

VISIBLE CINEMA



Hand Guide

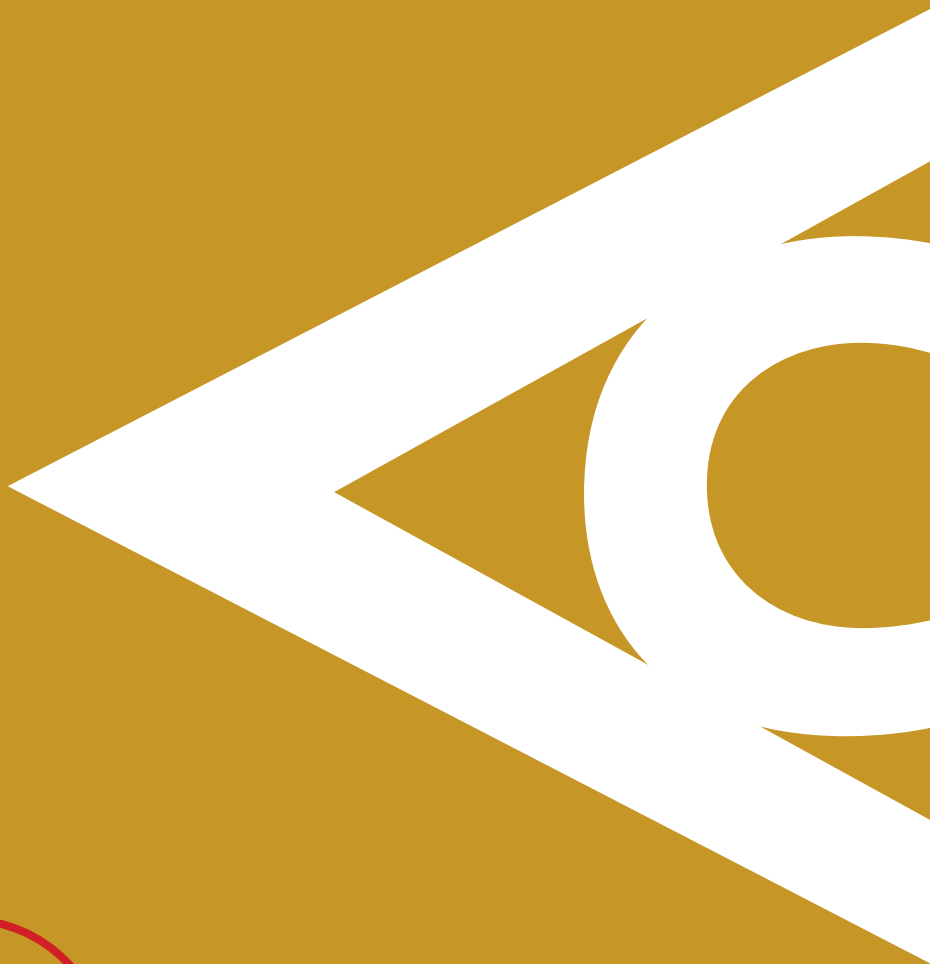
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GLASGOW
FILM



Chapter Index

FOREWORDS		3
PREFACE	Introduction; purpose and aims of this hand guide	4
CHAPTER 1	Questions we asked and wanted to find answers for...	6
CHAPTER 2	Widening access and how that can shape your programme	7
CHAPTER 3	Taking a stand – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	10
CHAPTER 4	Creative risk & investment	12
CHAPTER 5	Making a case for change	14
CHAPTER 6	The honest approach – creating an event, from idea to delivery	18
CHAPTER 7	Vital support	24



Forewords



“The ambition for this initiative was to explore how we could enrich the overall cinema experience and tackle the screen industry fracture that exists in providing accessible events for D/deaf people and people who are hard of hearing. It is time to challenge the inconsistent range of captioned films and contribute our experience to develop exhibitor knowledge on the importance of providing films with captions. This engagement has brought improved awareness to cinema access for the D/deaf and hard of hearing community. It has garnered a diverse community who have challenged and diversified our programme. We are so proud to have kick-started progress and believe that the power of film to explore and engage with issues, helps transform and improve people’s lives in meaningful and inspiring ways.”

Jaki McDougall
CEO, Glasgow Film

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“Film Hub Scotland is proud to support this pioneering work which increases engagement with deaf and hard of hearing audiences. Film Hub Scotland exists to increase the reach, depth and breadth of cinema programmes for audiences across Scotland, and Visible Cinema has done exactly that by crafting an integrated approach to audience engagement that offers a step-change in the provision cinemas are currently offering. Our hope is that this work will offer a model other cinemas can adopt to better serve their patrons.”

Sambrooke Scott
Film Hub Scotland Manager

Film Hub
Scotland

Proud to be a partner of
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Introduction



Dear Reader,

Hello and welcome to the Visible Cinema Hand Guide. We hope this proves to be a helpful guide borne from a personal and professional journey between colleagues and like minded organisations in widening access to film and striving for best practice in challenging cultural and social disability.

Firstly, we want to clarify that this hand-guide has not been produced as a didactic manual on what you must and must not do or a 'one guide fits all'. We hope that in reading, you and your colleagues will know whether this journey is the right fit for your organisation and audiences.

Visible Cinema is a unique film club programme of monthly screenings and events tailored for D/deaf and hard of hearing audiences with the specific aim to make film culture visible and accessible to these audiences. Visible Cinema is the first initiative of its kind in Scotland. Glasgow Film Theatre, in partnership with Creative Scotland, Solar Bear and Film Hub Scotland, launched the pilot programme in March 2015 and it has been growing in popularity ever since.

