

# Film Hub South West Reflections

2024-25



CREATE STUDIOS



# Introduction

## Film Hub South West is the driving force behind film culture in the region.

We work towards a thriving and inclusive film sector, enabling more people to show, watch, and make films where they are – thanks to the support of National Lottery. We are at the heart of the BFI 2033 strategy which aims to build a diverse UK screen culture that benefits everyone.

Led by internationally renowned cultural cinema Watershed in Bristol, a UNESCO City of Film, Film Hub South West is part of the UK wide BFI Film Audience Network (BFI FAN).

We are also home to BFI NETWORK and BFI Film Academy South West which nurture the region's new wave of filmmaking talent.

As the 2024-25-year ends, we reflect on the impact of BFI FAN, BFI NETWORK and BFI Film Academy here in the south west on audiences, talent, and the film sector over the past 12 months.



WildScreen Summit - Christian Tuckwell-Smith



Purbeck Film Festival – Jean Dixon

**More films,  
to more people,  
in more places**

## Impact On Audiences In 2024-25

### Overview

- Total amount invested in audience facing activity: **£135,635**
- Total admissions: **62,694**
- Number of screenings: **1883**
- **71%** number of specialised screenings

### Audience Breakdown

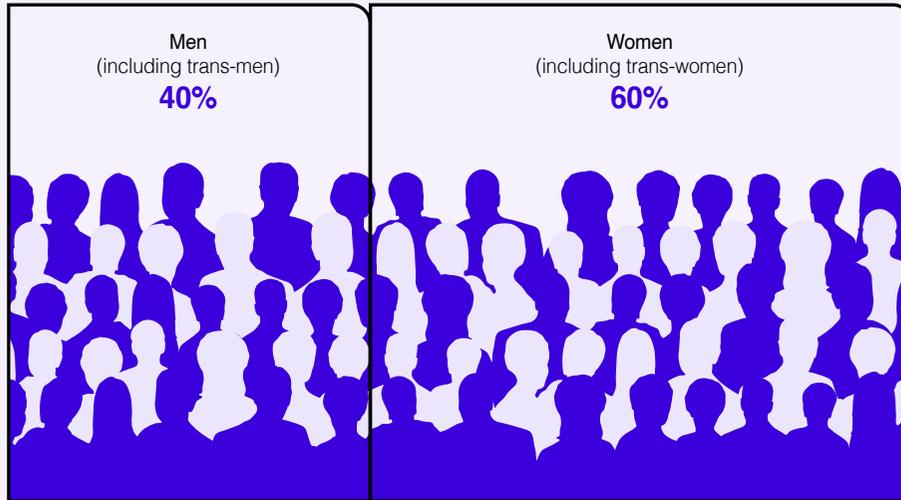
Film Hub South West is committed to working towards a more accessible and inclusive sector. To that end, we are monitoring how well our members are connecting with specific audience groups. The figures above are based on **2,520 surveys / 5% response rate.**



