

CAROUSEL PRESENTS
OSKA BRIGHT
FILM FESTIVAL

**WELCOMING LEARNING
DISABLED AUDIENCES
BACK**



HOW WE HELP CINEMAS

**THE WORLD'S
BIGGEST
LEARNING DISABILITY
FILM FESTIVAL**



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

CINEMAGOING TODAY

At Oska Bright Film Festival we believe in the power of cinema to bring people together.

The pandemic changed how things are for cinemas and we know that the next year or two will be all about doing all we can to bring audiences back and making sure that our venues have a future.

We have a responsibility to play our part in helping the exhibition sector recover.

2023 FINDS THE CINEMA SECTOR IN A MOMENT OF HUGE CHANGE.

When a period of ongoing growth in annual ticket sales which had lasted since the 1980s was cut short by the pandemic, our relationship with the very idea of cinemagoing was challenged in an entirely new way.

For 15 months, cinemas remained mostly closed or only partly open, and with a limited programme of films available.

With a backlog of movies unable to reach audiences via the intended destination of the cinema screen, the industry quickly pivoted. Films were fast-tracked to audiences under Lockdown via sped-up VOD releases, with films landing on streaming platforms such as Disney+ or Amazon Prime, cutting cinemas out of the equation.



A range of new options also emerged via cinemas' own online platforms or via distributors who were able to mount content on their own platforms, presenting them in partnership with cinemas online.

For the cinema goer, this suspension of our filmgoing habits and the emergence of a new and more accessible online experience has left cinemagoing a less fundamental part of our lives.

As a sector we're still learning what is exactly happening, but it is clear that our audiences are different: more selective of what they watch in a cinema, younger, and certainly seeming to migrate towards more spectacle-led, 'bigger' entertainment.

Whilst the number of cinema screens is still growing, and records are still being broken, there's a more

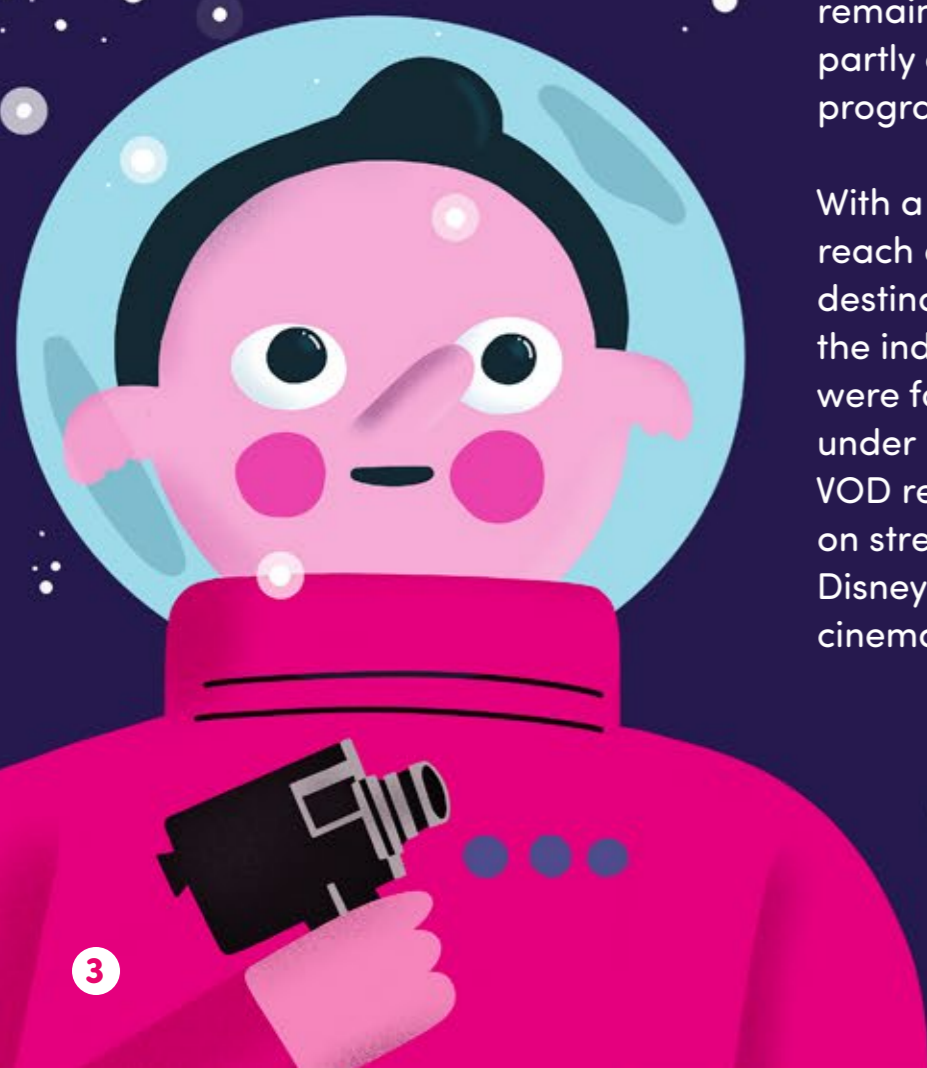
apparent distinction between large blockbuster studio titles and the smaller, more diverse films enjoyed in our independent cinemas.

