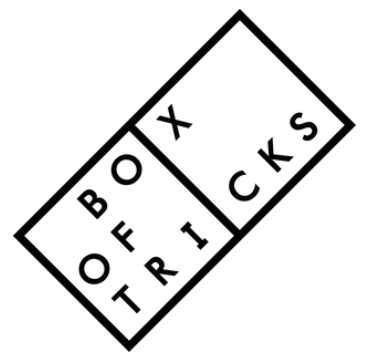




BOX OF TRICKS THEATRE COMPANY



ANNUAL EQUALITY & DIVERSITY REPORT

AUGUST 2020 - JULY 2021



Where we are
TODAY

Annual monitoring report

OUR COMMITMENT TO POSITIVE ACTION

In July 2020, driven and empowered by the worldwide impact of the Black Lives Matter Movement, Box of Tricks created our Commitment to a Fairer Future: an outline of our guiding values as an organisation and a ten point action plan to effect tangible, positive change in the coming months.

This report outlines how we have delivered on our action plan; our successes and areas for improvement, as well as results of our annual monitoring survey of core team, creatives and freelance work force covering the period 1 July 2020 - 31 July 2021.

"Box of Tricks know how to make space for writers' processes and ideas, and how to make truly collaborative work. Making Narvik with them was one of the most creatively rewarding experiences I'd had as a playwright. I was so grateful for their drive, energy and theatrical ambition. Together we went on a journey that transformed us as artists. Support for Box of Tricks is support for vital new voices and perspectives, and for all the communities brought together by their work."

~ Lizzie Nunnery, playwright (Narvik)

OUR COMMITMENT TO A FAIRER FUTURE

- We will stand up to discrimination and prejudice wherever we encounter it and whatever form it takes. We will stand shoulder to shoulder with our peers to root out ableism, sexism, racism, religious intolerance, homophobia, transphobia and classism within our industry.
- We will fight for equality inside and outside Box of Tricks. We will champion voices we feel are currently underrepresented on our stages. No aspect of identity – disability, neurodiversity, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and/or lower socio-economic background – will prevent your voice from being heard.
- Our working environment will be one where everyone can thrive free from discrimination or prejudice. Whether on stage or off, we will challenge instances of discrimination and support the individuals that encounter it.
- We will reflect the wider society beyond our theatres - in the stories we tell, the individuals we employ, the audiences we engage. We will make plays that are as rich and varied as those communities. We will empower playwrights and creatives to tell the stories they want to tell and embrace their unique perspective on the world.
- We will build audiences that reflect the communities where we stage our work. We will develop marketing and audience development strategies to attract new audiences beyond the already culturally-engaged.
- We will gather data on our Core Team, Board and freelance creative workforce so we can identify areas of low diversity - comparing statistics against current local and national averages to gauge our progress - and implement positive change to increase representation.
- We will celebrate the individual and their lived experience. We will not group disparate identities to meet diversity quotas or use unhelpful acronyms that further obscure and entrench discrimination.
- We will remove barriers to access wherever we find them and prioritise access needs wherever they are identified. We will increase the accessibility of our workplace and future productions so no one is excluded.
- We will combat structural discrimination through positive action. We will actively identify and develop talent from all backgrounds and forge future pathways within the industry.
- We will be transparent and open in how we achieve change. We will seek feedback, invite discussion, listen and learn. We will be open to criticism and hold our hands up when we make mistakes. We will be the change we want to see.



A person in an orange jacket is working on a stage set, possibly a ladder or scaffolding. The background is dark, and the person is illuminated by stage lights.

Delivering on our ACTION PLAN



1. Pilot a new Diversity Survey where respondents can self-identify free from pre-defined tick boxes.

Sent out to Board, Core Team and freelance creatives, this survey will enable us to gather detailed data that captures the complexity of individuals and intersectional identities to monitor and review representation and effect change where necessary.

A comprehensive survey was created and sent out to Board, Core Team and Freelance Creatives from 2014 – 2020 for benchmark figures. This survey is now sent out to all freelance creatives who undertake a project with Box of Tricks, and core team and board are surveyed within each reporting cycle (Aug - July) to monitor change. Results for the period 1 Aug 2020 - 31 July 2021 are included later in this report.



