

# **Diversity and Cultural Leadership in the West Midlands**

**A report for the West Midlands Leadership Commission**

**Dr Karen Patel and Dr Annette Naudin**

**Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research, Birmingham City  
University**

**March 2018**

## Executive Summary

Arts Council England's (ACE) *Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case* (2018) argues that diversity is crucial to the connection between the arts and society because "it represents a commitment to the wider world, and forms a two-way channel along which people can travel and find a platform to tell their stories" (2018:2). However, the UK's cultural industries remain unequal in access and opportunity (Banks, 2017; O'Brien and Oakley, 2015) and ACE's latest report stresses that despite small improvements in workforce diversity in the sector, "aspirations are not always translating into meaningful actions or significant appointments" and leadership plays a major role in this. ACE argue "more power should be in the hands of those who understand the need for change" (2018:2). Those in leadership positions help to determine which types of cultural offerings are valued, and it is essential that everyone should feel able to participate in and produce culture (ACE 2018; Banks, 2017).

Although there is a lack of evidence about leadership in the sector (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015), our report for the West Midlands Leadership Commission, considers existing data from various sources, at a national and regional level. We offer original findings on the diversity of leadership based on our analysis of ACE National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) in the West Midlands. We also highlight areas which need further research and policy attention in relation to cultural leadership, and offer a working definition of cultural leadership.

## Key findings

1. **Data:** For the West Midlands, there is very little data on diversity in cultural leadership. Birmingham City Council (BCC) labour market reports do not include the cultural sector as a distinct category, which has implications for how we can understand workforce diversity in the sector. Nationally, sector diversity reports by ACE present high proportions of organisations who prefer not to disclose diversity data, which also has implications for how much we actually know about diversity in the sector as a whole.
2. **Freelancers/SMEs:** Because the cultural industries have a relatively high rate of freelance and contractual employment, we know very little about the nature of cultural leadership in this area. The high level of freelance employment points to the importance of networking and being 'in the know' which can also contribute to a lack of diversity in the sector (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015), but presenting a clear picture is difficult because of the lack of data available about freelance employment in the sector.

## Recommendations

- **More data:** A comprehensive survey of diversity and cultural leadership in the region is required. Qualitative and anecdotal data from cultural leaders would also add valuable context and narrative to survey data.
- **Define cultural leadership:** It is important to distinguish between the two core areas of cultural leadership, namely: freelance and entrepreneurial practices which differ from leadership roles within managerial structures such as larger

cultural institutions. We suggest our working definition of cultural leadership which encompasses both types of cultural leadership: **activities that inspire, lead and empower others, and innovate, challenge and break ground in the cultural field, or the core arts.**

- **Build on good practice:** Data on freelance workers in the region could be obtained by engaging with leaders involved with RE:Present16 and ASTONish, and tap into relevant networks from there. The learning from evaluating both RE:Present16 and ASTONish programmes should act as case studies for further cultural leadership training which seeks to address inequalities in representation.
- **Refine future reporting:** Future regional surveys and studies should include the cultural industries as a distinct occupational area, which at the moment it is not. Sexual orientation, gender reassignment and/or identity, disability and class should also be considered in reporting to present a clearer picture of intersectionality in cultural leadership.
- **Empower SMEs and freelancers:** Events or training courses using examples of good practice from RE:Present16 and ASTONish can be held to empower SMEs and freelancers who are involved in cultural leadership activities in the region.
- **Promote role models:** Coventry City of Culture 2021 and the #WMGeneration campaign to bring Channel 4 to Birmingham could be used as platforms to promote diversity in cultural leadership in the region, if spearheaded by current diverse leaders who could act as role models.

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# Diversity and cultural leadership in the West

## Midlands

### Introduction

This report aims to assess and map the diversity of cultural leadership in the West Midlands region. It was produced for the West Midlands Leadership Commission (WMLC) which sets out to examine why the leadership of our region is not representative of the people it serves. The focus here is on the cultural sector in the West Midlands region, in particular the arts sector, including theatre and performance, fine art, museums and galleries. The authors of this report carried out a mapping of cultural leadership in the region which was mostly drawn from existing data sources. In addition we collected new data on cultural leaders of Arts Council England's (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) which are in Appendix 1. This primary data analysis is accompanied by a survey of academic literature on diversity in the cultural sector and cultural leadership, to provide some context and a critical perspective.

The structure of this report is as follows:

- We begin with a short discussion about the term 'diversity' and what it means, drawing from both academic and sector literature.
- An overview of attempts to define and understand cultural leadership from academia and industry, with a working definition of cultural leadership as something people do to inspire, innovate, and lead others within the core arts sector.

- We then discuss diversity and inequality in the cultural industries, and the national and regional cultural policies which centre on diversity.
- The methods used and sources of data are outlined, followed by an overview of key findings.
- Specific themes from key findings are discussed, focusing on protected characteristics, freelancers and sole traders, and the West Midlands region.
- A summary of findings and recommendations conclude the report.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank those who helped us with this report, in particular Abid Hussain of ACE, Helga Henry, Lara Ratnaraja, Ines Elsa for her photography, Lydia Harrington of Birmingham City Council, and colleagues at Birmingham City University's Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research.

## What is diversity?

It is now over 40 years since the publication of Naseem Khan's seminal report *The Arts Britain Ignores* (1976) which charted the range of arts practices amongst ethnic minority communities that were invisible and unsupported by national institutions. How much has changed since then? Recent research suggests that the arts sector continues to suffer from a lack of diversity (Gorman, 2017a; Neelands et al, 2015), with the workforce increasingly dominated by those who are white, middle class and privately educated (Banks, 2017, Taylor & O'Brien, 2017). Increasing the diversity of the cultural workforce is identified as a priority in UK cultural policy, particularly in cultural leadership positions (ACE, 2018; DCMS, 2016). Indeed, increasing diversity at leadership level is understood by ACE to be a potential catalyst for change. While ACE have included a small amount of data on leadership in the sector in their latest report, we still do not know enough about the diversity of cultural leadership, particularly at a regional level.

