

BFI FAN: GUIDE TO WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

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FAN



THE
NATIONAL
LOTTERY

Film Hub
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What this guide is

If you've thought about how to engage young audiences aged 16-30 but have been unsure where to start, or indeed if you've begun work in this area but are now thinking about how to take it to the next level, then this is the resource for you.

Significantly, all the fantastic practitioners we have invited to contribute to this document have highlighted one over-riding message and that is that to effectively attract young people to your venues and events, it is essential that you involve them in the design and development of your programmes and spaces. The purpose of this resource, therefore, is to inspire and encourage more venues, cinemas, festivals, film societies and collectives to embrace and experiment with working with young people, with the ultimate aim of welcoming young people as paid audiences for independent film.

Acknowledging limitations of actual resource (financial and human) that many venues and groups are facing post the pandemic, the guide is split into chapters that highlight just some of the ways you can begin to work with young people in your spaces from the light touch (focus groups) to the most in depth (young programmer groups) with a variety of options in between.

What the guide covers

Throughout the guide you'll find case study examples and links to supporting documents and further guidance. We have also included plenty of real-world quotes from both young people and venue management to aid board conversations and advocacy for the benefits of this work across your organisation. Everything recommended is evidence based and grounded in research.

The introduction references key research documents that have helped Film Hub London as cross-FAN Young Audiences lead, determine the key barriers to young people's attendance at independent venues with statistics from Digital Cinema Media (DCM) making the business case for young audiences' development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We touch on the negative impact that the pandemic has had on young people's education, career opportunities, social mobility, finances and mental health. Young people are in as much need for opportunities to learn transferable skills that will help them to enter the workforce as venues are in need of their patronage.

Understanding the value of 'youth voice' to your organisation and what you have to offer in return is fundamental to this work and to the recommendations in this resource. We reference examples from non-film organisations to demonstrate that the key principles are applicable to any art-form. Whilst young people are of course, not a homogenous group and a 16 year old has a very different perspective and is at a very different life stage to a 30 year old, learning to listen, challenge and support young people will reap rewards, regardless of age. We reference Upstart Projects particularly and the five key messages their young people wanted to give organisations that include offering real value of experience as well as transparency and clarity around the offer and expectations.

The first step in working with young people is determining the level of engagement you are able to commit to. We have highlighted mapping tools to help you understand and avoid any kind of tokenistic practice. If you're not mindful of this, then progress will be difficult if achievable at all. Young people demand authenticity above all else and will call out any practice or experience they deem not to be genuine. The best way to avoid inauthentic engagement is to be transparent about why you're doing this work in the first place, setting realistic objectives and goals, sharing them across your organisation and with the young people you hope to recruit.

The next step is all about meticulous planning and paying attention to the details. At this point the guide emphasises how essential co-production and co-design is to the success of projects with and for young people. We share information on how to recruit and how to make young people's experience of connecting with you as positive as possible. Including young people in any project you develop for them will not only save you time in the long run as they will tell you what they need, would like and how they'd best like it delivered but will surely lead to a much greater chance of success as both you and they will feel fully invested in the work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As previously mentioned, the guide offers a potential journey that a young person could take with a venue. Beginning with focus group sessions, moving to commissioning young writers and reviewers and onwards to Youth Advisory groups and panels. Increasing the intensity of engagement, we have a range of case studies from across the Film Audience Network (FAN) membership detailing Young Programmer initiatives and even examples of how young programmer groups have led to the formation of independent film collectives. Next stop on the journey is therefore about opening your venues doors and handing over your curatorial reigns to takeovers by these young collectives, youth led festivals and film clubs.

Not so common in the film exhibition sector but increasingly so across other art-forms we also hear from The Storyhouse, Chester about how they support young people that have been through their other training programmes to become Young Trustees on their Board.

Finally, we explore the tangible wellbeing benefits of Mentoring for both young people and organisations, an activity that would fit comfortably throughout this proposed journey of engagement.

The resource concludes with information about organisational safeguarding responsibilities, guidance on fundraising, further information and avenues for advice and support in creating and delivering this work.

The development of this resource has been informed by experts in this field and we're extremely grateful to all the contributing venues and organisations that have been keen to celebrate the positives that working with young people brings. These include Glasgow Film Theatre, Nerve Centre (Derry, Londonderry), Phoenix (Exeter), Barbican (London), Storyhouse (Chester), Filmhouse (Edinburgh), Belmont Filmhouse (Aberdeen), The Alhambra (Keswick), The Welsh Youth Film Festival Network, Queen's Film Theatre (Belfast), Hippodrome (Bo'ness), The Independent Cinema Office (ICO,) Into Film, Arts Emergency, TAPE Collective, UNDR LNDN, Leeds Film, Reel Connections, Film Hub South East (FHSE) Young film Programmers Network, the FAN Young Consultants and BFI Film Audience Network colleagues.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been much research into the cinema-going habits of young people aged 16-30 ([British Independent Film Awards \(BIFA\)](#), [MASSIVE](#), BFI & [Into Film](#)), and the two key barriers to their engagement with independent films and venues continue to be price and lack of relevant content (or knowledge of its existence). There are of course additional factors to consider such as transport links, threshold anxiety (the feeling that independent cinemas aren't for them) and how appealing your food and drink offers are but you'll only discover if these are barriers for your young audiences by talking to them!

If you are new to working directly with young people or want some inspiration for new young audience development activities and strategies, this resource will point you in the right direction to get started.

In 2019, [DCM reported](#) that 22% of the UK cinema going population was aged 16-34, and that this audience was 20% more likely to go to the cinema in a group of 3 or more than the 'average' cinema goer and were more interested in film choice, facilities and atmosphere when choosing a cinema. Furthermore, in BIFA's [2019 report on Under 30s and Film](#), they found that younger audiences are also the most frequent cinema visitors with 16-34-year-olds at an average of 8.1 visits per year and 15-19 year olds visiting an average of 9.6 times a year.

There are so many positive financial and cultural benefits to welcoming young audiences and young people into your venues as highlighted by the BFI:

"This group holds the key to the future of film culture, as well as to the continued economic growth of the screen industries. As screens proliferate and moving image becomes the predominant way that young people interact with the world and each other, there is a clear need to encourage cultural curiosity and risk-taking among this group."

Audiences at this age are making an increasing number of independent choices and building the tastes that will inform their behaviour for the rest of their lives. It's crucial that we reach out to them on their terms and where they gather, and offer an opportunity for them to see themselves, their heritage, and their future. This focus reaches right across into our strategy for education, skills, and filmmaking, acknowledging that much of this audience group watches films in commercial cinemas and online."

ENGAGING YOUNG AUDIENCES

To reach, grow and sustain young audiences effectively, once we've acknowledged the barriers, we really need to understand what does and doesn't appeal to them and what they want from the cinema going experience. We're talking films, food, special events, marketing platforms, and venues. If you're not in the age bracket yourself - and even if you are - the best way to start connecting with the young people and young audiences in your community is by working with them in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, we anticipate that as a sector we'll be able to move on from thoughts of business survival to building our audiences back up and beyond pre-pandemic levels. The last two years have proven that the sector can adapt and innovate- virtual platforms temporarily replaced physical ones and for possibly the first time, we have been able to connect with audiences beyond our immediate community. During the enforced closure periods, we learnt new skills and found ways to connect with each other to share our experiences and knowledge.

Audience sentiment studies conducted at various stages during the pandemic, as well as anecdotal evidence from cinemas themselves, suggest that young people have felt the most confident in returning to the cinema and are excited to get back into cinemas for the big screen experience. So, if you haven't tried to develop young audiences for your venue before, or indeed to work with young people before, now is a great time to give it a go.

THE VALUE OF 'YOUTH VOICE'

Young people bring with them fresh ideas, skillsets, networks and energy and it can be a hugely rewarding and beneficial experience for both parties when activity is grounded in planning, structure, and commitment.

There are a number of different ways you can bring young people into your organisation on either a voluntary (ensure you offer incentives and something of value to the young person to acknowledge their contributions) or paid basis, depending on the time and resource you're able to commit and the outcome you're aiming for.

These include:

- As focus group participants
- As bloggers/reviewers/writers
- As young programmers, curators, or young ambassadors
- As young marketers and event managers
- As part of a youth advisory board
- As independent curators
- As peer-to-peer mentors and mentees
- As a trustee or board member

Music charity [Sound Connections](#) defines the practice of embedding 'Youth Voice' as 'listening to young people, valuing what you hear and acting upon it; empowering young people to be involved at a governance level of your organisation and being part of decision making. At its heart it's about co-producing, working collaboratively, and staff and participants working side-by-side'.

Whichever level of engagement you decide on, you need to be conscious of your intentions for bringing 'Youth Voice' into your organisation. You should be able to clearly state your aims and objectives and to prove that the engagement is genuine and not tokenistic. Think through how you can really embed youth voice across your work.

THE VALUE OF 'YOUTH VOICE'

[Young Voices Heard](#) have put together [a must-read document](#) that takes you through their ten top tips for developing meaningful youth participation programmes based on the feedback they've received from young people over the years. It starts with the most important question you need to ask yourself: "Why do you want to listen to young people? How can they help you better achieve your vision, mission, and purpose?" The answers to these questions become your starting point.

