





National Theatre Wales' Strategic Equalities Plan 2022-23



As a national theatre company, we think about identity a lot.




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. As a national company we will always be transparent about our activities and open to dialogue, criticism and debate about how we choose to deploy the precious resources we are entrusted with.

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, 2019 **research findings** suggest 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 Covid-19 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. 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 structural 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 audience at NTW.


Kully's time and experience at National Theatre Wales is referenced with her permission and our gratitude.

For many of us, the past two years have forced reflection as life has been pared back by the Covid-19 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.



**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 Fairbairn 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, disability and socio-economic justice.




This action plan focuses on opportunity and agency for people who experience inequality or exclusion because of ableism, racism and classism. 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, racism and classism 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-19 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 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 meant that 10 artists who've experienced marginalisation each received a bursary of £5,000 and a bespoke attachment to the company. The project will return in 2022-23.

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 anti-racism, anti-ableism and anti-classism 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, back stage, 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, ableism and classism, 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 2022-25



We believe that supporting authorship and visibility is paramount for a diverse and thriving theatre sector. Read [where we are now](#) for details of progress to date.


Our ambition is that between 2022 and 2025, across the following areas of our work, at least 15% of people will be Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse, at least 25% will be racialised individuals and 25% will be individuals from a socio-economically disadvantaged background.

- = **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

A diverse slate 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 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 the period 2022-25 we aim for 25% of our team to have lived experience of racism, have lived experience of ableism and/or will be from a socio-economically disadvantaged background.¹

Our Board of Trustees

This year we will recruit at least **four new Trustees** to the Board and a new Chair, at least two of whom have experienced inequality or discrimination because of racism and/or ableism and/or poverty.

50% Trustees will have attended at least one externally-provided strategic equalities training course by the end of the year.

100% Trustees will have completed the Harvard University online Implicit Association tests for **Ethnicity / Disability / Age** and read the Weston Jerwood Toolkit for socio-economic diversity in the arts.

100% Trustees will have completed refresher or introductory governance training.

¹ 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. stats.wales.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).



Objectives



All of the following actions are in pursuit of our main three objectives.

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;
- = increase representation of these communities within National Theatre Wales and its Board of Trustees.

We aim to achieve this through a lens of intersectionality with particular focus on racialised, Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals and individuals who experience socio-economic disadvantage.



Actions / Theatre Makers

Evaluate and further develop Springboard, making a consistent offer to underrepresented artists every year until 2024.



Of the artists awarded in 2022, we will ensure at least;

- = 40% are artists who are racialised individuals
- = 40% are artists who are Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals
- = 40% are artists from a socio-economically disadvantaged background

Springboard was specifically developed to connect with theatre makers who've felt excluded from the arts because of who they are, and are most at risk of leaving the industry in the climate created by the Covid-19 pandemic. This need has not vanished as the industry returns to work.

Outcome Increase NTWs' 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 2021-22 Springboard project in April 2022
With a view to call-out for the new initiative by August 2022.
This should coincide with the new Creative Development Producer being in post.



Actions / Theatre Makers

Finalise the Creative Development programme focused on artists from underrepresented communities.



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

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

Responsibility Artistic Director, supported by the Creative Development department

Progress Report Rahim El Habachi joined us as Creative Associate in February 2022. The Creative Development Producer will be recruited by June 2022.



Actions / Theatre Makers

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

Progress Report Kaite O' Reilly is now onboard as Associate Dramaturg until end of June 2022



Actions / Theatre Makers

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

Current Ongoing Work

- = Create a Forum in collaboration with Disability Arts Cymru to explore ways of working with disabled artists
- = Have open conversations with artists who have experience with ableism and racism
- = Implement an open door policy for theatre makers to start conversations in ways that work for them
- = Interrogate our projects in progress and future plans to ensure they embody our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan and the ethos of this document.

Working with young people

We are currently working towards completing a comprehensive strategy for working with young people. To ensure this has anti-racism, anti-ableism and anti-classism 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 2023 for implementation into the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

Progress Report: The Young People's Working Group has been meeting since November 2021 to develop this plan.

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

- = **Continue to refine NTWs' offer of work experience, placements and apprenticeships. This is currently in draft form as a Volunteering and Internships Policy, within which, positions will be strategically reserved for individuals who are racialised, Deaf, disabled and/or neurodiverse, and/or socio-economically disadvantaged.**

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.

- = **Explore the potential of a well-supported Young Person position on the Board. This role will contribute to the Our Work Sub-committee but also, as a full Trustee, be integral to steering the new journey NTW is embarking on.**

Outcome: Placing young people at the heart of our decision-making, demystifying and further democratising how theatre and arts companies work. Forging new relationships for NTW with young people-led networks. Ensuring our work is relevant and meaningful to the next generation of theatre makers, participants and audiences.

Working Practices

Continue to review our recruitment processes.