These changes, this uncertain environment, and an audience now more aware of the value of the pound in its pocket than ever before, does not foster risk taking when making our choices.

Since 2020, Oska Bright Film Festival has been working with the cinema sector to help navigate this new landscape. Whilst our cinemas must be focused on survival and growth of post Lockdown audiences, we are working hard to ensure that learning disabled audiences are not left behind.

We've done this by creating new conversations with learning disabled people across the UK, by talking and working with exhibitors and by providing access to films made and selected by learning disabled filmmakers and programmers to cinemas.

Most importantly, we have been training our cinema colleagues in the best ways to welcome back our learning-disabled friends and family members with confidence.



THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CINEMAS

In 2022, Oska Bright Film Festival contacted cinemas across the UK to find out their thoughts on current provision in their programmes and about how they worked with learning disabled people.

Whilst we contacted hundreds of cinemas, we saw just around **10%** of organisations respond. This in itself is a telling statistic, and means that we have more work to do.

However, within these respondents we saw signs of a sector willing and eager to ensure that its doors are open to all and that our organisations are ready to be welcoming spaces for everyone.

50% of venues want to prioritise development of an offer for learning disabled audiences in their venues over the next three years (but **32%** still don't know if it will be a priority).

14% of venues already have a learning disabled person as a member of paid staff!

86% offer Enhanced/accessible screenings!

32% of organisations have a specific budget set aside for access programmes in general, but only **3%** have a budget line to support work with learning disabled audiences, or to present work made by learning disabled people.

In the future, exhibitors would mostly like to offer more screenings, more training for staff and more paid work or volunteering offers for learning disabled people.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO GROW THIS WORK?

Right now there are barriers to providing a greater provision of opportunities for learning disabled audiences. Exhibitors told us that these include a lack of training or specialist skills or dedicated staff resources in-house, limited knowledge of local partners, and most organisations said that a lack of dedicated funds or resources was a major hurdle for them.

Echoing this information, respondents also told us that a Hub-wide specialist role dedicated to developing audiences for learning disabled audiences was a popular option, and it was selected by **55%** of respondents.

HOW COULD OSKA BRIGHT FILM FESTIVAL HELP YOUR VENUE?

We work with cinemas in a number of ways. Here's what they said they needed to best engage with learning disabled cinema audiences:

68%

68% want films made by learning disabled audiences to screen.

68%

68% want help to prepare plans and people by being a training provider.

59%

59% want connections made with local partner organisations.

59%

59% want help to make front line staff ready, by way of customer service training.

55%

55% need us to be a source of useful information.

55%

55% want help to prepare their spaces – working with exhibitors on venue walkthroughs, and helping identify physical barriers to attendance. **45%** of respondents would like support with wider venue audits.



THE BIG PICTURE - THE UK LEARNING DISABLED CINEMA AUDIENCE



There are **1.5 million** Learning disabled people in the UK.

120,000 CEA Cards are issued in the UK each year.

There are **700,000** Autistic people in the UK.

80% of learning disabled people go to the cinema with another person.