[Upstarts Projects](#) also specialises in supporting organisations to embed youth voice in their practice. They talked to a group of 10 young creatives from across the UK who had moved from participation to representation in their organisations – they had worked as volunteers, taken on leadership roles, been ambassadors and joined advisory groups. Some had then gone on to gain employment. They all agreed on **5 key messages** they wanted to give organisations working with young people. They are:

- **LISTEN** Listen to us! Even if only one of our brilliant ideas is viable, please take that and run with it. We know what we want but we're willing to compromise, and we'll help you make that idea work.
- **OFFER REAL VALUE** Make sure young people are recognised as part of the team by all paid staff. Offer various levels of participation to suit different young people. Provide supervision and support for both big and small roles. Keep in touch with young people and ask for feedback.
- **BE TRANSPARENT** Are there hidden costs or will you cover expenses? Would someone else be paid for this role? If so, is there a benefit for the young person that replaces pay? What will they learn? How will this support their aspirations?
- **BE CLEAR** What are your expectations and what do you want from a young person? What roles will we play and how much time will this take? What responsibility are you giving us and what decisions can we make?
- **GIVE US A CHALLENGE** We're ready and we can probably achieve more than you think. Set us a brief, give us responsibility, let us lead, provide support. We'll surprise you!

Upstart Projects also offer training in how to embed youth voice across your organisation. You can register to view [their interactive powerpoint presentation](#) which explains the meaning of youth voice.

THE VALUE OF 'YOUTH VOICE'

The benefits of working with young people for cinemas, venues and cultural organisations is clear, not least for the 'reverse mentoring' opportunities this kind of work offers. You will be supporting young people to learn new and transferable skills, to become 'employment ready', to build their confidence and leadership skills, all whilst discovering a new or intensified love of film. In turn they will be advising you on how to make your venue a welcoming space for their peers and supporting your work in building young audiences for independent film.

"The development of the Young Audience Panel has not only led to participants gaining work experience within the sector in film programming, panel moderation, and content creation, furthering their own development and providing them with confidence and agency around their own creative ideas – but it has injected new energy and sense of possibilities into Studio 74 and Exeter Phoenix as a whole."

Claire Horrocks Phoenix, Exeter

"Undertaking this project is allowing us to go beyond the simple focus group approach because it's giving us the time to establish a rapport and trust with a key audience segment. By having this project in place, we are able to dig deeper into the young audiences' expectations of the cinema experience at Broadway. Their influence is already being felt at a programming decision level, where our trepidation about booking Captain Marvel was confirmed by the conversations, we have had with the Into Film group around programming expectations for independent cinemas. Furthermore, they have influenced the language we use when promoting the film programme on social media, where they place a higher emphasis on quality of sound and screen than our older customers. So far, the project has been incredibly insightful and we're looking forward to the next stage."

Stewart Terry Broadway, Nottingham (Into Film 16-19 Engagement project)

"The LUMI young programmers' group have had a significant, positive impact on QFT since their inception. They bring great energy and an abundance of ideas, allowing us to gain an important insight into what young cinemagoers want to see from a venue like ours. Their input is valuable, and it is rewarding for us to offer them opportunities to hone skills they can then use in their careers"

Michael Delaney Queen's Film Theatre, Belfast

BENEFITS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

"Research shows that exposure to the Arts can help teens develop many positive skills and capacities that are valued by leaders and employers, such as persistence, collaboration, creative thinking, motivation, and problem solving"

Arts Council England

Here is a selection of just some of the comments and quotes received from young people about their experiences as well as one from a teacher representing the thoughts of her students:

"(it) has highlighted career paths I never knew existed. For me working in film was a secret and unachievable dream, but thanks to you all this is no longer the case."

Barbican Young Film Programmer

"I was able to get a new job almost entirely on the back of being a Young Programmer and the things I'd learned having been part of the programme. It has given me confidence, motivation, and the aptitude to move far closer to places I'd like to be. For me the course has been priceless and a real personal asset. This can only be attributed to the generosity of the Barbican (which astounds me) and the unfaltering care and passion which I have received from each one of the course leaders."

Barbican Young Film Programmer

"Belonging to a Young Film Programmers Group is an opportunity that has opened so many doors for me and all of the others. We all have so much to offer each other and the industry... I find myself now constantly looking ahead with new ideas. It also made me see that we are already having an impact in our local community, and in doing so in the larger community within the South East."

Jasmine Chapman The Palace, Broadstairs (FHSE Young Film Programmers Network)

"Ffilm Ifanc has given me the chance to work on something so new but with skills I can take into future projects also but be more open to other possibilities that may come my way."

Izzie Reid Wales Youth Festival Network case study

BENEFITS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

"If I hadn't taken part in the Young Programmers scheme, I 100% wouldn't be in the job I am now, there was nothing in my life that would have pushed me towards the curation and programming side of film and opened up a whole new set of opportunities for me."

Isra Al Kassi Barbican Young Programmers

"Being a LUMI programmer was an amazing experience. I joined right as it was starting and was able to be a part of it growing and getting stuck in. I've had lots of brilliant opportunities as part of LUMI. I got to go to special screenings, learnt all about film promotion and developed a better understanding of what film programming really entails. It has helped me in my career as a social media officer by giving me hands on experience and it's also helped me outside of work in building up my confidence. Whether this was through Q&A's with industry experts or having hands on experience like organising and running an event, we always had opportunities to learn. But above all else it was just really good craic and I've made some brilliant film friends because of it!"

Amy Nolan LUMI Programmer

"During my time with LUMI Young Programmers I have found myself more creatively fulfilled, more able to actively pursue my goals and have gained several indispensable experiences. LUMI has given me the ability to follow my passion for film in a voluntary capacity while working towards gaining a full-time position in the industry. Through LUMI I have been able to explore my passion for film criticism and analysis in a way I have never before been able to while participating in workshops, pitching larger projects, and making invaluable connections. I truly feel that LUMI has enhanced me as a creative and afforded me professional opportunities that otherwise I would not have had access to. Overall, it has been, and will continue to be, a great experience."

Fionntán Macdonald LUMI Programmer

BENEFITS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

"The Queen's Film Theatre, and LUMI more specifically, were instrumental in helping me towards my desired career in film. It can be really difficult to 'break into' film, be that in exhibition, curation or criticism. It is often underestimated just how important it is for young writers to have a platform which facilitates, and even more pertinently, challenges their work – especially so early on in their career. What LUMI does is so valuable, because it allows young people with little or no prior experience to have a genuine impact on the films they see in their cinemas and determine how best to interact with these films as viewers and critics. Without the encouragement and trust of LUMI and the young programmers, I definitely wouldn't have had the wonderful opportunities I now do. LUMI and young programmers schemes in general are essential to the film industry and the culture section at large, and the work they do to uplift young creatives is crucial."

Lydia Rostant LUMI Programmer

"From watching, discussing, and selecting the different films to volunteering during the festival and getting to see people's reactions to the festival titles, especially those that the ambassadors selected, I have enjoyed the entire DYA experience over the years. I am also forever grateful as it has also introduced me to the world of film exhibition and curation. Since being a DYA, it has made me consider a wider variety of different film titles when I am making a trip to the cinema. I think one of the most important impacts would be being involved has change the way I receive and think about films. I find myself analysing them more and considering different reasons why a film may work for some and not for others and the inner workings of each production. I would say it has given me a wider appreciation for film, the film industry in general, furthered my cinema knowledge and been a great catalyst in my own journey to go on and study to become a filmmaker myself."

Discovery Film Festival Young Ambassador

BENEFITS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

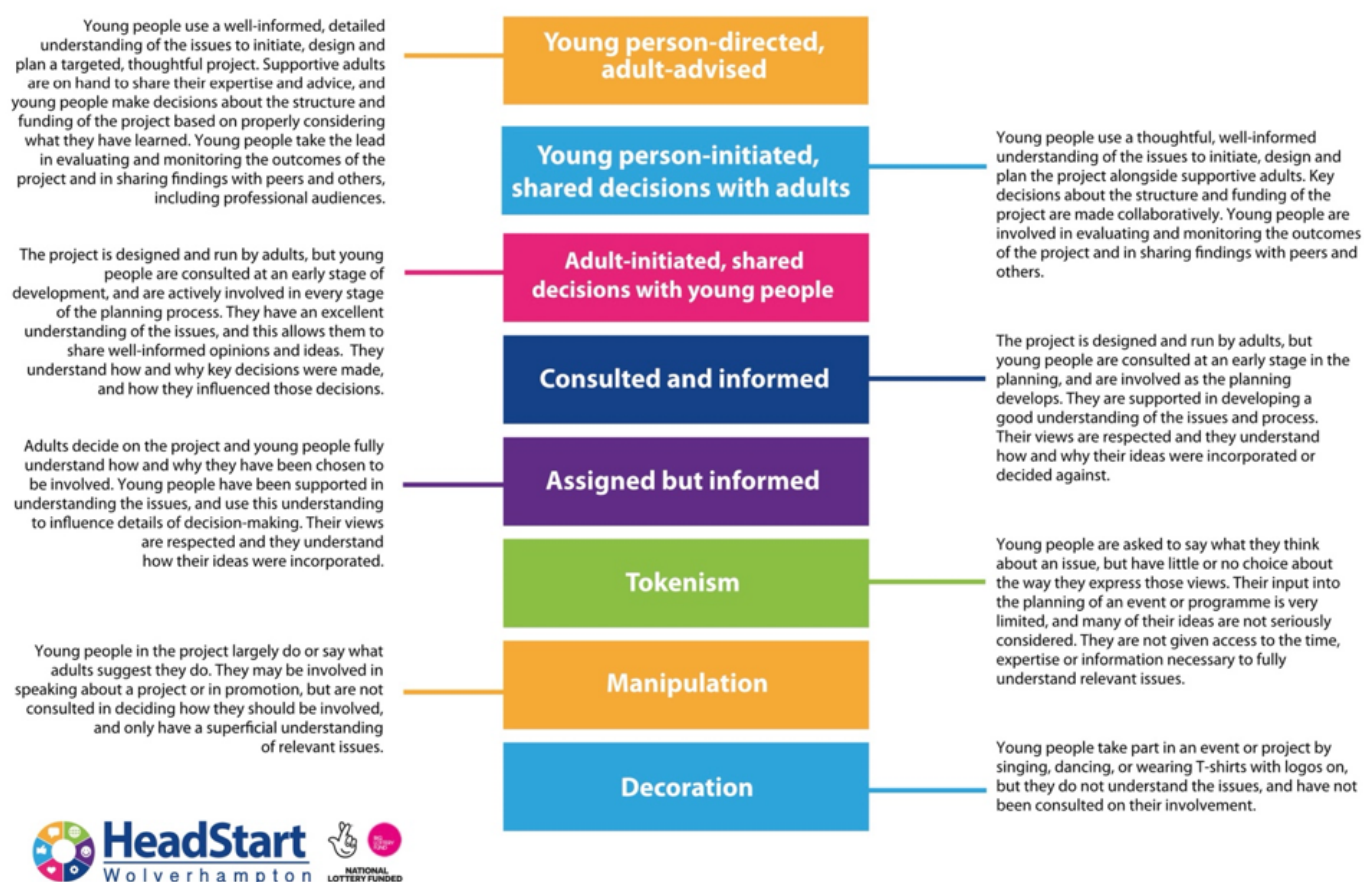
"'In the Dark' was a unique opportunity for pupils to affect real change in their local area. Our participants loved being able to have their voices and ideas on the table when it came to improvements for their local cinema. They have been able to evaluate their own experiences with cinema and community in a way that is meaningful and has real impact, which is an opportunity not always afforded to them."

