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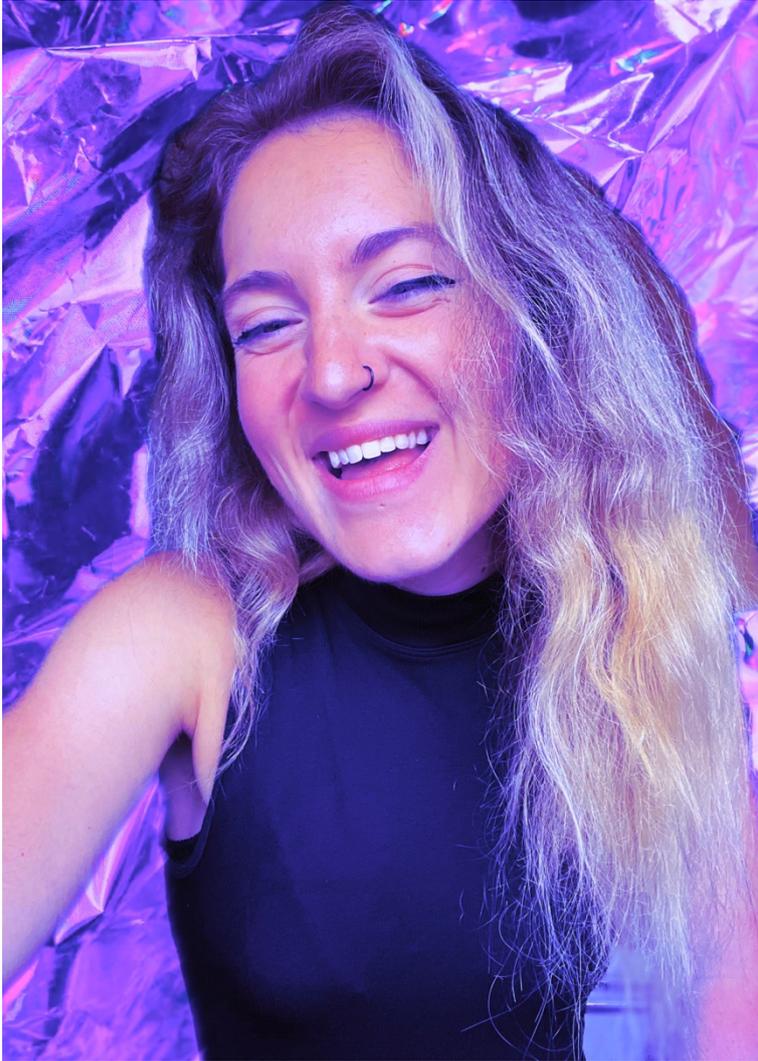


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**AMPLIFYING  
ACCESS  
IBILITY**

# Amplifying Accessibility



My name is Rightkeysonly, the two-handed, one-handed, musician that's great at high-fives and terrible at jazz hands. I'm also the 23-year-old, with A.D.H.D. and Erbs Palsy, that never saw anyone like them in the music industry and decided it was time that changed.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2023, I began Amplifying Accessibility, a 6-month project set on finding inclusive ways D/deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent individuals could progress their career in, what seemed like, a very able music industry. Now it's time to share what I learnt along the way, with you, in this article.

## CONTACT ME

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# Lesson 1

*You can't do things on your own.*

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Seems simple. But if you're like me, then you've had that period in your career where you were going to chase your dreams your *own way*, without *any help* from *anyone*, even though you have zero knowledge about the industry, besides making a few songs in your bedroom.

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**I didn't know where to begin this project. So, like when I set up the first accessible open mic in Pontypridd, I had to reach out for help.**

I wrote one email, summarising both myself and my project in just a few sentences, adapting it to suit each organisation it was sent to. I also stated exactly what help I needed, and requested signposting if they couldn't help me.

Each week I contacted around 15 new places, documenting each one, now in a public directory you can view on my website.



Don't get me wrong, I had many organisations that never responded. But each connection I made passed me on to several more, and several more after that, until I had everything from universities, funders, venues, and more, reaching out to get involved.

So, I grew in confidence. I started tagging organisations, like Gear 4 Music, in my Instagram videos, telling them to "slide into my inbox". The worst that could happen is I would be ignored and then it would be on to the next.

