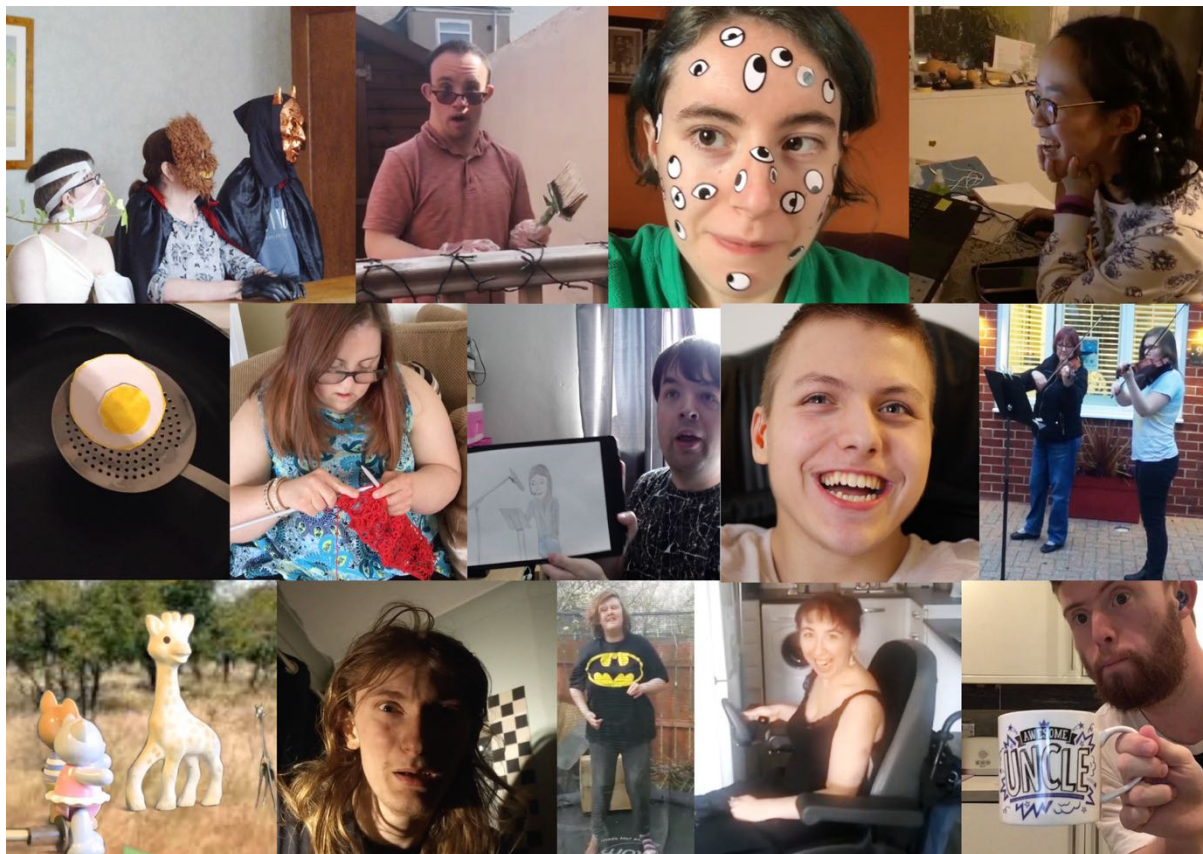




A selection of stills from films made by Beacon Films members during the pandemic lockdowns

View the appendices at padlet.com/beaconfilms/viewfinder
 If you are prompted for a password, please contact will@beaconfilms.org.uk

Introduction

This report covers the period between January 2019 and December 2021. The disruption caused by Covid made this a disjointed period. In addition to on-going delivery of core activity, the first year's work also focused on developing ways to enable member's volunteering. Following the suspension of all venue-based activity in March 2020, the flexibility of funders gave the space for Beacon Films to develop and test new delivery models. As we respond to ongoing waves of infection, these models of work are proving adaptable. Face-to-face, virtual and mixed delivery approaches continue to develop members' filmmaking skills and creative independence.

In parallel, Beacon Films continues to become a more user-led organisation. The project design group – six more experienced members who work with staff to develop project proposals – had its first meeting in July 2019. It has become an established mechanism, with members developing programme ideas and acting as an internal sounding board on broader issues including for emerging findings of this research. Following important work with Inclusion North, Jules Fraser and Zosia Feher formally became Directors of Beacon Films in September 2020.