Kerry Abercrombie English & Media Teacher, Larbert High School
(Into Film 16-19 engagement project)

As demonstrated by all this positive feedback, working directly with young people really is mutually beneficial for all involved. Not only do the young people get their foot in the door of a notoriously tricky industry to navigate but they gain new and valuable transferable skills, get to meet new people and to grow their networks and creative practice. Ultimately and most importantly, it can be a really enjoyable and fun experience!

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Once you've determined the level of engagement that you're able to commit to, you'll need to begin the planning process. As previously stated, it's paramount that when working with young people that the relationship is not tokenistic. [HeadStart Wolverhampton](#) has produced their own version of [Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation](#) pictured below in their excellent toolkit [All Together Now](#). This is a useful mapping tool in understanding the difference between tokenism and real devolvement of power.



Headstart Wolverhampton's Interpretation of "Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation" adapted 2016

However, HeadStart is clear to state that this model should not be used "to make negative judgements about young people who get involved at 'lower' levels initially." Rather this model "presents a reminder or challenge to staff to offer high quality, meaningful opportunities and progression." This model is also referred to by Blaze Arts in the Culture Session video shared in the next section.

CO-PRODUCTION & CO-DESIGN

The co-production and co-design model “enables citizens and professionals to share power and work together in equal partnership” (All in this Together, Wales). The point being that it is important to promote an equal platform for young people to co-create the strategies and activity that are specifically for them. This working method is increasingly being adopted by arts organisations and agencies. The co-design agency [Beyond Sticky Notes](#) has an excellent breakdown of what co-design looks like that can equally be applied to film exhibition activity:

- **SHARE POWER** When differences in power are unacknowledged and unaddressed, the people with the most power have the most influence over decisions, regardless of the quality of their knowledge or ideas. To change that, we must share power in research, decision-making, design, delivery and evaluation. Without sharing power, there is no co-design.
- **PRIORITISE RELATIONSHIPS** Co-design isn't possible without relationships, social connection and trust among co-designers, funders and organisers of co-design initiatives. Trust between people paves the way for conversations where we confront the metaphorical elephant in the room (or a whole stampede of them, in some cases). You can't buy trust; it can only be earned – the better the social connection, the better the process and outputs.
- **USE PARTICIPATORY MEANS** Co-design provides many ways for people to take part and express themselves, for example, through visual, kinaesthetic and oral approaches, instead of relying on writing, slideshows and long reports. Participatory approaches aren't about relaying information; they're about facilitating self-discovery and moving people from participants to active partners.
- **BUILD CAPABILITY** Many people require support and encouragement to adopt new ways of being and doing, learn from others, and have their voices heard. To support that, designers can move from 'expert' to coach. Everyone has something to teach and something to learn.

CO-PRODUCTION & CO-DESIGN

Blaze Arts in Lancashire's puts this model at the heart of their organisation:

"Blaze is a youth-led arts charity born in Lancashire. Our vision is a world where all young people are valued as creative citizens who can improve their lives, communities, and the world. We hold the space for young people from all backgrounds to develop confidence, creativity, and transferable skills through youth led creative projects and networks."

To hear more about how they work with young people, you can watch their Programme Producer Hannah Whitlow discuss Blaze Arts' approach to delivering youth-led projects, the importance of youth governance and how to effectively embed young voices into wider programme strategy as part of **Wild Rumpus' Culture Sessions**.

'Effervescent' is an advertising agency based in Devon made up of artists, creatives, youth workers and marketeers. They work with socially minded organisations to collaborate with children and young people to co-design campaigns on real life issues such as **loneliness** and **child sexual exploitation**. You can read more about the work they do and how they do it in their 2022 **Playbook: Experts in creative co-production** and what they've learnt from **commissioning young creatives**.

While this work doesn't come from a film exhibition context, there are many transferable approaches and strategies to learn from.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Here are some of the different ways you can welcome and work with young people in your venue. One type can easily lead to another, and a full youth programme might include all of them!

FOCUS GROUPS

If your organisation has limited resources or capacity, inviting your local young community into the venue for a focus group session is a great first step in connecting with your existing and hopefully future young audiences. Don't know where to start? Here are some resources that will help:

Eventbrite has put together a [straightforward one-pager document](#) on how to recruit and deliver your focus group and how to analyse the collected data. The document covers these planning steps:

- Write down your goals
- Define your target audience
- Find a venue
- Recruit participants
- Design the questions
- Moderate the group
- Analyse

The ICO's '[How to develop audiences for independent cinemas](#)' guide also includes a section on [Conducting a Focus Group](#) which provides solid advice on how to structure and deliver your session. They explain:

"Focus groups go far deeper into understanding your audience than an audience survey. For a focus group, you can select from people from the audience group you hope to attract and can ask them more qualitative questions with a view to receiving expanded answers. Done sensitively, it can also be a way to build new connections. It's advisable to create a focus group with both existing members of your audience and your target group to compare and contrast sentiments and understand the risks of changing your organisation as well as the potential rewards. One thing to bear in mind: a focus group can never be truly 'representative'; people are individuals, so a focus group can help sharpen your ideas but won't give you definitive answers. You need to have conviction about which insights to act on and are practical for your organisation."

If you're unable to pay participants due to budget restraints, the guide also has some suggestions of how to compensate the group.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

INTO FILM AND BFI FAN YOUNG ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Here is a [pre-pandemic case study of Into Film's 16-19 'Youth Engagement Project'](#) that was based on running focus group sessions with students from schools located near FAN member independent cinemas. Into Film staff recruited the young people and facilitated sessions in collaboration with the cinema staff. The students were asked to feedback on their experience of visiting the cinema and how welcoming they found it as well as to comment on pricing, marketing and branding.

We're grateful to Into Film for sharing the following resources created to support exhibitors running their own focus group sessions, in this case specifically for 16-19 year olds. The majority of the guidance is equally relevant to working with an older age range. In their [Audience Development Toolkit for ages 16-19](#) you will find themed session resources on:

- Engaging the group in creating and running a special event
- Marketing
- Customer loyalty/ticket offers
- Ice Breakers
- Design the questions

And here are their top tips for working with this age group:

- Use icebreakers at the beginning of a session to get to know the group a little - taking this time will pay dividends later
- Keep the tone of sessions lively - try to bring positive energy in register and delivery style
- Consider adapting your register and delivery style as a session progresses and you discover the level and needs of participants
- You may be working with young people with additional support needs. If this is the case it is recommended to speak with teachers/parents/guardians to discuss any necessary adjustments to activity plans e.g. to consider how feedback can be shared if young people don't like speaking in front of a group (Post-It notes, anonymous comments box, etc)

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Provide refreshments for any face-to-face sessions
- Inform the group of timings of sessions and activities. Give time checks throughout a session. Especially important if there are practical elements.
- Allow space for participants to think and practise mindfulness. Silence usually means participants are thinking and not bored. Inform your participants you are giving them space to think and that it is fine to be quiet and not immediately give a response.
- Incentives - complimentary tickets, concessions vouchers or similar are a great thank you for contributions and can encourage return visits.
- Young people love to know their thoughts and ideas are valued. It's always worthwhile to let them know if and how their ideas will be moved forward or why it's not possible to do so.

BLOGGERS/WRITERS/REVIEWERS

Commissioning young people to write pieces in support of your film programme is a great way to promote regional film culture, nurture regional film criticism talent and to directly engage with the voices of young people in your community.

As with all the suggested activity in this resource, you can engage with young film critics in a variety of ways. Perhaps your organisation runs a film festival, or you could partner with your local secondary school, sixth form college or university's film department to reach new voices and keen film enthusiasts? The image at the top of the next page is of a Twitter advert posted by Sinema Pontio, inviting their local young people to work with them.

Again, paid opportunities are obviously preferable and invaluable to young people starting out in film criticism but if you're not able to offer paid opportunities think of some other way to compensate them for their time and support, such as cinema tickets.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT



Sinema Pontio recruitment tweet

See [Appendix D](#) for some more examples of how festivals and organisations have worked with young writers, including examples of recruitment posts and reviews created as part of structured young film critics programmes.

Mubi Notebook has an 'open door' policy whereby anyone can pitch article ideas to them. Here are their [pitching guidelines](#) which are clear and straightforward.

