



ACTING UP REPORT

Labour's inquiry into access and diversity in the performing arts

“IT’S NOT ENOUGH BEING
TALENTED, THESE DAYS
YOU NEED CASH.”



GLORIA DE PIERO MP

TRACY BRABIN MP



STEVE COOGAN

Steve Coogan’s observation is all too true in Britain’s film, TV and theatre world.

Whether working as an actor on screen or as a producer or director backstage, these industries are increasingly dominated by a narrow set of people from well off backgrounds.

The evidence for this isn’t just anecdotal. As the chorus of concern over the lack of diversity in the industry has grown, so has the body of evidence tracking the situation.

[A recent paper](#) by academics from LSE and the University of Edinburgh found that just 16% of actors come from a working class background whereas 51% have a privileged background. This compares to 33% of the population who have a working class background and 29% from privileged backgrounds.

[Research by the Sutton Trust](#) last year found that despite just 7% of British kids attending private schools, 42% of British BAFTA winners attended a fee-paying school.

A [recent report](#) produced by UK theatre found just 7% of the theatre and performing arts workforce were from BAME backgrounds and just 5% identified as disabled.

We know about the problems with access and diversity first hand. As women from northern working class backgrounds who went on to work in TV we know what it’s like to have people sneer at your accent and struggle to pay your way.

Some might say that the problems of exclusivity and privilege exist in every profession - that inequality is perpetuated over generations, that

privilege begets more privilege and those from well off or well-connected families always have better chances.

But it matters particularly in this industry.

Who we see on stage and screen, what stories are being told and where they are set impacts the way we see ourselves and how the world sees us too. They are a mirror to the nation and have the power to bring us together.

They also represent opportunity. Both on and off stage and screen, from acting, producing, directing, casting, filming and more, these are great jobs.

The Labour Party wants everyone, no matter who they are, where they come from or what they look like to be able to aspire to work in this fantastic industry, and not just get in, but get on, and climb the ladder to the most senior jobs and the leading roles.

That is what this inquiry has been about – identifying where barriers to access lie and finding political solutions to knock them down.

The support and interest we’ve received during this inquiry has been phenomenal, with hundreds of submissions from people and organisations all across the country and over 100 people attending our evidence sessions, each of which had brilliant panellists bringing different perspectives on the problems.

We hope this report does all those who have helped us, and the problems the industry faces, justice.

Things must change. Or we’ll all be the poorer.

INTRODUCTION



When Tom Watson, Labour's Deputy Leader and Shadow Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, commissioned this inquiry in early 2017 it was in response to increasing concern about the inequalities in the cultural sector and in particular within the performing arts.

The aim wasn't to help every struggling actor to become a famous star, it's about addressing the systemic problems in the performing arts that mean, for the most part, particular types of people with particular backgrounds make it, and others don't. Making it doesn't mean becoming a famous actor or producer, it means making enough to live on and forging a career with fair opportunities to climb the ladder.

This matters for audiences just as much as actors. We want to see people and places we recognise on stage and TV as well as stories far removed from our own lives. Our performing arts represents us as a nation and we shouldn't have any classes or sections of society left out.

It's not just about actors on stage either. There is an important and direct relationship between decision makers behind the scenes, be it at theatres, broadcasters or in the film industry, and who and what ends up on stage. So too there is a relationship between the diversity of what is being performed and the diversity of those in the audience that will be inspired to want to work in the industry.¹

It's not just in the interests of 'diversity for diversity's sake' that we make the performing arts more meritocratic and open. We're missing out on talent that could strengthen the industry and on audiences that could boost revenues.

Particularly in TV, our traditional broadcasters are being challenged from across the world by the likes of Netflix and Amazon, who are making huge big budget shows with more diverse casts and storylines than ever before.

In theatre too, middle class shows for middle class audiences are leaving out huge swathes of the population, which wasn't the case years ago. The standing tickets at the Globe and the tables in music halls were packed with people from ordinary backgrounds. This isn't about turning back the clock but thinking about why the industry looks like it does, both those working in and on shows, and the audiences, and what we could do to widen that net.

Of course this isn't the first report looking at diversity and access in this industry. A huge body of good work has already been done by academics, actors, unions, organisations and campaign groups like Act for Change, Creative Skillset, Triforce Creative Network as well as the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation and many more in order to identify problems and recommend solutions.

This report doesn't aim to replicate that work but to focus minds at the top of politics on the fact that change won't happen on its own and policy makers and shapers have a part to play too.

The performing arts bridge the gap in the public and the private sector and although the problems are similar across both, the nature of the two means different solutions will be necessary. The state has direct political levers able to effect change in the public sector, but it also exercises influence in different ways on the private sector. This report intends to address both avenues of change.

¹ O'Brien, D., Allen, K., Friedman, S. and Saha, A. (2017) 'Producing and Consuming Inequality: A Cultural Sociology of the Cultural Industries' *Cultural Sociology* 11(3) 271-282 <http://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/PKE3dHE6D36h72ny3GGt/full>



THE C WORD

Diversity has been a mainstay of the performing arts lexicon for some time. But what do we mean by it?

That the industry should look like the country – that people from all socio-economic backgrounds and from all regions, people of colour, those with disabilities, those of all ages, of all sexualities and all gender identities should be represented on screen and stage and behind them.

For many good reasons, and in part because they are laid down in law, discussion about diversity has often focused on protected characteristics. Each of these have different and complex related barriers.

But one word is often missing. The C Word: **class**.

Class, or socio-economic background, is not a protected characteristic in law, but it is a powerful indicator of life chances and it intersects strongly with other characteristics such as race and disability. But it's often absent from the debate and from the statistics.

This isn't about creating a hierarchy of diversity but about recognising what's missing.

In an industry where perception and wealth are so important, recognising and understanding the role class plays is crucial. But at the moment there's a big C shaped hole.

LOOKING AT THE PROBLEM

Dr Dave O'Brien, Sam Friedman and other academics working in this field discuss the problem of the 'leaky pipeline', the points in a career path in performing arts where people from a working class background fall out. This 'leaky pipeline' is worse for working class women and working class BAME individuals and those with disabilities.²

This analogy is a helpful one and one that chimed with the experiences described in submissions to the inquiry.

From poor drama provision in state schools, to perceived or real elitism in drama schools, cuts in funding for grants and scholarships, the prevalence of unpaid work, the London-centrism of the industry to discrimination and prejudice, there are many points in a career in the industry where even if you've made your way in, you could easily fall out.