In April 2020, as part of a regular survey, members were asked about their interest in volunteering. Fifteen out of the twenty-four members who answered indicated that volunteering was not a high priority from them. Considerable discussion of these findings led to a move away from a theory of change/logic model to develop a new organisational outcomes framework and a more focused and individualised approach to setting goals and overcoming barriers. The survey findings, extracts of an internal working paper, and the mapping of funder outcomes to the new framework, are included as appendices at padlet.com/beaconfilms/viewfinder.

This document seeks to capture the delivery, impact and learning from the diverse strands of Beacon Films' work in the changing context of the past three years. Whilst the learning from the first year is included where relevant, the report is forward-looking. In January 2022 an Action Learning process was initiated to provide space for working with colleagues beyond Beacon Films. The focus is around improving the access of people with learning disabilities, autisms and additional needs to employment opportunities in the cultural and heritage sectors. This report and the appendices are structured to enable much of the content to be used in a modular online structure (links at the top of this document) to inform such shared learning initiatives.

The participants in the research are recorded in Appendix 1. Thanks are due to them, the funders, the staff and of course the members of Beacon Films. While best endeavors have been undertaken to ensure the accuracy of this report, all errors remain mine.

Chris Ford, January 2022

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Appendices – please access at padlet.com/beaconfilms/viewfinder

1. Research participants
2. State of Play report
3. Rethinking outcomes
 - a) Beacon Futures Presentation Board Meeting July 2020
 - b) Outcomes Review
 - c) Theory of Change to Outcomes Framework
 - d) Funder outcomes mapped to new framework
4. Online Viewfinder Programme
5. Supported Volunteering Programme evaluation form
6. Cinema Society evaluation
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8. Film Festivals 2019-2021
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10. Great North Museum Internship report
11. HTYT Logging recruitment letter
12. Project Design Group meeting notes January 2022

Easy Read Executive Summary



Beacon Films is a film company of disabled, autistic and neurodivergent filmmakers.



Beacon Films calls the filmmakers they support: **members**



What happened in Viewfinder Plus?



Members improved their film skills.



Members were supported to use these skills to make films for other people and organisations.



Sometimes they were paid to make the film



Sometimes they made the film as a volunteer



Beacon Films gave extra help to **members** who needed support to volunteer.



They ran supported paid placements, including with Great North Museum (see separate case study).



They helped **members** to get paid work with other organisations, like with HTYT which made the Netflix documentary “Rising Phoenix”.



They helped **members** to decide and reach their goals through one-to-one support.



They became more **member-led** during Viewfinder Plus. This means that members were included in more decisions.



Two **members** – Jules and Zosia - became **company directors** which are the people who make decisions about Beacon Films' future.



Beacon Films set up a **Project Design Group** of their members to decide what projects to do.



Beacon Films updated the **outcomes** (positive changes) they want to achieve, with the input of **members**.



What worked and what was difficult?



Generally, the project achieved what it set out to do.



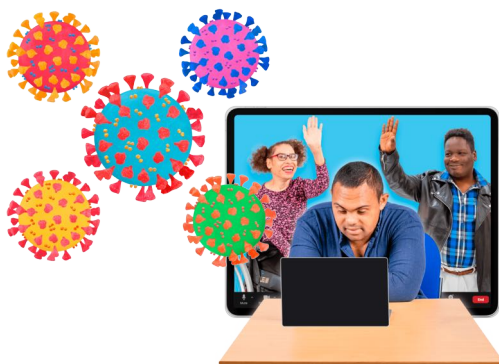
Beacon Films were able to learn from their mistakes.



For example, they changed to working with **members** one-to-one to help them find volunteering, instead of as a group.



There were some things that were a bigger challenge, like:



Covid. Beacon Films moved most of its activity online during the pandemic.



Trying to set up volunteering (or paid work) with organisations that don't focus on working with disabled people.



The balance between an organisation being expected to make changes for an employee / volunteer on the one hand ...



... and the employee / volunteer being supported to take part in existing processes on the other.



The balance between delivering projects on the one hand ...



... and the time needed for the organisation to think about its future on the other.



What we learnt for the future



Responding to the pandemic has helped Beacon Films' to get stronger and respond more quickly to change.



Beacon Films has updated a clear set of organisation **outcomes** that it wants to help its **members** achieve.



Beacon Films is more able to help its **members** achieve personal goals.



They should try to apply for funding and work that fit with these **outcomes** and **members'** goals.

Project Outline



Beacon Films member: Dan leads a filmmaking workshop at the Beacon Films Premiere 2019

Between **January 2019 and December 2021**, Viewfinder Plus supported **55** disabled, autistic and neurodivergent filmmakers to stay connected, and help each other to develop their skills and wellbeing.

