



Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport

24th November 2017

Dear Matthew and Melanie

Thank you for writing to me, and for the conversations you and your colleagues had with myself and officials at the Museums Association Conference last week.

'Growing and diversifying audiences' is indeed a key priority. It will be taken forward by DCMS and its Arm's-Length Bodies as part of developing a Museums Action Plan ensuring public funding and support is directed towards agreed objectives. It is a priority where individual museums have a significant role to play and we hope museums will also continue to strengthen their work engaging with different visitor groups.

There has been some progress in adults with a long-standing illness or disability participating in museums. Taking Part statistics show that the proportion of adults with a long-standing illness or disability who had visited a museum in the last 12 months has increased from under 40% in 2005/06 to 47% in 2016/17. The work of your organisations, and others, that help to make museum spaces more accessible and show why it is so crucial to include and welcome disabled visitors have played a pivotal role in this.

However, things are still not good enough. The proportion of adults with a long-standing illness or disability visiting museums is still below the proportion of adults with no disability visiting, which was 54% in 2016/17. There is considerable work to do just to get to parity for d/Deaf and disabled visitors, as well as to increase the overall proportions of everyone visiting museums, including d/Deaf and disabled people.

The aim should be for all d/Deaf and disabled people to participate in museums as much as they wish to: to have exhibitions and displays that are accessible physically and in different formats, to have services and resources provided, and to be able to fully play a role in museums as visitors, volunteers, and staff.

I am sorry to have disappointed d/Deaf and disabled visitors, organisations that represent them, and all people working towards improving access and participation in museums by failing to make this explicit in the Review itself. The Review, by necessity, touches only lightly on a number of issues. The challenges faced by disabled people participating in museums should not have been omitted.

I would like to assure VocalEyes, StageText, and the wider museums sector, that d/Deaf and disabled visitors not being explicitly mentioned in the report is in no sense a signal that they should not be a priority for the sector, or are not a priority for DCMS, its Arm's-Length Bodies, and myself and the whole Review team. The Review team will seek to continue these discussions about the needs of museums and audiences as we move into the implementation phase.

Thank you for drawing this important issue to our attention. I hope that this letter, alongside the conversations at the conference, addresses your concerns. The team at DCMS would be pleased to meet with you to discuss the Review further as well as your report *State of Museum Access 2016*.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Mendoza', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Neil Mendoza