Diversity is a contested term, argued to be vague and potentially 'catch all' (Arts Professional Pulse, 2016) in its use as an umbrella description of protected characteristics. In 2010 the UK government launched the Equality Act to legally protect people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society, to ensure organisations had a duty to promote workforce diversity. It amalgamated previous anti-discrimination laws into one single Act. Protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. O'Brien and Oakley (2015) point out that the Equality Act's list of protected characteristics do not include class, and as a result "there is no requirement on public agencies to collect



data in terms of social class and thus the debate about class discrimination in particular has to be carried out against a background of absent or less than comprehensive data" (2015:23). For O'Brien and Oakley the omission of class from the protected characteristics is highly problematic given how issues around social class tend to intersect with questions of ethnicity and spatial inequality.

ACE does consider "class and economic disadvantage" in its protected characteristics, but Malik (2013) argues that this is couched in the language of diversity rather than inequality, which can be problematic because diversity initiatives tend to focus on ethnicity more than other protected characteristics. Malik suggests that in UK broadcasting at least, discourses and policies of 'creative diversity' in cultural work serves to further depoliticise issues of ethnicity in the sector, where "ideas of quality and creativity are foregrounded over (structural) questions of (in)equality or the positive recognition of social or cultural difference" (2013:227).

Sara Ahmed (2012) describes diversity as an institutional speech act which becomes routine and accrues value for that institution, which is potentially paying 'lip service' because everyone is doing it. Thus, the language of diversity is limited in its potential to destabilise dominant power structures. Focusing on the film and television industries, Anamik Saha (2017) suggests that diversity initiatives actually work to serve ideological functions; "they are a way of managing the demands for equality while keeping racial hierarchies intact" (Saha, 2017). Saha suggests that to counter this, diversity initiatives need to be reconceptualised in a way which do not focus on employment and participation quotas, but instead concentrate on opening up production, allowing diverse voices to be a part of creative practice at all levels. This includes independent and alternative modes of practice, but most importantly, transforming its core so it is more inclusive towards minorities. Channel 4's Diversity

Charter (2015) is an attempt to transform practice in such a way; while there are diversity quotas and guidelines for commissioning and employment within the charter, there is also a social mobility programme to help 1000 socially disadvantaged people per year to get into the industry. Within a large media organisation diversity initiatives could help to drive change, but at a micro-enterprise and freelance level, and in the core cultural industries, it is unclear whether a similar approach would be suitable or feasible.

To summarise, the literature which deals with diversity broadly across the cultural and creative industries suggests that diversity as a term can be problematic in its use as highlighted by Ahmed (2012). Such discussions also highlight problems with data collection for protected characteristics, which has some implications for evidence-based policy making to address inequalities in the sector. Furthermore, critics of diversity initiatives argue that employment and participation quotas are not enough; a change in organisational and sector approaches to diversity are required. As suggested by ACE, such a transformation needs to take place at cultural leadership level.

## Definitions of cultural leadership

What is cultural leadership? Sue Hoyle (2014), former director of the Clore Leadership Foundation, refers to “performing and visual arts, film and digital media, museums, libraries, archives, heritage buildings, cultural policy, design and architecture” as the industries in her understanding of cultural leadership. For Hoyle, cultural leaders inspire others, can connect with others and build relationships, and are able to plan strategically and show others the way. Hoyle’s definition emphasises the individual values of a potential cultural leader, whereas the British Council’s definition of cultural leadership lists job titles and responsibilities. They define cultural leadership as “the act of leading in the cultural sector” concerning “senior managers and directors in subsidized cultural institutions; public officials developing and implementing policy for the cultural sector; and a huge range of producers, innovators and entrepreneurs in small companies, production houses and teams.” (British Council, 2017). However, many cultural leaders will be freelance or independent workers, and there is a severe lack of data on diverse, independent cultural leaders (Cultural Leadership Programme, 2008). The Cultural Leadership Programme (CLP), which was funded by ACE, defined cultural leadership by independent workers as related to the scale of their impact, so senior leaders are believed to have had a “national or international impact”, mid-career leaders as “sub-regional, city region or regional impact” (2008:18) and emerging leaders as those aspiring to make a regional impact. It is difficult, however, to ascertain what ‘impact’ actually means in the cultural sector. While geographical remit and impact may be a limiting factor, other activities are also identified as related to cultural leadership:

- setting the vision
- building the profile of the sector
- artistic/technical innovation
- developing strategy and policy
- developing partnerships and stakeholder relationships

Cultural Leadership Programme (2008:18)

Other than the definitions offered by Clore Leadership, the CLP and the British Council, it is difficult to find any other attempts to define cultural leadership in sector reports, and the same can be said for academic literature. One useful study by Gorman (2017a) explores the importance of BAME role models for developing a more diverse workforce. Focusing primarily on the theatre workforce, Gorman defines a role model as exemplifying “values, attitudes and behaviour in ways that others perceive as positive and worthy of imitation” (2017a:9). She characterises four different types of role model which relate to their function and level of engagement with participants: Bright Lights, Guides, Forgers and Enablers. Bright Lights make a difference to a person at a particular moment in time – providing inspiration, making a person believe they can achieve something. Guides model behaviour that others want to emulate, whereas Forgers manage to carve a career or path for themselves where one seemed unlikely, whilst paving the way for others to follow.

