



**NORTHERN
STAGE**

NORTHERN STAGE
EQUALITY ACTION PLAN
2015 – 2018



Rehearsals for *Antigone*:

Pilot Theatre's production, Autumn 2014



Township Café in Stage 3 Celebration

***Afrovibes* Festival: Autumn 2014**

EQUALITY STATEMENT

At Northern Stage, diversity and equality are embedded in the heart of our thinking and we are committed to promoting these values through all the activities undertaken by the company.

We demonstrate this by presenting an artistic programme that reflects a wide range of styles and cultures in order to attract as broad an audience as possible; by providing inclusive participation projects for all sectors of our community; by developing and providing services that are designed for the needs of the communities that we serve, recognising that the North East has the highest level of deprivation relating to young people outside of London* and by ensuring that decision making about our workforce is based on skills, abilities, potential and experience.

Our commitment to access and inclusion is supported by the facilities within our building and staff who are trained to deliver the best possible experience for all visitors.

Along with nine other cultural venues across Newcastle/Gateshead, Northern Stage in 2013 achieved the nationally recognised Equality Gold Standard.

**Mapping Disadvantage* – The Prince's Trust (<http://npi.org.uk>)

Northern Stage Equality Action Plan: 2015 - 18

Purpose

Northern Stage puts equality and diversity at the heart of its thinking and strives to set an example of innovative and consistently good practice both within and beyond the cultural sector. We recognise the importance and value of *The Creative Case for Diversity* and will endeavour to keep this in focus when considering the work that we do in developing artists, participants and our workforce, as well as our choices in presenting, commissioning and producing work. It is fundamental to us that we create an environment in which opportunity is created, potential recognised and individuals and groups nurtured towards achieving their ambitions. We will do this by encouraging dialogue in a setting of mutual learning.

We believe that the diversity of our team, programme, practice, artists and audiences is fundamental to our success. We do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, faith, educational background or any other difference between individuals. Instead we welcome and celebrate difference, seeking to find the most creative and fulfilling role for every individual's talents and aptitudes.

Since reopening the theatre in 2006, Northern Stage has made a number of positive moves towards raising the importance of equality and diversity both internally and externally.

These include:-

- Programming work that embodies our commitment to diversity to audiences and stakeholders
- Providing opportunities for people with disabilities to access performances through integrated BSL, Audio Description, Captioning and relaxed performances for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Encouraging and working with artists from the BME community to access our facilities and resources
- Ensuring our participation work is available to people of all ages, gender and race and to include people with disabilities
- Recognising that the high levels of economic deprivation in the North East can lead to social disadvantage and addressing this issue by providing opportunities for engagement in some of the City's poorest Wards
- Ensuring where possible that our staff represent the community in which we live through our recruitment processes
- Ensuring where possible that our Trustees represent an age, race and gender mix, appropriate to the community in which we live
- Providing training on different aspects of equality for our staff
- Ensuring our building is welcoming and accessible to all visitors
- Continuing to collaborate with our Newcastle/Gateshead Cultural Venue (NGCV) partners to ensure best practice is shared
- Ensuring the venue is a valued city resource through the support of theatrical hires and a range of events benefiting a broad range of users from all part of the city and region

In order to build on our achievements to date and successfully imbed equality and diversity into the company, we are committed to the development of measurable policies and systems.

Overall Objectives

- To be a leading example of a company with equality and diversity fully integrated into policies, procedures and the ethos and culture of the organisation
- To ensure that our programme of work reflects our vision of equality and diversity
- To develop new audiences for all our work and increase participation by minority or excluded groups in the life of the company
- To improve the collection of data about our audiences and participants
- To increase workforce representation by minority groups through work placements and any other appropriate methods
- To address economic disadvantage by providing pathways and opportunities for young people to engage in our work

This Equality Action plan sets out how we intend to achieve these goals. To focus delivery and aid evaluation the plan will be reviewed annually and is divided into the following sections:-

- Artistic/Artist Development
- Participation
- Communication
- Visitor Services
- Administration
- Governance

Monitoring – The actions in the plan will be monitored by the Heads of Department on a regular basis to ensure the work is being carried out and this will be reported back to Senior Team at Strategic Planning meetings and Programming meetings. The Trustees will monitor progress twice a year and the plan will be reviewed annually.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMME & ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

Northern Stage is committed to creating, programming and supporting the development of work from a diverse community of artists, for a diverse audience in a variety of accessible forms. We are constantly aware of creating work that does not discriminate on grounds of race, ethnicity, faith, disability, gender, age, sexuality, class or economic disadvantage.

