



# Developing Deaf Audiences in Your Cinema

# Contents

Introduction and Quick Read	3
Focus Group Report	6
Executive Summary: Deaf Audiences Survey	15
Executive Summary: Venues Survey	21

# Introduction

## QUICK READ FOR EXHIBITORS INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING DEAF AUDIENCES

**At least 1 in 6 people in the UK are affected by deafness.** This number incorporates a wide range of experiences and forms of communication, but no matter the specific need, the d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing deserve to be able to enjoy the cinema.

In 2016 the ICO worked on **Power in Our Hands**, an archive film project celebrating the history of the Deaf community in the UK. Screenings of the project were immensely popular, with several selling out. This project demonstrated that

- there was an **untapped d/Deaf audience in the UK**, who are interested in attending the cinema but
- **more needed to be done to include d/Deaf audiences in cinemas.**

### Deaf or deaf?

It's important to remember that there is a distinction between the physical condition of deafness and the Deaf community, a cultural and linguistic minority.

We set out to find out what the barriers were to building a strong d/Deaf audience in the UK. We conducted a survey of d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences, a focus group of Deaf people and also a survey of exhibitors to understand their experience with developing d/Deaf audiences. **97.5% of respondents to our Deaf audience survey said they would visit the cinema more frequently if provisions were improved, so there is a great opportunity. We are happy to provide these guidelines to help you with this opportunity.** With these recommendations, it is important to note we are focusing on Deaf audiences rather than the broader group of deafened and hard of hearing audiences.

## **What are the barriers to more d/Deaf people attending the cinema and what can be done?**

To create a significant shift in the way that cinemas are perceived by Deaf people will need commitment, opportunity and support. Like all audience development initiatives, reaching a Deaf audience requires strategy and commitment over a long term period. Nonetheless, we feel that there are core problems and solutions:

### **Stronger connections with Deaf groups**

Deaf patrons often feel cinema is not 'for them', or feel jaded by negative experiences, whether through poor customer service experiences or poor technical delivery. There is a strong network of Deaf groups in the UK. Making connections with these groups is a good way to understand the specific needs and interests of many of the Deaf people in your community. Groups such as the British Deaf Association can provide a route for you to connect with these groups to ensure that Deaf events are well attended and there is a way for the community to feel welcome and feedback any issues.

### **Improved venue accessibility**

A cinema is about more than films. Cinemas should consider how Deaf people will experience the rest of the cinema experience, which can often be alienating. Staff should have a basic knowledge of BSL and so we've put together subtitled films are playing a resource of videos to help staff learn key phrases so that Deaf patrons can buy tickets, drinks and snacks and feel included.

### **Improved technical provision**

One of the most cited negative experiences for Deaf audience members was attending screenings advertised as accessible but delivered without subtitles in the event. Changing this means that:

- front of house should be aware of accessible screenings during their shift
- Projectionists and technical managers have made adequate preparation of DCP materials and monitor the projection with care
- Management should empower staff to ensure that Deaf audience members have a positive experience

### **Improved marketing and listings**

Simply knowing when subtitled films are playing is often an arduous experience for Deaf audience members.

Ideally, marketing should be:

- Displayed in a dedicated area of a cinema's website
- Include a video summary of listings and titles in BSL
- Released with a good amount of advance warning

### **Suitable screening times**

Our survey of exhibitors showed that many felt frustrated with the size of the audience for accessible screenings, while many Deaf patrons felt frustrated that the screening slots offered to them (often during the day time) were not suitable for their working life. While we recognise that evening screenings are more lucrative periods for cinemas, most Deaf people work and so these times are not suitable. Cinemas that are keen to build a dedicated Deaf audience should commit to subtitled screenings in an evening or weekend slot.

### **Improved selection of films**

While larger budget studio films almost always have accessible materials, this is not the case for independent and world cinema titles, where economies of scale make this financially unsustainable. Cinemas were often unsure whether materials for films they were programming would be available for accessible cinema slots. It is very welcome that BFI-backed films include accessible materials. We will seek to extend this a broader range of art house and world cinema titles by pursuing public funding. We also recommend that distributors take care to subtitle English language sections of foreign language titles to avoid excluding d/Deaf audience members and that exhibitors are sensitive to this issue when programming.

# Focus Group Report

## THE DEAF COMMUNITY AND THE CINEMA

### *“It’s about Equal Rights”*

The findings of the ICO’s Venue Survey demonstrated that while venues are keen to ensure their programme is as accessible as possible for all audiences, current subtitled screenings are often badly attended and having a financial impact on their organisations. So why are Deaf people not going to the cinema?

In early 2017, the ICO carried out research with members of the Deaf community via two, targeted focus groups. The first of these took place at the British Deaf Association (BDA) AGM in York. The BDA is largest organisation in the UK that is run by Deaf people for Deaf people, representing British Sign Language (BSL) users all over the country. The second took place the following week in London and focused on those in the 18-30 age group.

Below is an overview of the reflections and responses of participants, which reveals apprehensions and barriers beyond the timings/availability of subtitled screenings. These valuable examples and anecdotes shed a light on Deaf people’s experiences at the cinema and their resulting reluctance to return. Only by starting by understanding this reluctance can venues improve their offer accordingly.

## SUBTITLED SCREENINGS

### **Scheduling**

Subtitled screenings are not offered at a convenient time, a problem acknowledged by many venues. This was a much bigger issue for members of the younger focus group who until recently were able to attend the cinema as they were at college/university. But now they are working full-time, especially for those with long commutes and/or other commitments, early evening screenings are no longer an option. There are certain cinemas that show more subtitled screenings, some even every day, but many of these tend to be during the day in the week, or a Sunday morning – not a particularly social time for this age group.

## **Film Choice**

There needs to be more flexibility and variation in not just the timing of screenings but the films that are shown. There is often a very limited choice on what Deaf audiences can watch, and sometimes subtitled screenings only become available one to two weeks after the film's release date in cinemas. Again, young people in particular described the frustration and increased isolation when their hearing peers talk about films that they watched on the first weekend of its release. Similarly, hearing people have a lot longer to see a film – subtitled screenings are usually only available for one week and often they find they have missed their chance to see a certain film.

*“Subtitles are not only on at the wrong time, but they’re on the wrong films. It’s always the same type of films that are subtitled. If you’re talking about increasing access to cinema through subtitles then, for me, you also need to widen the range of films.”*

## **Marketing and Information**

Access to information is another barrier for people attending the cinema. Traditional cinema practice of one week's notice for film listings is not practical for Deaf audiences. In a week's screenings there may only be one or two subtitled performances, and with only a week's notice it is unlikely that they would be able to attend. Again, the younger group were more outspoken on this issue as they would love to go to the cinema more and see more films, but are unable to do so.

It was also difficult for Deaf audiences to find out about subtitled screenings. The most commonly-cited source of information was [www.yourlocalcinema.com](http://www.yourlocalcinema.com) – however some participants felt their listings were often not up to date and/or provided the wrong information. One participant had previously complained and yourlocalcinema responded there had been a change at the venue that they were not informed about. Participants were not aware of the new Accessible Screenings website ([www.accessiblescreeningsuk.co.uk](http://www.accessiblescreeningsuk.co.uk)) and felt there should be better communication in place to update the Deaf community of these developments.

