preferably the evening before. The audio describer(s) will describe as they would on the night of the performance with a video/DVD recording the static coverage of the stage, show relay and audio description on the sound track.
- After the "dry run" the audio describer(s) will need a space with recording / viewing facilities to do their final preparation work.
- The technical team should clean the headset earpieces and ensure the batteries are charged before they are handed over to the front of house manager to be distributed to the customers attending the audio described performance.

Day of performance:

- Liaise with the Access Coordinator, Company Manager and/or DSM to prepare the stage for a touch tour; paying attention to the health and safety of the VI customers on stage.
- Organise an announcement that the pre-show notes will be broadcast in the auditorium 15 minutes before the start of the performance.

After the performance:

- The technical team needs to check that all the relevant equipment is packed up at the end of the assisted performance.
- Make sure headsets are returned by the front of house team, checked and cleaned before packing up.
- The equipment must be returned to the host venue/storage unit the day after an assisted performance.

AGREEMENT FOR AUDIO DESCRIPTION SERVICES
between

Name and address of Venue: XX

and

Name and address of Audio Describer: XX

PARTICULARS OF ENGAGEMENT

Assignment: to provide Audio Description services for a performance of: XX
on: date
at: Xpm

These services will be delivered in conjunction with XX
(name of co-describer)

These services will be delivered as a sole practitioner (*delete as applicable*)

First Performance Fee: £XXX.XX plus expenses

Fees for Subsequent Performances: £XXXXXX (*if applicable*)

Payment Terms: Audio Describer will invoice the venue at the above address after the performance has been delivered.
Venue agrees to pay the fee within 30 days of receipt of invoice.

AUDIO DESCRIBER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Audio Describer agrees to:

- carry out all necessary preparation work.
- deliver one assisted performance for the above mentioned fee.
- deliver subsequent assisted performances as agreed (*if applicable*).

This will include:

- working with a co-describer.
- providing pre-show notes to be recorded and sent to patrons by the venue's Box Office prior to the date of performance.
- recording pre-show notes if required (NB. an extra fee will normally be charged for this service).
- live delivery of pre-show notes immediately before the performance.
- delivery of a touch tour.

Recording of Venue Access Notes and/or Audio Brochures may be available by negotiation.

VENUE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Venue agrees to:

- provide contact details of relevant theatre/production staff.
- arrange a suitable place for the Audio Describer(s) to work from to enable a dry run and during the performance.
- provide, in advance, details regarding the production.

The materials required include:

- an up-to-date script of the show in a suitable format (a Word document supplied by email).
- a vocal score (for musicals).
- complimentary tickets to see the production 2 or 3 times, either at the venue, or whilst the production is on tour, as necessary (dates by arrangement with audio describer). ***This is essential in order for the audio describer(s) to complete their preparation of the show.***
- a recording of the show either on video or DVD. *If a recording is not available, arrangements should be made to record the show using the equipment supplied by See a Voice.*

NB. Failure to provide the above information in a timely manner will prevent the audio describer(s) from completing necessary preparation work and may lead to the cancellation of an assisted performance.

CANCELLATION

Notice of cancellation to be given to the Audio Describer(s):

In the event of cancellation of an assisted performance by the venue the following charges will apply:

14 working days or more notice	No Fee
7 to 14 working days notice	50% of the Fee
7 working days or less notice	Full Fee

Such notice should be given as soon as possible, and if given verbally, to be confirmed in writing via email or post on the day of cancellation.

A cancellation charge will not be due for travel costs unless the journey has already commenced, or the costs have already been incurred by purchasing cheaper tickets in advance.

Notice of cancellation to be given by the Audio Describer(s):

Should the audio describer(s) be unable to provide an assisted performance due to circumstances beyond their control, he/she will inform the contact person at the venue at the earliest possible opportunity. He/she will use their best endeavours to arrange a fully qualified replacement.

For & on behalf of the Venue

.....

Date:.....

By the Audio Describer

.....