Two years on, we have grown in confidence and have established a strong accessible film programme, which has enabled audiences from the D/deaf, hard of hearing and hearing community to come together, to share, absorb and socialise.

Alongside all of this, we have learnt vast amounts about how we, as exhibitors, have a duty to provide accessible events of high quality – consistently and with integrity. We hope you find this guide fruitful in enabling you, your colleagues and venue to push the envelope in the creation of high-quality accessible events. Your audiences will thank you for it.

Regards,

Jodie Wilkinson

Public Engagement Coordinator, Glasgow Film Theatre



“ I am proud that Solar Bear was a part of the pilot journey, ensuring that cinema, like theatre, becomes fully accessible to the D/deaf audiences. We, with the GFT, remain committed to ensuring that the D/deaf audiences has access to cinema like never before. It matters to all of us that everyone has access to the arts, both as spectator or participant. In doing so, it will encourage greater diversity in the arts and, ultimately, beyond.

It is vital that those of us working in the arts understand the challenges faced by D/deaf audience members in accessing theatre/cinema because in understanding the challenges we recognise the opportunities. When people can fully engage with culture on all levels, they gain knowledge and experience which enables the understanding of what contribution they can make whether that be back into the arts and/or to society.

There is something unique about sharing a theatre/cinema going experience with other people. This social cohesion is an immeasurable positive. The arts are leading the way in ensuring access to everything we have to offer. Not only is it important (and right) that we offer accessibility, but important too to be seen doing so in the hope that it will be built into all areas of society.”

SOLAR BEAR

Pilot Partner

Chapter One

QUESTIONS WE ASKED AND WANTED TO FIND ANSWERS FOR....

- Are we, as cinema exhibitors, equipped to programme for D/deaf audiences in-house?
- Is our venue equipped to provide a quality experience for those who need enhanced audio provision?
- Do D/deaf people want access to film culture?
- Do D/deaf people go to the cinema?
- What constitutes being 'hard of hearing'?
- Is there suitable entertainment provision for D/deaf audiences?
- Is 'reasonable adjustment' the best we can do for this audience?
- Are only our older audiences hard of hearing?
- Are we doing enough to cater for British Sign Language users?
- What would be an appropriate Deaf culture film?
- Are hearing audiences really unwilling to watch captioned films?
- What is 'closed-captioning'?
- Should cinema exhibitors be forced to finance subtitling for films because they are not provided with accessible formats? Where does the resource for this come from. Is this viable and/or sustainable?
- Could D/deaf and hard of hearing audiences come together through film culture?
- What's the difference between the big 'D' and the little 'd'?
- Is there a local D/deaf audience wanting to access our film programme?

Chapter Two

WIDENING ACCESS AND HOW THAT CAN SHAPE YOUR PROGRAMME



In recent years cinema exhibitors have made great strides to ensure that their venues are accessible to audiences with a range of disabilities or access needs: step-free venues have enabled people with mobility issues to access cinema spaces, personal audio-description equipment has given blind and partially sighted people the freedom to watch a wide range of cinema (last year, at any one time, nine out of ten of the Top Ten films at the box office were audio described) and the CEA Card has provided free cinema tickets to carers to enable people who need assistance to attend screenings with confidence.

This pilot programme sought to address current failings of current provision, and also to build knowledge and understanding to create a cultural shift in how cinemas provide programming for D/deaf audiences.

Firstly, we wanted to investigate D/deaf and hard of hearing audience's preference to access captioned screenings. Secondly, we wanted to introduce BSL interpretation into screening events as BSL is the primary language for Deaf people. Lastly, we aimed to schedule these accessible screenings within a mainstream time-slot and social context.



The project began as a collaboration between Film Hub Scotland, Glasgow Film and Solar Bear to design and pilot Deaf Film Clubs (Visible Cinema). At its core Visible Cinema is a holistic approach to access, which includes staff training, social activity, BSL introductions and interpretation and participant feedback. The learning from the pilot scheme enabled us to develop the tools, knowledge and methodology to deliver a high-quality, engaging programme of film accessible to all.

Through delivery we have learnt that Visible Cinema is a prime opportunity for diverse and often segregated communities to come together. For many hearing people, they may never have met a Deaf person let alone see someone use BSL. For the Deaf community who use BSL they see themselves as people within a linguistic minority not with a disability.

Visible Cinema provides a necessary entry point for both D/deaf and hard of hearing communities to share and communicate. Increasingly, hearing people join this dialogue too and this never fails to educate and inspire people as they leave knowing that they have had much more than a usual film experience. In addition, Scotland proudly passed the BSL bill in September 2015. This historic landmark occurred when the BSL (Scotland) Bill, introduced by Mark Griffin MSP on 29 October 2014, was passed unanimously by all Parties in the Chamber in Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh. This was a momentous day for the Scottish Deaf Community, their language and culture, and sets a necessary precedent that reminds us of the duty we have within our governments and communities to embrace, support and integrate this language and culture.

“Visible Cinema provides a unique platform to empower marginalised groups, elevating them from consumers to active participants. It enhances the cinematic experience, exposing Deaf and hard of hearing audiences to the richness and diversity of opinion that naturally follows any art form. It offers a space for new exploration – of life, of self and of the world.”