2. Identify areas of low diversity and underrepresentation in Box of Tricks' operations and take action.

We will evaluate our current position so we can tackle underrepresentation head-on.

An Associate Artists programme has been created with support from Genesis Foundation's Kickstart scheme. In line with our Positive Action Policy all applicants from underrepresented groups were automatically shortlisted. Five artists across a number of disciplines will be on attachment with us for 12 months.



3. Increase representation at Board level.

Through a targeted recruitment drive, we will expand our Board and increase diversity and representation.

New appointments made to the board in 2020/1 have increased representation amongst target groups. Ongoing Board recruitment to respond to gaps in representation highlighted by survey will take place in line with our trustee recruitment strategy.



4. Prioritise underrepresented groups for future appointments within our Core Team.

Roles will be advertised widely, targeting areas of underrepresentation. All candidates who meet a role's essential criteria and identify as being from an underrepresented group will be shortlisted for interview under our Positive Action Policy.

No roles in the Core Team were advertised in the last 12 months due to the impact of the pandemic. We are in conversation with Arts Emergency (an organisation dedicated to helping young people from underrepresented backgrounds break into the arts and humanities) to fund a paid internship for a new role 2 days a week for 4 months to be advertised in late 2021 to start early 2022.



5. Launch playwriting commissions targeting underrepresented groups.

Through targeted commissions for underrepresented groups, we will identify and commission playwrights from a broader spectrum of lived experience.

Our inaugural Screen/Play Award in partnership with Sky Studios was only open to applicants from underrepresented groups with no experience of writing for television. PlayBox 2021/22 ran an open call for submissions for the first time, with applicants from underrepresented groups automatically shortlisted in line with our Positive Action Policy.



6. Cast without prejudice.

For all future castings, we will not specify any aspect of a character in a breakdown unless it is intrinsic to the story being told.

Castings for the New Tricks readings have been open except for *How To Survive The War* which looked for actors with specific lived experiences integral to the play's story. A new Casting Policy outlining this, alongside our commitment to trans casting via our Trans Casting Statement, was released in 2021.





7. Launch a programme of professional development to increase diversity within our creative and backstage teams.

We will pilot training schemes to encourage new offstage talent from underrepresented groups.

Our Associate Artists scheme was created in summer 2021 specifically to increase the diversity of our creative teams, allowing talent from underrepresented groups in offstage roles to develop their practice on a year-long paid attachment.



8. Facilitate safe spaces for open conversations with artists and creatives

Where discrimination, prejudice and institutional barriers can be openly discussed to inform future practice.

Plans are in place for a 'Town Hall' event to discuss some of these issues in early 2022. We are piloting Culture Cafes and coffee mornings for playwrights to open up informal conversations and identify next steps however we want to identify the best and formal way to implement these important discussions. Our aim is to trial an annual 'Open Space' on barriers to industry.



9. Establish safe and robust reporting procedures for calling out discrimination, whether institutional or personal, so we can listen, learn and take action.

A Respect in the Workplace policy has been created which lives on the Box of Tricks website and will be included (along with all other policies) in welcome packs for new company members.



10. Improve access for artists and audiences.

Reviewing access throughout our work, we will identify areas of inaccessibility and work towards removing barriers to full engagement.

Our Screen/Play Award & Associate Artists application process was made fully accessible, with applicants having the opportunity to apply via video rather than form-filling. An Access & Wellness Rider has been created for new company members and supported playwrights to ensure we are supporting them in a way that works best for them. Once touring plans for 2022 and beyond are confirmed we will undertake a review of how to make new work accessible to audiences.

"Box of Tricks supported me as I attempted to write for theatre for the first time. Their artistry, encouragement and creativity is infectious and my experience of Playbox is something I cherish."

Furquan Akhtar, PlayBox

"Box of Tricks have raised me up into the light and made it possible for me to have a voice and feel heard, and talk about things that other people have felt too uncomfortable to talk about because it's not their identity or experience."

Clare McNulty, Pen Pals Cohort 1





MONITORING DATA

AUGUST 2020 - JULY 2021



One year on from our commitment to Positive Change, we've increased representation across the board amongst our family of writers and artists that we have supported and developed over the last 12 months.