Date:.....

INFORMATION FOR AUDIO DESCRIBERS
TO BE PROVIDED BY VENUES

Name of audio describer(s):	
Name of production:	
Audio described performance date and time:	
Touch tour date and time:	
Theatre details:	Name Address Phone Fax Website
Main theatre contact:	Name Job title/Role Phone Email
Key dates:	Run of show at venue Run of show including touring Date venue to supply script (by email) and video/DVD Date describer(s) to supply programme notes Date describer(s) to record notes (if applicable) Date of dry run
Other contacts:	Technical Manager Box Office Manager Front of House Manager

Comments / Notes:

ACCESS COORDINATOR'S CHECKLIST FOR ORGANISING ASSISTED PERFORMANCES

CAPTIONED PERFORMANCES

Once it has been agreed to offer a captioned performance:
(only applies to first ever captioned performance)**

UP TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

- Check the See a Voice hub clash diary for other programmed captioned performances in your area, and any other clash diaries that may operate in your area.
- Book the performances and the captioning equipment on the See a Voice software (you will still need to book delivery of the equipment to your venue with the host venue/storage unit).
- Book the captioner using the See a Voice list of qualified captioners.
- Liaise with marketing department to ensure inclusion of assisted performances in season brochure, on the website and in other publicity materials.
- Liaise with Artistic Director / incoming Producer / technical department regarding positioning of the caption unit(s) within the set or on the stage.
- Liaise with box office to ensure appropriate seats are set aside to ensure a good view of the caption unit(s), that any assistance dogs have been accommodated and that any discounts have been agreed.
- Liaise with technical department to decide where the captioner will operate from.
- Liaise with See a Voice to organise a meeting with your Box Office Manager to discuss the capture of box office data for both kinds of assisted performances. **

ONCE SEASON/PERFORMANCE HAS GONE ON SALE

- Issue contract to captioner.
- Liaise with the captioner to agree when they will receive a copy of the script, a video/DVD of the performance and dates to view the show.
- Finalise position of the caption unit(s).
- Liaise with See a Voice to organise training of Box Office and Front of House staff. **
- Liaise with marketing department to ensure audience development activity is taking place.
- Liaise with Box Office to ensure data is being collected re number of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing customers booking for the show.

- Liaise with technical department to arrange delivery of captioning equipment on the day BEFORE the performance, to allow for set up and trouble shooting.
- Agree emergency messages to be displayed on the caption unit(s) in the event of an evacuation.

ON THE DAY

- Be available to ensure that the performance runs smoothly and to deal with any last minute difficulties.
- Ensure that Front of House/Duty Manager is fully aware of the likely numbers of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing customers attending the performance and any issues that may arise.
- Ensure that Front of House/Duty Manager will brief all front of house staff before the performance, especially any new members of staff who may not have received See a Voice disability awareness training.
- Agree any audience feedback to be collected and by whom (usually short written questionnaires, collected by ushers after the performance).
- Liaise with the Company Manager to ensure that the company is fully aware that the performance is being captioned.
- Meet and greet Captioner and ensure time for liaison with Technical/Company Managers re any last minute script/performance changes.

AFTER THE SHOW

- Record and discuss feedback from captioner/audience with management team colleagues.
- Liaise with technical department to ensure prompt and complete return of the captioning equipment.
- Ensure payment of captioner's invoice.

CAPTIONED PERFORMANCES - RESPONSIBILITIES

PROGRAMMING

When considering at which shows/performances to offer captioning think:

- Is the show scripted?
 - If it is devised or improvised, then this makes it a difficult choice for captioning.
- Is it going to be possible to get a video at least two weeks in advance of the captioned performance?
 - If you are a receiving house this is a question that should also be directed to the shows producers.
- Is it going to be possible for the captioner to see the performance at your venue, or another venue, enough times before the date that you would like to have the performance captioned?

