

SCREENINGS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND MEMORY LOSS

There are currently around 850,000 people with dementia in the UK, with around 650,000 more people acting as their carers. Running dementia-friendly screenings could be a great way to engage with your community by using the power of cinema to bring together people with dementia, their family and carers, and members of the general public.

This document is designed to help you gain a better understanding of how to make your screening venue more accessible for audiences who are living with dementia or memory loss.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY CINEMA MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA OR MEMORY LOSS?

1. Work with partner organisations
2. Think carefully about your programming choices
3. Offer extra-screening activities
4. Make adjustments to your screening venue
5. Produce effective publicity materials
6. Brief your volunteers or staff

1. WORK WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

When organising dementia-friendly screenings, it is important to work with local organisations that support people with dementia and/or memory loss. This will help you fully meet the accessibility needs of people with dementia – and will also ensure there is an audience for your screening.

Working with one or two community partners in order to host a dementia-friendly screening is highly advised. To find a partner, you might contact local nursing homes or your local branch of Age UK, or seek out nearby 'memory cafes'. A directory of memory cafes, and other related

services, can be found here: <http://memorycafes.org.uk/#!/search>. Your local council will also have lots of information about their services for people with dementia and memory loss.

When you approach a local group, let them know that you have screening equipment – and, if it's applicable, a venue – that is available for them to use, and enquire if they're interested in working together to hold a dementia-friendly screening. A film screening might not always be suitable for their clients, as each group will have its own individual needs, so simply letting them know what you can offer is a good way to start building a relationship.

Once you've established a link with a partner organisation, you can work with them to decide what films you should show, how the venue can be adapted to suit their clients' needs, and how you should promote the screening. By seeking regular feedback from your partner organisation(s) on what you're planning for your dementia-friendly screening, you can adapt what you're doing to better meet the specific needs of your audience.



'My advice to community cinema groups who want to put on dementia-friendly screenings is that the staff at the partner organisation need to be really on board. The staff at the home we work with are amazing; they really build up the promotion during the week before the screening, getting people excited.'

Paul Hartley, In-Situ

Working with a partner organisation will also be helpful when establishing how to finance your screening. There are several ways you may decide to do this. Let your community partner(s) know what your costs will be; they may decide to help fund the screening. Local councils often have provision to fund dementia support services, so you could also investigate what provision they offer, and if they have any financial support available.

Taking donations at the screening is also a great way to help finance your event. Dementia-friendly screenings are really appreciated by the people with memory loss and by their families and carers, and so audiences are often keen to donate to ensure these kinds of events can keep happening.

You might also choose to screen the film you've chosen twice in one day: a dementia-friendly matinee screening, and an evening screening that is open to the general public. This would require two separate commercial single title screening licences. The dementia-friendly screening will likely have a smaller audience; money recouped by the general public screening can therefore help fund it. Having two showings in one day can also help with volunteer recruitment, as volunteers may be better placed to offer a single full day of assistance, rather than help out at multiple shorter events.

2. THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT YOUR PROGRAMMING CHOICES

Work with your partner organisation to decide which film(s) you're going to show. The clients of the organisation might like to be involved in this decision-making process; for example, you could offer them a list of suggested titles, from which they can pick their favourites.

RECOMMENDED:

- Films that are under 90 minutes long. Programmes of short films are often particularly successful at dementia-friendly screenings.
- Think about what themes the film you're planning to screen will invoke for people. Choose films that will trigger happy memories – and try and avoid films that will trigger bad ones. Films that trigger bad memories might include movies set around World War Two and films that include scenes of similar warfare.
- Musicals are often very popular choices. In musicals tunes help carry the story, which makes them easier to remember, so they can often be powerful aids to recollection. *Singin' In The Rain*, *Calamity Jane*, and other classic musicals from the 1940s – 1960s are often successful.

'We've found old musicals have gone down best, but we try to make it a maximum of two hours (including interval) so people aren't sat there too long. This is partly so they don't become restless, but also because they may have routines at their care homes which will be disrupted if we take too long.'

Ian Robinson, Chorley Little Theatre

- Similarly, archive footage, such as short films about local history and past events, are popular as they evoke positive memories.

Once you've chosen your film, screening it with English-language subtitles is highly recommended. This is a simple way to make your screening accessible for people with dementia, and can really enhance their viewing experience. For more detailed information on how to screen films with subtitles, please consult the 'programming subtitled films' section of our [Making your venue accessible for people with hearing loss](#) advice guide.

3. OFFER EXTRA-SCREENING ACTIVITIES

Dementia-friendly screenings are especially valuable because they are a shared activity that brings people with dementia and their families and carers together to enjoy an everyday activity in a safe, sociable setting. At dementia-friendly screenings, the social element of the event can therefore be at least as important as the film itself.

Instead of popcorn, offer tea, coffee and cake either before or after the film. This might be included in the ticket price. You might also like to offer the option of a meal either before or after the screening – again, this could be included in the ticket price, or purchased as an additional extra.

