FWD-DOC
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE BFI DOC SOCIETY FUND PRESENT

THE FWD-DOC ENGAGEMENT PACK

FWD-Doc

BFI | THE NATIONAL LOTTERY | doc society | little by little films

RESOURCES FOR FILMMAKERS

APPENDIX

WE KNOW THAT A MORE INCLUSIVE UK FILM INDUSTRY IS POSSIBLE

FWD-Doc: Filmmakers With Disabilities is collaborating with the BFI Doc Society Fund to create this Engagement Pack, which contains resources aimed at **filmmakers, commissioners, funders, buyers, decision-makers, business affairs and exhibitors**.
This document focuses on the **collaboration** and **audience engagement** processes of documentary filmmaking,
particularly with a view to social impact.

What comes to mind when you imagine disabled-accessible, disabled-inclusive cinema?

For us at [FWD-Doc: Filmmakers with Disabilities,](#) it goes beyond a small section of seats where wheelchair users sit to view a film, or a special captioned or audio described screening at an off-peak time of day.

To us, it means **film commissioners and buyers** who are deeply informed about disabled lived experience and ableism; who proactively create filmmaking environments that nurture dynamic disabled-led filmmaking; who knowledgeably enable safe and non-tokenistic spaces for marginalised voices; who support accessibility features in production and P&A budgets, and finance disabled filmmakers to explore much more than just disability.

It's **non-disabled filmmakers and decision-makers** always ensuring that they create high-quality captions and audio description for their films (whatever the subject matter), who recognise and lean into the significant creative opportunity of captioning and audio describing to add layers to their storytelling, and who listen to disabled people's voices and prioritise hiring and developing truly inclusive teams in a safe, non-ableist environment.

It's film releases supported by **exhibitors and publicists** who embrace the nuances of identity and authentic lived experience in their messaging, and know how to empower audiences to engage with the many layers of a disabled-led story, avoiding tropes and tragedy.

It means **cinemas and venues** with accessible stages for Q&As, as well as ample, well-located seating, so that both disabled filmmakers and audiences feel and are actively welcome. In those spaces it's also accessible offices and projection booths (to allow filmmakers to attend for sound checks and industry meetings), and accessible green rooms and dining areas.

It's **film festivals** that select disabled filmmakers' work whether or not it focuses on disability. It's festivals all requiring high-quality captions and audio description of all selected films, supporting filmmakers to make/fund them, and exhibiting accessible versions of everything in their programme, always mindful that accessibility has benefits for all audiences.

It's all **industry events** equipped with accessibility features (sign language interpreters, audio description, etc.), not just those about disability, and it's filmmakers with disabilities being supported to access industry parties as well as meetings (because we like a good time too!).

It's **awards ceremonies** like the BAFTAs and Oscars with ramps as standard, where nominated documentary films include rich and authentic representations of disability by disabled people, voted for by juries that include disabled people, whose presence on the red carpet is as familiar as that of non-disabled filmmakers. It's actors winning for their portrayals of disability who are not "cripping up," where disabled people are considered bankable cast, and disabled-led stories are venerated for their narrative prowess, not their 'inspiring' portrayal (performed for non-disabled people) of 'overcoming' a supposedly tragic disabled life.

And crucially, it's **disabled film teams and decision-makers** empowered to work throughout the industry, paid appropriately and with editorial decision-making power, thriving in a non-ableist environment, and being valued equally alongside people of colour, women and non-binary folks, LGBTQ+ people, those without educational or economic privilege, people with and without caring responsibilities, and everyone else.

We have the chance to create that change, together.

This pack of resources offers **empowering** and **practical information** on the crucial topic of **engagement**: engagement with disabled **colleagues** and expertise, and engagement with **audiences**.

Authentic, respectful and equitable engagement with **D/deaf and disabled film professionals** is one of the core goals of this Engagement Pack, and we aim to provide insights about best practice.

Additionally, the process of releasing an independent documentary often involves filmmakers' **direct engagement with audiences and stakeholders**, so this Engagement Pack aims to help make this process more inclusive and equitable when working with disabled stories and communities.

All of these resources can be used by filmmakers, funders, business affairs teams, decision-makers, distributors, exhibitors and stakeholders to improve their approaches to disability and inclusivity in film.

Centring disabled expertise

To inform this work we interviewed a range of D/deaf and disabled film professionals in the UK and USA, across a range of demographics. They provided their insights and experiences anonymously for use in this Engagement Pack (and they were paid an honorarium for their time). We note that reading about some of these experiences may be painful for fellow disabled and marginalised people; we express solidarity with you, and we are grateful to our interviewees for their courage and candour.

This FWD-Doc Engagement Pack will:

- Centre the voices, expertise and lived experience of D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse film and TV professionals;
- Give context for the work that needs to be done in the film industry, and introduce a few key concepts that will illuminate the path forward;
- Provide resources for film industry and filmmakers that can be used at every stage of the filmmaking process;
- Offer some guidance and recommendations for best practice, across engagement with colleagues and engagement with audiences;
- Equip you with a list of further reading and organisations with which to connect.
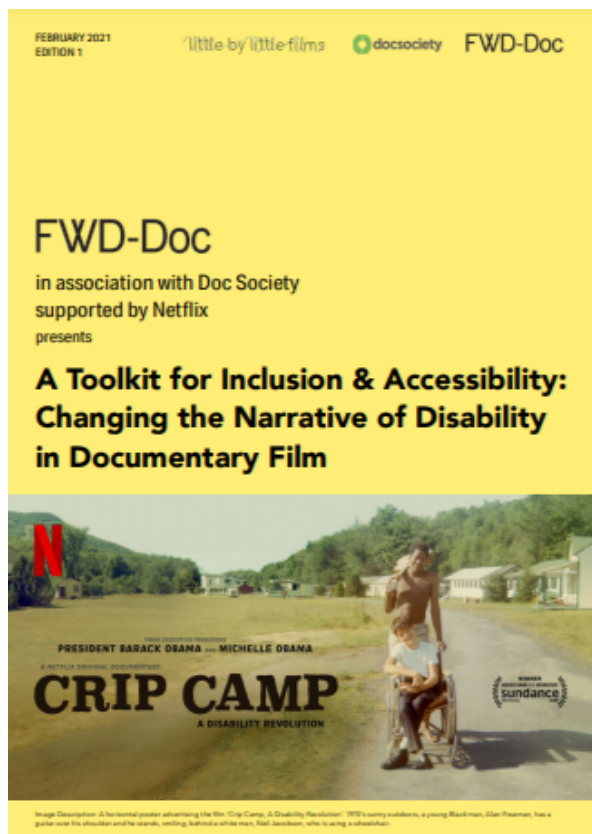
We hope that you will use this Engagement Pack alongside our recently-released [FWD-Doc Toolkit](#), which was created in association with Doc Society and supported by Netflix. The Toolkit details effective production and representation methodologies, and the ideas and resources within it complement those in this Engagement Pack.

Image Description: The cover of a PDF document. The top half of the page is bright yellow with logos for Little By Little Films, Doc Society and FWD-Doc. The date, 'February 2021, Edition 1' sits next to the logos. Below reads, "FWD-Doc in association with Doc Society supported by Netflix presents 'A Toolkit for Inclusion & Accessibility: Changing the Narrative of Disability in Documentary Film'".

The successes of authentic disabled-led feature documentaries When I Walk (2013, USA), Unrest (2017, USA/UK), Vision Portraits (2019, USA) and Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution (2020, USA) are powerful indicators that we are in a moment of urgent opportunity for the UK film industry to at last illuminate and champion disabled-led storytelling.

Image description:
Sketch of a cityscape at night in black, white and blue with a cartoon man with short black hair in a cape flying across the top. The text 'When I walk' is written in white at the top with cast and crew names written in white at the bottom.

Image description:
A young woman with long, dark, curly hair and a light grey t-shirt lies upside down in a white bed with various electrodes connected to her head. The text 'Unrest' is written in dark grey at the top centre of the image with the names of cast and crew directly under it.

Image description:
A face in shadow surrounded by pink, yellow and blue bokeh. The words 'Vision Portraits' are written in white, centre right of frame with the names of cast and crew written in white at the bottom of the image.

Image description:
A faded image of a young man with short brown hair and a white shirt smiling and sitting in a wheelchair. A shirtless man with short black hair stands behind him smiling , holding a guitar over his shoulder. They are outside surrounded by trees. The words 'Crip Camp' are written at the top left in black.
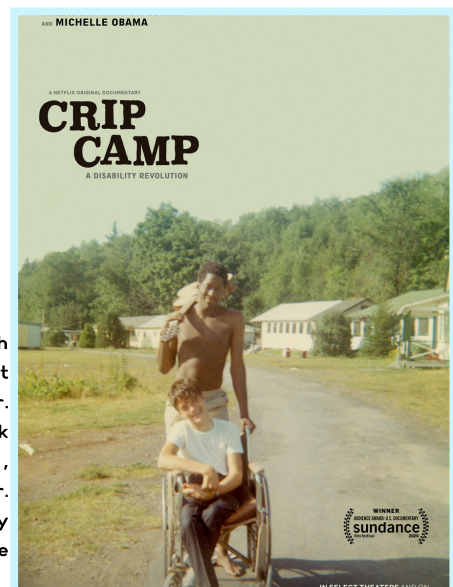
We have the opportunity to create a narrative shift in how D/deaf and disabled storytellers in UK documentary are empowered to engage with audiences and industry.

These authentically-made US-based films have connected with a global audience of millions, changed lives and policy, attracted broadcasters, buyers and revenue, won Sundance and Emmy awards, and achieved Oscar nomination. They have empowered audiences to feel visible and valued, to incite change in their communities and to tell their own stories.

Meanwhile, the UK has yet to shine a spotlight on its world-class disabled film talent and storytelling. Without significant action, the UK film industry will continue to exclude and marginalise Britain's 1 in 5 people with disabilities, who are currently potential colleagues and audiences.

If we take action now to centre disabled voices in British cinema, we have the chance to develop the UK documentary landscape to reject ableism, to include and uplift millions of under-served D/deaf and disabled people at last, and to do so with authenticity and accessibility

2020 WAS THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UK'S DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT (DDA) AND THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) IN THE UNITED STATES

1 in five Americans have a disability, while there are now 14.1 million people with disabilities in the UK. That means disabled people now make up **22% of the UK population** – more than one in five.[1]

And yet people with disabilities are seriously under-served and under-represented throughout film development, financing, commissioning, business affairs, production, post-production, distribution, exhibition, publicity and awards bodies.