MARKETING AND BOX OFFICE

In advance:

- The assisted performances should be included in your season brochure, flyers, posters, any other printed materials, on your website and in press listings.
- You may also choose to highlight the performances in your covering letter which will accompany the brochure.
- You should have agreed any audience development activity and use the weeks before the performance to publicise the availability of the service. See a Voice will offer support in this.
- In consultation with your technical team, you need to agree what seats should be held back at the box office and these should be marked as such on the box office system.
- By the time the brochure goes out, box office staff should be clear about which performances will be assisted so that they can convey the correct information to people who want to book tickets. All people booking for a performance that will be assisted should be told about the provision in case they would prefer to attend a different performance.
- For seating during the performance, ensure that seats have clear sight of the caption unit(s).
- You should also agree how data is to be collected on the people attending your assisted performances and the number of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing customers booking tickets specifically to see the caption unit(s). See a Voice will offer guidelines and training so that the information collected across the project can be compared.

- Agreement needs to be reached about any discounts that will be offered for people wanting to book for an assisted performance.
- What alternative methods of booking will you provide for those who are unable to book by phone? Details of these must be included in your season brochure. See a Voice will offer guidelines on this.
- If your website has an online booking system, will this allow people to book for the assisted shows i.e. will it provide the discount and offer them the right seats in order to see the captions?
- Box office should feed back all seating information to the marketing department so that everyone is clear as to how many suitable seats are available and when they should be released back onto general sale.
- The caption unit(s) can be used during the interval to advertise the next /future captioned performance(s).

Day of performance:

- While box office staff should have already had awareness training to enable them to communicate more easily with customers with sensory impairments, the Box Office Manager should refresh their memories, especially if there are any new or inexperienced staff on duty.

After the performance:

- Box office should run off a report giving data about who attended the performance. You will need to feed this information back to See a Voice when requested.
- Box office, marketing and front of house staff should get together to discuss the impact of any audience development activity to determine what worked and what didn't. This should feed into future marketing/audience development activity.

FRONT OF HOUSE

In advance:

- The front of house team should already have received disability awareness training to help them provide better customer service to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing customers.

Day of performance:

- Front of House/Duty Manager to liaise with Access Coordinator and box office to ensure that all signage is in place and to discuss any issues eg. assistance dogs and headsets.
- **Signage for a captioned performance should read:** *Tonight's performance of X will be captioned. Captioning provides access for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing audiences.*
- If your venue has unreserved seating an area should be reserved for customers using the captioning. Reservations can read: *Reserved seating for users of the captioning service.*

- New or inexperienced front of house staff on duty for the assisted performance should be briefed and provided with the **Assisted Performances Customer Care Guide (see section 8 of this file)**.
- All front of house staff should be aware of where the deaf, deafened and hard of hearing customers are most likely to be sitting, and to any changes in seating area if the caption unit(s) have had to be moved.
- Be aware that some hard of hearing customers may also like to use the headsets for the venue's induction loop, if installed. Front of house staff should know where headsets may be obtained and returned.
- Front of house staff should distribute feedback forms if required and collect them at the end of the performance. These should be returned to the Access Coordinator.

TECHNICAL

In advance:

- Ideally the position of the caption unit(s) should be discussed with the set designer/director as early as possible. It may be difficult to decide where the caption unit(s) will be positioned until the set design is finalised. If it is not an in house production, there may be less flexibility and/or opportunity to influence the designer. For general guidance/advice on the positioning of the unit(s) see **Guidelines to caption unit placement (section 9 of this file)**.
- You will need to decide where the captioner should operate from. They need to have a clear view of both the stage and the caption unit(s) as well as a clear audio of the live performance.
- When a captioner is booked to see a performance for their script check, ideally they would work from wherever they will caption the show from. If that is not possible it is important to provide the captioner with a secluded seat, a table and a light so that they can work as effectively as possible without disturbing the rest of your audience.
- Discuss with the Access Coordinator what the technical department needs to do in aiding the work of the captioner for example, liaison with the company manager or DSM re: access to scripts; obtaining or making the video/DVD recordings essential to the captioner's preparation.