Inspired 2024 – Kelvin Williams

# Audience Survey

## Gender



Target: 50% | 50%

## Age



Target: Under 25s 25%

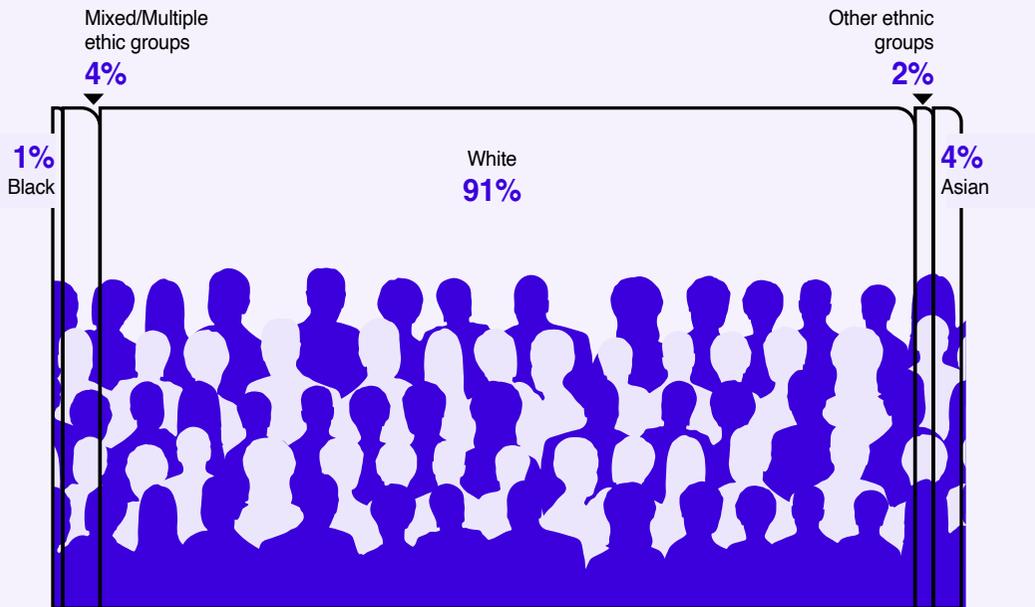
## Sexuality



Target: LGBTQ+ 13%

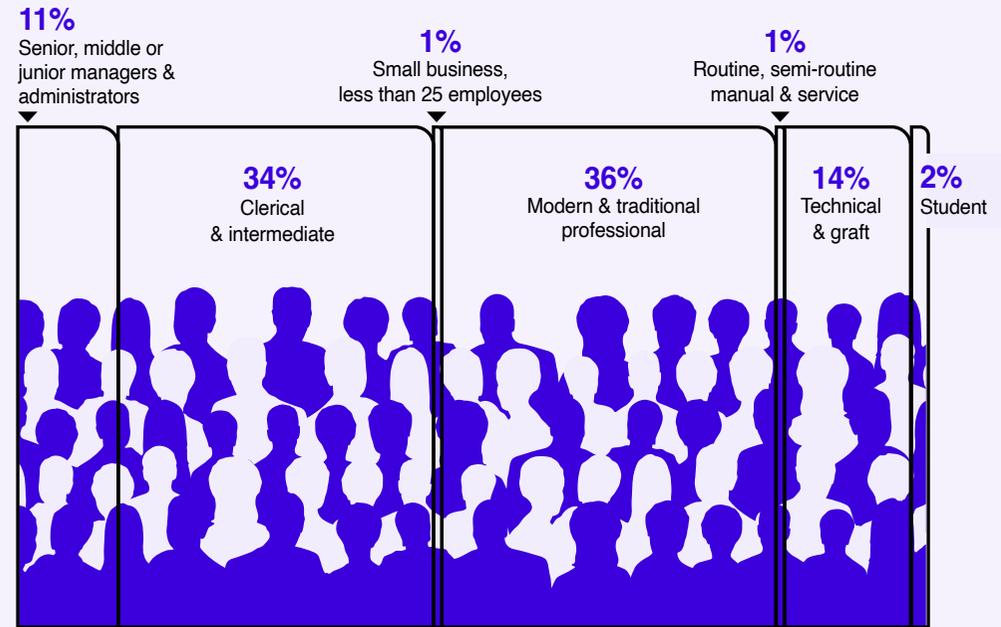
# Audience Survey

## Race



Target: Black and Global Majority 18%

## Occupation



Target: Low Socio Economic 30%

# Supporting Exhibition Sector Growth

“Through workshops and industry days I’ve managed to meet new people and share ideas on marketing, PR, organization, as well as audience outreach tips and tricks. We were also able to receive a small financial support to help us with our audience engagement and outreach in our local area.”

Members’ Survey Participant



## Membership & Networks

- 22 new organisations joined in 2024–25: total membership now **212 exhibitors across the South West**.
- 11 monthly members' meetings (2 in-person) with guests from across the sector.
- **Annual Members' Advisory Forum** provided a chance for the membership to feedback on strategy, be involved in a policy discussion with BFI, and share best practice in presenting immersive works.
- New **Regional Marketeers' Meet-ups** launched – quarterly meet-ups to foster peer sharing and networked practice building on a Marketing/PR training programme.

## Members

Since 2012, as Film Hub Lead Organisation for the South West, Watershed has built on its exemplary practice to inspire a growing membership of exhibitors to engage audiences.