Depending on the skills and enthusiasms of the team running your community cinema, and the needs of your partner organisation, there are other extra-screening activities that you might consider offering. For example, having a sing-a-long during the intermission of the screening, where music is played while song lyrics are projected onto the screen. Other cinemas have incorporated other creative arts workshops that involve dance, storytelling and singing into their dementia-friendly screening programmes. Look at the different capacities within your community cinema team and talk to your partner organisation to see if any of these kinds of extra-screening activities might be appropriate.

4. MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO YOUR SCREENING VENUE

Making small adjustments to your screening venue can make a real difference to its accessibility!

- A low sensory experience can often be appreciated, such as screening films with the sound lower than usual, and the house lights on low throughout the screening. If you don't have adjustable lighting at your screening venue, use lamps to ensure the venue remains partially lit during the performance, to avoid the audience being in the dark
- Use very clear signage throughout your venue. For example, replace toilet door signs that use male and female symbols to clearly printed "men" and "women" signs. Additional signage around the venue giving clear directions is also advisable.
- Have comfy seating. People who have memory loss can sometimes find it difficult to engage with everyday activities, and can therefore 'switch off' from them. Appropriate seating will allow your audience members to feel comfortable, helping them to focus.
- If necessary, alter the layout of seating in your screening room to accommodate extra wheelchairs, allowing plenty of room for movement.
- If possible, have a breakout room near your screening room. This should be a light, comfortable space where audience members can go if they need a break from the screening.
- Have an intermission partway through the screening. This will give audience members the opportunity to move around and relax. It's great if you can provide tea, coffee, and biscuits at this point too.
- Let attendees know in advance if free parking is available, and where it is located, as public transport is often unavailable to people with dementia and memory loss.
- Establishing links with community transport providers can also really benefit your dementia-friendly screening. Access to a safe means of transport can often be a barrier to people with dementia and memory loss attending these kinds of events.

'We had less people in the audience than usual to allow more room for individuals to move around. We also had a bit more lighting, and were very clear when the lights would go down and when any intervals would be. Checking that everyone is settled before starting the film is important. Make sure you have a good set up, disability access, and an ability to adapt and pause the show at short notice. When it works it is a beautiful thing.'

Carl Bell, The Whitaker

These adjustments and additional provisions can be highlighted on your marketing and promotional materials.

5. PRODUCE EFFECTIVE PUBLICITY MATERIALS

If you're publicly advertising your dementia-friendly screening, consult with your community partner(s) to see what wording and imagery you should use in your marketing materials. For example, some groups prefer the term 'memory loss' to 'dementia'. Some cinemas that are particularly focused on attracting a mixed audience of both people with and without dementia might choose to avoid both these terms altogether, and instead emphasise that the screenings have a relaxed atmosphere where people are welcome to move around as they please.

**Singin' In
The Rain**

A special screening for people with dementia and their families or carers.

Disabled Access ✓ **Free Parking** ✓ **Free Entry** ✓

Wednesday 16th September - 2pm
Whitaker Museum
Haslingden Rd - Rawtenstall - BB4 6RE
Free Admission - Advance Booking Only

Please Call 01706 218858

Make sure your website, around your venue, and your marketing materials all give information on how your screening and venue is accessible for people with dementia. Work with your community partner(s) on how best to communicate to all audiences what the screening will involve, including the fact that some members might wish to move around, talk, and sing or clap along with the screening.

Using visual communication can help when communicating with people with dementia and memory loss. Using icons in any posters, flyers, and other promotional material you

produce can help illustrate clearly and visually what the screening will involve. For example, the use of icons could help demonstrate that your film will screen with reduced sound, subtitles, and low lighting throughout.

6. BRIEF YOUR VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

Keeping your staff and volunteers informed about ways they can be of assistance to audiences with dementia can help them feel more confident and make your community cinema more accessible. Informal training that demonstrates simple, small steps your volunteers can take will have a huge impact on your screening!

Again, working with your partner organisation(s) can help your staff and volunteers to develop an awareness and understanding of the specific needs of people living with dementia, and of their carers.

Your partner organisation(s) are likely to provide any specialist care and support that is needed, but it is important for your staff and volunteers to be aware of, and comfortable with, the needs of people with dementia and memory loss. For example, during the screening audiences may talk about the events happening onscreen, or sing and clap along with songs and musical performances. In a dementia-friendly screening, audiences should feel comfortable and supported if they interact with the film in this way. Staff and volunteers should be briefed on best practice for communicating with people with dementia. This will help if your team need to offer directions or other assistance, and empower them to communicate with compassion, understanding, and patience. Your partner organisation can help you with this. Training your volunteers doesn't require you to spend money; your partner organisation will likely be happy to brief your community cinema team on the needs of their clients.

It is also advised to have more staff and volunteers than usual in dementia-friendly screenings.

Dementia screenings are a really valuable asset not only to your organisation but also to the wider community. Making sure you have strong partnerships in place and have done some research beforehand will ensure that your screenings are a success. We wish you the best of luck with your screenings!

USEFUL RESOURCES

Dementia Connect – a comprehensive list of resources and services, including care homes and memory cafes, for people with dementia and memory loss: <http://memorycafes.org.uk/>

Age UK – find local services provided by Age UK, including day centres and lunch clubs:
<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-partners/>