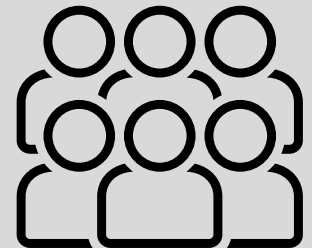
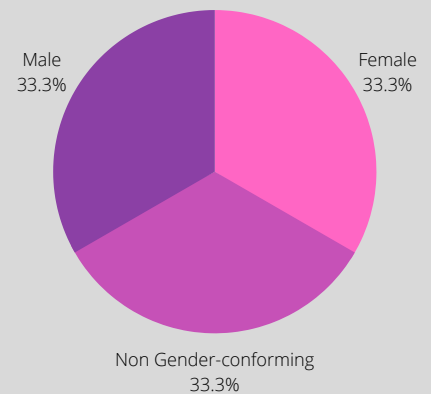
Every writer we have engaged, developed or directly supported was sent a monitoring survey as well as all freelance creatives, core team and board members; we received 48 responses (83% of those surveyed) , the results of which are on the following page.

In the last 12 months we have commissioned six playwrights:

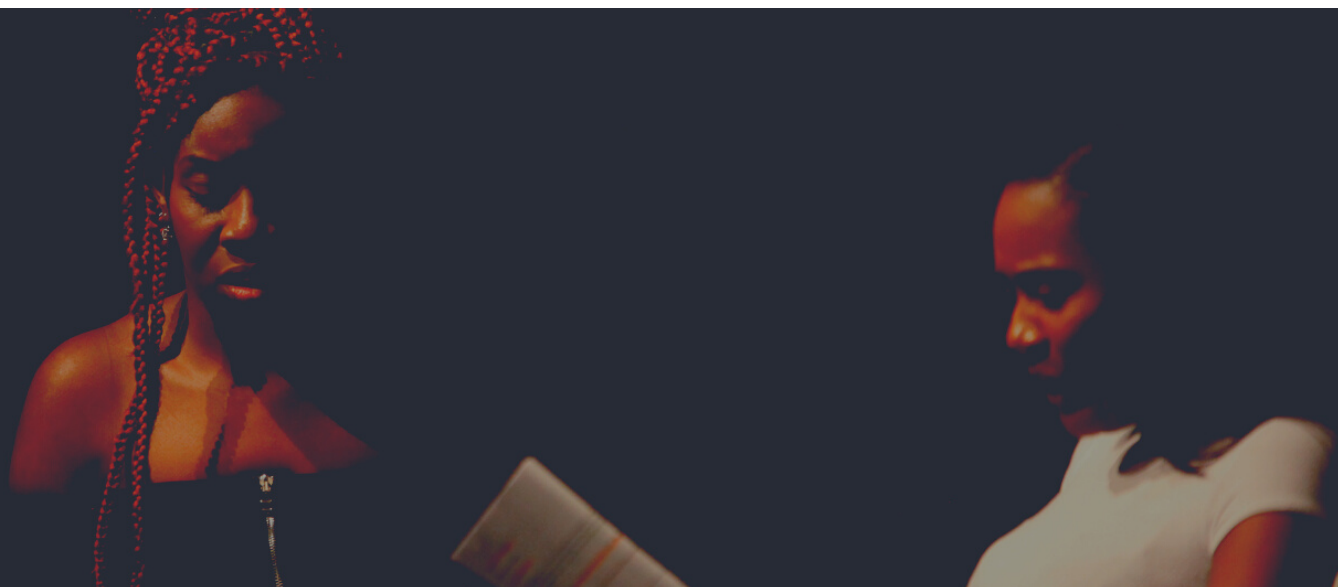
A third of these writers are **female**, a third are **non gender-conforming** and a third are **male**.

