

# STARTING A COMMUNITY CINEMA AT YOUR DEAF CLUB



Screening films at your deaf club could be a great way to engage with your community and to bring people together through the power of cinema. It is also an opportunity for people to use and develop skills by being part of a community cinema team. This document is adapted from our [Starting a Community Cinema](#) pack with additional, specific, information about setting up a community cinema at a deaf club/ in your deaf community. For further details on some of the areas mentioned in this document, download our Starting a Community Cinema pack or get in touch with us via email and we would be happy to help with any further enquiries.

## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CINEMA?

A community cinema is any volunteer-led, non-profit organisation that shows films in its community. This includes film societies and clubs; pop-up cinemas; school film clubs; college and university student cinemas; screenings in village halls, arts centres, deaf clubs, local cinemas, youth and community centres; mobile cinemas and local film festivals.

## WHAT MAKES COMMUNITY CINEMA SPECIAL?

- **CHOICE:** Community cinemas are run by the local community for their community: their audience. This gives communities the power to choose the films that they want to see, when they want to see them. This can be one of the most attractive reasons to start a community cinema at a deaf club as you can decide what films to show, providing a greater variety of films for your audience than is offered in commercial cinemas.
- **ATMOSPHERE:** Community cinemas specialise in providing a warm and friendly atmosphere, in which every audience member can feel welcomed and secure.
- **CONNECTIONS:** Community cinemas are the social heart of their community, providing opportunities to discuss and debate film and create connections between people who might otherwise be isolated.
- **CULTURE:** Community cinemas take films seriously, offering audiences varied and adventurous programming, bringing world cinema, classics and the very best new releases to audiences across the country, as well as showing short films, documentaries, animations and archive footage.
- **AVAILABILITY:** Community cinemas are hugely diverse. Some operate in cities and towns, where films are readily available, while others are in rural areas where a local film society might be the only form of cinema provision. Both types provide an enjoyable communal atmosphere and develop the viewing experience with special seasons, discussions and social events.

## VENUE

Once you have decided to begin screening films, the first thing to do is choose a venue. Does the place your club currently meets already have a suitable room for holding screenings? Your choice of venue can influence much about your community cinema, from the capacity of your audience and the format on which you will screen films (for example there might be a venue with a 35mm or a DCP projector and projectionist available). Otherwise, there might be a good sized local hall, community centre, or library that fits the bill, but may need equipment installing. Then you might decide to screen on DVD or Blu-ray, as the equipment will be cheaper, easier to install and more manageable without a trained projectionist. There

are also more films with subtitles available on DVD and Blu-ray, which will give you a wider choice when programming films for your community cinema. You could also use a variety of venues for each screening, which would mean you would need your equipment to be portable.

If your chosen venue is a cinema and has a 35mm or DCP projector, you will need to evaluate the state of the equipment, the seating and the rental charge. Then you can decide whether a community cinema could be made to work there. If you are looking at installing your own equipment in a non-cinema venue, you'll need a DVD or Blu-ray player, a sound system and a screen. You'll also need to consider whether the venue will allow permanent installation, or whether you'll need to take your equipment apart after each screening. You should also think about what other equipment you may need for your audience, such as hearing loops and infrared systems. You also might want to consider whether the venue has black-outs, or whether these can easily be installed. Anything that will improve your audience's experience is a good idea: comfortable seating, tea and coffee making facilities, access for people with disabilities and adjustable heating/ air conditioning. For more information on equipment and venue please take a look at our equipment [starter pack](#).

## RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Your deaf club may already have a committee. If so, it could be useful to meet with them about your idea to screen films, as they might be able to help.

Community cinema committees work best when they are made up of people ready to undertake a well-defined set of roles. A typical committee may look something like this.

- **The Chair** runs the meetings, keeps the committee members focused and makes sure key decisions are made.
- **The Secretary** organises meeting agendas, writes the minutes, replies to correspondence and is in charge of the general day-to-day administration of the organisation.
- **The Treasurer** monitors income and expenditure, keeps the books, prepares the annual accounts and is involved in obtaining grants and fundraising.
- **A Membership Secretary** for managing applications, records and communications can be very helpful to share the load with the secretary.
- **The Booking Officer** ensures that once a programme is settled all films are booked, that they subsequently arrive and are available for projection.
- **The Publicity Officer** produces the marketing materials and may have a strategic role in planning activities to publicise your screenings. They will often also be in control of any social media streams. However this task can be shared out amongst the committee.
- **The Front-of-House Manager** is responsible for ticketing, handling money at the door and banking it, recording numbers and on the audience size. They may also develop a working relationship with venue staff.
- **The Projectionist** is responsible for ensuring the quality of the viewing experience.

Note that some of the roles can be combined but the first three are best kept separate. Most of the roles require a certain level of expertise and benefit from being performed by someone of an appropriate professional background (e.g. a book-keeper as treasurer).