Of these, **17** participants went on to contribute their film skills through volunteering within Beacon Films and/or with external organisations.

Of these, **7** participants progressed into some form of paid employment that directly used their film skills.

During this period Beacon Films has become increasingly led by its members.

Developing film making skills.

Beacon Films is a production and training company of disabled, autistic and neurodivergent film makers. Providing training and skills development opportunities is a core role of the organisation. After the arrival of Covid, the established structure of skills workshops was replaced with a diverse online programme. There is evidence that the programme was important in sustaining members' wellbeing as well as continuing to enhance their filmmaking skills.

Enabling volunteering.

Volunteering is sometimes seen as a route towards employment as well as having value in itself. During the period, self/member – led groups and a supported volunteering programme were developed and volunteering opportunities connected to two commissions (Historic England, November Club) were undertaken. The 'Skills Tap' programme which aimed to support a group of members to volunteer was less successful with the learning from it informing future work. Identifying that members had a range of interests in and attitudes to

volunteering, led to considerable organisational development, including the outcomes framework: see table below.

Achieving Next Steps.

A disabling society creates barriers. Working with members to identify their goals reframes barriers as issues to be addressed in order to reach them. Drawing on the learning from the Skills Tap and supported volunteering programmes, the Next Steps initiative developed and tested an approach to personal planning with members. The role of Goal Mentor, which emerged from this work, will be embedded in future activity.

Realising opportunities.

For some members paid employment in the film industry is their goal. During the period there have been three paid placements, two paid commissions and a short term paid role for four members. Currently two of the more experienced members of Beacon Films have ongoing work as paid film makers, and two others have also entered paid employment.

Engaging audiences.

Content for the Forty Films Festival was created during the online workshops during summer 2020. In the period covered by this report, members' work was also promoted through 15 film festivals and similar events. Beacon Films' 2019 Premiere was held in the Great North Museum with an attendance of 200 people.

In the table on the next page the work undertaken between 2019 and 2021 is summarised against the organisational outcomes.

Activity during 2019 – 2021 against Beacon Films' Outcomes (indicative allocation)						
	Beacon Films Skills outcomes	Activity contributing to outcome	Beacon Films Attitudes outcomes	Activity contributing to outcome	Beacon Films Independence outcomes	Activity contributing to outcome
Me (Filmmaker)	1] I'll develop my filmmaking and employability skills	filmmaking skills development governance members sustained contributions placements volunteering	2] I'll improve confidence in my own abilities	filmmaking skills development governance placements self-led groups Star & Shadow cinema volunteering	3] I'll become more independent	filmmaking skills development members sustained contributions placements self-led groups Star & Shadow cinema
We (Beacon Films)	1] We will provide ongoing and tailored support to develop skills and abilities	organisation provides essential underpinning development of all initiatives governance reactive to individuals reactive to opportunities	2] We will promote filmmakers' skills and abilities to the wider community	premiere publications/posting Star & Shadow cinema volunteering including supported programme	3] We will help connect filmmakers (and their abilities) to each other, and their communities	members sustained contributions placements Star & Shadow cinema volunteering including supported programme 'to each other'; peer aspects of all activity
Us (Wider community)	1] We will offer opportunities for you to put your skills into practice beyond Beacon Films	placements volunteering including supported programme	2] We will respect the creative abilities of Beacon Filmmakers and value their contribution	placements Star & Shadow volunteering including supported programme	3] We will be inspired to put necessary support in place, and welcome ongoing meaningful participation	placements Star & Shadow cinema

Developing film making skills



Beacon Films delivered over 500 hours of online filmmaking workshops during the pandemic lockdowns.

Before the pandemic reached the UK, four blocks of skills workshops had been completed with a fifth underway. For some members this was a progression from the BFI Film Academy, which is a separate entry-level programme Beacon Films runs each year. In December 2019 it was recorded that a group of newer members had been “very very productive” whereas in blocks where participants had greater experience, it had been “difficult to get people going”.

During April and May 2020 online workshops were piloted which focused explicitly on supporting members and sustaining their connections with Beacon Films and their filmmaking friends (although some members connected with each other independently). A parent of one member stated: “The film was great this morning. These projects have been such a positive experience for [Name] during lockdown. He’s been in the house (literally only going in the back yard and nowhere else) for 3 months now and is really missing his friends. It’s been so good for him to have these online meetings to look forward to and activities to focus on in between.” Another said that “Most of the time, she would stay in bed to sleep... If she had a session with [Beacon Films], she would get up 8-9am and be ready at 10am to take part. She said she enjoyed it. I feel it is helpful...”