The structure of this report follows some of those particular pressure points in the pipeline:

- Secondary school and the realising of opportunity
- Drama School
- No pay, No way.
- Casting, commissioning and representation
- Data – measuring the problem

² Friedman S, O'Brien D and Laurison D (2016) "Like skydiving without a parachute": How class origin shapes occupational trajectories in British acting' *Sociology*. Epub ahead of print <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0038038516629917?rss=1> February 2016. DOI: 10.1177/0038038516629917. Friedman, S. and O'Brien, D. (2017) 'Resistance and Resignation: Responses to Type-casting in British Acting' *Cultural Sociology* 11(3) 359-376 <http://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/VxWY6g7vdrKKzBwqkRx/full>

ACTING UP

“SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY FORCED INTO A POSITION WHERE THE ARTS AND CREATIVE SUBJECTS HAVE BEEN SIDE-LINED WITH A RELENTLESS FOCUS ON STEM”

ADAM BUSS, QUAD DERBY

“IF ALL STATE SCHOOLS HAD THE RESOURCES OF ETON I THINK WE’D SEE A VERY DIFFERENT PICTURE IN TERMS OF WHO IS WORKING IN THE ARTS”

YOUNG VIC

“LOSING SO MUCH DRAMA FROM THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND ARTS SUBJECTS IN GENERAL LOSES THE BIGGEST HEAD START OF ALL: KNOWING THE OPTION IS EVEN THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE”

TIM FRANCES

THE PROBLEMS START AT SCHOOL

A key theme running through many of our submissions was that barriers to access start early and crucially, start at school.

Three key themes emerged

- Drama and related subjects treated as inferior and students discouraged from taking it
- Poor drama facilities and few visit opportunities
- A lack of awareness about career opportunities in the industry

DRAMA’S A SECOND CLASS CITIZEN

The first baby steps towards a career in the performing arts are usually taken in the drama classroom at school.

But in recent years the floor has fallen out of the classroom as the number of students taking Drama GCSE and A Level has plummeted.

Figures produced for the inquiry by the House of Commons Library indicated the scale of the problem. Since 2010 there has been a 15.9% fall in the uptake of drama GCSE and a 26.6% drop in the uptake of drama A Level.

The research also shows this has been accompanied by a huge fall in drama resources at school. There are now 1,700 fewer drama teachers in our schools than there were in 2010, and the number of hours of drama teaching in schools has fallen 15% during the same period.

WHAT’S GOING ON?

Many schools seem to disregard drama as neither a worthwhile nor important subject and do not encourage students to take it up or invest resources in it. Contributing to this attitude are schools’ squeezed budgets, perceptions about the value and sustainability of a career in the performing arts and vitally, the Government’s focus on so-called ‘academic’ subjects as a measure of how well a school is performing, ignoring the contribution of creative subjects.

This last point is manifested most starkly in the new EBacc that came into force in 2011 which measures a school's performance based on how well students perform in a combination of academic subjects including English, science, maths, humanities and languages. Creative subjects are not included in the measure and therefore good performance in these subjects does not contribute to Government's view of how well a school is doing. All that matters is those core academic subjects.

The result of this measure is clear from the numbers stated – a huge drop off in creative subjects. Despite campaigning by groups such as Bacc for Future, and despite 71% of respondents to the Government's own consultation on the EBacc expressing concern, the Government has refused to acknowledge the huge negative side effects of the EBacc. The situation is set to get worse as the Government pursue their new target of 75% of students taking the Ebacc combination by 2022 and 90% by 2025.

The Ebacc has hit all arts subjects but drama seems to have borne the brunt with a starker fall at GCSE level than other core arts subjects. House of Commons research shows that whereas the number of entries for drama GCSE fell 15.9% from 2010-2016, the number for music fell by just 8.30% and Art & Design fell by just 1.6%. The number of drama teachers fell by 15% between 2010-2015, whilst the number of music teachers fell by 8% and the number of Art and Design teachers fell by 9%.

Clearly there is a problem across the board but perhaps there is a particular problem with the devaluation of drama in particular and the significant drop-offs there. We heard from many parents and teachers that with the cuts to school budgets the first things to go were school plays and after school clubs. It takes hours of practice to hone a skill and the same is true for drama. If state schools are losing drama earlier and earlier from school careers students won't have the chances they need to develop a love of the subject and the time and space to improve.

We also received concerns that in order to 'prove its worth' as an academic subject, drama GCSE was losing what many previous students loved about it, contributing to the drop off in student numbers. This was also related to concerns voiced by drama schools that drama qualifications offered in schools did not prepare students well for pursuing drama in higher education.

“WE SHOULDN'T THINK OF DRAMA GCSE AS ONLY FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO BECOME ACTORS. IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT BEING ON STAGE OR BACK STAGE BUT ABOUT GETTING A JOB. IT'S ABOUT BEING ABLE TO ARTICULATE YOURSELF AND SELL YOURSELF. DRAMA SHOULD BE COMPULSORY AT SOME POINT IN EDUCATION, JUST LIKE SPORT IS.”

PAUL ROSEBY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH THEATRE



ACTING UP

“SO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE NOW JUST DON'T FEEL THEY HAVE THE PERMISSION TO ACT. THEY'VE BEEN TOLD BY THEIR PARENTS AND THEIR SCHOOL THAT IT'S NOT WORTHWHILE.”

GEOFF COLMAN,
CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA

PERCEPTION PROBLEM

Compounding the lack of regard for drama as a subject in schools, is the scepticism of many parents about the profit of taking such a subject at school and pursuing it beyond school as a career.

This will be discussed in further detail in the section looking at working practices and poverty pay in the industry but it is important to note that in addition to schools discouraging, or not encouraging, students from taking drama, parents often do not want their children to take drama and related subjects.

One representative of a drama school talked of some students being strongly discouraged to take up their places by their parents, and thought this was particularly the case for BAME students. He cited one year where 9 of 15 offers for the drama course were made to BAME students but only one student ended up taking up their place, largely, he felt, due to parental pressure.

It is an onus on the industry as well as educators to argue the worth of drama as a subject and the wealth of opportunity that a career in the sector can provide.



TRIPS TO THE THEATRE

A number of submissions also pointed to the drop off in the number of students being taken to the theatre.

In February this year the Government announced a welcome U-turn meaning all students taking drama GCSE and A Level are entitled to see a live theatre performance, following changes to the curriculum by exam boards meaning students could merely watch a recorded performance on TV.

But an entitlement alone does not make the difference. Theatre trips can be expensive, even if theatres provide discount tickets. For schools in rural areas far from a town or city with a theatre, these trips can be prohibitively expensive.

One teacher, who had previously worked in an ex-coalmining area in Nottinghamshire told us the cost of the coach to take students to the theatre in addition to the ticket prices were prohibitive. This was a world away from teaching at a South London Academy where the opportunities for students to see plays at world class venues on their doorstep was huge, as was the outreach work of theatres like the Young Vic that enable students to have a backstage experience and see for themselves the opportunities available in the industry.

Until more children get the chance to go to the theatre, and just as important see what goes on backstage, they will not be aware of the opportunities available to them.

