

## How we're doing: Equality Action Plan update

Summer 2021

### Summary of objectives

Blast Theory's Equality Action Plan 2020-22 focuses in particular on increasing representation from lower socio-economic groups, in the recognition that socio-economic status often intersects with race, disability (including neurodiversity) and other protected characteristics to heighten inequality.

We set four objectives for the two-year period covered by this plan:

- **Career development and paid opportunities:** we will support more people from our target groups - particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds; people of colour; and disabled people including neurodiverse people - into paid work in the arts, and we will also work to make sure that our paid opportunities (for instance as a freelance developer, producer or cast member) attract a diverse range of talent. With this, we also want to make sure that vacancies to join the Blast Theory team are more attractive and accessible to a wider range of candidates.
- **Talent development and skills sharing:** we will make sure that opportunities to access Blast Theory's 30-year experience of successful practice are available to artists from the above groups. This will benefit our practice and contribute to a wider range of talent being able to flourish in the sector.
- **Leadership and governance:** we will make sure that the Blast Theory Board of Trustees contains people with a wide range of personal and professional backgrounds, ages, and perspectives, and that they and the Blast Theory team have the skills and confidence to actively engage in our work around inequality. This will help to provide a healthy level of critical challenge for our work.
- **Blast Theory's work:** the work we make is about interaction, engagement and dialogue with the public. It's important that the participants and co-creators in our work bring different voices and perspectives to the table and that a wide range of people access, experience and enjoy our work. We will focus on removing barriers that traditionally restrict certain groups from having a platform in, or being able to contribute to, creative decision making and development processes.

## Career development and paid opportunities

What we will do	Who will lead	When we aim to get it done	How we will measure it	Update August 21
Expand the internship programme to offer 2 x two-month paid internships at the Real Living Wage	Business Director	Due to Covid-19 we can only deliver one paid internship in 2020/21; we will offer two more from 1 April 2021	Budgets and business plan	<p>With help from the government's Kickstart programme, we are able to offer four placements paid at the Real Living Wage this year. The first two placements started in April and will finish in October 2021. They are part-time, 25 hours per week.</p> <p>As Covid restrictions are lifted, our focus is on building relationships with more local organisations and gatekeepers to make sure the next two opportunities reach a diverse group of young people at risk of long-term unemployment. We are also focusing on fundraising for placements in 2022.</p>
Review the language for advertising opportunities (internships, mentoring, Pot Luck evenings) to make sure it is inclusive and welcoming, and to make it explicit who we are aiming to reach	Business Director	August 2020	Diversity dashboard: % of interns, mentees, Pot Luck attendees from target groups	<p>We have reviewed all our recruitment processes, including advertising of new opportunities.</p> <p>We ran an inclusive recruitment process for the Communications Manager post earlier this year with positive outcomes, as explained in our introduction above.</p> <p>We have made improvements in the way we are collecting and analysing data for recruitment call-outs and working to establish baselines. For the Communications Manager post we reached a diverse</p>

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				<p>range of applicants, with 16% identifying as non-binary; 43% as LGBTQ+; 15% as disabled; and 20% as neurodivergent. 3% described their ethnicity as Arab and 9% as Latin American. 76% were aged under 35.</p> <p>Our focus for the next year is to achieve a wider reach for local opportunities (such as Pot Luck evenings for local makers, mentoring and internships) via relationships with local organisations, as explained above.</p>
Form new relationships with organisations and educational settings who can help us to advertise our internship and mentoring opportunities e.g. POC-led organisations, sixth form colleges, universities and other higher education institutions	Artists' Assistant	December 2020	Diversity dashboard: % of interns and mentees from target groups	<p>We have built a positive new relationship with the Socially Engaged Arts Salon (SEAS), a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) and LGBTQ-led organisation in Brighton, and were delighted that they included a Blast Theory work in their The Force of Fantasy exhibition in March 2021. We hope that SEAS will be able to take up one of our artist residency slots in 2022, depending on funding. We also continue to build relationships with other organisations, including Rocket Artists, and are seeking opportunities to visit now that Covid restrictions are being lifted.</p> <p>This work remains a focus for us in the coming year.</p>

