

National Theatre Wales 'Strategic Equalities Plan 2021-22

As a national theatre company, we think about identity a lot. There are 3 million people in Wales. We all experience the identity of this nation as differently as we experience our own. The identity of a country can be as complicated and contradictory as any person's.

It is our mission to make theatre matter to all kinds of people, all over Wales. We want to create incredible theatre, and the better we are at amplifying varied experiences of what it means to be alive in Wales now, the closer we get to expressing something new, vital and complex about our nation and our people.

To be a truly national theatre, making meaningful art that resonates around Wales and beyond, we must engage genuinely in countering the disparity of opportunity and access for theatre audiences and makers who have been excluded. It is our job to welcome everyone in Wales to theatre; as a joy, as an industry, as a means of expression and connection.

In the wake of the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, it was too easy for many of us in Wales to offer notional support to the Black Lives Matter movement in the US while not interrogating our own privilege or compliance, and the state sanctioned violence in our own communities.

As Wales sometimes struggles to assert its own identity and gain recognition for its language, history and culture, sitting as we do in the shadows of larger nations, we can be in danger of not examining the stark realities of inequality and structural oppression that exist within Welsh society.

Leaders in the Senedd have been presented with the disturbing picture in Dr Robert Jones' 2020 report. Black, Asian and minority ethnic people in Wales are more than twice as likely to be subject to stop and search as their white counterparts. In Wales' prisons, research found 14 white, 28 Asian, 41 mixed heritage and 91 black people per 10,000 of the population.

Disparity in opportunity does not only run along racial lines. Our disabled population lives in the highest rates of poverty in the entire United Kingdom, with 39% struggling to get by.

In the Arts in Wales, 53% of Black, Asian and mixed heritage freelancers told the Wales Freelance Task Force that they had insufficient support at work, citing tokenism and poor representation. In the context of the pandemic, they lost more income than their white counterparts and were more likely to have insufficient income. While 43% of Deaf and disabled freelancers had

insufficient support at work and reported being made to feel like ‘irritations’ rather than ‘assets’.

National Theatre Wales is a part of the cultural landscape that has excluded and harmed people who experience racism and ableism. Our company has not always been a safe, welcoming and empowering place for these theatre makers, audience members and staff. We have to understand racist and ableist interactions and disparities as connected to systematic oppression and deeply-held attitudes to race and disability in Wales and the UK.

As we better comprehend Wales’ complicated history, not least its place in imperial Britain, and the work that needs to be done for a fairer future for everyone who calls Wales home, we can acknowledge achievements and progress too.

Wales is enacting some of the most progressive legislation in the world, enshrining the right to life and equity of future generations. We’re the first British nation to commit to teach and celebrate Black history in every one of our schools. And NTW is the first national arts organisation in the UK to have been led by a working-class woman of colour.

Kully Thiarai is a highly esteemed theatre maker and cultural leader. We’re extremely proud of the connections made, the work created, and the trust built under Kully’s leadership, which challenged hierarchies and orthodoxies in how we make and nurture new work and talent in Wales. We want to acknowledge that the way in which Kully’s stewardship of NTW was criticised and undermined in some parts of our industry — particularly the speed with which the condescension and aggression escalated — cannot be detached from her identity as a brown woman. It seems evident to us that white leaders, whose leadership is familiar and authoritative, get patience, respect and the benefit of the doubt where Kully did not. And it seems undeniable that this is indicative of racism and misogyny.

It is a continuing priority for us to reckon with some of our failings as a staff team in supporting Kully. We as a sector must face that Wales was not a welcoming place for her work to take flight, as it isn’t for so many whose perspectives are informed by lived experiences which are different to the Welsh arts sector’s white, middle-class majority.

Artists and audiences who were welcomed by Kully into NTW, especially women of colour, may be left wondering if they still belong here. We’re committed to nurturing the work she began — to repairing relationships,

rebuilding trust and working continuously to foster a safe space for all artists and audiences at NTW.