Recommendations:

- Revamp the EBacc: The EBacc has led to the systematic marginalisation of arts subjects, particularly drama, from schools. The measure should be revamped to recognise the benefits of creative subjects in tandem with the importance of core academic subjects.
- Fund visits to the theatre: The Government should increase funding for schools to take students on school trips to the theatre, allowing more money for schools in more rural areas and small towns that need a coach to travel further
- Advertise opportunity: Careers advice about the opportunities available to students in the performing arts should be improved, in association with the industry, via a creative careers campaign. This should focus in particular on 'behind the scenes' roles back stage and in TV and film production.

“TRIPS TO THE THEATRE HAVE BECOME MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE WITH RISK ASSESSMENTS GALORE AND THE PRIORITIZING IN MANY SCHOOLS OF BUDGETS FOR THE KEY AREAS OF MATHS, ENGLISH AND SCIENCE. MANY OF MY TEACHER FRIENDS HAVE HAD THEIR DRAMA PROVISION CUT PARTICULARLY IN SECONDARY PROVISION. JUST HAVING AN AFTER SCHOOL CLUB IS NOT ENOUGH”

JUSTINE GREEN,
DONCASTER COLLEGE

“MY KIDS ARE AT AN ARTS AND MEDIA SPECIALIST SCHOOL THAT ONLY TAKES ITS GCSE DRAMA STUDENTS TO SEE THE PLAYS THEY ARE STUDYING IF THEY HAVE CLEAN BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE RECORDS. GUESS WHO DOESN'T GET TO GO?”

SIÂN MARTIN



ACTING UP

DRAMA SCHOOL

“ I DIDN'T GO TO DRAMA SCHOOL, I WAS TURNED DOWN BY EVERY SINGLE DRAMA SCHOOL, IN FACT I GOT A RECALL FOR CENTRAL BUT I THINK THEY HAD THEIR QUOTA OF CHIRPY COCKNEY WORKING CLASS GIRLS.”

MICHELLE COLLINS



“ ADMISSION DECISIONS DEPEND ON THE STAFF'S SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF ARTISTIC 'TALENT', AND THOSE PERCEPTIONS TYPICALLY PRIORITISE MIDDLE CLASS, WHITE-ETHNIC AND EUROCENTRIC IDEAS OF THIS VITAL QUALITY ”

(CAMEO)



“ PEOPLE DON'T PAY FOR JOB INTERVIEWS OR UNIVERSITY INTERVIEWS SO WHY ARE DRAMA SCHOOLS MAKING US PAY BETWEEN £30- £80 JUST FOR AN AUDITION WHERE YOU'RE NOT EVEN GUARANTEED A PLACE. EITHER THOSE FEES NEED TO BE SCRAPPED OR IT SHOULD BE ONE PRICE ACROSS THE BOARD AND REFUNDED FOR UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS.”

TOM STOCKS,
ACTOR AWARENESS

“ I TALK TO A TON OF STUDENTS WHO ARE UNCOMFORTABLE AND ARE LEAVING DRAMA SCHOOL BECAUSE OF HOW THEY'RE BEING TREATED. ”

CUSH JUMBO

PERCEPTIONS OF DRAMA SCHOOL

Drama school isn't the only route to a career on stage (or behind it), but it is a major one. As research by Dave O'Brien, Sam Friedman and others have shown, attending one of the big drama schools is, aside from going to Oxford or Cambridge, one of the biggest indicators of whether you will be successful or not.³

Submissions to the inquiry made clear that there is a perception problem with drama schools: that they are elitist, expensive, white and middle class. As with all perceptions, this is true and untrue to varying degrees.

Many drama schools do a significant amount of outreach work to tackle that view, and talk about the need to provide an inclusive environment inside drama schools.

Drama school intakes do vary and schools like RADA were keen to point out that of the 2015-16 intake of BA Acting students, 39% had a household income below £35k and 82% attended a state school and 29% of the overall acting cohort were from a BAME background. This means that most of their students come from backgrounds far better off than the average UK household income of £25,100 and they did acknowledge that there was a long way to go to make this diversity reflected among the staff and in courses beyond acting.

Unfortunately whereas detailed statistics about individual university intakes are available via the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), wide-ranging data about the demographic intake of all drama schools is not publically available. Recent work done by Michael Donnelly and Sol Gamsu at the University of Bath has analysed available data on

the 2014-15 intakes of BA theatre and drama courses at HE institutions based on HESA stats.⁴ Their research found 40% of students were from the two most advantaged socio-economic groups, 87% of students were white and 87% said they had attended a state school.

Although a break down of student demographics on Acting BAs at major universities was available, the same was not true for drama schools, where individual schools are either reported under umbrella bodies, such as the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, or not reported at all.

One perception that it is difficult to dispel is that applying to drama school is very difficult and expensive. Unlike ordinary university admissions, not all drama schools accept applications through the centralised UCAS system with one personal statement and one flat fee. Instead most drama schools require separate individual application forms to each institution with an application or 'audition fee' attached to each.

This audition fee, on top of travel expenses and accommodation expenses, often makes the process totally unaffordable for many students.

This table demonstrates the cost of the audition fee across 15 major drama schools as advertised on their websites.

The cost of the process in addition to money for travel and accommodation was felt as deeply unjust and unfair, and a system almost unique to the drama schools. Many other higher education institutions interview for places, including at Oxford and Cambridge where applicants are often housed and fed for multiple days during the interview process, and they do not charge fees.

Institution	Audition Fee for Acting courses*
RADA	Early applicants £46.00 Non-early applicants £86.00
Bristol Old Vic	£65.00
Central School of Speech and Drama	£55.00
East 15	£55.00
Guildford School of Acting	£55.00
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	£64.00
Italia Conti	£45.00
LAMDA	£54.000
Manchester School of Theatre	£45.00
Mountview	£45.00
Oxford School of Drama	£45.00
Rose Bruford	£50.00
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	Application £24.00 Audition £45.00
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama	Application £24.00 Audition £47.00

*based on home students applying for full time BA courses entry 2017/2018

³ Friedman S, O'Brien D and Laurison D (2016) "Like skydiving without a parachute": How class origin shapes occupational trajectories in British acting' *Sociology*. Epub ahead of print <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0038038516629917> rrs=1 February 2016. DOI: 10.1177/0038038516629917.

⁴ This data was prepared by Dr Sol Gamsu who is a Researcher based at the University of Bath working on a programme of research led by Dr Michael Donnelly and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) which looks at geographies of educational and social mobility for UK university students (award no. ES/N002121/1).

ACTING UP

PHOTO CREDIT:
EMMA GRAY



Particular complaints were voiced from unsuccessful applicants who felt that they were charged a significant amount of money to audition and then were given no feedback when they were unsuccessful. Some also felt that drama schools used this process as a money making machine, repeatedly auditioning students for a fee, knowing there was little chance the student would be successful.

It is clear that the perception problems with the cost and difficulty of drama schools applications is based on reality.

Even if it does not put less well-off students applying to one drama school it is a disincentive to apply to many and decreases your chances of getting accepted somewhere relative to students that are able to apply to more schools. Whereas student loans make for debt in later life this process requires significant amounts of money up front in order to submit an application which is just not possible for many people. Particularly given Drama schools often say that the under representation of particular groups is due to the low numbers applying, the application process is a barrier that must be reformed.