The role model type most associated with a cultural leader is an Enabler, who “intervene and contribute directly to others’ careers. Enablers take the time to give strength, support, insight, knowledge, encouragement, permission and access.” (2017b:5). For Gorman, “Enabler functions, could actually be seen as part of a leadership job description” and she found that for some of her BAME participants, “their Enabler role model was white, not BAME.” (2017a: 26). She suggests that this

could be due to a lack of BAME leaders, because “for some of the enabler functions, a level of seniority and leadership is required – which BAME workers are less likely to have assumed than white workers.”

While Gorman found in her research that participants had BAME role models who were famous and well-known in their field, there were less role models in leadership positions, exhibiting enabler functions, within the cultural sector. Gorman's understanding of cultural leadership here is associated with a combination of ‘functions’ carried out and leadership qualities. Sutherland and Gosling (2010) base their idea of cultural leadership on histories of arts management and leadership, and define cultural leadership as an activity which involves encouraging engagement with cultural activities, with “the belief that such engagement may have positive social benefits for those engaged” (2010:7). So for them, cultural leadership is something people do to advocate for the arts.

Work on cultural intermediaries could also be useful for defining cultural leadership. Smith Maguire and Matthews (2014) provide a useful working definition of cultural intermediation, which involves the construction of value “by mediating how goods (or services, practices, people) are perceived and engaged with by others” (2014:2). For the authors, cultural intermediaries are also defined by their “expert orientation and market context. In the struggle to influence others’ perceptions and attachments, cultural intermediaries are defined by their claims to professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural fields.” (ibid.). In this sense cultural intermediaries are to an extent involved in the production of cultural value (or what is considered culturally valuable), describing an activity and role which we consider to be a part of cultural leadership.

For this report we propose a working definition of cultural leadership which involves activities that inspire, lead and empower others, and innovate, challenge and break ground in the cultural field, or the core arts. We prefer to characterise leadership as something that people do, and can learn. People can only become cultural leaders if they are given the opportunities to get into the industry in the first place, and such opportunities are already unequally distributed as the literature demonstrates (Banks, 2017; O'Brien and Oakley, 2015).

In our understanding of cultural leadership we have not focused on the commercially-oriented sectors such as video gaming, advertising and marketing, because of their contentious status within definitions of creative and cultural industries. Such debates are well documented (see Banks & O'Connor, 2009; Holden, 2015; O'Connor, 2010; Potts & Cunningham, 2008; Pratt, 2005). The Warwick Commission's report *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* report (Neelands et al, 2015) conceptualises the creative and cultural sector as an 'ecosystem' which acknowledges its dynamism and interplay between individual industries. The commission recognises that diversity in the creative workforce, leadership and consumers is crucial for enriching the creative industries ecosystem, and that production and consumption of culture should be enjoyed by all. This is usefully conceptualised in John Holden's (2015) idea of the cultural ecology, which for him "encompasses the many networks of arts and cultural creators, producers, presenters, sponsors, participants, and supporting casts embedded in diverse communities" (2015:2). This concept of cultural practice and production as an ecology takes into account almost everyone involved, from amateur to professional, from organisations to freelancers. It is a useful way for policy makers to think about

the cultural industries and how it is organised, and to consider the plurality and diversity of creative practice.

In this section we have discussed potential ways of characterising cultural leadership. Whilst there is no agreed definition of cultural leadership, we can see there are ways understanding it as something that people can do and learn, rather than a result of innate talent or characteristic traits.

## Diversity and inequality in the cultural industries

The lack of diversity in the creative and cultural industries is well-documented in academic studies. Within such work, there are suggestions that the type of culture which is perceived as valuable has some bearing on who is able to participate in, and lead, in cultural sectors. For example, O'Brien and Oakley (2015) suggest a connection between cultural value and social inequality, arguing that in academic literature and public policy, the two activities tend to be considered separately. They consider how cultural value and inequality is linked in both the production and consumption of cultural value, arguing that "specific types of cultural consumption are intertwined with who is able to succeed in cultural production" (2015:3). The link between cultural value and social inequality also arguably has implications for who is able to undertake leadership roles in cultural production.

Since the 1980s, governments have sought to measure the value of culture, particularly in terms of economic and societal impacts, or what are referred to as 'instrumental' cultural policies (Belfiore, 2002). Belfiore argues that "instrumental cultural policies are not sustainable in the long term" and that "they ultimately may turn from "policies of survival" to "policies of extinction"' (2002:104) for the arts sector as a whole. In contrast to instrumental measures of value, Crossick & Kazynska (2016) suggest that individual experiences of arts and culture should be "at the heart of the enquiry into cultural value" (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016:7). This is supported by empirical evidence from Newsinger and Green (2016) who suggest that there are key differences between dominant discourses of cultural value and the views of creative practitioners, and that cultural value should indeed be represented from the viewpoint of the practitioners. O'Brien and Oakley (2015) suggest that cultural



value is also socially grounded in cultural consumption. They note the complicated data issues occurring from existing survey data, make it difficult to understand and generate deeper understandings of minority ethnic cultural consumption and its relation to cultural value. Racial and ethnic inequalities persist in Britain (Centre for Social Investigation, 2015) and this is marked in the cultural sector, both in terms of consumption and production (ACE, 2018; O'Brien and Oakley, 2015). O'Brien and Oakley argue that the "unequal value afforded to BAME cultures" (2015:8) has a role in the reproduction of social inequalities. Fostering and enabling a diversity of cultural symbolic forms and expressions are crucial for addressing problems of inequality in the sector.