Kully's time and experience at NTW is referenced with her permission and our gratitude.

For many of us this year and last have forced reflection as life has been pared back by the pandemic, and the pain and brutality of existing inequalities has been laid bare. As a country, we're examining what our past means for our present and future. What kind of people and nation we're capable of being. As a national theatre company, we're examining our decision-making processes, to meet our responsibility to artists and audiences who experience racism, ableism and all kinds of prejudice and exclusion.

It is with a renewed focus on anti-discrimination that we are committed to the cultural life of all people in Wales, driven by an incredible wealth of Welsh talent, to tell stories which say something powerful about being alive, here, now.

We whole-heartedly believe that inclusivity and representation of a wide range of stories in theatre makes better, more insightful art, that is meaningful to a bigger, broader audience. We believe in theatre as an agent for change in society. And in culture as the space to grow and recover together.

We have much work to do, to embody these beliefs.

Terms we're using in this plan

Racialised individuals and communities, or racialised artists or theatre makers.

We're using the term to acknowledge that in Wales and the UK, Black and brown people (people of African and Caribbean heritage, of South Asian or East Asian or Southeast Asian heritage, those who have a Middle East or North African heritage, and people from other minority ethnic communities) are categorised by race like this, only because they're living in a white-led Welsh or British society. We first came across this term in the work of the Esmée Fairburn Foundation, who explain that "Racialised doesn't define people's identity, heritage or ethnicity, but the phenomenon that is happening to them."

Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. The term was conceptualised and coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw.

A focus on racial and disability justice

This action plan focuses on opportunity and agency for people who experience inequality or exclusion because of ableism and racism. With this plan, we aim to coalesce around clear, bold ideas that can be catalysts for real change. When we talk about people having lived experience of ableism and racism in this plan we want to be clear that people's lives intersect across these and other marginalised identities, and that we're striving to use an intersectional lens when considering the outcomes of our actions.

There was a striking demand from the UK Freelance Task Force for organisations to address inequality in the sector and reports, including Wales Freelance Taskforce's Rebalancing and Reimagining, attest that those most in need of meaningful opportunities, engagement and empowerment are arts professionals who experience ableism and racism.

This focussed approach will help us make bigger changes more quickly and presents us with the opportunity to bring new talent, potential and ideas into NTW, partnering with organisations in Wales and beyond to lay foundations for a thriving, diverse cultural landscape that we all want to be a part of.

This year we've changed the way we monitor diversity across our workforce, enabling people to more precisely identify their ethnicity, self-describe their gender and tell us meaningfully about their socio-economic background. This should give us firmer footing in understanding the people we're working with and the communities we're failing to reach.

We've committed to the Rebalancing and Reimagining recommendation that 20% of freelancers we work with be new to the company, we aim to meet that goal across each year of programming, and we're excited to see who we'll meet along the way. We've developed an Access Rider which invites every person to tell us what they need to do their best work with NTW and, alongside organisations throughout the UK, we're committed to The Seven Principals for inclusive recovery, from the UK Disability Arts Alliance. Starting by renewing our company-wide training on the Equality Act and ensuring that our COVID mitigation measures are clear to everyone we work with, so that they can assess their risk and seek any required adjustments.

In a moment of standstill for the performing arts, we've redirected vital funds to artists at greatest risk of leaving the industry. Time = Money saw us award bursaries of £2,500 to 14 under-represented theatre makers. Springboard is more ambitious still, and will mean 10 artists who've experienced marginalisation each receive a bursary of £5,000 and a bespoke attachment to the company.

We are currently developing a decision-making framework within NTW as part of our desire to be a more accountable and transparent organisation and to ensure that our process of commissioning, programming, assigning resources and pursuing projects remains consistent with our values. We want to put antiracism and anti-ableism at the heart of this framework, so that we're assessing the potential impact of our decisions on people with protected characteristics.

