

Literature Wales

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

2022 - 2025

Introduction

At Literature Wales, we are committed to transforming our literary culture into one that is representative and accessible for everyone in Wales. Striving for equality, diversity and inclusion is essential for the literature sector to thrive and be meaningful to all. This belief sits at the core of our values as an organisation and drives our vision and strategy.

This plan contains our aspirations, and details on how we will measure and share our progress. Included are:

- Definitions
- Why Equality, Diversity & Inclusion matters to us
- Examples of our progress so far
- Current state of EDI within the literary landscape
- Which under-represented groups we will focus on
- Our planned actions
- Details on how we will measure and share our progress and learning.

EDI actions are embedded across our organisation, so this plan sits side-by-side with our other Action Plans and programme of activity. Of particular note is our Accessibility Plan, which outlines how we aim to design and structure our work environment and creative opportunities to be easily understood, accessed, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their abilities.

Definitions

▪ Equality

In essence, equality means treating everyone fairly. But this does not mean that everyone should be treated exactly the same – some people already have considerable advantage in being able to buy tickets, travel to literature events, and in having the knowledge of how to get published or platformed. Our aim is to ensure that our opportunities are equally available to all by identifying and addressing existing barriers to inclusion for our workforce, writers, audiences and participants. Equality is about opening doors previously held shut.

▪ Diversity

Diversity is a term used to describe the fact that everyone is different and that these differences, and protected characteristics in particular, should be respected, recognised and valued. A diverse workforce will bring a wealth of knowledge from lived experiences to better serve our diverse audiences. A diverse literature scene in Wales will ensure that the voices of all our communities are represented and heard, inspiring the next generations of writers and audiences.

▪ Inclusion

By inclusion we mean a welcoming and kind approach to bringing a diverse range of people together within the arts and literature sector – whether as writers, audiences, literature professionals, producers, staff, readers or participants – regardless of their background. We

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are a national company with inclusive values, and we welcome everyone in Wales to engage with us and our work.

Why Equality, Diversity & Inclusion matters to Literature Wales

Based on our understanding of the power of literature to empower, improve, and brighten lives, and the need to focus our activities where they have the greatest impact, we have identified **Representation and Equality** as one of our three strategic priorities as an organisation in 2022-25. We will continue to focus our work for people who are under-represented and who have experienced racism, ableism, and discrimination. We aim to shape a sector that supports equal access for all by addressing historical and structural inequalities and platforming diverse voices.

Literature is deeply rooted in the notion of freedom of expression. However, true freedom requires equality of opportunity and fair representation. We know that the sector still presents a range of barriers which prevent writers, readers and audiences accessing literature. Research has highlighted a strong socio-economic gradient across arts participation in the UK to evidence that disadvantaged individuals are less likely to engage with cultural activities, with more than double of the proportion of individuals from higher socio-economic groups took part in creative writing compared to those living in a low income household.

Literature can generate many outcomes related to well-being, including increased ability to empathise, reduced loneliness and higher levels of self-awareness, sense of identity and self-worth. The groups that we prioritise within our activity are most likely to face multiple barriers of social mobility, educational success and good mental and physical health. In 2022, Wales presented the UK's highest poverty rates (23%). Statistics also highlight significant disparities in unemployment rates for people of colour and people living with a mental or physical disability or illness.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on these groups within the sector. A survey delivered as part of the #WeShallNotBeRemoved survey found that 83% of respondents expressed concern about the provision of access for disabled audiences and participants through the reopening of the sector. We fully endorse the vision outlined by Disability Arts Cymru, and strive for a literature that is inclusive of disabled and D/deaf people. The pandemic has also further revealed inequalities within the workforce of the cultural sectors, with those on low-incomes and/or from a lower socio-economic backgrounds face barriers to accessing employment opportunities within the sector, and people of colour or people with disabilities often face levels of over-representation in constituencies of socio-economic disadvantage.

100% of Literature Wales' Representing Wales 2021 cohort of writers of colour indicated that they saw challenges in pursuing a career as writer/artist in Wales.

Our commitment to increasing Representation & Equality within the sector is a priority for Literature Wales and 90% of respondents who took part in our Stakeholder Survey 2020 said that our work in this area was making a difference to Wales' Literary Culture. One respondent said:

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"[I've noticed] a huge shift in many projects and initiatives to reach, nurture and celebrate writers and participants from a range of diverse backgrounds"

Through partnership working, research and perseverance, we will continue to listen and learn about important methods that we can adopt to further influence a sector that must change to deliver the best service for the people of Wales.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action at Literature Wales

Literature Wales has started on the path to enabling a literary sector that is representative and accessible for everyone in Wales. However, we are aware there is much more work to be done. Before outlining our specific plans for 23-25, here is a summary of our current position and some recent actions. Please note, this is indicative rather than exhaustive.