What we will do	Who will lead	When we aim to get it done	How we will measure it	Update August 21
Implement an open day and studio visits accompanied by a talk, Q&A, drinks and snacks, working with partners to reach target groups	Artists' Assistant	TBC: we'll add a concrete deadline as soon as Covid-19 restrictions allow us to welcome visitors to the studios again	Diversity dashboard: % of interns, mentees, Pot Luck attendees from target groups (captured via a simple light-touch monitoring form). Number of open days and studio visits per year, number of visitors and background of the visitors.	We have not yet been able to do this as we have only recently been able to amend our 'no visitors' policy following the relaxation of Covid restrictions. We remain keen to open our studio doors to local groups and will continue this work in the next year as part of our wider objective to build relationships with local organisations, schools and colleges.
Offer personal feedback to any job applicant who self-identifies as being from a lower socio-economic background; as a person of colour or disabled – paying close attention to their strengths, identifying areas for improvement and offering concrete actions and, where	Director	Whenever we advertise a vacancy	We'll review after every recruitment round, analysing applicant data and reviewing feedback process. We'll analyse how many and what % of applicants came from each of the identified groups	We now offer this as standard for all our recruitment processes, and this has been received well. We ran a total of four call-outs between July 2020 and July 2021, and offered personal feedback to 19 people.

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relevant, support to address these				
Advertise freelance opportunities widely and with welcoming, inclusive language that is explicit about who we want to apply	Business Director	As soon as we have a new opportunity to advertise	Diversity dashboard: % of freelancers (including cast and crew) from target groups	<p>We ran a wide call-out for freelance Production Assistants and Filmmakers in December 2020/January 2021, receiving around 130 applications. 13% of applicants were people of colour; 46% identified as LGBTQ+; 7% were non-binary; 13% were disabled.</p> <p>We often work with freelance developers on Blast Theory projects. We are keen to give opportunities to people who are earlier in their career and underrepresented in the industry. We will therefore create a targeted opportunity in autumn 2021 for a Junior Developer to work with us on a short sprint of development work. They will work on a freelance basis for one week, with plenty of feedback and learning built in. This will enable us to build new relationships and widen the pool of freelancers we work with.</p>

## Career development and paid opportunities: priorities for 2021-22

What we will do	Who will lead	When we aim to get it done	How we will measure it
Form new relationships with organisations and educational settings who can help us to advertise our internship and mentoring opportunities e.g. POC-led organisations, sixth form colleges, universities and other higher education institutions	Artists' Assistant	August 2022	Number of active relationships where there is regular exchange and dialogue  Diversity dashboard: % of interns and mentees from target groups
Invite local organisations and groups into the studio for a visit or open day	Artists' Assistant	August 2022	Number of studio visits per year, number of visitors and background of the visitors.
Recruit a Junior Developer to work with us on a short sprint, via Codebar; Girls Who Code; and other networks promoting diversity in the sector	Project Manager	November 2021	Monitoring data and evaluation of the recruitment process

## Talent development and skills exchange

What we will do	Who will lead	When we aim to get it done	How we will measure it	Update August 21
Offer free use of meeting room and free use of the residency space when available to POC-led organisations and artists	Business Director	TBC: we'll add a concrete deadline as soon as Covid-19 restrictions allow us to welcome visitors to the studios again	Internal management meetings and reviews	<p>We ran a call-out via local organisations in summer 2021 for free studio space and offered a four-week slot to Munya Muchati (<a href="#">Thirty10 Arts</a>), a filmmaker of colour based in Brighton.</p> <p>Because some of our residencies this year are remote due to Covid, we have offered use of the space to a SEAS artist in December 2021, and to two local young makers, including one artist of colour, in October.</p> <p>We will make one of our residency slots available to local organisations every year and hope to partner with SEAS again next year.</p>
Offer free use of the residency space when available to <a href="#">Rocket Artists</a> and other deaf/disabled artists	Business Director	As above	As above	<p>We are in touch with Rocket Artists to discuss using the residency space this year or next year, once the Covid-related risk has reduced sufficiently for us to safely host them.</p>
Review the language we use when advertising our Residency	Business Director	December 2020	Diversity dashboard: % of residents from target groups	<p>We were pleased to reach a diverse range of applicants for our 2021-22 residencies. We received a total of 26 applications, with 38% identifying as</p>

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programme to make sure it is inclusive and welcoming and it's explicit who we're targeting – with proactive advertising to diverse networks.				people of colour; 38% as LGBTQ+; and 12% as non-binary.  We are working to set baselines across our activity so we can better evaluate trends over time.