All of this work, and that ahead of us, will change the ways we're able to talk to our audience and the industry. Throughout this plan, it will be the crucial job of our Audiences Department to communicate the work we're doing; profile the artists, their work and stories and the opportunities at NTW, to reach new people and amplify the change we're making. Better representation (onstage, backstage, in our boardroom, online), effectively and meaningfully communicated, will allow us to speak authentically to audiences who may not have yet seen themselves or their experiences reflected through our work. The positive impact this can have on how our audience perceive us; as relevant, engaging and important to them, is a core ingredient in our drive to grow and strengthen our relationships with audiences throughout Wales.

Our team is passionate and optimistic about this plan. We're building on strong foundations of the renowned, inclusive work our Collaboration department has undertaken throughout the company's first decade. We're excited to welcome new voices and experiences into NTW and programme our most diverse, ambitious and extraordinary work yet. As we necessarily bear witness to the dehumanising experiences of people who are subject to racism and ableism, we are striving to be a national theatre fuelled by the excellence, joy and vision of all Welsh theatre makers, producing work which allows artists both complexity of and freedom from 'identity'.

Ambitions for Representation and Opportunity in 2021-24

We believe that prioritising authorship and visibility of underrepresented artists is paramount for a thriving theatre sector. Read where we are now for details of our progress to date.

Our ambition is that between 2021 and 2024, across the following areas of our work, at least 15% of people will be Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse and at least 25% will be racialised individuals.

- Lead artists, traditionally a writer or director, sometimes a musician, designer, performance artist etc, the people whose ideas and sensibility drive a production
- Performers, including actors, musicians and dancers
- Participants, people in communities all over Wales who volunteer to be part of our productions and the varied work of our Collaboration department, including TEAM Panel
- Theatre makers in development, producers and artists of all disciplines who join us for development opportunities including residencies and bursaries

Commissioned writers and other artists

Commissioning individuals with a wide range of life experience, heritage and relationships to Wales, will mean extraordinary programming in the years to come. Of all new commissions in the coming year, at least;

- 25% will be by artists who are racialised individuals
- 25% by artists who are Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals
- 25% by artists who are individuals from a socio-economically disadvantaged background

For the first time, we're setting out our ambition to diversify our core staff and Board of Trustees.

Our core team

National Theatre Wales Employees, working on a permanent or fixed-term basis.

In 2019-20 20% of our team were racialised individuals, rising to 22% in 2020-21.

In 2019-20 3.5% of our team identified as Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse, rising to 10% in 2020-21.

In the period 2021 -24 we aim for 25% of our team to be racialised individuals and 15% to be Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals*.

* As a Cardiff based company, we're looking at the population of Wales 'most diverse city, and at our knowledge of the industry, to determine these ambitions. statswales.gov.wales suggest that 20.7% of Cardiff's population are Black, Asian and minority ethnic (year ending 31st March 2020) and that 19.7% of Cardiff's working age population is disabled (year ending 31st March 2013).

Our Board of Trustees

In the financial year 2020-21, 30% of serving trustees were racialised individuals, which was 15% in the previous financial year. There has been no one identifying as Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse on the board in either year.

This year we will appoint two new trustees who have experienced inequality or discrimination because of racism and/or ableism.

Objectives

All of the following actions are in pursuit of our main three objectives. In relation to racialised, Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals, we aim to;

- create safe and viable career pathways for artists and arts professionals
- build trust between NTW and people who experience inequality and exclusion because of racism and ableism
- increase representation of these communities within National Theatre Wales and its Board of Trustees.

Actions

Theatre Makers

Evaluate and further develop Springboard, making a consistent offer to underrepresented artists every year until 2024. Of the artists awarded, we will ensure at least

- 25% are artists who are racialised individuals
- 25% are artists who are Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals
- 25% are artists from a socio-economically disadvantaged background

Time = Money, and then Springboard, have been specifically developed to connect with theatre makers who've felt excluded from the arts because of who they are, and may be most at risk of leaving the industry in the climate created by the pandemic. This need will not vanish as the industry returns to work.

