

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Press release

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Southbank Centre awarded gold status for accessibility by disability charity Attitude is Everything

London's Southbank Centre has been awarded the highest status for making its venues accessible to people with disabilities, by the arts access charity [Attitude is Everything](#), and has installed the first Changing Places toilet on the South Bank.

The Attitude is Everything Gold Status has only been given to eight UK arts organisations and recognises Southbank Centre's outstanding work to welcome disabled audiences to its world class arts programme and its seventeen acre site in central London

Steps taken by Southbank Centre to improve accessibility include new facilities for people with disabilities within extensive renovations to the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Hayward Gallery; improvements to accessible seating in the Royal Festival Hall; work to create a more accessible booking system; a comprehensive new access training scheme for visitor hosts across Southbank Centre's site; and improved digital communications on access including at www.southbankcentre.co.uk.

The award is announced as Southbank Centre opens its first fully accessible Changing Places toilet, a room with tailored design to support people with profound and multiple impairments, some people with learning disabilities and people who require the assistance of a carer. The first [Changing Places](#) toilet in the South Bank area will be open to the public, allowing thousands more people with disabilities to enjoy the attractions along the south of the river, and answers the call from the Mayor of London in his [London Plan](#) for toilets that reflect the diversity of the city.

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, said: "Toilets are a vital public service and can help to shape the experience of the capital for those who live here and for those visiting. That's why I recently unveiled plans to increase the number of toilets in the city, to give people the confidence to move around London with dignity.

"I'm delighted that the Southbank Centre, as one of London's top cultural destinations, is leading the way on this important issue – helping to ensure the capital is welcoming and accessible to all."

Liz Carr, actress and disability rights activist, said: "With their increasing commitment to improving access, be it physical, attitudinal or in their programming, I'm thrilled to see that

Southbank Centre has been awarded the Gold Standard for Access by Attitude is Everything. This award is meaningful - Attitude is Everything are an organisation staffed with disabled people and allies who will only accept the highest in access across the board. I've personally benefited from Southbank Centre's constant evaluation of their access and provisions for disabled audiences and artists alike. I have no doubt this prestigious and deserved award will spur them on to further evolve and develop."

Elaine Bedell, Chief Executive at Southbank Centre, said: "We are thrilled to be recognised by Attitude is Everything for our work to make our artistic programme even more accessible for every single audience member that we welcome to our site. Accessibility to the arts is one of our top priorities and, with the opening of our new Changing Places toilet, we hope not just to open up Southbank Centre, but the whole South Bank area, to thousands more disabled visitors every year."

Suzanne Bull MBE, Chief Executive at Attitude is Everything, said: "We are delighted to welcome the Southbank Centre on to our Charter of Best Practice at Gold, the highest level of achievement and one that demonstrates that a venue or festival has shown a continuous commitment to improving access and embracing inclusion for more than 5 years. This iconic destination, encompassing three music venues amongst other key cultural attractions, has invested heavily in accessibility, undertaking significant infrastructure changes in order to be welcoming to everyone, whether they be artists, audiences or employees."

Lauren West, Trailblazers Manager at Muscular Dystrophy UK, said: "Muscular Dystrophy UK and the Changing Places Consortium are delighted that one of the country's great national centres for culture and arts has made its facilities accessible to profoundly disabled people.

"As a powerchair user, and someone who regularly visits the centre, it's reassuring to know that profoundly disabled people will be able to use an accessible toilet in a safe, clean and dignified manner. Without access to Changing Places toilets, over a quarter of a million people who have severe disabilities are faced with a choice of not going out, or being changed on a toilet floor.

"By building more Changing Places toilets across the capital, we can celebrate a city that is accessible to all."

For more information please visit the Southbank Centre website [HERE](#)

PRESS IMAGES [HERE](#)

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NOTES TO EDITORS

In order to achieve Gold on the Charter of Best Practice, the Southbank Centre made some big infrastructure changes to improve accessibility, including:

- The [Changing Places toilet](#), open to both Southbank Centre customers and the public will open up the Southbank Centre's many venues and the Southbank as a destination to the approximately [230,000 people in the UK](#) who require a Changing Places facility.
- Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room to be reopened in 2018 with more accessible seats and improved access to them, removing the need to use a different entrance to get to them.
- Adaptable accessible seating in the Royal Festival Hall, which will enable the provision of a clear view of the stage during performances where people can stand. This also builds in greater adaptability, allowing wheelchair users to sit together, and the venue to increase the number of accessible spaces if necessary.

Southbank Centre has also made a number of other significant changes including:

- Fully revising and updating [their online information](#) in line with Attitude is Everything's [Access Starts Online](#) guidance.
- This includes a [PDF Access Map](#) and [Photo Access Maps](#) showing accessible routes to, and around, the venue.
- Programming a wide range of [accessible performances](#) with adaptations including BSL interpretation, speech to text, audio description, captioning, relaxed performances and touch tours.

About Attitude is Everything

Attitude is Everything is an Arts Council England Sector Support Organisation that improves deaf and disabled people's access to live music by working in partnership with audiences, artists and the music industry to implement a Charter of Best Practice across the UK. More than 130 venues and festivals have committed to improve their access facilities and policies via this framework. In 2016, ticket sales to disabled customers at Charter venues and festivals increased by over 26% - contributing some £8m to the music economy. In July 2017, the UK Live Music Group, the body that sits within UK Music to represent views of Britain's live music industry, officially recognised the Charter as an industry standard. For further information visit: www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk

About Changing Places

A Changing Places toilet is a fully accessible toilet with the following additional equipment: a height-adjustable changing bench, an overhead track or mobile hoist; a peninsular toilet, privacy screen and enough space for up to two carers as detailed in British Standard BS8300: 2009. These toilets should be provided in addition to standard accessible toilets.

[Research](#) has found that 230,000 people in the UK need assistance to toilet and/or change continence pads. Users include people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and people with a range of other disabilities including Cerebral Palsy, Motor Neurone disease, Multiple Sclerosis, stroke, some older people and other specific disabilities. Our estimation

of up to a quarter of a million users will increase in the future. Without Changing Places toilets, carers are forced to change their loved ones on toilet floors or have to stay at home.

The Changing Places consortium has been leading the campaign for fully accessible toilets for over a decade and comprises Muscular Dystrophy UK, PAMIS, Centre for Accessible Environments, the Scottish Government and founding member and advisor/campaigner Martin Jackaman.

For information and advice on changing places facilities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland email: changingplaces@musculardystrophyuk.org

About Southbank Centre

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 17 acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as The National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection.

Let the Light In

Southbank Centre is carrying out vital refurbishment work on Hayward Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room to make the arts venues fit for future generations. The planned works include replacing Hayward Gallery's pyramid roof lights to let natural light into the upper galleries, and carefully restoring the original 1960s architecture. Generous support from Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund and Southbank Centre friends, through the Let The Light In campaign, means we have just £700,000 of our £25m fundraising target left to raise. Southbank Centre's Let The Light In campaign launched in September 2015 and offers people the opportunity to support this major repair and refurbishment project by sponsoring seats, dressing rooms and the Hayward Gallery pyramid rooflights. For more information, visit: southbankcentre.co.uk/letthelightin