94% of organisations surveyed indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied as members as part of our Members Annual Survey.

We asked what FAN members found beneficial/most beneficial about the Hub:

- **100%:** Being part of a network and feeling more connected
- **88%:** Accessing Bursary support
- **71%:** Opportunities to get involved in UK-wide initiatives such as Art of Action
- **71%:** One-to-one support with the Film Hub team
- **71%:** Training opportunities
- **53%:** Having access to Open Call funding
- **40%:** The Cinema Incentive Scheme

“Great to see so many members doing innovative events - provides great inspiration for us going forward.”

Members' Survey participant

**For every project we fund, members provide organisational feedback as part of their work. Highlights from 2024-2025 included:**

- 91% of members have gained confidence with programming
- 72% have improved their ability to attract more diverse audiences
- 91% are very satisfied with their experience of the Hub.

“I find the weekly Watershed emails on independent cinema's box office experience for screening current titles useful to alert me to ones to look out for when we plan our future season's films.”

Members' Survey participant

## Film Hub South West: Audience Reach

Impact by programme	Reach
FAN Exhibition Fund	28,263
Audience Pitch Pot	6,795
Art Of Action season (South West)	4,560
Cinema Incentive Scheme	25,520

## Film Exhibition Fund

- **161% oversubscribed** (£127.5K requested vs £78K available).
- 16 projects awarded £75.7k with total audiences of **28,263**.
- Highlights:
  - Purbeck Film Festival & FilmBath back to pre COVID levels of admission.
  - FilmBath introduced accessibility-first screenings (subtitles, BSL) with a Film Hub South West Beyond Boundaries participant as a strand called 'Sense and Accessibility'.
  - 99p Films expanded to deprived areas in Cornwall with huge local impact and introducing new audiences to cinema

## Cinema Incentive Scheme (CIS)

- 11 independent cinemas shared a **£43K** incentive to programme British Independent and Specialised titles.
- Screenings: **304 films, 25,520 attendees** (150%+ uplift on target).
- Scheme extended to 13 cinemas in 2025.
- Venues report CIS enables risk-taking and diverse programming.

“The Cinema Incentive Scheme enabled us to programme a more diverse range of films.”

CIS venue

“It supports and encourages more risk taking in programming, particularly for smaller venues who are under enormous pressure to cut back on riskier titles to make way for more ‘popular’ films. It could really change the landscape of programming.”

CIS venue

## Small-Scale Projects



Polite Society Q&A with Girls on Film podcast - Alex Tove

## Audience Pitch Pot

- **£16,935 invested in 15 projects**, reaching 6,795 people.
- Projects tackled rural isolation, loneliness, and access for low-income audiences.
- A benefactor of the fund, 99p Films carried out exploratory work with community cinema nights combining film, discussion & shared meals.

“99p Films provides something beyond cinema, combining food, social issues and film to tackle isolation and loneliness.”

99p Films audience feedback

## Art of Action (UK-wide BFI FAN season)

**Highest ever South West engagement in a UK-wide BFI FAN initiative:** 18 projects, audiences of **4,560**.

“This is the first substantial grant we have received from the Film Hub for a couple of years and this has given us the opportunity to improve and develop our skills in delivery... continuing to improve and develop our arts centre’s offer to our community.”

The Poly, Falmouth

Overall, the South West put on **106 Art of Action events** across **19 FAN member venues** for combined **audience attendance of 4,929**.

In 2024-25, BFI FAN presented a UK-wide season – Art of Action – celebrating the artistry of real action choreography that has kept audiences on the edge of their seats since the early days of cinema.

Produced by CrossFAN Programme Producer Timon Singh in partnership with BFI FAN partners, Art of Action offered an action-packed journey through cinema from the jaw-dropping stunts of silent cinema pioneers via the daredevil ethos of Hong Kong filmmaking to today’s intricate dynamic visual choreography.

