

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 detail on 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 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 2020, Wales presented the UK's highest figure for those living in relative income poverty (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' Platforming Under-represented Writers 2019 cohort 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:

"[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 22-23, 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 13.8% of Literature Wales' employees, volunteers, contractors and directors identified as Black, Asian or minority ethnic.

During the past year, we recruited for two roles and, for the first time we offered 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 learnt a lot from this process. Firstly, we received more applicants than previously who met these requirements (77% of Creative Exec applicants, and 50% of Creative Lead) which indicates that people who wouldn't ordinarily applied, did. Our interview candidates were therefore more diverse and panel members reported being positively surprised by some candidates who presented themselves much better in interview context than through written application. This indicates that we have previously overlooked good candidates and not progressed them to interview. Both roles were offered to candidates who are from one of the under-represented groups.

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 Accessibility training.

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 online events.

We have taken steps to adapt our monitoring and evaluation strategy. Previously we tried to collect EO 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.

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.

A few examples of projects already underway in 2022 include:

- Two residential courses at Tŷ Newydd, **Books for All** and **Stori i Bawb**, offering a total of 16 free of charge spaces for writers of colour and underrepresented writers to develop skill in writing for children and young people, which will be followed by one-to-one mentoring opportunities to ensure that some of these writers aim towards publication.
- Our flagship writer development programme **Representing Wales** has so far provided intense support to a new cohort of 14 writers from low-income backgrounds, and continues to support 12 writers of colour from the first round through our 3-year aftercare programme.
- Our latest writer commissions have led to the creation of four literature and nature for health and well-being project in partnership with Natural Resources Wales focusing on under-represented groups. These include **Write Back/ Grym Geiriau** offering a two day trilingual (Welsh, English and BSL) retreat where young people who identify as Disabled/Deaf/chronically ill will come together to explore their experiences and relationships with nature; and **The Long View** which will engage women of colour and combine physically visiting nature spaces in Cardiff and the surrounding areas, with creative writing workshop activities and storytelling to create a sense of belonging for participants and to claim space in their environment.
- **Cynefin**- our Educational Project, funded by Welsh Government to support Welsh Government with delivering the recommendations contained in the "Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group" report, which will include workshops in schools addressing issues of race and identity through creativity.

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).

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 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. 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:

- people of colour (Black, Asian or minority ethnic)
- 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. For this programme, Literature Wales have decided on the term "writers of colour" following a consultation process. During the process of developing and running this programme we as an organisation hope 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 throughout the process.

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.

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. Each quarter we will prepare a report 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 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 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 reach 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 share our platform
- 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
- 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

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.

Progress & Review

Each quarter we will prepare a short report detailing our progress and learning points for the future. This will be reviewed with the full staff team, to ensure that knowledge is shared. It will also be shared with our Trustees and published on our website.

This plan will next be reviewed in February 2023 and will be updated to include a comprehensive summary of actions taken in 22-23 and new targets planned for the following year.