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## The story so far

As the official UK broadcaster of the Paralympic Games, Channel 4 continues to transform attitudes towards disability across the UK

#### London 2012

#### **Meet the Superhumans**

In 2012, Channel 4 became the official UK broadcaster of the Paralympic Games. Channel 4's 'Meet the Superhumans' campaign transformed perceptions of disability, and celebrated Paralympians as elite athletes, leading to two-thirds of the population tuning into the multi-award-winning London 2012 Paralympic Games.



#### **Tokyo 2020**

#### Super. Human.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, Channel 4 rallied to bring viewers unparalleled coverage and talent for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, assembling the largest team of disabled presenters and commentators in UK television history. Its 'Super. Human.' campaign focused on the athletes' humanity and the extraordinary dedication and relentless perseverance it takes to win.



## 41-

#### **Rio 2016**

#### We're the Superhumans

Building on the success of London 2012, the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games continued to raise the profile of disability sport and improve public perceptions of disability in the UK and around the world. Channel 4's campaign celebrated both the remarkable achievements of elite athletes and the everyday talents and strengths of disabled individuals.



#### **Paris 2024**

#### **Considering What?**

The Paris 2024 Paralympic
Games saw Channel 4 set a new
standard for accessibility, elevating
the Paralympics to new heights.
The 'Considering What?' campaign
moved the conversation on by
challenging audience perceptions of
para-athletes and disability head on.

# **Channel 4:** Redefining **Paralympic** sport for future generations

### Introduction

From the moment Channel 4 won the broadcasting rights for the London 2012 Paralympic Games, we set out on a mission to redefine disability sport on the global stage.

Our efforts since then have cemented Channel 4's role as a global leader in Paralympic broadcasting, setting a new benchmark for accessibility and representation.

London 2012 was groundbreaking, attracting new, larger audiences and transforming public attitudes toward Paralympic sport. In Rio 2016, without the primetime-friendly schedule of a 'home' Games, we went bigger by making 2016 our Year of Disability amplifying our impact. Tokyo 2020 was the most challenging Paralympic Games in history to cover due to the Covid-19 pandemic, yet our ambition didn't waver. We set out to make the production, more comprehensive and even bigger and better than the last.

In Paris 2024, we elevated the Paralympics to new heights, delivering the most accessible Games yet. Ninety-one per cent of our on-screen team were disabled presenters and commentators, and twenty-three per cent of our production crews were disabled. Live subtitles were available across all content, with peak-time sports also featuring audio description and live signing.

We showcased more back-to-back Paralympic action than ever before, with over 1,300 hours of live sport on two linear television channels and 18 concurrent streams. If it was captured on camera, we broadcast it. Viewers connected with the Games through TV, streaming, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, attracting our largest-ever share of young viewers captivated by the drama and emotion in Paris.

Our pioneering team of presenters, pundits and reporters broke new ground with world-firsts including Rose Ayling-Ellis's brilliant performance as the first-ever deaf live sports presenter, and Libby Clegg becoming Channel 4's first registered-blind pundit. We will also leave a lasting legacy through the first fully accessible broadcast gallery and production hub in Cardiff.

Our production partners Whisper and Open Mike, along with sponsors Allianz and Toyota, enabled us to fulfil our vision of inclusion and excellence to drive positive change and shift perceptions about disability.

We reached one-third of the UK population with our coverage. Three-quarters of viewers said that watching the Games gave them a new perspective on the challenges that disabled people face. And we engaged with millions of young people with our content on social platforms.

Before 2024 we were changing attitudes, but with Paris we went a step further and tried to help change behaviours as well. Through our partnership with ParalympicsGB – from the Equal Play documentary highlighting the need for equal access to sports for all children, to the groundbreaking Every Body Moves – we broke down barriers and redefined access to sport for disabled people.

Our partnership with Every Body Moves connected 83,000 new users to a UK-wide database of inclusive activities in their communities through QR codes embedded within our on-air coverage. The number of listings available on the website trebled to 45,000, making it easier than ever for individuals to find activities near them. The Every Body Moves site saw a 2,000+% increase in traffic over the 12 days, and more and more people are engaging in accessible sport as a result of the Games on Channel 4.