## Talent development and skills exchange: priorities for 2021-22

What we will do	Who will lead	When we aim to get it done	How we will measure it
Offer free use of our residency space to local artists and makers in our target groups	Ju Row Farr	December 2021	Internal evaluation; diversity dashboard
Offer one residency to a local organisation in 2021-22	Ju Row Farr	August 2022	Internal evaluation



## Leadership and governance

What we will do	Who will lead	When we aim to get it done	How we will measure it	Update August 21
Design Trustee recruitment plan to include wide advertising, clear and explicit language and review/analysis	Business Director	End March 2021 (one new Trustee appointed)	Director and Business Director will review monitoring data and recruitment process and report back to the Board.	We launched a Trustee recruitment call-out in June 2021, a bit later than originally planned. We applied inclusive recruitment principles which are now embedded across all our processes.
Review succession planning for the Board to maintain a balance of skills and backgrounds	Business Director, Director, Chair	End March 2021	Business Director, Director and Chair will discuss at meeting and report to the Board	<p>In preparation for recruitment we reviewed our existing skills audit as well as diversity aims. We used explicit and welcoming language in our recruitment pack.</p> <p>We have reached out into new networks and have advertised nationally to reach a more diverse pool of candidates to act as Trustees. We continue to have a diverse group of Trustees; including our first appointment in the current round of recruitment.</p>
Invite Trustees to undertake a skills audit that includes equality and diversity strengths and weaknesses	Business Director	Every two years starting 2020	The Director and Business Director will report on this to the Board of Trustees for review	We reviewed the skills audit with the Chair and Trustees earlier this year in preparation for Board recruitment. All our Trustees have deep knowledge of and commitment to D&I, and this is evidenced by in-depth discussions at each meeting (for instance

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				about inclusive recruitment, diversifying the team and Board, and Blast Theory's impact locally).
Implement compulsory unconscious bias training for the team. All staff will also attend a follow up session where we will agree concrete steps as to how we will address the unconscious biases that we all hold, and we will actively monitor the implementation of these actions. This will become a default part of the process for anyone joining Blast Theory.	Business Director	End August; then refreshed annually	Budgets and business plan  We'll also check in with staff at their annual review every December	<p>We realised as we started to implement this plan that 'unconscious bias training' is problematic and does not always drive desired outcomes. Instead of signing up for an 'off the shelf' training course, we engaged Yassine Senghor as our D&amp;I specialist in the summer of 2020. Yassine led an in-depth workshop with the full team in October, covering a range of topics including oppression, racism, power and privilege. Yassine also worked with us to review and refresh company policies and procedures including a full review of our Staff Handbook and recruitment procedures. We continue to work with her on an ad-hoc basis to make sure we keep making progress. And we have regular follow-up conversations with the full team to discuss D&amp;I, giving people opportunities to share thoughts and suggestions.</p> <p>For new starters, we have included D&amp;I in our induction procedures and we will arrange additional training where necessary.</p>

## Leadership and governance: priorities for 2021-22

What we will do	Who will lead	When we aim to get it done	How we will measure it
Analyse monitoring data from 2021 Trustee recruitment to identify learnings	Business Director	October 2021	Diversity dashboard; internal meeting minutes
Schedule regular D&I meetings with the Blast Theory team to discuss progress, challenges and actions	Business Director	August 2022	Internal meeting minutes
Use December 2021 staff review meetings to identify progress and actions for each team member	Business Director	December 2021	Staff review notes

## Blast Theory's work

What we will do	Who will lead	When we aim to get it done	How we will measure it	Update August 21
Assess each of our artworks for their theme and content to make sure we have a mixed portfolio of work that reaches different audiences	Director	Each time we develop a new work	The Director and Business Director will report on this to the Board of Trustees for review	<p>We will report to the Board annually in September, and will have a section in the September 2021 Director's report dedicated to this.</p> <p>This year the artists have ensured a portfolio of works that considers our engagement with diverse audiences and the relevance for specific groups. A Cluster of 17 Cases Online launched in Bengaluru (India) at a time of highest concern about Covid-19. Our Bloodyminded event on Facebook engaged veterans in a discussion about PTSD. Rider Spoke reaches out beyond typical arts audiences to cyclists. And we developed a range of adaptations to remove or reduce barriers for non-cyclists and those with impaired vision, hearing or mobility.</p> <p>We have reviewed our approach to gathering audience data and are currently focusing on Rider Spoke to capture more demographic data.</p>

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Invite a range of voices [for instance artists, practitioners, experts] during the creative process to make sure target groups are represented within the creation of the work. When our works involve the stories of people of colour, deaf/disabled people and/or those from socio-economic groups CDE we will engage with those groups to ensure that we are representing those stories appropriately.	Lead Artist for each project	Each time we develop a new work	The Director and Business Director will report on this to the Board of Trustees for review	<p>When we developed an ambitious creative concept for the Festival UK*2022 R&amp;D opportunity between December 2020 and February 2021, we were able to engage a focus group of 32 young people across the four nations. The panelists were from diverse backgrounds; some had disabilities and/or mental health issues. Over the course of two days, they responded to our outline concept in detail, and we used their feedback to further develop and strengthen our ideas. Making sure there were no barriers to access was a big part of this. Whilst a focus group of this scope and depth was only possible as part of a funded R&amp;D programme, we learnt a lot from the process and will apply this learning to future projects. For instance, we are exploring ways to run smaller focus groups or panels to review new creative concepts and then act as 'critical friends' as we develop the work.</p> <p>In summer 2021 we are working with Manchester Street Poem (MSP) during Manchester International Festival, to co-create a concept for a new project. MSP are a culturally and ethnically</p>