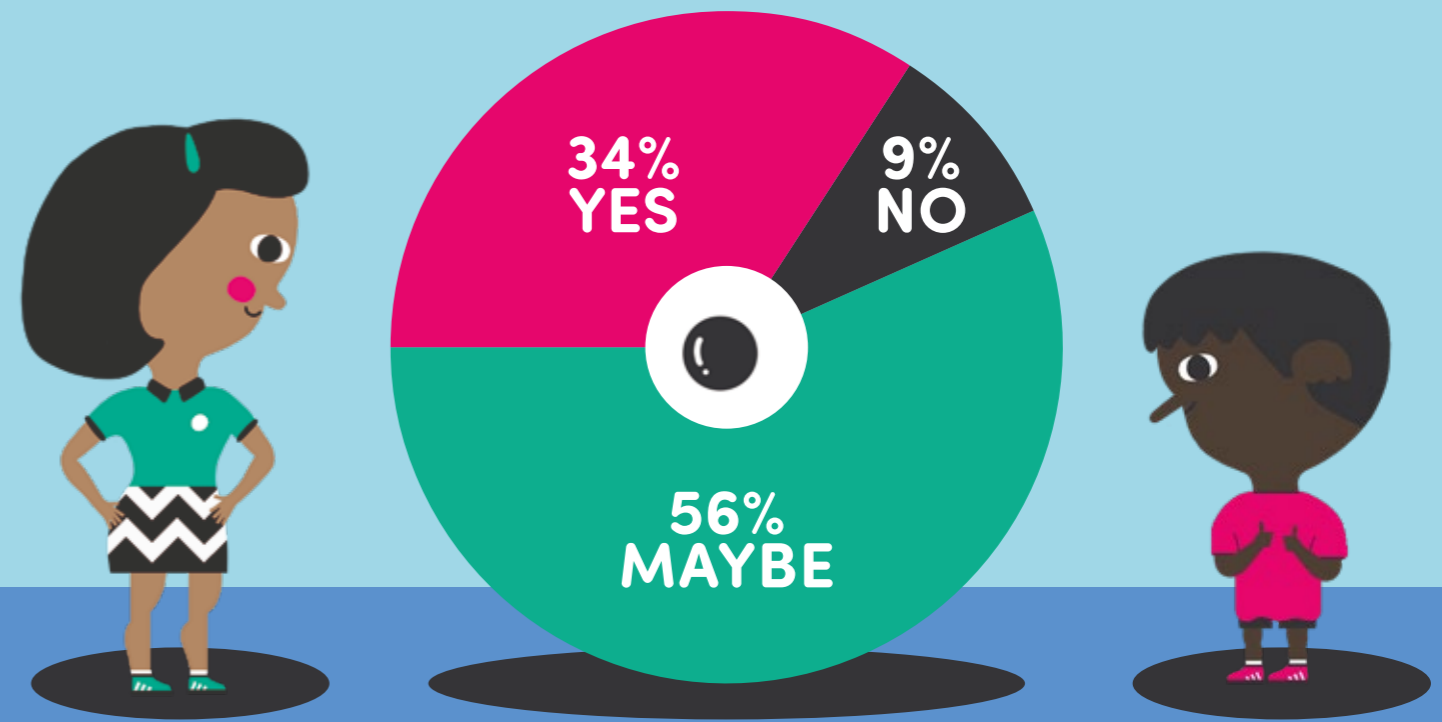
BARRIERS TO LEARNING DISABLED AUDIENCES IN ACCESSING CINEMA

When we talked to learning disabled audiences about how they view the cinema experience we found out that right now they are unsure about their relationship with the pastime of going to the cinema. They need to know that the spaces they visit are safe and ready for them.

Whilst our cinemas may be fit for purpose, we need to make sure that this is clear.



WILL YOU BE GOING BACK TO THE CINEMA SOON?



WHAT WOULD MAKE LEARNING DISABLED PEOPLE FEEL MORE WELCOME?

Walkthroughs / getting to know the spaces before I visit to watch a film

Knowing where things are in the building

Staff on hand to help me

Knowing there are films that I want to see on at times I want to go to the cinema

Staff who have been trained

Knowing there is space in the cinema to move around

Accepting concession tickets without having to prove I'm disabled

Knowing it's OK to express myself

WHAT WE HAVE DONE AND ARE DOING

Since 2020, Oska Bright Film Festival has...

...Had 16,000 people

in our audiences for films made by learning disabled people.

...Had 1,402 people

working in cinemas benefit from our sector support training or advice sessions (1:1 advice sessions, programming training and support, Welcome Back Training).

...Supported

the releases of the films *Sanctuary*, *Theo* and *the Metamorphosis*, and *The Reason I Jump*.

...Become

BAFTA and BIFA accredited.

...Delivered

training and support in 5 countries outside the UK.



OUR TOP BEST PRACTICE TIPS FOR CINEMAS

1

Audience development – social media is great, but more traditional marketing methods will better help you reach learning disabled audiences. Phone day centres and group homes, and follow up with flyers that staff can hand out to people.

2

Make a walkthrough of your venue so that people know what will happen and where to go when they arrive.

3

Advertise that you accept the CEA card, or better still, that you offer disabled concession tickets without proof of disability.