The Skillset Creative Media Workforce Survey 2014 Summary Report indicates that just[2] **"5% of the [UK creative arts] workforce stated that they have a disability. This figure has remained constant since 2003 and is significantly lower than the 11% across the wider UK working population."**

UWE Bristol found that:

"7% of respondents identified as having a disability. 85% identified as able-bodied and 8% chose not to answer this question. This suggests that people with disabilities are underrepresented in the feature docs sector when compared to the wider population, in which 19% of working age adults have disabilities (DWP 2018, 7). Almost 90% of workers in the creative industries are able-bodied (DCMS 2018, 12), while the proportion of workers with disabilities in the audio-visual industry has been as low as 0.8% (Randle and Hardy 2017, 448). However the proportion of respondents declining to report on this issue presents a problem for understanding the sector."

Source: *UK Feature Docs: Studying the feature documentary film industry* https://ukfd.org.uk/policy-reports/[3]

In 2020, UWE Bristol researchers created the Keeping it Real: Towards a Documentary Film Policy for the UK report (Presence et al) and noted that:

"The [UK] feature docs sector has a significant diversity problem. A huge majority (91 per cent) of survey respondents were middle class and a large majority (65 per cent) were based in London and the South East. Women, people of colour and people with disabilities are significantly under-represented."

NB: The above data points to a significant under-representation of disabled filmmakers in the UK documentary field, and also potentially to an issue with disclosing disability status for some people. A crucial question is: have we created a film industry in which it is unsafe – by which we mean it may damage a career or potential employment opportunities – to disclose a disability? How can we ensure and then measure D/deaf and disabled inclusion if our industry is an unsafe place to even reveal one's identity?

We believe that our identities are made up of a wealth of experiences that significantly and positively impact our skills, and are assets to our working environments. Having a disability can be an exercise in effective communication, advocacy, time management and empathy (to name a few) but these attributes are rarely talked about and acknowledged because of ableism's dominant narrative.

For industry hopefuls and professionals, destigmatising disability requires everyone to acknowledge the current fear people feel in our industry. For many people with visible disabilities disclosing a disability is not a choice, while for many with invisible disabilities, disclosing a disability to colleagues can be a risk.

Now, more than ever, we have the opportunity, resources and language to create change, uplift our colleagues and make truly narrative-shifting films that will have a lasting impact on the perception of disability, in turn making disclosure of disability safe and supported.

Please note:

- These resources are grounded in documentary, but are relevant and applicable across narrative storytelling. All are available at our website here: https://www.fwd-doc.org

- When we use the term 'disabled' in isolation in this document, we are including D/deaf, HOH (hard of hearing), chronically ill and neurodiverse people within that category.

- Whilst sources that we quote may use the term 'able-bodied', we prefer 'non-disabled'.

- FWD-Doc believes in an inclusive definition of disability. This is about identity, not rules to keep people in or out. This means physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, chronic health conditions, mental health, blindness and low vision, D/deaf, hard of hearing (HOH), and/or neurodiverse; we welcome and work to empower people with visible disabilities, invisible disabilities, and everything in between.

- Where they appear in this document, we are informed by the Fledgling Fund in defining the below terms:

   - **Distribution**: Putting your film into the world.
   - **Audience Engagement**: Taking your audience from passive viewership to active participation.
   - **Outreach**: Telling the world about your film.

THE BELOW CONCEPTS ARE FOUR OF THE MOST CRUCIAL THINGS FOR FILM PROFESSIONALS TO RESEARCH AND CONSIDER BEFORE WORKING WITH ANY KIND OF DISABILITY-RELATED STORYTELLING.

We provide the below overview information – which should be considered introductory rather than exhaustive – so that it can inform and infuse your conversations and interaction with D/deaf and disabled stories, themes, and filmmakers. Our goal is to help engender an informed and considerate film community that engages with disability respectfully and intersectionality. It is crucial that non-disabled members of industry do not create extractive, ableist and harmful working environments that they expect D/deaf and disabled professionals to navigate.

These are principles to uncover, explore and develop as a lifelong commitment to fundamentally understanding equality both in and outside of the workplace.

- **Ableism**
- **The Social & Medical Models of Disability**
- **Nothing About Us Without Us**
- **Intersectionality**

Whether non-disabled or disabled (we disabled people have our own internalised ableism to wrestle with, too) we recommend digging into resources like these:

- Ableism 101 – What is Ableism?
- Sins Invalid Disability Justice Primer
- The Disability Visibility Project: Ableism: The Causes and Consequences of Disability Prejudice
- Kimberlé Crenshaw: The urgency of intersectionality

ABLEISM - WHAT IS IT AND HOW DOES IT
MANIFEST IN FILMMAKING?

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MOST OF US KNOW WHAT SEXISM, RACISM AND CLASSISM MEAN, BUT VERY FEW OF US FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT ABLEISM IS.

It is an 'ism' that affects us all, regardless of gender, race or class and is often perpetuated by inaccurate media representations. Both non-disabled and disabled people experience ableism as a pervasive part of society both internally and externally. As disabled filmmakers, we are in a constant process of undoing our own internalised ableism so that its harmful messages and exclusion are not reverberated in our cultural fabric.[6]

Ableism can be described as:

"The discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability. Like racism and sexism, ableism classifies entire groups of people as 'less than' and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalisations of people with disabilities."[6]

"People should understand that disabled people are people first; that we are not inherently 'inspirational' and equally our lives are not inherently tragic; that many of us are proud of our disabilities; that we accept ourselves and often see our differences as a gift."

— *Director*

ABLEISM - WHAT IS IT AND HOW DOES IT MANIFEST IN FILMMAKING?

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Ableism comes from a number of sources but deeply originates from the predominance of the Medical Model of disability in society. Conversely, knowing and applying the Social Model of disability is key to understanding and dismantling ableism.

In a media context, ableism can look like:

- Portraying stereotypical characters with disabilities, and focusing on them as objects of tragedy, pity or inspiration
- Putting together a team that doesn't include D/deaf and disabled people or only one D/deaf or disabled person in a narrative with disability at its core
- Paying disabled talent less than non-disabled talent (or not hiring disabled people at all); this includes in the form of advice and consultancy
- Assuming that people with disabilities are broken and want or need to be 'fixed'
- Using disability as a punchline or mocking disabled people
- Refusing to provide reasonable accommodations
- Making a film without providing audio description or closed captioning
- Using someone else's mobility device as a hand or footrest
- Choosing an inaccessible venue for a screening, meeting or event, therefore excluding some participants (this can include a Zoom room with no captions)
- Holding very long meetings without appropriate rest breaks, or expecting excessively-long work days of your team
- Talking to a person with a disability like they are a child, talking about them instead of directly to them, or speaking for them
- Using disability as a lazy plot device, i.e. the motivation for a disabled person's actions is directly linked to their disability and that's the core of their personality.

AS DISABLED FILMMAKERS, WE KNOW THAT IT'S CRITICAL FOR EVERYONE THROUGHOUT THE FILMMAKING PROCESS TO UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL AND MEDICAL MODELS OF DISABILITY (AND HOW OFTEN THEY INTERACT WITH ABLEIST MEDIA PRACTICES).

These models are a fundamental part of understanding disabled perspectives and identities, and can influence decision-making at multiple levels. Recognising the Social Model and how it validates and empowers disabled lives can make the difference between telling a disabled-focused story that portrays disability as tragic and hopeless, or exploring the same experience with nuance, humour and emotional complexity. Surely this is not just a better outcome for disabled participants and audiences, but also for the quality and dynamism of films and stories themselves.

Social Model

This is a way of viewing the world, developed by disabled people. The model says that people are disabled by *barriers* in society, not by their so-called 'impairment' or difference. The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people.

"To say that someone is 'just different' or 'differently-abled' ignores the fact that they face these disabling barriers created by society, and implies that they do not experience discrimination, and that society does not need to change to become more accessible and inclusive."

Medical Model

This arose from the biomedical perception of disability. It links disability diagnosis to an individual's physical body, supposing that this disability may reduce the individual's quality of life and so the aim is, with medical intervention, that this disability should be diminished or corrected.

"The traditional Medical Model, which presents disability as an individual, medical 'problem', focuses on what a person *can't* do because of their particular physical, neurological or psychological characteristics; centres care, cure and welfare instead of accessibility, independence and inclusion; and places responsibility and burden on the disabled individual.

"I want people to understand the Social Model of disability: essentially that a person isn't 'disabled' by their health condition or the ways they differ from what's thought to be the medical 'norm'; rather it's the physical and attitudinal barriers in society – prejudice, lack of access adjustments and systemic exclusion – that disable people. Once you understand this, you start to understand why D/deaf and disabled people are desperate to see on-screen depictions of ourselves that actually value our lives and experience, and why inspiration porn and 'disability as tragedy' and 'overcoming disability' tropes are so offensive."
— *Producer/Director*

"NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!" IS A SLOGAN USED TO COMMUNICATE THE IDEA THAT NO POLICY SHOULD BE DECIDED BY ANY REPRESENTATIVE WITHOUT THE FULL AND DIRECT PARTICIPATION OF MEMBERS OF THE GROUP(S) AFFECTED BY THAT POLICY.

"Listen to our perspectives. They may feel uncomfortable for you, because we've been excluded for so long, and our voices often challenge the privileges that non-disabled people are used to having. We're not always quiet, we're not always uncomplicated, but we are full members of society and - in an industry all about storytelling - our stories are well worth hearing!"
— *Writer*

'Nothing About Us Without Us' involves national, ethnic, disability-based, or other groups that are often thought to be marginalised from political, social, and economic opportunities.

Regardless of whether a project is politically motivated, as the disabled perspective is so underrepresented and varied, authenticity and inclusion are key in all areas of engagement.

"If you are someone who wants to tell the story of someone with a disability and you yourself do not share that disability, involve those who do have that disability in the storytelling, including having creative input and compensation."
— *Filmmaker*

The lens of 'Nothing About Us Without Us' can be applied to empower all disabled people and assist in addressing ableism by:

- Learning from disabled people themselves as experts of their/our own experiences.

- Engaging with resources that are made by and for disabled people.

- Including as many disabled people to gain a variety of perspectives.

- Understanding lived experience is a source of knowledge that can be applied to all aspects of life, including a career. [11]

- Giving agency to the disabled person/people involved by centering them and their lived experience.

- Acknowledging and valuing the disabled experience as a source of pride rather than pity.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, we all contain and exist as having more than one identity. Over thirty years ago, Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality; the idea that when it comes to thinking about how inequalities persist, identities like gender, race, class (1) and disability* are best understood as overlapping and essential, rather than isolated and distinct.

We advocate for an intersectional approach that recognises there are many intersections of marginalisation, and multiple, interdependent identities.

We can acknowledge intersectionality by:

- Recognising that disabled people may face a range of oppressions that intersect with their other identities;
    i.e. being a disabled woman in a male dominated career may bring additional challenges to that woman.

- Working across the intersections of identities regardless of whether you experience all of them;
    i.e. if you are a non-disabled Black man, offer support by uplifting a Black disabled person because you understand they experience multiple intersections of oppression. If you are a disabled white person, uplift a disabled Black person, again because you understand that they experience multiple intersections of oppression.