Instead of relying on 'official' channels, participants explained how the Deaf community are increasingly using Facebook to share information about subtitled screenings. For example, in Derby one person uploads a video to his page each week explaining what's on in the local and surrounding area and lists details below the video. This is becoming an ever more popular source of 'valid' information, and furthermore allows elements of the information to be communicated in British Sign Language.

## Trust

The result of this lack of access to correct information has led to a lack of trust in cinemas and screening venues. A frequent experience of the cinema is arriving at subtitled screenings to find out that subtitles are not available. Sometimes this information is communicated at the box office, but often audiences discover this when the film begins. Many participants used the words ‘nervous’ and ‘anxious’ to describe how they feel waiting for film to start, and their relief when the subtitles appear. Indeed, many approach these screenings feeling there is a 50/50 chance of the subtitles appearing. In some circumstances the venue turns the subtitles on but refuses to play the film again from the start, which means trying to follow the storyline having missed the first fifteen minutes. Only one participant reported that she had managed to get the venue to start the film again with subtitles.

*“I made multiple attempts to watch films at my local cinema where I received continual apologies for subtitles not working and given ‘two free tickets’. I had so many free tickets I ended up just throwing them away as I could never use them!”*

*“If the film starts with no subtitles then one of two things happen. Either there’s an apology that there are no subtitles and I get refund, or they turn them on but will not go back to the start of the film so I’ve missed the first fifteen minutes. I no longer ask for refund in this scenario as it’s just normal now. My priority is to get out of the cinema and find a member of staff as soon as possible – I’m ready to run as soon as the film starts.”*

*“When subtitled screenings started at my local cinema I was really excited. But the subtitles are never working and I always end up really disappointed. My partner and I will go the cinema for ‘date night’ which means we’ve paid for a babysitter, dinner and then the night is ruined because the screening isn’t subtitled as advertised.”*

Deaf audiences were excited about the number of foreign films being shown in UK cinemas as it offers a more varied programme of subtitled screenings (see above). However, venues should be careful when advertising these as ‘subtitled screenings’, as an increasingly common occurrence is these films feature English dialogue that is not subtitled and therefore no longer accessible to Deaf audiences.



*“I attended the BFI London Film Festival to watch Raw which is a French film, but I got really frustrated when there were no subtitles for English speaking parts. This is a big issue with foreign language films that includes English speaking parts, it is subtitled but not for Deaf people!”*

### **Placement**

Although not one of the most commonly-cited problems, some participants did mention the size and position of the subtitles on the screen. Sometimes they are difficult to read, sometimes the subtitles disappear off the screen. The subtitles in 3D screenings in particular were not suitable. Of course, there is often little venues can do about this positioning, but it is yet another barrier to full access and one that further fuels the belief that cinema is a ‘hearing activity’ for hearing people.

### **‘CINEMA IS FOR HEARING PEOPLE’**

If venues truly want to engage with the Deaf community and build this audience then showing subtitled films is not enough. Participant’s responses revealed many invisible obstacles and difficulties that discourage Deaf audiences.

*‘I pay the same amount as hearing people, so why should I not have the same access?’*

### **Trailers**

Even in subtitled screenings the trailers are not accessible. Deaf people still have to watch these trailers knowing that the hearing people in the audience can understand them and they can’t. A couple of participants said that due to misunderstanding a trailer they had gone to watch a film completely different from what they expected and did not enjoy it.

*‘I hate the trailers. They never have subtitles and I have to sit through them for 20 minutes while my daughter says they’re the best bit!’*

### **Cinema Policies/Special Offers**

Most participants have CEA cards, but they noted they can’t use it to book tickets online, only in person – this is another barrier to access. Special memberships, such as an unlimited pass, are viewed as only being available to hearing people. Deaf people will not benefit from membership packages as the number of subtitled screenings limits the number of times they can attend. This means that Deaf people have missed out on any potential membership discount and have to pay more for the cinema when they do attend because they couldn’t benefit from any special offers.

## **Hearing Attitude to Subtitles**

The Deaf community is very aware that hearing people do not like subtitles. The majority of participants had been in a situation where hearing people have left and/or complained about subtitles. Under these circumstances the cinema becomes a very unpleasant experience that leaves many Deaf people feeling very awkward.

*'I went to see Bridget Jones's Baby and the screening was sold out. I was with a group of six Deaf people. Several hearing people walked out because of the subtitles, it made me feel really uncomfortable.'*

## **Language**

For many profoundly Deaf people, BSL is their first language. For most hard of hearing people, English is their first language. So, for the latter even though there is now a physical barrier (e.g. hearing loss), they share the same language as cinema staff. For BSL users this is different and the language, rather than the physical barrier, was mentioned by several participants as a source of anxiety that deters them from entering this 'hearing environment'. This seems to be particularly relevant in unexpected or stressful situations, such as the subtitles not appearing on screen, where Deaf people will have to quickly and effectively communicate in English. One participant regularly attends the cinema as part of a Deaf cinema club. Without this, he felt that he would find it impossible to go to the cinema and only enjoys the experience when he is with fellow BSL users.

*'I never attend the cinema but my wife does. She recently went to the cinema with her three friends, all Deaf, and were told the subtitles were broken. A hearing man overheard this and complained on their behalf. The subtitles were then switched on – if the hearing man had not interfered my wife's group would have been pushed aside because they couldn't communicate with cinema staff. My wife very much enjoys a night at the cinema with "the girls" but this is becoming an increasingly negative experience.'*

*'A lot of the time the cinema forgets to switch the subtitles on and I really do not like having to try and communicate with staff, it's very difficult and frustrating. They will then turn subtitles on but will not restart the film so I've missed the first fifteen minutes and do not know what's going on. So we have to take refund for tickets.'*

*'I actually get really nervous waiting for the film to start. When the subtitles appear, it's such a relief.'*

This language barrier, along with guaranteed subtitles, was the main reason Deaf people prefer online streaming services. Watching films online removes the need for dialogue with hearing people. However, several of the younger participants added that the drawback with this is not being able to see new releases. This is an important point as it reveals that these audiences would like to attend the cinema and engage in the cultural conversation and debate it generates. Again, particularly for younger participants, the general consensus appeared to be that they love watching films, and would choose cinema over other cultural activity such as theatres and museums if cinemas offered better accessibility.

*'I like going to the theatre and finds that provides more flexible access. I like going to museums, galleries. I love cultural activities and all have their own attempts at improving access with varying results.'*

*'I live in London and enjoy the cultural activities the city offers. I want to be able to engage in conversation around me, from discussion with colleagues to film reviews. This is as much about equal access to conversation as it is about access to the cinema. Theatre is much better and the subtitles always work. On a list of access to cultural activities, cinema is always at the bottom of the list by a mile.'*

## **IMPROVING OUR OFFER**

The two focus groups revealed that issues of trust and anxiety are central to why Deaf audiences are not visiting the cinema. So what can venues do to tackle this and what improvements did participants offer.

### **Visibility**

The most prevalent suggestion was to make any and all Deaf-focused activity more visible. Deaf people want, and in some cases need, to see that the cinema is committed to providing a positive experience for them. The majority of participants felt a BSL interpretation of the film would be distracting, but more visibility of BSL in-venue and on the website would encourage them to attend. Venue websites would benefit from film summaries in BSL, which could also

be shown on-screen before the film itself. An alternative would be a BSL video of the film blurb only, and these videos should always be a Deaf person not an interpreter. It would be beneficial for a cinema's website to have an area dedicated to subtitled screenings. Many participants agreed they find it hard to locate information about these screenings.

