

LIGHTHOUSE



GUIDING LIGHTS

# ACCESS AND INCLUSION GUIDE

By Quiet Down There



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## SECTION 1

# INTRODUCTION

This guide has been commissioned by Lighthouse as part of its Guiding Lights programme.

First launched in 2006, Guiding Lights is the UK film industry's leading mentoring programme, supporting upcoming film talent through high-level mentoring, complemented by training and networking activities. Each participant is matched with a leading film industry mentor who provides advice and guidance over a nine-month period.

For the eighth edition of Guiding Lights, Lighthouse partnered with Carousel and Oska Bright Film Festival to include two learning disabled participants on the

programme, supported by Creative Skillset and Film Hub South East. Quiet Down There (QDT) were commissioned by Lighthouse to assess the approach taken to supporting the participants, evaluate the impact of the project for all parties involved, and produce a set of recommendations for future work.

This guide is a practical companion to a longer evaluation report produced by QDT. It draws on the practical learning that has come specifically from the evaluation materials generated from this project.

## INTRODUCTION

**ABOUT THIS GUIDE**

This guide is for anybody interested in doing the groundwork to make their creative programmes, training and workshops more accessible and inclusive for learning disabled people.

The following will be useful in the planning stages of any creative project, and although in this particular case we talk specifically about the film industry, we have tried to broaden our findings to include other artform areas where possible. At the end, we include some advice around evaluation and sharing best practice.

## INTRODUCTION

# ACCESS AND INCLUSION FOR GUIDING LIGHTS

Access and inclusion for learning disabled people can be really different from project to project. Considerations include scheduling, cost, location, travel, support, communication and key staff. For Guiding Lights, we looked at the overall access and inclusion with a focus on key aspects of the programme such as mentoring, networking, peer support and training sessions.

## INTRODUCTION

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

At the end of this guide, there is a checklist for best practice which can be used as a quick reminder at the outset of a project. It highlights the factors that can make a big difference to how learning disabled people access and experience your work.

More detail about each topic can be found in [Section 2](#).

## SECTION 2

# THEMES & KEY FACTORS

We have broken down the learning into four areas:  
preparation, practical considerations, a successful project and sharing the learning.

## THEMES &amp; KEY FACTORS

**PREPARATION**

Preparation is really important. We found that knowing how to prepare the different people and organisations involved can really improve the quality of the experience for all.

During conversations before the project starts, it's useful to remember that it is common for people with no experience of being with learning disabled people to have some apprehensions. These can include using the right kind of language, communicating effectively, and the worry of causing a negative impact (rather than a positive one). It's important to talk about these concerns openly and encourage others to do the same. If you have a partner on board that works with the learning disabled community, get them to run a session with all staff and partners around language, common apprehensions, and accessibility. Alternatively, use some of the resources identified at the end of this guide to provide people with basic knowledge and build confidence.

It's important to identify a key person, or persons, to be the main point of contact for the participants. These staff members should meet face-to-face with them before the start of the project and be around for the sessions as much as possible, particularly at the start of the project.

Plan how to communicate throughout the project – 'talking about talk' is really important. Ask the participants how best to communicate with them, during each phase of the project, both face-to-face and remotely. Ask if you can share this information with other staff/partners and professionals working on the project – this can help develop relationships in a short space of time and will ensure everybody feels respected and heard.

## THEMES &amp; KEY FACTORS

**PREPARATION (CONT.)**

When working with any project contributors it's crucial to brief them to use simple language and remind them of basic communication facilitators, such as always introducing themselves and remaining open and honest in their communication style.

It is key to consider additional budgeting for the project. More resources will be needed in terms of support, lead organisation staff time, communication adaptation, transport, and accommodation. Talk to the participants in advance of any planned meetings or trips to find out what they will need in terms of

transport, accommodation and other support. For example, they may struggle to access certain types of public transport or need to stay overnight if a meeting/trip starts early or finishes late.

Structure, support and choice build confidence and the ability to participate. We found that having clear opportunities within the programme to build to more independent working, helped facilitate learning and growth. Try and find a consistent approach to pace and style of learning, to make the group accessible for everyone.

## CASE STUDY

# WORKING WITH PARTNERS

On the Guiding Lights programme, participants are matched with high level mentors from the film industry. Both mentors of the two Oska Bright participants reported initially feeling hesitant to mentor learning disabled individuals, partly due to lack of experience, and a lack of time to do the preparation they felt it required. After having sessions with their mentees, both mentors reflected on how they adapted their communication quite instinctively, and how through that process they learnt a lot about their own communication style.



## THEMES &amp; KEY FACTORS

# PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Scheduling is key. Make sure comfort breaks are scheduled into all sessions and create an agreed way for a person to take a break if and when they need one. Networking can be done over breakfast or lunch – consider opportunities that do not exclude people due to alcohol consumption, noise levels or conflicting routines such as medication.

Consider locations for all elements of the project in advance – travelling can be harder for learning disabled people and may also impact on other schedules in their routine. Budget for overnight accommodation or see if key individuals, such as mentors, are happy to travel to them.