Our commitment to creating more opportunities for disabled people on and off screen will continue long past Paris as we look forward to the next Paralympic cycle.

Alex Mahon, Chief Executive, Channel 4

### What we did

## Bigger and better than ever before

For Paris 2024, we launched our most ambitious plans yet.

#### Over 1,300 hours

Channel 4 aired over 1,300 hours of live sport for free across streaming and on Channel 4 and More4.

#### The most accessible ever

All content was broadcast with subtitles, with live peaktime sports featuring closed audio description, and British Sign Language (BSL) live signing every afternoon, and advertisers helped us ensure more than 60% of all ads during our Paris 2024 coverage carried subtitles.

#### 18 concurrent streams

Every televised moment was available on our Channel 4 Sport YouTube channel, with up to 18 simultaneous streams.

#### **Developing presenters**

Rose Ayling-Ellis and Ellie Simmonds made their Channel 4 presenting debuts, while emerging presenters like Paralympic gold-medal swimmer Ellie Robinson and award-winning actor Lenny Rush provided live reporting from around the French capital, showcasing the action and bringing a fresh perspective.







In 2012, our mission was to broadcast the Paralympics and give it the level of attention it deserved. Twelve years on, our focus has shifted from creating awareness to driving genuine change – impacting attitudes and behaviours alike.

Pete Andrews, Head of Sport, Channel 4



### What we did continued

This is no pity party; the advert demands that the audience confronts its biases. With its clever choice of phrasing, this confrontation will extend - maybe, With our bold 'Considering What?' campaign, we challenged viewers to see Paralympians as elite, world-class athletes – not simply competitors 'overcoming' their disabilities. Seventy-nine per cent of viewers agreed that the campaign showed that the Paralympics are just as exciting as the Olympics.



The legacy of my journey and the Paralympics is to inspire others to push beyond their limits. I was genuinely proud to be a part of this campaign.

Aaron Phipps, Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Wheelchair Rugby gold medallist



disabled people's achievements.

The
Guardian

hopefully – far beyond sport. We may finally be able to celebrate

## **Our impact**

Our goal was to make Paris the biggest, most accessible Paralympic Games ever – and we delivered.





#### On-screen impact

#### **Breaking records**

With around 4,400 athletes competing across 549 events in 22 sports, Paris 2024 showcased the broadest range of Paralympic talent on Channel 4 to date.

#### Biggest share in 12 years

Paris 2024 achieved Channel 4's largest weekly viewing share for any Paralympic Games since London 2012 – and our biggest share of young viewers for a Paralympics ever.

#### 19.9 million people reached

Channel 4's coverage reached 19.9 million people across the UK, representing 33% of the TV population.

#### 7.3 billion viewer minutes

Across streaming and linear, Channel 4's Paralympic coverage achieved 7.3 billion viewer minutes, up from 4.9 billion in Tokyo 2020, making this our most engaged Games since London 2012.

#### 91% disabled talent

91% of on-screen talent were disabled, underscoring Channel 4's commitment to authentic representation.

## Our impact continued

#### Digital reach

#### 2.5 million livestreams

Livestreams on Channel 4 Sport's dedicated YouTube channel reached 2.5 million views, extending our Paralympic coverage to a global audience.

#### 65 million social views

With over 65 million views across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, Channel 4's social platforms fuelled global interest in the Games.

### 5.2 million Snapchat interactions

Fans engaged with our augmented reality experience on Snapchat 5.2 million times, giving sports enthusiasts an immersive view into the Paralympic action.

#### The Last Leg's success

The Last Leg in Paris's content resonated widely on social media, garnering 9.4 million views. TikTok proved particularly popular, racking up 4.4 million global views and engaging a diverse, younger audience.





Channel 4 has consistently led the way with its broadcast coverage of the Paralympics, and this year they have delivered the most accessible Games yet.