- Disclosing your disability to a person you feel safe with;
    i.e. A person who has understood multiple forms of societal oppression is more likely to empathise with and support you

- Being an ally to a disabled person, even if you are not disabled but have experienced exclusion*

  Please see the section on allyship and advocacy on **p. 30**.

* As with many discussions about diversity and some about intersectionality, disability is not included. This is the case with dictionary definitions of intersectionality. It has been added here as it is an essential addition to understanding intersectionality.

"We need to be asking: who is not at the table, and why not, and actively reach out to incorporate and complicate our analyses if we ever hope to represent the diversity of the human condition, and the complexities of ableism when experienced by those who are also confronted by homophobia, racism, and the particularities of different disabilities as well."
— Dr Michelle Nario-Redmond, Professor of Psychology and Biomedical Humanities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM
BFI PRESS RESET

Contrary to expectations in some parts of industry, there is a growing number of successful D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists making their way in British television, film, games, VR and beyond.

Recently, the BFI has convened a network of disabled film and TV professionals to create the **Disability Screen Advisory Group (DSAG)**, and in turn this network has written recommendations for the wider industry about improving inclusion of D/deaf and disabled talent and audiences.

The **Press Reset** campaign emerged in early 2020, when this network gathered online and discussed the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on our creative community. It was noted that many of the new, negative consequences of the pandemic for non-disabled film professionals - e.g. facing barriers to working, travelling, collaborating and accessing opportunities - were in line with the everyday barriers experienced by their D/deaf and disabled peers in non-pandemic times.

As noted in the FWD-Doc Toolkit:

"There is no lack of D/deaf and disabled film talent, nor a lack of audiences. There is a lack of opportunity and ecosystem to connect this authentic, impactful filmmaking with the audiences that are hungry for it and the industry that will be enriched by it[13]

For decades, D/deaf and disabled people, alongside other diverse and excluded groups, have called for equal representation and participation in media against a background of continuing disempowerment and misrepresentation."

As *Under The Skin* actor Adam Pearson describes:

"Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, as far as disability and inclusion was concerned, the industry was very much broken. Now we're in the midst of Covid, it's pretty much broken for everyone. Welcome to our world."

Image description:
A yellow background with two women on the right of the image. The woman furthest right has medium black hair and brown eyes. She is smiling and is wearing a necklace. The woman next to her has short dark brown hair and brown eyes. She is wearing a black top with white flowers on it. On the left of the image is the text 'Disabled filmmakers need you to press reset'. The BFI logo is at the top left of the image.

As the pandemic unfolded, Press Reset called on "authority figures in film and TV to reset practices involving people with disabilities and establish a new, more inclusive normal." [14]

The recommendations listed below were written as a response to the further decrease in opportunities for disabled film talent that became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to the very real danger that during this time of pressure on the industry, disabled-led filmmaking would be even further marginalised. That said, the advice from Press Reset is applicable before, during and beyond the pandemic era.

PRESS RESET CAMPAIGN MEMBERS:

"If we're being brutally honest, the industry just wasn't working for disabled artists. And when disabled stories were being told, they were largely being told by non-disabled people."
David Proud

"Disabled people are often left out of the debate around diversity. But we need to be included in these conversations and included in the industry."

Kyla Harris

"Before this pandemic, representation of disabled people was wholly inadequate in our industry but solid progress towards equality was being made. We mustn't allow the pandemic to risk disabled people becoming invisible in our media once again."

Andrew Miller

" I don't want to go back to an industry where disabled people are not represented at every stage of the process."
Kim Tserkezie

PRESS RESET CAMPAIGN MEMBERS:

"Currently there is an extraordinary moment of equality for all of us. So there's never been a better time for casting agents, producers, commissioning editors to promote and engage disabled talent."

Andrew Miller

"Invite disabled people to the table. We can direct you to a whole host of amazing talent."

Sam Renke

"The situation we've all found ourselves in over the past few months has proven programming can be made in creative ways which should be the norm, and inclusion and reasonable adjustments should be of paramount importance at all times, not just in a pandemic."
Andrew Roach

"In a time where you have the opportunity to reset, why not press reset and think about how you can include everybody, especially people with disabilities, who have for so long been left on the outskirts of the industry."
Jacqui Adeniji-Williams

"When we rebuild our industry, don't rebuild the barriers."
- David Proud

1. **Recruit responsibly**

There is an abundance of great talent within the industry and therefore it's best practice to avoid "cripping up".

"I long to see D/deaf and disabled people on screen (and behind the camera) in every varied role in which I see a non-disabled person."
— *Producer*

"Not only is disability representation important, but the way that disabled people are represented is important. I would like a commitment for the disabled voice to be given to the disabled person."
— *Director*

2. Set targets

D/deaf and disabled talent targets can be set on and off screen, while paid job opportunities can be offered to help achieve them.

"If you're placing emphasis on diverse film projects, include disability in the targeted diversity efforts. If you're hosting a panel, invite people with disabilities to speak on panels (including those not about disabilities). Look at films in your slate/catalogue, films you're funding, films you're promoting, films you're screening and audit whether or not there were D/deaf/HoH/disabled professionals on-screen and above the line; if it's not in rough proportion to the amount of D/deaf/HoH/disabled people [in the wider community], then take proactive measures immediately to rehabilitate practices."
— Producer

3. Engage with the D/deaf and disabled and inclusive arts community

Nothing about us without us. For info on organisations and talent you can connect with, see Press Reset Resources and:

- FWD-Doc: Documentary Filmmakers With Disabilities
- Disabled Artists Network Community (DANC)
- Disability Visibility Project
- Disability Arts Online
- Inclusive Cinema
- D/deaf and Disabled People in TV

"Share your resources. Don't just sign someone on to consult one time. Give them the space, money, equipment, networking, whatever it is, so that they can have their turn in a way that could lead them to growth opportunities. Learn about the actual people and check out their work. Find out about who are the anti-black and/or non-disabled-led organisations and vow to avoid ever taking money from them or championing their goals. Ask us and trust our answers."

— *Filmmaker, closed captioner and audio describer*

4. Equal pay

Commit to equal pay so that D/deaf and disabled talent are not expected to give their time or advice for free or reduced rates.

NB: The Disability Pay Gap currently stands at **19.6%,** which means that non-disabled workers earned **19.6% more per hour** than disabled workers in 2020.

> **"Stop expecting D/deaf/disabled people to troubleshoot and explain accessibility to you for free — pay us. You wouldn't not have a wheelchair ramp and then expect the person needing one to build the ramp for you for free. Don't expect us to tell you how to improve your business by providing free advice on accessibility."**
> — *Producer*

5. Think about access

Access improvements usually have wider benefits and not all of them cost money. Start by making yourself accessible to D/deaf and disabled artists.

"Don't presume accessibility is just about providing wheelchair access or ASL interpretation. There are many dimensions to accessibility."
— *Filmmaker*

"Access can begin with an invitation to a meeting that proactively offers accommodations, like meeting later in the day to allow for travel time, choosing an accessible venue, or providing live captions online (Zoom and Google Meet now have free and surprisingly reliable captions!). It's as simple as ensuring a film budget will make room for line items like BSL interpreters or a director's personal assistant. It's as easy as talking to us and asking what will ensure our full participation."
— *Producer*

"Lack of accessibility adversely impacts my ability to attend industry events, and having to train every single event organiser on accessibility is time consuming, which takes away from my ability to produce."
— *Producer*

"[The worst film industry experience I've had was] not having the funds for me to access and attend 2 out of our 3 shoot days on my commissioned short documentary, despite being the film's lead producer and the film being my idea, and based on my own experience of disability. It felt very ironic that I didn't even get to meet 2 of 3 of our disabled contributors (with whom I'd built a trusting relationship over years), when we were making a film about disability and ableism and I was the only disabled crew member. This could have been easily remedied with just a small pot of money available for my access needs. It made me feel like the commissioners wanted to be seen to be making a film about disability (.ie. ticking that diversity box), without putting in the work to ensure that its disabled creator was supported and included."
— Director

6. Be an ally and an advocate

Meet and talk with D/deaf and disabled people (via BFI Press Reset, FWD-Doc, DANC, D/deaf and Disabled People in TV, and social media including #DisabilityTwitter), connect and amplify talent, create connections and challenge if you feel something is missing or lacking.

Being an ally to a disabled person or disabled people is not only possible, but encouraged even if you are not disabled, and we encourage allies to go above and beyond by interrogating the power dynamics of allyship. Whilst allyship is an individual form of activism that focuses on listening, learning and non-complacency, moving into coalition is the next active step. Transitioning from an individual ally to a coalition involves working collectively towards a similar goal; in this case the goal is challenging ableism in the workplace and as active audience members.

"You can't just imagine what it might be like to be D/deaf or disabled - you have to speak to people with the lived experience of it."
— Producer/Writer

"To me, the ideal ally is someone who uses the resources available to them to educate themselves, rather than expecting marginalised folks (who are already managing the burden of that marginalisation) to explain everything. Even better, they speak up for disabled voices so that the disabled folks in the room don't have to have yet another battle about accessibility or ableism, for example. My favourite non-disabled people in the industry are the ones who request that film festivals provide captions, that online meetings have accessibility features switched on as standard, and won't appear on a panel unless there is a genuine diversity of identities included. They use their power and capital to uplift those who have less of it. They're the folks who have the sensitivity and humility to figure out when to speak in support of marginalised communities, and also when to be quiet, listen and uplift other people's visibility."

— *Director*

"Fear and stereotypes about disability are deeply ingrained in our culture and reflected in media coverage, and people with disabilities are seldom seen as individuals beyond the framework of their disabilities. The legacy of demeaning, isolating, and institutionalising people with disabilities has left in its wake negative and inaccurate beliefs and attitudes about what it means to live with a disability. These attitudes are embraced and reflected by media, much of which relies on old stereotypes and misinformation." [16]

The creative collaboration between industry decision-makers and filmmaking talent, both above and below the line, can be one of the most rewarding parts of any film professional's working life. The best collaborations can generate art and legacies that impact the cultural landscape for generations. Watershed moments in inclusion and representation can change societies, and shape the course of lives.

As we encourage industry decision-makers to work with D/deaf and disabled talent, we offer insights about **how to create positive, nurturing environments** in which a disabled-led film and its team can thrive. **We provide examples of positive encounters** that disabled filmmaking professionals have had with industry. We also provide some **examples of the negative environments and practices** that disabled filmmakers have had to navigate within an ableist industry. We call upon those in salaried positions, with institutional resources available to them, to **take the time to listen, and prioritise the perspectives and voices of D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people,** whose marginalisation has caused tangible damage for so long. **We offer our support and partnership in this effort,** and together we aspire to a film industry that truly welcomes and nurtures disabled film professionals, across all roles.

