

Disability Code of Portrayal



to ensure authentic, nuanced and original disability portrayal.

At a programme level, we:

1 give disabled people agency

In the spirit of “nothing about us, without us”, disabled people in our content have their own voice and tell their own stories wherever possible



2 show disabled people in 3D

Disabled people in our content are more than just their conditions or impairments; they are well-rounded characters, with other identities, experiences and motivations too

3 represent being disabled as a valid identity

In our shows, choosing to identify as disabled is not undesirable; it’s nothing to be ashamed about or shocked by – it is a legitimate identity to step into, take on and be proud of

4 portray being disabled as a complex, nuanced human experience

We reflect the fluidity and diversity of the disabled experience in our shows; we lean into the contradictions and complications, and never over-simplify



5 apply social model thinking

In our content, we make a clear distinction between the fact of conditions, impairments, injuries and illnesses, and the impacts of disabling environments, structures and attitudes



6 remove the ‘able gaze’

We avoid assumptions and projections about the disabled experience in our content, always checking for any non-disabled bias, privilege or lack of knowledge and experience

7 have empathy with, rather than sympathy for, disabled people

We avoid patronising, pitying or objectifying disabled people in our content; instead, we come alongside disabled people and seek to understand their experiences while not claiming to know them



8 seek disabled performers for disabled roles*

In our scripted content, we look to cast people with similar conditions or impairments in disabled roles; we also seek to put disabled performers in roles not specifically written to be disabled

9 neither overplay nor underplay disability

While being disabled only drives the story if it genuinely needs to, we also don't gloss over or deny disability in our content if it is a relevant part of a character, presenter or contributor's lived experience

10 say something insightful to disabled viewers

Our content that includes disability is enlightening and engaging for both disabled and non-disabled viewers; it is not just about awareness-raising or educating, it speaks truths to everyone

At a portfolio level, we:

- 1 ensure a **range of portrayal types**:
 - incidental – disabled people are included, without making any direct comment on disability
 - integrated – disabled people are present and disability is sometimes directly addressed, where authentically relevant, and sometimes not
 - core – disabled people are front and centre of the core proposition and narrative
- 2 favour **inclusively disabled** shows above exclusively disabled stories, to limit “othering”
- 3 **offset** any stereotypes or tropes that may be editorially required within that genre
- 4 always have **senior editorial disabled input** in core disability stories (via the production team, a consultant or through Channel 4 expertise)
- 5 **peer review** all our incidental and integrated disability portrayal, against tropes and stereotypes and in line with our programme-level code of portrayal
- 6 deliver a **volume of representation** to allow for the full spectrum of disabled experiences and meaningful talent development – i.e., every series will have at least one disabled performer, contributor, guest or presenter, with the intention for more than one. We encourage the same for single commissions but it is acknowledged that there may be limitations due to editorial restrictions*.

* Please view the latest [Channel 4 Commissioning Diversity Guidelines](#) for more information.