Our commitment is manifested in a variety of ways throughout the artistic programme:

- The programming and creation of work that addresses, includes, explores and expresses experiences and narratives of audiences of all backgrounds
- Equal opportunities in casting and the assembly of creative teams
- Inclusion of performers from diverse backgrounds and skillsets in the main programme of work outside of the bounds of realistic, naturalistic or historically accurate casting
- The mentoring and development of BME and disabled artists and companies
- The integration of work instigated by our participatory programmes into the main artistic programme of work on our stages
- Provision of BSL interpreted, captioned audio-described and relaxed performances in the theatre and on tour
- Digital dissemination of our work (e.g. resource materials for schools) is regular practice ensuring an accessible and sustained presence for Northern Stage

Recent examples of practice by the company in these areas include:

- Our continued mentoring and support of Zende (since 2009) in their organisational and artistic growth as a BME led company based in the region
- Development space for the all-female regional theatre company Open Clasp (2013)
- Print for our productions includes details of: integrated BSL performance, Touch Tours of the Set and Captioned and Audio Described performances
This provision is available on tour as well as in the productions at Northern Stage
- In 2013 the first relaxed performance of our under 6s Christmas show for audiences with Autism Spectrum Disorder, now an annual offer
- Bi annual Young Persons curated First in Three (scratch night)
- In 2015 work with Greyscale and RADA on 'access to acting' workshop for young people with disabilities and developing a regular support programme for Deaf and BSL artists
- Teacher's Forum meets three times a year and work in partnership with The Bridge to ensure training sessions for teachers respond to sector demand
- Regular Touch Tours of sets for partially sighted attendees
- Programming team's remit to ensure representation in the presented season of work from BME artists and/or companies e.g. Afrovibes Festival and Pilot Theatre's *Antigone* adapted by Roy Williams in Autumn 2014.

- Supporting staff to undertake training including: in 2014 senior and FOH staff undertake training in ASD awareness through The Bridge's Strong Voices programme; the Deputy Director of Participation training with TIN Arts to support meaningful placements for children with ASD; and Box Office and FOH Managers attending a course in relaxed performances.

In order to advance our practice, we have identified the following areas of focus and action:

Action CONTRIBUTION TO ACE GOAL 1	Timescale	Budget	Lead(s)
<p>Present/produce/co-produce and/or support through residency at least 3 BME led companies or productions created by BME principal artists. Building on existing relationships with Zende, Selina Thompson, Tamasha and Eclipse, we will continue to grow our presentation and production of BME originated work across all of our spaces.</p>	Annual delivery for assessment at quarterly programming review	Programming, Commissioning, Creative Development, Residency and Production budgets as appropriate.	Artistic Director Programme Manager Creative Associate Director of Participation.
<p>Brief companies supported through our Residencies programme on the Creative Case Share best practice and raise greater awareness of the benefits of the Creative Case</p>	Briefings for four residency companies per year	N/A	Artistic Director Creative Associate
<p>Continue to research and promote Spare Room (free space for creative practice) to emerging BME and disabled artists. Target: 3 groups in 15/16, 4 groups in 16/17, 5 groups in 17/18.</p>	Three year phased target to be reviewed annually	N/A	Technical Administrator Creative Associate
<p>Examine how to mark/programme for landmark National and International events that champion diversity Including Black History Month, International Women’s Day and World Aids Day</p>	Monitored at January/July Board Meetings and prior SMT meetings	N/A	Programme Manager Director of Participation Artistic Director
<p>Encourage and develop work with local artists of BME heritage in the North East. 3 BME young artist-led scratch or developmental presentations in Stage 3 per year.</p>	Monitored at January/July Board Meetings and prior SMT meetings	Creative Residency Budget	Artistic Director Creative Associate
<p>To place diversity at the core of our Edinburgh programming agenda, ensuring artists from diverse backgrounds have access to this international showcase platform. Northern Stage will include work from a BME and/or disabled artist or company that fits with the vision in the Edinburgh programme</p>	Annually October – January through programming process	Edinburgh Budget	Programme Manager Artistic Director Creative Associate
<p>Establish model for best practice in the equal opportunities recruitment of performers and creative teams.</p>	Three year target monitored through programming	Production Budgets	Artistic Director Executive Director