Outcome: Increase NTW's knowledge of and relationships with cohorts of early-career theatre makers, with lived experience currently underrepresented in the industry, seeding for future collaboration.

Responsibility: Artistic Director, supported by Producing and Creative Development Departments

Timeline: Evaluation of Springboard in November 2021
With a view to call-out for new initiative by March 2022

Recruit a Creative Associate from an underrepresented community.

The Creative Associate will work closely with the Artistic Director, taking a lead on artist development initiatives and contributing to NTW's strategy for commissioning and project development. They'll also develop their own project for production.

Outcome: Puts lived experience of racist or ableist inequality at the heart of the company's decision making. Investment in an artist and potential future cultural leader.

Responsibility: Director of Operations and Artistic Director, Supported by Casting Associate

Timeline: Develop job description by end of October 2021, concurrently working on plans to support this individual and their development. Appointment by end of December 2021.

Collaborate with Artistic Associates who are Deaf, disabled, neurodiverse or racialised individuals.

Fixed-term roles to formalise relationships with artists who offer their advice, insight and support in developing and commissioning artists who experience inequality or exclusion because of racism and ableism.

Outcome: Lived experience of racist or ablest inequality at the heart of the company's decision making.

Responsibility: Artistic Director and Casting Associate

Timeline: Initial appointments by end of December 2021

Explore the most effective ways to resource theatre makers experiencing racism and ableism to sustain and grow their networks and support systems. Implement them.

Outcome: Improving connectivity for artists who may have been excluded from the industry and creating opportunities for safe spaces, peer to peer mentoring and support.

Responsibility: Creative Associate and Casting Associate

Timeline: Findings by the end of January 2021. Work underway by March 2022

Working with young people

We are currently working towards completing a comprehensive strategy for working with young people. To ensure this has anti-racism and anti-ableism at its heart, we are recommending that the below actions be included.

Outcome: A shared understanding across all areas of the company's practice, of how we will engage and inspire the theatre makers of the future.

Responsibility: Collaboration, Audiences, Development and Production Departments

Timeline: Strategy to be completed by March 2022 for implementation into business plan.

Actions specific to race and disability, for inclusion in our Young People Strategy;

Design NTW's offer of work experience, placements and apprenticeships. Within which, positions will be strategically reserved

for people who are racialised, Deaf, disabled and/or neurodiverse.

Outcome: Counter underrepresentation in key professions including technical production, sound and lighting design and stage management.

Create a free ticketing programme for young people from communities currently underrepresented in the Welsh theatre industry and audiences, in collaboration with other national organisations and arts companies in Wales, taking inspiration and advice from Black Ticket Project.

Outcome: Greater inclusion in our audiences. Fostering belonging in communities who have been excluded from the arts. Inspiring future theatre makers.

Devise an Agency legacy project, which builds on the success of our work with 15-25 year olds in Riverside, Butetown and Grangetown in Cardiff.

Carefully selecting communities, not only geographic, to ensure that we're able to work with young people from underrepresented communities. For example, exploring the potential of a Wales-wide digital version of Agency for young Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse people.

Outcome: Providing a performing arts offer for young people that is inherently inclusive of those underrepresented at traditional youth theatres and stage schools. Connecting NTW to young cohorts. Welcoming young people who experience inequality or exclusion to the theatre industry in a way which focuses on their empowerment, authenticity and ability to create change.

Working practices

Review recruitment processes

Our review will cover our recruitment philosophy, processes and documents identifying and removing barriers to access. This may include actions such as;

Advertising with specific new arts networks and targeted social media in advance of general communications

Working with recruitment specialists with a focus on underrepresented candidates for key managerial and leadership roles

Interviewing all candidates who are Deaf, disabled, neurodiverse and/or racialised individuals who meet the essential criteria

Consider whether roles need to keep set hours or whether greater flexibility might work just as well, encouraging those with caring responsibilities to apply

Overhauling our approaches to application and interview processes including:

Removing 'not for me' language such as acronyms, elitist industry terms and overly wordy text