We have a fantastic relationship with Channel 4 and are great admirers of how they have raised the profile of the Paralympics in the UK and across the globe.

Andrew Parsons, President, International Paralympic Committee





## **Every Body Moves**

**83,000+** new users

**2,000+%** increase in traffic to the website

**3x** website listings of inclusive activities

Channel 4 partnered with ParalympicsGB, leveraging its Toyota-sponsored Every Body Moves campaign to empower disabled people across the UK to take up sport and become more active in whatever way they choose, using the Paralympic Games as a catalyst for change.

Every day throughout the Games, a QR code featured prominently on TV screens, guiding viewers to the <u>Every Body Moves website</u>. The platform connects disabled people with inclusive activities in their local area, helping to break down barriers to accessing sport and physical activity.

The campaign drove significant engagement. During Channel 4's Paralympic coverage, the Every Body Moves website, powered by Toyota, welcomed a huge 83,000 new users.

The Every Body Moves site saw a 2,000+% increase in traffic compared to before the Games. The number of club listings on the site has tripled to 45,000 options, making it easier than ever for individuals to find activities near them.







Every Body Moves is such a good campaign. It's all about inclusivity, getting everyone involved in sport. I know what sport's done for me and how it's helped change my life for the better, I'm hoping it would do the same for more people.

Billy Monger, Presenter of Channel 4's Paralympics breakfast show



#### Changing perceptions

Channel 4's coverage of the Paralympics made a meaningful impact on viewers' attitudes towards disability.

of viewers agreed that the Paralympics is an important event for improving society's perceptions of disabled people

of viewers reported that watching the Games gave them a new perspective on the challenges disabled people face

felt that the Games challenged their own prejudices

## Increasing interest in para sport

Our coverage has fostered a growing interest in para sport, with many calling for more representation.

79%

agreed that the Paralympics is as exciting as the Olympics, with 'excited to watch' and 'talented athletes' trending as top topics during the opening ceremony

77%

of viewers believe there should be more coverage of para sport on TV

59%

of viewers said they will make more effort to watch para sport in the future

## What our viewers thought continued



#### Impactful representation

Our commitment to on-screen representation created a lasting impact, deepening viewers' understanding of disability.

of viewers felt that having disabled presenters helped them understand disability more fully

74%

said the Games made them realise that disability is not always visible

#### Sparking conversations

Channel 4's coverage stimulated valuable conversations around disability and paralympic sport.

17%

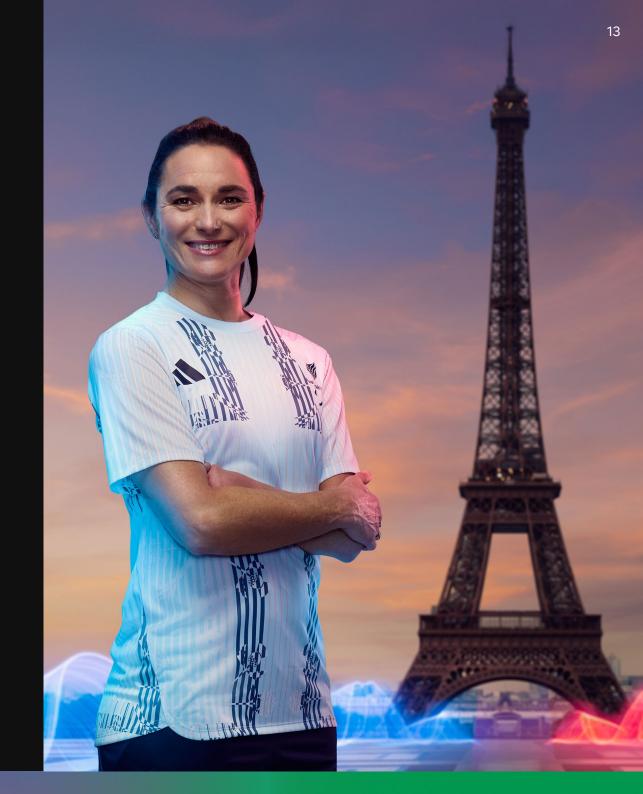
of viewers shared they talked to people in their life about disability specifically because of the coverage

## Dame Sarah Storey: The G.O.A.T.

Competing at a ninth consecutive summer Paralympic Games is a feat no other British athlete has ever achieved. In Barcelona 1992, Dame Sarah Storey won her first gold medal in the swimming pool, and in Paris 2024 she claimed her nineteenth on the cycling road track, solidifying her status as the most decorated British Paralympian of all time – and the Greatest Of All Time (G.O.A.T.).

