

# A Guide to Relaxed Cinema Marketing & Communications

As this PDF has a number of links embedded within it, we recommend that where possible, you view it on a computer or mobile device.

This PDF will continue to be updated over time.

Version 1 - September 2024

Developed by Midnight Memphis at



Supported by



**Contents:**

**Part 1: About this guide**

**Part 2: Connecting with potential audiences**

**Part 3: Information to include in marketing materials and on your website**

**Part 4: Raising awareness, acceptance and connecting to community initiatives**

## **Part 1: About this guide.**

Relaxed Screenings are cinema or film screenings which include adjustments to help create a more accessible and inclusive experience for neurodivergent and disabled audiences who have specific access requirements.

The neurodivergent and disabled community is diverse and people can have a range of access requirements. There are also varying levels of public and audience awareness and acceptance of these access requirements at public events. It is important to be clear about who the screenings you plan are primarily tailored for, both within your organisation and in your marketing. Currently, two of the most common types of screenings which feature in cinemas are based on the concept of “Autism-Friendly” screenings and “Dementia-Friendly” screenings.

This guide primarily focuses on autistic and/or learning disabled audiences which are screenings based on an “Autism-Friendly” concept. However, we have included some links which can help support research and implementation of Dementia-Friendly screenings which you may find useful.

Adjustments commonly made include:

- Changes to lighting, such as keeping it on at a low level during the screening.
- Changes to volume, with a lower volume level.
- Providing a break-out or chill out space for people to take time out during a screening or event.
- Relaxed policy that embraces noise and movement in the cinema during the film

It can also include:

- Capping the cinema sales - not selling out every seat for a screening, leaving space for audience members to move around.
- Providing relevant staff training such as disability equity, autism awareness, dementia awareness training etc.
- Providing additional access formats such as Descriptive Subtitles or audio description for the screening.
- Not showing trailers before films
- Providing accessible marketing materials - considering formats such as Easy Read and captioned videos.
- Providing additional accessible signage in the venue.
- Reducing sensory stimuli in the overall environment of the venue for example providing paper towels instead of using hand dryers in toilets or lowering or omitting foyer music.
- Any other adjustments necessary to tailor the experience for the audience.

**There are some resources have been developed to help you design your relaxed cinema events such as:**

- **A guide to “autism-friendly” Relaxed Screenings by Dimensions. [Click here](#) for more information.**
- **A guide to “dementia-friendly” Relaxed Screenings by the Alzheimer’s Society. [Click here](#) for more information.**

**This guide focuses on how to plan marketing and communications strategies to promote your events.**

This guide is intended to support venues who are at all stages of their relaxed cinema journey, so it may be that you already do some of these things.

Relaxed Screenings work best when considered holistically within venues, with a view to embed access measures across all organisational practice. Someone’s access requirements can vary, change over time and sometimes clash with others,, so evolving policies and procedures to provide clear approaches to this in cinemas should be considered continuous work.

**Please note: Links and external resources referred to in this guide are not created by Beacon Films. They are provided in good faith and are to be used at your own discretion.**

## **Part 2: Connecting with potential audiences**

**Familiarise yourself with current preferred terms in your target community.**

Use of language is important when engaging with audiences. You will want to make sure your choice of language and terminology around disability and neurodiversity is supportive, affirming and unlikely to upset potential audiences.

Language preferences can change over time so it is important to revisit this when needed. It is also important to remember that different people prefer different terms. For example there is a strong preference within the adult autistic community to use “identity-first” language (autistic person) but some people prefer to use person-first language (person with autism) and some people don’t mind either term. We would recommend identity-first language in this case due to current research indicating a preference for this within the adult autistic community.

A guide to neurodiversity affirming language can be found [here](#).

A guide to disability inclusive language can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

### **Create a spreadsheet of relevant organisations:**

Reaching audiences who may not usually come to your venue is a key part of providing Relaxed Cinema. It can help to create a list of local organisations to connect with who may help you spread the word about your Relaxed Cinema offer.

This could include local:

- SEN Schools and Colleges
- Mainstream Schools - find out the contact for their SenCo who supports neurodivergent students
- Signposting organisations such as local SENDIASS
- Disability Arts Organisations
- Parent Carer Forums
- Carers Centres
- Daycare Services
- Disability and neurodiversity support services
- Self Advocacy groups
- Healthcare organisations

You could also add local:

- Libraries
- Community Centres
- Other Arts Organisations who provide accessible/ relaxed events.
- Any organisations which are connected to the themes of chosen film titles for screenings.

Make sure you also advertise the screenings in your regular marketing.

### **Create an email list of potential customers.**

Before gathering people's email addresses, ensure that you do so in accordance with a compliant data protection / privacy policy.

You may use a marketing automation platform (MAP) for emails, examples of which include:

- Mailchimp
- Dotdigital (this can be provided for non-profits by Charity Digital)

Some email marketing services have a widget which you can embed on your website, and will automatically add people who sign up to the mailing list. Consider setting up an option for people to choose to receive specific information about Relaxed or accessible events.