Regional highlights included Purbeck Film Festival’s “Stunt Saturday” combining films with live stunt demos, workshops & family events and Exeter Phoenix celebrating the women who have advanced action cinema both on and off-screen. Their season was delivered in partnership with film critic and broadcaster Anna Smith of Girls of Film Podcast, Dolly’s Film Club and collaborations from Plymouth Art Cinema and university of Exeter Campus Cinema and included a Polite Society themed Girls on Film live podcast recording with lead star, Priya Kansara.



Polite Society Q&A with Girls on Film podcast - Alex Tove

“We loved Polite Society. A hugely enjoyable riot, working on so many levels and with a dark heart at its core.”

Attendee quote

## Spotlight: Swindon & Sub-Region

### Highlights include:

- New theatrical (DCP) provision introduced at Create Swindon & expansion to two screenings per week
- Created hands-on training opportunities for young people via Reel25 programme
- Reel25 alumnus Eve Whelan participated in Beyond Boundaries 360 and getting a paid role at Create Studios
- Audience admissions doubled from 2023-24 to 2024-25 (2,222)
- Extensive community outreach: screenings for refugee groups, families, women's refuges, and South Asian audiences.
- Strategic regional partnership with organisations such as Swindon Pride, Stroud Film Festival, Swindon Literature Festival.
- Year on Year increase:  
10% Black and Global Majority audiences
- Year on Year increase:  
20% of audiences who identify as Disabled

“We always have a wonderful time when we come to sofa screenings and we trust the film choice, even if we haven't heard of the film before. There is nothing like this in Swindon. We have come many times and enjoy the film and the atmosphere every time.”

**Sofa Screenings audience feedback**

“Spotlight has transformed Swindon's film landscape by creating a vibrant new platform for independent cinema and community connection. Through imaginative and responsive programming, development opportunities for festivals, and inclusive community screenings, Spotlight has opened up film culture to a wider audience.”

**Shahina Johnson MBE and Louise Norbury,  
lead Spotlight partners, Create Studios, Swindon**



Polite Society Q&A with Girls on Film podcast - Alex Tove

# Working towards a more inclusive film exhibition sector

## Beyond Boundaries 360

Working towards a more inclusive and representative screen sector, our development programme for individuals and grassroots organisations interested in cultural film curation, event production and audience development continues to deliver measurable impact for participant.

14 participants took part in 12 co-designed sessions with industry experts and accessed more bespoke mentoring. As part of a before and after evaluation, participants reported:

- **43.6%** increase in stronger networking connections
- **48.4%** increase in access to funding & opportunities
- **88.6%** increase in confidence as a film exhibitor

Other outcomes included two participants becoming Film Hub members; Swindon based Eve Whelan taking more responsibility for the delivery of the film programme at Create Studios supported through Spotlight; audience facing activity by Dáire Carson (The Little Film Society) and Carlota Matos at the 9th edition of Cinema Rediscovered and beyond.

“The holistic approach to film exhibition event, the milestone learning journey, and the support offered by the team - it was very insightful, practical and accessible.”

Beyond Boundaries 2024 participant

“The training gave me the opportunity to confront assumptions and helped me devise a more tangible and practical plan of action - not only for the sustainability of my CIC, but also for the benefit of the community I wish to support.”

Beyond Boundaries 2024 Participant



## 2024-25 Alumni Stories



Polite Society Q&A with Girls on Film podcast - Alex Tove

### Sal Creber

Bath based Sal Creber is an artist and creative producer whose work explores imaginative storytelling and community engagement. Building on their experience and after completing Beyond Boundaries, Sal launched Reel Life Monsters, a new venture bringing horror events of particular relevance to the LGBTQIA+ community including collaborations with Bath Film Festival and Forbidden World as programmer and screening partners, respectively.



Polite Society Q&A with Girls on Film podcast - Alex Tove

### Michelle Pascal

Bristol based Michelle Pascal is a television director who has worked extensively with productions for the BBC in London. She has returned to Bristol and formed a community interest company, Fam Films working across production and exhibition with various collaborators. Since finishing Beyond Boundaries, Michelle has delivered Hub-supported activity focussing on community and tackling subjects such as sustainability and social cohesion including Black Bristol on Film, a line-up of short films which delved deep into the rich and complex history of Bristol's Black community.