### **Staff Signing**

Participants seemed to agree that staff training in Deaf awareness and BSL would greatly contribute to making a venue more appealing to Deaf audiences. They also agreed that it is unrealistic to expect members of staff to have an extensive knowledge of BSL as it is very difficult, time-consuming and expensive to learn. Knowledge of basic signs – and attempting to use them – is most important.

*'For some Deaf people their English is good enough for basic communication, but for others it's not. It's nice for staff to make the effort.'*

One participant suggested a solution of using SignLive (<http://signlive.co.uk/>) to communicate with Deaf customers when they turn up at the venue. This is a Video Remote Interpreting service that allows businesses to communicate with their Deaf customers in real-time, without the need to organise face-to-face interpreters.

### **Engaging with Deaf Community**

Venues very much need to reach out to the Deaf community, and make it clear that these screenings are being organised and designed to appeal to them. Communication in English (letters, posters, social media, email newsletters) is not going to be enough. Visiting the local Deaf club in person could encourage people to attend, or offer a group discount for the Deaf club to attend. Having the venue information and film blurb in a BSL video is very important as the Deaf community use Facebook a lot to promote businesses and share information. A BSL video will reach more people, and venues should be using this avenue of communication.

### **Programming**

We have already outlined above that Deaf audiences would like greater choice of subtitled content. In addition to this, one key area of improvement that came up repeatedly was in the area of family screenings. The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) states that there are 48,000 deaf children in the UK. Yet finding subtitled films that families can attend together, at an appropriate time/date, proves difficult with several participants noting

the lack of opportunity to see films with their hearing relatives/friends, both now and when they themselves were younger. Family films were also the only genre of films that participants felt could benefit from BSL interpretation for those Deaf children who have learnt BSL before English. It was noted that these can be complex and challenging situations. In some cases, such as refugee families with a Deaf child, they are contending with two or three languages.

*'I work in Deaf mental health and a lot of families find it hard to find cinema screenings they can attend as a family. There are very few subtitled screenings for children, and children would find it harder to read subtitles anyway. What about making subtitles more creative? For example, where 'love' is symbolised as a growing heart. This becomes more about experiencing emotions through the subtitles and would work for both hearing and Deaf children.'*

*'I take my hearing children to the cinema and have to watch the film without subtitles. My daughter tries to explain what is going on during and after the film as I can't understand the story!'*

*'All my children are hearing and they do not like going to the cinema if there are no subtitles because they know I can't follow the film without them. It's mostly adult films that are subtitled; there are limited opportunities to see subtitled children's films.'*

*'Hearing parents are always taking Deaf children to the cinema because of hearing siblings and Deaf children sit through the film with no access. I often have students telling me about films they've seen and they have the plot completely wrong.'*

Additional supporting activities were also cited as valuable. As well as BSL interpretation of any introductions/Q&A sessions, the opportunity to informally discuss the film in BSL following the screenings would be welcomed.

*'I love the idea of discussing the film afterwards, like a book club for films! Often if I do see a film I haven't got anyone to discuss it with afterwards.'*

## **Films in British Sign Language**

Participants were aware and understood that there are not many feature films presented in sign language, so although it would be nice it is not expected. However, where films are available in sign language Deaf audiences feel that they do not always get an opportunity to see them. *The Tribe* was noted as a film many Deaf audiences wanted to see but didn't have the opportunity to do so.

# Executive Summary: Deaf Audience Survey

## WHAT DO d/DEAF PEOPLE THINK OF THE CINEMA EXPERIENCE?

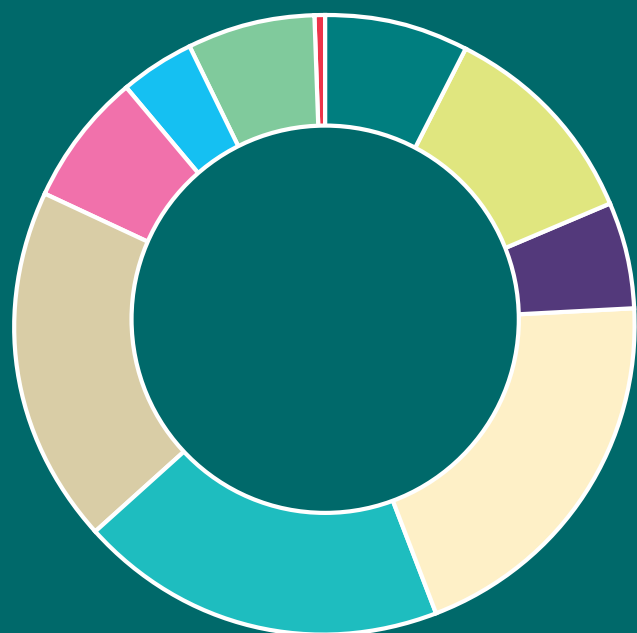
In our first phase of research for improving provision for Deaf audiences we teamed up with **Action on Hearing Loss** and the **British Deaf Association** to find out what d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing people think of the provisions offered by their local cinema. From our survey of 283 people, we found that:

- Less than 10% of respondents rated the provisions at their local cinema as good or excellent
- 97.5% of respondents said they would visit the cinema more frequently if provisions were improved
- 91% of respondents found the number of subtitled screenings in their area inadequate
- 61% of respondents felt the staff at their local cinema were not aware of their needs
- 64% of respondents felt the marketing of these provisions at their local cinema was inadequate or inconsistent

## DEMOGRAPHICS

We received 283 responses to our survey from throughout the UK.

- Scotland (7.8%)
- North West Central (11.0%)
- North (5.7%)
- South East (19.9%)
- London (19.2%)
- South West and West Midlands (18.9%)
- Northern Ireland (6.8%)
- Wales (3.9%)
- Central East (6.8%)
- Other (Please specify) (0.4%)

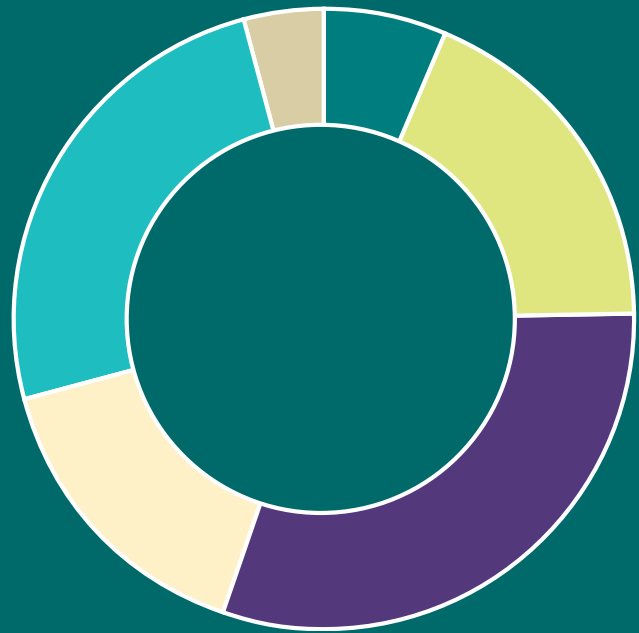


## RESULTS

Frequency of cinema visits.