The approach was extended during the summer in three phases, with the intention of “pushing people’s technical knowledge”. Initially people were asked to make films about their lockdown experience. This was followed by a set of Zoom films and then a set of more complex films which used split-screen, animations and voice over. In each phase a couple of group sessions were used to set up and initiate the work which was then supported and progressed through one-to-one or smaller group sessions. During this programme there was significant online volunteering with peer-to-peer workshops, training and support by members. Although access to hardware

and software was difficult for some people, flexibility allowed participation by anybody who had a webcam. Such flexibility was also visible with the music group which had to deal with the latency which makes online ensemble-playing incredibly challenging. Individuals from Leeds and London also participated.

By the end of the programme, a substantial body of work had been produced. In mid-October the 'Forty Films Festival' opened with one film released each day across social media channels. At the end of January 2021 the total number of views stood at 6,047. (www.beaconfilms.org.uk/40films)

Reflecting on the summer programme, Beacon Films workers recorded that:

- [His] work ethic, output is considerable – building models, creating back grounds, creating effects on his computer.
- Her facilitation of others work has increased her independence. She's been supportive, patient, clear, enthusiastic.
- They've been asked to produce things themselves, having worked in groups where people all contribute a little bit. People had to do stuff. It was freeing.
- It was quite revealing: people worked so well. People who had been through Viewfinder in the past helped others.
- In a weird way Covid made everyone stronger filmmakers, and made families and carers understand more of what we do.

Details about the online Viewfinder programme between 11 May and 22 June 2020 are included as an appendix.

Enabling volunteering



Still from Jem Clancy's film about her hopes for her local high street. Made for Historic England.

Informed by some research identifying different approaches used by peer organisations around the country (see 'State of Play' in the appendices), efforts to support members into volunteering consisted of two strands: preparation with members and identifying host organisations.

The preparation with members included portfolio-building and training sessions. An initial approach to building portfolios through a workshop proved ineffective with members needing greater individual support to consolidate and evidence their work history and identify their future aspirations than could be provided in a group session.

At first, attracting potential host organisations proved similarly difficult. An event called 'Skills Tap' was held at the Star and Shadow Cinema in April 2019 with members making a live pitch and running skills-based participatory workshops. Although this was a useful experience for members in developing and pitching their specific interests and ambitions, few potential host organisations attended. Despite the significant advertising, all those that did attend were charities with a disability-focus.

Through a more targeted approach, a small group of members trained a group of younger people taking part in VODA's I-Will programme to use tablets to make films, with one member sustaining a relationship with the group. Another member established an ongoing volunteering role with Reaching Out Across Durham (ROAD) a Groundwork programme focused on supporting people to overcome barriers to employment. Preparation for the next phase of this work was well underway, with a freelance Volunteer and Placement Co-ordinator recruited in early 2020 to support both this and the more targeted supported volunteering programme.

Supported Volunteering Programme

The supported volunteering programme, which was aimed at members that required additional support to offer their filmmaking skills to external organisations, was suspended until September 2020 due to Covid. When the project began, the impact of Covid on the nature of volunteering was still unclear, as was the question of which agencies were open, what their capacity was, and what members' appetite was for volunteering during the ongoing pandemic. With the varying restrictions, it was decided that all work would be undertaken online.

Following an initial scoping of interest and opportunities, one member withdrew from the programme due to high levels of anxiety. Two potential hosts also withdrew; a social housing provider that lacked capacity to engage, and a privately-owned café. The café had been closed for most of the year, and the owner was working shifts for another employer so was unable to participate.

The work with members was restructured with the Volunteer and Placement Coordinator, Creative Director and Support Coordinator running regular small group sessions online, mixed with multiple break-out rooms which provided mutual support with a practical focus and social element. It was recorded that "the structure of step by step planning has helped people. Members are ready and able to articulate what they are good at and what they want to try, so they can articulate their own position."

In the end, the group was asked to make films for three local charities, doing so almost entirely online through the use of Zoom.

One-to-one work was focused on film skills development, from conceptualisation to planning and - in early 2021 - the filming and editing of the work. A 'group crit' session at the first cut stage, where all members and hosts reviewed the films, was recorded as a key moment: "Hosts were asked for something they liked and something they wanted to change. So people were learning from others' feedback. This helped build the confidence in peoples own abilities."