We asked a range of D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse filmmakers: How has your most <u>positive</u> experience of D/deaf and disabled inclusion in the film industry impacted you?

"It has given me the validation that my voice is wanted and helpful, and has helped build my confidence as an artist."

"It gives me a sense of home, belonging, and motivation to continue. Outside that bubble and my local community, I am punched in the gut constantly by inspiration porn, elevation of rehab providers over disabled people, and on and on."

"It allowed me to connect with other disabled filmmakers and hear of their similar experiences to mine, when previously I had felt all alone. It gave me friendship and community, and some hope that other funding bodies and institutions might follow suit."

We asked a range of D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse filmmakers: How has your most <u>negative</u> experience of D/deaf and diabled inclusion in the film industry impacted you?

"It ended my career."

"It makes me feel under constant pressure, as if I can never work fast enough for the non-disabled industry to think highly of me; as if I will never be good enough because I need to work at a more sustainable pace."

"It has delayed my career by at least a decade. I had to wait for the industry to finally consider me as a valued member. But now I am a decade behind where I wanted to be."

"I was up for a directing programme and everyone was chosen for placements aside from myself and another disabled director. I don't think the producers selecting the placements wanted to be prejudiced, but choosing others was easier for them, because disability and access is complex."

"It has held me back in my career."

"It encouraged me to speak up and stop answering microaggressive and other harmful questions. I stand my ground and make more deliberate choices about what I say or don't say. In the end, I guess the things I learned have all moved me to a more positive place, but that's also because this was years ago, and the pain has faded."

"I was filled with dread, anxiety, and ruminations."

"It at the time made me feel alienated and downtrodden, but long-term it has made me even more determined to change things with my work. As a disabled person / wheelchair user I would never now attempt to work in production as a runner or even an AD for example, as the industry is completely ill-equipped for disabled people starting out from the bottom. The only way for me seems to be to go straight into directing."

"Lack of job prospects and advancement opportunities. I am a known quantity in my [previous corporate career] where former clients are regularly seeking out my counsel and wanting me to work for them, but in film there's very limited interest in working with me because I'm an unknown quantity despite the exact same efforts to network and serve clients."

"It made me feel very discouraged, and like I could only ever be on the margins of this industry. But much more importantly, not having good enough access and flexibility during the production process significantly impacted my physical health. I was not able to pace myself properly, or to balance the fast turnaround on our film round my medical appointments, and this led to a real deterioration in my health which I have still not fully recovered from. It has made me nervous to undertake a new project, as I worry that I will become so ill again."

Our community of disabled filmmaking professionals has a number of recommendations for wider industry about collaborating with and including us; these apply to everyone in all roles, from filmmakers and film teams to commissioners, funders and execs, and decision-makers across development, financing, commissioning, business affairs, production, post-production, distribution, exhibition, publicity and awards bodies. We encourage everyone to consider the resources available to them that they might, historically, have devoted solely to non-disabled projects and people.

Educate Yourself and Listen to Disabled Perspectives

- **Take the time to understand** ableism, the social and medical models of disability, "Nothing About Us Without Us", Disability Justice and intersectionality. Centre disabled voices in your thinking.

- **Recognise** that disabled people also wrestle with the ableist world we live in, and that internalised ableism ("where disabled people internalise the ideas and prejudices of society that see disability as 'other', as something undesirable, as tragic and as something to be shunned if not pitied. This in turn results in the disabled person loathing themselves and their bodies... [and] see[ing] themselves as lesser human beings.") is often part of our journey too. Ableism has many forms and can be very nuanced but it often results in people feeling alienated, disconnected and worthless. Examining and openly discussing ableist structures can have the opposite effect and can make people feel included, connected and valued.

- **Listen** to disabled people; and really listen. Not only should you ensure you never infantilise or patronise disabled people (for example, by talking to someone like they're a child, talking to someone's personal assistant or interpreter instead of them, or shouting to communicate with a D/deaf person), but it's also crucial to trust and invest in people's experience and insights. When you commission, fund or collaborate with a disabled voice, trust them to know both their stories and their own needs.

- **Say the words** 'disability' and 'disabled' instead of 'differently-abled', 'special', 'handicapped', 'handicapable' or 'different'. Using alternative words to make yourself more comfortable actually negates a person's experience of being disabled by our ableist society (see The Social Model of Disability). Avoiding the word 'disabled' because you think it makes someone less valid in some way says more about the stigma around disability than the disabled person themselves. (At FWD-Doc we also prefer to avoid the term 'impairment', as it centres what is thought to be 'broken' according to ableist standards, but we acknowledge that disabled people do use this term.) There are many compelling pieces by disabled writers about the use of language, including this one.

> **"Don't be scared of using the "D" word. Disability needs to be talked about and it's fine if a disabled person is at the forefront".**
> **- Sam Renke**

- Consider **the difference** between life-long disability and acquired disability, and recognise that all people with disabilities have their own perspective on their identity, which can change over time. Our community is not a monolith.

- Listen to a range of disabled perspectives and expertise, and be prepared to **have your thinking challenged** - then empower collaborators to affect the outcomes of editorial decision-making. This is the reality of true progress towards equity, and 'consultation' is meaningless if advice and expertise is ignored at a decision-making level.

- In the pandemic era, beware of **paternalistic practices.** Disabled people are the experts in their own health and safety, and should always be the decision-makers about themselves when undertaking risk assessments etc. The pandemic has seen non-disabled filmmakers and decision-makers seek to remove disabled, chronically ill and immuno-compromised people from film sets and teams in the guise of 'protecting' them. But this is an ableist and disempowering process that can stigmatise, isolate and devalue people. It is disabled, ill and immuno-compromised people who are the first decision-makers in their own health, and they are well aware of their own boundaries and needs, and of the insurance and risk-assessment needs of their productions. Work with us with our voices at the centre to figure out safe productions.

"There are many different kinds of disability and they can result from accidents, illness or genetics. A disability may be visible or hidden, may be permanent or temporary and may have minimal or substantial impact on a person's abilities. In addition, although some people are born with disability, many people acquire disability. For example, a person may acquire a disability through a workplace incident, stroke or car accident. There is no definitive list of acquired disabilities, and they can be visible and invisible." [19]

Be Proactive

- **Start early** - disabled expertise should be embedded from development onwards, and should run throughout every phase of the filmmaking process. And in the event that you have already begun a project without the necessary disabled expertise and inclusion – you can **start now**. While the best time to plant a tree was ten years ago, the next best time is now.

- **Be prepared** from the outset of a project to make rough cuts, trailers and all other materials accessible (with captions, transcripts, audio description etc) during all production and distribution phases, so that D/deaf and disabled professionals can contribute to all stages of the feedback process. Budget and schedule for this.

- **Actively include disability** at the front of your thinking alongside other under-represented perspectives and identities, and consider disabled people as worthy constituents in your team and audience.

> **"Kicking down barriers is exhausting, and it would be really nice to have someone open up the door for once. If you are reading this and have reached down the ladder to anyone in this industry or have referred to anyone in this industry, ask yourselves how often that person benefiting from your access has had a disability. If the answer is "not many" or, more likely, "not at all" that is informative."**
> — *Producer*

- **Plan for adequate time** in post-production to make high-quality captions and audio-description, including on marketing assets like trailers (for more on this, see the [FWD-Doc Toolkit](#)). Recognise that this is a crucial part of the creative process, not an add-on for minorities.

"I think you have to think about audio description [and captioning] as not like a textbook but like a beautiful novel. And if you really approach it that way, that it's not just functional, that the art involved with it is really important, then that's going to be a guiding light for you."
– Jim LeBrecht, co-director of Crip Camp

Invest & Deploy Resources

Investment is not just about your money but also your time, attention, energy and wider resources, including social currency.

- **Pay disabled collaborators** for their time and expertise. As we've previously stated, the Disability Pay Gap currently stands at 19.6%, which means that non-disabled workers earned 19.6% more per hour than disabled workers in 2020. And "In 2017/18, 31% of people with disabilities in the UK lived in poverty." Economic justice is a significant issue in the film and television industries, and impacts multiple under-represented communities, including disabled people. Ensure that you are transparent about payment rates with disabled collaborators (and indeed with all colleagues) in job advertisements and descriptions, and be prepared to discuss individual circumstances that may impact payment rates/timings.

- **Invest in developing talent;** we recommend a Fellowship model, in which newer professionals with lived experience of disability are paid to work alongside experienced film professionals in key roles, and together they infuse the production with their expertise, and develop their own skills. Note that this is not mentoring; instead it values that both parties have valuable experience and benefit from learning from each other. Sam Feder's feature documentary Disclosure (2020) provides an excellent case study of inclusive talent development that enriched both its storytelling and its community's film credits with a fellowship for transgender talent.

"For 95% of disabled filmmakers this industry is not sustainable. Talent migrates out or ends up in non creative roles. By being multi-disciplined I have survived but 15 years in I haven't yet thrived. The industry is still broken for disabled people."
– Writer/Director

[20]

- **Share the risk** of innovation with filmmakers. Create structures within your organisation to redistribute decision-making power, following the example of the independent filmmakers working towards equity and inclusion in the film industry (who typically do so without an institutional salary, benefits or job security), and ensure that everyone is empowered to do this new work with adequate time, money and editorial buy-in.

- Support existing disabled artist **talent databases** like DANC's, and contribute to resourcing the creation of an open, shareable **disabled film talent database**[21]. The resource burden of doing this should not fall on independent filmmaking professionals. Disabled filmmakers will gladly help populate a contacts/credits list (which could start as simply as a Google Form), and organisations like FWD-Doc will happily contribute expertise and outreach. Organisations like Brown Girls Doc Mafia have done extraordinary work in building a searchable documentary talent database.

"Offer support to filmmakers from the very earliest stages of our careers (for eg. accessibility in film schools; extra pots of money for access funds in even small budget short film commissioning….), so that talented, passionate voices don't get pushed out of the industry before having even given it a proper shot."
– Writer/Producer

Rethink Old Expectations and Empower New Practices

- Challenge your own thinking about **energy** and **schedules**. In the work culture we have created, having extreme levels of **stamina** and the energy to do 18-hour days are somehow considered evidence of talent and commitment. Talent and stamina are not the same thing. Energy and commitment are not the same thing. And conflating them is excluding many talented professionals and their voices, including parents, people with caring responsibilities and those based outside of major cities. Make schedules realistic and feasible.

- Encourage people to **stop apologising for their bodies.** If someone is late to a meeting or responding to an email after what would be considered a 'normal' amount of time and it is because they have been unwell or need to manage their energy levels, acknowledge that an apology is not necessary. We all have bodies that require flexibility, and instead of celebrating people for never taking 'sick days' or being constantly available, engage with honesty and flexibility. Listening to what our bodies need should be a priority, and it is essential for sustainable practices for all.