- Once a week (6.4%)
- Once a month (18.4%)
- One every few months (30.7%)
- A couple of times a year (15.5%)
- Very frequently (25.1%)
- Never (3.9%)

Most d/Deaf people who responded to our survey continue to engage with the cinema despite the issues defined below, with under 30% saying they attended very infrequently or never.



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE PROVISION OFFERED BY YOUR LOCAL CINEMA?

When asked to rate the provisions for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in their local cinemas, **67% of respondents thought them poor, while less than 1% rated the provision as excellent.**

- Excellent:** All of my needs are provided for (0.7%)
- Good:** Provision is not perfect, but good enough (8.8%)
- Average:** Provision is not adequate to my needs (23.7%)
- Poor:** The levels of provision means I attend much less than I would (66.8%)



Region	Percentage of respondents rating overall provision as poor
Northern Ireland	52%
London	54%
Central East	65%
Scotland	69%
North West Central	71%
South East	72%
South West & West Midlands	72%
Wales	73%
North	82%



Clearly these provisions affect how likely they were to attend screenings at their local cinemas, with **97.5% saying they would visit the cinema more frequently if provision improved.**

- Yes (97.5%)
- No (2.5%)



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE THAT THE NUMBER OF SUBTITLED AND BSL-INTERPRETED SCREENINGS IN YOUR LOCAL AREA?

**Only 9% of respondents thought there was an adequate number of subtitled screenings** in their local area, while **23% said these screenings were non-existent.**

- More than enough (1.8%)
- Adequate (7.1%)
- Not enough (68.3%)
- Non-existent (22.8%)



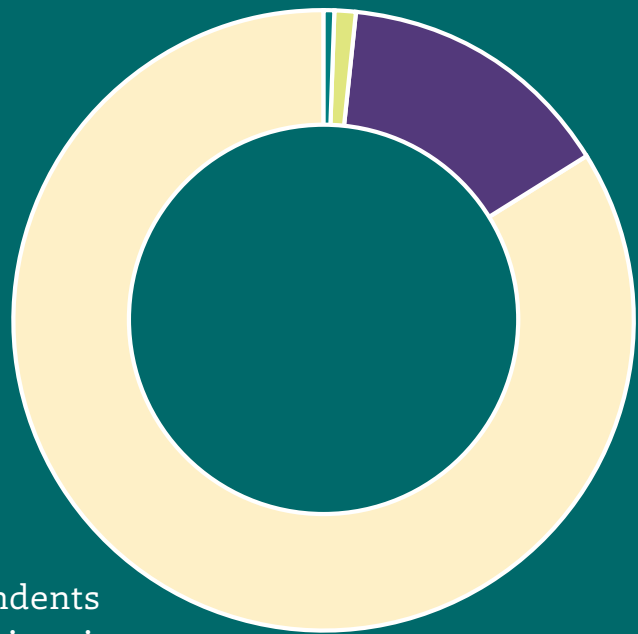
Subtitled screenings were by far the most demanded course of action for improving the situation. In addition to the **91% who found the number of subtitled screenings inadequate, 114 respondents (40%) expressed a desire for more subtitled screenings** and commented that the existing screenings were often at inconvenient times.

*'I would LOVE to be able to experience watching a subtitled film at a cinema on a Saturday night. I have never experienced this in my life which is a shame.'*

*'[Show] films with subtitles in the evening after 7pm, I work 9am-5pm Monday to Friday and would definitely attend the cinema more if the timing was better.'*

There were similar results for the number of BSL-interpreted screenings in their local area, **with only 2% respondents replying that there were an adequate number.**

- More than enough (0.7%)
- Adequate (1.1%)
- Not enough (14.5%)
- Non-existent (83.6%)

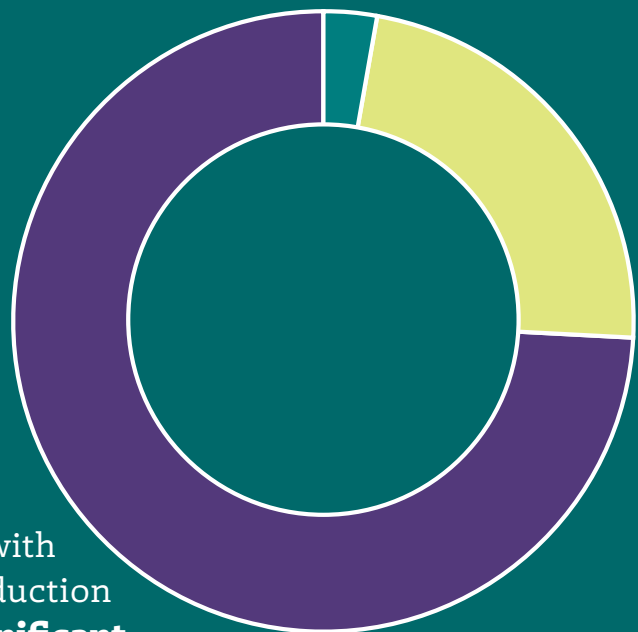


It should be noted that very few respondents asked for more BSL-interpreted screenings in their comments and one suggested these weren't needed; rather subtitled screenings should be prioritised.

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE TECHNICAL PROVISION (HEARING LOOPS, INFRA-RED SYSTEMS) IN CINEMAS IN YOUR LOCAL AREA?

Technical provision was similarly criticised with **74% stating they were inadequate** and **only 26% respondents** rating the provision as **adequate or good.**

- Good (3%)
- Adequate (23%)
- Not Adequate (74%)



Respondents had varied experiences with technical provision; some favoured induction over infra-red and vice versa, but **a significant number commented that staff did not know how these systems work.** Respondents highlighted new technology emerging in the USA, such as Sony's subtitling glasses, as an area for potential investment. The **best equipped region was Central East**, where 44% found the technical provision adequate, while only 14% found this to be the case in North West Central.

## AT YOUR LOCAL CINEMA DO YOU FEEL THAT STAFF ARE TRAINED TO BE AWARE OF THE NEEDS OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING AUDIENCE MEMBERS?

**61% of respondents found staff were unaware of the needs of Deaf or Hard of Hearing audiences.**

- Yes:** staff are able to provide for my needs (1.8%)
- To some extent:** staff can help with some of my needs (37.1%)
- No:** staff are not aware or unable to help me during a visit to the cinema (61.2%)



In general comments, **31 respondents specifically commented on the need for greater staff awareness** of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people's general needs.

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR LOCAL CINEMA'S MARKETING FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING AUDIENCES?

**64% of respondents** found that the marketing in their local cinema was **unsuitable or inconsistent**.

- Good:** I can always tell when subtitled or BSL-interpreted screenings are taking place and the cinema has reached out to my community to make sure I know they have provision (2.8%)
- Adequate:** I generally know about the venue and can find information if needed (33.5%)
- Unsuitable:** The venue doesn't give enough information or is inconsistent with communication (63.7%)



A number of respondents cited **www.yourlocalcinema.com** as the most reliable resource for finding subtitled screenings rather than the websites of their local cinemas, which often displayed inaccurate information.

