



Theatre Diversity Action Plan

www.bectu.org.uk/theatrediversity





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Foreword

The publication of the theatre industry's first joint union-employer action plan for diversity marks a major step forward towards bringing about greater diversity in the workforce.

It has long been a matter of concern that insufficient progress was being made across the UK to make theatre more diverse, not only on stage and in the work being performed but also backstage. A theatre that claims to have its roots in the community cannot truly make that claim if whole sections of that community are nowhere to be found within that theatre.

Failure to reflect in the workforce the diversity of the community that the theatre serves has an adverse impact on the theatre, by limiting its potential audience. But it also has an adverse impact on the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) population by reducing economic opportunities for those that are excluded.

It has long been regarded as best practice to conduct equality monitoring and publish the data, and then set realistic targets for improvement. BECTU believes that theatres with the courage to make public the diversity of their workforce would also make action a greater priority.

This action plan for diversity, developed by BECTU and supported by theatre employers in both the public and private sectors, follows best practice and is partly the result of the Arts Council's welcome transparency policy, publishing the diversity data of its funded theatres, as it created a need for greater assistance to employers wishing to address this issue. We believe that implementation of this plan with the adoption of best practice recruitment policies will benefit all protected groups, not only BAME workers.

Some of the employers supporting this action plan already have highly developed diversity strategies. A few are not so far down the road. But one key factor that will determine success or failure is a theatre's ability to reach wider sources of talent than they have hitherto been attracting. As this is an issue for every theatre, the partners supporting this diversity action plan intend to work together to identify new talent pools both within the wider live entertainment industry or with transferable skills in other industries.

We are delighted that this initiative brings together both public sector and private sector companies, and the employers with the unions, as working in partnership to bring about change for the better will make success easier to achieve. For the prize will be glittering: building more diverse audiences, greater employment opportunities for minority ethnic workers, and theatres that can truly say that they serve all their communities, culturally, artistically and economically.

Philippa Childs
Head of BECTU



Supporting statements

Cassie Chadderton, head of UK Theatre on behalf of UK Theatre and the Society of London Theatre

UK Theatre, the Society of London Theatre and BECTU share the aim of working with the theatre industry to increase the employment of under-represented groups.

UK Theatre and the Society of London Theatre supports BECTU's initiative as a series of sign-posts, actions and measures that our members may find useful as they go about recruiting and developing their workforce.

A more inclusive workforce will lead to an industry that is more relevant to the UK as a whole, and to broader and more engaged audiences.

Darren Henley OBE, Chief Executive, Arts Council England

We welcome the launch of BECTU's first action plan for diversity in theatres focusing on increasing opportunities for Black and minority ethnic workers across both publicly subsidised and commercial theatres in England. The plan complements our own commitment to advancing equality and diversity across the arts and cultural sector for creative practitioners across all protected characteristic groups under the Equality Act and all socio-economic backgrounds. BECTU's work will provide further advice and support for theatres to diversify their backstage, technical and administrative workforce.

I'm delighted that our work at Arts Council England has served as a catalyst for BECTU to develop the plan which has already received endorsement from over 80 arts organisations across the country creating an opportunity to significantly scale up initiatives to grow the off stage BAME talent pool across the theatre sector.

Frances O'Grady, General Secretary, Trades Union Congress

The TUC welcomes the launch of the Theatre Diversity Action Plan. The arts make a huge contribution to our economy and theatre brings communities together. But there are few Black and minority ethnic workers in theatre, so we need action to tackle discrimination and prevent exclusion.

This plan is a major breakthrough. With most major theatre companies signing up, it's the biggest multi-employer agreement with trade unions to tackle race discrimination. It will help ensure there are good job opportunities in theatre for all our communities.



Introduction

Why has BECTU developed and produced this action plan for diversity in theatre? It is because the union recognises that the theatre industry is overwhelmingly not reflecting the diversity of those communities that they claim to serve.

This was graphically demonstrated in December 2015 when, after pressure from BECTU and fellow unions, the Arts Council of England published the equality monitoring data for almost 100 of its client organisations that employ more than 50 staff. It showed that most theatres were not employing a workforce that reflected the diversity of UK society.