Day before performance:

- By this stage, you should have a clear idea of where the caption unit(s) will be placed for the performance.
- The technical equipment should be booked to be delivered the day before the performance. It is up to your venue to arrange collection of the equipment from the host venue/storage unit in time to receive it for your assisted performances.
- The technicians should check on arrival that the equipment is complete.
- The technicians will have received training from See a Voice in how to set up and connect the caption unit(s) to where the captioner will be operating from.

- The technicians should check that all the equipment is working in good time before the start of the performance, ideally the day before, so that advice can be sought if necessary and problems can be solved.

Day of performance:

- If discussions about caption unit(s) positioning have occurred early enough in advance, there should be no need for last minute changes. However if changes are required, the captioner, the Access Coordinator, Box Office and Front of House Managers would need to be involved in any discussion as it could involve re-seating deaf, deafened and hard of hearing customers.

After the performance:

- The technical team needs to check that all the relevant equipment is packed up at the end of the assisted performance.
- The equipment should be returned to the host venue/storage unit the day after an assisted performance.

AGREEMENT FOR AUDIO DESCRIPTION SERVICES
between

Name and address of Venue: *XX*

and

Name and address of Captioner: *XX*

PARTICULARS OF ENGAGEMENT

Assignment: to provide Captioning services for a performance of: *XX*
on: date
at: *Xpm*

First Performance Fee: *£XXX.XX plus expenses*

Fees for Subsequent Performances: *£XXXXX (if applicable)*

Payment Terms: Captioner will invoice the venue at the above address after the performance has been delivered.
Venue agrees to pay the fee within 30 days of receipt of invoice.

AUDIO DESCRIBER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Captioner agrees to:

- carry out all necessary preparation work.
- deliver one assisted performance for the above mentioned fee.
- deliver subsequent assisted performances as agreed (*if applicable*).

VENUE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Venue agrees to:

- provide contact details of relevant theatre/production staff.
- arrange a suitable place for the Captioner to work from during the performance.
- provide, in advance, details regarding the production.

The materials required include:

- an up-to-date script of the show in a suitable format (a Word document supplied by email).
- a vocal score (for musicals).
- complimentary tickets to see the production 2 or 3 times, either at the venue, or whilst the production is on tour, as necessary (dates by arrangement with captioner).
This is essential in order for the audio describer(s) to complete their preparation of the show.
- a recording of the show either on video or DVD. *If a recording is not available, arrangements should be made to record the show using the equipment supplied by See a Voice.*

NB. Failure to provide the above information in a timely manner will prevent the captioner from completing necessary preparation work, and may lead to the cancellation of an assisted performance.

CANCELLATION

Notice of cancellation to be given to the Captioner:

In the event of cancellation of an assisted performance by the venue the following charges will apply:

14 working days or more notice	No Fee
7 to 14 working days notice	50% of the Fee
7 working days or less notice	Full Fee

Such notice should be given as soon as possible, and if given verbally, to be confirmed in writing via email or post on the day of cancellation.

A cancellation charge will not be due for travel costs unless the journey has already commenced, or the costs have already been incurred by purchasing cheaper tickets in advance.

Notice of cancellation to be given by the Captioner:

Should the Captioner be unable to provide an assisted performance due to circumstances beyond their control, he/she will inform the contact person at the venue at the earliest possible opportunity. He/she will use their best endeavours to arrange a fully qualified replacement.

For & on behalf of the Venue

.....

Date:.....

By the Captioner

.....

Date:.....