Amy Cheskin

Registered British Sign Language Interpreter



KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- Set strategy to pilot best practice access solutions
- Programme new release subtitled/captioned films which offer varied and provoking narratives.
- Improve cinema accessibility to captioned screenings
- Train staff, improve skills to better serve D/deaf and hard of hearing patrons
- Develop and maintain a base level of attendance for each screening with numbers increasing as the film club develops
- Prioritise screenings at a social time and with a social aspect
- Champion the need for British films to be created with accessible formats.
- Programme resonant films which have particular relevance to D/deaf audiences
- Research new developments with captioned screenings, live captioning, invisible subtitles and alternative ways to display BSL
- Share research and project outcomes with other cultural organisations

“The Equality Act 2010 replaces many previous anti-discrimination laws like the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 and Race Relations Act 1976. The equality law also gives Deaf people their rights of access to everyday services. Service providers have an obligation to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ in the provision of their services. BSL and communication support are also mentioned in the legislation as an example of a ‘reasonable adjustment’.”

Deaf Access UK

Chapter Three

TAKING A STAND – EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Glasgow Film takes an up close and personal approach to our audiences, customers, communities, participants, staff and volunteers. Glasgow Film is comprised of Glasgow Film Theatre, Glasgow Film Festival, Glasgow Youth Film Festival and Glasgow Short Film Festival. We encourage our audiences to develop a lifelong appreciation of films and offer opportunities for people from all backgrounds and ages to learn about cinema, experience its diversity and explore their own cultural lives. We strive to create an environment that is inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Cinema culture is undergoing rapid change. Glasgow Film puts people and communities at the heart of what we do and shares a diverse film culture with the broadest range of people possible. We recognise the need to adapt and develop fresh ways of engaging people in order to achieve this. We value diversity and equality, and are committed to ensuring that everyone feels welcome at Glasgow Film.

As a sector, we absolutely need the lens of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to look through. It's a real necessity across the entire creative sphere that we're acknowledging the diversity and breadth of talent and skill in the various creative industry sectors. It's our duty as an independent cinema and as programmers to be responding to this evolution because if we're not providing events that are really resonating with or challenging our audience then we're not doing our jobs properly.

On the 22nd October 2015, the BSL (Scotland) Bill received Royal Assent and became the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, making BSL a fully recognised language. BSL is a visual form of communication using hands, facial expression and body language mainly used by people who are Deaf and is independent of spoken English.

Current statistics can be found at scod.org.uk/faqs/statistics

By majority, people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing live highly independent lives. It is important to grapple with the medical vs. social model of disability and ask the pertinent question – where does the disability lie? Is it with the person or within the environment in which people have come to live?



As a sector, we want to provide people with high quality and memorable experiences, we pride ourselves in offering a plethora of cultural choice, but to whom are these choices most/made accessible? Which demographic of people feel the most confident in accessing those choices? Is your programme information accessible to diverse audiences? Whether through printed media, via a website or on social media. Are these marketing outputs accessible? (see p19 for further reference).

Each audience member has their own strategy of how they like to communicate and through doing so they become visible, active participants in cultural life.

So allow your audiences to be active and visible. Empower people to participate in a cultural life of their choosing.

“ I have really enjoyed my experience here at the GFT. Not only the place itself but the staff who are so welcoming and are able to sign a little. It's not only about coming along to see the film but being able to go upstairs to the bar and make it more of a social event.”

Visible Cinema audience member

Captioned screening of FOXCATCHER with post-film conversation – March 2015

Chapter Four

CREATIVE RISK & INVESTMENT

UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE – ‘HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT TO A CAPTIONED SCREENING?’

The pilot programme sought to address current failings in accessible film provision, and to build knowledge and understanding to support a cultural shift in how cinemas provide programming for D/deaf and hard of hearing audiences.

As outlined in Chapter Two, we had several objectives for Visible Cinema. Most importantly, throughout the project’s pilot year (March 2015 – March 2016) we maintained a holistic approach to this work, in order to learn and develop best practice in programming films for D/deaf and hard of hearing audiences within a mainstream time-slot. The over-riding strategy was to take the learning from the pilot scheme to enable us to develop the tools, knowledge and methodology to deliver a high quality, engaging programme of film for these audiences. Now, we are open to sharing our learning with cinema venues across the UK to enable those exhibitors to; promote widening access to moving film image and champion best practice in challenging cultural and social disability.

“Our monthly Deaf Conversations About Cinema events at Watershed are now one of the most accessible in our core event programme, we have developed a genuine engagement within the Deaf Community, as well as with hard of hearing people (HOH). David (Agent for Change Artist) has done an amazing job and the response we have had from our Deaf and hard of hearing customers has been incredible. It’s also had a really positive effect on our teams here who have had the opportunity to learn some basic BSL and become more Deaf aware and certainly makes Watershed a much more welcoming space for our Deaf and hard of hearing audience members and customers.”

Louise Gardner – Head of Communications, Watershed



AIMS

- Regular screenings for D/deaf and hard of hearing audiences
- Training for venue staff – basic BSL and Deaf awareness training
- Availability of a hearing loop and infrared system in the cinema
- BSL interpreted and Speech-to-Text introductions and talks
- BSL and Speech-to-Text interpreted post-film discussions
- Promote social activity through post-film discussion
- At events, provide language support materials via a Plain English version of the film copy.
- Targeted marketing
- Partnership with appropriate representative organisation
- Creation of programme hand guide (post pilot year) for sharing practice with external exhibitors

RISKS

- Acknowledging a low/zero Deaf/hard of hearing demographic in your staff makeup
- Catering to differing communication needs
- Different access needs for Deaf and hard of hearing customers
- Understanding the cultural differences between Deaf culture and Hearing culture
- Lack of accessible film formats available
- Programming captioned screenings in more popular slots, which may usually be utilised for hearing audiences
- High and regular costs needed to hire BSL interpreters and STTRs
- Dedicating a staff member to spearhead the programme. The project management needs dedicated time throughout the developmental and delivery phases
- Securing finance, as project may need to be funding dependent.