[The FAN New Releases programme](#) was set up to help increase the visibility of specifically curated independent titles and the programme offers direct marketing support to the exhibitors who book the selected films. As part of this process FAN has commissioned young writers to create opinion pieces for [The Bigger Picture](#). This example was written by young film critic and programmer Beth Privitera on [Bad Luck Banging: or Loony Porn](#).

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Timon Singh (Campaign manager for FAN) regularly commissions articles from writers of all ages. Here are his top **DO's** and **DON'Ts** when it comes to commissioning:

DO:

- Hire knowledgeable and varied voices: When it comes to film journalism, there is a danger that the same old voices weigh in on the same old subjects, so consider commissioning newer, younger and more diverse voices. Thinking about an article on *Hit The Road*? Consider hiring a film writer from a Muslim or Middle Eastern background that might give a perspective to the film you hadn't considered.
- Spread your net: The internet has allowed you to reach out to writers all over the country and world – websites like Dial F For Freelancer allow you to find new writers and not have to resort to a regular few.
- Pay them on time: It's hard being freelance, so make sure you pay your writers on time!

DON'T:

- Don't offer work for 'exposure': too many freelance/up and coming writers take jobs where they are offered 'exposure' instead of money. What you're asking is for someone to work for free – don't do that. Just pay them a fair amount.
- Don't be afraid of tackling a film at a different angle: There are a million ways to write about a film, don't always go the more obvious route. Instead of commissioning an article about 'Multiverse films' in the wake of *Everything Everywhere All At Once* – how about articles on Michelle Yeoh's career? Asian representation in sci-fi? Family and the end of the world?!
- Don't bury your articles – you've paid someone to write an article for you – promote it! Share it on social media! Print it out and have it available for customers to read it the lobby/bar! The writer will appreciate it and your audience will be interested!

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Rafa Sales Ross (Independent Film journalist and Community Engagement and Learning Manager, Belmont Filmhouse) also shares her top tips for working with young people and commissioning young writers:

DO:

- Be clear throughout the commissioning process: what can applicants expect from what you are offering? What are some possible hurdles? What are they getting in return?
- Treat young people as people. Avoid being condescending and do not assume that, just because someone is younger than you, their knowledge doesn't carry any weight. Everyone has different lived experiences, and they are all valuable.
- Listen. As a professional, you will have a certain structure in mind for the programme you are offering or the activity you are preparing, but, if you are looking to work with young people, you need to be open to their ideas. Even if they don't end up resulting in action, the young people will feel heard and - most importantly - appreciated.

DON'T:

- Don't erase their voice but also don't be afraid of editing your writers' work. If they are just starting out, chances are that they need a guiding hand and - even if the editing process can be hard - they will certainly appreciate the learning curve.
- Don't expect emotional labour unless you are equipped to offer emotional support. If you are commissioning someone to write about potentially triggering subjects such as race, ethnicity or their experience being discriminated against, you need to have a solid understanding of how to deal with the emotional and psychological ripples of this process of introspection.
- Don't close the door. If you spent time and energy mentoring young people, why not reap the benefits? Invite them back for other opportunities, bring them back to the cinema for special events, send a call out for pitches if you have a season brewing. Keep in touch.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

YOUTH ADVISORY BOARDS

Much like focus groups, advisory groups and boards (they function in similar ways) provide a much needed space for organisations to speak directly with young people to hear about their lives and ideas around what they want from the arts and creative spaces they visit. These groups and boards also give organisations the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with young people. In turn, this allows young people to feed directly into an organisation's creative strategy, giving them a platform to effect change. They can also be a useful way of retaining young people that have been through other youth orientated programmes such as Young Programmer groups. It's an opportunity to direct and utilize the skills and knowledge they have gained to inform the broader considerations and operations of your organisation.



Glasgow Film Theatre's Youth Board

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Below, **Rebecca McSheaffrey** (Learning and Youth Engagement Manager at Glasgow Film Theatre) shares her experience of developing and managing their [Youth Advisory Group or Youth Board](#):

"In 2019, Glasgow Film established our first year-round Youth Board which is now entering its fourth year. Before the board we already ran the very successful Glasgow Youth Film Festival, a three-day festival co-curated with 15 young people who attended a three-week summer school, as well as a number of other successful youth initiatives. However, we realised that once the initial programme finished, even if the young people themselves were very keen to continue their relationship with Glasgow Film, we didn't have an established offer for them to continue their learning and engagement. This meant we were losing contact with young people who had developed a good understanding of GFT and the kind of film programming we champion, and we were losing out on the fresh perspective and understanding of a youth audience that they brought. Our young people were keen to share their ideas, and we wanted to hear them.

Through the Glasgow Film Education Alliance and our funders Screen Scotland, we were able to fund the GFT Youth Board. When we established the group a general rule to qualify was that you had to take part in one of our programmes prior to joining, this helped us establish a recruitment process and meant that young people came with a good understanding of Glasgow Film, and its offer.

The young people meet once a month and it's very self-led, some young people like to write about their favourite films and have these be published on the website, some are interested in hosting Q&As. Through Glasgow Film Education Alliance, we were also able to establish a programme of free monthly youth screenings which the Youth Board then began to curate, and when we received BFI Venue Education Funding in 2021, we were able to provide 'additional content' around the screenings. The Youth Board has taken the lead in creating this programme of content, interviewing film academics, people from the industry or journalists, writing blog content and creating video essays around the films.

In an evaluation of these screenings conducted by [The Lines Between](#), 93% of participants said they now watch a greater variety of films, 71% said they now think about the films they watch more and 43% are more likely to visit the cinema.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

As the confidence of the GFT Youth Board has grown, their influence has also come into the main public programme as well. In 2022 Programme Manager Paul Gallagher approached the Youth Board for their film recommendation for Valentine's Day. The group chose 10 Things I Hate About You and the Youth Board introduced the film to great audience applause.

Working with the Youth Board has been incredibly rewarding as we are able to see young people join Glasgow Youth Film Festival while at school and progress into young adults at college and university. They are our biggest champions of the GFT, and we hope to repay their support through valuable opportunities to engage in Glasgow Film's culture and shape the future of our programming."

Rebecca McSheaffrey Glasgow Film Theatre

"I definitely feel more personally close to the GFT after doing this – I think it's definitely helped because I was starting college...I was doing a television course. So that was perfect, and I could apply those skills"

"I had really solid friendships coming out of this. I still see some of the people that were on the same team as the Youth Board. GFT is like a second home now for us"

"It's given me a broad scope of films...before I only knew movies like the IMDb top 10 ... I've definitely got a wider interest in the film that the GFT show and in film festivals in general – before I didn't really know what they were and now I'm really into them"

"When I was preparing those blog things, I didn't even think about people reading it because the atmosphere that was created by [GFT staff members] was really safe. It was just something that we would do in our free time, that kind of thing. But the next day they released the list, I got an email from my lecturer saying that she loved the piece. And I was like "What?! Like, people actually read it! Wow! I didn't even realise it because the atmosphere was really comfortable"

"I think the biggest change in my mind was understanding the festival culture. So, when I'm writing my own little, short films, I'm also thinking about 'how would it be on the screen.' Like what kind of elements would be interesting for a programmer, but also still keeping the story that I want to write...so yeah, it's been really helpful for me and for my filmmaking"

Glasgow Film Theatre's Youth Board members

(see [Appendix E](#) for more examples of groups)

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

YOUNG PROGRAMMERS, CURATORS AND YOUNG AMBASSADORS

Setting up a young programmer group is an effective way to directly embed the voices of young people into your film programme. With the right structure and organisational support, young film programmer groups teach and train participants to develop new and transferable skills including how to build an audience targeted film programme; how to research film rights; marketing; PR and audience development skills and even how to manage the event itself. All of this, as alluded to in the quotes shared throughout the resource, helps young people to develop the confidence they need to enter the job market when the time comes.

Not all young programmer groups are the same, but most follow a similar path of real-world experience interspersed with training opportunities.

Film Hub South East operates a Young Film Programmers Network and has supported over 35 organisations across the region to develop film-based initiatives aimed at young people. They've kindly shared [this abridged guide](#) with advice on how to set up and recruit a young programmers group, reiterating the benefits for both parties.

The [Young FAN Toolkit created in 2017](#) also contains some 'Do's and Don'ts' advice for setting up a group.

The good news is that there is an ever-increasing number of Young Film Programmer groups running across the UK and FAN. Many of the groups have been supported by their respective Film Hubs or National Film Agencies to start up. Some of the venues also run BFI Film Academies and/or have extensive and embedded young audience and talent development programmes as in the case of [Nerve Centre in Derry - Londonderry](#).

"Since joining Ones to Watch a year ago I have learnt a lot and feel more confident in my work, I always feel supported and cared for by everyone! I love meeting people who love the same topics as I do, OTW has given me so many opportunities, both learning in person on set or online! I've made lifelong friends and I cannot wait to see what the OTW team has in store!"

Gaigai Xie Ones to Watch, Nerve Centre

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

"Being a part of the Ones to Watch group has impacted my work positively through training and projects since 2018. I've received training in programming film, marketing and events as well as worked on practical filmmaking projects such as Audio Adapter. It's a great network of film enthusiasts and creators!"

Tomala White Ones to Watch, Nerve Centre

CASE STUDY TABLE

To help demonstrate the variety of groups operating and for inspiration, we've gathered a range of case studies (with more in [Appendix A](#)) of the groups currently running at venues across the UK and as part of the FAN membership. The table below summarises the key operating elements of each one. Click on the venue name to access their full case study.

