

Removing Barriers Project - Becoming a Disability Confident EMPLOYER: Impact Story - Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

“From a creative perspective, forming BSO Resound, has been amazing and from an organisational learning perspective it’s been really seminal. It’s driven a lot of our understanding about inclusion and since then we’ve moved forward quite rapidly. Inclusion is the driving force of what the BSO does.”



At a Glance..

- BSO employs 38 head office staff
- This is in addition to the 65 within the orchestra including the 6-piece BSO Resound ensemble

Highlights..

- BSO first achieved the government’s disability confident scheme at EMPLOYER level back in 2019 following the formation of BSO Resound
- First orchestra to have a disabled-led ensemble
- Continued working towards achieving disability confident LEADER status with Seetec



What’s next?

“The overriding thing is that we are confident that we all understand the overall social model of disability & that’s how the whole company operates - that’s our general ethos. That’s the foundation.

All our staff get disability & equality training. That happens as a basic & that runs through & underlays everything we do.”

LUCY WARREN, HEAD OF BSO PARTICIPATE

Company background

Based at the Lighthouse, Poole, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) has residencies in Bristol, Exeter, Portsmouth, Southampton and Yeovil, and performs regularly in Truro, Basingstoke, Barnstaple and Weymouth – it is the largest cultural provider in the South West, serving one of the biggest and most diverse regions in the UK.

In 2018 the BSO made headlines when it formed its BSO Resound ensemble—the world’s first professional disabled-led ensemble at the core of a major symphony orchestra. The 6-piece ensemble was led by conductor James Rose. The driving force to BSO Resound’s formation came from a campaign and funding from the Arts Council England called Change Makers back in 2017. The aim of the campaign was to “create visible role models and professional opportunities within the sector”.

Outcomes

Lucy explained that they’re not a huge organisation, but they’re a **phenomenally busy one**, so having the framework that they established to get to Level 2 was really helpful for them when they set out to **achieve Level 3**. Couple this with the opportunity to work intensely as part of the Removing Barriers Project and having lots of **critical friends along the way** (in the form of the other participating companies) to help us assess where we were, was exactly what we needed. Lucy said “It’s been **so helpful**. And **really positive** to know that as part of the Level 3 status is all about continuing to question and reflect what we are doing and what we say we’re going to do.

“Putting inclusion at the heart of the orchestra has been transformative. It has changed the way we look at our Company, our Art, our Audience, and our role in the world.”

Dougie Scarfe, OBE DL