



## GEMS Roundtables on Women in the Media, Creative and Cultural Sectors, April 2021

The draft theory of change for Scotland's media and creative sectors was presented to a gathering of individuals, including researchers and representatives from organisations across the sectors; BBC Scotland, STV, Women in Journalism Scotland, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Scottish Women Inventing Music, P4 UK, the Scottish BAME Writers' Network, Scottish Women In Sport, Stellar Quines, the Piping Centre and the BIT Collective.

This paper summarises the thoughts and discussion that followed in some detail, with a Key Points section towards the end.

### 1. Sector-Specific Roundtables

In two roundtables (news journalism/broadcast media and creative/cultural), participants provided initial feedback on how the theory of change applied to their specific sectors.

#### Journalism/Broadcast Media

- There is a general lack of awareness in journalism that gender equality is a real problem needing tackled. But we need to balance speaking out about the issues without being off-putting or discouraging. The theory of change needs to be a message of **hope**.
- Online abuse is a big problem in journalism, which needs to be addressed. We need better organisational policies and better consequences, to protect whistle-blowers' careers if they report. Resilience training is a big priority, but the focus should be on decision-makers rather than those experiencing abuse. This should be included in the theory of change.
- Regulators such as Ofcom can play an important role in setting expectations and conditions.

#### Creative/Cultural Sectors

- Are the media and creative sectors too disparate? Can an Equal Media and Cultural Centre (EMCC) address even the creative sectors across the board, given how varied they are? Piping is at an infant stage, for example. There are also generational preferences for initiatives – e.g., support for pay discussion but not MeToo. Can we bring people together? We need to map out initiatives that have worked and best practice for the different sectors.
- There is a huge amount of information to make the case for change – how do we simplify it? Sometimes these discussions are too academic and jargon-led and intimidate certain class structures with lower access to education. How do we communicate the big issues to people who aren't involved? It's important to have strong communication and

engagement to achieve this. Can media and journalists play a role in covering gender inequality in the arts?

- We can learn from sport; Youth Football held a conference for swapping ideas which was a really positive experience.
- We need greater education of teachers and trainers in the creative sector. Can safeguarding training be made a requirement?
- We need an independent HR for freelancers who are left to struggle, but this would require buy-in from Unions.

## 2. Critique the Theory of Change

Participants were asked to reflect on three questions to help stress-test the theory of change critically and constructively:

- What assumptions have been made about this theory of change? What is missing?
- What will prevent this from being successful?
- Is this already happening? (Examples of best practice)

### What assumptions have been made about this theory of change? What is missing?

- There is no political will for change; such huge apathy is a problem. There is no appetite for change in certain news organisations – protecting reputations and positions is more vital.
- There are systemic cultural issues within institutions. Training, organisations, and structures are not designed with an intersectional lens. But we **do** need to change the institutions rather than the people who are excluded.
- Leadership is key, and we cannot assume senior figures are on board. We need to examine the breakdowns; having engaged leadership is key to long-term change.
- Our wider culture fails to recognise systemic issues – we need to change social attitudes as well.
- There is a lack of trust among excluded/marginalised groups within institutions. They may not wish to engage with a new project.
- Shifting practices needs to be balanced with maintaining/improving standards.
- In the creative and cultural sectors, there is no understanding of the commercial imperative for change – in a music context, for example, women are changing themselves to get gigs.

### What will prevent this from being successful?

- Short-termism. We must have sustained and guaranteed funding for a new change project; otherwise, it will fail. Institutions want to 'appear' like they are being proactive but take short-term approaches so really nothing changes.
- How do we find out who is not being represented – it's always about who shows up.
- Lack of research. We don't even know what still needs to be researched!
- Gatekeepers, who may try to influence the project from the beginning, and for whom there is little accountability in the real world. What are gatekeepers scared of? Public shaming? Removal of funds? Lack of access to influencers/content?

- Fear of repercussions for speaking out. Fear of consequences to your career. Fear of loss of funding if you report something which shows a weakness in your organisation.
- Putting the onus on women to create change. How do we square the work with the unpaid labour of women in making change?
- Resistance to change, and reluctance to take necessary steps. This may be due to precarity/capacity issues amongst organisations/individuals. Or it may seem like too much work (frame it positively!). It may also come down to: “We tried it once and it didn’t work.” Do we scare people off by talking about patriarchy and white supremacy?
- Creative Scotland has previously been resistant to sharing best practice/networks. It *could* play a key role in ensuring organisations that are championing gender equality are rewarded and instigating meaningful institutional cultural change.
- Lack of accountability/repercussions for companies who do not treat their staff fairly or take action to promote gender equality. In the arts, this is harder (“can we litigate the pub?”).
- Membership fees, which can block some people to engage when they most need it.
- A misunderstanding that social space is also professional space, and this creates an unbalanced and sometimes uncomfortable space for women.