### **Part 3: Information to include in marketing materials and on your website**

#### **Create a dedicated page on your website for Relaxed Cinema and events information.**

There can be a lot of specific information to include about Relaxed Cinema so it can help to have a dedicated page to refer customers to. This can feature:

- Information about the access measures in place for your Relaxed events
- Links to the upcoming screenings or events.

#### **Information about the access measures in place for Relaxed Screenings**

Tailor this to the adjustments your Relaxed Screenings or events have, for example:

- Are the lights lower?
- Is the volume on a low level?
- Are there any Ads and trailers before the film?
- Is the screening capped (reduced ticket sales to allow personal space and space to move around?)
- Is the seating allocated or unallocated?
- Do the staff have relevant disability awareness training or experience?
- Can disabled customers claim a free companion ticket? What if they need more than one support person to attend?
- Does the screening have Descriptive Subtitles/ HOH captions?
- Is there a chill-out or break-out space available during the screening? How does someone access it?
- Do you have a walk through video and/or a visual guide to the venue?

If you provide several types of Relaxed Screenings or events aimed at different audiences, you will need to provide clear information about each.

#### **Links to upcoming screenings or events**

Include information or links to information about upcoming Relaxed Screenings or events and booking information. This should include:

## Film information

- What is the film about? Provide a synopsis
- Does this film have audio description available?
- Does this film have Descriptive Subtitles (aka HOH captions) available?
- Does this film contain flashing lights or sequences? - if so this **MUST** be clearly marked in marketing and with a sign at Box office/ outside the cinema.
- Content - what is the [BBFC](#) certificate and content information about the film?
- If a film does not have a BBFC certificate (this can be the case for short film programmes) you should provide some information about the content of the film. Please note that this is currently an under-researched area which lacks clear guidance on what information to provide. See [here](#) for an article on the subject by the Independent Cinema Office.


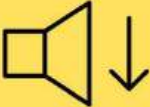




## Use of pictures and icons for access measures

You can help to make some of this information easier to understand or recognise in marketing by using pictures or icons.

You could use icons from [Noun Project](#), for example.

This is an example of a slide and icons that Beacon Films uses for its Relaxed Cinema events:

**During this Relaxed Screening...**

-  The lighting will be left on low
-  The sound will be kept down low.
-  There is a chill-out space available if you need to take a break.
-  You can make noise if you need to.
-  You can move around if you need to.
-  The film will have English language descriptive subtitles.

Some access formats and provisions have their own widely recognised or official symbols, for example Changing Places or hearing induction loop system signs.

**Provide a general access page on your website. Link the Relaxed cinema event page to this. This should include information about:**

- Wheelchair access throughout the building
- Toilets (include type e.g. gendered toilets, accessible toilets, nearest Changing Places)
- Hearing loops throughout the building
- Audio description equipment and availability for screenings and shows
- Parking, including any blue badge parking spaces.
- Map of the building
- Photos of the outside and inside of the building
- Photos of staff in uniform - this could link to a staff information page if you have one.
- Walkthrough videos or 360 degree video of the venue
- Familiarisation visits - If and how someone can book a pre-event visit to the venue - who to contact.
- Can disabled customers claim a free companion ticket? What if they need more than one support person to attend? Do you recognise a scheme such as the CEA card?
- Seat size - for more information check out the film “Your Fat Friend” access information by [clicking here](#).
- Information about chill-out, quiet or break-out spaces available.
- Availability of ear defenders and/or ear plugs
- Availability of sensory or fidget toys or aides.
- Current Covid safety measures
- Availability of covid safety PPE such as face masks and hand sanitiser
- Do staff have any disability awareness or equity training?
- Does the organisation follow the social model of disability?
- Who is the staff contact or department to contact about access queries for customers?

### **Create a walk-through video for Relaxed Screenings**

You can help audiences to feel more confident about visiting your venue or event by providing a walk-through video on your website and social media.

Here are some things to think about including in your Relaxed screenings walkthrough video:

- Include a description of what the video is for (eg: for a Relaxed Screening) and why it might be useful (eg: to find out more about the venue before your visit)
- Are the relaxed screenings usually on the same screen? If not you may need to provide footage of all or several screens, or state that it might not always take place in the same screen.
- Include information about wheelchair access
- Include information about location of toilets in relation to the auditorium
- Information about the location of the break-out/ chill-out space in relation to the auditorium, how to access it and whether this may change.
- Information about where to get refreshments
- Show the inside of all spaces where possible

### **Provide a Visual Guide to the cinema**

**Social stories** are a trademarked idea which is a guide to help someone navigate a social situation. This could include going to a cinema. Social Stories are usually focused on one person's specific access and communication requirements and are developed by working together with the person. Dimensions have created a social stories template for going to the cinema which can be adapted with your own photos and pictures. You can find it by [clicking here](#).

**Visual guides** work in a similar way in that they are a step-by-step picture or photo guide to visiting a cinema or venue, however the guides are intended for broader audiences.

If you add a visual guide to your website, make sure it can easily be downloaded and printed out.

As these guides are often created with neurodivergent people in mind, you may need to consider the language used in these pieces of communication. For example, some people can take language literally and so you should consider adapting language which may be ambiguous and easily misinterpreted.

Things to think about for a visual guide:

- Include a description of what the guide is for (e.g. for a Relaxed screening) and why it might be used (e.g. to find out more about the venue before your visit).
- Provide photos of the venue in the sequence of a walkthrough the venue and what might happen in it - for example you buy tickets from the box office, you can take a lift or stairs to the cinema etc.

- Are the relaxed screenings usually on the same screen? If not, you may need to provide photos of all or several screens, or state that it might not always take place in the same screen.
- Include information about wheelchair access
- Include information about toilets location in relation to the cinema or the journey through the venue.
- Information about the break-out/ chill-out space in relation to the cinema, how to access it and if this may change.
- Use simple language and an accessible sans-serif font in a minimum of 14pt.

The visual guide can be provided as a PDF download for your website. You can also print some out for your Box Office. You could also email a link to customers who have booked in advance of a screening.

## Pricing Schemes

You may want to consider trying pricing schemes which centre financial accessibility. These can include:

- Pay What You Can
- Pay What You Decide

[Here is an Arts Professional article](#) that examines the difference between these variations.

Try to provide clear and specific information for these pricing schemes and how they work. They can be confusing for some neurodivergent people who need clear information about the price or the expectations for this. It may help to provide a recommended general ticket price or guide price when using these pricing schemes.

## Concessions

If you provide concession priced tickets for screenings, be clear about what “proof” may be needed. Where possible, aim to avoid asking for any unnecessary personal documents, for example about a person’s disability or benefits.

Make sure you include any information about free companion and carer tickets you provide, which can be considered a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person to be able to attend an event. For more information, see the **Access Schemes** section in part 3 of this guide.

## Social media

When creating social media posts for relaxed screenings, aim to

- Use clear simple language where possible
- Add alt text to your images and/or make sure any text embedded within an image is repeated as ordinary text in the post itself - [Click here](#) to download a guide created by the RNIB.
- Add captions to videos - these can either be open captions, which are 'burnt into' the film, or closed captions which can be switched on or off and which all major social media platforms support. Beacon Films offers a captioning service, as well as training for marketing staff, which follows OFCOM guidelines. Please get in touch with us to find out more ([info@beaconfilms.org.uk](mailto:info@beaconfilms.org.uk)).
- You can also find guidelines on how to caption a video [here](#) and [here](#).

## **Part 3: Raising awareness, acceptance and connecting to community initiatives**

### **Making access visible**

General audience awareness and acceptance of Relaxed Screenings and their audiences is crucial to creating inclusive environments.

You can help raise awareness of accessibility in cinemas by creating inclusive marketing and information as described above.

You can also consider:

- Identifying events as "Relaxed" in marketing, wherever possible, including on tickets and through ticket booking systems or platforms.
- Providing targeted marketing which uses Easy Read or other accessible formats such as large print, video or audio.
- Providing staff with training on producing Easy Read information (find out about EasyReadUK's training by [clicking here](#)).
- Creating a specific leaflet to provide information about access measures in screenings and across the venue.
- Joining the **Sunflower Lanyard Scheme**. This is a national initiative to enable people to signal that they have a hidden disability and may need assistance. Find out more [here](#).

- Joining the **Dementia Friends** scheme, an Alzheimer's Society initiative to help people learn about dementia so they can help their community. Find out more [here](#).
- Joining a **Safe Places** scheme. These are venues which actively welcome people who are feeling anxious, scared or at risk as they are out and about. Find out more [here](#).

### **Providing an information video about Relaxed Screenings.**

Through their Film Factory, Beacon Films have created 2 films you may wish to use. These can help with audience awareness and understanding of what will happen during a Relaxed Screening.

Film 1 - "How Relaxed Screenings Work" which can be shown before a Relaxed Cinema Screening. You can view this film on our website [here](#).

Film 2 - "What Relaxed Screenings Are" which can be shown before regular screenings in cinemas or on social media to help promote awareness of your screenings to general audiences. You can view this [here](#).

Use of these films is free of charge, but we do need to keep a record of where they are screened. Please contact Beacon Films at [info@beaconfilms.org.uk](mailto:info@beaconfilms.org.uk) to find out how to use them at your event.

### **Access Schemes**

To support customers who may need to attend with a companion for access requirements, here are a range of access schemes to consider recognising in your venue, including:

- CEA card - [www.ceacard.co.uk](http://www.ceacard.co.uk)
- Hynt card - [www.hynt.co.uk](http://www.hynt.co.uk)
- Carers card - [www.carerscarduk.co.uk](http://www.carerscarduk.co.uk)
- Max card - [www.mymaxcard.co.uk](http://www.mymaxcard.co.uk)

Some theatre and arts venues have their own schemes, which you may want to consider or adapt. If you set up your own scheme which collects and stores access information for customers, you will need to consider data protection and privacy.

If you think we have missed something out, or have any questions about this document, please get in touch with us: [info@beaconfilms.org.uk](mailto:info@beaconfilms.org.uk)