Chapter Five

MAKING A CASE FOR CHANGE

Making a programme accessible to D/deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences involves traversing new territory and trialling new approaches. This demands trust in experimentation and expanding resources.



THE ADVANTAGES FOR YOUR CINEMA:

- You can increase the skills of your staff team with Deaf Awareness training opportunities in line with the Equalities Act 2010 and Human Rights Act (<http://www.scod.org.uk/information/position-statements/deaf-awareness-training/>).
- You can provide high quality accessible events that attract diverse audiences.
- You can showcase equality driven action, which raises the profile of your venue and this can be attractive to potential funders.



- Public Engagement staff departments can maximize on the innovative remit and promote in various accessible ways to develop audiences.
- Pushing the envelope as a cinema provider and advocating for change, can create new ripples of understanding and sharing in best practice modeling for the exhibition sector.
- Due to the passing of the BSL Scotland Bill in August 2015 and the current development of the BSL National Plan (2017-2023), there is now a pertinent platform for wider government action driven by an active communities agenda.

RESOURCE MATTERS

- Researching and prioritising the best access requirements for your audience should be intrinsic in budget and strategy development. This empowers you and your venue in consolidating a responsive and high quality format programme.
- A designated member of staff needs to steer this programme. It is equally important for this steer to be supported by an organisational understanding and shared ethos. Ideally this person would work within the organisation on a regular basis and can be supported from the relevant venue departments in developing the model. In turn, they can regularly feedback and build in-house communication and awareness.
- Extra hours will be required for the lead staff member to attend the events (if out of regular working hours). As much as is possible, keep planning and development time within agreed working hours. However, events may fall out with this contract and so pre-planning needs to be set aside to measure this impact.
- Staff training is a priority. A minimum requirement is to provide basic BSL awareness training. But you will find in real time that training needs will increase as the bar is raised on what your staff and audiences want to see realised. Many organisations offer training packages. Find further information through www.deafblindscotland.org.uk and www.signature.org.uk.



“ I feel that from the training I have now made stronger relationships with Deaf and Hard of hearing customers. I feel much less scared to approach and start a conversation using BSL and I hope that this confidence makes my service much stronger. It certainly makes me feel more confident!”

Scott Galloway – GFT FOH Staff

- Consultation with people who have lived experience is vital to create the most relevant programme and experience. Costings to enable travel support and refreshments need to be a necessary component of a budget. Where consultancy involvement exceeds a basic focus group it is best practice to factor in paying a fee for consultancy time.
- Making the programme and the venue philosophy visible – engaging with people and organisations that require and champion access proactively
- Resource for marketing and promotion time to develop an accessible presence on shared platforms and social media
- Having the resources to research developments with captioned screenings (live captioning, invisible subtitles, soft subtitles)
- Staff time to research programme (appropriate film titles and use of different audio levels within the cinema)
- Receiving finance to enable this programme to happen on a consistent basis
- Providing training on access and equality
- Take time with staff and monitoring your resources to understand the audience and their needs
- Space and support for focus group activity
- Outreach time to build and maintain trust within Deaf and hard of hearing Communities
- Finance to employ registered British Sign Language Interpreters and STTRs on a regular basis.



“Through the Arts Council-funded scheme Agent for Change, Watershed has been collaborating with artist David Ellington, himself a profoundly Deaf BSL user, on a six month residency to develop his practice and increase awareness among the Watershed team of wider accessibility issues for Deaf people (including teaching staff to sign for example). David has also collaborated with the team to introduce a monthly Deaf Conversations About Cinema film event, a relaxed, informal opportunity for both Deaf and hearing customers to come together to talk about a film following a descriptive subtitled screening. The response has been fantastic so far. Sign language online videos were produced to promote the strand in addition to generic online and venue based assets to improve customers’ experiences of Watershed (such as a ‘welcome to the Watershed’ video in the lobby) The partnership is part of a long-term commitment to this area of practice.”

Madeleine Probst

Producer – Watershed Cinema Programme & Film Hub South West
Vice-President – Europa Cinemas

“Glasgow Film Theatre is what you want a cinema to look like. It showcases exceptional audience development to all sectors of the community. The GFT consistently punches above its weight and strives to support ‘cinema for all, a ballsy move that the industry is grateful for.”

2015 Screen Awards, Glasgow Film Theatre, Cinema of the Year



Chapter Six

THE HONEST APPROACH – CREATING AN EVENT FROM IDEA TO DELIVERY



PROGRAMMING

Every person has unique needs, every audience has likes and dislikes, subjective and collective, and every venue has its own in-house ethos and style. A desirable ethos is one that integrates the championing of equality, diversity and inclusion with high quality programming, which both attracts and challenges people. This ethos should not be reneged on in order to become more attractive to one kind of audience as the wider consequence of this dilutes a venue's identity and causes audience mistrust. The best option is to take time to become informed through D/deaf and hard of hearing audience consultation, how popular tastes and expectations can align with the venue programme and ambition.

The film choice needs to be relevant: new releases, in accessible formats, caters for the basic right of your audience to enjoy a film at the same time as a hearing audience.



Maintain a dialogue with your audiences. You will develop a regular audience and a consistent flow of new patrons. Evaluating in paper form at every event is not the best approach in inspiring the right kind of feedback but quarterly monitoring and live informal questions at the end of the event can offer a vibrant response.