To recruit volunteers to your community cinema team, you could put up posters around the venue of your deaf club. You could also get in touch with surrounding community groups in your area to see if they are interested in helping, or advertising for you. It's a good idea to create a Facebook page and set up a Twitter

account, as social media can be a great way to recruit volunteers. Try to make your advertising clear and outline some of the roles and responsibilities available to interest people with the enthusiasm and relevant skills for each role.

## FACILITATORS

If you plan to host extra activities with your screenings such as panels and Q&As, particularly if your screenings are open to the public, you might want to find a facilitator from the hearing world to help with communication and accessibility. This can help with communicating between the community cinema team and the outsourced venue, or planning extra elements to your screenings such as filmmaker Q&As. If you do involve a facilitator, find one who is a registered qualified BSL interpreter. If you decide to make a funding application to help finance activity at your community cinema, including a request for financial support to help you hire a facilitator would be extremely useful. Your local Film Hub may be able to help with funding and finding a facilitator in your area – for more information on Film Hubs and the Film Audience Network and to find your local Hub, visit [our website](#).

## LICENCES

No matter what kind of film screenings you plan to run, if you are going to show a film to an audience you must have a licence. You can get these from the distributor, or their agent, who owns the rights to show the film. In practice, this means hiring a copy of the film from the distributor, or their agent on terms that include payment for the licence. Films can be hired on DCP, DVD, Blu-ray and (more rarely) on VHS tape or 35mm/ 16mm film.

In general, community cinemas have the choice of two ways of screening films:

- a **non-commercial single title licence** allows only *members of your club* to attend the film screening. Usually this licence does not allow tickets to be paid for in advance or on the door, or permit any advertising of the film screening.

OR

- a **commercial single title licence** allows your members *and* the general public to attend the film screening. People can pay in advance of the screening or on the door. This licence allows you to freely advertise films screened under it giving you much greater flexibility.

**Non-commercial licences** may be funded by audience member subscriptions collected at the start of each season or year. Films are hired on a flat rate basis (around £85-£120), and less paperwork is involved as there is no need to file box office returns.

**Commercial licences** are paid for by working out a percentage (usually 35%) of the box office income OR a minimum amount - the 'minimum guarantee' (ranging from £85-£120 for DVD hire). You pay whichever is the greater figure. The amount paid is therefore dependent on the size of your audience. After a screening using this licence type you must complete a 'return' to the distributor that reports how many people attended and ticket income generated.

It's important to have a licence for each film that you screen. We strongly recommend that you book and confirm your films from the rights-holders before you begin to publicise them. This will require a bit of preparation, but is much better than being without a film at the last minute due to lack of availability. Remember, not all films will be available and sometimes you'll need to do some research to track down the

films you wish to screen. For more information on sourcing films, go to:

<http://cinemaforall.org.uk/advice/programming/sourcing-films/>

Although there is more work involved in publicising your programme, the use of the commercial licence gives greater freedom as it allows you to build an audience over a season by external advertising, creating a much higher profile and reaching more potential members.

### Membership


Offering a membership schemes for your films provides several advantages regardless of which licence you use. Receiving most of your income at the start of the year or season can give you greater financial security (and give you the freedom to be more adventurous in your choice of films. Once people have paid their membership fees they are more likely to come even to films that are unfamiliar.

If you are operating under a **non-commercial licence**, your audience have to be members of your community cinema – so make sure you pay special attention getting the pricing right.

If you are screening using a **commercial licence** it might be a good idea to operate a membership scheme or offer season tickets to members at prices that encourage enrolment. Having a bulk of your income come in this way will allow some security as the season progresses.

### MARKETING AND PUBLICITY

Marketing and publicity is an important part of running a community cinema at your deaf club. Potential audiences, whether your members or the general public, need to receive plenty of information about your event, before they decide to come along. Marketing and publicity can be a fun and creative side to running a community cinema. Designing, creating and building an identity for your community cinema can be very fulfilling. Online tools such as social media and your own website can be a fantastic way to advertise your screenings and reach a wider audience. Online tools can also be a way of finding and connecting with other deaf clubs, finding creative volunteers who can help you, as well as forums and groups near you to help build your audience and community.



*'The advent of social media has been a powerful tool for us and brought an already tight knit community closer together. We made promos that we have signed ourselves and uploaded to Facebook, which has proved to be an effective method of marketing and led to such an amazing turnout.'*

Priscilla Igwe from The 888 Club

An effective publicity campaign will include:

- Creating your own **website** – if your budget is tight try setting up a free **Wordpress or Tumblr** site. These are simple tools that can help you choose a simple design, customise to your needs and even set up a memorable domain name ie. [www.sheffielddeaffilmclub.co.uk](http://www.sheffielddeaffilmclub.co.uk). If you have someone within your team who is confident with web design, you can call upon their skills to improve your site. However, you will be able to make a great, basic site with very little know-how using these tools. Fill your website with information about your screenings and news about your deaf club, as well as other interesting content like photos from your events or audience reviews.
- Setting up a **Twitter** and **Facebook** account will allow you to reach a huge potential audience. They can be a great way to share information about your screenings in a variety of formats: words, pictures and videos.