But I wasn't ignored. In fact, many organisations, that I'd tagged, went on to offer me opportunities in content creation, interviews, and performances at their events, sharing my music with audiences bigger than I was yet to reach.

**They wanted to help me.**

## **WHERE TO GO:**

- Arts Council websites advertise paid and unpaid opportunities in your area.
- Anthem Cymru and Youth Music distribute opportunities for musicians under 25.
- Shape Arts, Heart n Soul, and Sound Without Sight focus their opportunities on disabled individuals.

**Conclusion:** Ask everyone for help.

## Lesson 2:

*You deserve to be listened to.*

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Even when you're a rockstar, additional needs don't just disappear.

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In one day, I once performed three times, in two different cities, during the peak of summer. This wasn't uncommon after I started producing dance music, as the demand to perform grew. However, at the same time, my health deteriorated.

I always used to hide my needs; out of fear I wouldn't get booked for gigs. Then, I was told about Access Riders. An Access Rider is a document disabled artists share with colleagues to explain how best to support their needs when working together.

## **WHERE TO GO:**

- Unlimited and Disability Arts Cymru offer advice on how to write an Access Rider.
- Musicians Union offers legal advice for those experiencing discrimination.
- Take it Away offer a “Guide to Buying Adaptive Instruments”.

**Conclusion:** Accessibility hurts no one.

This is up to you to design how you would like, and so I began with the question:

**If I could have everything I every needed, what would that be?**

When reading it back, I realised I was often just asking for patience and empathy. I put it on my website and sent it to every person, organisation, and venue I worked with. Some enjoyed the little sprinkles of humour I'd put in along the way, and most took onboard everything it had said, and it made working together so much easier.

Some did, however, tell me they didn't have time to read about my needs. That opinion swiftly changed after they were gently reminded of the U.K. Equality Act of 2010.

## Lesson 3:

*You are human.*

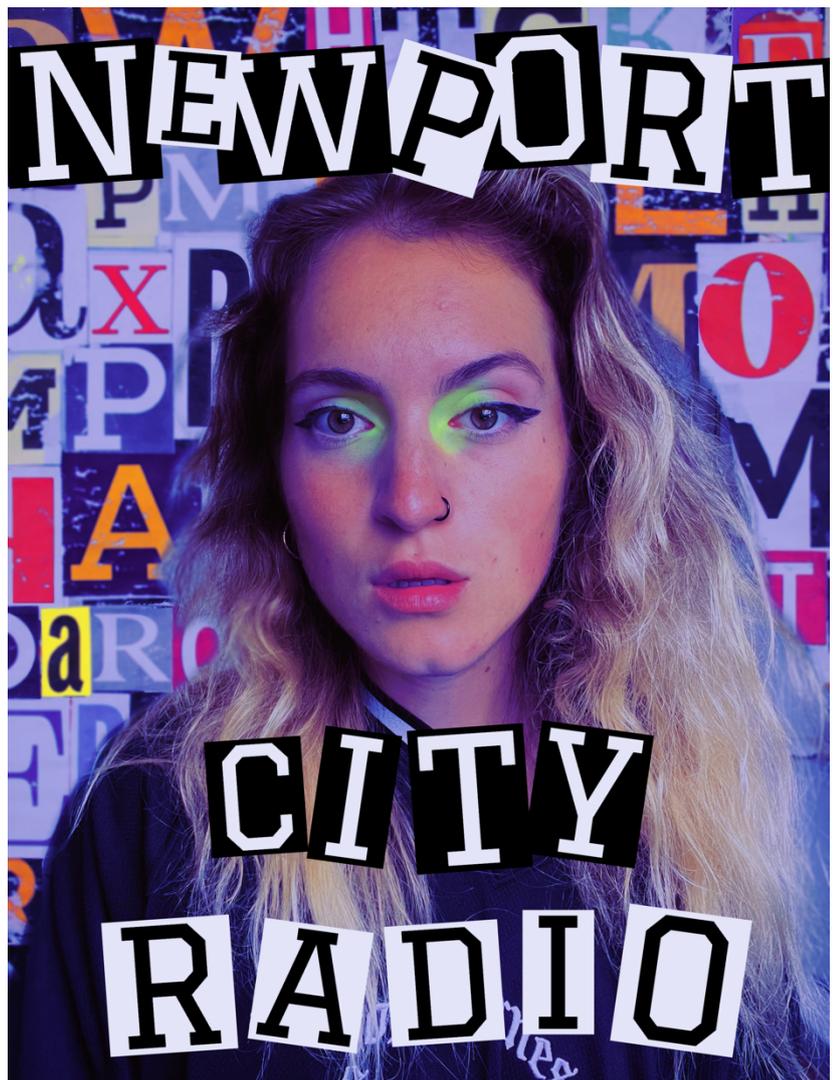
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One of the reasons I chose to pursue music was because I had been told I wasn't "able enough" to be a real musician. Therefore, I made it my goal to work towards ensuring less people experience the discrimination that occurs in a predominantly straight, white, able, male industry.