In 2021/22 we reviewed our recruitment philosophy, processes and documents, identifying and removing barriers to access. Completed actions include:

= Overhauling our approaches to application and interview processes including:

- = Removing 'not for me' language such as acronyms, elitist industry terms and overly wordy text in the updated job advert template;
- = Developing a warmer and more approachable voice across all our Company documents, and through additions like the 'Day in the Life' sections in our updated job advert template;
- = Being more flexible in the total and set hours of each role, emphasising that we would consider part-time appointments for the right candidate to encourage those with caring responsibilities to apply;
- = Emphasising that we would happily consider applications from those who don't fit all of the essential criteria in the Person Specification;
- = Reducing the amount of time involved in applying for roles by focusing on a cover letter / video application and CV;
- = Inviting different forms of job application including video;
- = 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 resumed) choosing coffee shops rather than the Boardroom;
- = Working with panels in advance to challenge preconceptions about who might be the 'best candidate' for the role. We will now require panellists to undertake Implicit Association Tests for ethnicity, disability and age, plus read Weston Jerwood's Socio-economic Diversity & Inclusion in the Arts Toolkit. We overhauled the Interview Scoring Matrix so it now includes scoring for potential over proven experience in the exact field, especially for entry level roles. This includes instructions on valuing experiences, skills and personalities currently lacking at NTW rather than those which are familiar and 'will fit in easily'.



Working Practices

Continue to review our recruitment processes.



Actions to do in 2022/23 include:

- = 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;
- = Increasing the number of open recruitment processes for freelance roles as well as proactively inviting underrepresented freelancers to connect with the company;
- = Providing sensitive, detailed and bespoke feedback to unsuccessful interviewees via panel members and offering further follow-up and progression routes.

Outcome: Increase representation amongst applicants and the NTW workforce.


Responsibility: Executive Director with company-wide support, especially from the Audiences Department.

Timeline: Work ongoing, connected to our work on retention, wellbeing and staff development.



Working Practices

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 Creative Associate, with support from the Executive Director.

Timeline This work is ongoing as part of our work on retention, well-being and staff development.



Working Practices

Require all subcontractors to pay their staff the Real Living Wage.



Outcome

Support ethical employment in the wider sector, living by Our Values and helping to decrease poverty.


Responsibility

All staff to enquire about this before agreeing to agreements with suppliers. Finance Team to check this prior to Purchase Orders being approved.



Working Practices

Review company rate and fees for freelancers across the organisation.



For the start of the 2022-23 financial year, we will be implementing an increase in the company wage, which affects all performers, stage management and production staff on a weekly rate.

This year we will work on benchmarking other fees paid to freelancers across the organisation, including specialist production roles, contractors and consultants. This work will feed into a report to the Board in September that will explore the potential for a further uplift to all rates, salaries and fees, taking into account levels of inflation and predicted cost of living.

Outcome Support ethical employment in the wider sector and ensure that the rates and fees we pay reflect the rising cost of living in the UK. Ensure equity across the organisation, ensuring that freelancers are paid fair and transparent rates.

Responsibility Executive Director, with assistance from Executive Assistant and HODs.

Timeline Uplift from April 2022. Benchmarking work in first half of 2022-23 for presentation to the Board in September 2022.



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. We'll publish stats like those below, that give an insight into the people who make up NTW.



Where we are now.

2021-22



Our work in 2021-22 continued to be shaped by the Covid-19 pandemic, though we were able to meet audiences in venues with live performances again.

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



Where We Are Now

Our core team



National Theatre Wales employees, working on a permanent or fixed-term basis:

- In the November 2021 monitoring of 23 staff, 4 (17%) described their ethnicity and nationality as non-white and 2 (9%) members of staff identified as Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse.



Where We Are Now

Our Board of Trustees



- = In the November 2021 monitoring of 8 Trustees, 4 (50%) Trustees described their ethnicity and nationality as non-white and 2 (25%) identified as having a disability or health condition.**



Where We Are Now

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. In our 2021 monitoring, our 13 members of Team Panel described themselves as follows:

- = 4 (31%) are Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals
- = 1 (8%) is of Black African heritage
- = 1 (8%) is of Mixed or Dual heritage (Black and White)
- = 1 (8%) is of Mixed or Dual heritage (Asian and White)
- = 4 (31%) are of Asian heritage, including Pakistani Welsh and Indian Welsh
- = 5 (38%) are of white heritage
- = 1 (8%) is of any other background

- = 7 (54%) consider themselves to be from a socioeconomically disadvantaged background.



Where We Are Now

Theatre Makers in Development



- = In the first Springboard cohort of 10 theatre makers, 30% identified as Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals. 50% of the cohort identified as white, 20% Black British, 20% as Asian British and 10% as Mixed heritage.**



Where We Are Now

Writers Currently Under Commission



- = Of the 12 writers and artists currently under commission, 25% are racialised individuals, none are disabled and 16% self-identify as from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.**



Where We Are Now

Lead Artists



8% of our lead artists in 2021-22 were Deaf, disabled or neurodiverse individuals and 8% considered themselves to be from a socio-economically deprived background. All of our lead artists in 2021-22 identified as White, White with Middle Eastern heritage or did not complete the form.



Where We Are Now

Performers



In 2021-22, 29 performers across productions and R&D projects completed our monitoring form. They identified as follows:

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes	4 (14%)
No	18 (62%)
Prefer not to say	7 (24%)

How would you best describe your ethnicity?

Any other African / Caribbean / Black background	2 (7%)
Black Caribbean / Dual Heritage Black Caribbean	1 (3%)
Mixed / dual heritage: White and Black African	3 (10%)
Mixed / dual heritage: White and Black Caribbean	1 (3%)
Prefer not to say	5 (17%)
White	17 (60%)

Do you consider yourself to be from a socioeconomically disadvantaged background?

Yes	5 (17%)
No	13 (45%)
Prefer not to say	11 (38%)

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