Workforce:

During the period of April 2021- April 2022 14.3% of Literature Wales' employees, volunteers and trustees identified as Black, Asian or minority ethnic.

During the past year, we continued to offer guaranteed interviews for candidates who were from a minority ethnic or low-income background or who lived with a disability or chronic illness and met the basic requirements for the role. We continue to learn a lot from this process. In our most recent recruitment for a Creative Executive role, 50% of applicants identified as underrepresented in the literary sector. This suggests that our recruitment policy is encouraging capable candidates from a more diverse backgrounds to apply for positions at Literature Wales.

Operations:

Our organisation is led by a set of values and principles shared by every member of staff, and they include:

- being actively anti-racist
- supporting under-represented groups and communities
- respecting the Welsh language
- and promoting inclusivity and accessibility.

In the past year, staff have taken part in regular training, including, for example, Deaf Awareness, Anti-Racism and unconscious bias. During an internal staff meeting to present the updated Accessibility Plan, a member of Disability Arts Cymru was present to answer questions from the staff.

We have taken steps to ensure that our work is more accessible, for example by ensuring that guidelines and callouts for our schemes are written in clear and accessible language and by providing different formats of documents for those with access requirements and offering BSL interpretation for some online events.

We have taken steps to adapt our monitoring and evaluation strategy. Previously we tried to collect EDI data on every artist, participant but we believe it to not always be appropriate and can lead to individuals feeling tokenised. Therefore, we've made the decision to collect specific

EDI data for targeted activity only, so that we do not continuously unnecessarily collect and hold personal data.

The Welsh Government's [Anti-Racist Action Plan](#) sets out pathways for making Wales an anti-racist nation by 2030. Our work in the areas of health, education, Welsh language and Welsh heritage align with Welsh Government's ethos that *"rhetoric on racial equality should be translated into meaningful action, with organisations and institutions made accountable for turning this into reality."*

Along with the seven other national arts companies of Wales, we are committed to creating change in the arts and cultural sector in Wales. Driven by a strong desire to diversify those employed at a senior level within organisations, the companies commissioned a study to investigate the optimum means to improve diversity, especially with regard to leadership, within their own organisations, and potentially within other Welsh cultural organisations. The focus was on improving representation of three groups:

- Individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds – the global majority
- Disabled or D/deaf people
- Individuals from a low-income background.

In 2022, the Art Council's National Companies network successfully bid for funding from the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Culture and Sport fund to develop a programme of work to explore and promote Diversity in Leadership within the arts in 2022-2025.

Programme:

Literature Wales continues to address the imbalance of under-representation within literature by offering targeted opportunities for marginalised groups, and ensuring that representation and equality is a priority within every single project we run.

Highlights from our 2022-2023 programme include:

- As a theme, equality, diversity and inclusion focuses heavily in our **National Poet**, Hanan Issa's commissioned poems, e.g. her 'The ABCD's of Equal Opportunities' explores identity and belonging, and 'Global Warming' is about the poverty and hardships facing so many individuals and families in the coming months. Hanan's Welsh-Iraqi heritage brings new opportunities to educate audiences and communities, for example mentioning Eid in her contemporary creative response to the festive classic A Child's Christmas in Wales commissioned by Hay Winter Weekend 2022.
- In 2022, two residential courses at Tŷ Newydd, **Books for All** and **Stori i Bawb** offered a total of 17 free of charge spaces for writers of colour and underrepresented writers to develop skills in writing for children and young people, and to meet representatives from the publishing industry to aim towards publication.
- In 2023, the **Reinventing the Protagonist** 6-week series of courses will be tutored by Kaite O'Reilly for disabled writers. To increase accessibility, this will be delivered online. This course will offer workshops on craft and on career development, and will be

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developed and delivered in partnership with Disability Arts Cymru. An aftercare programme will be developed with the cohort to continue to offer development opportunities and support.

