

# *Diversity and the Creative Case: One Year On*



*Sir Peter Bazalgette - Chair, Arts Council England*

For more: [www.artscouncil.org.uk/creativecase](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/creativecase)

Thank you for coming here today.

## Introduction

- A year ago, I committed the Arts Council, and our partners, funded organisations in England – to a fundamental shift in the way we approach diversity.
- I said then that we would no longer let progress with this crucial issue be abandoned to a small group of specialist organisations, that had for years been brilliant champions of the cause - but in terms of effecting lasting change to the arts establishment, were themselves, by definition, on the outside, looking in.
- That for us to make real progress, diversity had to really become a part of all the work we all do. That it had to go mainstream.
- And that the way to do it was through what we call the Creative Case for Diversity – understanding diversity as an opportunity within which we will find new art and fresh ideas.
- I'm here today to, a year on – to review progress, in what will be the first of our annual presentations and discussions.
- There are two questions: how are we doing? And what are we doing about it going forward?
- Forgive me, but in answering, I will cite quite a lot of statistics, because we have to measure how we're doing and report openly. Likewise, I will talk about our programmes, because that's how we're addressing the challenge.
- I'm not here today to say, mission accomplished. We're just getting started.

- We all know it's about changing minds, not a quick fix. We are not looking for dramatic change. In fact - apologies to the theatre people present - we don't want drama; we want sustainable progress.
- To start with I'd like to remind you of some fundamental principles of public investment.
- First, public funding should be invested for the benefit of *all* the public.
- Second, it should draw on *all* the talents.
- As our Chief Executive Darren Henley puts it: "Talent is everywhere: opportunity is not. Not yet. And to achieve real diversity, we've got to change things. And that's what we're going to do."

## Inclusion

- Last year I talked about how we must give opportunities to everyone, from the children of middle class Asian parents to the children of working class white families. How we must make visible those members of society that too often we do not see –disabled and deaf people, or older people.
- I talked about how we must cross all social barriers, not only the protected characteristics, but also class and geography.
- In May this year, our chief executive Darren Henley announced an important shift in our distribution of funding –by 2018 we will increase our use of Lottery funds outside London by at least five percentage points, from 70% to 75%.
- An important part of that will be the Ambition for Excellence fund – a three-year £35.2 million fund to develop talent and leadership in the regions, support work of increased ambition, and help build 'cultural capacity'.

It will fund work that contributes to the Creative Case – and close on one million has already been allocated, with awards to the Tricycle Theatre and Urban Music.

- We intend to spend more than £31 million of it outside of London. That means more money for arts organisations all over England.
- Alongside this, we're also looking at how we can build demand for our Grants for the Arts applications in areas of need outside London.
- It's a significant step in our commitment to reaching more communities.

- We also announced an additional £10 million of investment over the next two years in our Creative People and Places Programme, which is targeting 21 areas with low arts engagement, from Liverpool to Luton.
- Creative People and Places makes a real impact on people's lives, no matter where they come from, who they are, how old they are. |Some 75% of people it works with haven't had much previous engagement with the arts.
- There's also been a big contribution to inclusion through our strategic touring programme.
- Earlier this year, Ramps to the Moon, a consortium of seven theatres led by New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich received £2.3 million for work by, with and for disabled performers and audiences. This is the largest Strategic Touring Award we've made.
- Libraries are also important part of our work, and through our development role we've been promoting libraries as spaces, for education, research, business and personal wellbeing - for everyone. We know that they already have a very diverse user base, and that's been added to by programmes such as Enterprising Libraries – and this year's national roll out of Wi-Fi, which offers free public access.
- Hand in hand with promoting participation, we have to challenge the circle of privilege that exists around the arts and education. We know the importance of cultural education to improving outcomes for children and young people. Typically, where this is most needed is in those areas where provision is most dispersed or stretched.
- That's why this autumn we launched the Cultural Education Challenge, so arts and educational organisations can work better together through a national network of cultural education partnerships.
- By more targeted distribution of our investment; by focusing on marginalised communities; by putting the formerly invisible centre stage and by ensuring that more children and young people can enjoy the opportunities of cultural education – these are some of the ways in which we are building diversity into our thinking. So that everybody will know that the arts are for them.
- So it becomes a creative, shaping process for us that will make for a richer arts and culture, and a richer nation.
- And I say richer also in a material sense, as well as metaphorical. Because diversity also means that we can find new audiences and income streams. It's not – like any of this – an overnight process. But change will come.