### Is this already happening? (Examples of best practice)

- This roundtable! Good work is happening, but in silos – can we get people together more?
- Women in local journalism take a self-championing approach – we need to encourage women to recognise and promote their own achievements.
- Pass the Mic is an intermediary organisation that holds trust and can bridge the gap between individuals and institutions. How is this mainstreamed? Sustainable? Longer-term change is needed.
- Job shares in lower status roles are fantastic, but this is not replicated at senior levels and should be to create more space for women at the top.
- Sport and Youth work with vulnerable people seems to be working well.
- Whistleblowing processes can warn women that employers do not treat staff well, which can break the cycle of bad behaviour.

## 3. General Discussion

All participants then came together for a general discussion, using prompt questions:

- What is most important to the institutions that control funding/programming/curation/jobs?
- What role does the state play?
- What role do boards play?
- What other players are there?
- Do we need new infrastructure to make this happen?

Their discussion is summarised thematically here.

## Institutions

There is a widening gulf between good and bad institutions. There is also a gender disparity between large/mid-scale institutions. How do we support mid-scale organisations to do better but not be elbowed out (e.g., spending money on training)? Toolkits? Free training? Funding?

Mid-scale institutions are often run by women. They are gatekeepers but are also individuals and may be more open to change?

## Accountability

What does that mean in practice? What are the consequences? How are institutions being held accountable? What are the different sanctions?

## Motivations

We need to examine the motivations of actors within the process. Some honest conversations are required in an independent, safe space. Can institutions stop measuring success by commercial measures? What are gatekeepers scared of? Public shaming? Removal of funds? Lack of access to influencers/content?

## Creative Scotland

Recognising the sway that funding/money has on the ability of mid/small organisations to make change. Creative Scotland could take a stronger stance on implementing consequences for certain actions or inactions. Creative Scotland has issues with reporting procedures. Hesitancy among individuals to report issues of abuse due to fear of losing funding. Reluctance for Creative Scotland to take ownership of this and address this issue. Greater leadership from Creative Scotland and the representative bodies could be really powerful.

## Gatekeepers

How do we identify gatekeepers? Recruitment - all recruiters are gatekeepers. Bookers are too scared to hire women. They need some sort of incentive to give it equal focus. Is there an opportunity for mid-level gatekeepers to use the level of influence/power that they have to initiate/seed change higher up the ladder? Bring gatekeepers together to involve them in creating change from the outset.

## Leadership

Why are women not leading large institutions? What are the barriers? Are mentorship and champions enough? We need scaling opportunities for women as they ascend through leadership roles in institutions - gatekeepers, champions for female leaders.

## Monitoring

The role of monitoring is important – it creates an overview and helps understand standards. Is there a model for monitoring outputs? Can we create targets – this has helped at STV.

What counts as good content/sport/headlines? Do we need better standards drawn up?

## Audience Attitudes

How can we mobilise and change audiences' attitudes, so the demand for change is there? We can trust the audience to accept female art. We need substantial education and training to ensure people understand that there **is** a problem.

## Recruitment

Build recruitment networks which deliberately think outside of the box.

How do we demystify processes, appointments, awards, funding mechanisms etc.? Better clarity of communication/expectations? We need to think about internal communications practices as well as audience-facing.

Balancing the need to protect/recognise issues where they exist and not 'scaring people off' from entering the field, ensuring people are not discouraged. Safe spaces, mentors etc.?

How do we avoid equality tick-boxing?

## A Project for Change

We need to create a truly independent entity that is focused on engagement to gather information on needs and create responsive solutions with organisational accountability.

We need to start with understanding that this would be a long-term process and it is not going to be easy. There are no quick solutions, and it needs substantial investment.

Can we learn from classical music here - they are able to push boundaries with new music, whilst also keeping up audiences through popular composers? This is done through a mix of funded streams of events, in conjunction with - say - a series of Beethoven symphonies.

We need to talk more about the benefits of the change we want to implement.

## 4. Deep Dive: Specific Measures

Participants broke into two final roundtables to discuss two specific measures:

- Targets and Quotas
- Rewards/Awards

### Targets & Quotas

- Quotas can create change. Change will not necessarily happen organically
- Quotas help 'educate' audiences
- Audiences are unaware of quotas once it has happened
- Quotas can increase exposure to 'new' experiences
- Quotas have worked in other countries - Sweden has gender quotas for music
- Quotas can lead to short-term changes
- Do we need quotas/targets for promotion and amplification as well?
- Often a lot of resistance to quotas
- Chicken and egg in the arts - need to create opportunities also

- Targets aren't a thing you set and then forget about it, need to be embedded
- Targets have to be ambitious but achievable - this will be different for different sectors and can be moveable, e.g., 30 per cent in 10 years, 50 per cent in 15 years
- Targets encourage tick-boxing
- What are we trying to achieve? Content representative of the population (Scotland/global)? Or something else?
- Problems occur when targets are exceeded
- Danger of just becoming about statistics and numbers
- Be clear that we are already using positive discrimination whenever we recruit
  
- What are the next steps after putting in a quota?
- Agents are reluctant to do things differently
- What are 'measures of success'? At present, these are just based on audience figures. We need to broaden this out to audience reach, e.g., Netflix measures success as new subscribers
- Nothing is restricted to Scotland now! We have international reach/audiences
- Restructure / provide support / consult / listen
- Need to create role models and visibility of women
- Can we have a 'how to' guide which is adaptable for different sectors?
  
