

# DIVERSIFY REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final report on  
the MA's workforce  
diversity scheme

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# 1 FOREWORD

Most employers now accept that a successful team should contain a range of different approaches, personalities and working styles. A team composed entirely of people just like the team leader is doomed to fail. Thanks to the Museums Association's Diversify Scheme we have seen that the same is true of the museum workforce as a whole, and the scheme has reflected back to us our often inadvertently exclusive recruitment practices. It is encouraging that there is now much more of a focus on broadening entry level recruitment and training posts, which aim to bring out people's innate abilities and encourage a wider range of applicants.

The Diversify scheme has changed the museum workforce, although, as this final report says, perhaps not enough. But change has happened – you need only to consider the greater diversity of people attending the MA's annual conference to see that there has been a step change, hopefully the first of many.

I commend this report to everyone in the museum sector. If you have yet to think about workforce diversity this report will inspire you. If you are already working towards greater diversification this report will support and encourage you on to the next stage.

The Diversify scheme has shown that a consistent and persistent focus on doing things differently and doing things better can achieve results. We must now build on those positive outcomes to make the UK museum workforce truly representative of our vibrant and diverse population.

**Vanessa Trevelyan**

President, Museums Association

# 2 INTRODUCTION

The Museums Association's (MA) Diversify scheme ran from 1998 to 2011. It set out to make museum careers more accessible to people from Black, Asian and Minority-Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds through targeted 'positive-action' training to prepare them to apply successfully for jobs in museums. The scheme was subsequently expanded to include disabled people and people from low income households. In all, 130 individuals and around 50 museums and galleries participated.

This report looks back on the scheme and what it achieved. It draws on the experiences of those involved, earlier research and a consultation exercise with MA members, and reflects on the impact of Diversify on the individuals involved, the museum workforce as a whole and on organisational culture. It also examines concerns that the scheme was not as transformative as it might have been.

Finally, the report identifies what the sector now needs to do in order to build on the achievements of Diversify and other positive action schemes, and sets out the MA's plans in this area. It offers a call to action, urging the sector not to lose the impetus for change but to recognise that there is still much to be done to ensure that museum careers are truly accessible to all beyond the privileged few.

# 3 SUMMARY

**1** The MA's Diversify scheme ran from 1998 to 2011. Its original aim was to make museum careers more accessible to people from BAME backgrounds through targeted positive-action training and it was later expanded to other under-represented groups.

**2** In all, 130 individuals and around 50 museums and galleries participated.

**3** Of BAME former Diversify participants responding to a survey:

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**98%** felt that Diversify had either been "very important" or "important" to them starting a career in the museum sector

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**90%** gained work in museums after completing Diversify training

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**74%** are still working in the museum sector (as of June 2011)

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**61%** are working in museum management or are on track to work in museum management, the key long-term aim of the Diversify scheme

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**ALL** management-level trainees secured employment in museums soon after completing training.

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**4** Diversify has helped show museums the benefits of having a more diverse workforce. However, BAME staff continue to be significantly under-represented in the workforce and there is a general sense of frustration that progress hasn't been more significant.

**5** Institutions need to recognise their responsibility for workforce diversity.

**6** Having more projects and initiatives is not the answer. There needs to be a more holistic approach that tackles all the barriers to change.

**7** There are four interconnected barriers to workforce diversification:

- leadership and institutional responsibility
- entry routes and recruitment practices
- the current economic crisis
- changes to higher education funding.

**8** The MA will embrace and campaign for these priorities:

**1. Organisational and cultural change.**

For individual museums to adopt an approach to workforce diversity similar to the notable work that has been done with audience development and participation.

**2. Leadership and institutional responsibility.**

For boards of individual institutions and museum leaders to take responsibility for diversity, and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and national strategic bodies to support the sector strategically with policy and funding.

**3. Real change to entry routes to the workforce.**

A shift to more non-postgraduate routes, which needs to encourage and promote new approaches to internships/volunteering.

**9** The MA also believes there is a case to be made for funders and strategic bodies to take a harder line on funding, as well as demonstrating leadership through their own practice.

# 4 THE BACKGROUND TO DIVERSIFY

## WHY WAS DIVERSIFY NECESSARY?

“Diversifying the sector is something that I feel was important, and still is. The MA created a wonderful scheme that has helped many into something that may never have been possible... I hope that museums and galleries the country over will be able to self-sustain the work and continue to keep a diverse workforce.”

*Gemma Dhami, former Diversify participant and museum development officer, Worcestershire*

Historically, the museum sector has been largely monocultural, with a workforce and governing bodies dominated by the white educated middle classes. People from minority-ethnic backgrounds have been starkly under-represented at all levels and particularly in senior management.

It is true that museums are not the only organisations to have been in this position, but while, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the need for change was being recognised and acted upon elsewhere, museums were slow to respond. As a national report on museum training noted in 1987, other arts organisations were treating the issue of training for people from ethnic minorities “more seriously than museums”<sup>1</sup>.

In 1993, the Museum Training Institute’s Museum Sector Workforce Survey found that in non-local authority museums with more than 10 employees, 1.6% of curators and managers were non-white, while the figure for local authority museums was even lower, at 1%. In Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales), 5.5% of the population was non-white, according to the 1991 census.

More than a decade later in 2006, figures compiled by the London Mayor’s Commission on African and Asian Heritage<sup>2</sup> on the make-up of the workforce showed some progress, but not much:

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**10.9%** of staff were BAME - 422 out of 3,857

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**1.3%** of senior managers were BAME - 2 out of 154

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**4.2%** of curatorial staff were BAME - 15 out of 356.

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In London, where most national museums are located, around 30% of the population is minority-ethnic, indicating that BAME staff continued to be significantly under-represented in the museum workforce.

Throughout the early to mid-1990s, museum leaders, academics and thinkers repeatedly highlighted the problem, but progress in terms of action was slow. Collections-related jobs seemed particularly resistant to diversification.

And it was a circular problem: the lack of diversity in the profession discouraged people from different backgrounds from aspiring to enter it, perpetuating the imbalance.

It was against this background that the MA decided to try to rectify this entrenched, if unintentional, inequality with the launch of the Diversify scheme in 1998.

<sup>1</sup> *Museum Professional Training and Career Structure*, Museums and Galleries Commission, 1987

<sup>2</sup> *Delivering Shared Heritage: The Mayor’s Commission on African and Asian Heritage*, 2006, cited by the National Museum Director’s Council in [www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/cultural\\_diversity\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/cultural_diversity_final_report.pdf)

# 4 THE BACKGROUND TO DIVERSIFY

## AIMS OF THE SCHEME

Diversify's initial aim was to make museum careers more accessible to people from BAME backgrounds through targeted positive-action training to prepare them to apply successfully for jobs in museums. It sought to ensure that in the longer term there were more minority-ethnic people who were qualified as potential applicants for mid- and senior-level management positions in museums. The majority of people participating were from BAME backgrounds and at entry-level.

The scheme was about fairness: tackling a fundamental inequality by increasing the number of people from BAME backgrounds in the workforce. It was about improving representation: bringing people into the sector who would offer a new dimension to the understanding of collections and all that goes with them. And there was a third element: incentivising a group of people to consider a museum career who might never have contemplated it before.

