

## **Job Description: Access Officer 2022**

### **Contract**

Temporary: Start date: w/c Monday 6 June - Friday 30 September 2022

**Salary:** £24,257 pro rata

### **Key dates**

Festival Launch: Wednesday 8 June 2022

Friends and sponsors advanced booking: Friday 17 June - Monday 20 June 2022

Opening day of sales to public: Thursday 23 June 2022

The Edinburgh International Book Festival runs from 13- 29 August 2022, with the Baillie Gifford Schools Gala Day on Tuesday 30 August 2022

Festival Debrief Day: TBC September 2022

---

### **Background**

The Edinburgh International Book Festival, a non-profit making organisation, is a distinctive international showcase celebrating the written word, literature and ideas. It brings leading and emerging international, British and Scottish authors and thinkers together to inspire each other and audiences in an extensive programme of public events.

Discussion, performance and interactive events have become prominent features of the Festival, complementing the more traditional interview-style conversations and readings, and contributing to the Book Festival's reputation as a powerful forum for the public to exchange views with writers and experts on a wide range of issues: social, ethical and political as well as literary and cultural. At the heart of the Book Festival's activity is an integrated approach to creative learning and education, with the aim of expanding participation in democratic discussion, fostering a love of reading and developing engaged, knowledgeable audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

The Book Festival's children's programme of author events, activities and workshops is produced for young audiences of all ages, from babies to teenagers, attracting family audiences of around 20,000 each year. In addition, an extensive Schools' Programme is created for primary and secondary pupils, with around 14,000 school children attending each year. Following an award from players of People's Postcode Lottery, the Book Festival expanded its activities to deliver a wide-ranging communities programme. A series of live-literature events, artist residencies and mini-festivals take place throughout the year, taking the Book Festival on the road around the country to inspire and entertain people in many different communities, including in Scottish prisons.

Since 1983, the Edinburgh International Book Festival has grown to stage over 900 events every August, attracting around 250,000 visits, making it the largest public celebration of the written word in the world. Up until 2020, the Book Festival took place in a specially built tented Festival Village in Charlotte Square Gardens, in the heart of Edinburgh.

With the global pandemic the world changed. As a small, agile festival operation, the Edinburgh International Book Festival responded swiftly to the changing environment by staging a fully digital Book Festival in August 2020. With little experience, the Festival team boldly embarked on creating a new interactive online environment, where authors came together in 147 live and pre-recorded events. Real-time chatrooms, live author Q&As and book signings created a lively online forum where 2 people gathered, and authors interacted with their audience. Most importantly, conversation and the exchange of ideas were able to continue. The new digital format was enthusiastically received, and many thousands of people tuned in and chatted with each other from countries across the world.

Building on the success of 2020's fully online Festival, 2021 opened up a new chapter: a long-term strategic partnership with the University of Edinburgh. This partnership has enabled the Book Festival to present a hybrid festival from a new central location at the Edinburgh College of Art and offers the opportunity to develop the hybrid model further. The range of distinctive indoor spaces and the grassy outdoor courtyard offers the Book Festival the facilities to build broadcasting studios for digital events and a range of flexible spaces for audiences to enjoy live and screened events in-person.

Prior to the pandemic, the Edinburgh International Book Festival's annual turnover was around £4.2 million, with under 20% of the income coming from Creative Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council to support core operations. The remainder was raised through ticket sales, the sales of books through the Book Festival's highly successful independent bookshops, corporate sponsorship, grants from trusts and foundations, and donations from individuals. Due to the impact of Covid, the hybrid 2021 Edinburgh International Book Festival was designed to have smaller audiences and ticket sales. As a result of the planned reduction in scale, budgeted turnover for 2021 was just over £3 million. In 2022 the Book Festival plans to expand the scale of the site and programme, with plans place to attract more people to the site to enjoy events. Income will continue to be derived from a blend of public and private sources to maintain the Festival's long-held, robust financial position.

The Edinburgh International Book Festival is a founder member of Festivals Edinburgh, the organisation created by Edinburgh's 11 major Festivals to support joint strategic development and maintain the position of Edinburgh's festivals as global leaders.

## **The Role**

This is an exciting opportunity to work with a wide range of teams, external stakeholders and customers to help make the Book Festival as accessible as possible. The Access Officer acts as a point of contact for our audience, coordinating our accessible programming and liaising with contractors supplying our BSL and caption provision. They will update our reserved seating

database, contact customers to confirm requirements and manage access ticket bookings, including group bookings.