Developing a warmer and more approachable voice across all our Company documents, and through additions like the 'Day in the Life' sections in our job advert template

Reducing the amount of time involved in applying for roles by focusing on a cover letter / video application and CV only

Invite different forms of job applications including video and audio

Asking applicants to speak about their aspirations rather than 'testing' them on their knowledge of NTW or the sector, or on how well they can match their experiences to the job description

Providing candidates with interview questions in advance, and relaxing interview conditions - especially for entry level roles and at stage 1 conversations - by using smaller panels, sharing biographies of panellists in advance and (when face to face contact resumes) choosing coffee shops rather than the Board Room

Working with panels in advance to challenge preconceptions about who might be the 'best candidate' for the role. We will require panellists to undertake implicit bias training and an Implicit Association Test and reduce reliance on matrix scoring to 50% or less. Instead, we will encourage them to look for potential over proven experience in the exact field, especially for entry level roles. This includes valuing experiences, skills and personalities currently lacking at NTW rather than those which are familiar and 'will fit in easily'

Increase the number of open recruitment processes for freelance roles as well as proactively inviting underrepresented freelancers to connect with the company.

Outcome: Increase representation amongst applicants and the NTW workforce

Responsibility: Director of Operations with company-wide support, especially from Audiences Department

Timeline: Work ongoing until the end of October 2021, which connects to our work on retention, wellbeing and staff development.

Identify ways to offer all engaged arts professionals who experience inequality and exclusion because of racism and ableism the opportunity to connect with networks or mentors who share that aspect of their lived experience.

Outcome: Create safer spaces, promote connectivity and mitigate the risk of people feeling 'othered' at NTW.

Responsibility: Associate Director and Casting Associate, with support from the Director of Operations

Timeline: by the end of December 2021, as part of our work on retention, wellbeing and staff development.

Accountability

This plan is approved by the board of trustees who oversee the governance of National Theatre Wales. It is shared with our main funder, Arts Council Wales, and publicly with you, the artists, participants and audience who make our work possible and meaningful. Each year, we'll update you on our progress and renew our ambitions.

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We'll publish stats like those on the following pages, that give an insight into the people who make up NTW. These stats help us understand these

numbers in relation to our workforce as a whole, but we recognise that people's identities intersect and people can identify as both racialised and Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse.

Where we are now. 2020-21

This was not a usual year and activity has been majorly curtailed by the Coronavirus pandemic.

There is substantial work to be done in ensuring that the artists who lead our productions are more representative of Welsh society. We believe that our plan for new commissions, including the focussed work of Time=Money and Springboard, will enable us to work with our most exciting and representative cohort of lead artist in the coming years.

We're pleased to have continued progress and increased representation of racialised, Deaf, disabled and/or neurodiverse individuals amongst our theatre makers in development and performers on our stages.

Lead Artists

8% of our lead artists in 2020-21 were racialised individuals and 8% were Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals.

Our 2017-20 average was 12% racialised individuals and no lead artists who are Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals

Performers

In 2020-21, 31% of performers in NTW productions were racialised individuals

12.5% were Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals

Our 2017-20 average was 18% racialised performers and 10% Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse performers.

Theatre Makers in Development

Time = Money saw us working with a cohort of early career theatre makers. 35% are Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse theatre makers and 43% are racialised theatre makers

Looking forward, we're in the process of awarding Springboard bursaries, we'll be working with these artists in the 2021-22 financial year. This cohort is 30% Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals and 50% racialised individuals

Our 2017-20 average was 22% racialised theatre makers and 3.5% Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse theatre makers.

TEAM Panel

TEAM Panel support, question and advise us on all aspects of our work, and a TEAM Panel member sits on our board. Panel gives TEAM a voice at the very core of NTW. Of our current Team Panel;

27% are Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals

27% are of Asian heritage, including Pakistani Welsh and Indian Welsh

7% are of Black African heritage

13% are of mixed or dual heritage, including Black African and White

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