ONCE IN, SURVIVING.

Even if students win a place at drama school, surviving and thriving is their next challenge.

Many students expressed concern at the financial difficulties students from less well-off backgrounds faced.

Particularly in London student maintenance loans often do not cover costs of living. It is not just students at drama schools facing this challenge, students across the country often struggle to make ends meet, but whereas degree programmes with fewer contact hours allow time for students to get jobs to supplement their student loans, the very intensive contact hours at drama school (whether on an acting, writing or technical course) often means students have to get work at night, leaving them exhausted for classes the next day.

Those working in bars and clubs are at a clear disadvantage to those able to rehearse in the evenings and be rested for classes the next day.

We were also told of instances of exclusionary practices – where students were asked to suppress their regional accents, play stereotyped parts and we even heard of instances of blacking up among white students. We heard one instance of a voice coach at a drama school telling a black student to “find your big black momma voice”

One drama school student, Steven Kavuma, a founder of The Diversity School Initiative, set up to address underrepresentation and access in drama schools, told us that once drama schools do accept people from diverse backgrounds they act as if their work stops there. “The drama schools get the diverse students into the building but then they have no idea what to do with them or how to support them.” If they do accept students from less well-off backgrounds they don't offer them enough financial

support when they arrive so they struggle and often end up dropping out. He said that although drama schools talk about diversity they don't do enough to make students from different background feel included and supported, “it feels like we are there to tick a box.”

Academic research has also demonstrated the existence of these practices and it was clear from submissions that incidents of snobbery, stereotyping and racism remain too common.⁵ They should not be tolerated.

“IT WASN'T UNTIL I WENT TO CENTRAL DRAMA SCHOOL THAT I ACTUALLY LOOKED IN THE MIRROR AND REALISED I WAS OF COLOUR, I NEARLY LEFT AT THE END OF MY FIRST YEAR BECAUSE I FELT SO UNCOMFORTABLE, SO WORKING CLASS. I REMEMBER BEING TOLD BY THE TEACHER WHO I WAS STUDYING RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION WITH THAT MY ACCENT WAS LAZY, THAT SOUTH LONDONERS HAD LAZY MOUTHS AND LAZY ACCENTS.”

CUSH JUMBO

⁵Freidman, S. and O'Brien, D. (2017) 'Resistance and Resignation: Responses to Typecasting in British Acting'

DRAMA SCHOOLS BRIDGING THE GAP

If students do manage to win a place at a drama school and complete their training, many difficulties begin after graduation as the job market is competitive and precarious.

Many of the more elite drama schools have very high success rates of their students getting signed to agents even before graduation but that is not the case across the board or for BA Acting courses at universities.

Many submissions discussed the inequality between an acting student's chance of being signed to an agent if they attended one of the elite drama schools and if they did a BA in acting at a university. They felt that this difference could perhaps be better understood by students before deciding which path was best for them.

There were also concerns about the over promotion of drama schools and the huge burden of debt that comes with them as the only possible route into a successful career in the industry. Many pointed to the decline in the Repertory system as a way in for diverse and working class talent that has been lost.

“DRAMA IS NOT ABOUT PAPER QUALIFICATIONS, IT'S ABOUT VOCATION. THE NATIONAL YOUTH THEATRE IS ABOUT PROVIDING A ROUTE INTO A CAREER OTHER THAN DRAMA SCHOOL AND HUGE DEBTS”

PAUL ROSEBY



ACTING UP

“ WHEN WE FINALLY GO OUT INTO THE REAL WORLD WE HAVE NO CONCEPT OF WAGES, NO CONCEPT OF NEGOTIATING OR KNOWING OUR WORTH, AND WE ARE SO DESPERATE FOR THAT FIRST JOB THAT WE ACCEPT WHAT EVER IS OFFERED. WE COME OUT OF DRAMA SCHOOL AND WE WORSEN THE INDUSTRY WITHOUT KNOWING IT, BECAUSE WE ARE CHEAP AND IMPRESSIONABLE. IT IS EXPLOITATION AT ITS FINEST. OR PERHAPS JUST A GOOD BUSINESS. ”

EDWARD CURRIE

“ THE REPRESENTATION PROBLEMS START AT DRAMA SCHOOL. THERE IS NO WAY WE CAN MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT CHANGES THERE. ”

STEVEN KAVUMA

The difficulties and best ways of sustaining a career in the industry whether on or off stage also needs to be better understood before graduation.

The problems of chronic low pay and demands for free work will be discussed next but many respondents to our inquiry felt that drama schools and universities needed to do more to prepare students to be aware, and in some case resistant to, exploitative working practices within the industry and encourage networking and entrepreneurial skills that will be vital to future success.

Recommendations

- ❶ Reform of the application process: Application and audition fees can be prohibitive and are not justifiable. A centralised UCAS based process should be introduced for degree awarding institutions with a flat application fee
- ❷ Making funding match the cost of living. Student loans do not cover the cost of living in much of the UK, particularly London. Maintenance loans should be increased to reflect that higher cost of living.
- ❸ Reform inside drama schools. Despite many positive initiatives drama schools still need to be more aware of difference and disadvantage inside their walls. Focus needs to be placed on diversifying teaching bodies, increasing support for students and better preparing students for the difficult job market and the widespread danger of exploitation.



NO AND LOW PAY

At the core of many of the issues of accessibility and diversity within the industry are problems with low or no pay and very poor working conditions.

Equity union has produced research demonstrating how widespread the problem is.

[Equity's most recent survey](#) of members found that 11% earned nothing from their work in the entertainment industry and 67% earned either nothing or under £10k per year. Nearly half of respondents had worked in the entertainment industry for no pay in the previous twelve months and of those who had 51% received no expenses.

Theatre and film were identified as parts of the entertainment industry in which no pay practices were widespread. Of those who had worked for no pay in the past twelve months 47% had worked in theatre and 25% in film.

The damaging effect of this system of chronic low pay is manifold.

Academic research has shown that actors who do manage to make it through training and enter the world of professional work find that working for free is a necessary first step. If you have a home in London and a family who can support you then such demands might be sustainable but if you need paid work to live and pay rent, particularly if you have a family to support, then this system just does not work.

It leads to less well-off actors being forced to work other part time jobs to sustain their continued acting career and many are forced to take jobs that then do not allow the immediate flexibility required when audition calls are announced at short notice. Those with families or caring responsibilities are forced out even quicker.

Low and no pay are not just restricted to those on stage. It is a problem in jobs across the sector – from being a runner, to assisting directors and producers in theatres and on film sets.

The prevalence of a culture of chronic low pay is in turn a disincentive to entering the industry and the reason why many parents discourage their children from taking up drama at school and are very wary of pursuing it in higher education.