INFORMATION FOR CAPTIONERS
TO BE PROVIDED BY VENUES

Name of Captioner:	
Name of production:	
Captioned performance date and time:	
Touch tour date and time:	
Theatre details: Name Address Phone Fax Website	
Main theatre contact: Name Job title/Role Phone Email	
Key dates: Run of show at venue Run of show including touring Date venue to supply script (by email) and video/DVD Date of script check	
Other contacts: Technical Manager Box Office Manager Front of House Manager	

Comments / Notes:

AUDIO DESCRIBERS AND CAPTIONERS CODE OF PRACTICE

This code sets out standards of how Audio Describers and Captioners should behave and work.

1. Standards of work

Audio Describers and Captioners will:

- 1.1 aim to reflect the theatrical performance as accurately as possible. They will not add anything or take anything away from the meaning, and they will reflect the spirit of the production.
- 1.2 recognise and accept the obligation to provide additional environmental information to allow service users to experience the live theatrical performance.
- 1.3 recognise and accept the boundaries of their competence and responsibilities, and the roles played by other professionals within the provision of the audio description/captioning service.
- 1.4 if there are problems during an assignment, do their best to solve them using their professional skills. If this is impossible, they will stop describing/captioning and let the appropriate venue colleagues know there is a problem.
- 1.5 adhere to the working practices and policies of the venues.

2. Acceptance of work

Audio Describers and Captioners will:

- 2.1 only accept work where they have appropriate qualifications, skills, experience and competence.
- 2.2 not, having accepted an assignment, cancel it without good reason. If the audio describer/captioner cannot go to an assignment s/he will tell the people concerned as soon as possible, and try to find another experienced audio describer/captioner to take her/his place.
- 2.3 not give their work to another audio describer/captioner without the knowledge and agreement of the venue.
- 2.4 they will agree the amount to be paid and the working conditions when they accept the work.

3. Confidentiality

Audio Describers and Captioners will:

- 3.1 maintain the confidential nature of all matters relating to the production, venue and personnel, and will not discuss these with a third party.

- 3.2 may give information from their work if they could be prosecuted for not doing so or if asked to by law or to protect the welfare of an individual or the community.
- 3.3 not make unauthorized copies of or distribute, scripts, musical scores, video and audio recordings, and all materials will be returned on completion of the engagement.

4. Professional behaviour and relationships

Audio Describers and Captioners will:

- 4.1 support the reputation of their profession and work to maintain high standards and try to improved their professional standards and status. They will not do anything to damage the profession.
- 4.2 respect the ethics and the working practices of other professions.
- 4.3 support each other when working together.

5. Professional development

Audio Describers and Captioners will:

- 5.1 try to improve and develop their skills and knowledge. They will try to take any training and development opportunities offered to them.
- 5.2 encourage and help other audio describers/captioners with their professional development.
- 5.3 agree to be assessed regularly by VI/hearing impaired assessors on behalf of the venues with which they work.

RATES SHEET - 2007

AUDIO DESCRIBERS	
Commissioning fee, 1 st performance including dry run, touch tour and pre-show notes: 2 describers at £385 each	Total £770 Plus travel
By special arrangement for venues under 150 seats for commissioning fee, 1 st performance, dry run, touch tour and pre-show notes: EITHER 2 describers at £200 each OR 1 describer at £300	£400 £300 Both plus travel
Performance fee ie. 2 nd and consecutive performance thereafter: 2 describers at £165	Total £330 Plus travel
Additional payment when 2 nights away from home are required to perform a single repeat performance	£100.00
Recording session (for one describer) For venues under 150 seats - £50 minimum	£50 an hour £75 minimum Plus travel
Access notes: Preparation Recording (as for pre-show notes ; see above)	By negotiation

CAPTIONERS	
Commissioning fee & 1 st performance Venues under 150 seats	£400 £200 Plus travel
Performance fee ie. 2 nd and consecutive performance thereafter Venues under 150 seats	£200 £125 Plus travel

ALLOWANCES

Accommodation, travel and subsistence for meals must be arranged by the venue, and apply if an audio describer(s) or captioner is traveling 25 miles, or further from home to provide the service. If the audio describer(s) or captioner is traveling less than 25 miles, to provide the service, then all of these provisions below are included in their fee.