This failure to employ a diverse workforce has serious implications for the industry, for our society and for the union. The Arts Council of England rightly states that “art and culture can help us tackle society’s greatest challenges. They bring us together as communities, helping us connect with one another to combat social exclusion and achieve great things. Participation in the arts can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation, and make communities feel safer and stronger.”

Arts and culture can indeed do all these things. But the failure to employ a diverse staff in theatre discourages diverse audiences and acts as a barrier to theatres succeeding in being a part of the community rather than merely talking to it.

Much research has been carried out to demonstrate how the under-representation of minority ethnic workers is linked to race discrimination in employment, and applications for employment, across British industry as a whole¹.

And failure to employ a diverse workforce impacts on BECTU and its fellow unions that work in theatre. If the workforce from which we recruit is overwhelmingly white then it will be difficult for the union’s own membership not to reflect this. So this action plan is part of the union’s strategy to increase its own diversity.

Our action plan focusses on BAME under-representation because we believe that it is only by doing so that real progress will be made towards achieving a workforce that reflects the communities our theatres serve. However, we are confident that successful implementation of this plan will have a much wider impact among other groups with protected characteristics, because central to this plan is the implementation of long-established best practice in recruitment. This will help to create a level playing field for all.

In drafting the plan we have utilised the excellent guidance available for example from the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the advice and conciliation service ACAS and we have signposted where to find more.

BECTU members and theatre managers are needed to play a leading role together in bringing about changes to the way recruitment takes place. It is imperative for the industry, the union and for the economic and social development of our society that the theatre industry stands up to be counted at this crucial time, and we are delighted that so many theatres have done so.

Janice Turner
BECTU Diversity Officer

¹ Eg *The 60-76 Report*; and *A test for Race Discrimination in Seven British Cities*



The action plan

The diversity action plan is a step-by-step practical guide to addressing diversity in your workplace. It draws on existing good practice and shows you where you can find additional assistance if you need it.

1. We recommend that your theatre sets up a joint working group of the union and management

BECTU and our partners want staff and managements to work together taking this forward. It is important to be able to communicate with both staff and management about the need for changes to the way things 'have always been done', what is being done and why the working group is proposing such action. The most successful initiatives bring everyone along with them.

One of the first things your working group can do is familiarise itself with the Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance in this area, titled *Good equality practice for employers: equality policies, equality training and monitoring* (downloadable at <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/good-equality-practice-employers-equality-policies-equality-training-and>).

This very useful guidance explains how the law applies to your organisation and what good equality practice looks like. It focusses on three key areas: equality policies, equality training and monitoring. It gives examples and makes suggestions.

2. Check your equality policy

It is good practice to have a written document that you can use to set out your theatre's commitment to tackle discrimination and promote equality and diversity. This is an equality policy. Having one shows your theatre's commitment to equality for its workers, audiences and others who use or work with the theatre. The policy should not only set out what you would like to achieve, but also how you are going about achieving it – your action plan.

The working group should review your theatre's existing plan, if it has one. In the light of the group's work it might want to revise it. If you don't currently have one you can create one. The EHRC guide (above) contains good advice on how to do this and what it should contain.

3. Achieve an accurate assessment of your theatre's workforce

If your theatre has not carried out equality monitoring then your HR dept will need to do so. The purpose of equality monitoring is to establish the real picture which will help you to work out whether there is an issue to be addressed. It will help you assess whether your theatre is recruiting employees from the whole community in the area in which your theatre is based or whether some appear to have been excluded. It can reveal whether progress is being made towards the aims set out in your equality policy. As the EHRC says, it can also help you identify where taking positive action can be appropriate, by highlighting parts of your workforce where people with certain 'protected characteristics' (eg minority ethnic workers, women, people with disabilities) are disproportionately underrepresented.

There are several aspects of employment in which monitoring can be carried out but here we focus on staffing and recruitment.