Consider how you are disseminating information throughout the project. Social media groups can be a good way to start building relationships but can also be a source of anxiety. More private methods such as WhatsApp may help with direct communication.

Circulating written information in advance will help, including details of the structure of a session and when there will be breaks. Consider how accessible all your communication and marketing about the project is, including your website, social media and print materials, not just the material aimed at the learning disabled participants – they may want to engage with and share wider information about the project.

## CASE STUDY

# PLANNING FOR TRAVEL

One participant travelled from Brighton to Bristol to meet with her mentor. She found the 6-hour return train journey hard and felt the travelling impacted on her ability to get the most from her time with her mentor. It was agreed for the last session that the participant would meet the mentor when the latter was on business in London as it was closer. Speaking to the mentor following the programme, it transpired she'd have been happy to travel to Brighton for meetings, with the costs covered by the scheme, had she known this was an option.



THEMES & KEY FACTORS

# RELATIONSHIPS

Foregrounding your relationship with the participants is key. Remember how powerful stigma is and that building confidence will take time. Keep checking in throughout the process and be open to tweaking arrangements and finding alternative ways of doing things. We have also seen that it's important that support staff develop a relationship with the lead organisation alongside the participants, as that can help them provide better support.

Initially, the relationship between the learning disabled participants and their support staff can be challenging within a mixed abilities group, and can lead to feelings of difference which can hamper relationships with non-disabled participants. Preparing for how the participants would like to be introduced to others, and how they would like the support staff to be introduced at each session, will help alleviate awkwardness and discomfort in this area.

In this project, the two learning disabled participants did report a difficulty making connections with other members of the mentee group – traditional opportunities such as evening networking events did not work for them. Slowing down the pace of a session and giving people more time for reflection and the chance to get to know each

other in smaller groups can help. Smaller interventions such as making a handout with everyone's name, photo and some key facts and information at the beginning could help them start to form relationships.

It's important to note that the relationship between the two learning disabled participants grew and strengthened throughout the programme and they have found a new depth of professional support. Importantly, both also reported they would have struggled to complete the programme if they had been the only learning disabled person in the group.

## CASE STUDY

# A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

One participant talked openly about the stigmatising attitudes towards disability she had experienced in previous educational settings. She described how her experience with Guiding Lights, particularly the mentoring and the visits to film festivals, had built a new confidence and pride, providing a strong alternative story to counter her previous experiences.



## THEMES &amp; KEY FACTORS

**SHARING LEARNING**

It is vital to evaluate your project and include the cost of commissioning an independent body to do this in your budget. Access and inclusion is an on-going process and doing interviews with your main stakeholders in a project like this can be invaluable for your development and growth as an organisation.

Sharing the learning from your project with other organisations is also really important. Allow your learning to be an example to others in your sector, show how it can be done, and how it benefits an organisation.

It is best practice to include learning disabled participants in the evaluation not just as interviewees but also as co-designers. Also important is to 'member check' any findings with the participants to ensure the reporting truly reflects their experience. In order to create meaningful opportunities, consider what will happen once the project has

finished with the participants and support staff. If participants have a transformative experience it's important to build on that and have a plan for what happens next.

Try and join up with others in the sector doing similar work. There is a list at the end of this guide of organisations and networks. Make noise about the importance of the work you are doing.

**NINE GOALS**

# A CHECK LIST FOR BEST PRACTICE

<p><b>01</b> <b>PLANNING</b> ‘Talk about talk’ — discuss communication preferences from the start</p>	<p><b>02</b> <b>PARTNERSHIPS</b> Find and access the expertise you don’t have in your organisation</p>	<p><b>03</b> <b>FINANCE</b> Budget for additional staff time and other resources from the start</p>
<p><b>04</b> <b>TIMETABLING</b> Think about where and when you hold sessions and events</p>	<p><b>05</b> <b>COMMUNICATION</b> Look at how you communicate with participants both face-to-face and remotely</p>	<p><b>06</b> <b>MAKING IT WORK</b> The key components to enable an experience that offers depth and growth for learning disabled participants are structure, support and choice</p>
<p><b>07</b> <b>BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS</b> Foreground the relationship, check-in regularly and keep conversations open throughout the project</p>	<p><b>08</b> <b>EVALUATION</b> Build it in from the start</p>	<p><b>09</b> <b>SHARING EXPERIENCES</b> Let others know about your experiences and join up with others doing similar work</p>

## SECTION 3

**OTHER RELEVANT RESOURCES****Creative Minds Project**

A learning disability led discussion about quality, inclusion, leadership and collaboration in the arts.

<http://www.creativemindsproject.org.uk/community/>

**Access All Areas**

Makes performance with Learning Disabled and Autistic Artists.

<http://www.accessallareastheatre.org/>

**South East Museums**

A self-assessment toolkit designed to enable organisations to develop more accessible and inclusive policies and practices.

<http://southeastmuseums.org/access-all-toolkit>

**Mencap**

The leading voice of learning disability committed to changing the world for everyone with a learning disability.

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/>

**Family Arts**

A selection of resources with information on accessibility, included assisted performances and inclusive practice.

<http://www.familyarts.co.uk/resources/accessibility/>