AUDIO DESCRIBERS & CAPITONERS	
Accommodation allowance (guide price when booking own)	£50.00
Accommodation in lieu of hotel eg. staying with a friend or fellow describer.	£15.50
Subsistence: actual costs of meals should be claimed with a maximum guideline per day for three main meals.	Maximum guideline £25
Mileage allowance for own car (use to be agreed in advance):	
Mileage (up to 100 miles)	42p
Mileage (after 100 miles)	28p

RATES SHEET - 2008

AUDIO DESCRIBERS	
Commissioning fee, 1 st performance including dry run, touch tour and pre-show notes: 2 describers at £400 each	Total £800 Plus travel
By special arrangement for venues under 150 seats for commissioning fee, 1 st performance, dry run, touch tour and pre-show notes: EITHER 2 describers at £200 each OR 1 describer at £300	£400 £300 Both plus travel
Performance fee ie. 2 nd and consecutive performance thereafter: 2 describers at £175	Total £350 Plus travel
Additional payment when 2 nights away from home are required to perform a single repeat performance	£100.00
Recording session (for one describer) For venues under 150 seats - £50 minimum	£50 an hour £75 minimum Plus travel
Access notes: Preparation Recording (as for pre-show notes ; see above)	By negotiation

CAPTIONERS	
Commissioning fee & 1 st performance Venues under 150 seats	£425 £200 Plus travel
Performance fee ie. 2 nd and consecutive performance thereafter Venues under 150 seats	£210 £125 Plus travel

ALLOWANCES

Accommodation, travel and subsistence for meals must be arranged by the venue, and apply if an audio describer(s) or captioner is traveling 25 miles, or further from home to provide the service. If the audio describer(s) or captioner is traveling less than 25 miles, to provide the service, then all of these provisions below are included in their fee.

AUDIO DESCRIBERS & CAPITONERS	
Accommodation allowance (guide price when booking own)	£65.00
Accommodation in lieu of hotel eg. staying with a friend or fellow describer.	£15.50
Subsistence: actual costs of meals should be claimed with a maximum guideline per day for three main meals.	Maximum guideline £25
Mileage allowance for own car (use to be agreed in advance): Mileage (up to 100 miles) Mileage (after 100 miles)	 42p 28p

RATES SHEET - 2009

THESE RATES WILL BE CONFIRMED BY SEE A VOICE PRIOR TO 2009

HUB CLASH DIARY

This software was created to enable See a Voice venues to keep a clash diary of:

1. The use of the shared equipment for performances.
2. The assisted performances within each hub.

NB. The software does not automatically book delivery of the equipment. This should be arranged with the host venue/storage unit.

Also included on this software are:

- Contact details of Audio Describers and Captioners.
- Contact details of hub venues across the UK.
- Access to each hub's clash diary.

You will log on to your page of the booking software via the See a Voice website: www.see-a-voice.org

Your username is:

Your password is:

Once you have logged on there is a SOFTWARE TUTOR page, which explains how to use the site. If you have any queries please contact the Project Administrator, either via the Contact Admin page on the site or at the office on:

Tel: 020 7377 0978

Email: info@see-a-voice.org

Other potential clashes:

If you are a TMA member we recommend that you check with the TMA as they hold an assisted performance diary. This diary also includes assisted performances scheduled with STAGETEXT & VocalEyes, our parent organisations.

PLUS

We also recommend that London venues check what else is programmed with SOLT, who run the Access London Theatre brochure.

FEEDBACK

Feedback is an important part of the See a Voice project and will enable us to evaluate how successful the project has been in meeting its objectives.

For Venues

It is assumed that venues will want feedback on how the assisted performances are going, as part of a policy of continuous improvement in customer service. This may be obtained by:

- Internal discussion - through the normal management channels.
- Audience feedback on performances - at the venue's discretion.
- Feedback from See a Voice.