If you don't know the ethnic breakdown of your area you can find out by searching Google with the term 2011 Census: KS201EW Ethnic group, local authorities in England and Wales (Excel sheet 335Kb). This is published by the Office for National Statistics and gives you the information in numbers and as percentages.

Your HR department will need to tell your workforce why they are asking them for monitoring information and give them details of the process they have in place for collecting, storing and using the information.

In larger organisations it would be useful to ensure that those completing the equality monitoring state which department they are in so that it can be identified whether some departments are leading, or falling behind, with regard to diversity. With this information it is possible to produce a strategy that aims to address the specific department(s) in your theatre if you have identified a particular problem.

4. Study the results within the working group and compare the data with the ethnic demographic of your area and with the national figure of 14%. Does your theatre's workforce reflect these demographics?

5. Arrive at a consensus within your group about a realistic target to achieve and a timeframe in which to achieve it.

The idea that every workplace should reflect the national demographic is not realistic because there are wide variations in diversity across the country. It is more appropriate to take into account the local population demographic as well, meaning that your target could be higher or lower than 14%.

For example, more than 40% of Londoners are from minority ethnic communities so a London-based venue should be aiming for a minority ethnic workforce greater than 14%, whereas a venue in Exeter, with a minority ethnic population of 7%, would be aiming at a target below 14%.

6. If you have concluded that action needs to be taken, fill in the table

set out in appendix one, excluding the last column for now. An online version can be downloaded from www.bectu.org.uk which you can amend as appropriate to your theatre.

Here is an example:

Role	Are they permanent staff, casual, fulltime or part-time?	What qualifications or experience are required?	Where are they usually recruited from?	Who is responsible for deciding who to hire?	What other sources of talent are there that we could utilise?
Stage hands	All of the above	On-the-job vocational training. Capable of doing physical labour	Casuals: informal networks & students. Permanent: from among the casuals	John Smith	

The point is to set out the basic requirements of the role and how your organisation usually recruits them. Ask the person responsible for making the hiring decisions how they are usually recruited if your working group is unsure.



7. Establish through discussion with the hirer whether BAME candidates are applying but are not successful, or very few/no BAME candidates are applying.

While overt racism is no doubt still present in every industry, unconscious bias is an important issue that needs to be recognised and addressed. Unconscious bias refers to a bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

The Department for Work and Pensions showed how much discrimination affects BAME job applicants in a study (*see box*) which concluded that while 4% of public sector employers discriminated against BAME job applicants, more than a third of private sector employers did.

If a lot of BAME applications are coming in but hardly any such applicants are offered the job, you may want to review your application and interview process (*see point 10*).

If hardly any BAME candidates are applying for posts, take a close look at how your organisation fills those posts and consider how likely it is that a potential BAME applicant would find out about the vacancy or be inclined to apply for it.

Discrimination in employment

Many studies have shown that discrimination in employment is real. The Department for Work and Pensions commissioned *A test of racial discrimination in recruitment practice in seven British cities* to collect factual evidence about whether discrimination is a significant factor affecting labour market outcomes for ethnic minorities. Matched pairs of job applications were sent in response to job advertisements in the public sector and private sector in seven British cities. Ethnic identity was conveyed using names widely associated with the ethnic groups included in the survey, randomly assigned to each application.

The survey found that, looking at the pairs of applications in which either or both were called to interview, 39% of BAME applicants got through compared with 68% of white applicants. It also found that 4% of public sector employers were likely to have discriminated on the grounds of race – but 35% of private sector employers were likely to have done so.

The 60/76 report by the Business Commission on Race Equality in the Workplace surveyed 1,000 businesses. Among the rationales they heard for why companies were not taking any action were that white staff resent measures to tackle race inequality; all they want to do is “hire the best” and in promoting race equality they are being asked to lower standards; and that race equality is not an issue because they do not have any ethnic minority employees.

More recently the authoritative McGregor-Smith report into race equality in the workplace, commissioned by Secretary of State for Business Sajid Javid, pointed out that an integrated workforce has far wider benefits than companies and their shareholders: they substantially impact the economy as a whole. It states: “As McKinsey identified in 2015, companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians ... The potential benefit to the UK economy from full representation of BME individuals across the labour market through improved participation and progression is estimated to be £24-billion a year, which represents 1.3% of GDP.”