- Continue to interrogate **your assumptions about time.** Are you expecting disabled and/or chronically ill filmmaking teams or colleagues to work at the same pace as non-disabled people, and is the pace you expect of non-disabled people actually realistic and sustainable? Have you considered that your independent colleagues may be working part-time across multiple demanding projects? Have you considered the resources people will need for access, including in scheduling? And are the schedules and timelines that you create sustainable and feasible for all team members, including disabled colleagues, with adequate time for creativity, rest and reflection?

Example: The *"I Already Have A Job…"* report by Chronic Illness Inclusion and Leeds University Business School recommends the following accommodations to support sustainable working practices for people with energy-limiting chronic illness:

1. *reduced hours of work [when requested];*
2. *working from home opportunities in order to eliminate the energy demands of commuting, manage sensory sensitivity, and promote rest breaks;*
3. *flexibility over working times; and*
4. *autonomy over pacing of work activity and rest.*

- Recognise that appropriate **messaging** needs to be continuously championed around a film in a historically ableist environment. Support and empower your partners (including exhibitors, broadcasters, distributors, buyers, publicists and business affairs) to understand and deploy each film's core messages and language, and get the tone and terminology right in every contract, press release, industry announcement and published document, even (especially) the subtle nuances related to identity. This avoids undermining a film's intentions, and also prevents harm to teams and audiences.

Businesses and film entities need to realize that D/deaf communities and disabled communities are underserved, niche audiences that are pretty organised, reachable, and easily convertible. Businesses and film entities' practices of ignoring the existence of D/deaf/disabled people results in loss of massive audiences and revenue. Also, a lot of practices that are key to D/deaf audiences are useful to hearing audiences and people using devices. You can hire a D/deaf/disabled person who can help you seize these opportunities."
– Producer

Ensure Rich Representation in Teams and Crews

- **Don't assume that one disabled person on a team is enough to 'cover' the disabled perspective or that they can speak for the whole of their community** - they can't be expected to know and represent all of the spectrum of disabled experience. This is especially important if one of the film team is currently experiencing acquired disability, and may therefore be wrestling with their own identity questions and not yet have access to the rich variety of disability politics and thinking that exists beyond their current experience.

- Recognise that employing junior disabled team members on a production about disability is meaningless if they do not have **editorial decision-making power**, and if decisions are ultimately made through a non-disabled lens. Performative representation without editorial influence puts junior professionals in an unfair position (of having to defend or push for disabled authenticity to senior non-disabled team members), and it cannot infuse a project with truly dynamic perspectives. Recognise too that junior team members may have a relatively small amount of industry experience, but may well have significant life experience; it can take many more years for marginalised people to develop creative careers because of the barriers they are expected to navigate (e.g. economic, social, cultural, physical), especially those who are multiply marginalised, so those considered 'junior' team members can be all ages.

- **Interrogate the perspectives** of the non-disabled filmmakers wanting to tell disabled stories; even if they have passion and access, are they the appropriate voices for this story today, and have they brought lived experience and disabled expertise into the team at an empowered, well-paid, decision-making level?

"Commission disabled filmmakers. Prioritise disabled stories by disabled people that do not perpetuate the tired and damaging stereotypes that are so commonplace."
– *Director*

"Support films that are about or made by people with disabilities even if the central theme of the film has nothing to do with disability."
– *Filmmaker*

"You are not always the best person to make a film about someone else, no matter how much you love the person or the topic. Be prepared to hand over your idea and your access to resources if you are unable to meet the needs of the people in the film and the audience."
– *Director/Writer*

"Hire us! We're constantly told that no-one can find disabled talent, and yet we're out here, making work. If we don't have enough experience for you yet? Then hire us in a more junior role, and use your expertise and capital (social, cultural, economic, educational and creative) to really develop our talent and listen to our voices, on the job. We do not need more entry-level training schemes - paid work is what makes us all more experienced and employable. And if you're a training organisation, invest that funding in paid long-term work experience that will both support us and the productions we work on. At some point, someone with the resources of an organisation, company or broadcaster behind them has to have the courage to do things differently."

— *Writer*

Prioritise Ethical Practice and Mental Health

- **Avoid creating ableist environments**, and interrogate the values and ideas about disability that infuse your workplace or production. Inviting disabled filmmakers to contribute and collaborate in a culture that is still dominated by non-disabled perspectives and privilege often means that marginalised people have to fight to defend their expertise and lived experience. This is deeply traumatising and must be avoided.

"I want to work in a professional filmmaking team where I'm not the only one worrying about what it's like to work there for fellow disabled people. It should be on the whole team's agenda, not just those directly affected by disability and we shouldn't have to go up against the execs for our expertise and concerns to be treated respectfully."

– *Researcher*

- Proactively **support your team's mental health** - making identity-based work is extremely demanding for any marginalised group, particularly when working within institutions or frameworks that have historically rejected us. The best work environments actively provide mental health support resources during the filmmaking process (like access to Film In Mind).

- **Confront and prevent extractive and exploitative filmmaking practice**, described by Sonya Childress as "an entrenched culture of entitlement and imperialist impulse on the part of filmmakers seeking to tell the stories of communities that are not their own, advancing disempowering narratives about marginalised communities – and all for personal gain." As with much[23] of the equitable practice recommended in this document, it's crucial that this imperative applies across storytelling about disability and all other marginalised and under-represented communities.

Our other resource pack, the [FWD-Doc Toolkit](), details the practicalities, creative opportunities and financial variables of making high-quality accessible deliverables for filmmakers.

Here we recommend actions for independent film funders, executives and commissioners to take, to ensure the films they produce are accessible.

- **Consult** the brilliant existing resources at [https://inclusivecinema.org](). **Inclusive Cinema** is a UK-wide project developed by the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) designed to support screen exhibitors to promote diversity on screen, in the audience and behind the camera.

- **Require** high-quality captions and audio description in contracts and budgets, as a minimum, and require this for both films and marketing assets.

- **Protect** those budget line items when your supported filmmakers are presenting their projects to other potential funders. Advocate for accessibility with your business affairs colleagues, and with your co-production, co-financing, distribution, exhibition and marketing partners; as film institutions, you have the power to do this.

- **Empower** filmmakers to understand what 'high-quality' means in relation to accessible deliverables (as detailed in the FWD-Doc Toolkit).

- **Direct** filmmakers to resources like p.32 of Archer's Mark's Accessible Filmmaking Guide, which details the financial expenses involved in making captions, audio description and other accessible deliverables: [http://archersmark.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Accessible-Filmmaking-Guide2018.pdf]()

- **Connect** cohorts of funded filmmakers with captioning and audio description expertise. Convene and resource teach-ins and workshops with organisations like Inclusive Cinema, FWD-Doc and others, and with freelance captioners and audio describers, to support the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for your filmmaking community. Events convened by film institutions are hugely beneficial in validating and enabling this work for independent filmmakers who are balancing multiple pressures and requirements.

- **Encourage** - even mandate - your funded filmmakers to advertise their accessible deliverables in their communications with film festivals, exhibitors, distributors, and in press kits.

- **Advise** your distribution and exhibition partners to ensure accessible screenings are always available in their programming and prioritise the use of **Open Captions** (which are generally preferred by D/deaf users, and also benefit wider audiences. In contrast, Closed Captions require audience members to engage with a cinema experience via a separate screening device; these can fail, and often make for an unpleasant, uncomfortable and/or alienating viewing experience).

- **Be transparent and use inclusive language** in your **Deliverables Requirements** (in contracts, on your website, in application materials and throughout communications with your funded filmmakers).

  For a template example of a Deliverables Requirements list, which includes inclusive language, please note the **Enhanced Access Materials Specifications Example** on *Page 73* of this Engagement Pack.

Accessible screenings at film festivals, whether online or in-person, are just the first step in including and validating disabled perspectives in cinema, and welcoming the disabled audience of millions that is currently being excluded.

We recommend that all film festivals:

- **Work with D/deaf and disabled programmers and programming advisors**, who know what authentic D/deaf and disabled filmmaking looks like, so that we can avoid the repetition of tropes like 'inspiration porn' and cripping up. As disabled civil rights movements have declared: "Nothing about us without us"; and there are whole communities of experienced disabled film talent available, at FWD-Doc and Press Reset. The majority of D/deaf and disabled stories are still told in film without D/deaf and disabled expertise embedded in the editorial decision-making process, and often financiers, exhibitor, distributors and awards voters who don't have lived experience of disability don't realise until it's too late that they have a problematic film on their hands, or they vote for films that seem 'worthy' and inspiring but actually inflict real damage on D/deaf and disabled people through misrepresentation and stereotyping.

- If you're funding films or selecting filmmakers for market opportunities, ensure that there is **D/deaf and disabled expertise** and decision-making power in the **selection committees**, and that those professionals can access the films they're assessing with captioned/audio described screeners.

- **Require filmmakers to deliver** captioned and audio described films, and support those filmmakers with grants and recommendations/resources to make accessible deliverables.

- **Actually offer live captioned and audio described screenings at the festival**, making use of the accessible deliverables filmmakers have provided. If a festival is screening a film 3 times, at least one of those screenings should surely be accessible. (At a recent US film festival, numerous non-blind viewers said that the audio described screenings were their favourite events, because of the creativity on show!)

- **Advertise** your accessible screenings and events, and **note** the details of access provision on every webpage, press release, announcement (e.g. 'This screening has captions and a live captioned Q&A'). **Ask** ticket/pass buyers what their access requirements are early in the ticketing process, as standard. If you advertise accessible screenings and events, D/deaf and disabled audiences will come!

- Ensure that all **film trailers and festival teasers** are captioned and audio described. And provide **live captions and sign language interpreters** as standard at Q&As, announcements, parties, awards shows etc. Essentially, if you want your non-disabled community to be able to see/hear/enter any of your festival offerings then D/deaf and disabled people should be able to as well.

- **Welcome D/deaf and disabled critics,** who may need financial and/or access assistance to attend.

- **Extend accessibility** to social, pitching and networking events, as well as just screenings. At numerous festivals disabled filmmakers can attend the screening of their film but can't go to the bar afterwards because there's no wheelchair access, or it's so dark that it's impossible to lipread. **Both screenings and parties should be open to all,** and it can take only small, thoughtful changes to create events that welcome everyone.

- Work with **venues** that are **genuinely accessible**. Remember that some exhibition venues that describe themselves as fully accessible actually only allow wheelchair users to sit in the audience, but not get onto the stage to present Q&As, for example. Festival awards ceremonies should also take place in venues with ramps to the stage, with BSL interpreters and captions, as standard.

- Involve D/deaf and disabled talent in your programme of talks, panel and events **discussing something other than disability**. We are in the film industry because we're talented storytellers, and it's that talent that deserves a spotlight. Don't just wheel us out to talk about access, representation or equity.