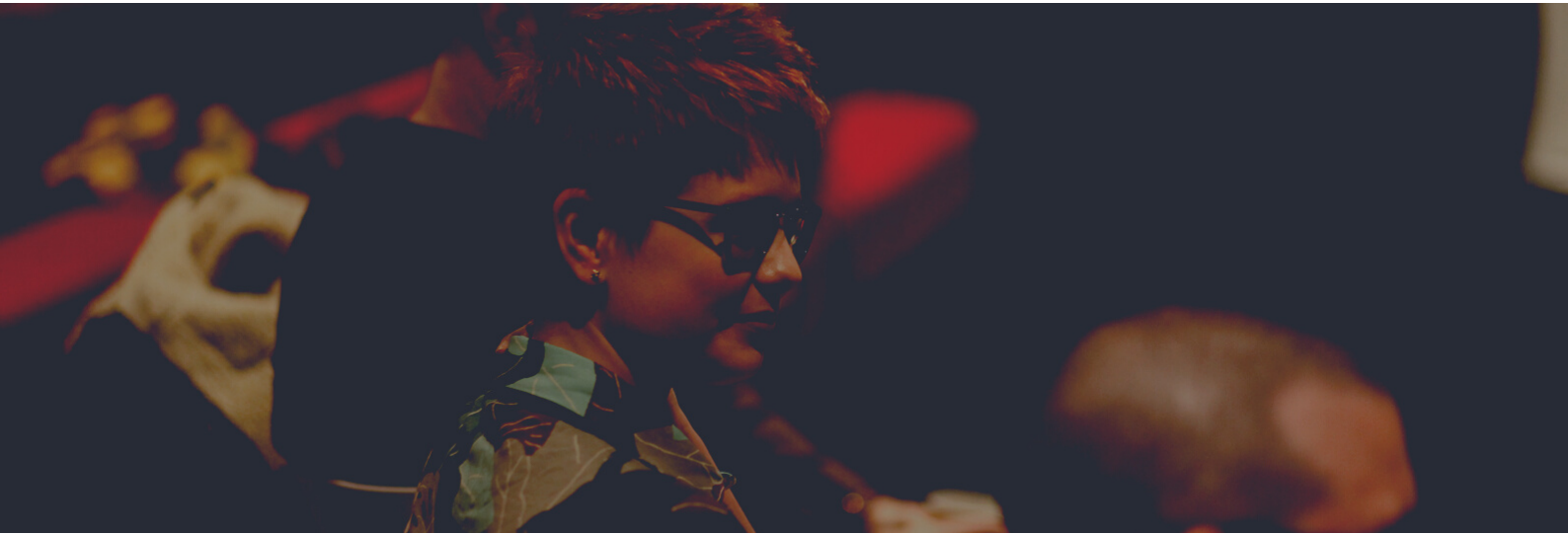
A third are **writers of colour**, and a third are **disabled**.

Five out of six (**86%**) are from the **LGBTQ+ community** and all writers identify as being from a **low socio-economic background***.



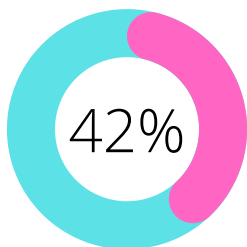
** Individuals from a low socioeconomic background would generally identify with at least two of the following criteria: spent time within the care system; registered as a young carer as a child; first generation of their family to attend university (or another Higher Education setting), or no one from the family has attended university or another HE setting; attended a non-selective state school from age 11-16; eligible for free school meals (if attending school after 1980); have been in receipt of Universal Credit (or equivalent state benefits e.g. housing benefit, income support, working tax credits, job seeker's allowance)*





Results from all respondents - including playwrights, actors, creatives and core team - are below. Not all respondents answered every question and the percentages below reflect the number of blank responses in each category.

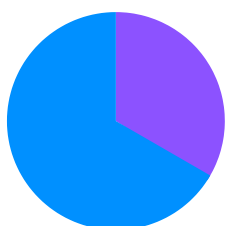
We've supported **10 writers, actors and creatives of colour** – a fifth (**21%**) of the total supported in the last 12 months. The industry average is 15%.*



20 survey respondents are from the **LGBTQ+ community**, representing **42%** of total supported in the last year compared to an industry average of 7%.*

25 respondents are **female (52%)** and 4 are **non-gender conforming (8%)**.

33% of respondents – 16 in total – come from a **low socio-economic background**.



28% of all respondents identify as disabled, compared to an industry average of just 4%.* We've supported **13 disabled writers and artists**.

* Source: ACE England NPO Annual Diversity Report 2018/19