Venue	Aim	Group Name	Age	Group Size	Group Role	Activity (meeting frequency & type)
Phoenix, Exeter	To strengthen the visibility of Studio 74 and to find new ways to reach under 25s with a focus on connecting with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic audiences.	Young Audience Panel	18-25	14	Cinema programming, event management, marketing and promotion, filmmaking and digital content creation.	<p>Initial weekly masterclasses to upskill the group members and additional collaborative opportunities i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two Short Nights Film Festival pre-selection panel. Watching and short-listing submissions.• Collaboration with BFI NETWORK and Encounters film festival, hosting filmmaker Q&As• Programming opportunities for Studio 74• Invitation to shape and influence the Studio 74 promotional strategy• Supplementing audience engagement with the film programme - providing the panel access to screener links for select titles and inviting them to generate copy, reviews, programming notes which are published and shared with Studio 74 Audience.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Venue	Aim	Group Name	Age	Group Size	Group Role	Activity (meeting frequency & type)
<u>Nerve Centre, Northern Ireland</u>	The aim of Ones to Watch is to empower young people with the skills needed to curate and create content and events both for themselves as audience members and also as filmmakers.	Ones to Watch	17-25	5 core members that manage the group.		Monthly meetings but the meeting frequency increases as the current project demands. The programme offers training in film exhibition, marketing, events management, business of film, presentation and curation of online content. Over the last 5 years, the programme has delivered curated film events for a wide variety of community stakeholders, written and produced short films and programmed the festivals, conferences and screenings that showcase their work.
<u>Story-house, Chester</u>	Create events for all spaces of Storyhouse including digital platforms. Bring in new young audiences to Storyhouse. Showcase young performers and young talent.	Young Programmers (working across all artforms at Storyhouse)	14-25	15	The group programmes work together across cinema, stage, library, festivals and online. These interventions happen throughout the year and include 'cinema takeovers'	Weekly meetings. Young Programmers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive mentoring and training • Meet industry professionals • Learn about programming, marketing and event management • Plan, run, market and host festivals and events in Storyhouse and on Storyhouse digital platforms • Develop a valuable portfolio of experience • Have the opportunity to attend film screenings and theatre events • Collaborate with like-minded young people • The option to work towards their Arts Award Qualification. The group bring in new audiences, give young people a positive platform and enhance the programme at Storyhouse.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Venue	Aim	Group Name	Age	Group Size	Group Role	Activity (meeting frequency & type)
<u>Ffilm Ifanc, Wales</u>	<p>To find and raise the profile of Made in Wales films made by young filmmakers by curating interesting and innovative programmes of films online and in person all programmed by peer aged young people.</p> <p>To foster a community for young Wales based filmmakers amongst exhibitors nationally and internationally.</p> <p>To provide upskilling opportunities and training for the young programmers to increase their experience and employability.</p>	Ffilm Ifanc (Young Film)	17-29	10	Curating and promoting programmes of 'Made in Wales films' and offering curatorial support to festivals and venues wishing to engage with a local youth audience.	<p>The group have led the project from the outset, choosing the group name, watching and selecting films for the programmes, designing the logo, branding and setting up of the social media platforms to promote their screenings and events.</p> <p>Ffilm Ifanc are committed to supporting up and coming talent by providing young filmmakers with a platform for their work to be seen and their voices to be heard. Being involved in Ffilm Ifanc also means that the young programmers have opportunities for training and visiting film festivals both nationally and internationally.</p> <p>Professional development is key to the project.</p>
<u>ICO's YFPN, South East</u>	The Young Film Programmers' Network (South East) aims to support access to cultural cinema for young people who are keen to learn more about all aspects of the film industry.	Young Film Programmers (member venues choose their own group name)	16-25	Varies	The Network is based on a free-to-join membership model, offering a central support programme whilst encouraging autonomy, diversity and creativity across membership venues. In this way, we nurture venues to take a risk on young audience development, with a safety net of tailor-made programmes, resources and support where needed.	<p>Over 35 FAN member venues across the Network and over 300 young film programmers engaged.</p> <p>Member venues receive access to mentoring support, training, funding and resources.</p> <p>Young people are given training (via masterclasses) and real world industry opportunities around film programming, filmmaking, event management and promotion, as well as networking sessions organised across the region</p>

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Venue	Aim	Group Name	Age	Group Size	Group Role	Activity (meeting frequency & type)
<u>LUMI, QFT, Northern Ireland</u>	To drive young audience engagement with independent and foreign language film within an independent cinema setting.	LUMI	18-26	5	The group are recruited to programme, market and deliver events at QFT for their peers.	<p>The group meets every two weeks, usually online.</p> <p>They will meet and discuss the upcoming programme and propose ideas for LUMI-specific events that can be held alongside screenings. The young programmers are also encouraged to submit ideas for films and events that have not been directly programmed by QFT. They are also asked to think about how films and events can be marketed in order to specifically appeal to younger audiences and will contribute to this marketing strategy by creating images, writing articles, and recording videos. As well as this, the group can interview film creatives, including journalists and filmmakers, and are given the freedom to deliver events with help and advice from QFT.</p> <p>In the past sessions have included training and advice from industry speakers, including journalists, podcasters, graphic designers, cinema programmers and more.</p>

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Venue	Aim	Group Name	Age	Group Size	Group Role	Activity (meeting frequency & type)
<u>GFT, Glasgow</u>		Young Selectors	18-21	10	<p>Curation: selecting titles to champion in the festival (including writing programme notes and recording introduction)</p> <p>Content creation: video and digital for festival promotion</p>	<p>This is a short-term festival based annual activity. After induction training sessions in December, meetings move to weekly in January and February in the lead up to the festival.</p> <p>As well as access to festival titles for selection, participants are offered training in festival programming from the Glasgow Film team; insights into the roles of the festival team and learn about careers in festivals, cinemas and filmmaking and distribution; a free Industry pass for GFF 2022; a bespoke careers session from the Glasgow Film team; and certificate and written reference upon completion of the programme (subject to attendance and commitment levels).</p> <p>Participants will learn about review writing and creating social media, video and digital content.</p>
<u>Alhambra, Keswick</u>	To develop Young Audiences for their culturally under-served, rural location with the intention of permanently growing their younger audience through the agency and initiative and marketing of the group.	The Alhambra Cinematic Society (ASC)	16-18	Up to 20 but around 5-8 meet regularly	Programming a weekly film slot whilst building more adhoc special events.	<p>The group runs at and is formed of students from the local secondary school. The group is led by a teacher with a background in film programming.</p> <p>The group meets every week during lunchtime and have been invited to programme one mainstream and one 'classic' title each week. They have also been supported to deliver 2 'cultural' cinema events.</p> <p>The group have been given programming training, access to the cinema staff and a broad understanding of all the roles at the cinema. They group have been encouraged to do their own marketing for their screenings and to deliver introductions.</p> <p>They've also been encouraged to collaborate with local cultural institutions such as the Museum.</p>

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Venue	Aim	Group Name	Age	Group Size	Group Role	Activity (meeting frequency & type)
<u>INDIs Young Programmers' Group (Leeds)</u>	To offer an alternative and affordable cinema experience with and for young people.	INDIs Young Programmers' Group	16-30	15	Programming a monthly film slot, festival curation, film ambassadors for the city of Leeds.	The group meets twice a month. Once online where they plan future events and then once in person on the same night as that month's screening event which they host.
<u>Barbican, London</u>	To develop Young Audiences for their culturally under-served, rural location with the intention of permanently growing their younger audience through the agency and initiative and marketing of the group.	Barbican Young Film Programmers	16-25	12	Curation & training – the group ultimately programme, market and deliver the Chronic Youth Film Festival together which takes place at the end of the 6-month programme.	<p>The group meets 4 times a month over the 6-month programme (Sept-March) with the Festival taking place in April.</p> <p>Programme activity/ benefits for the young programmers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship from industry-leading experts • Free tickets to Barbican film screenings in cinema and on demand • Knowledge of film and the film industry • Gain practical marketing, event planning and delivery, and live hosting experience • Hands on experience programming and delivering film events from curation and event planning to hosting Q&As • A network of professionals working in film, as well as establishing your own contacts within your peer group of film fans

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

YOUTH LED INDEPENDENT FILM COLLECTIVES – VENUE TAKEOVERS

'Venue takeovers' whereby cinemas open their doors and their programmes to independent film collectives are a really positive way of diversifying your programme and building deeper connections with your local community. Even thinking about how this type of activity could work in your organisation will give you a good sense of how accessible you are to your audiences. For example, if a group (whether a festival, film club, film society or touring programme) wanted to work with you, in your venue, would they know how to get in touch and with whom?

Asking yourself how comfortable you are with handing over the reins to an independent group and the processes involved with doing so will also help you think about how ready you are to work with young people at all.

Independent groups will need support in getting to know your venue but if the initial event is a success it could lead to a long and rewarding relationship. There are two models to consider, the 'buy-out' or 'private hire' versus the 'co-production'. The first option gives you the no risk income but no audience data and the second gives you the audience data via your box office and the opportunity to co-promote the event.

If you want to hear more about how exhibitors are working with young people, young programmers and independent collectives, you can watch FAN Conversations #4 session on [exploring the benefits of connecting with young audiences](#). The panel speak in more depth about how important and rewarding it's been to work with young people. Tyrone Walker-Hebborn, owner of [The Genesis Cinema](#) talks specifically about working with local young film collectives and community groups and how that has enriched the Genesis' programme and diversified their audiences. Youth led Film Collective UNDR LNDN's co-founder Caroline Wilson, also shares her experiences of working with venues as an independent curator, including with the Genesis. Rafa Sales Ross (Community Engagement and Learning Manager, Belmont Filmhouse and Independent Film Journalist) shares her experiences of working with young people and the conversation is chaired by FAN Young Consultant Thea Berry.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

A google search or open call will help you discover the local collectives, clubs, festivals and film societies operating in your area, and you'll find some on [Cinema For All's](#) site and via their [My Community Cinema](#) site but here are some examples:

UNDR LNDN

Founded in 2017, UNDR LNDN is a London based film platform and collective. They aim to support emerging filmmakers and creative talent. Their vision is to support the London independent film scene and to see it reach new heights. They host events, curate films screenings, and produce their own work.