Diversify had modest beginnings, with just a handful of bursaries given out to cover a university masters degree in museum studies. In addition, a few museums funded positive-action training, particularly Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery. Diversify participants typically trained for one to two years, combining their masters qualification with a varied amount of paid work experience.

## FUNDING

In 2002, Renaissance in the Regions became the scheme's major funder, contributing a total of almost £1m up to the time Diversify formally ended in 2011. By that point 110 people from BAME backgrounds had benefited from the scheme, with access to the MA's full range of Diversify support, which included networking, workshops and mentoring. The MA also supported organisations hosting trainees with advice, training seminars, staff briefing sessions and the Diversify Toolkit.

As well as funding from Renaissance, Diversify had tremendous support throughout its life from museums and galleries hosting (and sometimes funding) placements and traineeships, from universities, particularly the University of Leicester, from the MA and from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

## DIVERSIFYING DIVERSIFY

By 2008, when the scheme had been running for 10 years, there was a groundswell of opinion forming that it needed to expand from its original brief. The focus on BAME participants had been justified in the beginning on several grounds: the need for a tightly-focused scheme with limited resources available; the particular potential of people from BAME backgrounds for enriching the research and interpretation of the world's heritage held in collections in the UK; the symbolic value of those individuals as role models; and the need to incentivise through bursaries and other support a group of graduates who, for whatever reason, were not considering museums as a career.

But after a decade, what was understood by 'diversity' had generally become much broader than just race or ethnicity, encompassing people with disabilities and (less obviously, and more difficult to pinpoint) people from lower income homes, among others.

The MA's own thinking had also changed. The scheme itself had been criticised for ignoring other disadvantaged groups to focus on BAME individuals, although it is fair to say that positive action schemes routinely attract such complaints. More significantly, research by the MA into ways to broaden entry routes into the sector<sup>3</sup> had highlighted how public policy was shifting and giving greater recognition to the barriers preventing people from other disadvantaged groups – the white working class, people with disabilities – from entering the profession. Broadening the existing Diversify scheme to include these groups therefore chimed with how opinions were changing in the MA and elsewhere.

In 2008 the scheme was expanded to include, initially, people with disabilities. The MA worked with the University of Leicester, Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service and Shape Arts to pilot the first Bill Kirby traineeship for deaf and disabled people. Diversify went on to recruit four further Bill Kirby entry-level trainees and one management-level Bill Kirby trainee.

<sup>3</sup> *Diversify: review of existing models and recommendations for future approach*, Helen Wilkinson, MA, 2008 (unpublished)

# 4 THE BACKGROUND TO DIVERSIFY

Around the same time, the MA's research into barriers to entry in the sector<sup>4</sup> showed there was a growing desire to create new routes into the museum workforce as an alternative to university masters degrees. Among other things, the research pinpointed "insufficient diversity among applicants" as an issue that needed to be addressed if "the museum workforce is to represent the audience that museums serve". It showed that museums as employers were seeking a more diverse field of applicants for the jobs they advertised, including people from poorer backgrounds in addition to those from minority-ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities.

<sup>4</sup> *The Tomorrow People*, Maurice Davies, MA, 2007, [www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=13718](http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=13718)

<sup>5</sup> *Unleashing Aspiration: Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*, Cabinet Office, 2009, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/227102/fair-access.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> *Next Step Grant evaluation report*, Rebecca Jacobs, MA, 2011, [www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=624356](http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=624356)

<sup>7</sup> Further details on the Support and Challenge programme can be found in *Culture Change, dynamism and diversity*, Maurice Davies and Helen Wilkinson, MA, 2011, [www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=298384](http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=298384)

<sup>8</sup> [www.rca.ac.uk/Default.aspx?ContentID=504639&groupID=504639](http://www.rca.ac.uk/Default.aspx?ContentID=504639&groupID=504639)

<sup>9</sup> [www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/qualifications/encompass/pages/default.aspx](http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/qualifications/encompass/pages/default.aspx)

<sup>10</sup> [www.nhm.ac.uk/natureplus/community/library/blog/2011/08/01/young-graduates-for-museums-and-galleries-ygmg-programme-2011](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/natureplus/community/library/blog/2011/08/01/young-graduates-for-museums-and-galleries-ygmg-programme-2011)

<sup>11</sup> [www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Pages/Skillsforthefuture.aspx](http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Pages/Skillsforthefuture.aspx)

<sup>12</sup> [www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource\\_8.pdf](http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_8.pdf)

Social mobility in general was also on the government agenda, in particular in Alan Milburn's report for the Cabinet Office, *Unleashing Aspiration*, which explored how to make access to the professions fairer.<sup>5</sup>

This, combined with an increasing concern that most people working in museums were from relatively affluent backgrounds, led the MA to introduce a new model of purely work-based entry-level training in 2010 for people on a low income. The traineeships were aimed at people from less affluent backgrounds who may have had no family tradition of higher education or professional work.

In two further initiatives in 2010-11, the MA ran the Next Step Grant scheme to support the professional development of BAME people and people with disabilities already working in the sector<sup>6</sup>. In addition, the Support and Challenge programme<sup>7</sup> helped regional museums develop their workforce diversification plans.

## OTHER SECTOR INITIATIVES TO DIVERSIFY THE WORKFORCE

Diversify was a pioneering scheme when it began in 1998. It was followed by others in later years, including:

- Arts Council England's (ACE) Inspire fellowship programme, which has developed into the Royal College of Art's masters in contemporary curating<sup>8</sup>
- The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professional's Encompass scheme
- Young Graduates in Museums and Galleries<sup>10</sup>
- The HLF Skills for the Future programme<sup>11</sup>
- Various Renaissance-funded regional initiatives such as Stepping Stones in the East of England.<sup>12</sup>

# 5 THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

In 2012 the MA undertook a consultation exercise with its members through an online questionnaire, which asked:

- Why do you think it is important to encourage greater diversity in the museum sector's workforce?
- What could improve workforce diversity within your organisation and the sector?
- What could be done nationally, by funders and by the MA to help museums improve workforce diversity?

While it could be argued that the 48 people who responded to the consultation were a self-selecting group generally in favour of encouraging workforce diversity, the respondents' collective opinion is still thought-provoking.

The consultation exercise included a roundtable event at the National Portrait Gallery in March 2012. It was chaired by the gallery's director, Sandy Nairne, and was attended by leading sector figures from across the UK.<sup>13</sup>

The following sections explore the rationale for diversity and draw on both the consultation and earlier research.

## THE LEGAL AND MORAL IMPERATIVE

The MA believes that, as public institutions, serving and representing the whole of the community, museums have a duty to help combat inequality in all its forms. We have a moral imperative to ensure that all people, whoever they are and wherever they are from, are able to work in our organisations. So it is not enough to justify diversifying the workforce on the basis that it is 'good for business': it is an intrinsically moral issue that means treating people fairly and with respect.

Respondents to the online consultation felt strongly about this. Sian Thurgood from the London Transport Museum said: "Museums are public spaces and are for all in society. To make sure they represent society, staff should represent the diverse make up of society."