Three members produced films for host organisations: Better Days, Friends Action North East and the Hextol Foundation. Two of the members had an existing relationship with the organisation for which they produced a film. In addition, the two members whose hosts had withdrawn, volunteered on the set of 'The Hermit', a production being shot on location in the region with support from Film Hub North BFI NETWORK short film funding programme. One person took still photographs for the promotional materials while another operated the clapper board: "Her personal circumstances made no difference.... It was not until the third day that the camera assistant knew [she was autistic]." A past member of Beacon Films, who is pursuing a career as an actor, was a full cast member while another member on the supported volunteering programme was an extra.

Establishing self-led groups

The self-led groups were designed to support independence by enhancing member-led activity. Two groups were established during 2019 with the support of a named member of staff. Another two were in development for early 2020. A reflective template was developed as part of the training to support the set-up of these groups, although it is not clear how much it was used.

The model of self-led groups seems to hold considerable potential for supporting members to pursue particular interests. The approach seems to require the support of a named worker who can be flexible in their input while continuing to promote leadership and independence. The second pair of groups had two members leading each group with the intention of enabling mutual support.

As well as the content focus of the group (vlogging, special effects, etc), some attention was needed on the process of managing a group. This could be as straight forward as a check-list for setting up the sessions like the one used with the Cinema Society, or the more tricky process of ensuring all voices were heard during a group discussion.

After the arrival of the pandemic, the only one of these groups to continue was the Cinema Society, which transferred effectively to an online format from March 2020. There was an increase in the number of people attending and the frequency of sessions increased from monthly to fortnightly, providing members with ongoing opportunities to engage with film and socialise. There were issues for some members with hardware, software and costs of streaming content. Additionally, the choice of films that could be shown was more limited because of licensing and copyright issues.

The oversight of the Cinema Society provided by a worker also proved valuable, for example when the content of one film was considered inappropriate by some participants. The need for advance information about content is a lesson that has been reinforced and generalised in a project that has grown from the Cinema Society. The Relaxed Cinema project, funded by Film Hub North, is supporting members into volunteering and programming roles at the Star and Shadow Cinema in Newcastle.

Vlogging	Successful initiation as a self-led group. "Very competent" leadership by the member in charge, but the pandemic caused the group to cease.
Cinema Society	Successful initiation with about 11 sessions running in-person, and subsequently online. Each session starts with a brief introduction to the film, with a discussion at the end. The work informed the development of the Relaxed Cinema project with Star and Shadow

	Cinema. The group leader has also been providing a monthly film review for North East Bylines since June 2021.
Special effects	An initial meeting was penciled in for early 2020 and put on hold during the first lockdown. This was developed as an online workshop in 2020, with the identified leaders running workshops via Zoom.
Women's group	A supporting facilitator was appointed with an initial meeting held in early 2020. However, the first lockdown prevented its continuation.

Commissions

Unlike during the first Viewfinder programme, producing commissioned films ('Film Factories') was not a specific strand of work. However, there have been specific opportunities for members to make films following an externally set brief. Here are two examples of projects that were for organisations that do not specialise in working with disabled people. This is notable as the majority of Beacon Films' partnering organisations do so, and so the opportunity to work with a broader range of partners was very much welcomed.

Historic England

High Streets Heritage Action Zone is a four-year programme run by Historic England focused on renovating and improving sixty-seven high streets across the country with a capital development strand ("bricks and mortar") complemented by a cultural development and community engagement strand. In 2021 a responsive commission with a direct invitation to 10 organisations across England was initiated in order to take "a temperature check" including understanding the impact of Covid and engaging citizens who are "not so present on the high street."

Beacon Films' submission was structured with each filmmaker, or a small team, creating 30-60 second film 'chapters' using varying styles of filmmaking in response to the range of questions posed in the brief. These chapters were woven together to create a 5-minute 'featurette'.

Members were supported through flexible online mentoring throughout the process. This approach allowed a responsiveness to members' individual needs as well as the style and content of the films. With regions across the country experiencing various levels of Covid measures, Beacon Films' assumption of remote working lead to the project being delivered as planned, ahead of the other commissions. As such, the commissioner reported that the project "set the template for working with the other organisations."

It was recorded that the effective delivery, diversity of voices, broad picture and quality of the work led to clips of the film being used to promote the commissions with one member talking at the launch event.

November Club

'Food and Feuds: Two Cooks of Hexham' is inspired by Hannah Glasse and Ann Cook, who published cookbooks in 1747 and 1754 respectively. The show's publicity states that the "imaginary time-travelling performance.....celebrates these strong, opinionated, and underrated women for what they achieved in inhospitable times and recognises them for the pioneering characters they were."

The show was due to tour in March 2020 – plans which were upended by the pandemic. At the end of the year a new Artistic Director was appointed to the company and they recognised the opportunity to remount the work while exploring different ways of working. They asked Beacon Films to help them engage younger people at the Queens Arts Centre in Hexham to make short films to intersperse throughout the performance and as part of live streaming of the event. Following difficulties with recruitment, Beacon Films members were asked to produce two short films about issues and attitudes to food, which would intersperse the live production.

The commissioner stated that Beacon Films "worked quickly as a team and with members." There was a meeting between the November Club and filmmakers where the brief was presented with an outline of context, themes, and story of the production. Following the meeting, members developed proposals on which November Club were invited to comment. The clear schedule for the filmmaking was valuable as the theatre piece was in rehearsal, so the film fed into a wider production schedule. At one point there was a minor delay due to Beacon Films capacity. It was stated that, because of its broader impact "it would have been good to know this", although it was described as "a small thing".

The final films were described as "a great addition to the production, echoing the linking between the historical and contemporary, with the juxtaposition of art forms.....The final films worked as it was planned because Beacon Films were the right partner."

Achieving Next Steps



Paul and Adam discuss their work at a Viewfinder session, 2019

Working with members to identify goals and specific 'next steps' was introduced in early volunteer training activity and developed through the supported volunteering programme (see above). An online recording template, which is reproduced in the appendices, was tested during a further piloting phase with 3 members. As well as helping "to guide a focused conversation" with members, the proforma enabled goals and their achievements to be captured, therefore informing an iterative cycle of progression.

Following this pilot, a freelance 'Goals Mentor' was appointed to run the Next Steps programme, which ran from October to December 2021 and engaged eleven participants. Seven people completed their identified goals within the programme: for two others, some progress towards the goal was made but the work could not be completed within the timescales. Two other members were not in contact with Beacon Films during the period. Although some was done online, the work was mainly undertaken face-to-face, in parallel with members attending other Beacon Films sessions.

Perhaps reflecting the preparatory work with members, "there was a real eagerness to sit down and talk." Some expectation management was required and although "most members identified goals effectively" some people found it difficult to sustain focus on a specific goal. For some members the goals were met through the sessions, sometimes supplemented by additional time with the worker. For others their goals were met through other work within Beacon Films. Where a few people had a similar goal, specific sessions were developed including podcasting, animation, and video making. Three peoples' goals were not about filmmaking and creativity, but broader issues such as interview skills and creating a CV. These goals were supported in the same way as more film-related aims.

Although personalized working has always been an aspect of Beacon Film's work, the survey in April 2020, which identified significant barriers to volunteering crystalized the approach. A focus on the achievement of 'goals' shapes 'barriers' as issues to be addressed through a series of 'steps'. Informed by the Next Steps programme, the role of Goal Mentor will be embedded in future activity.

Realising Opportunities



Chris Bradburn carries out socially-distanced filming in between lockdowns in 2020. More info at bradburnfilms.co.uk

In this section the experiences of three approaches to realising paid opportunities are recorded: the development of placements, responding to a commission and brokering specific roles in a commercial production.

Two of the more experienced members of Beacon Films have started working as paid film makers; one having established a business, the other with a Tyneside-based charity. Two others are also in paid employment; one in retail, the other at a theatre and cinema venue. In each case Beacon Films has made a significant contribution. This is in addition to a number of short-to-medium term paid work placements members have taken on over the lifetime of the project

Placements

A 200-hour paid placement with the Great North Museum ran from January to October 2020, and a second is currently underway. A full report of the first Great North Museum placement is included as an appendix.

Another 200-hour paid placement ran between July and October 2021, as part of the Light Years Project, a partnership with Kielder Observatory. The filmmaker created a 'behind the scenes' documentary about the process.

When Northumbria University approached Beacon Films about creating a recruitment film for a gender and sexuality research project, Beacon Films connected the University with a member who is a talented animator. The filmmaker was paid in a freelance capacity, and the resulting film was shared on the university's social media platforms.

The learning from the Great North Museum placement has informed subsequent work, including the establishment of an Action Learning group; which is focused around the challenges of "supporting people into cultural workforce". The learning from this work will link with the proposed development of an online resource to

support 'Inclusive Recruitment and Employment in the Cultural and Heritage Sectors.'

Paid commission

The Family Advice and Support Team of Skills for People works with disabled children, young people and their families. As part of Transforming Care, the team was funded by the NHS to produce a film that illustrates how the process of co-designing training about Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) can lead to better outcomes. PBS is a NICE-recommended approach for supporting people with challenging behaviours. It aims to understand the function of a person's behaviour so that their needs can be met in a better, safer way.

The Team approached Beacon Films who identified a member who could deliver the work largely on their own, in a paid capacity. During the initial meeting the brief from the NHS as funder, a description of the approach the team wanted and the key messages were outlined. A proposal was submitted and amended following the team's comments. Beyond the initial meeting with the client, the support given to the member was "very much behind the scenes". He was given "the freedom and opportunity to do his own thing... It made the process much more fulfilling and valuable."

Subsequently, he "worked very independently... (He) comes, he films, asks questions, gets us to do stuff and goes away. He doesn't faff around. He's brilliant, been very efficient... It was a very professional relationship."

There was a particular added value with the individual being "a great role model... The parents were thrilled to have met him and thinking about what their own children could do in the future."

Film and Television work

Logging is the process of watching footage and recording its content. This allows the effective identification and accessing of relevant footage as a film is being edited. "Logging isn't the equivalent of making the tea. It is a key to documentary making."

In mid 2020 HTYT approached Beacon Films, seeking to enhance its engagement with disabled and neurodivergent film professionals. Logging had been identified as an area of business need. The details of the role and opportunity as communicated to members is reproduced as an appendix. Four members, employed through Beacon Films, were appointed each with around 48 hours work per phase. The initial phase between October and December 2020, was extended to April 2021.

An introductory meeting was held with the client following which, it was reported, all was "exceptionally smooth" with members working independently and being in contact only when they wanted more material on which to work. "The work was completed beautifully." From the perspective of Beacon Films, it was noted that "members loved it. Being part of something... A tangible task with an outcome."

During a review meeting it was suggested that a brief contextualizing session outlining Beacon Films' and members' experiences would have been valuable, partially because this would have given permission and the context for everybody to ask questions. It was recorded that "Archive documentary [for which logging is essential] is massive. A flexible team is ideal. Feels like the nature of this work fits really well with some people with learning disabilities.... It does work very very well for this role. It can be done remotely. Inclusivity is, in this respect, much easier under Covid. For this role and more broadly [we] will be using regional filmmakers more."

Separately, one member stated: "It's been great being able to work and earn something during these uncertain times. It's given me something to focus on and has boosted my confidence. Also, being able to see other people's perspectives about the pandemic has helped me to come to terms with everything that's going on."

There is a particular resonance between the support of Spirit of 2012 for both phases of Viewfinder and this commercial relationship with HTYT.

On HTYT's website (<https://htyt.world/missions/>) it states: "Mission 1: Change Attitudes to Disability

"The Phoenix Project has a simple objective of dramatically increasing the profile of the Paralympics and in doing so changing attitude to disability the work over. It began with Rising Phoenix in 2018. The story of the Paralympics continues with the delayed Tokyo 2020 Games, through to Paris 2024 and beyond. Our mission will complete at the closing ceremony of the Los Angeles Paralympic Games in 2028, a games that we believe will have transformed our views and attitudes globally towards disability. In a unique partnership with the International Paralympic Committee, we will use the power of creativity to change the conversation and create a better, fairer world for those with disability."



Clockwise from top left: Stills from behind the Scenes film for Light Years project; recruitment video for gender and sexuality project; final film made during first Great North Museum placement; Positive Behavioural Support film

Engaging Audiences



Beacon Films' most recent venue-based premiere event was in November 2019

The Forty Films Festival (see section 1) ran during October and November 2020. At the end of September 2021, the total social media views across all Viewfinder films was 25,367.

In addition, members' work continues to be promoted through Film Festivals. One of the fifteen events held between 2019 and 2021 focused on neurodivergent filmmakers, three festivals were in Tyne and Wear, six were overseas and nine focused on younger filmmakers. A full list of festivals is included as an appendix.

During the period covered by this report, there has been one premiere hosted by Beacon Films, taking place in November 2019. After 6 years at Whitley Bay Playhouse, the annual event moved to the Great North Museum. This allowed the traditional presentation and celebration of members films and live musical performance to be enhanced with a 'full dome' immersive film called 'Hyperdrive Hannah's Cosmic Adventure' and a set of participatory workshops run by members.

Twenty-three members of the audience of 202 completed a questionnaire. The lessons learned by the staff team were reflected in some comments concerning the complexity of the event, while one person stated "It was a logistically complicated evening which seemed to work completely successfully - the smooth running being assisted by project members who acted as such good guides, ushers etc."

The weight of responses was overwhelmingly positive, with some specific suggestions for improvements. One person stated: "Something about the venue and presentations put this premiere on a different level. It felt more like a professional showcase than a school/college-based performance to parents and friends and family."

As recorded in Appendix 8, there were mainly very positive comments about the content and quality of films, as well as the processes of supporting film makers. One

person commented that some films were “too short to give a perspective of the subject”. Another person “had attended the Premiere last year and thought the quality and general entertaining value of the films then overall was better. However, it is appreciated how much hard work goes into them all.”

Comparing the overall quality of the films with their expectations, respondents were again very positive, although one person noted “Probably the subjects did not appeal to us. Some of them we thought were a bit silly. The quality of the films however is very good.” Separately it was stated “I think the closeness to the screen made a lot of difference - but even without that quality improves year by year.”

While some very encouraging comments were made about the potential impact of the films on communities' awareness of people's potential, several of the audience noted that this was a function of who viewed the films, with Beacon Films' role in “the ‘normalisation’ of employment” also being noted.



Clockwise from top left: The audience at the first screening of Beacon Films' 2019 premiere; the presenting team; a screening of “Hyperdrive Hannah” taking place in one of the planetariums; two Beacon Films volunteers at the premiere

Conclusions: Supporting Creative Independence



A team of volunteers shoot a scene for a film for Kielder Observatory, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, 2021

This brief report has summarized the main elements of delivery during the past three years. It is informed by, but has not reproduced, the considerable body of diverse data that is generated through an increasingly embedded approach. Looking across the organisation there are two key achievements of the past period.

Firstly, Beacon Films has made meaningful and significant steps towards becoming more member-led as an organisation. This can be seen in Board membership, internal organisational mechanisms and the new outcomes framework. (Developing member-led approaches to evaluation is one important area for future development.)

Secondly, for many members, engagement with Beacon Films during Covid has been a key element of sustaining their wellbeing and social connections. One short-contract worker observed: "many organisations have given people stuff ... we were asking members to create content."

Impressive organisational flexibility and resilience can be evidenced. Helped perhaps by the art form, this has been valued by both members and external commissioning organisations. When activity is delivered in a hybrid format (mixed in-person and online delivery) there is a recognised risk of those online having a less inclusive experience. There are some indications that remote working could increase opportunities for regionally-based disabled professionals in the screen industries. The model of delivering high quality films through training and supporting members as filmmakers is recognised and valued by diverse external agencies. These organisations consider Beacon Films and its members as competent, responsive and professional.

During the period of this programme, the core elements of delivery previously established (training programmes and commissions) have been sustained. Specific new elements have been developed and tested. These include:

- Self/member-led groups which require light-touch support and overview.
- Supported volunteering models which enable people requiring some more support to volunteer. There is however a risk of remaining within the echo chamber of a specialist set of organisations.
- Placements, with initial evidence of sustained change within host organisations.
- A goals-orientated approach ('Next Steps') which provides the balance of individual progression with the collective focus and delivery of most activity.

Member's participation in Beacon Films is, most commonly, across different elements. There is some evidence that members value doing different activities with different workers: 'this activity is what I do with this person'.

Reflecting on these considerable achievements there seems to be a set of balances within which the next stages of development could be framed:

1/ A focus on filmmaking skills versus more generic – life and employability – skills.

Beacon Films is about making films. This is a skilled process. Through learning and practising these skills, people gain a whole range of competencies including other skills. The emphasis between these is different for different people at different times. Which skills are seen as most important, and the balance Beacon Films should strike when nurturing these skills, is always open to debate.

2/ Filmmaking as an intrinsically valuable activity versus as a career or route to a career.

People at Beacon Films make films for a whole range of reasons. For some people it is the pleasure of creative expression. Others want to earn a living in the screen industry. For some people this is not an important question. One answer is not better than any other. People's reasons change over time.

3/ Enabling external agencies to pay members directly for specific pieces of work versus Beacon Films being an employing agency in those situations. As collections of people, organisations take time and experience to develop confidence. Beacon Films needs to be a supportive and challenging organisational ally, willing to learn alongside partners to make the changes needed to become more inclusive, while maximising current opportunities for members by being an intermediary.

4/ Promoting the independence of members versus an organisational desire (and perhaps need) to retain talented filmmakers. Beacon Films want members to live lives that are as independent and full as possible. For some, this may mean leaving Beacon Films. On the other hand, Beacon Films is a production company that makes high quality films. It needs talented and experienced creative filmmakers amongst its members in order to do this.