



# Rewriting the Script

## Launch engagement events report - October 2016

Diverse Cymru is a unique Welsh charity committed to supporting people faced with inequality and discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## Background

In October 2016 we launched the recommendations and actions from our Welsh Government funded Rewriting the Script: Diversity in Film and TV in Wales research project.

We held three public launch events in:

- **Cardiff**
- **Carmarthen**
- **Colwyn Bay**

Participants included Welsh film and TV production companies, casting agencies, disability arts organisation, Higher and Further Education providers, trade unions, equalities organisations, community organisations, film festivals, Welsh Government, and diverse individuals working in or trying to get into the film and TV industry in Wales.

At each event participants discussed the recommendations and actions from the report. Discussions focused on how the report reflected their own experiences and ideas to take forward the recommendations and actions.

Participants at all engagement events were keen to participate in ongoing networking, engagement and joint working to implement the recommendations of the report. They expressed a need to ensure that this does not become another report on a shelf, but is the start of an ongoing process of change and improving diversity in film and TV in Wales for all groups.

This report follows the themes in the recommendations and actions and summarises people's experiences and proposals to take forward diversity in film and TV in Wales.

## Opportunities

Some participants felt that funding for the creative industries in Wales is not accessible to diverse individuals. They felt that the Welsh Government should fund competitions for new ideas and concepts.

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Participants felt the action targeting promotion of opportunities by working with BME and other diverse communities was vital to any effort to improve diversity in the industry.

Some participants highlighted the lack of any casting/employment agency specifically for disabled actors. They felt a specific agency is needed to address a lack of understanding of adjustments and support that can be provided. One example was disabled actors' Personal Assistants not being allowed on set.

Opportunities could be promoted online, as well as through arts venues and community arts organisations. An example was Chapter.

Participants suggested creating a paid employment role for a champion to actively find roles for disadvantaged groups and link them into the industry.

Some people felt that it would help to proactively train and recruit diverse participants, rather than wait for a role to come up then not being able to find the right candidate.

Participants felt that it is important to work across characteristics where there are similar barriers and to tackle multiple barriers at the same time. However, this should be balanced with specific actions and approaches for different groups where there are differences.

Participants suggested using festivals and events to provide opportunities for people to showcase their talent and for networking and fundraising.

Reaching some communities is difficult using the internet and written promotion (e.g Gypsies, Roma and Travellers). There is poor internet access in some rural areas of Wales. Getting into education and community settings and talking to people directly is the only effective way to reach some communities.

Job centres could support people to understand the range of roles in the industry and themselves need training and understanding around the nature of the industry and jobs ending.

A creative futures conference open to the public and the industry could help.

More affluent people are often willing to undertake placements and jobs for free to get into the industry. This creates barriers for people who cannot afford to work for free. Paid entry-level opportunities need to be more available and promoted. There also needs to be reimbursement for travel, accommodation and other related costs to remove barriers.

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## **Recruitment**

Participants felt that tailoring recruitment adverts for different communities would help address lower levels of applications.

When recruiting organisations should actively consider their own unconscious bias and a tendency to recruit people like them. They should also bring diverse people onto recruitment panels or teams to assist in overcoming barriers and preconceptions.

Participants felt that training or placements need to be recognised as relevant experience. They felt that many short-term initial schemes were available, but that they didn't lead to jobs.

Participants generally agreed with positive action and specific support for under-represented communities to get into the industry.

There should be support to enter the industry and actively offering a more diverse pool of candidates. Some participants felt that there was an assumption that if an acting role did not specify they want a younger, older disabled, BME or LGBTQ+ etc. Person then there is an assumption that they only want white, middle-aged, non-disabled people and roles are not offered to diverse people.

Short timescales from confirmation of funding to production mean that smaller companies get to work with a less diverse group of people. Active promotion of potential, not confirmed, opportunities could assist with this.

Building trust and engagement with communities and positive portrayals are vital to ensuring diverse individuals feel able to apply.

Internships, bursaries and low-cost loans could help, especially as many opportunities are short-term and short-notice.

Participants also felt that monitoring needs to improve and successes need to be promoted. The more people see disabled, BME, LGBTQ+ etc. People in the industry the more it will be accepted as the norm, which in turn encourages more people into the industry.

Support needs to be provided once people are in the industry to stop them feeling they have to hide parts of themselves or leave the industry.

## Education

Participants felt that people should be taught about film and TV in schools, like they are about drama and theatre. This also involves better careers education around the industry and the industry linking with schools more.