- Look for example at two recent examples from literature– at the success of the Bradford Literature Festival in attracting £250, 000 from Provident Financial. Or Book Trust’s first large scale touring project, which took them to local communities in the West Midlands, Bradford, and Middlesbrough - for which they raised an additional £30,000.
- All this reflects our determination that diversity should never again be pushed to the margins: that diversity should be understood as opportunity for all, in the interests of everyone.

### Equality analysis

- However, we know that in advancing a social agenda, it’s deeds, not words that count. We need to show progress, in defined and specific ways. We need data.
- So far as data goes, many of the touchstones of progress remain our evaluation around BME and deaf and disabled representation. These are key indicators of progress.
- Last year I reported on our Equality analysis for 2013-14. And this year’s figures for 2014-15 show an encouraging increase in BME representation in the workforce of our National portfolio organisations, from around 13% to 13.7%.
- This brings us more in line with levels of representation in the general population. It translates into 576 more jobs.
- BME representation at manager level has now risen above 10%: but in contrast to these advances, the data around disabled and deaf is largely static – slightly more staff, fractionally fewer managers, and discernibly fewer board members.
- We know there are particular issues around disabled and deaf representation, including access, that require a concerted response. We’re addressing this.
- It’s worth noting that, for example, in Grants for the Arts, we spent an additional £50,000 last year supporting access for disabled applicants.
- It’s therefore good to see that there’s been an increase in successful applications from disabled artists for Grants for the Arts, which are now at 4%, reversing a downward trend from the previous year.
- There was also encouraging data from Grants for the Arts about BME representation: in 2014-15, 11.2% of awards were to BME applicants, more than a point up.

- And again, with gender, we are pleased that the workforce is now more than balanced between men and women, with women occupying nearly 60% of managerial positions.
- So, some progress. And many areas in which we have to do better.
- We will be providing new guidance to organisations looking to improve their workforce diversity – this will address important areas for positive action, including some difficult subjects like writing job descriptions and mitigating against unconscious bias.
- There is much we can do ourselves. It takes effort to challenge one's assumptions and the innate tendency to default to the choices we are most comfortable with. But the right decisions are not always the most comfortable ones.
- We can all be more courageous, more rigorous and fairer.
- The Arts Council has taken a look at the make-up of its own workforce. We're a little behind the sector in the overall figure for BME representation, and slightly more diverse at leadership level. We will apply the same lessons to ourselves as others - and we have introduced obligatory equality training.

#### Data

- But to understand the impact of these measures, we need data.
- I talked about the need for this last year. We cannot evaluate or substantiate our progress merely with anecdotes.
- As I promised, we will be publishing data about the composition of our NPO's senior leadership and boards, and additional information about contracted and temporary staff. In fact, today we will also be highlighting online the employment profiles of our larger NPOs. So everyone can see how they compare.
- We've recently published a report by the Museums' Consultancy about the diversity of our Major Partner Museums. These are making real progress engaging new audiences, but demonstrating diversity within the workforce remains a challenge. There are historic reasons for this, which the sector is addressing through an action plan that is being taken forward with museum partners.
- However - and I will repeat this as often as it takes – we still need better data. And while we respect the right of individuals not to identify in surveys, if you do not participate it may weaken the overall case for public funding.

- We currently don't know anything about the ethnicity, gender or disabled status of 20% of the workforce. One in five is simply “unknown”.
- We love – don't we - the poet John Donne's famous line “no man is an island, entire unto itself”.
- And when it comes to public investment and data, none of us is an island, no matter our gender, sexuality or ethnicity.
- If we all want to benefit, we all need to participate. So please, fill in your data returns, for your sake - and for the sake of everyone.
- I've no doubt we will be returning to this subject. I certainly won't be silent on it.

### The Creative Case

- The heart of last year's speech was of course the Creative Case for Diversity. How all our National Portfolio organisations would be required to show that they were implementing this in their programming over the next three years.
- That they would be making their work more reflective of their communities, and representative of 21<sup>st</sup> century England.
- We know that the evolution of the Creative Case will take time: it's a major change in the way we approach the issue of diversity; it challenges us to bring diversity out of a box and make it part of mainstream conversation.
- It requires a change of mind-set.
- It's just seven months into the era of the Creative Case. We know how seriously it's being taken: it's leading to much discussion.
- It's already producing some excellent work, bringing together organisations of different scales and disciplines – and we are looking for those partnerships that bring together the best resourced with the most street-wise.
- Take what's happening around Birmingham and the Midlands.
- The Belgrade Coventry is home to Critical Mass, a nationally recognised programme offering a platform for emerging writers from BME communities.