Case study: the Young Vic

Step eight of the action plan asks employers to attract diverse job applications by finding BAME talent appropriate to each job type.

The Young Vic has set an example of this strategy. Associate Artistic Director Sue Emma says: “We recognised, especially in terms of casual show staff, that you tend to use your existing contacts and that often leads to a monocultural workforce. Often jobs are entry level, it is a key access point to jobs in theatres, whether that be stage crew, dressers or wardrobe.”

Young Vic Head of Costume Catherine Kodicek recognised this and decided to expand the pool from which she drew people for wardrobe. “To reach people who may not usually apply, we removed the customary “three years or more experience” barrier and committed to train some people,” she says. “We circulated the details of

the opportunities months before the shows we were employing for, through our Taking Part’s communities groups, ushers, several Facebook groups and twitter and encouraged people to share with anyone they thought would be interested stressing the training that would be available. We met with a huge number of people and as a result we had a more representative pool to draw from.

“This has resulted in having makers, dressers and maintenance people working on our most recent shows, *Fun Home* and *Twelfth Night* who are new to the Young Vic.”

“It was time-consuming but we recognised the benefit to us,” says Emma. “To make change you have to honestly ask: ‘Do you want to change, how much are you willing to change and what does success look like?’”

Pictured below left: Deputy HOD Costume Kinnetia Isidore (foreground) and Naomi Thompson, costume show maintenance; right: costume maker Francesca Duval





If some posts are being filled by word of mouth, or by friends of friends, without openly advertising the post more widely then this could potentially result in indirect discrimination.

When advertising the post consider how many BAME potential applicants are likely to see the notice of the vacancy. For example, it may seem a fair and open way to attract applicants to a casual vacancy by putting a notice outside your building for people to see as they walk past. But if your theatre is in a part of town with hardly any BAME residents or workers in the vicinity, it is highly unlikely that you will attract a diverse range of applications.

8. Attracting diverse applications:

BECTU's consultations with theatre reps indicate that the key to improving diversity in many theatres is success in attracting diverse applications. So your working group's next step is to find sources of BAME talent appropriate to each job type.

Casual work should be included in this exercise. Many people enter the theatre industry through casual work and progress into staff roles and then progress into more senior positions so inclusion of casual vacancies is important for both the short and long term.

What the law says

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission says that the underlying principle of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') is that everyone should be treated fairly and have equal opportunities to fulfil their potential. This means that selecting people for jobs and roles must be on merit, demonstrated through fair and transparent criteria and procedures. The Act prohibits discrimination based on nine 'protected characteristics': age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

People sharing particular protected characteristics, such as women, ethnic minorities or disabled people, who are under-represented on boards or in companies are often referred to as 'under-represented groups'.

If you can demonstrate that there is under-representation in the workforce then you may take positive action. Positive action can mean working hard to ensure that the vacancy is seen by the under-represented groups and that they are encouraged to apply. It can mean holding an event to encourage BAME talent to consider working in theatre. The positive action is designed to encourage a diverse range of candidates to apply for a job who can be considered on their merits.

The appointment process must not treat one candidate less favourably than another, or unjustifiably put candidates who share a protected characteristic at a disadvantage as this would be unlawful.

You may decide to use the positive action 'tie-break provision' contained in the Equality Act 2010. This allows you to treat a candidate from an under-represented group more favourably at any stage of the recruitment or promotion process, from longlisting to selection. However, it can only be used if two or more candidates are equally qualified. It will be more difficult to satisfy yourself of this at the earlier stages of the recruitment process.

For further guidance you can read the EHRC's Code of Practice on Employment, www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/employment-statutory-code-practice



Case study: Sheffield Theatres

Throughout 2017 and into 2018 Sheffield Theatres has been developing new recruitment initiatives to help increase the diversity of its staff. Alongside recruiting seven new members of the Board of Trustees, we were also delighted to be accepted on the Arts Council's Change Maker Programme which brought Javaad Alipoor, Theatre Maker and Director, onto our Senior Management Team as an Associate Director for 18 months.