“WE PAY £200+ FOR HEADSHOTS, £600+ FOR A SHOWREEL, £159 FOR SPOTLIGHT MEMBERSHIP, £100 FOR EQUITY MEMBERSHIP AND MUCH MORE. ALREADY YOU'RE PAYING OVER £1000 FOR ESSENTIALLY YOUR ACTORS STARTER PACK.”

TOM STOCKS

“I CAN ALWAYS FIND WORK TO KEEP ME BUSY BUT RARELY FIND MONEY THAT CAN SUPPORT ME...”

DOMINIC THOMPSON, ACTOR



ACTING UP



Some case studies illustrate the problem

Chris is originally from Scotland and trained in Wales.

“AFTER GRADUATION I WAS FORCED TO TAKE UNSKILLED WORK TO PAY MY WAY. I COULD NOT LET A REGULAR EMPLOYER DOWN OR CUT AND RUN FOR SHORT NOTICE AUDITIONS OTHERWISE. WHEN I DID GET WORK MY FEES WERE SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER THAN MORE ESTABLISHED ACTORS, THERE IS NO WAY I COULD HAVE SURVIVED IN LONDON ON ACTING WORK ALONE AND EVEN THE MOST FLEXIBLE EMPLOYERS STRUGGLED TO ACCEPT THE FLAKINESS FORCED ON ME BY THE JOB I REALLY DID WANT TO DO. FLEXIBLE AGENCY WORK WAS A GODSEND AND EASY TO FIND. LONDON IS EXPENSIVE SO IT PLACES YOU ON THE BREADLINE.”

Nicola, who comes from outer London, told us

“SUSTAINING A CAREER IS DIFFICULT. I AM FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE A PARENT LIVING CLOSE ENOUGH TO LONDON SO AFTER WORKING REGIONALLY I CAN ALWAYS COME BACK BEFORE I CAN FIND SOMEWHERE TO LIVE AGAIN. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO AFFORD TO PAY LONDON RENT AND TOUR/LIVE REGIONALLY SO IT'S ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO MOVE BETWEEN CITIES AND COME BACK TO AUDITION. I CAN'T SEE HOW IT'S POSSIBLE TO HAVE CHILDREN WITH THE WAY I LIVE, EVEN WHEN OUT OF WORK, I HAVE TO BE EXTREMELY FLEXIBLE WITH NON-ACTING JOBS TO PAY RENT/SURVIVE.”

Equity's Deputy for the General Secretary, Stephen Spence, who was formerly an actor and stage manager adds:

“WHEN I CAME OUT (OF TRAINING) I GOT WORK, WHEN I WORKED I GOT PAID, WHEN I DIDN'T WORK I GOT ACCESS TO BENEFITS. THERE WAS INCOME TO KEEP ME GOING...I BUILT A CAREER AS AN ACTOR AND A STAGE MANAGER, EARNING MONEY, PAYING TAX AND NATIONAL INSURANCE AND REFLECTING MY COMMUNITY IN INDEPENDENT THEATRE. I COULDN'T DO IT TODAY.”

We looked at the kind of contracts being offered, very common in off-West End productions, but on West End too.

One production had a three week rehearsal period, where actors were expected to rehearse 6 days a week from 10am-6pm, followed by a 4 week run of 8 performances per week. The remuneration was just £100 per week, including all expenses and National Insurance contributions were to be paid by the performer. During the rehearsal period this works out as performers being paid under £2.10 an hour.

Another advert for a show at a well-known off West End theatre said the casting was open to those of all ethnicities but then went on to state that total pay would be £250 expenses for the whole period of two months' work and a share of the profit made. Actors we spoke to made clear that promises of a 'profit share' usually turned out to be very small amounts, if anything at all.

A quick glance at any of the major casting websites will produce a plethora of adverts similar to these.

WHY IS THIS ALLOWED?

When we have a legal National Minimum Wage (NMW – sometimes referred to as the National Living Wage), why is this allowed?

The current widespread system of performers working for free or working for far below the minimum wage is a result of performers not being treated as ‘workers’, which is the requirement of those entitled to the minimum wage.

The criteria for a ‘worker’ eligible for the minimum wage is set out in section 54(3) of the *National Minimum Wage Act 1998*:

(3) In this Act “worker” ... means an individual who has entered into or works under (or, where the employment has ceased, worked under)—

(a) a contract of employment; or

(b) any other contract, whether express or implied and (if it is express) whether oral or in writing, whereby the individual undertakes to do or perform personally any work or services for another party to the contract whose status is not by virtue of the contract that of a client or customer of any profession or business undertaking carried on by the individual;

Although in some instances performers will not satisfy this criteria it seems that in many instances, when they are contracted to perform in a show, under a director or managerial team, they are and should be classified as workers and therefore be entitled to the minimum wage.

Until the prevalence of low and no pay, which has become all but a necessity in the early stages of a career in particular in

film and TV, is tackled the core problems with access and who is able to survive in the industry will not be solved.

Although much of this abuse takes place in the private sector, the Government have a critical role to play in ensuring proper regulation and pay, one they are not fulfilling at the moment. Their approach to tackling this should be two pronged about entitlement and enforcement.

Given that performers in similar shows under similar arrangements could have very different contracts, one paid properly the other paid almost nothing, there seems to be a problem with the contracts being offered.

Government need to take the lead by publishing sector specific pay guidance to make clearer that performers are workers and should be paid as such.

But further than this it is up to HMRC to enforce the proper payment of the minimum wage to those entitled to it. Given the widespread culture in the entertainment industry of failing to pay the NMW we need a review of employment practices in the sector targeted at enforcement of the National Minimum Wage.

There is perhaps a greater role for unions to play as well. Equity has done significant important work in this area but more could be achieved through working with other unions representing the entertainment industry, such as BECTU, alongside the TUC and learning from the experience of other unions’ victories, such as the GMB’s work with Uber drivers. Similarly organisations like PACT, the Producers Alliance for Cinema and TV could do more to ensure greater transparency on pay agreements and to prevent thinks like gender and BAME pay gaps emerging.

ACTING UP



USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

In addition to improving practice in the private sector, organisations who distribute public funds also need to take more action to tackle this problem.

Although Arts Council England has placed a heavy emphasis on diversity and access in their work for many years not all organisations they fund live up to expectations.

Organisations that are part of the National Portfolio have a responsibility to measure their performance on access and diversity and they are also required by ACE to meet the industry standard on pay and terms and conditions. This standard is not always adhered to, and more needs to be done to ensure NPOs meet this minimum standard.

Guidance could also be made clearer that fair pay for performers is a key criteria for the one off Grants for the Arts programme run by the Arts Council. The Arts Council do have a separate [information sheet](#) laying out clear fair pay standards, but this guidance should be made clear in all the grants guidance.

The lack of clarity or abuse of the guidelines is leading to the Arts Council funding shows that are paying poverty wages. An example of this was a casting call on Spotlight for a show 'supported by Arts Council England' that was paying £100 per week for full time work over 8 weeks.

Shows in which a budget is allocated for venue and equipment hire and management costs, but none available for performer wages should not be funded.

Recommendations

- Sector-specific pay guidance: The Government should clarify that performers employed as workers on shows should be paid the National Minimum Wage.
- An HMRC review of NMW enforcement in the performing arts: The performing arts is one of the most unregulated sections of the labour market. We need a targeted review by Her Majesties Revenue and Customs, who regulate payment of the minimum wage, looking at ensuring the National Minimum Wage is paid to those entitled to it.
- Public Grants: The Arts Council and other lottery distributors should amend their guidelines to make clearer that projects in which performers are workers but will not be paid the minimum wage shall not receive funding.



CASTING, COMMISSIONING AND REPRESENTATION

In the words of Julie Hesmondhalgh 'if you can't see it, you can't be it.' That's why it matters so much who and what stories we see on our screens and stages. If people from working class backgrounds or people of colour, or people with disabilities, or older people, or LGBT people can't see themselves on screen or stage they won't aspire to be on them.

Even for those actors who do aspire to be on them, they often find they hit a stereotyped ceiling early on, stuck playing typecast roles over and over again with no chance of range and progression.

For Tracy Brabin that meant rarely being offered work detached from her working class roots, instead being constantly seen for supporting roles as feisty barmaids or the lead woman's cheeky best mate. Despite a 20 year long career where she did manage to play some great roles, she never played a character that wore a suit.

Cush Jumbo experienced a similar problem, speaking to our panel event about the 'exotic best friend' ceiling that she kept hitting in British TV, offered stereotyped supporting roles but few leading parts. That ceiling led her to write her own one woman play that caught the attention of the American industry who recognised the talent where the British industry had failed and swept her over the water and into the hit CBS show *The Good Wife*. The script for the show was the first she had read which didn't specify black or mixed race or exotic best friend, which is all too common for British shows. Where Cush was hardly let into the room in British casting calls in America she was flooded with offers. When asked about the supposed 'brain drain' of black British actors to America she was clear that it's not the actors wanting to leave, it's the UK industry pulling the plug:

“THERE'S NO DRAIN. IF THERE WAS WORK HERE, I WOULD BE WORKING HERE. I WOULD LOVE NOTHING MORE THAN TO BE WORKING ON TELEVISION AND FILMS HERE. IT BECOMES LESS AND LESS ATTRACTIVE TO COME BACK, BECAUSE YOU'RE COMING BACK TO NOTHING”

We also received submissions about the problems of tokenism. One submission talked about broadcasters' new found desire to represent disability. That often meant disabled actors were cast as extras or in background roles and that broadcasters

“CHOOSE TO EMPLOY VERY VISIBLY DISABLED ACTORS TO 'PROVE' THAT THEY'RE 'POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE, WHILST NONE-VISIBLY DISABLED ACTORS ARE MARGINALISED”

“PREGNANT WOMEN ARE INVISIBLE ON TV, YOU HARDLY EVER SEE THEM. WHEN I WAS OFFERED THE PART OF SARAH FERGUSON IN A FILM FOR ABC TV I HID THE FACT THAT I WAS PREGNANT BECAUSE I BELIEVED THEY WOULD FIRE ME.”

TRACY BRABIN

“SHOWS LIKE AUF WEIDERSEIN PET, BOYS FROM THE BLACK STUFF, FILMS LIKE KES, RITA SUE AND BOB TOO, EDUCATING SHIRLEY... YOU JUST DON'T SEE WORK LIKE THIS ANYMORE OR WORKING CLASS PEOPLE IN WORKING CLASS ROLES”

CHRIS

“THERE IS NO REASON I CAN'T PERFORM SHAKESPEARE APART FROM YOU THINKING I CAN'T PERFORM SHAKESPEARE. THAT IS THE BIGGEST BARRIER. PEOPLE ASSUME THEY KNOW WHAT I CAN AND CAN'T DO. IF THE PEOPLE AT THE TOP DO THAT, YOU HAVE A REAL ISSUE.”

DEBORAH WILLIAMS

ACTING UP

“THEY NEED TO STOP STEREOTYPING ROLES. SO YOU’RE A WORKING CLASS ACTOR? YOU CAN BE A SERVANT IN DOWNTON. YOU’RE A YOUNG BLACK ACTOR? YOU CAN BE A THIEF OR HANGING AROUND THE ESTATE IN A CHANNEL 4 DRAMA”

TOM STOCKS,
ACTOR AWARENESS

“VERY OFTEN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS ON SCREEN TEND TO BE (IN THE MAIN) NEGATIVE, ‘BENEFIT SCROUNGERS’, SUBSTANCE MISUSERS ETC. I THINK ON STAGE THERE IS EVEN MORE OF AN ISSUE”

GAVIN PORTER



So what is going on? Why do some of our best black actors feel forced to go to America for want of good, well-paid roles in the UK? Why are working class actors forced to settle for stereotyped bit parts and rarely leading roles? Why are people with disabilities almost invisible on TV?

Throughout submissions the answer was clear: if we want the answer to diversity on stage we’ve got to look behind the scenes. At the commissioners who choose what stories are told, the writers penning the parts, the casting directors casting actors to the roles. That’s where diversity really matters.

One submission from a casting assistant who wished to remain anonymous told us a story that described the personnel problem in starkest terms.

He had been working on an audition looking to find a black male actor for a lead role in an online mini-series. They auditioned lots of black actors, many of whom would have been perfect for the role, but the (white) casting director didn’t think any were right. Finally because they’d “run out of black options” they auditioned a few white actors. Lo and behold one of the white actors turned out to be a ‘perfect fit’ according to the casting director and was duly hired for a role that had been specifically written as a black character.

Few stories of casting are as stark as this but clearly casting is a critical point in the process of deciding who ends up on our stages and screens. Even if examples of bias are not as obvious as this unconscious bias can play a crucial role in deciding who is chosen to play what roles.

It’s not just the casting process that matters though.

James Graham, author of *This House* talked about the need to nurture working class writers to create those real stories and parts:

“IF WE AREN’T ENCOURAGING AND GENERATING WRITERS FROM CERTAIN COMMUNITIES, CLASSES OR BACKGROUNDS TO TELL THEIR STORIES, TO WRITE THOSE ROLES, THEN THERE’S NOT GOING TO BE A DEMAND FOR ACTORS FROM THOSE COMMUNITIES TO PLAY THEM.”

He explained his own career was only possible because of the ambition and support from his teachers at school who believed working class kids should do plays and encouraged him and his peers to take a show to the Edinburgh fringe and then study drama at University. He thinks the organisation of the broadcasters have a big part to play too in working class stories being aired

“ THE LOSS OF THOSE REGIONAL PRODUCING BODIES – CENTRAL, GRANADA – NOW ALL COMPLETELY CENTRALISED INTO LONDON, MEANS THAT WE JUST TELL LESS OF THOSE STORIES. ”

David Mercatali, from Stage Directors UK, stressed that directors are critical too.

“ WE DON'T HAVE A DIVERSE RANGE OF THEATRE DIRECTORS. IF WE DON'T HAVE DIVERSE THEATRE DIRECTORS WE WON'T HAVE DIVERSE CASTING. ”

He talked about the system of hiring assistant directors which is dominated by networks and family connections.

“ THE POSITIONS ARE NOT ADVERTISED AND THERE IS NO TRANSPARENT PROCESS. IF I WENT TO MANY OF THE BIG THEATRES AND ASKED THEM THEIR PROCESS FOR GETTING ASSISTANT DIRECTORS, THERE WOULD PROBABLY BE A LONG PAUSE ”

In these examples and in many others we received networks played a critical role, and were thought of, and sometimes justified, as a way to minimise risk.

The research unit at the University of Leicester looking at Cultural and Media Economies (CAMEo) said that their work had found that in the performing arts

“ EMPLOYERS RECRUIT THROUGH PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND NETWORKS TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF MAKING WRONG RECRUITMENT DECISIONS ”

Cassie Chadderton, Head of UK Theatre, said similar

“ SPEED IS THE ENEMY OF CHANGE IN THEATRE. IF PRODUCTIONS HAVE TO BE STAFFED AND CAST QUICKLY DIRECTORS TURN TO THEIR IMMEDIATE NETWORK OF PEOPLE. THEY DON'T SPEND TIME REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE THEY HAVEN'T WORKED WITH BEFORE. ”

Minnie Ayres, Chief Operations Officer of TriForce Creative Network which supports and provides a platform for diverse talent to break into the industry, said:

“ TALENT FROM UNDER REPRESENTED BACKGROUNDS ARE SEEN AS MORE OF A 'RISK' TO THE GATEKEEPERS OF OUR INDUSTRY. THEY AREN'T GIVEN A CHANCE TO FAIL. WHEREAS IF A WHITE MIDDLE CLASS ACTOR OR DIRECTOR FAILS ONCE THAT ISN'T THE END FOR THEM, THERE'S MORE LEEWAY. ”

A recent report commissioned by UK Theatre and SOLT came to similar conclusions, that the theatre workforce was not representative of the country as a whole and that was due to factors including 'an endemic culture of networking and closed recruitment practices' as well as unpaid and low paid entry routes giving those from affluent backgrounds an unfair advantage.

It's not only recruitment practices that matter for access. Dr Maria Barrett has done research into class access to the theatre looking in particular at why working class people think theatre is 'not for the likes of us' and how you can encourage more diverse audiences. In addition to feeling theatre was an unwelcome space some people felt nervous about what was going to be performed and whether they would 'get it' and therefore felt spending money and their time on a ticket was a big risk.



ACTING UP

“80% OF CASTINGS TAKE PLACE IN LONDON EVEN IF THE THEATRE IS IN LIVERPOOL.”

TOM STOCKS

“THE PROBLEM REACHES THE NORTH WHEN NORTHERN THEATRES AND INSTITUTIONS HOLD AUDITIONS IN LONDON. AN ACTOR FROM MANCHESTER HAS TO TRAVEL BACK AND FORTH TO LONDON TO GET AUDITIONS FOR THE ROYAL EXCHANGE. THIS CUTS OUT NORTHERN, LOCAL, WORKING CLASS TALENT.”

SAM MCKAY



Maria looked at what the Royal Court theatre in Liverpool have done to tackle this by including dinner in the ticket price therefore spreading the risk by adding something else to bank on, and by showing pictures of a diverse audience in advertisements for shows and minimising the sense of risk beforehand.

Theatres across the country could learn from these initiatives. Many theatres already do significant outreach work and often employ a dedicated member of staff for the purpose but more can be done, particularly by providing cheaper tickets in order to allow those who rarely see theatre to get a taste for it at a reduced price. Protecting budgets to provide apprenticeships backstage and give local people from diverse backgrounds a route in to the industry is important too.

MADE IN LIVERPOOL, CAST IN LONDON

Another problem raised again and again was the London-centrism of the industry. James Graham raised the issue of the regional broadcasting powerbases being diminished and others, particularly actors, raised concerns that even regional shows were cast in London.

One of the recommendations of Equity's recently released Manifesto for Casting was that during the casting process consideration should be given to professional local talent from where the production is made. Alongside this more effort should be made, particularly for productions receiving ACE or lottery funding, to hold castings where the show is being made rather than force local and regional talent to travel to London.

The issues with representation, typecasting and decision makers are varied and complicated. In part there are problems with the systems for recruitment that remain closed to too many. But there is also a fundamental problem with personnel. If the industry is dominated by people who have the same unconscious or conscious biases, who want to see the same kind of shows and the same people on stage, then we won't see the diversity we need. We discuss the statistics of this in the next chapter.

Recommendations

- **Combatting bias:** Casting Directors should undergo unconscious bias training to help realise and mitigate against bias, and as far as possible casting calls should be race blind.
- **Regional Auditions:** Shows taking place outside London, especially those that are funded by the Arts Council or lottery money, should hold some or all castings locally not in London.
- **Supporting behind the scenes talent:** Broadcasters, film companies and theatres need to do more to bring on and develop working class and diverse talent in all levels and roles behind the scenes. Lenny Henry has recently urged Ofcom to monitor the BBC's diversity behind the scenes, we should monitor across the broadcasters too.

FACING THE FACTS – MONITORING DIVERSITY

We know that there is a problem with diversity on stage and screen. We know that there is a problem with personnel behind the scenes. We know the problems that a narrow set of decision makers poses. But we do not know the stats.

As the saying goes: sunlight is the best disinfectant. Sometimes you need the revelation of the facts of the matter in order to force change.

That proved true just last month when the release of the BBC's top salary data provoked outrage when the gender and BAME pay gap was revealed. Despite long held suspicions of the pay gap the swift and sharp response by female stars, and the BBC's promise to achieve equal pay by 2020 was only achieved by the hard facts coming to light.

Later this month we may see something similar happen when the ground-breaking Project Diamond, which has monitored in association with the major UK broadcasters who is on and behind our screens for the past year, releases its first set of diversity data. The release will be the first time we've had a broad set of data showing who is making and starring in UK TV shows. If the data shows what we suspect, poor diversity on screen and perhaps even poorer off screen, it could lead to real, long term change.

The release of the first set of data is all the more timely as Lenny Henry and others have raised concerns about Ofcom's regulation of the BBC Charter's commitment to off screen diversity. Given the centrality of off screen diversity to on screen diversity there is no reason that Ofcom should regulate the latter but not the former. Unfortunately Ofcom does not have a similar remit over even the public sector broadcasters, let alone private broadcasters. Were these broadcasters to have similar obligations to transparency this would no doubt promote significant swift progress.

If Project Diamond is a success, an equivalent data collection project looking at theatre and films produced in the UK would bring similar pressure to bear on those parts of the industry to do more to address access and diversity.

We also need clearer data on the private drama schools. Whereas data on the demographic intake of Universities is clearly available via the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), equivalent data private drama schools are not.

That should not continue. Particularly HE degree awarding institutions, which many drama schools are, should not be exempt or absent from this detailed reporting.

But we need data that provides a holistic picture of what is going on. Too often statistical data has focused on protected characteristics and ignored social class. We need both and we also need longer term data looking at sustainability in the industry – where working class actors are 10 years on from finishing their training.

The Arts Council England for example places heavy emphasis on diversity data but does not include class or any kind of socio-economic background in that data collection. [Channel 4's Diversity Charter](#) was and remains an important initiative, but although some of the 30 diversity commitments involved focus on socio-economic background, the data it produces for its' on and off screen workforce is not publically available and seems to contain no data on class background. In the 2 year update on the charter a social mobility strategy was stated as next on the channel's agenda, but we've yet to hear more on this.

Some organisations have made more progress than others and are looking at diversity in the round. The [BFI's diversity standards](#) were seen as the vanguard, with all fund applicants required to fill out a diversity form, and with the standards meaning projects have to assure their commitment to diversity in the project as well as the staff team. Despite this impressive framework it's not clear that the standard is being fully enforced.

Similarly the [BBC's diversity report](#) referenced the socio-economic data being collected in the corporation's workforce census and the ambition to break down barriers to access. The census found that 83% of the BBC workforce attended a state school, 48% had a parent without a degree and 61% had a parent with a higher managerial and professional job. Acknowledgement of socio-economic background is key but so is publishing the data, not just summarising select internal findings. A detailed breakdown of background in each level and sector of the organisation is the next step.

Until we plug this hole and start producing comprehensive data we won't see change happen.

Part of the problem is that class is difficult to measure, with the best definition and criteria contentious.

ACTING UP

The civil service has recently started measuring social background of their employees. They use up to 12 measures of social origin, including parental occupation, type of school attended, and the place where the individual grew up. Academics working with ONS data have used parental occupation when the respondent was aged 14.⁶ There are many different proxies, but what is clear is that having this information would create a clearer and informed understanding of who is on and behind stage and screen.

The other part of the problem is legislative. While protected characteristics are laid down in law in the Equalities Act 2010, class or socio-economic background is not. The obligation on public bodies to take class disadvantage into account when making decisions, 'the socio-economic duty', was never brought into force by Theresa May after the Conservatives got into Government in the 2010 election. A clearer framework in law to take account of and mitigate against socio-economic disadvantage would be of great benefit to diversity and inclusion across the whole of society, not just the performing arts.

We need the political will to drive this change, and in particular in the performing arts as the issues span the public and private sector divide. A cross-party grouping should be set up to foster greater political interest in and ensure continual campaigning for change.

AUDIENCES HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

Proper comprehensive sets of data would also allow audiences to exert a greater degree of control that they do now.

Just as fairtrade food and fashion have become a stalwart of consumer choice so could fair paid and representative theatre, TV and film if the data was available.

There have been recent examples of consumer boycotts that indicate there is an appetite on the part of audiences to

help change the industry. The #OscarsSoWhite hashtag on social media went viral in response to no BAME actors being nominated at the Oscars in two successive years. The film *Stonewall* flopped at the Box Office because it wrote LGBT people of colour and trans people out of the history of the gay rights movement. The Bechdel test about women's roles in films has become part of common discussion as films constantly fail to properly represent women.

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Recommendations

- Filling the class gap. Class data should be an essential part of all diversity data collection in order to get a true picture of access and diversity across the performing arts. Politicians should spearhead a move to recognise socio-economic disadvantage in law.
- We need a more comprehensive programme of diversity data collection across the industry, in film, TV, theatre and drama schools.
- Audiences acting up: Audiences should be enabled and encouraged to respond and react to bad practice, whether in terms of diversity or pay and conditions.

⁶ O'Brien D, Laurison D, Friedman S and Miles A. (2016) Are the creative industries meritocratic? *Cultural Trends* 25(2): 116-131. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09548963.2016.1170943?src=recsys>

Key Recommendations

- Revamp the EBacc: The EBacc has led to the systematic marginalisation of arts subjects, particularly drama, from schools. The measure should be revamped to recognise the benefits of creative subjects in tandem with the importance of core academic subjects.
- Reform of the drama school application process: Application and audition fees for drama schools can be prohibitive and are not justifiable. A centralised UCAS based process should be introduced for degree awarding institutions with a flat application fee.
- We need an HMRC review of NMW enforcement in the performing arts: Poverty pay is the Government's business. The performing arts is one of the most unregulated sections of the labour market. We need a targeted review by Her Majesties Revenue and Customs, who regulate payment of the minimum wage, looking at ensuring the National Minimum Wage is paid to those entitled to it.
- Supporting behind the scenes talent: Off screen diversity is critical to on screen diversity. Broadcasters, film companies and theatres need to do more to bring on and develop working class and diverse talent in all levels and roles behind the scenes. Lenny Henry has recently urged Ofcom to monitor the BBC's diversity behind the scenes, we should monitor across the broadcasters too.
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Full Recommendations

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revamped to recognise the benefits of creative subjects in tandem with the importance of core academic subjects.

- Fund visits to the theatre: The Government should increase funding for schools to take students on school trips to the theatre, allowing more money for schools in more rural areas and small towns that need a coach to travel further
- Advertise opportunity: Careers advice about the opportunities available to students in the performing arts should be improved, in association with the industry. This should focus in particular on 'behind the scenes' roles back stage and in TV and film production.
- Reform of the drama school application process: Application and audition fees for drama schools can be prohibitive and are not justifiable. A centralised UCAS based process should be introduced for degree awarding institutions with a flat application fee
- Making funding match the cost of living. Student loans do not cover the cost of living in much of the UK, particularly London. Maintenance loans should be increased to reflect that higher cost of living.
- Reform inside drama schools. Despite many positive initiatives drama schools still need to be more aware of difference and disadvantage inside their walls. Focus needs to be placed on diversifying teaching bodies, increasing support for students and better preparing students for the difficult job market and the widespread danger of exploitation.
- Government improve sector specific pay guidance: The Government should clarify that performers employed as workers on shows should be paid the National Minimum Wage.
- We need an HMRC review of NMW enforcement in the performing arts: Poverty pay is the Government's business. The performing arts is one

of the most unregulated sections of the labour market. We need a targeted review by Her Majesties Revenue and Customs, who regulate payment of the minimum wage, looking at ensuring the National Minimum Wage is paid to those entitled to it.

- No funding for poverty pay: The Arts Council should amend its guidelines to make clear that projects in which performers are workers, but will not be paid the minimum wage, shall not receive funding.
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Acting Up Report

The Labour Party's inquiry into access and diversity in the performing arts.

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With thanks to Dr Sam Friedman, Dr Dave O'Brien, Deborah Williams, Bethany Taylor and everyone who gave evidence to the inquiry. Your contribution has been invaluable.

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