- There's the work of the Ikon Gallery, which recently hosted an exhibition by Vanley Burke, chronicling the lives of Britain's African and Caribbean communities.
- And the new 'Faith in Birmingham' gallery at Birmingham Museum and Arts Gallery, which I visited last week, will focus on the six faiths with the largest representation in the city; Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism. Eventually it will incorporate all the other religions.
- I've been very encouraged by the other things I've experienced over the last few months.
- In Leicester, I was at the opening of the new gallery at Attenborough Arts Centre, which was launched with an exhibition putting the politics of disability centre-stage.
- In Bexhill, I saw In the Realms of Others, an exhibition of brilliant work by artists with profound intellectual impairment, mounted by Project Art Works at the de la Warr Pavilion.
- And last month I went to the MOBO awards in Leeds – where I learned that MOBO is teaming up with the London Theatre Consortium to help address the lack of diversity at executive level by offering six-month fellowships across leading theatres.
- But the process will be a conversation – there are no hard and fast rules about what the Creative Case should mean to each arts organisation.
- To sharpen thinking, we've been looking at the ratings process for the Creative Case.
- In this, 97% of organisations received a “met’ or ‘good’ rating, on the basis of their proposed plans.
- But was that exacting enough?
- Well, we think our rating process needs to be more testing, so we will be rating organisations again on the basis of their actual delivery, ensuring that we have more rigorous assessments of what we mean by “met” and “good”.
- I'd like to highlight the work of Creative Case North, a forum developed by our funded organisations, with a practical focus on discussing how the Creative Case can be a natural part of the way of working. We look forward to more such sharing of ideas.

- Alongside this conversation about the Creative Case, we're looking at areas of policy that no longer necessarily express the subtleties of the issue.
- For example, I talked last year about how the current 'diverse led' definition did not always include organisations being led by significant and influential individuals from diverse communities.
- That huge investment in the Ramps to the Moon for example- the £2.3 million to promote the work of disabled artists - is not recognised as a diverse-led initiative under current definitions. This is discouraging for all. So we've commissioned an independent report into how to develop definitions that will serve everyone better.

### New funds

- Now we come to the money. We were able last year to announce that we would be making £6 million of strategic funds available to support work around diversity and the Creative Case.
- We have in fact, gone further. Over the next five months, we will launch four funds collectively worth £8.5 million to advance diversity.
- These funds are: Elevate, a £2.1 million fund to develop diverse-led organisations that may be future contenders for National Portfolio membership.
- Unlimited: £1.8 million to continue to support the development and commissioning of a range of new work by deaf and disabled artists.
- Sustained Theatre: £2 million repurposed to support established and emerging BME theatre makers across the wider theatre sector in England.
- Change Makers: £2.6 million to help address the lack of diversity in arts leadership.
- We will be releasing the details and dates for each fund today, and you can get more information from those present, and on our website.
- These funds are in addition to the investment that we are making elsewhere – through Strategic Touring, Creative People and Places, ReImagine India, Ambition for Excellence and the Cultural Leadership Programme.
- These will invigorate our work with cultural education and they will help us to capitalise on the wider national distribution of our Lottery money.



## Final thought

- I'd like to end with a general reflection on the importance of what we are engaged with here.
- The arts can show us how things are – and the arts can give us a vision of what they could be. They can make the case for diversity; they can be the case for diversity. They can bring us together.
- Earlier this year I spoke at a festival of publishing and asked the audience to read some of the poets the Arts Council has helped promote and publish.
- One of these was the wonderful Warsan Shire.
- She was born in Kenya to Somali parents and brought up in London. She's an extraordinary young talent who represents a new generation of diverse English writers and voices. I'm very proud that her career has been supported by public funding.
- I want to read a poem of hers that has recently been shared many thousands of times on social media, particularly since the Paris shootings. You may know it...

'What they did yesterday afternoon' by [Warsan Shire](#)

they set my aunts house on fire  
i cried the way women on tv do  
folding at the middle  
like a five pound note.  
i called the boy who used to love me  
tried to 'okay' my voice  
i said *hello*  
he said *warsan, what's wrong, what's happened?*

i've been praying,  
and these are what my prayers look like;  
*dear god*  
*i come from two countries*  
*one is thirsty*  
*the other is on fire*  
*both need water.*

later that night  
i held an atlas in my lap  
ran my fingers across the whole world  
and whispered  
*where does it hurt?*

it answered  
*everywhere*  
*everywhere*  
*everywhere.*

Great art, that draws on every talent, can speak for all of us.