Cultural practice and production is less ethnically diverse than most other parts of the UK economy, and there are suggestions that it has worsened over the past five years (Neelands et al, 2015). O'Brien and Oakley (2015) highlight that while these problems are apparent in high profile, commercial cultural industries, data on micro-enterprises and the self-employed is scarce, given the prevalence of informal hiring patterns, networks and unpaid work. The reliance on social networks is a well-documented characteristic of the sector (Lee, 2011; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Oakley, 2014). O'Brien and Oakley also argue that networks reproduce, rather than alleviate, inequalities in the sector:

"When work, particularly project-based work is often won through a combination of reputation and membership of social networks, participation in such networks – in themselves the product of structural social inequalities, often based on education – becomes vital"

(O'Brien and Oakley, 2015:15).

The argument that networks reproduce inequality in the cultural industries is supported by Mark Banks (2017). He points out that selection processes for arts education programmes have homophilic tendencies, whereby selectors are inclined to 'hire in their own image'. Therefore, "far from being open and accessible to all-comers, the cultural and creative industries, and the education systems that serve them, are becoming enclaves of privilege - that dispense favour to the favoured and give grace to the graceful." (2017:85). Such systems of privilege are based on notions of 'talent' and meritocracy which pervade cultural industries discourse, and Banks argues that "talent is not so much 'found' as serially manufactured in social inequality" (2017:69). The social inequalities of society appear to be replicated and even exacerbated in the cultural industries, and perceptions of the sector being meritocratic and inclusive are wide of the mark (Gill, 2002; Littler, 2017). Indeed the myth of the 'cool, creative and egalitarian' cultural sector masks the realities of precarious working conditions and high levels of self-employment (Gill and Pratt, 2008).

## National cultural policies

ACE's report *The Creative Case for Diversity* (2018) sets out to invite new ways of thinking about diversity in the arts. The Creative Case for diversity in the arts states it is crucial that diversity is understood as "a source of cultural inspiration that also makes a demonstrable contribution to the long-term health of the arts" (ACE, 2018:2). In the report it is argued that ACE's initiatives to address the lack of diversity in the arts are contributing to some progress, such as higher proportions of NPOs led by people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and disabled people than ever before. However, the Chair of ACE, Sir Nicholas Serota, admits that "aspirations are not always translating into meaningful actions or significant appointments" (2018:2) and claims that this is because of a lack of diverse leadership in the cultural sector. As we will summarise in the findings section, the latest ACE report highlights continuing inequalities at all levels in the arts sector.

The UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Culture White Paper (DCMS, 2016) identifies the need for "a more diverse leadership and workforce in the cultural sectors" (2016:10). The report notes that "too few people from black or minority ethnic backgrounds, or who are disabled, work at the highest levels in cultural organisations" (2016:27). In 2016 ACE developed strategies for addressing the lack of diversity in leadership across the cultural sector, and in November 2017 they produced the *Culture Change Toolkit* (ACE, 2017) which includes guidelines to help organisations to develop diverse workforces and leadership in the cultural sector. Such guidance includes mentoring and professional development measures to ensure "diverse people are within the leadership development pipeline" (2017:5) with some case studies of successful schemes, such

as the MOBO Fellowships, developed through a partnership between London Theatre Consortium's and MOBO. The Fellowships are aimed at mid-career leaders from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Though such policies seek to address the need for greater diversity in the cultural workforce, the very language of diversity, as already mentioned, is argued to depoliticise and obscure issues of equality of representation, production and inequalities in the workforce (Malik, 2013).

## The regional picture

In terms of the West Midlands region, the council which appeared to address cultural leadership the most is Birmingham City Council (BCC). The BCC cultural strategy (2016-2019) focuses on fostering the leadership capabilities of young people. Upcoming projects as outlined by Lydia Harrington, Culture Officer at BCC, include:

- Commissioned projects that engage more Birmingham residents as leaders and more paid shadow artist opportunities
- Young People on Arts Boards training
- 2016-18 commissioning of activities to support development of skills and capacity of local leaders through;
  - Programmes of development for local BME creative entrepreneurship and local BME producers – especially emerging cultural leaders
  - Programmes of capacity development for local artists, community groups and trustees of local arts organisations to build the necessary skills, networks and knowledge to support further culture sector development

BCC have also invested in the [ASTONish](#) and [RE:Present16](#) programmes. Both initiatives, in partnership with the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research, Birmingham City University, were aimed towards cultural leaders underrepresented in Birmingham. RE:Present16 was a pilot programme which ended in 2016, and enabled cultural leaders in Birmingham to reflect on and develop their leadership skills. The programme involved a series of events and workshops, as well as online networks, which brought together cultural workers and leaders to discuss

issues around cultural leadership and diversity in the region. This was followed by ASTONish, led by Helga Henry at Birmingham Hippodrome and consultant Lara Ratnaraja; a programme of training, mentoring, and placements to develop cultural leadership and talent in the Aston and Newtown areas of Birmingham. The programme also included a series of 'masterclasses' open to the public, which were designed to inspire and encourage networking and debate. More information about the programmes can be found in the case study on page 26.

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) identifies 'Creative and Digital' as one of its priority areas, however the strategy places much emphasis on digital and innovation, rather than the core arts. It is unclear in the plan how sectors are defined, because it does not reference an existing definition of what is meant by the 'creative and digital' industries. The aim for the 'creative and digital' sector is to support continued growth, but it is unclear exactly how this will be done; there is only mention of an 'open data approach' and investment in broadband. There is an emphasis on 'transferable skills' possibly working across disciplines, for example: "the attractions of creative industries as a pathway into manufacturing" (WMCA, 2017:40). The establishment of creative clusters is also referenced in the strategy, with mention of Birmingham City University's STEAMHouse initiative, which aims to bring together the arts, science, technology, engineering and maths (STEAM) sectors in a collaborative space in Central Birmingham. Within the SEP document there is no reference to cultural leadership or leadership initiatives to support the implementation of the plan, leaving a potential skills gap.