- **Be open-minded, non-defensive and talk with D/deaf and disabled people** about what we need to be able to take part. Work with D/deaf and disabled-led service providers, too. We're usually the experts in what we need and how to make it happen as affordably as possible. And we'll probably help you avoid costly and potentially embarrassing access experiments (like using unreliable, wobbly handheld devices to deliver captions to D/deaf audiences) because we've already tried them, and we've probably already made - and continue to make - those mistakes ourselves. Doing accessibility well in film is an ongoing dialogue. As long as there's an acknowledgement that this is work, and that soon we won't have to do this labour for non-disabled people anymore because they'll all be doing it already, then we're usually happy to advise. (And even happier if this is paid advisory, even with just a modest honorarium.)

We want to highlight that the onus isn't on film festivals alone - it's about the entire film pipeline, and there is no point creating accessible festivals if film financiers haven't been proactive about budgeting for the (minimal) costs of making accessible deliverables, filmmakers haven't thought ahead about captioning and audio describing their work, exhibitors and distributors don't release their films with captions and audio description, or awards bodies don't provide screeners with captions/AD for voters.

We also note the potential ripple effects of this work. If the key funding, exhibition and distribution players in the film chain start to require and support accessible films and events, and those films and events welcome new filmmakers and audiences who make up over 20% of the population, then **this provision becomes an industry standard, it becomes a respected part of every budget, the entire film ecosystem learns how to do this effectively, we all save time, bigger audiences can consume our films, and everyone benefits.** More accessible film environments benefit all of us, not just wheelchair users or those who use captions or lipread, for example. Nearly all of us will have some experience of bodily vulnerability, illness and/or disability one day, and a more accessible film industry welcomes us all.

Film criticism is a crucial contributor to representation and equity in society, and a skilled writer will inform themselves about authentic portrayals of disability, recognise misconceptions and tropes, and take steps to avoid ableist language and interpretations of films.

Simultaneously, **voting practices by awards body members** can determine how audiences interpret and approach films and their messages; an awards nod for an ableist or misrepresentative film can negate the perspectives of disabled people, because audiences sometimes perceive that awards voters' seal of approval must signify that a film has got its representation right.

Skillful, responsible voters must, like critics, inform themselves about authentic portrayals of disability, **interrogate their own expectations, challenge misconceptions and tropes, and take steps to avoid ableist interpretations of films.** This is particularly important when considering films that portray disability as simply **tragic and/or inspirational.**

We know that non-disabled film professionals have long benefited **from reducing disability to tropes of tragedy or inspiration in cinema:** over the last century in Hollywood, 59 non-disabled actors have secured Oscar nominations for playing disabled characters, often 'triumphing' over the apparent horror of having or acquiring a disability. History suggests that those nominees have nearly a 50% shot at a win. And "since 1989, the majority of Best Actor Oscars have gone to men playing the sick or disabled."

There is much to discuss about how the portrayal of disability in cinema, often grounded in ableist stereotypes and assumptions about disabled lives and the value of a so-called 'normal' body, seems to **tug on voters' and critics' heartstrings.**

If authentic films are made by authentic voices but on release only reviewed by writers and only elected for awards by voters who have **no insight into that authenticity,** then they are immediately disadvantaged in the crucial cinema pipeline that leads from positive reviews to sales and distribution deals to awards to 'success'. The nuance and artistry of narratives that avoid the pervasive misrepresentations of disability that have dominated culture for decades (e.g. 'inspiration porn', 'disability as tragedy') can be **invisible to critics and voters if the lens they are viewing through is an under-informed, unexamined or ableist one.**

If **critics** and **voters** have an unconscious bias about disability, harmful stereotypes will not only be **reinforced** but **promoted**. It is essential that writers and voters assess their own lens, experiences and beliefs that may lead them to **unconsciously devalue disabled lives**. We recommend that critics and voters also keep in mind that, even in the case that a film is made by a disabled person about their disability, **ableism can be so pervasive and internalised** that disabled-led films also need to be held accountable for perpetuating harmful stereotypes in storytelling.

It is the responsibility of cinema **critics** and **voters** to devote the same [26] attention to ableism as they do other forms of discrimination in cinema and TV, and also to invest time in exploring intersectionality and the multiple forms of discrimination enacted upon D/deaf or disabled people who also occupy other marginalised identities. We recommend reading the work of **disabled film critics including Kristen Lopez, Angelo Muredda and Charlotte Little, actively identifying tropes and stereotypes in media (See Glossary), and reflecting upon whether a film values disabled bodies as equal to non-disabled bodies.**

"Most people know what racism in movies looks like. They know what misogyny in movies looks like. They can disagree with those assessments, but they know it when they see it. Most people don't know ableism in movies."
— *Film critic Kristen Lopez,*
interviewed by writer and activist Alice Wong

Here we describe how exhibitors, distributors and filmmakers on their audience engagement and distribution journeys can create film screening events that are inclusive, safe and welcoming to disabled audiences, whether in-person or online.

We note that any event with disability, inclusion, representation or 'diversity' at its heart must always be fully disabled-accessible as a minimum, but we recommend that all events are made accessible regardless of the subject matter.

1) Hosting <u>in-person</u> accessible events (screenings, Q&As, panels, parties, awards, markets)

Filmmaking doesn't end with the creation of a film; its life continues when the film meets the world.

- **Planning** for in-person events is key. This includes everything from basic audience development, engaging with advisory groups, transport and planning the **event space** itself. Within this **marketing** will also play a key role in order to ensure that you are reaching people, through engaging with various D/deaf and disabled perspectives including critics, and also offering free and discounted tickets when you're able to. Invitations to your events should include a question about accommodations and/or an accessibility contact at your organisation who will communicate reliably with disabled participants before and during events.

- **Effective delivery processes** will ensure the success of in-person events/screenings. Ensure venues are accessible, captions and audio headsets for audio descriptions are working, British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters are present for Q&As, accessible toilets are available and trained staff or volunteers are present to assist where needed.

- **Seek feedback** after events, to evaluate what worked and what didn't. This doesn't always have to be done in a formal setting – even engaging quickly with your audience after events is an opportunity to help you evaluate its effectiveness.

- It's as important that D/deaf and disabled filmmakers can **access parties, drinks and networking events** as it is for screenings or formal meetings; much of the business and pleasure of film is done in these **informal social environments.**

- Invite D/deaf and disabled talent to take part in talks, panels and events to **discuss something other than disability**. We're in the film industry because we're talented storytellers, and it's that talent that deserves a spotlight. Don't just wheel us out to talk about access, representation or equity.

- **Ensure access to the stage** as well as to the audience seating area. Award-winning filmmakers should be able to get to the **stage** to receive their accolades! Venues frequently consider themselves accessible if wheelchair users can sit at the back of the room, and have never considered that disabled people might be **talent** who need to get on to the stage at the front. **If a non-disabled person can do it at your event, then a disabled person should be able to do it too.**

We recommend [Inclusive Cinema](#) for further information, including accessibility service provider recommendations, how-to guides, research and data, case studies and information on training and funding.

2) Hosting online accessible events (screenings, Q&As, panels, parties, awards, markets)

The pandemic has changed the way we work and network. In some cases, this has allowed D/deaf and disabled people more access than ever before to events that were previously inaccessible. Many D/deaf and disabled people **don't want to return to the 'normal' of pre-pandemic times**, in which we were **excluded** from attending much in-person activity. That said, online events are **not automatically more accessible**; here are the key steps to ensure that everyone can participate.

- **Communications**. Ensure that all of your comms (email, registration forms, websites, announcements, marketing) include a **prominent notice** that accommodations are available, and instructions on how to request them. For many, this may be their first contact with you and it is a signal as to whether or not they are welcome in your space.

- **Accommodation requests. Proactively ask** your invitees and attendees about accessibility and diversity so you can offer **accommodations** and resources that welcome everyone. It lessens the burden on those without privilege when you use your privilege to lift up others.

- **Respecting time and expertise.** Include an honorarium in your budget to pay all panellists and moderators – even a modest payment to recognise their expertise.

- **Budget**. Include line items in your **budgets** for captioning and BSL interpreting. Keep in mind that you may need additional funding if it is necessary to select a more accessible location for events. If this is part of your event planning from the beginning it is less of a strain later.

- **Captioning and sign language interpreters**. Provide **both** live captioning and **sign language interpreters** for all events whenever possible, but if you need to start with one option we recommend live captioning (as not all D/deaf people are sign language users). While we recognise the increasing usage of **automatic live captioning** services, we do not currently recommend them, as they're frequently inaccurate.

- **Captioning**. Live captioning is affordable, and creating captions afterwards for a recording of a panel are pennies per minute. Providing this **by default** for **all** of your online events (not just those for or about D/deaf and disabled people) not only increases accessibility for individuals who are D/deaf, but may also be helpful for international participants or those that need their speakers to be turned off in their household environment. In addition, **not all participants have visible disabilities, nor are comfortable disclosing**. NB: Live captioning services are sometimes called Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART).

- **Sign language interpreters**. Provide BSL in the UK. Provide **advance information** about who will talk and any key terms, for interpreters and captioners.

- **Testing**. When you do a technical run-through, include interpreting and captioning as part of your **test run**. Regardless of the platform or system you use, at a minimum please be sure to 'test' (both live captioners and/or automated) with **sound off** to ensure that what is being typed is actually meaningful communication. Make sure your interpreter is **easy to see** and their signing clearly visible.

- **Accessing accommodations**. During the event, **explain** how individuals may **access** captions and interpreters within the platform you're using. If you aren't sure, check in advance with your captioning service and interpreters (many are well-versed and can talk you through it).

- Ensure you **display captions** in any video materials shown during webinars, panels, and/or screenings, including **trailers**.

- **Informal industry events**. Accessibility isn't just for panels or webinars – it is also for informal (and crucial) industry social events and networking and the development of meaningful, substantive professional relationships that advance careers. Please ensure you have secured an accessible location and provide live captioning and/or BSL interpreters for the **social and networking** elements of your online events.

- **Introductions**. If you're participating in an online event:

  When giving your bio/intro, provide your pronouns (if comfortable), a land acknowledgement when appropriate, and a short image description of yourself and background for blind and low-vision participants. Encourage fellow panellists to do the same. An example image description might be:

  "My name is _____ and my pronouns are she/her/they/them/he/him. I am a Black woman with shoulder-length, curly brown hair that is shaved on both sides. I'm wearing a green shirt, red glasses and I am sitting in a room with plants and artwork behind me."

One of the greatest ways to empower film audiences is to equip them with tangible resources that they can use independently in their communities, to engage with, discuss and champion a film and its messages.

Watch Parties are events in which individuals gather friends, colleagues, family and others together for a shared screening in a venue of their choice (like a living room), whether in-person or online.