The Access Officer will be largely based within the Box Office team, but also be required to work closely with the Front of House team, the Site and Production team, the Marketing team and the Programme team. The Access Officer will also be a member of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Group.

The Box Office team comprises the Manager, Supervisors, Schools Booking Coordinator and increasing numbers of sales staff in the run-up to the Festival. The Box Office operates on the Red61 ticketing system.

### **Key duties and responsibilities**

- Booking BSL interpreters and captioning services as required
- Being a point of contact for different accessibility partners
- Working closely with the Site and Production team to make sure the Festival site is as accessible as possible
- Working with the Programme team on specified events
- Contacting customers to confirm access requirements
- Advising on facilities provided and suggesting suitable events in the programme to customers
- Collating materials and information that make the Festival more accessible for audiences e.g. Easy Read guides, maps, visual guides
- Maintaining our reserved seating database and generating seating reports
- Working with groups such as Artlink to book tickets
- Liaising with the FOH team and Box Office to ensure access requirements are communicated correctly during the festival
- Handling access bookings and issuing tickets using the Red61 ticketing system by phone, in person and by post
- Resolving customer queries and providing excellent customer care at all times
- Staffing the on-site Access and Information desk during the Festival and acting as point of contact for site access requirements
- Collating feedback and recommendations, leading on debrief meetings with customers, partners and stakeholders for the evaluation and future development of our processes and systems
- Sharing best practice examples of access provision to staff team, including training opportunities and online resources
- Other duties as required

### **Person specification**

This is an ideal opportunity for individuals who wish to build on their existing customer service skills in a festival environment, while making the Book Festival as accessible as possible. Previous experience in a similar role would be beneficial. Excellent communication and teamwork skills, and a willingness to learn and adapt quickly are all essential for this role. A good understanding of

the barriers that face people attending events is required, preferably through having some lived experience.

**Essential:**

- Commitment to high levels of customer service, with experience of dealing with customers both in person and on the telephone.
- An understanding of the broad range of barriers that can prevent people accessing the Festival
- Self-motivated and passionate about improving access and inclusion
- Strong communications skills and the ability to interact with a wide range of people
- Empathy and the ability to maintain confidentiality
- A positive, flexible attitude and calm manner under pressure
- The ability to work on own initiative and as part of a team, and to advocate for others if necessary
- Strong administrative and IT skills
- Excellent attention to detail

**Desirable:**

- Previous experience working in the field of accessibility and inclusion
- Experience of Box Office ticketing systems, in particular Red61 ticketing
- Experience in a festival or arts venue
- Ability to use British Sign Language

**Terms and conditions**

The Book Festival is currently in a hybrid working phase, and the Access Officer will be asked to be present in the offices in Edinburgh for a minimum of three days a week. Work will be based at the Festival site during August. Normal hours of work are 9.30 am - 5.30 pm, Monday to Friday and additional hours may be required at peak times of the year and during the Festival itself (when staff should expect to work 6 days a week). Time off in lieu will be given for weekend days worked outside of normal working hours. During the Festival, Box Office opening hours are 09:30 to approximately 21:00.

Wages are paid monthly in arrears by bank transfer.

**Equal Opportunities**

The Edinburgh International Book Festival is an equal opportunities employer and a Real Living Wage employer. Our work is framed by a commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

The Book Festival is a working environment where everyone is treated fairly, and our differences are celebrated as strengths. We encourage applicants with diverse backgrounds and experiences to apply. If you have any specific access requirements, please let us know and we will do our best to meet your needs.

## **Applications**

To apply for this position, please complete the online application at <http://www.edbookfest.co.uk/about-us/jobs>.

Please ensure you upload **a copy of your current CV and an application letter**. Your letter should outline your suitability for the post, why you wish to work at the Book Festival and highlight your significant skills and experience. You may include any other information to support your application.

If the job description doesn't answer your questions, please contact [jobs@edbookfest.co.uk](mailto:jobs@edbookfest.co.uk) or call the Book Festival office on 0131 718 5666.

**Closing date for applications:** 12 noon on Thursday 5 May 2022

**Interviews:** w/c Monday 9 May 2022

Interviews will be held at the Book Festival offices at 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN, or virtually if requested.

The Edinburgh International Book Festival Ltd has its registered office at 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN and is a company limited by guarantee (no SC 79939) with charitable status (SCO10120).