Overall there is little acknowledgement of cultural leadership and diversity in cultural strategies for the West Midlands region. This is a concern given the continuing lack of diversity in cultural leadership in the region which has been voiced by some in the sector. For example, Rebecca Hemmings, director of Drama Education company Strawberry Words, wrote a blog post about her experience at an 'Arts and Learning Strategic Planning day' in Birmingham. She writes:

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*"I expressed my concern that there were very few people in the room that looked like me and that worried me. My direct question [to the speaker, Darren Henley of ACE] was: 'How can we change the diversity of arts management within the city?' I got a politician's answer, which was not the clear, concise reply I wanted, but could I really have expected more? I was told to keep doing what I am doing with regards to being a role model for others and to keep raising the issue. In addition, Darren Henley said ACE now has the power to take away funding from organisations that do not embrace diversity. On the one hand, it is a good start but on the other, I wonder what experience diverse staff members will have at the hands of disgruntled arts leaders who are practically forced to employ us? The fact that I brought this point up meant that I got many people talking to me throughout the day about this. I got the sense from these individuals that they too were genuinely concerned about the problem."*

*Hemmings (2016)*

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Ammo Talwar, CEO of Punch Records in Birmingham, highlights his concerns about diversity in cultural leadership in a blog post for Arts Professional:

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*“Everyone in the arts sector says ‘we want difference and diverse opinions,’ but unpack the conversation a little and you will find the story it tells is one of stagnation and even a relative decline in both BME audience engagement and organisational backing. I’m a CEO who happens to be BME and leads a creative organisation, Punch Records, commissioning new work every year. I’m quintessentially positive about change – we’re about to embark on an amazing summer working with over 500 young people across Birmingham’s great cultural ecosystem. But I’d prefer to compete for our investment in a dynamic, fast-moving ecosystem with a rainbow of cultural agencies, instead of in a greenhouse of highly cultivated, state-funded behemoths who have become ‘too big to fail’ or have mates in Whitehall.”*

*Talwar (2016)*

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The thoughts of Rebecca and Ammo suggest there is a lot to do to improve diversity in cultural leadership in the region. Their comments reveal some insights into the tensions around ethnic diversity. Abid Hussain, Director of Diversity at ACE speaks about the difficulties disabled artists can face:



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*"Volunteering with West Midlands Disability Arts Forum was my introduction to the world of arts and culture but more crucially it opened my eyes to the bias, barriers and discrimination so many talented disabled artists face. Through Zoe [formerly of the West Midlands Disability Arts Forum] I was introduced to the social model of disability, highlighting the preventable barriers that too often exist without challenge in society."*

*Hussain, (2017)*

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It is difficult to gain a comprehensive picture of cultural diversity and leadership in the region because of a lack of investment in monitoring and evaluation. Smaller research budgets for cultural agencies and the levels of freelance and self-employment in the sector also make gathering data on cultural leadership difficult.



## Case Study: RE:Present16 and ASTONish

### *Transforming diversity and inclusion in cultural sector leadership*

RE:Present16 and ASTONish were two training programmes delivered in Birmingham which addressed inequalities of representation in cultural leadership. Between 2016-2018, RE:Present16 & ASTONish trained a total of 77 participants based predominantly in Birmingham. The two programmes included masterclasses and seminars from established cultural leaders and role models in the region, as well as training provision for cultural leaders who are underrepresented in the sector.

The two programmes are examples of good practice for developing cultural leadership in the region. Evaluation of the projects resulted in the following recommendations for future programmes following a similar model:

- Sustainability: Programmes such as RE:Present16 and ASTONish benefitted from two separate funding opportunities which are not guaranteed. Policy makers need to collaborate with key stakeholders to provide ongoing support and funding.
- Recognition of self-employment status: High levels of self-employment and precarious working conditions amongst diverse cultural workers & leaders results in exclusion from mainstream programmes such as the Clore Leadership programme. Alternative provision is needed to ensure equality of access and representation for diverse cultural workers & leaders.
- Creative and Cultural Industries: Introduce the structural context of the cultural and creative industries by providing insights into regional and national institutions, an overview of cultural policies, including how the sector overlaps with more commercially driven creative practices.
- Relationship with cultural institutions: Make connections between 'diverse' cultural workers & leaders and local, regional and national institutions by creating spaces for introductions and conversations. Exploit the role cultural intermediaries to bridge the gap between policymakers, institutions and diverse cultural workers & leaders. The programmes draw attention to issues of language and of cultural value as part of the role of cultural workers & leaders, for audiences, funders, collaborators and institutions.
- Mutual support: A variety of approaches to ensure relationships are developed and nurtured are critical to the ongoing development of diverse workers & leaders.

RE:Present16 was supported by Creative Shift, Lara Ratnaraja, Birmingham City Council, ACE, Aston Business School, University of Birmingham and Birmingham City University.

ASTONish was supported by Birmingham Museums Trust, Birmingham Hippodrome, Lara Ratnaraja and Birmingham City University.