<p>Target: Achieve a 50/50 gender casting profile across Northern Stage produced work during the 15/18 NPO cycle Commitment to colour blind casting across all Northern Stage productions.</p>	process with annual review		
<p>Programme at least 2 per year specifically curated 'First in Three' events for targeted groups E.g. young people, BME artists or hard of hearing groups in the region.</p>	Monitored at January/July Board Meetings and prior SMT meetings	Creative Residency Budget	Creative Associate Director of Participation Programme Manager
<p>Increase the number of accessible performances (BSL, Captioned, Audio Describes, Relaxed) year on year. Creating more in house productions will allow this to be included as part of creative process, particularly our innovative integrated BSL performances.</p>	Monitored at January/July Board Meetings and prior SMT meetings	Access Budget	Artistic Director, FOH Manager (Access Co-ord) Programming Manager
<p>Exploring how the Time-in-Two and creative residencies encourage engagement with diverse artists. Feedback reported annually to representatives from all departments at Programming meetings.</p>	Monitored through programming process with annual review	N/A	Artistic Director Director of Participation Creative Associate Programme Manager.
<p>Provide opportunities to observe the creative process (including technical rehearsals) for diverse artists and directors. Target: 2 placements in 15/16, 3 placements in 16/17, 4 placements in 17/18</p>	Monitored through programming process with annual review	N/A	Artistic Director Creative Associate

PARTICIPATION

Northern Stage is particularly proud of the depth and breadth of the work undertaken by its Participation team. Its fundamental principle is to break down barriers that might prevent participation in cultural activity. We actively engage and welcome people from all backgrounds and abilities to explore and express their creativity. Regular projects include; First Steps (creative play for 0-4yrs) Open Stages (drama for 4 – 12 year olds), Young Company, NORTH, our summer schools and work with schools, HE/FE, teacher training sessions, script reading group for older people and summer schools. We endorse the quality principles for children and young people. The team also works with hard to reach, vulnerable and marginalised individuals, groups and communities providing a variety of projects, each one tailored to a specific group's needs and ambitions.

Participation is also responsible for introducing young people to the many career roles and opportunities which the cultural sector provides. This includes: work experience, placements, careers events, insight tours and apprenticeships. In 2014/15 we are working with TIN Arts to support the development of a placement programme for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. We work closely with every department to ensure that these programmes and initiatives are delivered across the theatre and are available throughout the year.

We promote our theatre as an accessible and welcoming space, we are an Arts Award support centre and are working with City of Sanctuary to become the first Theatre of Sanctuary in the North East. Over the next three years we will work with partners and local community organisations to develop a more municipal space in Stage 3 which responds to the demands of local people.

In order to advance our practice we have identified the following areas of focus and action:

Action CONTRIBUTION TO ACE GOAL 5	Timescale	Budget	Lead(s)
<p>Work placement opportunities are promoted to schools and organisations which support diverse groups. Target: at least 2 placements from BME or economically disadvantaged young people per year.</p>	Monitored at January/July Board Meetings and prior SMT meetings	N/A	Deputy Director of Participation Participation Co-ordinator
<p>Participants complete an equality monitoring form as part of evaluation. Data examined every 6 months to identify areas of under representation.</p>	Monitored at January/July Board Meetings and prior SMT meetings	N/A	Participation Co-ordinator
<p>Work with young people on creative youth leadership initiatives</p>	Annually	N/A	Director of Participation Participation Facilitator