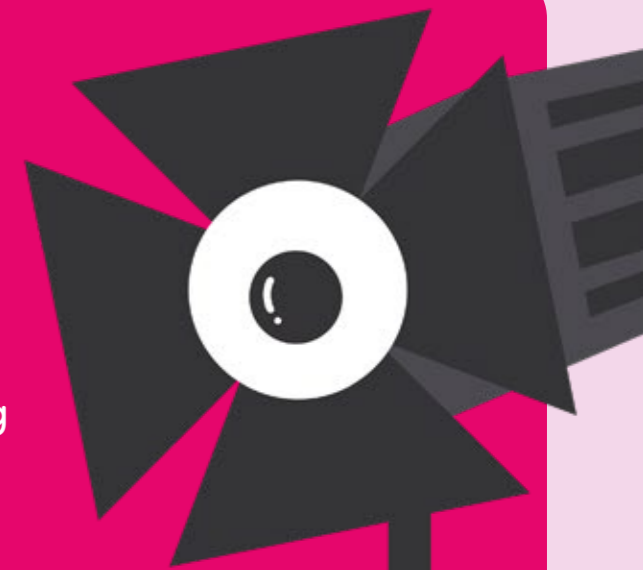
4

Think about your programming. You don't stop having a learning disability or autism at 18, so offer films that aren't just for kids in your relaxed screenings.

5

Be friendly and welcoming. It sounds simple, but it's so important. When someone sees a friendly face they feel safe and welcomed and they'll want to come back.

We are on hand and available to support you to develop these audiences. With over 40 years' experience as an organisation, and with learning disabled leaders at the helm, we can guide you to be inclusive and welcoming venues.



WELCOME BACK - OUR CINEMA SUPPORT PROGRAMME



After two years of lockdown and navigating a global pandemic, Oska Bright wanted to support the industry to reopen and bring back learning disabled and autistic audiences.

Welcome Back was launched in 2021, and sought to be a supportive partner for venues looking to develop these audiences.

In our first year we worked with Edinburgh Filmhouse and Festival, Derby QUAD and the Barbican, London.

We spoke to Jonathan Gleneadie, Cinema Administrator, Barbican, to hear how they approached the work and what's next for them.

Q. Why did you want to develop this audience segment?

A. At the Barbican Cinema, we are committed to offering access to all audiences. We have had Relaxed screenings in place for a few years but the audiences had not picked up as we had hoped, so we decided to modify our approach and begin to utilise different ways of marketing to this audience and using outreach to get in touch with local groups.

Learning disabled audiences have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic so we felt it imperative to work even harder to connect with them.

Q. How long have you been doing relaxed screenings?

A. Barbican Cinema have been offering Relaxed screenings since 2016.

Q. What do they include?

A. Initially this was one screening each month which was part of our new release programme. In 2019 we included another weekday evening screening to increase the breadth and accessibility of the programme. We have now held some events with Oska Bright Film Festival which have been successful and were a great way to engage the audience. We will continue to look where we can to include the Relaxed format more widely our programme.

HOW THE OSKA BRIGHT TEAM WORK WITH CINEMAS

Oska Bright Film Festival is managed and delivered by a team of learning disabled and autistic people. With years of experience of working in the sector and connecting the community with screens across the UK and the world, our team are well placed to work with you on developing audiences.

We work in a holistic way, tailoring our approach to each venue and addressing the barriers from both sides. Through programming, audience development, venue walkthroughs and audits, we're able to support you to make learning disabled and autistic people part of your core audience.

Q. How you think things have been going?

A. I think we still have a long way to go but I've been heartened by the recent screenings and the audience engagement with the diversifying programme. For the latest screening we had in June, the audiences for both the Queer Freedom and Emerging Filmmakers events were strong and showed signs of continued engagement from previous events.

Q. Where would you like the work to go next?

A. I would like to expand our Relaxed screenings to include more events from across our programme. We are being very careful to walk before running though so are making sure to focus on the developing audience we currently have before moving on to new projects, but the future is exciting with a lot of opportunities on the horizon!



HOW EXHIBITORS CAN GET INVOLVED WITH OSKA BRIGHT FILM FESTIVAL

We are currently developing our new Welcome Back support network.

Complementing the Welcome Back support programme that we offer to exhibitors, this new network is comprised of a group of people who will meet every two months to discuss the wider needs of learning disabled people in cinemas and how the sector can support this.

Our initial network members currently include a range of exhibitors from independent cinemas across the UK and larger cinema chains, as well as representatives of cinema industry bodies.

These include:

Barbican, London

Glasgow Film

HOME, Manchester

Hyde Park Picture House, Leeds

Into Film

Picturehouse Cinemas

The Light Cinemas

We want to ensure that we are asking the right questions and providing the right answers for our sector and for our audiences. Now is exactly the time we should be making sure that our cinema spaces are ready. For updates on our work and the network, please visit <https://oskabright.org>.

If you would like to know more about the Welcome Back network please get in touch with us via oskabright@carousel.org.uk.

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