*'[I'd love...] the cinema to actually show a subtitled film as advertised. I've turned up many times, bought refreshments only to sit down and the film start with no subtitles and then had to leave the cinema as there was nothing that could be done.'*

## FILM CHOICE

Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences have as diverse tastes as the general cinema-going population, but often find that this range of films is not accessible to them, **57% responded that it wasn't often that a film they wanted to watch was accessible to them.**

- Yes:** There's always something available that is accessible to me (6.1%)
- Sometimes:** Mostly there is a film available that I'm interested to watch (36.9%)
- No:** It's not often that a film I'm interested is accessible to me (57%)



**London has the highest rating for film choice**, with **55%** of respondents saying they can find a film they want to watch most or all of the time. Regions with lower ratings include **South West & West Midlands (36%) Wales (27%) and Central East (18%).**

# Executive Summary: Venues Survey

## VENUE SURVEY: DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING AUDIENCES

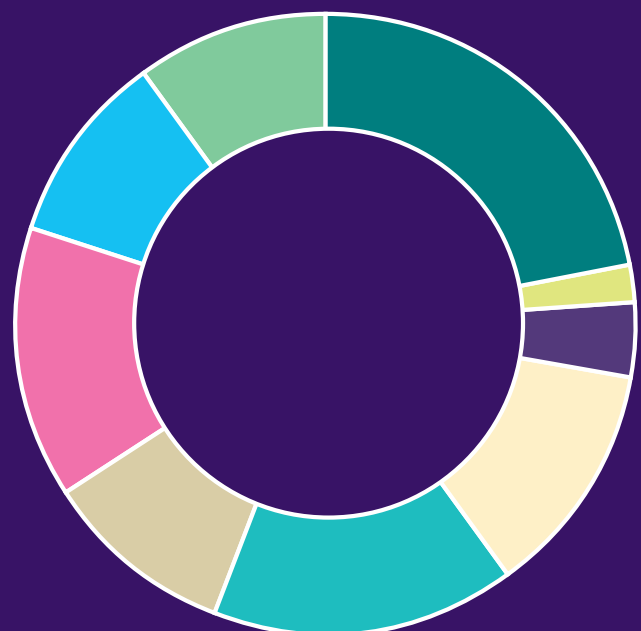
### Key Findings:

- 34% of respondents had previously undertaken Deaf Awareness Training. Of those who stated where this had taken place, 70% had attended the 2016 Deaf Awareness courses run by the ICO and British Deaf Association.
- No respondents show films with subtitles every day, and 30% of respondents never show films with captions.
- The financial impact of subtitled screenings is a core concern, with 44% of respondents reporting that these screenings are attended by 20 persons or less.
- Very few venues highlight subtitled screenings outside of their main marketing materials/film listings. Only 7% have a separate page for accessible screenings on their website, and only 3% use BSL to communicate with their Deaf audience.
- The main problems with programming cited fell into three categories – information from distributors, engaging with a Deaf audience, and a need for an unobtrusive technique of providing subtitles.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

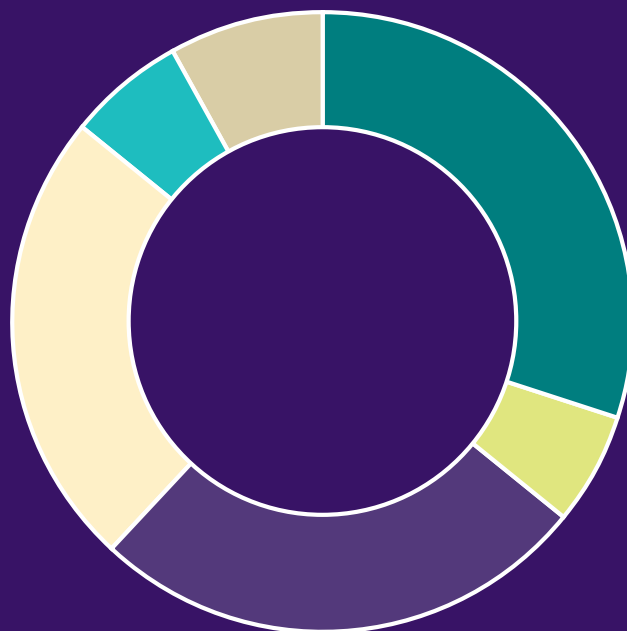
We received 50 responses to our survey from throughout the UK, representing all the UK Film Hubs.

- Scotland (22%)
- Northern Ireland (2.0%)
- Wales (4%)
- North, England (12%)
- North West, England (16%)
- Central East, England (10%)
- South West and West Midlands (14%)
- London (10%)
- South East, England (10%)



Of these venues, 64% had only one screen (14% had two, 10% had five) and 45% showed films every day.

- Full-Time Independent Cinema (30%)
- Full-Time Commercial Cinema (6%)
- Mixed Arts Venue (26%)
- Community Cinema (24%)
- Film Society (6%)
- Other (8%)

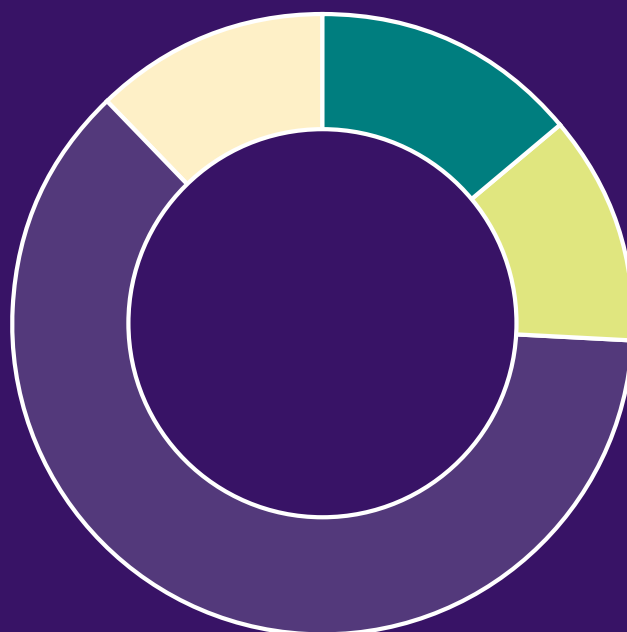


## RESULTS

### HAVE YOU DONE ANY SURVEYS/EVALUATIONS TO FIND OUT WHETHER PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING ATTEND YOUR VENUE?

62% of venues that responded have never carried out previous research with this audience. For those that had, previous surveys revealed that there is a small, d/Deaf/HOH audience attending but they would like further provision.

- Yes, in the past year (14%)
- Yes, more than a year ago (12%)
- No, never (62%)
- Not sure (12%)



*'They do attend, though not in large numbers. We've changed our screening times based on feedback. It's now Wednesday morning and Sunday evening.'*

*'A small number of people who are deaf or hard of hearing attend. They would like more provision though.'*

*'We could be doing more to reach these audiences and find ways to improve their experience. We haven't done a survey, but we have ongoing evaluation and analysis of audience feedback and uptake/use of audio equipment and subtitled performances. We're looking at developing a segmented emailing list for access screenings which are run regularly.'*

### **HAVE ANY MEMBERS OF YOUR TEAM EVER BEEN TRAINED ON DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING ACCESSIBILITY?**

34% of respondents had previously undertaken Deaf Awareness Training. Of those who stated where this had taken place, 70% had attended the 2016 Deaf Awareness courses run by the ICO and British Deaf Association.

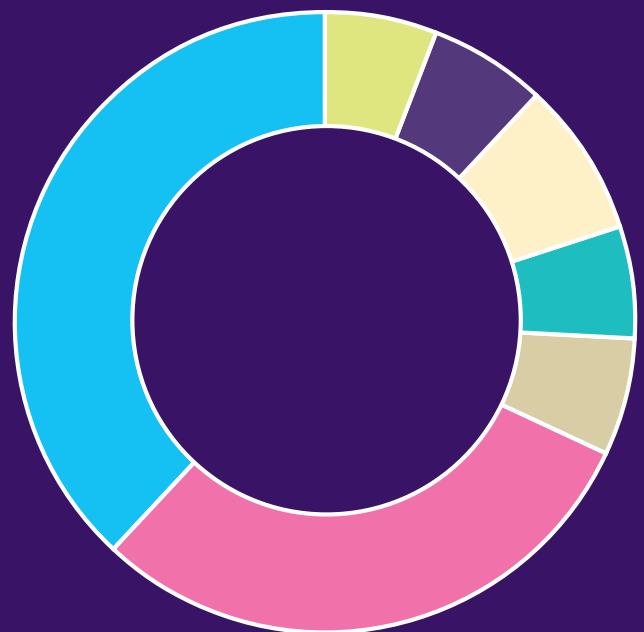
- Yes (34%)
- No (66%)



### **HOW OFTEN DO YOU SHOW FILMS WITH HARD OF HEARING CAPTIONS?**

No respondents show films with subtitles every day, and 30% of respondents never show films with captions.

- Every day (0%)
- Once a week (6%)
- Several times a week (6%)
- Once a month (8%)
- Several times a month (6%)
- Several times a year (6%)
- Never (30%)
- Other (38%)



**Some respondents outlined how they have been/intend to engage Deaf audiences through subtitled screenings:**

*'We have worked with a local Deaf organisation on several subtitled screenings. Also, captioned James and the Giant Peach outdoor screening as part of Roald Dahl festival as the Deaf community requested it.'*

*'We have been working on making one of our programme strands accessible to Deaf audiences. We have identified several films which have subtitles and created a BSL-friendly package. It is our first exploration in to offering films to this audience and hope it will allow us to make it standard practice.'*

**However, several respondents highlighted the common problem of showing subtitled films and the financial impact it has on their venue:**

*'We have screened subtitled films for Deaf/hard of hearing but very poor take up and hearing people complained about the subtitles.'*

*'We have tried screening films with HOH captions in the past, but were disappointed with the number of attendees.'*

*'We did but we don't have enough screenings and were losing audience numbers because of subtitling.'*

**Interestingly, exhibitors have also noticed the growing trend for foreign films to have sections of English, which is causing problem for d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences:**

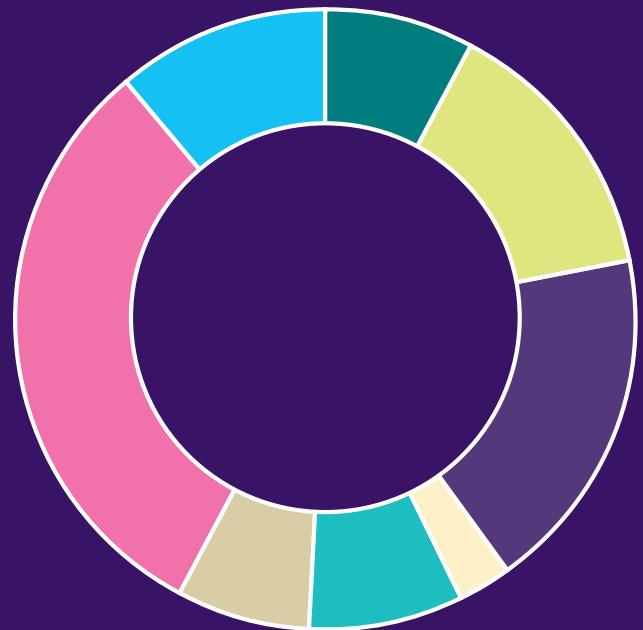
*'We show mostly foreign films with English subtitles but this is becoming a problem because many of these films now have sections in English which are not subtitled (e.g. Victoria).'*



## WHAT TIME OF DAY DO YOU USUALLY SHOW FILMS WITH HARD OF HEARING CAPTIONS?

The most popular time for screening subtitled films was a weekday evening (18%) and a weekday afternoon (14%). However, it is unclear whether these are early evening screenings or main evening shows. Only 18% of respondents offered subtitled screenings at weekends.

- Weekday morning (8%)
- Weekday afternoon (14%)
- Weekday evening (18%)
- Weekend morning (3%)
- Weekend afternoon (8%)
- Weekend evening (7%)
- N/A (31%)
- Other (11%)



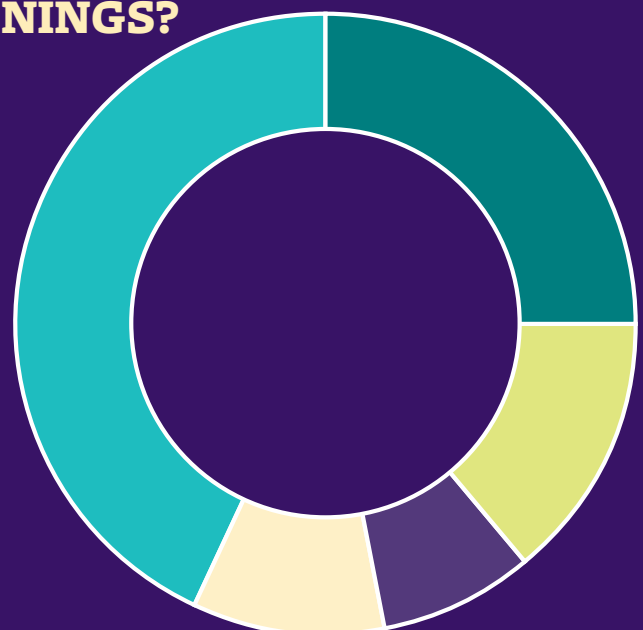
*'The programme we have identified as outlined above are screening at various time across the week but all are evening showings intended to a mixed audience of both hearing and a hard of hearing audience.'*

*'We tried at 5pm and 5.30pm but needed more screens.'*

## ON AVERAGE, WHAT LEVEL OF ATTENDANCE DO YOU GET FOR CAPTIONED SCREENINGS?

Of those respondents that are currently screenings subtitled films, 44% report that these screenings are attended by 20 persons or less.

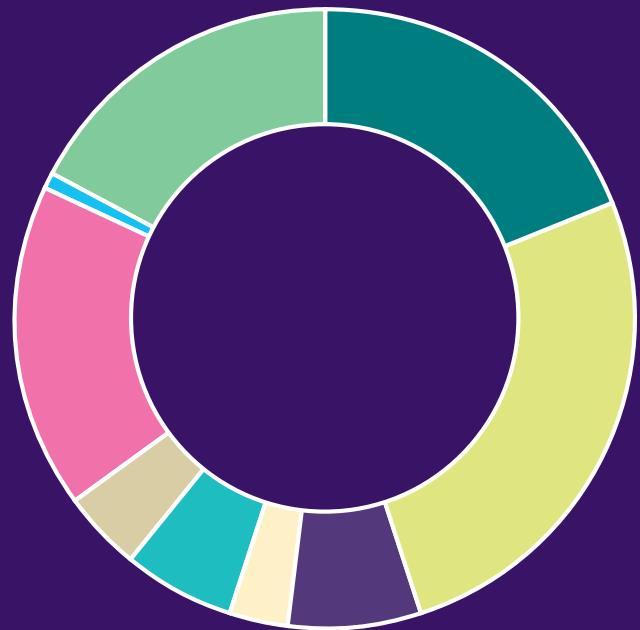
- 20 persons or less (25%)
- 30 persons or less (14%)
- 40 persons or less (8%)
- 41 persons or more (10%)
- N/A (43%)



## HOW DO YOU HIGHLIGHT THAT FILMS WILL BE SCREENED WITH HARD OF HEARING CAPTIONS?

The majority of respondents rely on their brochure and main listings page on their website to publicise subtitled screenings. Only 7% have a separate page for accessible screenings on their website, and only 3% use BSL to communicate with their audiences.

- In our brochure (19%)
- On the website listings (26%)
- Special page for accessible screenings on website (7%)
- BSL interpreted video on our website (3%)
- Poster in venue (6%)
- Poster outside venue (4%)
- On social website (17%)
- We do not highlight this (1%)
- N/A (17%)



*'We are soon to develop a captioned video on our website to discuss accessibility to our venue.'*

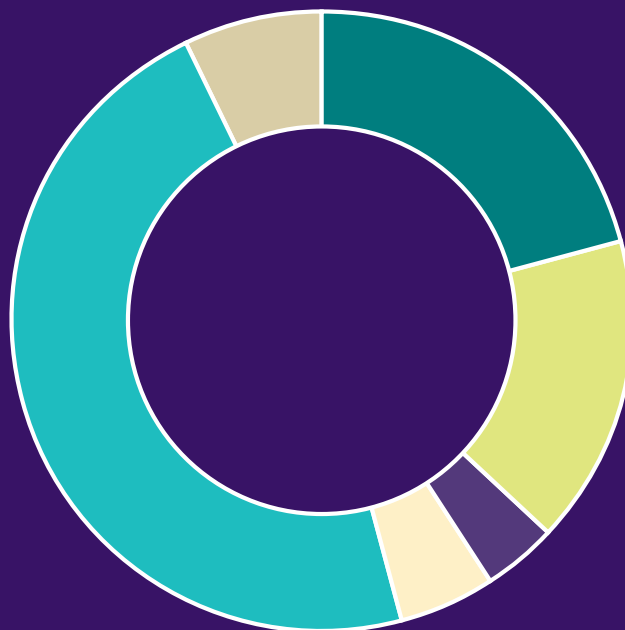
*'We run a dementia-friendly community cinema. It's a cinema space for everyone, we feel that if we get it right for people living with dementia we get it right for lots of people. Accessibility and inclusion is key for us, hence all of our films are show with subtitles.'*

*'We have a mailing list which people can sign up to including individuals and local organisations.'*

## ASIDE FROM YOUR OWN MARKETING, DO YOU USE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS TO ADVERTISE YOUR DEAF FRIENDLY OR HARD OF HEARING SCREENINGS?

21% of respondents use YourLocalCinema.com to advertise screenings, while only 4% of respondents advertise their screenings in British Sign Language.

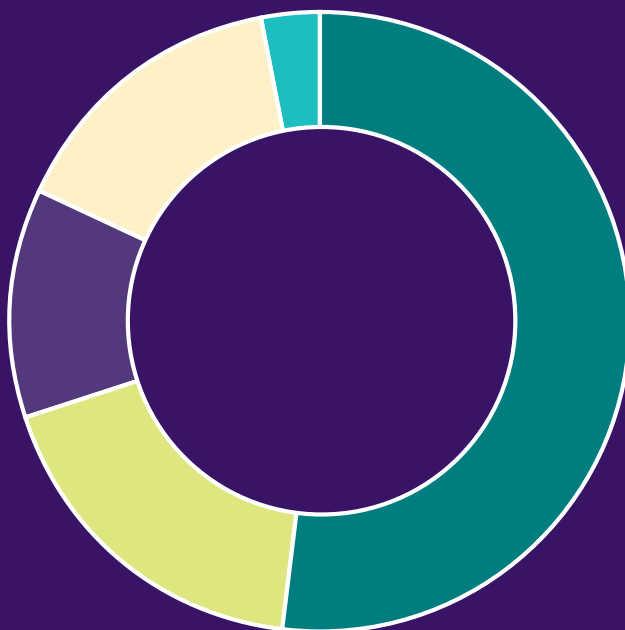
- YourLocalCinema.com (21%)
- Outreach via local groups (16%)
- BSL advertising online or in venue (4%)
- BFI Film Hub (5%)
- N/A (47%)
- Other (7%)



## DO YOU USE ANY TECHNICAL SYSTEMS IN YOUR VENUE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING?

A Hearing Loop system was the most popular technical system in place in venues (52%), although it should be noted that this and similar systems are not effective for BSL users.

- Hearing Loop (52%)
- Infrared (18%)
- No, but we have plans to implement on or would like funding to do so (12%)
- No (15%)
- Not sure (3%)



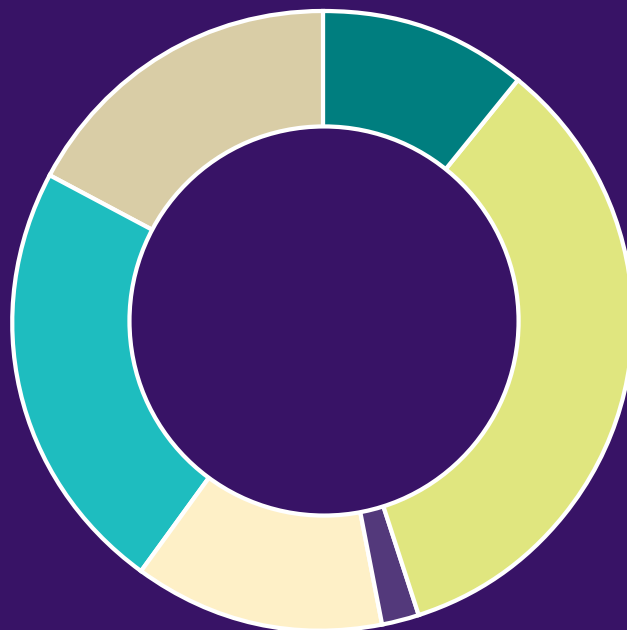
*'We have Captiview which is no longer supported in the UK.'*

*'We have a hearing loop and have applied to the Neighbourhood Fund for Mobile Connect.'*

## HAVE YOU EVER HELD (OR THOUGHT ABOUT HOLDING) A FILM SCREENING WITH BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION?

The biggest concern about holding a screening with BSL interpretation is cost (23%) followed by logistics (13%).

- Yes, we have done this before (11%)
- No, never (34%)
- We would be interested and are looking into it (2%)
- We would be interested but are not sure about logistics (13%)
- We would be interested but are concerned about the costs (23%)
- Other (17%)



### Those that had attempted BSL-interpreted screenings had mixed views on their impact and value:

*'We've discovered our audience prefers subtitles over BSL interpretation.'*

*'The other viewers complain about subtitles & will not attend / avoid BSL as it is "distracting".'*

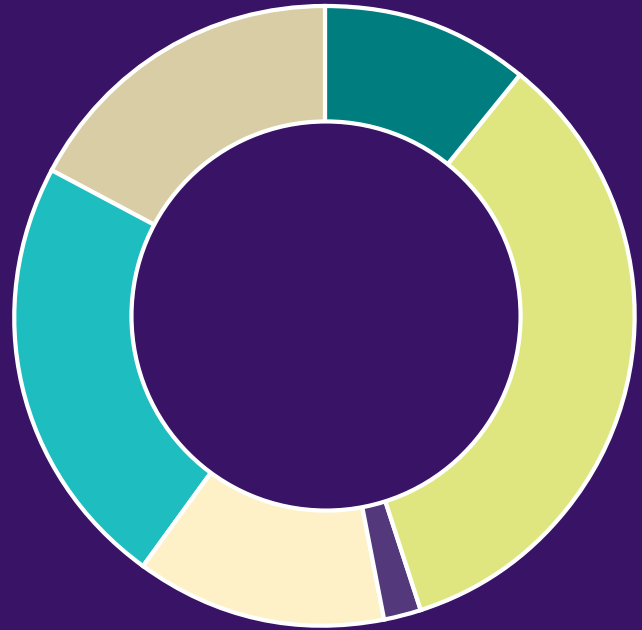
*'We run tours of the building in BSL/ Sign Supported English during Disability Awareness Week but found it hard/costly getting an interpreter.'*

*'We have had interpreters present for a few screenings. They interpret panel decisions and introductions associated with the films. They were expensive and it would not have been possible without financial support from our Film Hub.'*

*'I doubt it would be worth it.'*

## IS IT EASY FOR YOU TO FIND ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF HARD OF HEARING CAPTIONED FILMS?

- Yes (17%)
- No (9%)
- Sometimes (25%)
- Not sure (21%)
- N/A (14%)
- Other (14%)



*'We use DVDs and buy Single Title Screening Licenses. I wish more DVDs subtitled song lyrics. We screen a lot of musicals because recognisable songs is great for our audience members with dementia.'*

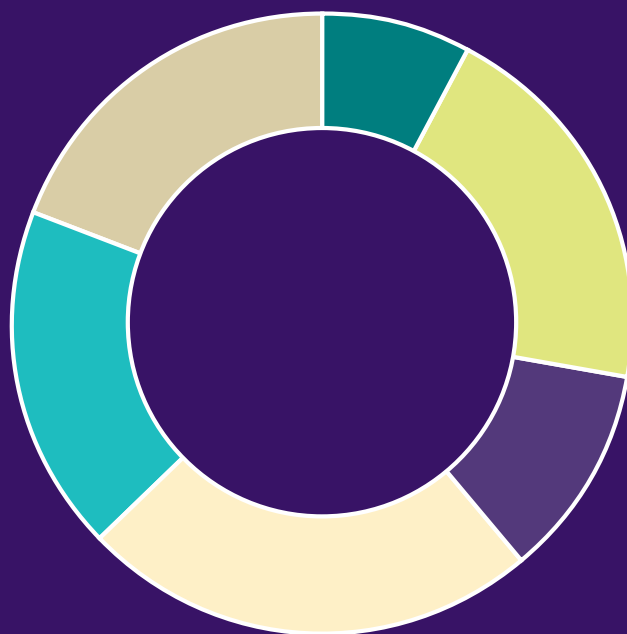
*'It is enough of a struggle to find release dates & who to pay fees to, it adds another job to a long list. As we are all volunteers, anything extra is very off-putting.'*

*'Only once we have the drive on site and can check it.'*

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBSTACLES/CONCERNS YOU HAVE ABOUT OFFERING DEAF FRIENDLY AND/OR HARD OF HEARING CAPTIONED FILM SCREENINGS AT YOUR VENUE?

The biggest concern about offering subtitled screenings is alienating current audiences (24%), followed by apprehension about how to reach the right audiences (20%).

- Unsure about technical delivery required (8%)
- Unsure about how to reach the right audiences (20%)
- Unsure about availability of films with Hard of Hearing captions (11%)
- Concerned it would put off regular audiences (24%)
- Don't have enough room in the programme (18%)
- Other (19%)



*'Very occasionally we have struggled with compatibility of DVDs with subtitles and our tech. Last year we made a commitment to showing subtitles/captions at film screenings and have on most occasions been able to.'*

*'We've had disappointing support. We tried twelve screenings when first installed. The first screening was free for local organisations which were attended by 25 people. Following that another 11 shows were programmed for a sum cumulative total of 0 admissions before abandoning them.'*

*'We have zero concerns. We surveyed our audience, and half of respondents said it was a good thing, the other half hadn't noticed. No one who replied said it was annoying (we gave three options: good, annoying, not noticed).'*

*'We're not convinced the audience is large enough to risk losing an income-generating screening.'*

*'We operate solely in the evening five days a week and do not have sufficient screening slots to target specific audiences with the additional screenings of the same film.'*

*'We have thought about whether we have the capacity to offer extra screenings of certain films – we are 100% staffed by volunteers so this presents challenges.'*

*'We bought a system Captiview – used in USA and Australia – which has issues in the UK, due to distributors saying costs are prohibitive to include on DCP'*

*'We want to ensure that our offering is consistent across our venue and that we can meet the needs of Deaf audiences from the moment they arrive at our venue. I would like to see the cafe bar / box office and other facilities joining in on this.'*

*'Many festival titles lack distribution and thus do not come with full HoH captions.'*

*'Subtitled shows were always the lowest attended of the run – sometimes they were empty. It's costing us money - why would I do anymore?'*

## **WHAT OTHER PROBLEMS/CHALLENGES DO YOU HAVE WHEN PROGRAMMING FILMS FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING AUDIENCES?**

Main problems cited fell into three categories – information from distributors, engaging with a Deaf audience, and a need for an unobtrusive technique of providing subtitles.

*'It's difficult to plan ahead with IMAX HoH shows, as distributors are not clearly stating whether the HoH files are available. Sometimes it takes weeks to get hold of it! By that time, most customers will have gone to a regular HoH screening of that film and are no longer interested in the IMAX version. It's also difficult advertising it. Our social media posts don't get much attention and we have a local*

*supporter who runs Deaf groups, but she's only one person. She used to work for the BDA and that was massively helpful, but that relationship cooled after she left.'*

*'We'd love to be able to offer subtitled encores of NT Live and other Screen Arts. We'd also like our promoting to have a wider reach as we do struggle to get customers to these screenings.'*

*'Programming, in terms of showing films whose DCPs have hard of hearing captioning tracks on them, isn't difficult. What is difficult is presenting that film to an audience that wants to see them.'*

*'There are no active groups for the Deaf/HoH in our area (or if there are, they're very well hidden), which makes it hard to reach the potential audience.'*

*'There are different Deaf organisations who avoid each other and information is hoarded not shared. There are no public noticeboards to promote local events. People having interchangeable carers means it is impossible to target information. It used to be easier when there were day centres you could put a poster up and groups would come. Now people are too scattered. Interpreters are expensive and unviable. People were moved out into estates and now the cutting of bus routes stops people coming out. Really unrewarding. We only got complaints and accusations which puts us off volunteering.'*

*'Main problem is budget for little uptake, disquiet from regular users and as a multi-use space we don't have the capacity to run many films in general. The ideal scenario would be Captiview or if a similar system was available for closed captioning.'*

*'Trying to balance the needs of those who are Deaf or hard of hearing with the needs of the majority of our audience who would rather not have subtitles on English language films. We have limited screening slots so can't separate the two. We would love to do more but wish the technology would allow for unobtrusive subtitles as with audio description.'*





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