

BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend



Middlesbrough, May 2019

In May 2019 we were given the opportunity to support a small group of young adults with learning impairments to work at BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend in Middlesbrough. The opportunity came about through a link between Ben, one of our directors, and a member of staff on the accessibility team at Festival Republic, who organise many of the BBC's live events.

Bridge Creative is all about supporting people to reach their potential through creative and innovative employment opportunities. We had supported two young guys to work at a small local music festival previously and knew the benefits this experience had on those we supported.

County Durham has the lowest rate of adults with a learning disability in any form of paid employment at just 1.9% compared to 6% nationally. That means out of 1,700 adults with a learning disability in County Durham, only 34 people are in any form of paid employment. This includes zero-hour contracts, part-time work, and self-employed work. We expect that a much smaller percentage are in full-time employment.



The group we supported to work at the Big Weekend, had never been to a big music festival before, let alone worked at one – it was a whole new experience, so of course excitement was at an all-time high!

Before the festival, we liaised with Festival Republic where we discussed how everything would work, planning shift times, any reasonable adjustments that were needed, and what training we needed to do before the festival. We carried out a half-day training session, including a stewarding training session where the guys practiced their wristband technique and learnt how to check and scan tickets and wristbands. The training also included ACT Terrorism Awareness Training to help us keep people safe at the event by identifying suspicious behaviour.

One-to-one support was arranged for each of the guys we were supporting to support them to carry out their role. We were ready for our day working on the Disabled Access Team at the festival. The guys carried out a 4-hour shift, stewarding on the disabled viewing platforms. Half of the group were on the main stage viewing platform and the other half were on the Big Top tent viewing platform. *[Continues on next page]*

Tasks included checking guests were wearing the correct wristbands in order to access the platforms, ensuring the entrance, exit, and walkway areas on the platforms were kept clear for people to move around, setting up seated areas for guests and being a point of contact to ensure guests enjoyed their time at the festival.

An hour into the shifts, the guys were doing most tasks without our support – they remembered to check every guests' wristband as they arrived at the platform, they were asking guests if they needed a seat, and even collecting rubbish from the platform to recycle.

At 5pm it was time for the shift changeover, and time for us to catch some of the acts at the festival. We watched Stormzy, Annie Mac, Future and Miley Cyrus and one of guys even managed to fit in a quick on-camera interview with press from the BBC!

The guys said what an amazing day they'd had. Since the festival, they have been constantly checking the local papers for events we could work at next, with one guy commenting 'I can't wait to work at a festival again, I want to do a nightshift next time'.

Supporting that group of young people to have that opportunity and work experience, made such a difference in their lives. Their confidence had clearly been boosted, and their aspirations raised, from just one experience. Next year – Glastonbury!