# Member Support: Regional Marketing & PR Workshops

**Film Hub South West put on two regional marketing workshops to upskill the membership and encourage peer-sharing and collaborative practice to respond to the fast-evolving shifts in consumer habits and platforms from TikTok to Letterboxd.**

In November 2024, Ellie Kirby (Communications Manager at Watershed), shared how longer lead seasonal programming has been enabling more impactful marketing campaigns. In March 2025, Claire Stewart (Head of Communications at Watershed) gave insights into Watershed's transition away from X (formerly Twitter) to Instagram and newer platforms such as Letterboxd.

Members' highlights included everything from 99P Films' risograph-printed posters using vegetable-based inks on recycled paper and Cary Comes Home's stencilled life size Cary Grant window displays to tips from Purbeck Film Festival on their far reaching outdoor poster campaign in a rural setting.



Charlotte Crofts, Cary Comes Home

# Through BFI NETWORK, We Support The New Wave Of Filmmakers

The BFI NETWORK team is here to nurture south west-based filmmaking talent and to support writers, directors and producers who have original stories to tell and inspired approaches to their craft. Thanks to National Lottery funding, Film Hub South West is home to two BFI NETWORK Talent Executives and a Comms & Outreach Coordinator to support this ambition.

## We Fund Filmmakers

- In 2024-25 we funded **5 short films** through the BFI NETWORK Short Film Fund
- We supported the development of **3 feature projects** through BFI NETWORK Early Development Fund
- The total award amount of both funds in 2024-25 was **£106,426**



Poll Pri (BTS) dir. Edward Rowe

# South West & beyond...

London Short Film Festival

[BFI Flare](#)

Encounters Film Festival

[Iris Prize](#)

Women X

[Aesthetica \(York\)](#)

Sea Change (Totnes)

[Fantastic Fest \(Austin, Texas\)](#)

Athens Short Film Festival (Greece)

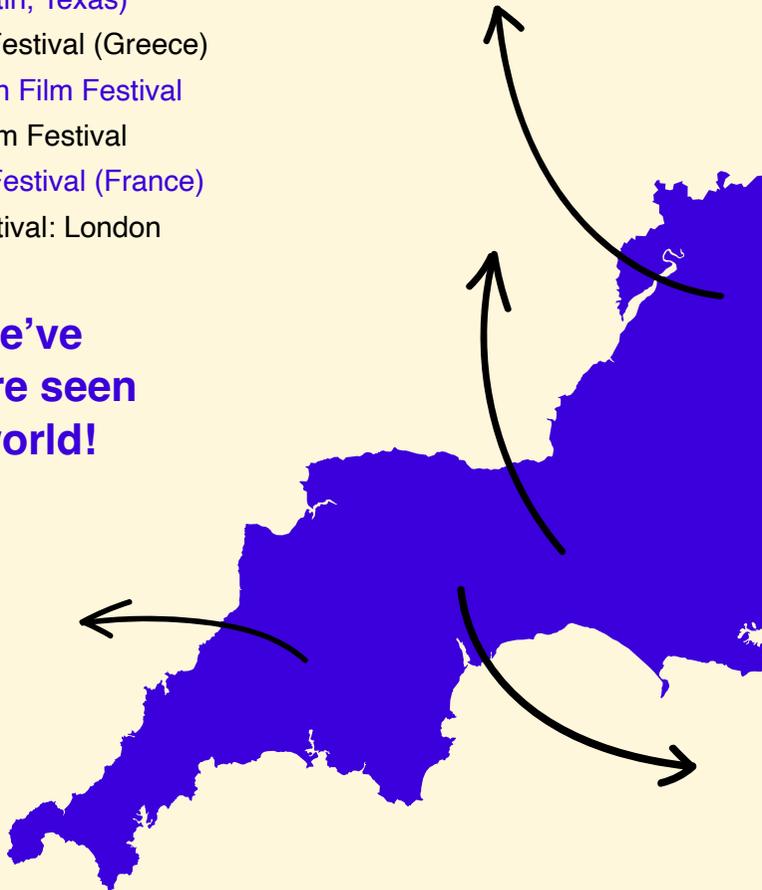
[Windrush Caribbean Film Festival](#)

Edinburgh Short Film Festival

[Paris Awards Film Festival \(France\)](#)

Sundance Film Festival: London

**...the films we've  
supported are seen  
across the world!**



“I came away from this experience feeling empowered to do this again on my own, I met someone I respect and admire, and throughout, I felt supported. Getting to know my local BFI reps, I’ve received genuine interest in my growth and development and I feel more positive about my next steps into the industry.”