Filmmakers can provide their audiences with both a **Screening Guide** (to describe the logistics of hosting a Watch Party) and a **Discussion Guide** (to offer talking points, takeaways and questions with which to discuss the film screened).

We provide templates for both of these Guides on *Page 66* for filmmakers to personalise and use, with **disability inclusion and access embedded throughout.**

When independent filmmakers are making websites for their films, it is important that these are accessible to D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse visitors, whether or not the subject matter of the film is disability.

Below we note some best practices for making your film website accessible to a range of audiences, keeping in mind a range of disabilities. We acknowledge ways in which websites can be a barrier to accessibility, and how to address a variety of situations. When designing a website, it is important to be explicit about who your website is trying to reach. However, it is equally important to remember that disabled people can be a part of any audience, including others in the film industry.

Website Presentation

Wording
- Keep your wording simple to ensure that people with a learning disability or neurodiversity can access your work. This might look like swapping out jargonistic, long words for shorter, more common ones, and it has benefits for all audiences.

Colours
- Bright colours can be a barrier for people with neurodiversity or with people who are blind or low vision. You can use the website linked below to check if your website is in line with guidelines for people who may have trouble with particularly bright colours in website design.

[Learn More about the Color Contrast Checker tool](#).

Fonts
People who are blind or low vision may be unable to access fonts that are too small or too complicated. Keep your font at a consistent size level and use simple fonts.

Images
- Flashing images can be distressing or harmful to people with epilepsy or to neurodivergent people. Whilst a PowerPoint-style homepage works, enable settings to ensure that it doesn't move too quickly. Refrain from using quick-flashing GIFs or video.

Audio

Audio embedded into website
- Automatic audio embedded into a website is a barrier to neurodivergent people. Please ensure that your website has an option to turn audio on.

Audio Descriptions (video)
- Video without audio description is a barrier to blind and low-vision people. Having audio descriptions on trailers embedded into your website will enable blind and low vision people to access your work fully. Below are further guides to AD, and links to a collection of recommended AD service providers:

https://www.fwd-doc.org/resources

https://inclusivecinema.org/how-to-guides/subtitling-bsl-and-audio-description-services/

https://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-home-and-leisure-television-radio-and-film/audio-description

Captions

Captioning Video
- Captions on video are crucial to enabling access for D/deaf people and people with auditory processing disorders. For full accessibility, captions must be available on trailers as well as short and feature length films. Below are links to a collection of recommended captioning service providers:

https://www.fwd-doc.org/resources

https://inclusivecinema.org/how-to-guides/subtitling-bsl-and-audio-description-services/

Alt. Text on Images
- Alt. text's purpose is to describe images to blind or low vision website visitors, to enable screen-readers to read out parts of your website that may not be accessible otherwise.
- In order to create alt. text, write alt. Text for each image in your website's embed code section. You can embed it in with the following code: <img src = " " alt = "">
- If this is not an option for you due to your website server, you can add a caption block below photos instead.

Below is a guide to using alt. text effectively on your website.

https://accessguide.io/descriptive-link-text

Transcripts
- Do you have audio-only files uploaded onto your website? In order to make these accessible for D/deaf and hard of hearing people, you can provide a transcript alongside your audio. Below is a helpful link for transcript services.

http://www.uiaccess.com/transcripts/transcript_services.html
https://www.rev.com/
https://www.uktranscription.com/

Evaluation

Assessing Your Website's Accessibility
- There are numerous companies that will assess your website's level of accessibility and suggest ways to improve it. These include:

https://squareada.com/
http://wave.webaim.org/

Building Websites With Accessibility In Mind
- The major website platforms provide useful guidance for building accessible sites with their tools:

Squarespace: https://support.squarespace.com/hc/en-us/articles/215129127-Making-your-Squarespace-site-more-accessible

Wordpress:
https://wordpress.com/support/accessibility/
https://premium.wpmudev.org/blog/making-wordpress-accessible/

More Information:

- https://www.allsensesgo.com/
- https://www.boptheatre.co.uk/what-we-do/resources/
- https://accessguide.io/
- https://www.afb.org/about-afb/what-we-do/afb-consulting/afb-accessibility-resources/users-technology
- https://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility
- http://nosmag.org/5-ways-to-make-your-web-content-more-neurodiversity-inclusive

Watch Party Template

Watching films like _____ with a gathering of friends, family, and neighbours can be a great way to facilitate a discussion and help to more deeply understand someone else's experience and raise awareness of the issues at hand. You can share the film with those who don't know much about the issues explored in it, and/or to help encourage people in your community to be better allies to those navigating _____, like the film's participants.

In this document, you'll find all of the resources you need to host a successful Watch Party event, whether online or in-person.

Step 1: Prepare your watch party

Choose a date, time and event format. Online or in-person events can include webinars, Q&As or open discussions with audience members, experts or community members (please note that during the Covid-19 pandemic we recommend that you only host online events: you must always follow regulations from your local and national health authorities).

Showing the film. _____ is available at _____. If you are planning an in-person event, you will need to find an appropriate and accessible venue. Please email _____ for questions about licensing.

Online platforms for the Q&A. Based on your event format, needs and goals, prepare the Q&A choosing the right platform. Zoom, Skype, Jitsi and Facebook Live are some options to keep in mind. Make sure to at least leave 20 to 30 minutes for the discussion (please note you will need to nominate a moderator to facilitate it).

Accessibility. Think and plan ahead for both online and in-person events. _____ is offered with Open Captions and audio description (AD). For the Q&A, you should keep in mind the need for sign language interpreting and captioning. Click here to find more information, tips and resources about accessibility. If you are planning an in-person event, you must also make sure that the venue is accessible for wheelchair users.

Step 2: Share your event

Invitations. Create a guest list and make sure to include your family and friends. You can also invite neighbours, colleagues and, if you want to advertise the event to a wider audience, then be sure to post on social media and consider using Eventbrite or Facebook Events to monitor attendance and to send reminders. When sharing your event, ensure that you offer a clear timeline with links/information and access details.

Outreach. If you want to reach wider audience members, consider putting together an outreach plan and get in touch with local charities, organisations and allies relevant to the film and the event's themes. You can use the materials on the film's website, photos or clips as additional materials.

Step 3: Reminders and tech check

Reminder. Make sure that you remind your guests and potential audience members about the upcoming event at least a week before it takes place, and ideally also the day before: send the event details (e.g. links to access the film and the Q&A in case of an online event) again so everyone has the information handy.

Technical check. At least do one tech check beforehand to ensure that everything runs smoothly. From checking the links to testing a projector, be sure to do it several days before the watch party to allow time for any troubleshooting.

Step 4: Host the event & raise awareness

Host the watch party. It's the big day! Make sure that you are online or at the venue approximately 45 minutes before the event to check everything one last time, welcome guests, and prepare your tech. After screening the film, and depending on your screening format, allow at least 20-30 minutes for the Q&A (you can use our discussion guide template to craft possible topics) and to raise important issues generated by the film.

Raise awareness. A watch party is a unique opportunity to facilitate a discussion and help to more deeply understand someone else's experience and raise awareness. Encourage people in your community to be better allies to those navigating the themes or experiences presented in the film.

For more information we recommend:

Accessibility & Events
- Vera Institute of Justice: [Designing Accessible Events for People with Disabilities and Deaf Individuals](#)
- Inclusive Cinema: [Subtitling, BSL and Audio Description services](#)
- FWD-Doc: [Accessibility and Virtual Events: The First 10 Tips](#)
- Longmore Institute: [Ensuring Access with Virtual Programming on Zoom](#)
- Gallus Events: [Engaging an online event audience](#)
- Zoom: [Best Practices for Hosting a Digital Event](#)
- ICO: [Tips for producing accessible marketing and publicity materials](#)

FILM TITLE

FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE

FILM STILL

PARTNER LOGOS

Director:
Producer:
Editor:
Featured Cast/Contributors:

Production Company:
Year:
Running Time:

Available to view at:

[link]

For screenings contact: [email]

FILM SUMMARY

A paragraph about the film's story and key participants; usually the short synopsis used in other marketing materials is appropriate here, but do bear in mind the different audiences you may share this document with.

FILM THEMES

SENTENCE TO DESCRIBE THEME 1 e.g. THE POWER OF CREATIVITY IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Paragraph to describe the theme in more detail and pose questions about it. This should be written sensitively with your audience in mind, considering their lived experience that may be relevant to this film, and any potential triggers.

SENTENCE TO DESCRIBE THEME 2

Paragraph to describe the theme in more detail and pose questions about it. This should be written sensitively with your audience in mind, considering their lived experience that may be relevant to this film, and any potential triggers.

SENTENCE TO DESCRIBE THEME 3

Paragraph to describe the theme in more detail and pose questions about it. This should be written sensitively with your audience in mind, considering their lived experience that may be relevant to this film, and any potential triggers.

FURTHER DISCUSSION

This section should pose questions for the audience to discuss and explore together.

1. E.g. Prior to watching _____ [name of film], what were your preconceptions of _____? Where and how have these shown up in your life?
2. E.g. How do you think about _____ now, having watched the film? How do you feel about this new way of thinking, if there is one?
3. E.g. How do you think this film has changed the participants/filmmaker's experience of _____?
4. E.g. What would you like to see happen next for _____? Are there any ways you think you could contribute to that?
5. E.g. What have you learned or taken away from the film?
6. E.g. What would you like to do now, having seen _____? How could any of the themes explored today help you to do that?

QUOTES FROM THE FILM

This section should present some key statements from the film that could be useful takeaways or points of discussion.

Quote 1

Quote 2

Quote 3

WAYS TO MAKE CHANGE

In this section, list the ways in which audiences can take action and/or empower others to do so.

- E.g. Support someone you know who experiences _____ [E.g. the themes from the film' by doing_____ and _____.
- E.g. Do your own research and become an advocate. Someone experiencing _____ may be constantly fighting to _____, which can get tiring, repetitive and frustrating. As an advocate, it's your role to help make things a little easier — and that means helping to alleviate this burden.
- E.g. Read about _____ and reflect on the preconceptions about _____ that you may have had in your life.
- E.g. Talk about _____ with your community. Make a commitment together to _____.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & FURTHER READING

- *Any links to sources of information and further reading.*
-
-
-

Enhanced Access Materials Specification Example

The following enhanced access materials are to be supplied as part of the DCP, and should be delivered for films and marketing assets (e.g. trailers):

- Narrative audio track for blind and low vision audiences. Audio description (AD) is a verbal commentary that explains what's happening on screen including locations, production design, appearance, body language, expressions and movements.

- Open captions (English): Open captions are text displayed to convey the full detail of the audio story to D/deaf audience members. Captions text includes accurate scene dialogue, descriptions of key sounds i.e. "phone rings" or "door slams", and descriptions of music. Open captions are rendered by the server or projector and will display the timed text captions on screen, visible to the entire audience.
- Closed captions (English): Closed captions are text displayed to convey the full detail of the audio story to D/deaf audience members. Captions text includes accurate scene dialogue, descriptions of key sounds i.e. "phone rings" or "door slams", and descriptions of music. Closed captions are generally presented off screen on dedicated devices and are not generally visible to the entire audience.

The DCP will not be accepted if it fails to include enhanced access materials.

The following enhanced access materials are to be supplied as part of the Pro-Res/A-11:

* Captions in .srt format or timed text format
* Audio description track as _____

1.Scope, Disability facts and figures. Available at Scope.org.uk

2.https://www.screenskills.com/media/1559/creative_skillset_creative_media_workforce_survey_2014-1.pdf

3.Presence et al 2020 Keeping It Real. p. 18. https://ukfd.org.uk/policy-reports/

4.https://www.thefledglingfund.org/impact-resources/distribution-audience-engagement/

5.https://www.documentary.org/feature/whose-story-five-doc-makers-avoiding-extractive-filmmaking

6.Access Living, Ableism 101: What it is, what it looks like, and what we can do to fix it (12 December 2019). Available at Access Living.

7.https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability/

8.https://www.shapearts.org.uk/news/social-model-of-disability

9.https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability/#:~:text=The%20medical%20model%20of%20disability,and%20control%20in%20their%20lives

10.https://www.shapearts.org.uk/news/social-model-of-disability

11.https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nothing-about-us-without-us-mantra-for-a-movement_b_59aea450e4b0c50640cd61cf

13.Disability Visibility Project, Ableism: the causes and consequences of disability prejudice, (6 November 2019). Available at Disability Visibility Project.

14.FWD-Doc Toolkit, 2021. Available at FWD-Doc.

15.https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/diversity-inclusion/press-reset

16.https://dredf.org/media-disability/

17.https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/disability-pay-and-employment-gaps

18.https://disabilityrightsbastard.wordpress.com/2013/04/23/ableism-and-internalized-ableism/

19.https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/what-to-call-disabled-person_l_5d02c521e4b0304a120c7549

20.https://www.peerconnect.org.au/stuff-peer-networks-talk-about/life-issues/role-changes-after-acquired-disability/#:~:text=Examples%20of%20acquired%20disability%20issues,a%20range%20of%20mental%20illnesses

21.https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2020/february/nearly-half-everyone-poverty-either-disabled-person-or-lives-disabled-person#:~:text=In%202017%2F18%2C%2031%25,poverty%20%E2%80%93%20around%204%20million%20people.&text=If%20there%20is%20also%20a,face%20barriers%20to%20paid%20work

22.https://www.forbes.com/sites/alyssawright/2021/01/27/how-a-trans-filmmaking-fellowship-became-foundational-to-the-success-of-the-documentary-disclosure/

23.https://chronicillnessinclusion.org.uk/2021/05/05/i-already-have-a-job-getting-through-the-day/

24.https://medium.com/@sonya.childress/the-documentary-future-a-call-for-accountability-79e7c1315912

25.IndieWire, Here are 59 actors who landed Oscar nominations for portraying characters with disabilities (25 September 2017). Available at IndieWire.

26.The Washington Post. 'Not much has changed': Actress Marlee Matlin on Hollywood's portrayal of people with disabilities (27 February 2017). Available at The Washington Post.

27.Disability Visibility Podcast. Host: Alice Wong. Episode 30: Film Criticism. Available at Disability Visibility Project.

TERM	DEFINITION
Ableism	Ableism is a system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence, excellence and productivity. Further reading can be found at Disability Arts Online.
Accessibility	Accessibility can be defined as the "ability to access" the functionality, and possible benefit, of some system or entity and is used to describe the degree to which a product such as a device, service, environment is accessible by as many people as possible. The concept of accessible design ensures both "direct access" (i.e. unassisted) and "indirect access" meaning compatibility with a person's assistive technology (for example, computer screen readers). Further reading can be found at Disabled World.
Audience Engagement	Taking your audiences from viewers to activists. Further Reading can be found at The Fledging Fund.
Audio Description	Audio description (AD) is a mode of media accessibility that turns visual elements into a verbal text to provide access for the blind and partially sighted audiences. Further reading can be found at RNIB.
Captions vs. Subtitles	Captions are designed for viewers who cannot hear the audio in the video. Subtitles are designed for viewers who can hear but do not understand the language in the video. Further reading can be found at Vimeo.

Closed Captions

Closed Captions are the most common type of captions used by major broadcasters and video streaming services. Usually identified by a [CC] symbol in the corner of the screen, closed captions exist as a separate file, which gives the viewer the ability to switch them on or off. Further reading can be found at AI Media.

Crip

Using the terms "crip" and "cripping" is one way of "taking back" language and power from people, institutions and systems that have used it historically (and, in some cases, presently) to harm and demean disabled people, including certain at times "crippling" physical disabilities. Language, control, and social power are thus asserted by disabled people and our allies, who have the right to speak for ourselves and act on our own behalf. Further reading can be found at Cripping the Con.

Cripping Up

"Cripping up" is typically when a non-disabled actor takes on the role of a disabled character and their portrayal often involves mimicking the physical characteristics of a specific disability or condition. The term can also be expanded to mean that the story doesn't engage with the lived experience of disability. Further reading can be found at National Theatre of Scotland and Dominick Evans.

D/deaf

The "uppercase D" Deaf is used to describe people who identify as culturally Deaf. The "lowercase d" deaf simply refers to the physical condition of being deaf or hard of hearing.
Source / Further Reading can be found at GRE.

Disability Justice

Disability Justice centres on the needs and experiences of folks experiencing intersectional oppression, such as disabled people of colour, immigrants with disabilities, queers with disabilities, trans and gender non-conforming people with disabilities, people with disabilities who are houseless, people with disabilities who are incarcerated, people with disabilities who have had their ancestral lands stolen, amongst others. Further reading can be found at Sins Invalid.

Distribution

Putting your film into the world. Further reading can be found at The Fledging Fund.

Employment Gap

The disability employment gap is the difference between the employment rates of disabled and non-disabled people. Further reading can be found at TUC.

Intersectionality

Coined by Professor Kimberley Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality is the concept that all oppression is linked and acknowledges that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people – gender, race, disability, class, sexual orientation etc. Further reading can be found at Colombia Law School.

Inspiration Porn

"Inspiration Porn" is an informal term, coined by the late Australian disability activist Stella Young, for a loose genre of media depictions of disabled people. It is the portrayal of people with disabilities as inspiring on the basis of their disability. Further reading can be found at TEDX and Forbes.

Medical Model of Disability

The medical model of disability arose from the biomedical perception of disability. It links disability diagnosis to an individual's physical body, supposing that this disability may reduce the individual's quality of life and the aim is, with medical intervention, this disability will be diminished or corrected. Further reading can be found at Scope.

"Nothing About Us Without Us"

"Nothing About Us Without Us!" is a slogan used to communicate the idea that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy. This involves national, ethnic, disability-based, or other groups that are often thought to be marginalised from political, social, and economic opportunities. Further reading can be found at Huffington post.

Open Captions

Open captions are permanently visible, or "burnt" onto the video or stream meaning that the viewer does not need to switch anything on to access them. Further reading can be found at AI Media.

Outreach

Telling the world about your film. Further reading can be found at The Fledging Fund.

Pay Gap

The disability pay gap is the difference between the median hourly pay of disabled and non-disabled people. Further reading can be found at TUC.

Representation in Media

The basic definition of representation in the media is simply how media, such as television, film and books, portray certain types of people or communities. Groups that have been underrepresented in media include women, people of colour, D/deaf and disabled people, LBGTQ+ people, people with a range of body shapes and types, and people of non-Christian religions. Further reading can be found at Forbes.

Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability is a way of viewing the world, developed by disabled people. The model says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their so-called impairment or difference. The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people. Further reading can be found at Scope.

Books

- Being Heumann: *An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*
by Judith Heumann and Kristen Joiner
- *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- *Crippled: Austerity and the Demonization of Disabled People* by Frances Ryan
- *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* by Alice
  Wong
- *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* by Adrienne Maree Brown
- *Sitting Pretty: The View From My Ordinary Resilient Disabled Body* by Rebekah
  Taussig
- *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women White Feminists Forgot* by Mikki Kendall.
- *Ableism: The Causes and Consequences of Disability Prejudice* by MR Nario-Remond.

Reports

- *Ford Foundation, Road Map for Inclusion – Changing the Face of Disability in Media*.
  Available at: https://www.fordfoundation.org/judyheumann
- *UK Feature Docs, A study of the feature documentary film industry in the UK*.
  Available at: https://ukfd.org.uk/
- *The Accessible Filmmaking Guide*, from Archers Mark. Available at:
  http://archersmark.co.uk/Accessible-Filmmaking-Guide

Websites

- FWD-Doc, *Practices and resources we recommend*. Available at: https://www.fwd-doc.org/resources
- Gov.uk, *Guidance: words to use and avoid when writing about disabled people*.
  Available at: www.gov.uk/inclusive language
- Film: blogging the reel world, *A year in disabled criticism: what it's like to write about movies when you have a disability* (3 December 2019). Available at:
  www.slashfilm.com/beingafilmcritic
- Fansided, *Disabled critics need to be included in the film critic diversity campaign*.
  Available at: https://culturess.com/disabled critics
- Variety, *No more 'fake diversity' on screen. It's about quality, as well as quantity* (28 January 2021). Available at: https://variety-com/uk-fake-diversity
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- *This Close*, 2018. [Series]. Joshua Feldman & Shoshannah Stern. USA: Super Deluxe & Killer Films
- *Unrest*, 2017. [Film]. Jennifer Brea. USA/UK: Shella Films & Little By Little Films
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FWD-Doc

FWD-Doc is a group of filmmakers with disabilities (FWDs) working in documentary film – and our active allies. We believe that coming together as a community allows us to support each other and advocate for ourselves with greater power. Led by founding members Day Al-Mohamed, Lindsey Dryden, Jim LeBrecht and Alysa Nahmias, FWD-Doc seeks to increase the visibility of, support for, and direct access to opportunities, networks, and employment for D/deaf and disabled filmmakers. We aim to foster greater inclusion of D/deafness and disability within the broader entertainment industry. FWD-Doc is a non-profit organisation supported by Frances and Jen Rainin, Field of Vision and individual donors, and fiscally sponsored by CID. To find out more or to get in touch with us, please visit https://www.fwd-doc.org/

little by little films

Little by Little Films is a UK- and US-based independent production company dedicated to brilliant storytelling by and about under-represented voices and founded by Emmy®-winning producer and director Lindsey Dryden. With a focus on the perspectives of women, LGBTQ+ folks, and D/deaf and disabled people, LBL Films is committed to making films with artistry and originality, and delivering impactful and authentic campaigns.

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