T A P E Collective

T A P E was founded in 2015 by Angela Moneke and Isra Al Kassi after meeting through the Barbican Young Programmers scheme. The group formed as a response to the lack of representation on screen; wanting to platform and highlight the sheer variety of under-served film out there. Since then, they have launched two touring film programmes [But Where Are You Really From?](#) and [What About Me?](#), with many more to come.



Tape Collective team - Isra Al Kassi, Angela Moneke, Nelly Alston (thanks to Sweet Thang Zine)

Hustle Cinematic

Hustle Cinematic is a series of film screening events incorporating multiple art forms and live performances as part of [The Hustle Collective](#). Bringing together audiences to embrace the communality of experience, diverse perspectives, and the transformative nature of cinema.



Hustle Cinematic

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Bounce Cinema

Bounce cinema was originally set up with the intention of building a better future for film through their dedicated programme of screenings, training and industry opportunities. They wanted to create a club and fund to tackle the lack of representation in the film industry. The team behind Bounce have successfully created a space for people to enjoy film, network and discover new talent. A percentage of the profits made from their events is put back into a fund to support young creative talent who may not have the tools they need to kick start their careers by themselves.

"I wanted to create something that I wished existed when I first embarked on my creative journey. It's important we create our own solutions. If we don't tackle our own problems, then who will?"

Bounce Founder/Director Mathieu Ajan

Beginning in London, the collective has since expanded and is now creating events and film moments across the UK, working with Netflix, Nike and the BBC amongst organisations and brands.

Here is a case study from the early stages of Bounce Cinema.



Bounce Cinema founder Mathieu Ajan
(thanks to Film London)

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Film East

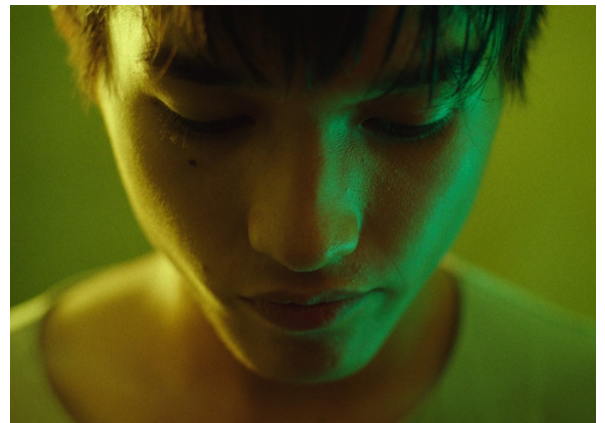
This multi award-nominated film programming group based in Norwich was initially set up with the support of [Reel Connections](#) as part of Film Hub South East's Young Film Programmers Network but it is now run by young film critic, marketer and curator Shelby Cooke. It's become a platform 'for young people by young people' (the ultimate goal!) for young audiences to experience cinema through immersive and interactive film screenings.



Film East Director Shelby Cooke

Queer East

Launched in 2020, Queer East is an LGBTIQ+ film festival that showcases rarely seen queer cinema from East and Southeast Asia. Seeking to amplify the voices of Asian communities in the UK, the festival explores the forces that have shaped the current queer landscape in Asia, and aims to encourage more inclusive narratives. The third edition of Queer East Film Festival took place in London from 18 to 29 May 2022 and their UK wide tour begins in October.



Queer East Film Festival Director Yi Wang

"Queer East started from a simple realisation, driven by my personal experience as a filmgoer: here in the UK, there is a noticeable lack of East and Southeast Asian queer films available in cinemas for the public. It seems that we still lack understanding about these communities. It is hugely important that we bring more queer Asian representation to the big screen."

Yi Wang, Festival and Programme Director

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

YOUTH LED INDEPENDENT FILM COLLECTIVES – VENUE TAKEOVERS

If a google search or open call doesn't help you to locate independent curators and collectives in your area, perhaps you could consider supporting interested young people with your own training/mentoring programme.

Here are two examples from across FAN:

Film Hub South West: Beyond Boundaries 360

Not specifically aimed at young people but a great example, Beyond Boundaries 360 launched in the summer of 2019. A free skills development opportunity, it's aimed at individuals based in the South West who are under-represented in the cinema sector (particularly people of colour, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, women, and those from low socio-economic backgrounds) interested in putting on film screenings. Not only do participants receive training and advice from industry experts and receive curatorial support from partner venues, but the support and guidance from group members in equal measure provides an important space to explore their own creativity.

Film Hub Scotland: New Promoters Scheme

FHS' New Promoters scheme is designed to bring new voices into Scottish film exhibition and curation roles. It creates paid placements in exhibition at a real living wage and fills the available placements with passionate people who have faced barriers to working in the industry. Find out more from previous participants [here](#).

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

YOUNG TRUSTEES AND BOARD MEMBERS

The Charity Governance Code states that *"diversity, in the widest sense, is essential for boards to stay informed and responsive and to navigate the fast-paced and complex changes facing the voluntary sector. Boards whose trustees have different backgrounds and experience are more likely to encourage debate and to make better decisions."*

Organisations like the [Young Trustees Movement](#), who campaign for more young people aged 30 and under to have positions on charity boards have some great resources to learn from such as their [Young Trustees Checklist](#) and [Young Trustees Guide \(2015\)](#) to help with the recruitment and delivery.

The youth-led [Rising Arts Agency](#) in Bristol is a community made up of activists, producers, facilitators, filmmakers and more. They bring together young people at all stages of their career and connect them with organisations and industry professionals open to collaboration and who are excited to share knowledge and expertise. In 2018 they launched their [OnBoard programme](#) with the aim of growing the number of young people recruited as trustees in the creative sector and every year they work with a small group of organisations *"to centre the opinions and expertise of young people into their governance structure, while eradicating common barriers that prevent young people from entering leadership."*

The young people are recruited by Rising Arts who offer them board member training and ongoing support throughout their board tenure.

Young Trustees is a relatively new area of youth engagement for the film exhibition sector as there is a perceived nervousness about devolving this level of power to a less experienced young person. But as with the other forms of engagement, with the right planning and support, this really doesn't need to be a concern. Storyhouse, Chester is an example of an independent venue who has taken the plunge with very positive results.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

YOUNG STORYHOUSE



"Youth voice is at the heart of Storyhouse and all of our programmes, therefore it was important that we ensured we have young people at board level as trustees and that they raised thoughts and ideas of our Young Catalysts to the board."

Hayley Lindley-Thornhill Young Storyhouse Manager

Storyhouse in Chester does extensive work with young people under the umbrella of [Young Storyhouse](#). Including their Youth Theatre programme, Young Readers, Young Programmers and Young Makers, (to name a few of the opportunities), they also give participants on these programmes the chance to affect real change in the organisation at a board level as Young Catalysts and Young Trustees.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

As active participants of Young Storyhouse programmes aged 8-25 years old, [Young Catalysts](#) help shape the purpose of the organisation, address issues pertaining to young people in Storyhouse, particularly with reference to: programming, engagement, building services and marketing and communications. Made up of about 20 children and young people, the group contributes to the work of the organisation by offering insight, advice, ideas, feedback, and support for their peers and the management team.

Their responsibilities include:

- Taking part in consultations to influence decision-making
- Attending meetings and events to promote the voice of young people
- Planning and running campaigns and events to give young people a voice
- Reviewing our performance and constructively challenging areas for improvement
- Making decisions on any branding related to Young Storyhouse
- Being part of the interview panel for Young Storyhouse roles
- Having input into any social opportunities for all young people to come together including leading on the activity and communication
- Being a peer mentor

"We are a voice for young people in the local community to push Storyhouse to be even better than it is".

Jack Howard Storyhouse Young Trustee

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

The Young Catalysts meetings are chaired by the current [Young Trustee](#) Amy Jones, who is supported by an allocated Board member and attends eight mentoring sessions with fellow trustees. The Young Trustee is also supported by the Young Storyhouse Manager and Young Storyhouse Coordinator with regards to managing Young Catalyst meetings. The mentoring they receive includes:

- Role of a board member – set expectations
- How to prepare for a board meeting
- Meeting skills: listening, communicating, note-taking
- Dealing with conflict
- Culture of the board: operating systems and codes of conduct
- Communication skills: feeding back to the youth forum
- Confidentiality
- Making Mistakes

Storyhouse is now onto their fourth Young Trustee since the programme started and their previous trustee has now gone on to sign for a full board term length of 5 years.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

The best thing to do with knowledge is to pass it on! If you've set up a young programmers' group but your participants have outgrown the programme, a brilliant way to retain the talent that you've nurtured is to invite them to take on the leadership and training of the group. Venues have also gone on to create alumni youth advisory groups and there are several instances across the sector of young programmer alumni gaining paid employment at the venue that trained them. Others have gone on to start their own collectives as in the case of TAPE and Film East, creating events for their peers.

MENTORING

"Mentoring is a supportive learning relationship between a caring individual (mentor) and another individual (mentee). The mentor shares knowledge, experience, and wisdom and the mentee benefits from this exchange. This relationship enriches their professional journeys. The mentor helps the mentee to consider opportunities for their career growth, gain confidence and improve interpersonal skills. The support is based on the mentor's own experiences and learnings." **Developer Experience.io**

As we know, due to the isolation and trauma of the pandemic, young people's mental health has been deeply and adversely affected. Traditional milestones have been missed and their education has also suffered dramatically. Unfortunately, access to support continues to be massively overstretched. Therefore, mentoring is yet another way our sector can help young people regain confidence, guidance, inspiration, and aspiration. Essentially it is about helping 'young people to get a fair start' in the creative industries ([Arts Emergency](#)).