- Need to address the benefits of diversity and difference
- Don't just put someone in a position and then leave them to drown
- Classical music is really good to learn from - funding for innovation. Blind auditions, then (non-blind) probation for orchestras - mixed success

## Rewards/Awards

- Public/private sector divide in where awards are situated
- Sponsors, commercial interests involved can shape the nature of an awards programme
- Cost of attending awards, lack of access is a huge issue
- Awards themselves lead to rewards; what is the impact in terms of access, consequences, and how does this play into existing disparities?
- Award for payment schemes popping up, leading to issues of credibility/reputation
- Avoiding tokenism
- Processes of nominations and categories of awards, ensuring that these do not perpetuate exclusion
- Scottish Press Awards, are the same people winning? Perception of impenetrability
- How are awards measured when it comes to decisions about funding, especially public funding? What does the presence of an award actually tell us, and where is the quality assurance around what an award actually leads to?
- Embedding gender equality with the design of awards right from outset rather than tweaking systems that are problematic
  
- Accreditation schemes - already a busy landscape
- A system that recognises impact and outcomes that is based in evidence rather than some kind of benchmark/stamp of approval?

- Women in leadership positions, visibility and representation important
- Governance is a huge issue. Board stagnation. Creative Scotland and other public funders don't look enough at governance?
- Visible scrutiny, transparency, making targets and outcomes public?
- Hesitancy to confront issues due to fears of funding – a recurring theme
- Generational change - shift in attitudes and need to support younger generations to initiate change without fear of repercussion
- Intrenched attitudes among women of having to 'serve your time', gatekeepers among older women who inadvertently hold up the unequal systems and structures keeping younger women out
- Balancing between recognising achievement/good practice and also creating opportunities to 'call out' or confront issues where this is not happening
- How to shift power from the existing bases to new structures?
- Mainstreaming diversity and equality. This is a key goal
- Taking a more holistic view of what equal representation in media looks like, mainstreaming an intersectional approach right from the outset
- We need to be more radical!

## 5. Key Points for a Theory of Change for Scotland

Who is responsible for what, and accountable to whom? What does accountability look like?

We need to motivate rather than alienate decision-makers. How do we frame ideas to be most accessible? Any new venture would benefit from a strong Communications Officer.

A new change project should act as an intermediary, helping to bring together voices that wouldn't usually be in the same space for honest conversation.

Data and parameters are needed to decide what we are aiming for: standards, guidelines, benchmarks and best practice.

We need ways to make it clear that this **is** a problem: this is the first hurdle needing addressing in many sectors. We can do this through evidence and state attention.

We need spaces/events like this to discuss ideas further and hear from more people.

We need to embed new institutional practices, not create add-on extra tasks.

There are differences between the industries and sectors, but also overlapping issues of recruitment pipelines, gatekeepers, funding, employment practices and empty box-ticking EDI exercises.

### Layers of Accountability

**Content creators** – if you are in a position to be able to, then do not engage with institutions lacking fair, progressive policies and demonstrable work towards targets.

**Commissioners/editors** – you have a duty of care to marginalised voices. Decision-makers must be aware of what they are asking of contributors and what their responsibilities are to support them.

**Journalists** – Set yourself targets in terms of sources/panellists.

**Recruiters** - Recognise your role in making processes more equitable. Seek out specialist equality and diversity support to overhaul these.

**Audiences** – Demand more representational content, complain to regulators and look at where you spend your money.

**Leaders** – Make sure you are listening to marginalised voices and perspectives, lead by example, instigate change, and don't be afraid to be radical.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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### ABOUT ENGENDER

Engender is Scotland's feminist policy and advocacy organisation, working to increase women's social, political and economic equality, enable women's rights, and make visible the impact of sexism on women and wider society. We work at Scottish, UK and international level to produce research, analysis, and recommendations for intersectional feminist legislation and programmes.

### ABOUT GENDER EQUAL MEDIA SCOTLAND

Gender Equal Media Scotland is a coalition of journalists, organisations and academics working to bring about women's equality in Scotland's media. The post of Development Officer is hosted by Engender, Scotland's feminist policy and advocacy organisation, on behalf of GEMS.