## Method and sources of data

The data used to map diversity in cultural leadership in the West Midlands was collected from the following sources:

- DCMS Economic Estimates 2016
- ACE Diversity reports 2015-16, 2016-17
- ACE Changemakers Programme 2016
- Clore Leadership Foundation
- UK Heritage reports
- Creative and Cultural Skills West Midlands Creative Industries Report 2012-13
- Cultural Leadership Programme 2008
- BCC Ethnic Groups in the Labour Market 2014
- BCC Women in the Labour Market 2016

We also carried out a scoping of current leaders in cultural institutions in the West Midlands. The institutions are those named in ACE's current list of NPO's, and we looked at online biographies and profiles of the leaders of each institution. This was carried out due to the lack of available data on cultural leadership in the region. Key figures at ACE and Birmingham City Council were approached, but no additional data was provided to what is already online. While the ACE reports only included data from the Midlands as a whole, they were the most comprehensive source for information on diversity in cultural leadership in the UK.

## Overview of key findings

- ACE's latest Creative Case report suggests that while the diversity of boards and senior management in NPOs are improving (particularly in terms of BAME and women representation), the same cannot be said of Major Partner Museums (MPMs). Even so, the proportion of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in leadership positions remains low. Also of concern is the number of respondents who preferred not to disclose information about the diversity of their workforce and leadership. This is voiced by ACE chairman Nick Serota, who has told NPOs that failing to disclose diversity data could put their funding at risk (Arts Professional, 2018). In all other reports there was little or no data on leadership diversity in the sector, and nothing about diversity in freelance and contractual work.
- There is little data on diversity in the heritage and museum sector, the data which does exist points to an even less diverse workforce and senior leadership than the rest of the cultural sector. Reports mainly focused on skills gaps and sustainability of the sector, rather than workforce diversity.
- There was even less data available for the West Midlands region in relation to the cultural workforce. Birmingham City Council does not include the creative or cultural industries as a category in its labour market data, and it is difficult to see which existing categories it could fit into, which is of major concern.
- Our own analysis of leaders in West Midlands NPOs from ACE's data found that out of 48 organisations in total, 54% (26) are led by women, 16% (8) are led by people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Again however, the focus is on NPOs and we know very little about self-employed and freelance cultural workers who are not based at an institution, but carry out leadership activities.



In the next sections we explore some of the key issues with mapping data on diversity and cultural leadership, and our findings at a regional level.



## Themes from key findings

### West Midlands cultural leaders

The table below is a summary of our scoping of cultural leaders among NPOs and MPMs in the West Midlands region:

	<b>Age</b> <b>25-</b> <b>35</b>	<b>Age</b> <b>35-</b> <b>45</b>	<b>Age</b> <b>45-</b> <b>55</b>	<b>Age</b> <b>55-</b> <b>65</b>	<b>Age</b> <b>65+</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>BAME</b>	<b>LGBT+</b>
No.	3	11	15	15	3	26	22	40	8	1
Percent	6%	23%	31%	31%	6%	54%	46%	84%	16%	2%

Age data for one of the organisations could not be discerned. The full table can be found in Appendix 1.

#### Key facts:

- The majority of cultural leaders in the region (62%) are aged between 45 and 65.
- More than half (54%) of organisations are led by women, but only 16% are led by people from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Of the organisations led by women, 23% are from an ethnic minority background, which is much more than the 9% of male leaders.
- It was difficult to obtain concrete information regarding other protected characteristics such as sexual orientation and disability.

While this data is a start, it does not represent an accurate enough picture of diversity in cultural leadership in the region. Of other reports, the Ethnic Groups in the Labour Market (2014) report by Birmingham City Council (BCC) found that the ethnic make-up of the working age population of the city is very different to England as a whole - Birmingham has a higher proportion of ethnic groups than England. The report has some figures relating to self-employment, suggesting that it only accounts for 13% of employment in the region, however it does not break this down by sector. The major concern in this data is that the cultural industries were not included in a separate category, and it is difficult to see where it would fit into existing categories. Future surveys of the workforce should include the creative sector as a distinct industrial category if we are to gain any meaningful data on cultural diversity in the region.

The Women in the Labour Market (2016) report by BCC states that 39% of working age women in Birmingham are from ethnic minorities, the highest of any core city, and well above the national proportion of 14%. Only 3% of working age women are self-employed, and it is not clear which sectors they are in. Once again, the cultural industries is not included as an occupational category in the data, and it is difficult to see where creative occupations would fit in to existing categories.

## Protected characteristics

The table below outlines the main reports used in our research, and the protected characteristics mentioned in each:

Protected characteristics mentioned in data/reports	ACE Creative case	DCMS	Arts Professional Pulse Survey	Creative & Cultural Skills	Heritage reports
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Disability	Yes		Yes		Yes
Gender reassignment					
Sexuality	Yes		Yes		
Gender	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maternity					
Ethnicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religion			Yes		
Class	Yes	Yes	Yes		



**Key facts:**

- As the table illustrates, we found that the diversity data reports mostly focus on age, gender and ethnicity.
- Class, disability and sexual orientation are acknowledged in some reports, but data is scarce.
- The ACE Creative Case 2016-17 report noted that numbers of staff reporting as male or female has dropped since 'unknown' and 'prefer not to say' were introduced as options in the 'gender' category of their survey. This points to a need to further refine reporting to include transgender, queer and non-binary identified individuals.
- While gender reassignment is a protected characteristic it is not acknowledged in any art sector reporting, and neither is maternity.

ACE's 2016-17 report included new data on 'White-Other' which accounted for individuals from the EU. This was also evident in our own scoping of the West Midlands where we found three individuals in leadership positions who were white but from the EU. In 2015-16 ACE began to collect data on the sexual orientation of board members, with 5% of leaders in NPOs and 1% of leaders in MPMs identifying as LGBT.