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

There are an increasing number of mentoring schemes available for young people interested in getting into the film production industry, particularly given the recognised skills shortages but far fewer currently in the exhibition sector. In this section, we cover becoming a mentor as an individual, ways in which you can support staff to volunteer as mentors and starting up a mentoring scheme within your organisation. Many of the engagement activities highlighted in this resource will involve some form of mentoring without it being explicitly presented as such. For example, young programmer and filmmaker **Ross Wilders** took part in the Nerve Centre's 'Ones to Watch' programme and had this to say about the experience of working with staff:

"I joined Ones To Watch during lockdown in 2020 and amidst a difficult year it was a shining light for me, keeping me positive and creative. Ever since I've been a regular contributor to the group and I am really looking forward to being a part of this ever-growing group."

"As someone who feels on track to hopefully being successful in the film industry, without Ones To Watch I wouldn't feel like that. I am honoured to be able to work with the team at the Nerve Centre and I'm grateful for the amount they have done to help me progress, Ones To Watch is just one of the many reasons why."

The benefits of mentoring for both parties [as outlined by ScreenSkills](#) include:

- Seeing things from another's perspective
- Increasing your network
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Developing communication skills
- Learning from the ideas and experiences of someone who is different to you
- Using your creativity
- Boosting your job satisfaction
- A deeper appreciation of diversity and inclusivity

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

Some examples of organisations with mentoring programmes include:

**ARTS
EMERGENCY**

The Girls' Network
Unlimited futures for all young women



Meet (a) Mentor



Becoming a Mentor is a hugely rewarding experience. The majority of programmes run by organisations like Arts Emergency focus on voluntary mentoring and are based on the principle of 'giving back' or 'paying it forward'. Many of the programmes exist to support disadvantaged young people who face more barriers to entering the creative industries.

The simplest way to become a mentor or to encourage your staff members to become mentors is to sign up with an existing programme.

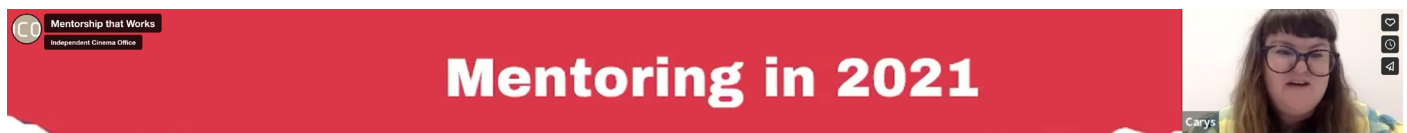
In the video on the following page, recorded at the ICO's Young Audiences Screening Days in June 2022, you'll hear from Carys Nelkon at Arts Emergency about their programme as well as the personal experience of Sonia Zadurian of the Barbican, about being a mentor with The Step-Up Sorority.

If you would like to consider setting up your own mentoring scheme within your organisation, in the video, Hayley Lindley-Thornhill of Young Storyhouse shares her first-hand experience of developing a programme for Storyhouse, Chester. All Storyhouse staff are offered mentoring training and an element of mentoring is included in everyone's job descriptions. As the programme has expanded, they most recently have openly recruited for external mentors who have joined from all over the UK for online sessions.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

There is a lot to think about when setting up your own programme including the age of the mentees that you will recruit or work with. For example, there is a big difference in Safeguarding responsibilities when working with under 18 year olds versus over 18s. You'll need to consider your recruitment eligibility criteria, how often you intend mentees and mentors to meet, the length of the programme and how you will monitor and evaluate the activity and of course how you will fund it. Later in the resource you will find links to guides on Safeguarding and fundraising created for the sector.

As also mentioned in the video presentation, you'll find an array of free to download resources on how to set up your own scheme on the [ScreenSkills website](#). You can also access their free e-learning training modules for both mentors and mentees. Click below to play the video.



- **In 2021 we mentored 352 young people across England, Scotland, and Wales, who between them had 3731 meetings.**
- 92% of teachers feel their students are more prepared for future careers
- 93% of young people that feel they know more about the world of work
- 82.61% of those mentored over the age of 18 feel like a career in the creative or cultural industry is more attainable



TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

REVERSE MENTORING - THE FAN YOUNG CONSULTANTS

The [FAN Young Consultants](#) group was set up in 2018 to provide an authentic 'youth voice' for FAN. The group of 9 under 30-year-olds work in roles across the exhibition and distribution sector either in venues or as freelancers. Whilst led by Moira McVean, FAN Young Audiences Manager, the group exists to advise Moira on the authenticity of the young audience development initiatives FAN recommends, grounded in the experience and understanding of the pressure exhibitors are under. From sharing their personal perspectives on new release titles in the [marketing packs we co-create](#) to presenting and writing for FAN, the group keeps Moira up to date with Gen Z trends and examples of events and programmes that appeal to them. The group also elected to produce their own newsletter [No Content Available](#) in which they share what's inspiring or interesting them each month.



The FAN Young Consultants. Top (L-R): Thea Berry, Louise Giadom, Colette Webber. Middle (L-R): Rebekah Taylor, Yasmin Begum, Alex Goldsmith. Bottom (L-R): Caitlin Lydon, James Calver, Caroline Wilson.

RECRUITING YOUNG PEOPLE

"Young people this year and possibly for years to come are going to face many different challenges as they leave education and move into the world of work. Whilst Covid has had a devastating impact on the health and well-being of people of all ages it has also had a tragic impact on the experiences of young people through their education and journey to work." **Youth Employment UK**

When welcoming anyone into your organisation you should ensure that the guidance you offer on the recruitment and application process is totally clear, so individuals can manage their own time and expectations accordingly. It may be the case for many of the young people you're aiming to recruit that they have never worked in an arts organisation before or this may be their first time entering the workforce altogether. Therefore, it is essential that you have clear inclusive and accessible guidance on what the recruitment process is going to look like.

Taken from [Youth Employment UK](#) and the [Reading Agency](#), here are some points on recruitment and the onboarding process.

Review your outreach activity:

- Work with youth organisations, schools and youth and community groups to reach your target audience and build those relationships by maintaining consistent contact and revisiting groups.
- Peer promotion: if you have worked with young people in the past, keep in contact with those people and get them to share new and relevant opportunities with their peers.

RECRUITING YOUNG PEOPLE

Review the recruitment process:

- Do the personal requirements you set out in specifications align with the challenges young people have had, are you asking for work experience when most young people will not have had the opportunity for work experience?
- How will you ensure young people understand how to pass through your process, can you provide training videos or step-by-step guides? Having an [Employer Profile](#) on your [Careers Hub](#) will allow you to share advice and tips, videos and other resources to help young people before they start the recruitment process.
- Set clear dates for the application deadline, interview dates, a notification date for unsuccessful applicants and whether personalised feedback will be available.
- If you are unable to send feedback to every unsuccessful applicant, perhaps consider sending an email which contains constructive feedback for how those invited to interview were successful and what was missing from those that were not. This will give young people an idea of how to do better next time.

ONBOARDING PROCESS

While many of the opportunities outlined in this document are not centred around full-time work, it is still vital that young people feel welcome and supported and that they are considered an integral part of the organisation:

Induction:

- **Really get to know the person on an individual level.** Understand what Covid experience they have had, what issues there may have been and what their concerns are. From there you can build an understanding of the personal support and guidance that might be needed.
- **Make sure you help young people to socialise.** Lock-down has left many young people feeling isolated, so socialising again and integrating into groups may be a little overwhelming. Take this slow and make sure that you provide plenty of opportunities for people to get to know each other and settle back into socialisation.
- **Emotional support needs to be available.** Supporting the well-being of young people is key and providing opportunities for 1-2-1 conversations where young people can talk through their concerns will be important. Make sure staff are trained to do this well and are able to build a rapport with young people and show empathy.
- **Skill development may need to be a priority.** If young people have not had the chance to build their "employability skills, skills for work or study skills" you will need to help them acquire those skills.
- **Mentoring/buddying.** We strongly recommend a mentor or buddy to work with young people on a 1-2-1 basis during their first few months. It is a great opportunity for other young people already within the organisation to develop their leadership and people skills.
- **Check-in points.** Regularly check-in with young people and create a culture for honest and open conversations. Young people should feel comfortable to share their concerns and successes with you.

SAFEGUARDING

When working with children and young people in any capacity, it is also essential to employ safeguarding practices to your programme. Although many of the young people you may go on to work with will be over 18, your organisation is still responsible for their wellbeing while on the premises.

Here are some resources to get your started:

[FAN Guide to Safeguarding](#)

[Recommended Safeguarding online training course covering working with 16-25-year-olds](#)

[Key advice and resources for working with young people](#)

FUNDING RESOURCES AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

The youth engagement and programme activity explored throughout this resource takes consideration, time, and most importantly, funding. Here are some links to useful funding resources and sources. Don't forget that, in most cases, your first port of call should be your FAN regional hub team as much of the FAN activity referenced in this resource has been supported through the various FAN Film Exhibition Funds as part of the BFI's 2022 'Film Forever' strategy. This will be replaced by the upcoming Screen Culture 2033 strategy. There is also currently FAN Network support available to exhibitors who want to further their fund-raising skills or need advice about where to apply for funding:

[The Independent Cinema Office Guide to Fundraising](#) (Ellen McGuinness)

This is an essential starting point for those that need some guidance on how and where to applying for funding:

"The purpose of this guide is to give organisations working in the cinema exhibition sector an overview of good fundraising practice across grant fundraising, sponsorship and corporate support and as well as fundraising from individuals."