Includes the curators for Young Person's First in Three, Young Company and NORTH participants who are creating new work as individual artists and forming companies, active advocates for theatre and the region. Embed good practice throughout the organisation.			Creative Associate Participation Co-ordinator
Work with targeted wards of economic deprivation in the city in strategic partnerships This includes the Prince's Trust NEETS group and Newcastle City Council. Target: Increase uptake of existing entry points for participants of economically deprived backgrounds. Target of 15% of participants in Young Company, North, and Summer School to be from this demographic by end of three year cycle (7% 15/16, 10% 16/17).	Annually	Existing spend within Participation budgets	Director of Participation
Increase our participation offer to older audiences. Target: By 17/18 we aim to have supported the development of our script reading group to 30 people, offered 2 theatre projects for intergenerational work in communities and created a network of regular older participants to attend the theatre together.	By 17/18	Programming budget	Director of Participation Creative Associate
Continue to fundraise in order to provide free opportunities throughout the year and bursaries to those who are economically disadvantaged. To enable access to our paid for programmes such as Summer School and Springboard performance training. Target: at least 10% of participants supported by bursaries	Reviewed annually	Sponsorship through Trusts & Foundations	Director of Participation Participation Co-ordinator
Partnership with local authorities and our local Bridge organisation to identify schools that do not normally have access to cultural activities. Target: To identify 5 new schools each year, engaging over 150 new pupils.	Reviewed annually	N/A	Dir Participation
Work to ensure representation from diverse community groups as part of the Stage 3 programme offer. Target: By 2018 we aim to have established partnerships with 12 organisations.	Three year phased target to be reviewed annually	Programming budget	Director of Participation, Project Coordinator, Creative Associate
Clear communication and branding of participation work with increased digital engagement	Reviewed quarterly	Audience Development	Dir Participation Dir Communications Participation Co-ordinator

<p>This will specifically be focused at children and young people through Participation pages on website, Facebook and twitter, incl. digital support for Arts Award (see digital section of ADP).</p> <p>Ensure all digital elements reflect the diversity of the work that is done.</p> <p>Review and update content regularly.</p>			
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COMMUNICATIONS & SALES

In addition to this plan, we recognise the importance of communicating our commitment to equality beyond our walls and particularly to our audiences, artists and participants. We have created an Equality Communications Plan, the progress of which is reviewed by the Senior Team twice a year at Strategic Planning Meetings.

Further to this, the Communications & Sales Team have developed specific strategies for attracting key audiences for our programmed work i.e. for BME/disabled/gay & lesbian audiences. Utilising relationships with key groups and organisations, we are committed to widening access for disabled audiences, particularly children with Autism Spectrum Disorder through the introduction of 'relaxed' performances. The Team continue to influence programming decisions to ensure its approach and the way in which it is communicated appeals to a diverse audience.

Action CONTRIBUTION TO ACE GOAL 2	Timescale	Resources	Lead(s)
Annual review of company Comms strategy to promote equality and diversity at Northern Stage	By autumn each year	N/A	Director of Communications
Ensure printed materials represent the diversity of the work we present and the communities we serve and continue to provide season brochures in a range in accessible formats (large print, audio)	Reviewed each season (twice a year)	Comms budget	Communications Manager
Continue to work with national and regional agencies such as SPIT, Vocal Eyes and Deaflink to promote accessible performances	Annually	Comms budget	Communications Officer
Update Equality section on website providing details of what we provide and how people can access services/opportunities	Annual update	N/A	Director of Communications Digital Coordinator
Include an equality statement on out-going email correspondence	Annually	N/A	Communications Manager
Investigate compatibility of website with screen reader software	Spring 2015 and on-going	Comms budget	Digital Co-ordinator
Secure at least one instance of press coverage per year that demonstrates equality in action	Review quarterly	N/A	Press Officer
Use social media to promote/celebrate events i.e. World Aids Day. Target: Promote at least 5 national/international events per year	As appropriate	N/A	Communications Officer
Continue Christmas Access Scheme inviting local business to sponsor the cost of tickets for school groups in areas of high social deprivation	Annual	Fundraising	Development Manager Sales and Box Office Manager

<p>From 16/17 begin a Community Network Scheme. Groups who could not otherwise access Northern Stage can apply to be a member and receive discounted tickets. Membership will be reviewed annually. Groups under- represented in NS typical audience will be targeted.</p>	Spring 16 on-going	Comms Budget	Director of Communications Sales and box office Manager
<p>From 15/16 introduce Fiver Friday for 18-25 year olds. Up to 30 tickets at reduced price on Friday evening performances.</p>	Spring 15 on-going	Comms Budget	Director of Communications Communications Manager
<p>Work with visiting companies to allocate strategic complimentary tickets for targeted groups.</p>	As appropriate	N/A	Communications Manager
<p>From 15/16 through post-show surveys we will improve data capture about audiences' ethnic groups.</p>	Review annually	N/A	Communications Officer

VISITOR SERVICES

A key aim for the Visitor Services team is to ensure that all visitors receive a consistently high standard of ‘welcome’ at Northern Stage. The building is accessible for those with physical impairments. We are ‘family friendly’ and staff receive regular training in equality and diversity in order to provide an excellent customer focused service. Given our position on the University campus, the users of our front of house facilities are probably more racially diverse than many other establishments in the city. As Stage 3 develops into a hub for community groups we will ensure the Visitor Services Team is fully equipped to manage any special requirements the groups may have. We are aware that Visitor Services has a major role to play in creating and maintaining the right environment in which an atmosphere of equality can flourish. Within the Visitor Services Team our FOH Manager is a dedicated Access Co-ordinator.