Arts Professional attempted to include class in their diversity report, however it was in the form of anecdotal or qualitative findings which suggested that class is a major barrier. For example, one respondent said: "I think we should be more concerned about the arts becoming a middle class enclave and access to it being dictated by the amount of resource you have access to. Inequality sustains a lack of diversity."

The acknowledgment of class being a barrier to diversity is also included in ACE's 2015-16 report:

“We already recognise socio-economic status as a barrier to achieving greater equality and diversity. Addressing this will be a major theme of our future work. We will work to gather better data on social mobility and socio-economic status so that our investment programmes ensure that everyone can enjoy the opportunities art and culture bring, no matter their background.”

(ACE, 2017:36)

More information needs to be collected specifically about class, sexual orientation and disability across the board. In our own scoping of cultural leaders in the West Midlands, such data was not readily available, and so more comprehensive surveying needs to be carried out.

## Freelancers and sole traders

Creative and Cultural Skills (2013) provides the most recent regional overview of self-employment levels in the cultural industries. The table below demonstrates the high level of self-employment in the creative and cultural industries in comparison to the entire economy:

Sector	Creative and Cultural	Total Economy
Regional Distribution (West Midlands)	38%	13%
England Distribution	39%	46%
UK Distribution	39%	46%

The below table on business size also provides an indication of the level of micro-enterprise in the sector, with 81% of creative and cultural organisations in the region having less than 4 employees:

	Business size (number of employees)		
	0-4	5-50	50+

<b>Creative and Cultural Regional Distribution (West Midlands)</b>	81%	17%	2%
<b>Creative and Cultural Industry (England)</b>	85%	14%	1%
<b>Creative and Cultural Industry (UK)</b>	85%	14%	1%
<b>Regional Distribution (West Midlands)</b>	75%	23%	2%
<b>England Distribution</b>	76%	22%	2%
<b>UK Distribution</b>	76%	22%	2%

Overall, levels of self-employment and micro-enterprise are marginally lower in the cultural industries than the England and UK average.

**Key facts:**

- While there is some data available on freelance and contractual positions, they are considered separate from leadership, where there may be some cross over. Furthermore, leadership data in the ACE report appears to be based on permanent jobs only.
- It is possible that those working in freelance jobs do carry out leadership activities in the region, however they would not be recognised in the data.

This is even more difficult on a regional level where we identified some problems with data availability for the cultural sector.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The aim of this report was to assess and map the diversity of cultural leadership in the West Midlands region. Due to the lack of available data, particularly at a regional level, this was very difficult to do. We carried out some additional scoping of cultural leadership based on ACE's National Portfolio Organisations but this still does not present an accurate picture, as freelance and contracted workers are missing, and their reports take into account the entire Midlands region.

What our report does suggest is that there is a lack of diversity at leadership level among cultural institutions in the West Midlands. While over half of ACE NPOs are led by women, the majority of leaders are from a White British background.

Based on our analysis, we recommend the following:

- While ACE have begun to gather some data on freelance and contracted work, more detail is needed at national and regional level, particularly with regards to diversity and leadership. Such data can inform more strategic, evidence-based planning and policy for the region. We suggest that, building on data generated from this research on local cultural leaders, a comprehensive survey of diversity and cultural leadership in the region should be carried out. This could be done in conjunction with ACE, as an add-on to their existing surveys. Qualitative and anecdotal data would add context and narrative to the quantitative data.
- Data on freelance workers in the region could be obtained by engaging with leaders involved with RE:Present16 and ASTONish, and tap into relevant networks from there. It is important to distinguish between the two core areas of cultural leadership, namely: freelance and entrepreneurial practices which

differ from leadership roles within managerial structures such as larger cultural institutions. We suggest our working definition of cultural leadership which encompasses both types of cultural leadership: **activities that inspire, lead and empower others, and innovate, challenge and break ground in the cultural field, or the core arts.**

- Future regional surveys and studies should include the cultural industries as a distinct occupational area, which at the moment it is not. They should also consider the protected characteristics as outlined by the Equality Act 2010. Existing data focuses primarily on ethnic origin, age and gender. Sexual orientation, gender reassignment and/or identity, disability and class should also be considered in reporting. This would aid understanding of intersectionality in cultural leadership.
- Events or training courses using examples of good practice from RE:Present16 and ASTONish can be held to empower SMEs and freelancers who are involved in cultural leadership activities in the region.
- Coventry City of Culture 2021 and the #WMGeneration campaign to bring Channel 4 to Birmingham are both potentially useful opportunities to promote diversity in cultural leadership in the region. Current leaders from diverse backgrounds could be the figureheads of such campaigns and provide the role models needed for aspiring leaders.

This report has highlighted some of the gaps and discrepancies in our understanding of cultural leadership. At a national level there is recognition of a creative case for diverse cultural leadership and ACE are beginning to gather a wider range of data on various protected characteristics at leadership level, however in the latest report

(2018) there was little reference to class or socio-economic status, in comparison to the previous report. This may be because ACE are developing a wider programme of research looking at socio-economic barriers to access in the arts.

At a regional level there was no information available on diversity in cultural leadership, and existing reports by Birmingham City Council do not consider the creative industries as a distinct occupational category, which needs to be addressed. What also needs to be considered is freelance and sole traders in the region who may also be involved with leadership activities. By providing a clear idea of what cultural leadership is, as suggested in this report, we can start to build a better understanding of diversity in the cultural sector in the West Midlands.