FAN Hubs

For smaller scale activity, (in the current BFI 2022 FAN 2 phase) Hub Members can apply for Audience Pitch Pot funding from their lead Hub organisation. The amount of funding available varies between the Hubs but the pots are there to cover the costs involved for activities focusing on cultural engagement. Focus areas include developing young audiences (16-30), promoting inclusivity, and showcasing screen heritage.

FAN Advice Sessions

Free to all Hub Members, the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) offer advice sessions with advisors that can help you with a range of topics from constructing a budget to putting together a marketing plan, or attracting new audiences. In this case there are advisors that can specifically support you in working with young people in whatever capacity you feel will best suit your organisation, including fundraising for specific projects. The Advice Sessions consist of a half-day meeting (either in-person or virtually) with your advisor followed by a report outlining practical next steps to advance your project.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

[Charity Commission Young Trustees guide](#)

[Meaningful Youth Participation](#)

[Digital Cinema Media: Understanding the UK cinema audience](#)

[The Independent Cinema Office Guide to: How to Develop Audiences for Independent Cinema](#)

[The Independent Cinema Office Film Education Guide](#)

[WYFN: Young people and independent cinema: developing a marketing/outreach plan](#)

[Film Hub South West: What do young people really want from your cinema?](#)

[Arts Award: Young people's advice to arts and cultural organisations](#)

[Arts Council England: Young people taking the lead](#)

[Young Consultants at This Way Up: The Radical in the Practical](#)

[What is co-design?](#)

APPENDICES

A. Additional Young Programmer Group examples running across the UK

Edinburgh International Film Festival Young Programmers are a group of 15–19-year-olds with a real passion for film. Meeting weekly they work together to select, promote, and host films for Filmhouse and the Edinburgh International Film Festival.

HOME Young Creatives, Manchester. This programme is for 15–25-year-olds who are interested in developing creative skills or pursuing a career in the creative industries. Throughout each year, a series of workshops, projects and commissioning opportunities are held for this aged group. Projects are led by industry professionals and the high-quality sessions are relevant to real careers in the creative industries.

Derby Film Festival Young Programmers. From August to November 2021, Rebekah Taylor from Derby QUAD launched the first iteration of the Derby Film Festival Young Programmers which consisted of 8 young people aged 18–30 who contributed to the programming of the festival.

BFI Young Programmers Festival, Sheffield Showroom. The BFI Young Programmers Festival was planned and put together by 36 talented 16–19-year-olds from the BFI Film Academy Specialist Programming Course, which runs at Showroom Cinema each year.

Flatpack Festival: Build Your Own Film Night is a workshop package devised by Flatpack, giving young people the skills and knowledge to put on their own pop-up film events. Running since 2016, the programme has engaged over 300 young people in film programming and event production across the Midlands as well as reaching audiences in excess of 3000.

Cinema For All Young Film Programmers Network is a Facebook group for film exhibitors, aged 30 or under, that are dedicated to putting on volunteer-led cinema screening in their community: "As part of the Young Film Programmer's network we share interviews with cinemas that are led by 16–30-year-olds, to encourage peer to peer learning and shine a light on the amazing events that groups up and down the country are putting on."

APPENDICES

BFI Film Academy Young Programmers. Ten young people from all over the UK preview film submissions for BFI Future Film Festival, programme, and host events online and in venue, create marketing and editorial content, and really become the face of BFI Film Academy events.

Bridport Arts Centre, Young Programmers. Bridport Arts Centre's main film audience is aged 40 - 60 years old and there was little on offer to attract a younger more diverse audience, including children and young people. To respond to this, Bridport Arts devised a programme employing a member of the BACstage Youth Theatre (aged 14 years) for four months to assist and develop a season of films and activities which were designed to appeal to the 16-30 age group.

Cromarty Community Cinema: New Navigations. Launched in July 2021, Cromarty Community Cinema worked with 5 Young Programmers in the production and delivery of 6 weeks of film screening and events.

B. Young Programmers in their own words

Interview with Isra Al Kassi

Ffilm Ifanc Young Programmers on their 'Film Feels Curious' programme

Storyhouse Young Film Programmers on their 'Sherman Brothers' programme

C. Youth Film Festivals UK Case studies

Wales Youth Festival Network (WYFN) is an informal network for supporting film festivals and venues across Wales to screen independent films to young audiences aged 15-26.

Three Films Festival, Wales. Part of the Wales Youth Festival Network, Three Films Festival was a three-day short online film festival showcasing films made for and by young people aged 15-25.

APPENDICES

Playback Virtual Film Festival: LUMI, Reimagine, Remake, Replay (RRR) and Zeppo Arts. Working in partnership, three organisations across Northern Ireland recruited young people aged 16-26 to participate in a 4-week event management course with the aim to produce a virtual film festival.

D. Examples of Festival and organisations that have worked with young writers

Hippodrome Cinema Bo'ness, Falkirk. For the 2022 edition of their Silent Film Festival, Hippodrome Cinema Bo'ness partnered with the department of film studies at the University of St Andrews to recruit young people to report on the festival programme as part of their course. The rationale behind this programme was to develop the students' critical skills, receive training from film critic and historian Pamela Hutchinson, learn historiographic methods and contribute to regional film culture through the festival's blog.

New Wave Jury Programme, Cornwall Film Festival. Formally known as the Youth Jury Programme, the New Wave Jury Programme opportunity helps those aged 18-25 living, studying and/or working in the South West to develop their interest in film criticism.

The 2021 EIFF Youth Young Critics Programme offers free professional mentorship for young film writers aged 18-25 based across the UK. The project's dedicated aim is to find new voices and nurture fresh talent, affirming the future of film criticism.

Rife Magazine is a youth-led platform is based at Watershed, Bristol, and every six months three new content creators are hired to make everything you see on the website, from thought-provoking articles to powerful videos, and to promote it on social media. Often this will be the first creative job their creators have ever held and are invited to join Rife because of their enthusiasm and ideas they bring to the table.

Film Critics Workshop: Video Essays, Watershed as part of Cinema Rediscovered. This annual programme isn't specifically aimed at young people but rather aspiring and early career film critics and video essay makers.

APPENDICES

E. Examples of Youth Advisory Boards

Arts Council England Youth Advisory Board. The Youth Advisory Board consists of 18 young people from across the North of England as part of a pilot programme. Together they work with staff throughout the organisation to ensure the voices of children and young people are at the heart of what they do.

Edinburgh International Film Festival: Young Advisory Group. Made up of a small group of 19–25-year-olds, the Young Advisory Group curate the EIFF New Visions Competition which is open to all young filmmakers in Scotland. Acting as figureheads for EIFF Youth strand, group members will also get the opportunity to co-host events at the festival.

Exeter Phoenix Young Audience Panel. Exeter Phoenix recruited 14 young people to join the Young Audience Panel to feed into the building of a new youth audience development strategy. In return, they were invited to attend a series of workshops that were aimed at furthering the group's knowledge and skill set with regards to Film Exhibition and provided members opportunities to produce creative content, host film events and programme titles.

GLOSSARY

Empower: Not to be conflated with confidence, to empower someone is to provide them with the material means to determine their future, gaining a seat at the table for decisions that affect them, or gaining meaningful decision-making authority.

Co-design: Co-design is about challenging the imbalance of power held by individuals, who make important decisions about others' lives, livelihoods and bodies. Often, with little to no involvement of the people who will be most impacted by those decisions. Co-design seeks to change that through prioritising relationships, using creative tools and building capability. It uses inclusive convening to share knowledge and power.

Co-production: Co-production is when you as an individual influence the support and services you receive, or when groups of people get together to influence the way that services are designed, commissioned and delivered.

Threshold Anxiety: It's the stress of an unfamiliar situation, arising when a person feels threatened or uncomfortable by a new situation or place. Taken from [this article written by Johnny Tull](#).

Young Programmers: This refers to a group of young people aged anywhere between 14-30 who are welcomed into an organisation or film festival to curate and programme a specialised film season. This is a great way to provide young people with creative and professional experience of the creative sector as well as bringing an authentic youth voice to the forefront of your cultural output.

Reverse Mentoring: At its core, Reverse Mentoring is a way to encourage and foster knowledge sharing between generations. Also known as "upward mentoring", it is when a more junior member of staff or a young person new to an organisation, mentors someone more senior than them. The idea is that they can share their expertise and personal lived experience to with the senior colleague in order to educate them on issues relating to them such as the changing cultural landscape and inclusion & diversity issues.

GLOSSARY

Youth Voice: Refers to the distinct ideas, opinions, attitudes, knowledge and actions of young people as a collective body. The term youth voice often groups together a diversity of perspectives and experiences, regardless of backgrounds, identities, and cultural differences ([Wikipedia](#)).

Onboarding: Sometimes referred to "organisational socialisation", onboarding refers to the processes in which new hires are integrated into an organisation. It includes activities that allow new employees to complete an initial new-hire orientation process, as well as learn about the organisation and its structure, culture, vision, mission and values.

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- Storyhouse, Chester
- Glasgow Film Theatre
- Hippodrome, Bo'Ness
- The Phoenix, Exeter
- Barbican, London
- Alhambra, Keswick
- Wicked Wales and the Welsh Youth Film Festival Network
- Leeds Young Film
- Nerve Centre, Derry-Londonderry
- Edinburgh Filmhouse/Edinburgh International Film Festival
- Belmont Filmhouse
- Into Film
- BFI
- BIFA
- MASSIVE
- DCM
- Sound Connections
- Young Voices Heard
- Upstarts Projects
- Arts Council England
- The Palace, Broadstairs
- Discovery Film Festival/DCA
- HeadStart, Wolverhampton
- Blaze Arts
- All in this Together, Wales
- Beyond Sticky Notes
- Wild Rumpus
- Effervescent
- Sinema Pontio
- The Lines Between
- Cinema for All

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