Provide accessible formats of communication. Unlike spoken languages such as English, there is no written form of British Sign Language. It has its own grammar and sentence structure, which is quite different from English. It is important that all staff members understand this distinction, in particular those that are preparing marketing materials, to ensure that plain English versions of film copy and event information are made available.

The Plain English Campaign defines plain English as ‘something the intended audience can read, understand and act upon the first time they read it.’

Here are some basic guidelines:

- Keep your sentences and paragraphs short
- Always use short words instead of long words where possible.
For example, say ‘use’ not ‘utilise’ and ‘buy’ not ‘purchase’
- Avoid jargon
- Use words that are appropriate for the reader
- Don't be afraid to give instructions
- Avoid nominalisations (e.g. ‘We will have a discussion’ rather than ‘We will discuss’)
- Use lists where appropriate
- Use ‘you and ‘we’
- Break up the writing with headings and bullet points
- Think about using clear diagrams to replace long written descriptions
- Use photographs to illustrate your points

www.plainenglish.co.uk



Identifying age appropriate films

Not all people who are hard of hearing are older people. Neither is there a set age range for people who are Deaf. Hard of hearing and Deaf people have a breadth of linguistic preferences and abilities, but this does not mean that film choices should be simplified or intellectually undemanding. Programming should be rich in diversity and culture, not fearful of the lived experience and heritage of the audience.

Post-film discussions are a brilliant opportunity for deepening engagement with film and creating a social space for connecting, sharing and understanding.

SET UP

Employing the services of a registered British Sign Language interpreter (RSLI) and Speech-to-Text Reporter is vital for best practice in accessibility. There are varied ways in which people who are D/deaf and hard of hearing prefer to communicate, so don't be overwhelmed and worry that you won't be able to cater for every exception. It is much better to focus on the clearest methods of communication that suit the needs of your audience. It should always be possible to do this and maintain a high quality experience. Delivering accessible programmes does not 'dumb down' the event. In our experience it only serves to enhance and strengthen the customer experience – nothing negative comes from diversifying!

Therefore, the most appropriate ways to cater for a D/deaf and hard of hearing audience is to provide British Sign Language interpretation and a Speech-to-Text service. This way you are providing access that caters for both audiences without being prescriptive. Many Deaf people use British Sign Language (BSL), as it is common for a person who is Deaf to have learnt BSL as a first language. In BSL, the face, the body and the hands are all equally important. BSL is different to other sign languages (e.g. American Sign Language and French Sign Language).

Listings of freelance Sign Language Interpreters can be found through the Association of Sign Language Interpreters: www.asli.co.uk. This involves a private arrangement between the venue and the Registered Sign Language Interpreter. Each freelancer will have their own specifications on working practice. The best advice is to be clear on your needs and develop an open chain of communication to find the best result. Alternatively, you can book through an agency. Deaf Action: Communication Support Agency is a swift and helpful



resource for understanding your requirements and providing interpreter services for a small agency charge included in the overall fee.

Furthermore, a Speech-to-Text service may well serve to help those who don't have a diagnosed hearing loss yet acknowledge the benefit of having live speech subtitled. More information on understanding speech-to-text practice can be found at www.stagetext.org.

Aside from the film screening being subtitled or captioned it is vital to provide a copy of any introduction or post film speech to your access staff at least seven days prior. Whilst this does not have to be a set script, any guideline script enables the RSLI and Speech-to-Text reporter to revise language and key phrases. It is important to set dedicated time aside before your screening starts to revise any speech (especially with guest speakers to establish confidence) and also get the access team to hear the speaker's style and intonation. This aids the translation process.

BEING WELCOMING

It is important to make sure that your audiences feel welcome from the moment they arrive to your venue. Crossing the threshold can be a daunting prospect especially if you are welcoming new audiences. Meeting and greeting people, guiding the way and making the transaction process clear and smooth is integral to making the experience as positive as possible. What may seem familiar and obvious cinema etiquette may be unfamiliar and alien for a person with hearing loss who is D/deaf or hard of hearing, so never presume and don't be afraid to make yourself visible to help where necessary.

If possible, make sure that the frontline staff working on the screening events have had at least basic BSL awareness training. This is important so that the team feel confident and supported. Pre-event, providing a refresher session for the most likely questions that may be asked is ideal for extra assurance. This could be in the form of a staff member taking the lead to host a BSL 'rehearsal' or providing a BSL training video with captions that can be easily accessed by staff. Use of paper and pen for those frontline staff is also advisable. It is perfectly fine and acceptable to use pen and paper to write down a question/answer when in conversation with a Deaf/hard of hearing customer to aid the exchange.

Tips for hearing people communicating with people who are D/deaf or have a hearing loss can be found at www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk.



INSIDE THE AUDITORIUM

If you have information you need to tell patrons who use BSL, use the RSLI for communicate support (i.e. taking a flyer, filling out an event questionnaire). It is also advisable to repeat this information in front of the entire audience once everyone is seated utilising the speech-to-text service also. Before the film starts it is nice to introduce the film and the guest host so that the audience have a visual on who will be speaking after the film.

Using the screen before the start of the film can be a very good way to inform your audience of any upcoming Deaf and hard of hearing friendly events, i.e. subtitled, captioned films and any occasions where you would have BSL interpreted events.

After the film has finished go swiftly into the post-film event to maintain energy. You may decide to host an informal chat or a Q&A, or maybe the guest is comfortable to lead the discussion.

COMMUNICATION

As above, in understanding that for many Deaf people BSL is their first language, it is then easier to grasp that they may find the structure of spoken and written English confusing. It is therefore important that where possible, you provide film copy, captioned screenings and event information in plain English (both on paper and on screen).