- A well-produced **leaflet or flyer**, widely-distributed among your members and placed in key areas such as libraries, shops, theatres, concert halls and at your venue can be valuable, especially to potential audiences that do not use or have access to internet facilities. However it can also be expensive.
- Attractive, informative and easy-to-read **posters** placed in libraries, at community poster sites and at other venues can help you reach even more people.
- Free advertising and **editorial in local papers** and on **radio stations** (well-timed press releases are the key to this).
- Inclusion in **mailshots** by other local arts and cultural organisations e.g charities and deaf forums could also help spread the word of your screenings and community cinema.
- Inclusion in your venue's publicity and **mailings**
- Have your screenings listed on the Your Local Cinema website: [www.yourlocalcinema.com](http://www.yourlocalcinema.com), which lists subtitled and audio described screenings going on across the country. You can also list your films on [www.screeningfilm.com/](http://www.screeningfilm.com/)
- Make your own video to post online! This usually involves a BSL interpreter signing information about the film and the details of the event and screening, and usually has subtitles. Videos can be posted and shared widely across websites and social media channels, making it an effective way of marketing screenings to people who are hard of hearing.

## EXTRA SCREENING ACTIVITIES

Some community cinemas offer a more unique cinema experience for their audience through extra screening activities, such pre-film introductions, after film discussions and Q&A sessions. Start by looking at your community cinema team and their existing skills. It's likely your group is made up of passionate film fans, so ask someone if they'd like to prepare a short introduction to the film. Include any interesting trivia about the film, or talk a little bit about why it was selected. If you're screening a local film, try getting in touch with the filmmaker directly, as they might be interested in a Q&A, or even providing a short filmed introduction for you to screen beforehand. Again, events like these can benefit from having a facilitator, a registered BSL interpreter to help organise and support the extra screening activity.

*Our Deaf Conversations About Cinema screenings and discussions means that all of our audience (both Deaf and hearing) can come together to discuss and share their views on the films in our programme. The positive response we've seen has been huge – there is absolutely an appetite for creating shared, inclusive opportunities like this. An added benefit of this work is that as a team we have really enjoyed beginning to learn basic BSL – and are committed to continue developing this new skill.*

**Louise Gardner, Watershed Cinema**

## LEGAL ISSUES

Some of the things that you need to consider are:

- As of April 2015 in England and Wales you will no longer need a Premises Licence to screen films, provided it is a not-for-profit screening between the hours of 8.30am and 11.00pm. It is still worth double checking with your local council to check that you are eligible. If there is any other activity in the venue this still requires a premises licence. In Northern Ireland you still need a Premises Licence to screen films and in Scotland although a Premises Licence is often free for not for profit venues, you will need a Cinemas Licence. To find out more read our Scottish Starter Pack: <http://cinemaforall.org.uk/advice/scottish-starter-pack/>.

- Are there any restrictions under the fire and building regulations? The venue and your local authority will be able to provide advice and assistance.
- Is your venue accessible to all, including people with disabilities? More advice and information on increasing the accessibility of your venue is available from: [www.yourlocalcinema.com](http://www.yourlocalcinema.com) and [Action on Hearing Loss](#).
- Does your venue have public liability insurance, and does this cover your film screenings? Being a member of Cinema For All will give you access to a competitive insurance package to cover equipment and public liability insurance with WRS insurance: <http://www.wrsinsurance.co.uk/wrs-insurance-services/cinemainsurance>
- Does your venue have a performing rights licence to cover music? This is not covered by your screening licence. Advice and information is available from: [www.prsformusic.com](http://www.prsformusic.com)
- Do you have confirmation and permission (i.e. a licence) from the rights holder to screen your chosen films? Take a look at our guide to sourcing films to help you find the distributor <http://cinemaforall.org.uk/advice/programming/sourcing-films/>
- Have you made your viewers aware of the film's classification, if it has been classified? If not, you will need to obtain local classification from your council. Classification must be clearly displayed on any publicity materials, including websites, programmes, posters, etc. You can find a film's classification on the British Board of Film Classification's website: <http://www.bbfc.co.uk/>

## **GOOD LUCK!**

We wish you the best of luck, but with common sense, teamwork, effective planning and making good use of the resources around you, you'll find that running a community cinema can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience. Cinema For All is here to support you all the way through your life as a film society, so don't hesitate to get in touch by phone: 0114 2210314 or by email: [info@cinemaforall.org.uk](mailto:info@cinemaforall.org.uk)