Jade-Lauren Cawthray, a trainee in the sustainability of heritage at the Garden Museum, said: "Diversity is part of our societal fabric, of which heritage is the foundation. All members of society should be represented in workforce, because all members are equally important to heritage."

As well as this ethical or moral responsibility, there is a strong legal imperative. The Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5 April 2011, offers new protection against discrimination and a stronger impetus for organisations to work towards equality. The main aim of the legislation was to replace a confusing array of earlier legislation with one simple act that ensures all forms of difference that might give rise to discrimination are given the same protection. The law requires public bodies to ensure that the people they employ and those who use their services have equality of access and equal opportunities.

## GETTING THE BEST WORKFORCE TO DO THE JOB

We need the best people to enable us to go forward, develop and grow as a sector. Recruiting from a wider pool of potential candidates means that there is more choice and more opportunity to find these people. Sarah Kaiser, diversity manager at Tate, said: "The sector will suffer if its workforce is drawn from a limited pool, rather than being able to select the most talented people from all backgrounds."

Hilary Bracegirdle, director of the Royal Cornwall Museum, reinforced this point: "Too many good people are not appointed on merit because of systematic failures in the sector, e.g. reliance on ability to volunteer."

Catherine Cartmell, workforce development manager at Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS), said simply: "Better representation means you get the best people."

<sup>13</sup> A list of participants at the round table consultation in March 2012 is available in the appendix, p24



# 5 THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

## NEW WAYS OF WORKING

In straitened times, having a diverse workforce is key to supporting museums' economic survival; people from diverse backgrounds will find more creative solutions to problems and be more innovative than homogenous groups. The museum sector needs to be able to draw on the widest possible pool of talent for its future leaders or risk limiting its ability to address the many challenges - political, managerial, financial and creative - that it faces on an ongoing basis.

Joanne Irvine, consultant at Libertas, said: "The future of the sector relies on different models of delivery and if we all come from the same place and are educated to think the same, we will not find creative solutions. Let's face it, we need solutions at the moment."

Stephen Carl-Lokko, collections development officer at National Museums Liverpool, agreed: "Greater diversity in the workforce will not only make the museum sector more reflective of society as a whole, it will also strengthen and enrich the sector itself."

## BEING RELEVANT: ENGAGING AUDIENCES AND INCLUDING MULTIPLE VOICES

A diverse workforce - one that reflects more closely the community it serves and can understand, represent and explain multiple perspectives - also plays an important part in audience development and education. It is part of a holistic approach, enabling an institution to attract and engage a greater range of audiences, serve the community more effectively and thereby improve its programming. There is a strong connection between having a representative workforce and what the museum can offer to visitors. In the absence of diverse voices, vast swathes of people's experiences and histories may remain buried in the footnotes, to the detriment of both audiences and scholars.

One anonymous respondent summed this up neatly: "A workforce better reflective of the audience of a museum will serve that audience better."

Nichola Blackmore, collections assistant at the Waterways Trust, said: "Diversity is one of the keys to the survival of the museum sector. If the workforce does not reflect the community it serves... how can it hope to represent that community?"

Panya Banjoko, co-founder of the Nottingham Black Archive, expanded on this line of thinking: "It helps to ensure that there are multiple voices. That more than one world view is presented. It helps to ensure that communities feel part of their community. It fosters a sense of identity and belonging. It demonstrates that museums are committed to representing the community they are there to serve."

Kate Bowgett, regional volunteer management advisor at the Museum of London, said: "Museums hold our country's shared heritage. If the people who look after and provide access to this shared heritage come from a very narrow section of society, then we risk losing or misinterpreting vast swathes of people's experience and history."

This applies even more to collections that form part of wider international heritage.

The issue of representation was key to the decision to focus exclusively on BAME people in the scheme's initial phase, rather than include other disadvantaged or under-represented groups. It was not simply about fairness, but about flagging up the potential, even symbolic, importance of having people from a wide range of backgrounds interpreting what is essentially the heritage of the world as held in collections in the UK.

# 5 THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

## HIGH-LEVEL SUPPORT

There is support for workforce diversity at the highest levels: government, strategic and funding bodies.

For example, the third aim of MGS' *Going Further: A National Strategy for Scotland's Museums and Galleries* is to "empower a diverse workforce: to increase their potential for the benefit of the sector and beyond"<sup>14</sup>

In ACE's 10-year strategic vision, *Culture, knowledge and understanding: great museums and libraries for everyone*, the fourth goal is to ensure the sector's leadership and workforce are "diverse and highly skilled". It continues: "Unless the museums and libraries workforce is diverse and highly skilled, it will not reach its potential. To make an enduring contribution to civic life, museums and libraries must be staffed by people who both reflect and can inspire the communities that they serve. Diversity in the workforce is important to museums and libraries building diverse collections and developing new perspectives."<sup>15</sup>

CyMAL: Museums, Libraries and Archives Wales' museums strategy for Wales<sup>16</sup> says "understanding and dismantling barriers, real or perceived, that deter those who do not currently visit or work in museums [...] is crucial", and adds that "there is a need to consider entry routes into museums".

The HLF Skills for the Future Programme aims to equip people with the skills to pursue a career in heritage and specifies an outcome to "increase the diversity of the heritage workforce".

But if we can see why workforce diversity is important and our strategic and funding bodies tell us we should be doing it, why does it still sometimes feel like the quest for the Holy Grail?

On this point, Kate Bowgett, regional volunteer management advisor at the Museum of London, said: "If we are to make a continued compelling case for museums to be funded then they need to 'belong' to everyone, and this shared ownership cannot happen if careers in museums are only open to a very narrow and privileged sub-section of society."

There needs to be a shift in emphasis from the individual to the institution, with organisations as a whole recognising their responsibility for workforce diversity. Perhaps a tougher approach is required from strategic bodies and funders to help push through this culture change?

<sup>14</sup> *Going Further: The National Strategy for Scotland's Museums and Galleries*, MGS, 2012

<sup>15</sup> *Culture, knowledge and understanding: great museums and libraries for everyone (a companion document to Achieving great art for everyone)*, ACE, 2011

<sup>16</sup> *A Museums Strategy for Wales 2010-15*, CyMAL, 2010

# 6 THE IMPACT OF DIVERSIFY

Diversify ran for 13 years, becoming the longest running programme of its kind in the museum sector. It is generally viewed as a success, especially by those involved in the programme as trainees or host museums. The original target was simply to have trained 50 people from BAME backgrounds for careers in museums by 2006, a target that was easily exceeded. By the time Diversify ended in 2011, 130 had been trained on the scheme.

It was never the scheme's ambition to transform the whole sector. For an initiative of relatively small scale and limited funding, that would have been an impossible aim. Diversify was first and foremost about individuals and boosting the number of people from BAME backgrounds - and subsequently other under-represented groups - in the workforce. Yet the hope was that, in making the under-represented more visible, this would in itself influence museum attitudes and practice.

In some respects, Diversify did achieve more than the sum of its parts by encouraging museums actively to consider the value of a diverse workforce. But it has not altered the views of governing bodies and museum directors enough to make them change their wider thinking, their policies and processes or, in particular, their approach to recruitment and selection. It is that deeper shift that will be required if workforce diversity is ever to become embedded in organisational cultures, rather than viewed as a desirable but non-essential extra.

## JOB SUCCESS

Diversify certainly got people into jobs, which is something to celebrate. It provided a group of individuals with a stream of money to cover the costs of training that they otherwise would not have had access to and brought them into the sector. It has also helped to diversify the sector to a degree: the museum workforce has changed and is now more diverse than it was in the 1990s, if we consider bald numbers. For example, from 1993-2008 the proportion of BAME people working in UK museums almost trebled, from 2.5% to 7% (although, as outlined below, the picture is more complex than that). But there is less evidence of deeper or more long-term change.

In 2011 Maurice Davies and Lucy Shaw undertook research to explore the career experiences of people who had participated in Diversify.<sup>17</sup> Of the BAME people who participated in the Diversify scheme and responded to a survey:

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**98%**

felt that Diversify had either been "very important" or "important" to them starting a career in the museum sector

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are still working in the museum sector (as of June 2011)

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**61%**

are working in museum management or are on track to work in museum management, the key long-term aim of the Diversify scheme

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**ALL**

management-level trainees secured employment in museums soon after completing training.

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<sup>14</sup> Destination Research Report: The impact of the Diversify scheme on participants' careers 1998-2011, Maurice Davies and Lucy Shaw, MA, 2011, [www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=624355](http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=624355)

# 6 THE IMPACT OF DIVERSIFY

Most respondents commented that they wouldn't be working in the sector without participating in Diversify. In the words of one anonymous respondent: "I have no doubt that if I hadn't taken part in the Diversify scheme I wouldn't be where I am today. It has given me so many experiences and knowledge and helped me to network."

When it started, Diversify was primarily about individuals. Its aim was to equip people with the skills, knowledge and experience they needed to compete successfully for museum jobs, with a more long-term aspiration that they should eventually be in a position to apply for mid- and senior-level jobs in the museum sector. And from this point of view, it has been a success. A group of passionate, creative, diverse individuals, many of whom previously doubted whether they would get a job in the sector, are now employed in museums and are making a difference.

## CULTURE CHANGE FOR MUSEUMS: DID IT HAPPEN?

A hundred or so individuals are not enough to significantly shift the sector's overall demographics. In general, positive-action training is not intended to have an immediate impact, but to create long-term changes in the workforce. Has this happened?

## WHAT THE STATISTICS TELL US

In 2010 Maurice Davies and Lucy Shaw undertook research into changes in the diversity of the museum workforce, and the impact and cost of the Diversify scheme and similar targeted training and development programmes.<sup>18</sup> It found that from 1993-2008 the proportion of BAME people working in UK museums almost trebled, from 2.5% to 7%. In national museums the proportion in 2006 was almost 11%. However, during the same period the proportion of BAME people in the UK population as a whole increased from 5.5% to 12%.<sup>19</sup> In London, where most national museums are located, around 30% of the population is BAME. This means that there continues to be a significant under-representation of BAME staff in the museum workforce.

Under-representation varies by job type. For example, only about 3% of people working with collections are from BAME backgrounds, while the figure for staff in audience, education or communication-related jobs is around 8%.

<sup>18</sup> *Measuring the ethnic diversity of the museum workforce and the impact and cost of positive-action training, with particular reference to the Diversify scheme*, Maurice Davies and Lucy Shaw, *Cultural Trends* vol 19, no. 3:147-179, Routledge, 2010

<sup>19</sup> National population data from the Annual Population Survey, 2008, Nomis official labour market statistics, [www.nomisweb.co.uk/articles/462.aspx](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/articles/462.aspx)

# 6 THE IMPACT OF DIVERSIFY

Why are there not more BAME people working with collections? Catherine Cartmell, workforce development manager at MGS, raised this issue at the roundtable event: "Education and learning have more diverse staff than collections - why is this? Is it because they are working in communities and people see them as potential role models, whereas they don't see collections jobs as having as much impact?"

Gurdeep Thiara, outreach officer (wellbeing) at the People's History Museum, reflected on this issue in the consultation, saying: "I've worked in this sector for 10 years - most of the people I have come across from a [BAME] background have all worked in learning and community engagement posts. Why is this? Some ideas and attitudes are deep-rooted and quite traditional - how does this shift and change?"

If the museum sector is working towards a representative workforce, the percentage of museum staff from minority-ethnic backgrounds should be around 12%, not 7% (or 9% in larger museums in England), with fewer than this in collections and management jobs. Even in larger museums in England, only 4%-6% of people in collections jobs are minority-ethnic and 1%-5% of people in management jobs are minority-ethnic, so the numbers of BAME people in these jobs needs to more than double to match the working age population as a whole.

## INFLUENCE ON THINKING

Diversify has undoubtedly helped show museums the benefits of having a more diverse workforce. Sandy Nairne, director of the National Portrait Gallery, explained to *Museums Journal* in 2010: "Diversify has been very influential in allowing existing staff to see people from different backgrounds and this has helped to change thinking."<sup>20</sup>

A feeling that workforce diversity has been accepted as a strategic issue for museums was expressed at the roundtable event. Maggie Appleton, chief executive of Luton Cultural Services Trust, said: "Diversify was about hearts and minds and it has made a difference, even through a relatively small number of individuals."

John Orna-Ornstein, head of London and national programmes at the British Museum said: "The language we are using is different to 10 years ago, which is a good thing."

However, while Diversify may have influenced thinking, this has not necessarily translated widely into changes in organisational cultures or practice.

There is a general sense of frustration that progress hasn't been more significant. Hedley Swain, ACE's director of museums and Renaissance, said: "We should have got to the point where everyone gets it and that hasn't happened. [Workforce diversity] needs to be natural and it isn't yet, which is disappointing".

Maurice Davies, head of policy and communication at the MA, added: "The good news is that over 100 passionate people from a diverse range of backgrounds have trained for museum work and many of them are now museum managers, or on the way to management. The bad news is that the museum workforce as a whole is nowhere near as diverse as it should be. It's upsetting that so few museums have fully embraced the benefits of having a diverse workforce."

Changing organisational culture was not the specific aim of Diversify. But perhaps that was a weakness; if it had been bolder and suggested targets for recruitment across the sector, rather than just for the MA scheme, it may have had a deeper, more lasting impact.

<sup>20</sup> *Diverse voices*, Felicity Heywood, *Museums Journal*, August 2010; p32-35; *Still pale, male and stale?*, Felicity Heywood, *Museums Journal*, October 2010; p30-33

# 7 BARRIERS TO CHANGE

What barriers to change does the sector still have to break through?

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“In light of current debates around social mobility, how do we ensure that the systems and processes we have in place for such things do not create barriers to entry for certain socio-economic groups?”<sup>21</sup>

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Four interconnected barriers to workforce diversification were identified at the roundtable and are supported by the comments received through the online consultation:

- leadership and institutional responsibility
- entry routes and recruitment practices
- the current economic crisis
- changes to higher education funding.

## LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Institutions need to accept responsibility for diversity and ensure it is championed right at the top, starting with the governing body. The role of leadership in creating an environment that supports inclusive working practices is paramount. The people at the top determine priorities, set strategy and create policies for the whole organisation. If museum leaders don't take action, change will be limited.

Institutions also need to ensure that, culturally, they really are embracing diversity – in terms of both audiences and staff (paid and unpaid). It isn't enough to say 'our audiences are diverse so we are too'. Staff must also reflect this diversity. The fundamental issue here is that institutions need to look at their values and practices, and question whether they are fair and treat people equally.

It also follows that, if an institution is striving to develop a more diverse workforce, its leadership also needs to model that approach by becoming more diverse. This would mean some governing bodies taking a long, hard look at themselves and reflecting on how they, too, can become more representative of the wider society in which they operate.

## ENTRY ROUTES AND RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

Also related to the issue of institutional responsibility, there needs to be a commitment to addressing entry routes into careers in museums and recruitment practices. Maybe this is the key to unlocking the mystery of workforce diversity? If we can get recruitment right, perhaps the real step change will happen.

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“This is an incredibly attractive sector [craft, music, cultural heritage, design, visual and performing arts]. 60% of workers are graduates compared with other industries where around 30% of workers have qualifications at level 4 or above. As a sector we rely on the fact that graduates will volunteer and take unpaid internships as a way into employment. It is staggering that we don't consider non-graduates for jobs that do not require degree-level qualifications. If you only recruit graduates it's obviously harder to ensure that there is genuine diversity in terms of ethnic diversity, social class and disability, as you limit the recruitment pool. There is obviously a huge risk that as higher education fees are introduced this will affect those who can afford to go to university and the diversity profile of the sector will get worse. For this reason we must consider other entry routes like apprenticeships and ensure that internships are managed fairly.”

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*Pauline Tambling, joint CEO, Creative & Cultural Skills*

<sup>21</sup> *Becoming a Professional: New Ways of Entering the Professions*, Christina Williams, William Harrison and Andy Friedman, Professional Associations Research Network, 2012, p1

# 7 BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Entry routes have been cited as a barrier to workforce diversity for many years. One of the key findings of a 2008 MA report was that museums wanted to employ more people from poorer backgrounds, in addition to more people from minority-ethnic backgrounds and disabled people.<sup>22</sup> However, many people were being put off pursuing a museum career by an approach to entry that favours those with extensive qualifications and voluntary experience. It is clearly easier for people from more affluent backgrounds to work for free. Moreover, people from affluent backgrounds are more likely to have contacts in the cultural sector, and can sometimes use these to secure work experience opportunities for themselves and their families. Alan Milburn's report for the Cabinet Office on fair access to the professions<sup>23</sup> shows this situation is mirrored in many professions. He also made the point that it is not only the poorest in society who are disadvantaged in this way but, increasingly, the average middle classes, who may not have the contacts or insider knowledge to secure internships and other opportunities.

In response, the MA diversified Diversify in 2010 specifically to make museum careers more accessible to people who could not afford to pay for training or to volunteer extensively and whose background and family circumstances made it hard for them to pursue a museum career. The last round of Diversify, therefore, was aimed at people who were on a low income, who came from a less affluent background and who may not have had a family tradition of higher education or professional work.

A new recruitment and selection process was developed to enable applicants to demonstrate aptitude and potential as much as qualifications and relevant experience. This has demonstrated that it is possible to recruit differently and in a way that is accessible to a broader pool of applicants.

## CASE STUDY THE IMPACT OF DIVERSIFY ON ONE OF THE SCHEME'S PARTICIPANTS DAMON WALDOCK

Damon had a 12-month work-based traineeship at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and was one of the last trainees to go through the Diversify programme. He is now programme, events and marketing coordinator at the organisation.

### Why did you apply for a Diversify traineeship?

I saw the scheme as a great opportunity for people from all different backgrounds and experiences to be given the chance to be involved in something they were passionate about... I thought I would try as directly applying for job positions in the past had been unsuccessful... I saw how the scheme became more accessible and was more open to the different backgrounds of those applying.

### What barriers to getting a job in museums had / have you experienced?

I had support to study at degree level, but couldn't afford to continue studies at a higher level (which I assumed was the only way to get a job in the museums sector). Personally, I had family life commitments, concentrating on helping younger family members and not having the time to focus clearly on my ambitions and career goals. Also I struggled to get any voluntary work in museums and art galleries.

### Did the traineeship at your host museum meet your expectations?

I was expecting to learn bits of everything whilst working... but what I didn't realise was how seriously my host gallery treated me and how much guidance and help they would give me. I hadn't expected so much support. [They also] didn't take me for granted - there was a genuine concern for my learning and development.

### How did Diversify contribute to you getting a job in the museum sector?

Without Diversify I would not have been given the chance to prove myself in this environment. Also it allowed me to learn so much - I grew and developed. The confidence it gave me, in terms of meeting people, learning new skills and development was so valuable.

### What is your dream job?

Hopefully this doesn't sound clichéd, but I am doing it now. I have grown so much personally with my role... I get to work with some great people, artists and other well established organisations and such a fantastic team of staff that I would say my job is very important to me.

<sup>22</sup> *The Tomorrow People*, Maurice Davies, Museums Association, 2008, [www.museumsassociation.org/asset\\_arena/text/al/thetomorrowpeople\\_final.pdf](http://www.museumsassociation.org/asset_arena/text/al/thetomorrowpeople_final.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> *Unleashing Aspiration: Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*, Alan Milburn, Cabinet Office, 2009, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/227102/fair-access.pdf>

# 7 BARRIERS TO CHANGE

## **How can careers in museums be opened up?**

As many museums are committed to supporting and engaging with people from all cultural backgrounds and experiences then museums also need continue that representation...in the workplace. Bringing groups of people with different experiences and backgrounds brings more innovative and creative ideas to the workplace. Valuing the differences in people and recognising the similarities gains the best possible outcomes – surely we all know this, but it is down to museums or organisations to get involved with this way of thinking, to see the possible outcomes, and they need to continue this before it can become a natural part on the industry.

## **What else could the sector do to encourage greater workforce diversity?**

Talking about it – discussing what works and what doesn't... it becomes a natural part of the process, but without taking part, getting involved and discussing success, it cannot move forward.

Although there are some notable exceptions, the sector has been slow to address issues with recruitment and selection, and this must change. Many current recruitment practices are not acceptable in 2012. In her response to the consultation, Aysha Afridi, relationship manager learning at ACE, said: “We need to stop thinking of diversity as just a race issue, and start recognising that in this challenging economic climate, people need every opportunity they can get to secure paid work for themselves... We need to diversify our approaches to employment, the procedures we go through, and indeed, the people who sit on the decision panels need to change too. Like attracts like in many cases, and how can a workforce be diverse if the panel doesn't even understand what diversity means in 2012?”

## **CASE STUDY**

### **THE IMPACT OF DIVERSIFY ON A HOST INSTITUTION YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK, WAKEFIELD**

Helen Pheby, curator at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, supervised Damon Waldock's traineeship. It wasn't the first Diversify traineeship the organisation had hosted; a positive-action trainee had successfully completed a placement there in 2008. Yorkshire Sculpture Park participated in the programme because it is committed to finding new talent and diversifying its offer to audiences.