Information about accessible screenings must be easily signposted on your venue website in text format. If possible, provide short BSL and captioned promotional event videos – it is the most effective way to attract a target D/deaf audience.

Turtlelear – a Scottish-based organisation whose mission is supporting the Deaf community to have greater access to the arts – provides an excellent English-Plain English translation, BSL and captioning video service. Further information can be found at <http://turtlelear.squarespace.com>.

Developing trust with your audience is key. Maintain open and regular correspondence with your audience through consistency with the venue team presence at events.

Spend time developing a strong and up-to-date database of contacts.

Correspond regularly about upcoming events via email and/or a



dedicated accessible events e-newsletter.

Utilise the benefit of instant online communication via social media platforms i.e. a dedicated Facebook group page.

Maintain an open dialogue through focus groups comprised of mixed representatives including Deaf and hard of hearing representatives, programme partner representatives, relevant in-house staff and access staff who have worked on the events. They are vital to maintaining a transparent relationship that serves to enhance the strength of the activity. Knowing what you are doing well and how you can improve your equality and access provision should never be underestimated or undervalued.

All focus groups, meetings and film discussions must be BSL interpreted, with hearing loop available for customers wearing t-switch hearing aids and, wherever possible, involve a Speech-to-Text service.

Keep a clear and consistent dialogue with local cultural arts institutions and relevant courses about what you are up to. An accessible and diverse programme provides the opportunity to elevate aspiration and showcase positive representations of D/deaf and hard of hearing people (artists/actors/directors/producers) within the creative screen industries. This encourages and nurtures personal and industry confidence, empowering people and communities.

“GFT’s Visible Cinema programme’s commitment to providing truly accessible screenings enabled us to build up a productive and valuable relationship which resulted in sold-out public and schools screenings. They understand the varying communication methods of their target audiences and strive to create both an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere. It’s been a pleasure to work with them and we look forward to more collaborations in the future.”

Jemma Buckley, Project Manager, British Deaf Association

“I feel like maybe that’s what going to the cinema will be like in the utopian future I dream of! Everyone has a voice allowing for an interesting open discussion.”

Visible Cinema audience member

January 2016 captioned screening of JOY

Chapter Seven

VITAL SUPPORT

The success of the Visible Cinema screenings depends on the skills and expertise of a wide range of people who each have their own important role to play.

SCOTT GALLOWAY is a Cinema Operative at Glasgow Film who attended a BSL awareness course run by Solar Bear. Scott both works on Visible Cinema and also enjoys attending Visible Cinema screenings as an audience member.

Why was it important for you to participate in BSL awareness training?

I am interested in not only developing my work skills but also my personal development. I am keen to learn how to communicate with other BSL users and these skills help me greatly when communicating with our customers.

What did you learn in the training?

I learnt basic BSL and how to start communicating with people who are D/deaf and hard of hearing. I also learnt about Deaf culture, something not a lot of hearing people are aware of.

What do you think about the GFT Visible Cinema programme?

I think it is very positive, engaging. I see a lot of passionate conversation which is kick-started by the film programme. Each event always has a new focus and I find it very informative, plus the sharing of ideas makes it a very unique event.

Do you have a favourite moment from one of the Visible Cinema events?

It was the November 2015 captioned screening *Lady in the Van*. It was a great film, with a mixture of D/deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing audience - where everyone loved captions! Both the audience and the guest speaker, Richard Warden (a producer of documentaries and dramas and film curator for the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival) were so passionate. It was such a great conversation, centred on Richard asking whether films promoting positive social change are better served through the casting of people with the necessary lived experience – so the cast may have less ‘star power’, but maybe the issues portrayed and the overall effect has a stronger impact. Such a lively conversation. It felt great to be a part of something like this. I don’t know where else this happens, but I am so glad it’s happening here in Glasgow!



Cinema Technician **ROBBIE DUNCAN** has worked at GFT since 2012, starting shortly after finishing his MLit in Film and Visual Culture.

What are your experiences working on Visible Cinema screenings?

All very positive so far. I'm very glad it's doing well and is something that other venues are interested in adopting.

Can you give advice on working with a BSL interpreter? What are the main concerns? e.g. lighting, microphones?

There are different issues depending on the type of show. When we use a BSL interpreter for the purposes of introductions and Q&A sessions the technical requirements are fairly straightforward as the lights are up for the speakers and discussions. We have however had 'live' BSL interpretation of films and this poses a potential issue as you need to both light the interpreter but maintain darkness for the correct presentation of the film. As we have to tailor our presentations to the limitations of each of our halls we don't do this in our third screen as control of the lighting is very minimal. In our second screen we have used a directional theatre spot to be able to light the interpreter whilst maintaining the best possible image on the screen. We have not done many of these live BSL interpretations owing to both the issues listed above and the disconnect between the image and the interpreter.

For our normal proceedings our main concern is making sure that the BSL interpreter can be seen by the whole audience. At the moment this isn't an issue as Visible Cinema is held in one of our better equipped, smaller halls, but if for instance we had a Visible Cinema event in our 400 seat hall it may be required to set up a live camera feed on the screen to allow audience members at the back of the hall to see the interpreter clearly.

We also found that it was important during Q&A sessions that anyone asking a question needed to be seen by the whole audience. If there is easy access to get past other audience members, it worked well to have the audience member come down to the front of the hall to ask the question (whether signing or speaking). This meant it was possible to both lipread and see the signing.

Can you give advice on working with Stagetext/STTRs? How do you set this up?