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## Appendix 1: West Midlands Cultural Leaders in NPOs West

### Midlands region

Within West Midlands Combined Authority constituent local authorities (Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall)

Name of organisation	Location	Name of leader(s)	Age	Gender	Ethnic origin	Other
Talking Birds Theatre Company Limited	Coventry	Co-Artistic Directors – Derek Nisbet and Janet Vaughan	45-55	Male	White British	
			45-55	Female	White British	
Dancefest	Worcester	Director – Rose Beeston		Female	Unknown	
Beatfrecks	Birmingham	CEO – Anisa Haghdadi	25-35	Female	Asian British	
City of Birmingham Symphony orchestra	Birmingham	Director - Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla	25-35	Female	Lithuanian	
Birmingham LGBT	Birmingham	Director - Steph Keeble	35-45	Female	White British	Lesbian
BOM (Birmingham Open Media)	Birmingham	Director – Karen Newman	35-45	Female	White British	



Capsule Events Ltd	Birmingham	Artistic director/CEO – Lisa Meyer	35-45	Female	White British	
Grand Union	Birmingham	Director – Cheryl Jones	35-45	Female	White British	
Polish Expats Association cic	Birmingham	Director – Alicja Kaczmarek	35-45	Female	Polish	
Sonia Sabri Company	Birmingham	Artistic Director – Sonia Sabri	35-45	Female	Asian British	
The DanceXchange Limited	Birmingham	Interim Artistic Director – Lucie Mirkova	35-45	Female	Czech	
Vamos Theatre Company	Worcester	Artistic Director – Rachael Savage	35-45	Female	White British	
ACE Dance and music	Birmingham	Artistic director - Gail Parmel	45-55	Female	Caribbean British	
Birmingham Repertory Theatre	Birmingham	Artistic Director – Roxana Silbert	45-55	Female	White British	
Dance Consortium	Birmingham	Co-chairs – Fiona Allan and John Stalker	45-55	Female	White British	
			55-65	Male	White British	
Multistory	Sandwell	Director – Emma Chetcuti	45-55	Female	White British	

Newhampton Arts Centre	Wolverhampton	Manager – Christine McGowan	45-55	Female	White British	
One Dance UK	Birmingham	Chair – Sue Wyatt	45-55	Female	White British	
Performances Birmingham Limited	Birmingham	Chair – Anita Bhalla	45-55	Female	Asian British	
Rosie Kay Dance Company	Birmingham	Artistic Director – Rosie Kay	45-55	Female	White British	
Vivid Projects	Birmingham	Director – Yasmeen Baig- Clifford	45-55	Female	Asian British	
Craftspace	Birmingham	Director – Deidre Figueiredo	55-65	Female	Mixed heritage	
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust	Telford and Wrekin	Director – Denise Gaye Blake- Roberts	55-65	Female	Unknown	
Birmingham Museums Trust	Birmingham	Director – Ellen McAdam	65+	Female	White British	
FIERCE! Festival	Birmingham	Artistic Director – Aaron Wright	25-35	Male	White British	
Eastside Projects	Birmingham	Directors – Gavin Wade and Ruth Claxton	35-45	Male	White British	
			35-45	Female	White British	

China Plate	Birmingham	Co-directors – Ed Collier & Paul Warwick	35-45	Male	White British	
Flatpack Projects	Birmingham	Director – Ian Francis	35-45	Male	White British	
Arts Connect	Birmingham	Director – Rob Elkington	45-55	Male	White British	
Collar and TIE Ltd	Worcester	Artistic director – Paul Sutton	45-55	Male	White British	
Friction Arts	Birmingham	Director- Lee Griffiths	45-55	Male	White British	
PUNCH RECORDS	Birmingham	CEO – Ammo Talwar	45-55	Male	Asian British	
Stan's Cafe	Birmingham	Artistic Director – James Yarker	45-55	Male	White British	
Albatross Arts Project (aka Geese theatre UK)	Birmingham	Chair – Tim Manson	55-65	Male	White British	
Belgrade Theatre Trust (Coventry) Ltd	Coventry	Chief Executive and artistic director - Hamish Glen	55-65	Male	White British	
Birmingham Contemporary Music Group	Birmingham	Chair – Christoph Trestler	55-65	Male	Austrian	

Birmingham Opera Company	Birmingham	Artistic Director – Graham Vick	55-65	Male	White British	
Birmingham Royal Ballet	Birmingham	Director – David Bintley	55-65	Male	White British	
Black Country Living Museum Trust	Dudley	Chair – Lowell Williams	55-65	Male	White British	
Black Country Touring	Sandwell	Co-directors – Steve Johnstone and Frances Land	55-65	Male	White British	
			55-65	Female	White British	
Ikon Gallery	Birmingham	Director- Jonathan Watkins	55-65	Male	White British	
Lapworth Museum of Geology	Birmingham	Director – Jonathan Clatworthy	55-65	Male	White British	
Midlands Arts Centre	Birmingham	Chair – Jonnie Turpie	55-65	Male	White British	
Open Theatre Company	Coventry	Director - Richard Hayhow	55-65	Male	White British	
Sampad (South Asian Arts Development)	Birmingham	Chair – Ranjit Sondhi	55-65	Male	Asian British	

Writing West Midlands	Birmingham	Chief Executive – Jonathan Davidson	55-65	Male	White British	
BE FESTIVAL CIC	Birmingham	Chair – Joseph Seelig OBE	65+	Male	White British	
Ex Cathedra Ltd	Birmingham	Artistic Director – Jeffrey Skidmore	65+	Male	White British	

Summary table

	<b>Age 25- 35</b>	<b>Age 35- 45</b>	<b>Age 45- 55</b>	<b>Age 55- 65</b>	<b>Age 65+</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>BAME</b>	<b>LGBT+</b>
No.	3	11	15	15	3	26	22	40	8	1
Percent	6%	23%	31%	31%	6%	54%	46%	84%	16%	2%