The experience of hosting both Diversify traineeships has encouraged a shift in the way the organisation approaches recruitment and selection towards looking beyond people who have taken conventional routes into the sector. Staff look for personality and potential when selecting candidates, not just qualifications and skills. Application forms are now simpler and interviews include an element that allows applicants to demonstrate practical skills. By taking these simple steps, Yorkshire Sculpture Park has found it has broadened the pool of potential candidates for posts.



# 7 BARRIERS TO CHANGE

## THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS

The spectre of the difficult economic times looms large. Perhaps it is an additional threat rather than a direct barrier, but it is one we need to take seriously nonetheless. The museum sector has taken deep cuts that have reduced the number of jobs available. The MA's 2012 survey into the impact of cuts on museum services has revealed that 51% of responding museums reported a cut to their budgets and almost a quarter had been forced to reduce public access by closing whole sites or parts of sites permanently or temporarily. 42% of respondents said there had been cuts to staff, with almost a fifth saying staffing levels were down 25% or more. This raises real concerns about the sector's ability to keep workforce diversity high on the agenda.<sup>24</sup>

A session at the MA's Annual Conference in Brighton in 2011 asked: "Workforce diversity - can we afford it?" The feeling from delegates attending was that it is now even more vital to ensure the sector has a diverse workforce. A reversal of the progress made over the last decade could spell disaster for museums at a time when new business models, audiences and markets need to be developed.

<sup>24</sup> *The impact of cuts on UK museums*, Gina Evans, MA, July 2012, [www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=770702](http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=770702)

<sup>25</sup> *Becoming a Professional: New Ways of Entering the Professions*, Christina Williams, William Harrison and Andy Friedman, Professional Associations Research Network, 2012, p97

<sup>26</sup> *University applications from the UK fall 8.9%*, Sean Coughlan, BBC, July 2012, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-18768857](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-18768857)

## CHANGES TO HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING: THE INTRODUCTION OF TUITION FEES

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"Higher education is increasingly becoming accessible only to those who can afford the newly increased fees, or indeed feel that a university education is worth suffering what may become a lifetime in debt."<sup>25</sup>

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Changes to higher education funding, particularly the introduction of high tuition fees, pose a further barrier to people from low income households. At the roundtable, Hedley Swain said: "With new tuition fees we run the risk of a whole generation of working class people turning their back on the arts and culture in higher education." He said that ACE would "ask our major [museum] partners to buy into diversity but there are finite resources and big challenges ahead".

Although it is still early days, preliminary analysis collated in July 2012 reveals that university applications from the UK have fallen by 8.9%, with the biggest drop occurring in England, where applications are down by 10%. Depending on your political views, this is either an insignificant fall - or evidence that the trebling of tuition fees is hitting young people hard. Those living in the most advantaged areas of the country are many times more likely to apply for a place at university than their counterparts in poorer areas.<sup>26</sup>

Richard Sandell, director of the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, said: "Personally and politically, I think the rise in undergraduate tuition fees is a bad thing which could lead to a narrowing down of opportunity. It is very likely to hit the worse off but we just don't know yet."

Sandell reflected that one unexpected consequence of the economic climate has been that the Department of Museum Studies has become aware of a rise in the number of funding opportunities for students through scholarships and bursaries, meaning that it may not all be bad news.

The full consequences won't be clear for some time, but museums need to keep abreast of developments and take the opportunity to think seriously about how they can support new entrants to get on the museum career ladder.

# 8 PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Undertaking the research and consultation for this report has sometimes felt like Groundhog Day. So many of the views, arguments and suggestions for change have been aired before, yet we are still saying that things need to change, and change radically. The hoped-for shift, from agreeing that diversity is a necessary and valuable approach to workforce development to diversity becoming institutional practice, has not materialised. This is certainly disappointing.

But to focus only on the negative would deny us the opportunity to celebrate the changes that have been made. The challenge is to keep the limited momentum that was gained over the last two decades going amid the changing political and economic climate in which we now find ourselves. The fact that there is less money available will clearly be an issue for workforce diversity initiatives; and we are facing perhaps the biggest challenge to the diversity of the sector through the changes to higher education funding.

In order to ensure genuine equality of opportunity, the sector needs to broaden out its entry routes: one long-term means of transforming the workforce is to provide different ways of entering the profession other than via university degree. Diversity of opportunity will lead to diversity in the workforce.

Correspondingly, institutions need to respond by changing their recruitment practices. It will be hard, if not impossible, to diversify the workforce – and with that audiences and programming – if the approach to recruitment remains as it is now and the minimum qualification is a masters degree.

This is not rocket science, it's simply good practice. But underpinning the structures of selection and recruitment are the more cultural issues of institutional leadership and values. We have to get these right if real, lasting and permanent change is to happen.

So what can museums and sector bodies do to ensure workforce diversity remains a priority? For a start, there needs to be a move away from relying on specific projects and initiatives. Schemes like Diversify can help selected individuals and play a useful role in highlighting the issue and demonstrating new ways of working, but they clearly have not solved the problem. That requires a far more holistic approach that can tackle all the barriers to change.

The MA's consultation aimed to pin down the key priorities for the sector to improve workforce diversification. The following list will be no surprise to those who have been campaigning in this area for many years, but it is framed within the current political, social and economic climate. The MA will embrace and campaign for these priorities.

## PRIORITIES FOR THE SECTOR

**1 Organisational and cultural change.** For individual museums to adopt an approach to workforce diversity similar to the notable work that has been done with audience development and participation.

**2 Institutional responsibility.** For boards of individual institutions and museum leaders to take responsibility for diversity, and HLF and national strategic bodies to support the sector strategically with policy and funding.

**3 Real change to entry routes to the workforce.** A shift to more non-postgraduate routes which needs to encourage and promote new approaches to internships/volunteering.

# 8 PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

## PRIORITY 1 ORGANISATIONAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE

For individual museums to adopt an approach to workforce diversity similar to the notable work that has been done with audience development and participation.

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"If employers are not attracting a diversity of applicants, then that suggests they need to look at the signals they are sending out to the community, as well as their recruitment policies and practices."<sup>27</sup>

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### Learning from audience development and participation

There is much we can take from the sector's experience of audience development and participation to apply to workforce development and diversity. In fact it makes sense for these not to be viewed as separate entities but as one and the same.

Hazel Courtley, museum development projects manager at Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, supports this view: "The scope is there for having a diverse range of people working in museums, but the way in which entry routes into the sector have developed has become a barrier to diversity. Inspiring people and ensuring learning and access shouldn't just be for audiences, but for the workforce as well. There has been some great work around audience development but links haven't often been made between that and workforce development and recruitment. Why is this? For example, if we're working with a specific community group, then it makes sense to extend that relationship by offering them volunteering opportunities or letting them know about posts."

### Broadening out 'diversity'

The general consensus of the consultation was that there needs to be a wider definition of diversity that takes into account factors such as socio-economic background as well as ethnicity – one that embraces all of the diversity characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010.<sup>28</sup>

Aysha Afridi of ACE said: "I think that we need to start looking at engaging with people from different social backgrounds, not just different ethnic backgrounds. We need to remember that middle class people (white or not) do not make up the majority of this country's population, and that by encouraging people from a range of social

backgrounds to consider the arts/culture as a career path, we are in turn reflecting the very diverse nature of our society, and the communities in which we live."

A more sophisticated application of diversity also needs to be taken into account. For example, as Martin Harrison-Putnam, senior curator at the London Transport Museum, said: "Diversity needs to be defined in its wider sense so that it can be applied to specific organisations. A museum in a rural setting or Scottish island will be different from an urban museum."

### Behaviours and values

Binna Kandola argues that diversity is about human relationships, behaviours and values. It's about how relationships are evaluated and how we perform in everyday situations based on how we think. Diversity is a process, not a structure, and "once we can appreciate diversity as a process, we can begin to make changes"<sup>29</sup>. Diversity should therefore be driven by values – it's about how we want to run our institutions.

Museums are becoming adept at creating mission and values statements that nurture inclusiveness and diversity for their audiences – but if these are really the values of the institution, then they should be applicable to people working for the institution as well. Museum leaders need to display values and behaviours that demonstrate commitment to diversity. If they don't, others will not see it necessary to alter their behaviour, resulting in an unchanging culture.

<sup>27</sup> *The Value of Difference: Eliminating Bias in Organisations*, Binna Kandola, 2009, p24

<sup>28</sup> <http://homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/>

<sup>29</sup> *The Value of Difference: Eliminating Bias in Organisations*, Binna Kandola, 2009, p3

# 8 PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

## PRIORITY 2 LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Boards of individual institutions and museum leaders must take responsibility for diversity, while ACE, HLF and strategic bodies in the devolved nations should support the sector strategically with policy and funding.

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"[There needs to be] full support from the chair and board members for a strategic approach to diversity, as it runs through the business and operational plans as well as governance... Not all heritage organisations are taking ownership of diversifying their workforce... [They] need to be accountable for change by embedding diversity in business plans and linking senior management appraisals to monitoring improvements in workforce diversity. Diversity competences should be part of the appraisal system and there should be diversity awareness training for all staff including volunteers and trustees."<sup>30</sup>

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### Leadership

Leadership is often cited as crucial for enabling real change to happen. And if the sector is to embrace the culture change needed, it needs strong leadership from the governing body down. There can be a difference between what leaders say and what they do, and this disparity can have a profound effect on how diversity is perceived within an institution. Diversity cannot become mainstream by words alone: it needs action.

One respondent to the MA's online consultation said:

"Strong and committed leadership from the very top down must be in place, and this leadership must be seen to be genuine and it must be mirrored at every level down. If there is any fracture in this, the next level down will simply let things slide. No matter how much good work is done at ground level in recruitment, if the recognition for change in staffing is not genuinely committed to from the very top of an organisation, it will never be anything other than piecemeal and arbitrary."

Joanna Yeung, programme developer at the Natural History Museum, said: "Make diversity and social inclusion a core part of the museum's work. Have directors, trustees and HR to champion the subject."

So what should this leadership look like? The sector should be looking to encourage leaders who are able to reflect on their own behaviour and make changes on a personal level, because culture change can only follow from the examples of individuals. Our leaders need to be able to:

- Develop people
- Value individuals
- Champion diversity
- Have a strategic diversity focus.<sup>31</sup>

To help governing bodies and museum leaders achieve this, consultant Jane Arthur suggested that organisations should have "diversity and equality embedded within performance management with clear indication of what is expected".

### The 'carrot and the stick'

There was much discussion at the roundtable over the 'carrot and the stick' approach to achieving the culture change necessary for workforce diversity to become more natural. The 'carrot' is about promoting and encouraging good organisational behaviours, values and practices, while the 'stick' refers to the law and restricting access to funding to those who won't embrace diversity. Panya Banjoko suggested in the consultation that a radical shake-up is needed if real culture change is to happen: "Policies [should] stipulate that a percentage of staff have to be representative of the community they serve." Martin Harrison-Putnam, senior curator at the London Transport Museum, suggested that "diversification of audiences and staff should be a requirement of funding and accreditation".

The MA thinks there is a case for funders and strategic bodies taking a harder line on funding, as well as demonstrating leadership through their own practice and offering support to museums through advice, policy development and strategic thinking.

<sup>30</sup> *Embedding Shared Heritage*, Mayor of London's Heritage Diversity Task Force, 2009, pp36, 38-9

<sup>31</sup> *The Value of Difference: Eliminating Bias in Organisations*, Binna Kandola, 2009, pp130-144

# 8 PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

## PRIORITY 3 REAL CHANGE TO ENTRY ROUTES TO THE WORKFORCE

A shift to more non-postgraduate routes which encourages and promotes new approaches to internships/volunteering.

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“Heritage sector organisations tend to recruit from too narrow a pool of talent. There is an over-reliance on academic qualifications and more employers should support new entry routes such as apprenticeships, internships and foundation degrees.”

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### Opening up careers

As discussed earlier in this report, there has been much debate around the need to open up careers in the museum sector and it is not surprising that this was raised throughout the consultation process. Catherine Cartmell of MGS said: “[Diversify and other similar schemes] have treated the symptoms rather than root causes... we need to address career progression as the routes simply aren’t there. Academic qualifications have historically been seen as far more important, but if we are to broaden workforce diversity [to people from low-income households] we have to get beyond this obsession.”

An anonymous respondent to the consultation argued for more flexible recruitment practices that give “people with limited education a chance. It seems that without a masters and substantial volunteering behind you, you don’t stand a chance”<sup>32</sup>.

Aysha Afridi said: “We should be actively providing entry-level opportunities for people from socially/economically deprived backgrounds. Similarly, there should be more positions available in museums that train on the job, allowing people to earn money whilst learning. Too many museums jobs focus on an MA in Museum Studies, not enough focus on the actual skills required to do the job itself. Just because someone doesn’t have an MA, doesn’t mean that they won’t know how to look after a collection.”

Jane Arthur said: “As someone who was promoting diversity through placements at entry - and management-level over the last 10 years and who has been working with museums on strategic development and advocacy for equality and diversity, I’m very aware that there is more still to be done. Opening up career paths within the sector to a broader base will enrich the sector overall and give far greater opportunities for connection with audiences.”

Maggie Appleton of Luton Cultural Services Trust suggested that “more entry-level jobs aimed at local people would / will make a real difference”. She went on to describe Luton’s approach: “We’ve started to address this in our post-Renaissance restructure, which we hope will be strengthened via Renaissance transition funding, then in the future through a strategic grant application. Closer working with the business sector could also make a real difference and we’re in the very early stages of thinking how we might deliver that via a future strategic grant.”

Sarah Kaiser, Diversity Projects Manager at Tate, suggested four approaches to tackling how to open up the sector:

- abolishing unpaid internships as a route into the sector
- providing routes for career progression from more diverse parts of the sector to less diverse parts of the sector
- diversity training
- reviewing how recruiting managers set person specifications and judge whether applicants are suitable for role.