My experiences working with STTRs for Visible Cinema has been very positive. Not only because they have been very pleasant individuals but their tech requirements are very straightforward yet provide such a huge benefit to the screenings.



Our normal setup for the STTR is just a laptop connected to our projector. Their software allows for an image, usually the Visible Cinema logo to be put on screen and the text then flows up the screen as it is typed. In our case the palantypist is in the hall at the front, but it would be equally possible for them to be situated elsewhere as long as they have a feed from the microphones. In fact, for one screening it wasn't possible to organise a stenographer to physically come to the screening so we did it over Skype. The STTR's software allows for a remote connection, so we connected a laptop to the projector in the usual fashion and it showed a mirror of the STTR's software. It was then a case of sending a mix of the microphones over Skype so they could hear the proceedings. The delay was impressively quite short, and whilst we have only used this method once it was definitely successful.

Where we do run into limitations here is being able to place the STTR's software over an image from another source; for instance a trailer or even a feature. The easiest solution for this, which we just aren't physically capable of doing in our third screen, is using a small second projector to 'soft title' the screenings. It may be possible depending on what hardware is available to key the software over an image as Alpha, but this requires expensive hardware and software and would only work for non-DCI content.

When you are expecting a subtitled film, how often does that film arrive without subtitles? What do you do in this situation?

These days it is very rare for a title that is advertised to the programmers as having hard of hearing titles to then arrive without them, especially with larger titles from the bigger distributors. Occasionally we will receive a version file a few days after receiving the DCP that contains the hard of hearing titles because they weren't ready at time of shipping the original DCP, but it is more likely we would receive a title that surprises us by having hard of hearing titles rather than vice versa.

Should a film be advertised to our programmers as having hard of hearing titles (and therefore has been entered into the brochure and website as having them) only for the film to not have them then we email the distributors immediately when the print comes in to double check. If it has been an oversight and hard of hearing titles exist, again a version file will be sent and all is well. If there has been an error in information from the distributor and no hard of hearing titles exist, then unfortunately we have to apologise to the customers and make it know that there will be no captioned screenings of said feature.



Have Visible Cinema tried creating their own subtitles? How does this work?

Yes! I have a lot of experience with subtitling and content distribution for theatrical and home video and so we worked with the distributors of the film *Winter* (www.imdb.com/title/tt2902126) to create captions for the feature to run at Visible Cinema. In this instance the process was quite straightforward:

- I got in touch with a company who creates SDH titles predominantly for theatre called 'Stagetext' (see below) who were extremely helpful and intrigued by the project.
- I received an unencrypted DCP from the distributors
- I sent low resolution BITC (burned in timecode) clips of the reels for Stagertext to work from
- I received the subtitles back from Stagertext as SRT files
- I converted the SRTs to Digital Cinema subtitles and using the unencrypted DCP created a version file thereby giving us a captioned version of the film in the same way all other features are distributed with captioned titles.

Whilst this process was smooth in this instance because we had the permission from the distributor to do this, it would not be possible to do this with larger title from a bigger distributor unless you approached a large post production house and paid for the captions to be created. I performed the above work not through my position at the GFT but in a freelance capacity and this allowed me to negate the costs. It does require the correct expertise and software.

It would alternatively be possible to enlist the services of a company to create subtitles to be run as 'soft' titles. This means using two projectors, one to show the film, the other masked to only show the subtitles. This would be a much cheaper option, but in the above case, we wanted to see if it was potentially viable to go through the DCP route. Were soft titling to be an option, permission would still be required from the distributor.

Are you aware of any future technology currently being developed that could change how D/deaf audiences enjoy the cinema? What are your thoughts on this? How would you like to see technology develop in this area?

At IBC in Amsterdam this year, and CineEurope in Barcelona, I had a look to see what new technologies the major players were offering, and at the moment it's still iterative methods of sending out captions of enhanced audio in different



ways. Dolby do their Captiview system which puts the captions on a device that sits on the users seat. This removes the need to run specifically captioned screenings (as now all screenings of the feature has captions if you use the device), but it then goes back to the disconnect between looking at the device and looking at the screen.

We also trialled a 'Shazam' like app that can detect the audio of the feature and runs captions on your smartphone but this is still a device that you have to look at instead of looking at the screen and also introduces the omnipotent glow of the smartphone to the hall.

The ideal solution will be a low visibility device that enables deaf audiences to view captions on any given screening that significantly reduces or negates the need to look on a different plane of focus to read captions. There are solutions to be found in augmented reality but this requires very expensive and bulky hardware such as Microsoft's Hololens, or viewing the feature through your smartphone or tablet. This again brings in the issue of having the light from these devices in the hall, and the hair on the back of distributors' necks stands up at the thought of an audience having potentially hundreds of cameras pointed at their content!

Sony developed a really intriguing solution called 'Entertainment Access Glasses' (https://pro.sony.com/bbsccms/assets/files/mkt/digicinema/brochures/EntAccessGlasses-DI-0272_2.pdf). These were getting close to the ideal device, but it's not clear yet whether these will be successful or not in UK cinemas.

Lastly, what was your favourite Visible Cinema screening?

I enjoy the problem solving so my favourite screening has always yet to happen!



Stagetext have been a vital collaborator in enabling wider access at the GFT. **DEEPA SHASTRI** is Stagetext's 'Talks Programme Manager'.

How did you collaborate with Visible Cinema?

Captions and live subtitles are used in a range of cultural venues. The speakers' words are displayed openly on screens, giving the audience access to what's being said. Alongside Stagetext, Visible Cinema provided digital captions for the full length film 'Winter', as well as live subtitles for the pre-/post-show discussions.