**New Voices: Step Up participant**

“I gained some excellent insight that film school didn’t teach me, I also loved how inclusive and positive it was for queer voices! Everyone was super encouraging and inclusive and I felt empowered to write again after a long slump.”

**Queer Storytelling Workshop participant**



## We support the talent development of writers, directors producers in the region.

- **96%** of participants achieved what they hoped out of our events.
- **100%** of participants would recommend our events to others.
- **63%** of feedback responses stated that they had made useful contacts and 60% said learned something new of relevance to their role or career aspirations.

During the 2024-25 period we held or took part in 53 events across the South West (a mix of online and in-person sessions).

Our labs this year included an Animation Producer Lab with Screenskills Animation Fund, New Voices Step Up mentoring with Bristol AF Productions, Director Lab with Bournemouth Film School, Channel 4's New Writers Scheme and a Queer Storytelling Workshop.

We held film screenings across the south west, including at Watershed, Exeter Phoenix, Totnes Cinema, Plymouth and Bridport.

In the 2024-25 period we delivered activity at Queer Vision, Exit 6 Festival, Cornwall Film Festival, Stroud Film Festival, Cardiff Animation Festival and Bath Film Festival.

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“BFI NETWORK has a unique place in the filmmaking ecosystem as the only funding body that recognises and supports filmmakers who are outside the mainstream. For me to be recognised by and included in BFI NETWORK Short Film Fund was confirmation that every story is relevant, every storyteller important.”

**Kitty Percy** (writer-director of BFI NETWORK-backed short, *For Better*)

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“Thank you for providing such a welcoming and creative atmosphere on the day. As someone who often has pretty bad imposter syndrome, I went in feeling quite out of place – but it was incredibly reassuring to receive such positive feedback regarding my script/directing. The entire experience has left me realising that I need to stop being so hard on myself.”

**Director Lab participant**

## We work collaboratively with partners

We worked with amazing partners, both in the region and beyond, such as Screen Cornwall, Exeter Phoenix, Ffilm Cymru, Spike Island, Bournemouth Film School, Screenskills Animation Fund, Channel 4, Undershed, The Script Factory, Queer Vision, Bristol AF Productions, Exit 6 Film Festival, Bigger House Film, Stroud Film Festival, Bristol Film School, Rising Arts Agency and Screen Cornwall.



DIRECTOR LAB WORKSHOP IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BOUREMOUTH FILM SCHOOL

## Case Study: C4 New Writers Scheme

Channel 4's New Writers Scheme is a one-stop-shop for un-agented UK screenwriters with a burning desire to write TV drama. We were excited to collaborate once again with Channel 4 on the second iteration of the programme, which expanded out of Bristol and the south west and opened for applications in Glasgow and Leeds. The programme offers a unique opportunity to gain the skills needed to forge a successful writing career and tell stories that reflect the diversity and creativity of the place selected participants live. Over nine months these writers received script editor and mentor support to complete a spec pilot script, alongside industry training and insights, and introductions to scripted production companies.

“The Channel 4 New Writers Scheme was undoubtedly the biggest boost to my writing career so far. I was introduced to a cohort of talented new friends from across the UK, and learned so much through the workshops with the most inspiring writers in the industry. I was paired with an amazing script editor and producer mentor, both of whom were so supportive and insightful. Within six months of finishing the scheme, that new script has played a key role in me signing with an agent.”

Alex MJ Smith



Talent Executive Nadia Attia at the graduation event with south west participants Alex Smith and Corinne Walker



Blackout dir. Chris Urch

## Spotlight on BFI-backed short films 2024– 25

“For our 2024-25 funding round we supported filmmakers who came up through our New Voices talent-development scheme, as well as more established teams, and this year funded our very first musical! Other genres included dramas, a folk horror and a psychological horror, with a few films already making their way into festivals. The talented writers awarded Early Development Funding for their feature ideas are working on personal themes that re-imagine the world through the lens of a rural crisis, a dystopian power struggle and via skewed family dynamics on a comical road trip. It’s awesome to see the range of stories and voices in the South West.”