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				<p>diverse group, all with lived experience of homelessness. We are working closely with them to capture their ideas and stories.</p> <p>We are shaping a new creative idea in our role as cultural ambassadors for the Trustworthy Autonomous Systems Hub and as part of this will consider ways to invite different voices into the development process.</p>
For each project, work with local partners to engage target audiences appropriate to that place.	Lead Artist for each project	Each time we develop a new work	Project reporting/data	<p>From May 2021 we have started touring Rider Spoke again after redeveloping the work as an app last year. We carried out additional testing for accessibility (and captured what we learnt in <a href="#">this resource</a>). We encourage partner venues and festivals to work with local organisations to promote the work to different groups. We monitor take-up of the new accessibility features for each presentation and discuss this as part of our evaluation processes.</p> <p>We are also focused on improving our audience data collection and will implement a new approach in August 2021.</p>

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Use plain, welcoming language when describing the work online and in other marketing channels	Communications Manager	Each time we develop a new work	Internal reviews, management meetings and audience feedback	<p>As part of our review of communications, we are looking at the way we talk about our work across our channels, and how we can best reach different audiences. This is a work in progress.</p> <p>We have recently implemented consistent Image Descriptions across our web and social media posts and are assessing additional accessibility plug-ins for the website.</p>
Introduce access checklist when planning each project to make sure reasonable adjustments are made to allow those with access needs to participate (e.g. signage, captions, free Personal Carer tickets) and that e.g. food options and hours of work do not pose a	Project Manager	Each time we develop a new work	Internal reviews and management meetings	<p>We have introduced an access checklist which is updated regularly.</p> <p>One of our key areas of progress over the last year has been to introduce in-depth accessibility testing as standard across our projects. As part of this work, we introduced access checklists which we share with venue and festival partners. And we also wrote a <a href="#">new resource</a> about software accessibility testing, aimed at organisations working in similar areas who want to improve access for audiences with restricted mobility, hearing or vision in particular.</p> <p>Over the coming year we will monitor take-up of accessibility features for Rider Spoke and gather</p>

# BLAST THEORY

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barrier				audience feedback so we can improve future presentations.
Translate work into local language	Lead Artist for each project	Each time we develop a new work	Internal reviews and management meetings	<p>We are delighted to present a Lithuanian language version of Rider Spoke at SIRENOS festival in Vilnius in September 2021.</p> <p>We are bidding for European funding to explore new tour models for Rider Spoke that break down barriers for partners and audiences. Translation will form a key part of this.</p>
Invite voices of colour and/or deaf/disabled voices into testing and feedback process of our work	Lead Artist for each project	Each time we develop a new work	We'll use anonymous monitoring forms and self declaration to assess whether we're successfully doing this, and use internal management meetings to review and adjust our approach	<p>As part of our accessibility testing for Rider Spoke, we ran a call-out for testers with disabilities and paid them a fee to test the work and feed back to us. We also invited wheelchair and mobility scooter users to join our dress rehearsals so we could test procedures prior to opening.</p> <p>When we tested <a href="#">A Cluster Of 17 Cases Online</a> in March 2021, we created six testing opportunities for audiences of colour and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and did a targeted call-out for testers via local organisations. We wanted to make sure there were no financial barriers to access so we offered these as paid</p>



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				opportunities. We then assessed and acted on feedback from our testers to finalise the work before launching in April 2021. We will continue to offer targeted, paid testing opportunities to make sure we are able to gather and act on a diverse range of feedback.

## Blast Theory's work: priorities for 2021-22

What we will do	Who will lead	When we aim to get it done	How we will measure it
Establish how to invite different voices into the development process for Trustworthy Autonomous Systems	Director	December 2021	Internal meeting minutes
Implement new audience data process	Communications Manager	August 2021	Number of completed surveys
Use plain, welcoming language when describing the work online and in other marketing channels	Communications Manager	Each time we develop a new work	Internal reviews, management meetings and audience feedback
Monitor take-up of accessibility features for Rider Spoke and gather	Communications Manager	March 2022	Internal meeting minutes

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audience feedback to improve future presentations			
Seek opportunities to explore new tour models for Rider Spoke that break down barriers for partners and audiences	Business Director	August 2022	Internal evaluation
Offer targeted, paid testing opportunities for new work	Project Manager	August 2022	Internal evaluation