What service did you provide?

Stagetext created professional digital caption files for *Winter*. We sourced local speech-to-text reporters (STTRs) to provide the live subtitles and identified the best set-up for the live subtitles in the auditoriums. In addition, we trained venue staff to ensure the highest quality of customer service for Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing visitors and supported Visible Cinema to set up in-house so that the venue can independently provide live subtitles for future events.

What was unique about this collaboration?

Stagetext invented an alternative solution to providing live subtitles: a remote (offsite) service for when onsite STTRs are not available. As Stagetext and GFT provide live subtitles access for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing visitors, giving them full access to the pre/post-show discussions, we created GFT's first caption files for a full length film. GFT also identified a need to have more autonomy with speech to text services (knowledge and staffing) and so Stagetext trained GFT so that they can now set up the remote (offsite) service in-house.

Why is this service important?

The captioning and live subtitling services give the UK's 11 million deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people equal access to the arts, as well as the choice to participate in related discussions. This ensures that equality and inclusion is at the heart of the cultural experience.

For many people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing, a visit to a theatre or cultural venue can be a challenging prospect. Up until 16 years ago, some D/deaf or hard of hearing theatregoers had to resort to taking the script into the theatre with them and following it with a torch. That was until Stagetext came along,



providing text-based access to arts and culture for these audiences. In theatre that means we provide captioning services, where a script of the play or musical is prepared in advance and then outputted to a screen, usually integrated into the set or at the side of the stage, as the words are spoken by the actors. Stagetext now caption over 300 theatre performances a year around the country, as well as supporting organisations to caption far more than this in-house. Leaps in technology have also enabled Stagetext to branch out into the museum and gallery sector, providing live subtitles for talks and lectures, as well as for post-show discussions in a range of venues. For this service we provide a speech-to-text reporter, who delivers the live subtitles live, as the speaker is talking. There are now an estimated 11 million D/deaf and hard of hearing people in the UK; as we all live longer, that's set to increase to 15.6 million by 2035. We hope to continue to provide captions and live subtitles in as many cultural venues as possible, helping to open up the arts to every audience member.

You can find out more here: www.stagetext.org

>> StageTEXT



British Sign Language interpreters are crucial for Visible Cinema screenings. AMY CHESKIN and MAUREEN GLOVER are our regular Visible Cinema interpreters.

Why did you become a sign language interpreter?

A - It wasn't my original intention. I've been signing since I was 6, fascinated with different cultures and language in general. I am particularly enamoured with the beauty and honesty of the language and culture of the deaf community, so much so that I went to the University of Bristol and got a degree in Deaf Studies. I didn't become an interpreter until I was in Scotland and I saw the shortage and need of them.

Have you seen any changes for the Scottish Deaf community since the BSL bill was passed in 2015?

A - For me, one of the exciting immediate effects of the BSL Bill / Act has been to highlight the existence of deafblind BSL users, and the increased recognition of their rights to their language.

How would you describe Deaf Culture to someone who is wanting to learn more?

M - A shared visual language and an understanding of deafness, comedy and education.

A - I'm not sure I'm qualified to comment. I could point you in the direction of some really good books – like Paddy Ladd's *Understanding Deaf Culture*. My personal experience/opinion would be to say that it is something vast and yet something completely unique and personal to individual members of the community. It celebrates Deaf gains providing a space to be empowered and recognise the wonderful positive qualities that come with Deafness.

What do you think about the GFT Visible Cinema programme?

M - I think what GFT are offering is fantastic, being able to access the cinema on a monthly basis with the subtitled or captioned films and the post film discussion is a great opportunity for D/deaf audiences to be able to discuss how they feel about what they have just watched.

A - I think it is brilliant and unique for a community/group of people who are usually silent.

Do you think access in arts culture could be better? What are the barriers?

A - Yes, but as always it's linked to funding. The problem is, to get funding you need audience members, but to pull in a regular audience you need to make events accessible. This starts before the actual event. The promotion of events and the style and accessibility of information is paramount.



Quotes

“ We were delighted to have the opportunity to attend and very happy with the outcome as it was a most interesting experience. One of our younger pupils who does not yet have a first language but is learning BSL/English simultaneously and not yet confident in either – was the young lady who asked almost all the questions of the day and we are really proud of how good her questions were and how much she listened to the answers and asked more relevant questions. A great experience for all sorts of reasons. Thank you.”

Primary School Teacher, *Power in Our Hands* film event

“ I think I learned more about deafness and the experience of engaging socially and culturally with deafness in the two-hour long event at the GFT tonight than I had in my life prior to it. And if I managed to learn that much in just a couple of hours, it makes me realise I had known woefully little, and I now wish to build on that.”

“ I feel like maybe that's what going to the cinema will be like in the utopian future I dream of! Everyone has a voice allowing for an interesting open discussion.

“ Visible Cinema is a fantastic idea. I love the idea of regular captioned/subtitled films, old and new. Mixing with other groups of people including Hard of Hearing etc. Can't wait for more of the same.”

“ What I enjoyed about tonight was the fact I could discuss the film after it finished. It is captioned which isn't BSL so there were parts of it I didn't clearly understand. Here in the bar area I was able to clarify a few things and understood the content to a better level. To add to that I love the fact that films aren't only in the morning as in other cinemas.”



**For more information on making your cinema accessible to D/deaf and
Hard of Hearing audiences please contact the Independent Cinema Office
info@independentcinemaoffice.org.uk
or visit the Advice & Information page at
www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk**