



Guidance on Showing Films and Television in Synagogue and Community Settings

Many synagogues and community venues enjoy showing films, television programmes, or live broadcasts, as part of educational, social, or cultural activities. However, it is important to understand that most films and TV programmes are protected by copyright and showing them outside a private home setting is usually classed as a “**public performance**” under UK copyright law.

Legal Framework

Under the [Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988](#), a film or television programme supplied for home use, (for example via DVD, streaming services, or broadcast television), cannot normally be shown to a group in a community venue, without appropriate permission from the copyright holder. Charitable status does **not** create an exemption, and copyright law applies equally to free, ticketed, religious, and not-for-profit events.

Licences used by Synagogue Communities

The most common way to obtain permission to show films or TV legally is through Licences provided by the [Motion Picture Licensing Company \(MPLC\)](#).

MPLC Umbrella Licence

This is an annual Licence held at each location. It allows unlimited communal screenings from a large catalogue of films and TV programmes that have been legally obtained (including DVDs, downloads, streaming, or broadcast TV). Under this Licence:

- Admission must not be charged for the viewing.
- Specific titles must not be publicly advertised.
- Licence certificates should be kept on site and available for inspection.

MPLC Single Title Movie Licence

This Licence is used for one-off events where a specific film is advertised or admission

is charged. The Licence is granted per title, per screening, and requires basic reporting to MPLC (for example the title, date, and venue).

TV Licences and Live Broadcasts

A **TV Licence** is required whenever:

- Live television is watched or recorded.
- BBC iPlayer is used.

This applies even in community or religious settings. A TV Licence does not replace the need for MPLC cover; in many cases, **both** are required.

Live Subscription Sport or Rolling News

For live subscription sport or rolling news, an MPLC Licence may not be required *if* only that content is shown. However, strict controls must be in place to prevent films or entertainment programmes being shown unintentionally. If there is any doubt, holding an MPLC Licence is strongly recommended.

Direct Permission

In limited cases, a film may be shown where the copyright holder has given **explicit written permission** for public performance (for example, a film produced by a Jewish organisation specifically for community use). A copy of that permission must be kept on file, and any additional content shown at the event must still be properly Licenced.

Local Responsibility

Each location should:

- Confirm which Licences it holds and ensure they remain current.
- Follow all Licence conditions carefully.
- Nominate a **Screenings Responsible Person** to oversee compliance.
- Keep a simple log of communal screenings and store Licence certificates centrally and on site.

Taking these steps helps protect the Charity, trustees, and volunteers, and demonstrates good governance and respect for intellectual property rights.