For See a Voice

Basis Information about service provision

- Each venue is asked to complete a questionnaire when they join the project, giving details of current/recent provision of assisted performances and awareness training.

Quantitative feedback

- Box Office data - this is being collected by all venues and will form an important part of the final evaluation of See a Voice. Beth Aplin, out box office consultant, is visiting each venue to ensure that we are collecting consistent data on assisted performances even though there are many different Box Office systems being used.
- Your venue will be asked to provide information on a regular basis.

Qualitative feedback

- Audience feedback - to be shared with venues. This will usually be collected by SAV at the first and fourth performances organised by each venue.
- Captioning - with the cooperation of the venue, See a Voice will issue questionnaires to members of the audience, especially those who have booked to use the captioning service. Questionnaires will be collated by See a Voice and the results fed back to the venue, as well as being part of the See a Voice evaluation process.
- Audio description - we will also seek feedback from VI customers, but this is usually more reliable when done in the form of a telephone interview on the day after the performance.

VI/Deaf Assessors feedback - from See a Voice Audience Liaison Officers (ALOs) to Venues.

- See a Voice's ALOs will attend the first and fourth performances organised by the venue, and offer feedback from the user's perspective on customer service issues, including staff awareness, positioning of caption unit(s), quality of audio description etc. It is hoped that this feedback will inform continuous improvements in the service.

Staff feedback on training - from Venues to See a Voice.

- We will issue questionnaires to venue staff at the end of our awareness training and use this feedback to ensure that we are meeting training needs.

**ACCESS COORDINATOR
PLEASE ALSO CONSULT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS**

ALL OTHER SECTIONS OF THIS GUIDE

AUDIO DESCRIBED PERFORMANCES

In advance:

- The assisted performances should be included in your season brochure, flyers, posters, any other printed materials, on your website and in press listings.
- You may also choose to highlight the performances in your covering letter which will accompany the brochure.
- You should have agreed any audience development activity and use the weeks before the performance to publicise the availability of the service. See a Voice will offer support in this.
- In consultation with your technical team, you need to agree what seats should be held back at the box office and these should be marked as such on the box office system.
- By the time the brochure goes out, box office staff should be clear about which performances will be assisted so that they can convey the correct information to people who want to book tickets. All people booking for a performance that will be assisted should be told about the provision in case they would prefer to attend a different performance.
- You should also agree how data is to be collected on the people attending your assisted performances and the number of VI customers specifically booked to use the headsets. See a Voice will offer guidelines and training so that the information collected across the project can be compared.
- Agreement needs to be reached about any discounts that will be offered for people wanting to book for an assisted performance.
- If your website has an online booking system, will this allow people to book for the assisted shows i.e. will it provide the discount and offer them the right seats in order to use the headsets?
- If there is also a tour touch available, book this separately (see Box Office guidelines).
- For seating during the performance please ensure:
 - Clear reception of signal to headsets.
 - End of row if patron is accompanied by an assistance dog into the auditorium.
- Ensure that box office staff are fully aware of assistance dog policy and any restrictions on numbers of dog bookings.
- If the assistance dog is to stay outside the auditorium during the performance, Front of House need to know how many they should expect to look after.

- Box office should inform the Access Coordinator of the number of headsets that will be needed for the performance in case more need to be hired in.
- Box office should inform the Access Coordinator/marketing department of the number of introductory/pre show notes CDs that will need to be produced and sent to customers.
- Box office should feed back all seating information to the marketing department so that everyone is clear as to how many suitable seats are available and when they should be released back onto general sale.

Day of performance:

- While box office staff should have already had awareness training to enable them to communicate more easily with customers with sensory impairments, the Box Office Manager should refresh their memories, especially if there are any new or inexperienced staff on duty.

After the performance:

- Box office should run off a report giving data about who attended the performance. You will need to feed this information back to See a Voice when requested.
- Box office, marketing and front of house staff should get together to discuss the impact of any audience development activity to determine what worked and what didn't. This should feed into future marketing/audience development activity.