After winning her second gold medal in Paris, she reflected: "When I was a little girl, I just wanted to be a British athlete for as long as I possibly could. I never imagined it would take me to nine Paralympic Games. I never anticipated I'd be sat on a start line again at the age of 46 – trying to not just defend the title, but make history. It's not something you get to do every day.

"Every time you get yourself on the start line, it's an opportunity to be beaten. It's also an opportunity to win again. And I think that's the exciting part about sport and that motivation to see just what you're capable of."



## **Q&A: Dame Sarah Storey**

#### What do the Paralympics mean to you?

The Paralympics is the pinnacle for disabled athletes, who have trained so incredibly hard. Everyone wants to try and get onto the podium at the Paralympic Games. Every four years, the eyes of the world turn to the city you're competing in. History is made and it's a thrill to be there alongside athletes from other sports.

#### How have the Games evolved since you first took part?

The Games have got so much bigger, in the attention paid to them and the number of people competing, but also in the level of competition. It's harder in terms of classification. There are more people and nations coming, and more athletes are competing. It's incredibly tough – and it's just got tougher.

#### What has been Channel 4's impact on the Paralympic Games?

When Channel 4 became broadcast rights holder in 2012, it completely changed the whole landscape for the Games and the way that people watch them.

We had one hour of TV coverage for Barcelona '92, about once every four days. That grew to one hour of highlights every day in Atlanta, and in Sydney you could press the red button to watch different sports. Beijing had a little more coverage.

But, in 2012, suddenly there was an explosion of coverage and opportunity to watch sport all day, every day. It's been amazing to see it grow and push forward. Next is to try and get that for World Championships and beyond, so there is something for everyone to see every year.



## Making history: Rose Ayling-Ellis and Clare Balding

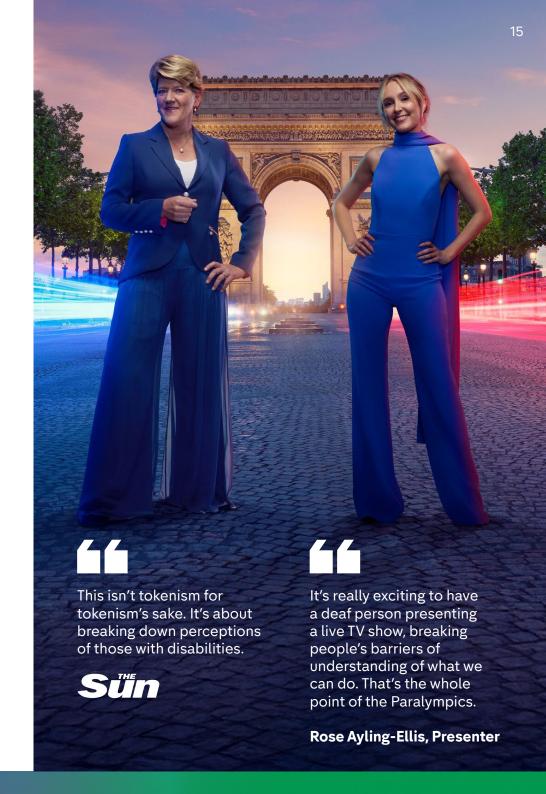
Representation is at the heart of Channel 4's remit, and we continuously innovate to enable audiences to see themselves represented on screen. In a world-first, Rose Ayling-Ellis became the first deaf presenter to host a live programme at the Paralympic Games, co-presenting with Clare Balding live from Paris. Importantly, our coverage included British Sign Language (BSL) live signing for accessibility.