<sup>32</sup> *Embedding Shared Heritage*, Mayor of London’s Heritage Diversity Task Force, 2009, p39

# 8 PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

## CASE STUDY

### PUTTING THE THINKING INTO ACTION

#### THE TEACHING MUSEUM, NORFOLK MUSEUMS AND ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

Hazel Courtley, museum development projects manager at Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), is part of the team creating a radical new approach to opening up careers in museums that aims to stimulate a wider cultural change across the service. The Teaching Museum, supported by ACE major museum funding, is still in its infancy but the thinking behind the programme offers a great way forward for the sector. Hazel explained that the model is loosely based on that of a 'teaching hospital'. The idea is to recruit 'starter posts' across the service which are designed to train and prepare people from diverse backgrounds for careers in museums. In addition, the programme intends to facilitate a change in attitudes around recruitment and development.

It was decided at an early stage to call these training positions 'starter posts' rather than internships, because many people had preconceived ideas about what an internship is. The starter posts do not require applicants to have a postgraduate qualification or any previous experience, in order to "cut through the myth that you have to work for nothing before you can get a job in a museum". A first degree is desirable but not essential, although applicants will be expected to demonstrate transferable skills. Starter posts don't come with a guaranteed job at the end, but the intention is that post-holders will be in the best possible position to apply for jobs as and when they arise.

In setting up the teaching museum, NMAS has taken considerable time and effort to ensure that all staff are on board and understand the ethos of the programme. Hazel is working with HR and learning and development colleagues within Norfolk County Council to devise a range of workshops and other communication opportunities, in order to ensure NMAS staff are kept in the loop and are given the skills they need to host starter posts.

The programme has also enabled NMAS to look at its approach to recruitment and selection with a fresh pair of eyes, and has facilitated staff within the service to work together in new ways; for example, creating roles that span across departments and developing more strengths-based recruitment processes that ask different, more nuanced questions. It is hoped that the learning from this experience will be applied to future posts, with other entry positions or temporary contracts being viewed as starter posts.

Eight starter posts are now in place, with eight more planned for January 2014. In addition to their on-the-job learning, participants will benefit from a tailored programme of support and development offered by NMAS. To maximise the benefits of the programme, NMAS aims to offer elements of the learning to support the development of existing staff. Through the Stepping Stones<sup>33</sup> and SHARE<sup>34</sup> programmes, museums in the East of England have already seen shifts in organisational culture through sharing and learning from each other, and it is this ethos that underpins the teaching museum: "It is about everybody learning."

<sup>33</sup> [www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource\\_8.pdf](http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_8.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> [www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk](http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk)

# 9 CLOSING THOUGHTS

Diversify was about individuals, first and foremost, and it has succeeded to the extent that there are now more people from BAME backgrounds working in the sector than would have entered it had the scheme not existed.

But there was also hope that it would influence the organisational culture of museums; that the high profile of the scheme, the work that participants did and their contributions to the thinking in individual institutions and across the sector would begin to alter attitudes, policies and practices. This cultural shift has not happened; not enough museums have embraced the advantages of having a diverse workforce, and improving workforce diversity is still something we, as a sector, need to talk about. That is a disappointment for those who have been at the forefront of the campaign.

A very real concern, in the current economic crisis, is about priorities; can we afford workforce diversity and do museums still see it as an important issue? The counter argument is that we can't afford not to. In these straitened times we need, more than ever, a workforce that is diverse, dynamic and adaptable, and for that we need the best talent available.

As a sector, we are more or less united in our belief that our role is to enable people - all people - to explore, learn from, be inspired by and enjoy the wonderful collections that museums hold. The last decade, in particular, has seen tremendous leaps forward in terms of audience development and participation, with the sector working hard to ensure that collections and programmes encourage the whole of society to engage with museums. It is rightly accepted and expected that museums should be relevant to the communities they serve. This should also be true of the people who work in museums, both paid and volunteer. The workforce needs to represent the communities we strive to reach.

There is a lot we can be proud of and, in many instances, efforts to diversify our institutions have been successful. However, we need to be more holistic in our understanding of what we mean by diversity and not see it as being a separate thing for audiences and workforce - these need to be one and the same. If they were, perhaps workforce diversity would become more natural.

The last few years have seen the sector begin new conversations around wellbeing and how museums can play a wider, more significant role in society. If we follow this path then we really will have to become naturally diverse institutions.

The process doesn't have to be complicated. It's simple really: good leadership + good practice = diverse and inclusive organisations that value all people.

Let's stop talking about it and just get on with it.

## 10 RESOURCES: HELP WITH DIVERSIFYING YOUR WORKFORCE

The MA has published a range of guidance to help museums diversify their workforce. Good starting points are:

### **The Diversify Toolkit:**

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/careers/diversify/diversify-overview>

### **Culture Change, Dynamism and Diversity:**

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/15042011-culture-change>

### **Museum Practice, April 2011**

(includes a detailed list of further resources):

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/building-a-stronger-workforce>

## 11 THANKS

So many people and organisations have supported Diversify that it would be impossible to name them all here. Particular thanks are due to Renaissance in the Regions for funding Diversify from 2002-11, along with the original funders of the scheme alongside the MA: the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the University of Leicester. Their initial support made it all possible, together with the contribution of Lee Fulton, who turned the MA's germ of an idea into a viable programme. Lucy Shaw enthusiastically and energetically managed Diversify, developed it and took it into new areas. Maurice Davies had the initial vision and drive to push for Diversify and has tirelessly supported it since. Thanks are also due to the many museums, galleries and universities who supported and hosted traineeships and those who contributed funding traineeships. Without them Diversify would not have happened.

And finally, thanks must go to the trainees themselves, most of whom are now working in and contributing to the sector. They are a talented group of people and it has been a pleasure to see them go on to great careers in museums.

## 12 APPENDIX

### **Diversify roundtable participants**

- 1** Sandy Nairne, director, National Portrait Gallery (chair)
- 2** Hedley Swain, director, Museums and Renaissance, Arts Council England
- 3** Gus Casely-Hayford, art historian, research associate (SOAS) and trustee, National Portrait Gallery
- 4** John Orna-Ornstein, head of London and national programmes, British Museum
- 5** Pauline Tambling, joint CEO, Creative & Cultural Skills
- 6** Iain Bailey, head of human resources, Heritage Lottery Fund
- 7** Fiona Talbot, head of Museums, Libraries & Archives, Heritage Lottery Fund
- 8** Catherine Cartmell, workforce development manager, Museums Galleries Scotland
- 9** Clara Arokiasamy, director, KALAI, and former chair, Mayor of London's Heritage Diversity Task Force
- 10** Tony Panayiotou, director of diversity, Arts Council England
- 11** Denise Lavis, workforce development adviser, CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales
- 12** Prakash Daswani, chief executive, Cultural Cooperation
- 13** Maggie Appleton, chief executive, Luton Cultural Services Trust
- 14** Mark Taylor, director, Museums Association
- 15** Maurice Davies, head of policy, Museums Association
- 16** Lucy Shaw, Diversify coordinator, Museums Association



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