In 2017 Sheffield Theatres created three new trainee positions thanks to support from the Change Makers fund. These Positive Action Traineeships were established as a specific way to address the lower levels of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic diversity within our workforce. In order to reach a more diverse range of applicants we expanded our recruitment channels. This ranged from more active use of, and collaboration with relevant partners on social media within the recruitment process. Facebook and Twitter were particularly useful tools for reaching applicants directly 'where they live'. We utilised our existing community networks which had grown and developed through initiatives such as Fun Palaces and Sheffield People's Theatre (which brings around 100 people from the community together every year to create work for our stage), as well as actively developing new links and partnerships with contacts at the university, other theatres and arts organisations and charities.

We successfully attracted a wider range of applicants and recruited three new roles in three

areas of the organisation: technical theatre; events and theatre management; and producing and programming. The roles have an 18-month term and the learning contracts are devised between the trainee and their line managers to offer a bespoke and beneficial experience to each of them.

"I truly feel like an integral part of the Sheffield Theatres - not only with something to learn, but with something uniquely important to contribute also."

Lauren Townsend, Programming & Producing Trainee

We hope that the programme we've established will enable the trainees to move into assistant technician; producer; and event management roles once they have concluded their traineeships. In the meantime, we have seen enormous benefit from the skills and talents that the trainees have brought to the organisation. We have expanded our 'Positive Action' approach to other trainee roles and have recently recruited into the post of Finance Trainee on that basis. Our approach to diversifying the workforce has continued with further support from our Agent for Change who has a remit to focus on D/deaf and disabled engagement, our involvement in Stage Sight which is designed to diversify the backstage workforce and our work with Artistic Directors of the Future on a programme which will bring BAME artists into the Board environment at five Yorkshire Theatres over the course of 2019.



Photo: Maisie Burn



Fill in the right-hand column on the form in appendix one, setting out the alternative sources of BAME talent with contact details.

Some examples:

If some casual work is often done by students then the working group could ask itself where it would find BAME students. The nearest university may have student societies run by and for different groups.

For specialist roles the working group could identify BAME-focussed companies and forge links with them (including BAME-led theatres and arts centres), Some roles can transfer in such as accountancy and marketing, so it may be possible to link in to BAME professional networks and find BAME-led companies or institutions that employ a higher proportion of BAME staff with transferable skills.

Many higher education colleges offer qualifications in theatrical skills such as a Higher National Diploma in Production Arts, a media hair and makeup (theatre special effects) diploma level 3, technical theatre (lighting sound and stage) level 3 and theatrical costume, hair and makeup level 3.

Find out what media is used by the BAME communities in your area, whether printed newspapers, radio or online media.

BECTU is planning to work with willing theatres to divide up the search for sources of BAME talent and pool the knowledge. If your theatre would like to join in please get in touch with BECTU.

9. Make contact with your new sources, establish a good relationship and a method of alerting them to job vacancies as they arise.

10. Ensure a level playing field

Ensure that your recruitment procedure follows good practice and does not inadvertently indirectly discriminate.

Check that a standard application form is used for all recruitment.

Check that job descriptions and selection criteria are made clear to all potential applicants.

We particularly recommend:

- that you adopt a policy of 'name-blind applications', in which the applicant's name is detached before the application is considered. Many organisations have been surprised at the increase in BAME appointments after this small change was implemented.
- that more than one person sifts applications, conducts the interviews and makes the hiring decision.

Appendix two is an easy guide to the recruitment procedure provided by ACAS.

Have those who draw up the shortlist, conduct the interviews and make the hiring decisions undertaken equality training?

ACAS, which exists to provide help and advice for employers and employees, has a wealth of resources that can be downloaded from www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1392

It includes a simple outline of a job description, a person specification, job application forms, job offer letters and pre-employment checks.