**Nadia Attia and Jess Wheeler**  
**BFI NETWORK Talent Executives**

# BFI Film Academy South West

“I knew nothing about cameras. I got to use really expensive equipment, take out the lenses and put them back in, move the camera around and focus it. It was great.”

Participant, Cables & Cameras taster sessions



Charley Williams

## Highlights of the 2024-25 year period include:

- 868 young people engaged taking part in talks, screenings, masterclasses and talent development opportunities.
- 3 Talent Development Commissions delivered for 16-25 year olds, to develop skills and produce short films across the South West (Devon, Cornwall and Somerset).
- 16 young people accessed hands-on cinematography craft skills training with Arri.
- 6 young people received 1-1 mentoring from industry professionals in areas including programming, producing and costume design.
- 10 young people received talent development support, training and hands-on experience in film programming, event planning, and content creation, in partnership with BFI Future Film Festival, and Cinema Rediscovered.

## Cables & Cameras Programme

BFI Film Academy South West collaborated with Cables & Cameras to deliver a variety of film masterclasses and practical sessions for eight young people from Black and Global Majority backgrounds. These sessions included: Gary Thompson (Cables & Cameras) on the importance of platforming creatives of colour; an Arri camera workshop arranged by MyWorld and the University of Bristol ([read more](#)); local writer-director Michael Jenkins showcasing his films and career journey, before leading an ‘on-set’ practical workshop; and networking sessions with Latent Pictures, Gritty Talent, and Jane Coulter from The Bottle Yard Studios.



## Inside Screen

122 16–25-year-olds attended Inside Screen 2025, our annual event bringing together young people as they take their next steps in exploring the screen industries.

Attendees included BFI Film Academy Short Course alumni and young people referred by organisations such as Somerset Film, Create Studios (Swindon), and Exeter Phoenix - supported by travel bursaries.

Masterclasses included Funding Your Short Film with industry guests Slick Films CEO Chris Overton, Director/Producer Euella Jackson, and BFI NETWORK Talent Executive Jess Wheeler; and Traineeships in HETV with 60/40 Productions trainee manager Chloe Perkins, alongside young industry trainees talking about their experiences first-hand. Read more on [our website](#) and watch on [Instagram](#).

“We had loads of questions, lots of really keen and engaged people. I think it’s really great for these young people to be looking around the room and seeing 100+ other people in exactly the same position as them.”

Talent Executive, BFI NETWORK

“The event has been excellent today. As a writer-director, it’s given me a lot of ambition.”

Inside Screen Attendee

# Get in touch

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## Showing films

### Film Hub South West

-  [filmhub@watershed.co.uk](mailto:filmhub@watershed.co.uk)
-  [@FilmHubSW](https://twitter.com/FilmHubSW)
-  [@FilmHubSW](https://www.instagram.com/FilmHubSW)
-  [Film Hub South West](https://www.facebook.com/FilmHubSouthWest)

## Making films

### BFI NETWORK South West

-  [bfnetwork@watershed.co.uk](mailto:bfnetwork@watershed.co.uk)
-  [@networkfhsw.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/@networkfhsw.bsky.social)
-  [@FilmHubSW](https://www.instagram.com/FilmHubSW)
-  [@filmHubSW](https://twitter.com/filmHubSW)
-  [South West Talent Connect](https://www.facebook.com/SouthWestTalentConnect)

## Starting out

### BFI Film Academy South West

-  [film.academy@watershed.co.uk](mailto:film.academy@watershed.co.uk)
-  [@takepart\\_ws](https://www.instagram.com/takepart_ws)
-  [BFIFilmAcademySW](https://www.facebook.com/BFIFilmAcademySW)

Film Hub South West, BFI NETWORK South West and BFI Film Academy South West are part of the BFI Film Audience Network, supported by The National Lottery

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