Another priority for Visitor Services is making users more aware of Northern Stage’s commitment to equality and diversity by promoting services that may benefit them, like the access performances. Our future aims are to promote these services more widely, grow the audience that uses them and have these services available for more of our future programs.

Action	Timescale	Resources	Lead(s)
Access audit conducted. To be repeated in 2017 to track progress.	Spring 15 / Spring 17	Access Budget	Theatre Manager Production Manager
Display of Equality statement both front and back of house in prominent positions	Annually	N/A	Theatre Manager FOH Manager
Improve the capture of data for users of access performances via Box Office and FOH staff. By 2017 we will have more accurate data on the number of audience members making use of accessible performances and be able to target communications accordingly.	On-going and reviewed in 2017	N/A	Theatre Manager
From 2015 introduce more accessible tours of the building e.g. BSL tours to coincide with interpreted performances. Target: 2 per year.	Twice per year	Access Budget	FOH Manager
Equality training for casual FOH staff	Every other year (Due 2015)	Training Budget	Theatre Manager

ADMINISTRATION

We will review the staff handbook annually to ensure the company is fully compliant with the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This process will be led by the Executive Director with assistance from the Theatre Manager. Advice will be sought through the NGCV HR Network group. Having achieved the Equality Gold Standard in 2013, we will assess the work that was undertaken to ensure we remain compliant. We will continue to communicate the value of equality within the culture of the organisation to ensure that it is embedded in all our thinking.

Action	Timescale	Resources	Lead(s)
Training for staff in an area of equality or diversity	Every other year (Due 2015)	Training budget	Executive Dir
Maintaining Gold Standard recommendations from Equality NE.	Review annually	N/A	Executive Dir Theatre Manager
Review/updating of policies in line with changes to legislation	Review annually	Possible legal costs	Executive Dir Theatre Manager Board of Trustees
Monitor recruitment procedure to measure representation from minority groups.	Review annually	N/A	Executive Dir
Monitor induction procedure for staff and Trustees to ensure an equalities and diversity culture is fully embedded at Northern Stage	Review annually	N/A	Board Champion Executive Dir
Ensuring the building remains accessible and fit for purpose Maintenance of equipment and facilities	Review annually	Maintenance budget	Operations Director Production Manager
Include Equality statement in contracts with service providers	Review annually	N/A	Executive Dir Programming Manager Dir of Operations
Publish workforce equality statistics internally	Annually	N/A	Executive Dir Executive Assistant
Advertise vacancies using a variety of media to reach as diverse a range of applicants as possible	As necessary	Recruitment Budget	Executive Asst
Senior Team to monitor the Action Plan twice a year to ensure actions are met. Reflect on Action Plan annually, considering evidence and lessons learnt from previous year.	Spring & Autumn	N/A	Executive Dir Artistic Dir Senior Team

GOVERNANCE

The Trustees of Northern Stage, led by the Chair, will ensure that Northern Stage is an organisation in which all users can fulfill their potential and make a distinctive contribution; an organisation where diversity is celebrated and where staff, artists, participants and visitors can express their identities free from the threat of intimidation and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Following a governance review in 2013/14 and the establishment of a Nominations Committee, the Board will regularly review the make-up of Trustees to ensure it is representative. The Board Equality Champion will be responsible for ensuring this Action Plan is monitored and delivered. The Board will ensure that resources are made available as required to facilitate the delivery of this plan.

Action	Timescale	Resources	Lead(s)
Board to consider representation of membership through the Nominations Committee and report to the Board.	Spring 2015	Recruitment budget	Chair of Trustees Noms Comm Executive
Equality Action Plan is included in the Schedule of Matters and is reviewed biannually by the Board	January & July	N/A	Chair of Trustees Executive Dir
Annual Review of Plan. Activity evaluated and targets set for following year	March Board Meeting	N/A	Chair of Trustees Equality Champion
Skill audit to be conducted every three years.	Next due 2016	N/A	Chair of Trustees Noms Comm Executive