- Our flagship writer development programme **Representing Wales** has so far provided intense support to a new cohort of 14 writers from low-income backgrounds in 2022-23, and continues to support 12 writers of colour from the first round through our 3-year aftercare programme. In April 2023, we will support a new cohort of writers from a range of under-represented backgrounds to forge a career in writing for children and young adults.
- **Writing Well** is a new programme launched in 2023 to develop and train literary facilitators with underrepresented life experiences to go into communities that need the power of literature to help them with their health and well-being. When appointing cohorts for this intense development programme, we'll ensure a high percentage of Welsh speakers to ensure that more Welsh language speaking facilitators can work in communities through their mother tongue.
- **Cymru Ni | Our Wales** is our educational project funded by Welsh Government to support schools in delivering the recommendations contained in the 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group' report. This project has included workshops in schools addressing issues of race and identity through creativity. Welsh writers of colour are also developing digital teaching resources that will be available online. These digital resources will add to the reach and legacy of the Cymru Ni | Our Wales project, allowing teachers to continue with the aims of the project in their own time.
- The partnerships developed through Cymru Ni has led to Literature Wales working with Arts Council Wales and regional educational consortia to develop and deliver **anti-racist professional training for teachers and workshop facilitators**.
- [Our project in partnership with Cadw](#) saw Alex Wharton composing new creative work celebrating and commemorating individuals of Black heritage in Wales, in response to the Welsh Government's audit on public monuments, street and building names associated with the slave trade.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within the current literary landscape

The unrepresentative state of our sector is reflected in the Arts Council of Wales' 2018-2023 Corporate Plan, [For the Benefit of All](#), which outlines that the number of disabled people working in Arts Portfolio Wales funded organisations is just 2% of the workforce, while the corresponding figure for people from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background is 3% (Arts Council of Wales, 2018). Whilst these statistics are now in need of refreshing, informal conversations within the art networks still report that disabled people and Black, Asian or minority ethnic background people are under-represented within our companies.

There is currently no data on the protected characteristics of authors in Wales, nor on the characters featuring in the books published in Wales. However overall, by reading newly published book catalogues, browsing literary events, or looking at past Wales Book of the Year eligible books, it is clear that the literature and publishing sector in Wales remains fairly

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unrepresentative in terms of ethnicity, disability, LGBTQA+ and other protected characteristics. Since 1861, only two women – Mererid Hopwood and Hilma Lloyd Edwards – have won the Chair at the National Eisteddfod. In 2021, *Daydreams and Jellybeans* by Alex Wharton was published, the first ever poetry collection for children in Wales written by a poet of colour, this collection was also shortlisted for the 2022 Wales Book of the Year Awards. And in 2022, Lucent Dreaming became the first Welsh publisher to have full-time editors of colour, after receiving funding from the Books Council.

These are a few examples of the historical inequalities that are only now starting to be acknowledged and redressed. Multiple barriers to literary engagement and a professional writing career remain for people from some demographic backgrounds, and discrimination and lack of access to opportunities have left individuals behind.

When people don't see themselves in what they read they are far less likely to pursue other works or see value in creative writing. When they do not see themselves represented by and within the organisations offering creative opportunities, they are far less likely to engage and apply.

Wales' writers should comprise of a range of ages, socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, religions and languages and not be typified by a certain demographic profile. This isn't about excluding anyone; it's about creating equal and fair access to artistic innovation and professional development.

This is why we have introduced this **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan**. It is aimed at guiding our own activities towards redressing these inequalities, as well as those organised by others with our funding and support. The EDI Action Plan is further informed by regular consultation with the sector, critical friends and stakeholders, as well as a regular review of current activity. It also considers the broader legislative context, specifically the *Equality Act of 2010*, the *Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)* and the *Welsh Language Act of 1993*.

Which under-represented groups do we focus on?

We will prioritise working with:

- Black, Asian or minority ethnic individuals
- those living with disabilities or illness (mental or physical)
- individuals from low-income backgrounds

We will also work with writers from the LGBTQ+ community, the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, refugees, and individuals isolated due to caring responsibilities, personal commitments, and geographical location. We will listen and learn from campaigns like Black Lives Matter and #weshallnotberemoved and incorporate their values in our work. We support the Welsh Government's [Race Equality Action Plan](#) and the vision of creating an Anti-Racist Wales.

A note on terminology

We recognise that terminology to do with race is changing and evolving, and that different individuals and communities will have different views and preference on terms. The terms “writers/people of colour” is used in this document, also “Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals”. Working with our colleagues at other National Art Organisations, our Diversity in Leadership work refers to “those from the Global Majority”. Some individuals also use a capital D when writing Disabled, or Deaf – and others do not. As an organisation, we will continue to learn more about the under-represented voices and communities of Wales, and we will be listening carefully to our writers and stakeholders’ advice about language and terms, and adapting and changing our terminology as we go.

We recognise that many people identify with multiple protected characteristics (as defined in the [Equality Act 2010](#)) and we will take an intersectional approach, bearing in mind that people often face multiple and complex barriers to access the arts.

In addition, we will actively work towards Welsh Government’s *Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers* strategy to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050. This commitment is detailed in our [Welsh Language Development Plan](#).

How will EDI be embedded in our programme?

Our programme is structured around achieving impact on **3 priority areas**; (Representation & Equality, Climate Emergency and Health & Well-being) through **3 activity strands** (Participation, Writer Development & Wales’ Literary Culture). The Welsh Language remains a foundation for all our work. You can read about why these areas are important to us, and what we will be doing in our [Strategic Plan](#).

For our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion efforts to have impact, they need to be embedded in all our work, across all our priorities and activities.

Most activities will have specific, SMART, goals attached to them to ensure that they contribute to our EDI vision. These will be measured and reported on during each project. In addition, there are EDI actions included in our other Action Plans; notably our HR & Recruitment plan, our Accessibility plan and Welsh Language Development Plan.

The section below, broken down into each of our activity strands details the behaviours all our work in this area will need to include to contribute to our EDI vision. In each of our quarterly organisational report we will prepare a section providing details of our progress and points of learning for the future. For accountability, this will be published on our website, as well as shared with our board.

Participation

In order to reach our EDI vision, it's important our participation work:

- Provides meaningful opportunities to upskill facilitators and workshop leaders with lived experience in order to engage effectively with our target under-represented communities.
- Offers opportunities through a variety of platforms – including online workshops for those that cannot travel due to health reasons and/or caring responsibilities.
- Supports and platforms other individuals and organisations who are leading the way on pioneering initiatives for under-represented groups.
- Ensures legacy for intervention activities by working in partnership.

Writer Development

In order to reach our EDI vision, it's important our Writer Development work:

- Provides targeted investment of money and time for our target under-represented communities.
- Creates a continuum of inspiration, learning & professional development from primary school to professional.
- Engages visible role models to inspire, lead and mentor.
- Works to disable historic barriers for people to develop as professional writers.
- Works in partnership.
- Develops a nonbiased, inclusive, internal assessment structures that don't rely, with the intention of fairness, on overly complicated assessment methods that put inappropriate burden on writers. Techniques currently used include always engaging panels with lived experience and occasional anonymous assessment. These sit alongside a personal, friendly approach to supporting applicants to apply, and providing individual feedback.
- Is seen as a long-term investment. Outside of the lifecycle of projects, writers are provided with informal support and guidance.

Wales' Literary Culture

In order to realise our EDI vision, our work on Wales' Literary culture must be representative of our communities. People who currently don't see themselves in the literature they read and hear should be able to see writers with similar lived experiences in published books, in performed work, as community champions, as workshops leaders, creative writing tutors, and laureates.

We will ensure:

- We use our platforms widely to champion diverse writers.
- Ambassadorial roles are carefully appointed – chosen to reflect the communities they serve.
- We employ a diverse range of facilitators to lead our work, ensuring they are skilled and appropriate for the participants.
- We support other literary event organisers, through Inspiring Communities Fund, to make their programmes more diverse and inclusive for audiences.
- Our communications messages reach beyond our echo chamber.

The Welsh Language

The Welsh language belongs to us all. We will work to make our projects in the Welsh language inclusive for our audiences and participants whether they are fluent, use a handful of words or expressions, or completely new to the language and curious to know more. We will ensure:

- Our communications messaging celebrates the languages accents, slang and dialects.
- Our work supports the Welsh Government's goal to reach 1 million speakers by 2050. by designing appealing and exciting projects for all through the medium of Welsh.
- We work in partnership to identify gaps in Welsh language provision, such as a lack of diversity in publications for children & young people, and design appropriate interventions.
- We identify, and work with, Welsh language speakers within underrepresented groups. in our literature

Sector Support

We will always be aware of our privilege as the national company responsible for literature and be aware of the risk of gatekeeping. We believe that achieving a representative literary landscape can only be achieved in collaboration. We will help the sector by listening, answering queries, and responding to the writers and audiences of Wales. We will avoid duplicating projects that others can run better. We will focus on better evidence gathering to identify where the biggest barriers remain and where we can champion individuals and organisations striving to bring about change. We will be an ally to suppressed groups and show our support through our actions.

We will also offer regular paid consultation opportunities for our under-represented writers to help us develop our schemes and to make sure our offers and support are meaningful.