School and college projects should involve a requirement to work with diverse individuals and communities, so they learn about inclusion. They also felt that there should be more talk about diversity in schools and in all areas of the curriculum.

There should be more information available on vocational courses. Participants felt that in schools and colleges there is a focus on academic courses and vocational courses not being valued as much. They felt that vocational courses would be more appropriate both for diverse communities and getting into the film and TV industry and other practical industries.

Short courses and industry-specific training and development are important for people to be able to get into the industry, return from a career break, or continue to develop their skills. These need to be available to everyone, not just people currently employed in the industry.

HE and FE need to be designing courses specifically with film and TV companies to ensure the courses are more appropriate for the industry.

School productions could be full productions bringing in skills from various classes and helping students to find their skills and use in the industry.

Young people could also produce films as part of their work for other subjects once the digital curriculum is embedded.

Participants felt it is important to co-design a career pathway between education and training providers and industry organisations

and to work together. Opportunities should flow from courses, initiatives and training, through placements and apprenticeships to jobs.

Participants also felt there should be clear, visual guides to different industry roles. These should focus on what skills you need for each role and be flexible to different ways of providing those skills. These could be used to ensure that the careers industry consider ways of bringing skills into film and TV from other sectors and could assist individuals by being public guides.

People need to be able to get into the industry and get jobs without an agent. Participants talked about the issue where you can't get an agent without having worked in the industry, or even when you can't afford them. However, without an agent it's very difficult to get work in the industry.

Participants also felt there needs to be more links between different creative industries. This would allow someone with transferable skills to work in multiple industries and create a career whilst ensuring they have sufficient income. There could also be a lot of cross-over and support for example working in theatre as well as film and TV, or game design.

## **Funding**

Linking with students who have to do practical projects anyway can be a low-cost way of supporting development and diversity in the industry.

Working with communities and reaching out doesn't have to be expensive.

People can't afford to get involved in network events or auditions they have to travel a long way for, but utilising local community arts organisations can remove this barrier while not costing industry companies a lot of money.

## **Community Involvement, working together and networks.**

Participants felt that networking is often the only way for individuals to get their foot in the door. To be able to reach diverse communities of new entrants they felt that promoting networking opportunities to communities, through community groups and venues are vital.

Opportunities to network should be free to attend and local to individuals.

Participants felt that third sector groups often have links in the communities and more community trust so should be employed as advisors and to promote opportunities.

Talking head role models could really help promote diversity. Supporting and developing community storytelling projects could both assist in skill building and promoting positive diverse stories. Sharing good practice examples and templates of how success was achieved would help other organisations to see how they can improve diversity.

Some participants felt that the Welsh Government should set a requirement for a minimum number of days that industry organisations must dedicate to networking and supporting diverse individuals to work in the industry.

Showcasing opportunities for community groups to show films and their work at community festivals and with organisations who support independent film-making would promote links and also provide routes into the industry.

Some participants felt an odd-jobs website would help people trying to get into the industry find opportunities.

Participants also felt that not only were there gatekeepers to getting into the industry, but also gatekeepers to getting ahead and to senior roles. There needs to be transparency about how to get into more senior roles and support to get there.

Participants felt that commissioning programmes that showcase local communities and stories is vital, as representation on screen in a

a sensitive way (not 'My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding') will encourage diverse people into the industry.

## **Addressing specific barriers**

There needs to be a mind-set change where people in the industry proactively and positively ask someone what would support them best. This would address barriers such as disabled actors changing outside, as there was no accessible changing room or assumptions.

Participants felt that guidance is useful, but favoured in-depth equality training on each characteristic, as a detailed guide may not promote a flexible approach to each individual and may be off-putting for organisations.

Participants also felt that it is important for industry organisations to recognise that it's OK to cast someone in a specific role because of their protected characteristic (for example a wheelchair user playing a wheelchair user.) However, they also need to be flexible and recognise that a wheelchair user can play other roles too.

Participants felt it is important to offer targeted schemes and support for different groups to address specific barriers.

They also that breaking down myths and stereotypes and proactively working with communities is vital to building trust and encouraging involvement.

## **Developing guidance and standards.**

Participants felt that many organisations have diversity policies, but practice is different. They felt a diversity standard could really help to distinguish those organisations that value diversity and put policy into practice. It needs to be evidence based, not simply answering questions as an organisation.

Participants felt that having links with third sector organisations and those organisations forwarding people for roles could be an important part of an equality standard or kite mark.