#### Behind the scenes: How it worked

To accommodate Rose's needs as a deaf presenter, the production team devised a new system ahead of the Games. This included two interpreters – one translating studio content, and the other signing gallery instructions – and a flashboard system with colour-coded messages, such as 'read autocue' or 'last question', typically delivered via earpiece to hearing presenters.

"It's like a relay team and we all hand the baton to each other," said Clare Balding. Some of the highest performing social content featured Rose explaining her live presentation process, reaching 1.1 million views on TikTok and over 750,000 views on Instagram.

"It was a massive team effort," said Angus Scott, the chief talent trainer. "We worked forensically so Rose would succeed, and this setup now leaves a legacy for future live programmes featuring deaf presenters."



## **Spotlight**Paralympics Production Training Scheme

Ahead of Paris 2024, Channel 4's Paralympics Production Training Scheme recruited 16 disabled trainees, offering them a unique opportunity to launch their broadcast careers with 12-month placements. Nine trainees went on to work on the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, either in Paris or at the custom-built Cardiff broadcast centre (more details on page 21).

Designed to increase the number of disabled people in key behind-the-camera roles, the scheme provided hands-on experience in sports production. Over the year, trainees worked as production co-ordinators or as researchers across sport, entertainment, factual entertainment, and factual productions at independent production companies based throughout the UK, including in Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, London, and Manchester.



#### What our trainees thought



I am extremely grateful to the Channel 4 Paralympics Training Scheme for giving me an entirely new outlook on what I can achieve as disabled person in this industry.

Maisie, Paralympics Production Training Scheme Trainee



Going to Paris was the experience of a lifetime. I got first-hand experience on one of the world's largest sport productions, learned to think on my feet, and practiced my French! It was so much fun to see the stadiums, studio sets, on-screen talent and, of course, all the inspiring sport.

Rachel, Paralympics Production Training Scheme Trainee



Working on the Paralympics has been a real experience. Seeing the custom-built broadcasting centre in Cardiff and sitting in on a gallery during the live record of a Wheelchair Basketball game was a pinch-me moment. The best part was getting to work alongside other disabled people in a team so passionate about what they do.

Tehya, Paralympics Production Training Scheme Trainee

## Viewpoint: Exclusion is a choice

### 46

Exclusion is a choice. Inclusion requires effort and a desire to act.



#### Viewpoint from David Clarke, CEO, ParalympicsGB

Sport is in every essence of my being – it has shaped who I am and how I live my life. Growing up in the North of England in the 1970s, I was largely excluded from sport, either explicitly or by design.

Notwithstanding this, I was fortunate to meet teachers and coaches determined to create the right environment for me and people like me to participate, hone our skills and become world class athletes.

This journey led me to represent my country for ten years in Goalball, culminating in the Atlanta 1996 Paralympics, and a 17-year career in blind football, where I became the country's highest-ever scorer. My final goal came in my last game at London 2012, broadcast free-to-air and live on Channel 4, which had just begun to reframe the way the public viewed Paralympic sport.

This summer, I had the privilege to see things from a different angle as the CEO of ParalympicsGB at Paris 2024, one of the most inclusive and well supported Paralympic Games to date, with 2.5 million tickets sold and a UK audience of 20 million people on Channel 4.

The Games are bigger and better than ever, and the social injustices disabled people face daily are now openly spoken about, but there's still more work to do.

ParalympicsGB's Equal Play documentary broadcast on Channel 4, shows that only one in four disabled children can participate in school sports – a stark reminder of the barriers still faced. The Government's commitment to address this is crucial to our work, ensuring that every disabled person can be active on their own terms.

Channel 4's blanket, free-to-air coverage since London 2012 has been pivotal in reshaping public perceptions of disability. Shows like The Last Leg and Channel 4's commitment to on- and off-screen

disabled talent have equally made significant inroads into the often-negative public perceptions towards disability and have provided our athletes with a meaningful public profile.