- Acas can also provide training on interview skills, avoiding discriminatory practices in recruitment and other matters.



If you are achieving success, please let us know so that we can celebrate your achievements and pass on to others your examples of how you achieved it

- ACAS has an equality and diversity advisory service. They have a network of specialist equality and diversity advisers around the country. They will look at your current policies and practices with you, recommend improvements, help put them in place and provide training if you need it.

For example, they can help you with your equal opportunities policies, recruitment systems, monitoring and targets, training programmes and how you deal with harassment.

Their first visit is free of charge and usually takes no more than an hour. After that, it's up to you to decide if you need further help. You can find out more about these services by contacting your local Acas office which can be found by going to www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2030

11. Review your progress

Once you have put your plan into action, continue reviewing the progress you're making at each stage to see whether you need to make changes or adopt a different approach.

12. Communicate

With your union branch: it is important to discuss the diversity strategy with your branch and especially the case for doing it, so that everyone understands why this is happening.

With the union: if you are encountering problems please get in touch. But also if you are achieving success in making new links with BAME communities and professionals, securing more diverse job applications and achieving a more diverse workforce, please let us know so that we can celebrate your achievements and pass on to others your examples of how you achieved your success.



Appendix one

You can download this form at www.bectu.org.uk/theatrediversity and fill it in in order to work out how and from where you might attract more diverse staff in relevant areas. You can change the form on the downloaded file to fit your own theatre's needs.

Role	Are they permanent staff, casual, fulltime or part-time?	What qualifications or experience are required?	Where are they usually recruited from?	Who is responsible for deciding who to hire?	What other sources of talent are there that we could utilise?
STAGE CREW					
Stage hands					
Flyman					
Stage machinery/ automation					
LX including lighting and sound					
Wardrobe - maintenance and running wardrobe					
Sound and video					
Maintenance					



Role	Are they permanent staff, casual, fulltime or part-time?	What qualifications or experience are required?	Where are they usually recruited from?	Who is responsible for deciding who to hire?	What other sources of talent are there that we could utilise?
ADMINISTRATION					
Admin					
Accounts					
Box office					
Stage door					
MANAGEMENT					
Theatre manager					
Artistic director					
Director					
Stage manager					
Education and outreach					



Role	Are they permanent staff, casual, fulltime or part-time?	What qualifications or experience are required?	Where are they usually recruited from?	Who is responsible for deciding who to hire?	What other sources of talent are there that we could utilise?
WORKSHOPS (IN RELEVANT THEATRES)					
Carpentry					
Metal					
Scenic art					
Wigs/props/hair & makeup					
Props (making)					
Costume and wardrobe					
Making and design					
Lighting and sound design					
Armoury and SFX including pyrotechnics					
Cleaners and security					



Appendix two

Recruiting staff

STEP 1 Hiring options

- Work out what is really needed - more staff, new skills, specific duties
- Make sure the employment terms and conditions on offer are attractive in the current labour market
- Don't forget the benefits of training and developing current staff

STEP 2 Essential documents

- Consider factors, such as has the role changed or is it a completely new role, before preparing the documents
- The six documents:
1. Job description **2.** Person specification **3.** Job application form **4.** Equality and diversity monitoring form **5.** Information about the employer **6.** Job offer letter template

STEP 3 Advertise the job

- Consider the range of media and advertise opportunities in at least two channels
- Make important decisions, such as how the successful candidate will be picked, before compiling the job ad
- Compile the ad, including asking applicants to say if they need any 'reasonable adjustments' for any part of the recruitment process

STEP 4 Sift and select

- Check again if applicants need any 'reasonable adjustments'
- Make 'reasonable adjustments' if the candidate is disabled
- At least two people should sift applications to select candidates for interviews etc
- Prepare for the interview/ tests
- Conduct the interview/ tests and score candidates
- Select the best candidate for the job

STEP 5 Complete final details

- Offer the job and make necessary pre-employment checks
- Resolve any queries over the contract of employment and the checks
- File documentation e.g. candidate's written acceptance of the job offer
- Start to prepare for the new recruit's arrival



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