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**However, fighting a place that doesn't always show it wants you is hard.**

In 2023, I have met organisations that would rather prioritise their time elsewhere, as opposed to ensuring their work is inclusive and accessible. I have met organisations that told me of the times they have turned down musicians from life-changing opportunities because their needs would be "too expensive". I have cried at home, like many others, questioning why the way I was born makes me a burden.



## **This is not how it will stay.**

There are numerous amounts of organisations proactively working towards a more inclusive music industry, and individuals wearing their differences like a badge of honour, empowering those left behind.

### **WHERE TO GO:**

- B.A.P.A.M. delivers specialist health and wellbeing services for musicians.
- Music Industry Therapists deliver individual, couple, and group psychotherapy.
- Help Musicians provide funding for injury, illness, getting back to work, or preventing hearing loss.

## **But you don't always have to fight.**

Organisations like Help Musicians and Tonic Rider are providing those in the music industry free counselling, peer support groups, and helplines, recognising that the pain we feel isn't something we must go through alone.

**Conclusion:** Take a break, speak out, and start again.

## Lesson 4:

*You choose your sound.*

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Working out who you are as a musician, whether that be your genre, appearance, or the messages you wish to share, can give your audience an idea of who you are as an artist. It will also help you decide how best to work towards your goals.

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For example, I see Rightkeysonly as a vibrant and energetic, Electronic Dance Music creator, who didn't have the best upbringing, but is proud to be different, and wants to set up more opportunities for disabled musicians.

**How do I  
reflect  
this?**

## WHERE TO GO:

- Music Production for Women offer a getting started guide for music production.
- Attitude is Everything, Pirate Studios, and the Independent Society of Musicians offer online music industry courses.
- Ty Cerdd and PRS Foundation fund most elements of music creation and release.

**Conclusion:** Define your creative voice and share it with the world.

I work with artists and organisations that are inclusive, made a multicoloured yet clear to navigate artist website, speak openly, on and off stage, about my lowest moments, film goofy TikTok's about being a disabled individual as a resource for others, all whilst making music that speaks my truth, filling me with joy, whether that be as I create it in my bedroom or perform to a sea of people.

The potential to become whoever you want to be is in your hands.

**So, start exploring.**

# The End

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At the start of Amplifying Accessibility, I wrote how I was feeling at the time to reflect on in the future.

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After receiving approval from the project's supporting partners, I was quite overwhelmed. Finally, I had an opportunity to have my voice heard in the music industry. It felt like a hundred doors had been opened and I wasn't fully able to process it.

However, I also wrote that "I think this project has come at the right time. I hope, after it, I won't be constantly afraid anymore."

Since then, I've performed almost weekly in venues, events, and festivals, spoke in panels and media interviews, even had my songs sang back to me at gigs a few times – which was mind-blowing.

Most importantly, I've shared my story with a plethora of diverse musicians, encouraging them to strive for their goals, no matter their obstacles, by simply showing them that's its possible.

In fact, the last 6 months have also shown me that it's possible too.

I'm not quite sure how to finish this article, as I feel like there's so much left to say. So, the last lesson is:

***The journey isn't over.***

# Thank You

If you would like to share your experience of the music industry, or have any questions about the project, whether you're an individual or organisation, able or disabled, you can find me on Instagram, Tiktok, and Facebook:

[@rightkeysonly](#)

Thank you to all those that have contributed to Amplifying Accessibility.