The moment of truth for me was visiting the Paralympic Village in Paris, where accessibility was considered at every level. I was also extremely encouraged by some of the long-term commitments Paris has made for accessible public transport and a more accessible city infrastructure.

Ultimately, exclusion is a choice. Inclusion requires effort and a desire to act. I hope the legacy of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games encourages everyone to put in the effort and have the desire to act.

## Whisper: Behind the camera

Channel 4's Paris 2024 Paralympics coverage was bold and boundary-pushing, led by an inclusive and innovative presentation team.

Rose Ayling-Ellis made history as the first deaf presenter to anchor a live sports show, while Libby Clegg became Channel 4's first registeredblind pundit and deaf Gladiator Jodie Ounsley brought expert insights and connected with young audiences. Fresh voices including racing-driverturned-commentator Billy Monger, comedian and blind footballer Josh Pugh, Wheelchair Basketball player Gaz Choudhry, Sex Education actor George Robinson, and digital influencers Milly Pickles and Fats Timbo, all helped attract a new, younger viewership.

Our ambitious coverage spanned multiple Paris locations, with studios at the athletics and swimming stadia, the Alexandre III Bridge, and ParalympicsGB House – placing Channel 4's coverage at the heart of the Games.

Highlights included Sammi Kinghorn winning her first ever Paralympic Gold, with her family celebrating live in the studio just 30 minutes after her win, and crowd reactions to Dan Pembroke's Javelin gold medal win captured live from the stadium.

A new production gallery in Cardiff improved sustainability and has provided a lasting legacy as Wales's first fully accessible remote broadcast facility. The diverse production team was expanded with off-screen disabled talent being recruited through accessibility outreach events.

Viewers were drawn in through innovative content: Ade Adepitan, driving an electric-powered classic French van, transported Ellie Simmonds to venues, while his playful race with Lenny Rush added a fun touch that entertained viewers. Courtside commentary from Adepitan and Choudhry at the men's Wheelchair Basketball final captured the thrill of the event.

The broadcast addressed disability head-on, from the importance of equal access to PE and school sport for disabled children, and Jodie



Ounsley's message on the importance of deaf representation, to George Robinson's critique of the Paralympics during the Closing Ceremony. Studio discussions also explored complex topics such as Dan Pembroke's deteriorating sight, and George Peasgood's thoughts on the personal impact of serious brain injuries.

Above all, Channel 4's coverage authentically showcased the scale and significance of the Paralympic Games in an entertaining, engaging and vibrant manner.

## A new benchmark in the accessibility of TV sponsorship

Together with our sponsors Allianz and Toyota – official partners of the International Paralympic Committee and ParalympicsGB – Channel 4 set a new benchmark for TV sponsorship during the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, creating the most accessible sponsorship creative ever seen in the UK.

Our shared commitment to promote positive attitudes toward disability came to life through new idents with built-in accessibility features as standard, not optional, setting a precedent in inclusive TV sponsorship.

The idents launched alongside a series of 12 three-minute films profiling British Paralympians, created by presenter Ade Adepitan's production company Bolla Media. These played out each evening in the weeks leading up to the Games, starting with the swimmer Maisie Summers-Newton. They were present throughout the Games coverage across Channel 4, More 4 and on streaming, as well as on accessible simulcast coverage on 4Seven.

The Allianz idents all featured audio description, while LV= (as part of the Allianz group) and Toyota had two versions of each ident. The first with British Sign Language accompanied by closed captions and the second with open captions. These accessibility features were at the centre of the creative itself and not an option to toggle on or off.

The sponsorship delivered impressive results for both brands, reaching over two-thirds of adults:

- 8 out of 10 viewers said they had an improved overall opinion of both brands due to the sponsorship
- 50% increase in consideration for Allianz and 40% increase for Toyota during the Games
- The sponsorship significantly improved perceptions including 'trust', 'personality', 'meaningfulness', 'a force for good' and 'helping to build a better society' for both brands
- Both brands out performed sponsorship 'distinctiveness' standards for integration, alignment and commitment to the Games









This year we partnered with Channel 4 for the second summer Games in a row for its Paralympic broadcast content, helping to ensure the competition was accessible to millions of people, not just those fortunate enough to be attending in person. This is an important element of our commitment to showcasing inclusive and sustainable mobility for all.

