

Modes of Community Cinema Operation

CINEMA
FOR ALL

There are a number of considerations to be made in deciding how your film society/community cinema is to operate.

We have listed the two main ways that community cinemas run their ticketing, along with some tips and information to help you decide the best option for your community cinema!

This is just one aspect of running your community cinema. For more tips and advice read our [Guide to Starting a Community Cinema](#). If you are based in Scotland, read [Regional Screen Scotlands Guide](#) [here](#).

Non-membership:

- This option is for groups that do not want to run their community cinema on a membership scheme.
- Instead you can simply sell tickets in advance and/or on the door at your screenings, to the public.
- With this option you are able to advertise your screenings publicly and reach a wider potential audience.
- This form of selling tickets may be more accessible to your audience as it does not require a larger upfront fee and you could perhaps include tiered ticketing options e.g student, family, low/no wage tickets.
- This method does not offer the advantage of upfront funds provided from membership subscriptions, to pay for operating costs and future film licences, so it is important to carefully consider ticket pricing for your screenings. With this in mind, it can be helpful to explore other ways of generating funds to help support running costs, e.g. funding, sponsorship and selling refreshments.
- This is a commonly chosen form of running of a community cinema as it offers flexibility for you the cinema and your audience.

Membership:

- There are a number of different ways to run a membership scheme at your community cinema, for example:
 - Members can pay an upfront subscription fee that gives them entry to all the films you screen in that year or season.

- Members can pay a nominal fee e.g. £20, which allows them to purchase tickets to each screening for a much lower fee e.g. £3.

- Some community cinemas choose to make these screenings private and screen to members only, allowing them to take advantage of the non-commercial screening licence (see below for more information). Whereas others allow members to bring paying guests and set a guest ticket fee that is a little higher than a members ticket fee, e.g. £5.
- When running a membership scheme you are more likely to need to programme a whole year or season in advance, for your members to see what their subscriptions gives them access to.
- Members must be over the age of 16. You must also comply to age certifications for all of your screenings.
- The advantage of running a membership, rather than your screenings only being open to the public, is that you have some upfront funds to cover the costs of running your film season/programme. It is also a useful way of starting to build a loyal (and often guaranteed) audience.
- Running a membership scheme usually requires more administration work and holding personal data (member name, email address etc). You will need to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) with the use and storage of this information.

Regardless of whether you operate a membership system or not, all screenings must adhere to the BBFC certificate given to the film. For more information go to www.bbfc.co.uk.



Film Licencing

To screen any film to an audience outside the home you must obtain – and pay for – permission to do so. This permission is given in the form of what is called a 'screening licence' and is simply obtained by hiring a film from the distributor who handles that film.

You find information on sourcing films and finding their distributors [here](#).

The conditions attached to the types of screening licence may also influence your operational mode:

- **Non-commercial screenings:** A film society/community cinema that operates a membership subscription scheme, screens only to members and guests, and does not sell tickets on the door may be able to take advantage of a flat rate hire fee by purchasing a 'non-commercial licence' from a distributor. Conditions attached to this cheap rate however, limit your ability to advertise outside of your immediate membership, so attracting new members can be tricky.
- **Commercial screenings:** A film society/community cinema that allows entry to members of the public and charges on the door must purchase a licence from a distributor on a 'commercial' basis. Using this licence you pay either a minimum amount (the 'minimum guarantee' e.g. £110) or a percentage of takings on the door ('percentage of Box Office')- whichever is greater. This type of licence also allows you to advertise your screenings publicly. You may still operate a membership scheme using this licence, but you are freer in terms of admitting the public and charging on the door.

If you would like more information or have any questions about the licence for a particular film please contact Cinema For All at info@cinemaforall.org.uk or call 0114 2210314.