Stuart Sanders, Communications and Product Director, Toyota (GB)



We were thrilled to be part of a hugely successful sponsorship with Channel 4, once again, for their Paris 2024 Paralympic Games coverage, following our support of the 2016 Rio and 2018 PyeongChang Games. This campaign allowed us to activate and broaden our long-term partnership with both the IPC and ParalympicsGB, recognising and promoting the amazing day-to-day performance of people of all abilities.

Serge Raffard, Managing Director for Personal Lines, Allianz



## Viewpoint: A long-term legacy in Wales

#### **Viewpoint from Carys Owens, Managing Director Cymru, Whisper**

When Whisper pitched for the Paris 2024 Paralympics in 2022, our vision went beyond delivering coverage across the UK - we wanted to make a lasting impact. One of our ideas was to create the most accessible broadcast centre in Europe, and that became a reality with the Cymru Broadcast Centre.

In September 2024, the Paris Paralympic Games became the largest sports production ever produced from Wales, broadcast from the Cymru Broadcast Centre. More than 200 production crew worked at the all-new centre during the Games, with 23% of the production members being disabled - exceeding the national average of 20%.

Designed in conjunction with The Ability People, the Centre was created to be as accessible as possible. Features include accessible doors, a 'Changing Spaces' toilet (available to the public) with electrical fitted hoist, wide walkways and ramps,

hand rails, power-assisted doors and accessible signage in Welsh, English and braille. Attention to detail was extended to branding, fonts, colour scheme and even tactile lines along walls to assist visually impaired individuals.

As a state-of-the-art production facility, the Centre is already delivering global remote productions that it is one of the most accessible on a large scale and bringing increased opportunity to the region. Future productions include Formula One for Channel 4 and the Women's Super League for the BBC.

The Centre also opens new training possibilities that were previously unavailable in Wales. Its impact has been recognised by key leaders, including the First Minister of Wales and the Welsh Government's Minister for the Creative Industries.

"I'm so pleased that the Welsh Government and Creative Wales have been working closely with Whisper, Tramshed Tech, and Cardiff Capital Region to establish the

Cymru Broadcast Centre," said Jack Sargeant, Welsh Minister for the Creative Industries.

"This state-of-the-art facility brings substantial investment and new opportunities to Cardiff, further strengthening our capital's reputation as a leader in the film and television industry. The fact remote production hubs in Europe ensures that opportunities in this sector are open to all. This investment not only boosts our creative sector but also highlights Wales's commitment to innovation and inclusivity on a global scale."



You can focus on your job, rather than focusing on access and just getting around.

Ella Beaumont, Programme Editor and wheelchair user



## What stakeholders thought



C4 Paralympic coverage shows us the amazing power of sport.





Channel 4 pours heart and soul into Paralympics. The Paris 2024 Games have proven a huge success for Paralympics...The project has proven just as big a PR and Marketing triumph for Channel 4.

Danny Rodgers, Editor PR Week writing in The i Paper



Fantastic atmosphere @RolandGarros at the @paralympics @WChairTennisGB in a packed stadium, cheering on @ParalympicsGB team members @GordonReid91 and @AlfieHewitt6, with stunning world beating TV coverage by @Channel4.

Helen Grant MP, Conservative



The Games have been a total triumph. @Channel4 coverage excellent. Paris has been amazing. Organisation off the scale good. And the success of @ParalympicsGB should act as an inspiration ... invest for the long term, put faith in people, and it is amazing what you can build.

Alastair Campbell, Journalist The Rest is Politics Podcast



The Paralympics in Paris have been the best since London & I was delighted to join @Channel4, meet @ParalympicsGB and attend the Closing Ceremony. I hope its legacy will be to deliver on the promise of real gains in equality & inclusion for disabled people in Paris and beyond.

Liam Conlon MP, Labour

