EQUAL MEDIA &
CULTURE CENTRE
FOR SCOTLAND

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: women in media, creative and cultural sectors in Scotland

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INTRODUCTION

Media and culture are critically important to Scotland's society and economy. While significant strides have been made across Scottish media, creative and cultural sectors in terms of the representation and inclusion of women and marginalised groups, many barriers to equality and diversity persist. This report – and its accompanying literature review – provides a summary of existing work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in Scotland, alongside a qualitative case study of the experiences of women participating in and/or leading Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) related initiatives across these sectors. Through thematic analysis and drawing on lived experiences of key stakeholders, the report highlights key opportunities for, and obstacles to, advancing EDI in media, creative and cultural sectors; and concludes by reflecting on wider implications and lessons for change strategies.

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EDI AND REPRESENTATION

IN MEDIA, CREATIVE AND CULTURAL SECTORS IN SCOTLAND

As highlighted by many of our interviewees, and in the wider literature, EDI is a broad and sometimes contested term, that has been defined in different ways and can mean different things in different contexts. For the purposes of this report, we understand EDI to encompass a broad set of strategies aimed at transforming **workforces**, **leadership** and **outputs** (EMCC 2023). This allows for sufficient flexibility to examine themes across a variety of inter-related but different industries. Our focus here is on institutional and organisational change. EDI strategies incorporate a range of actors and stakeholders – governments, institutions, third sector organisations, civil society – and institutional and organisational sites, with initiatives implemented internally and/or externally to organisations (Engender 2021; Eikhof 2023).

The funding models and work patterns that predominate in the media, creative and cultural sectors make it difficult to identify and implement 'one size fits all' EDI measures (Engender 2022); nevertheless, commonalities exist across these sectors. It has become standard for companies and organisations to collect, monitor and report diversity and inclusion data, within a wider framework of legal obligations including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), and specific duties in Scotland. EDI data collection is an important undertaking in itself – providing a starting point for change, as well as a means through which progress can be monitored and evaluated within organisations (Eikhof 2023). External pressure through data monitoring, reports and research can also help push for change (Engender 2022); where there is political, organisational and/or public will to use it. At the same time, the PSED framework has also been critiqued for prioritising 'paperwork over change' (CRER 2021: 3) and providing insufficient direction on how public bodies should use this data to develop effective action (see also Close the Gap 2022).

Existing data and previous reports point to improvements in diversity and representation across media, creative and cultural sectors, but also continuing inequalities. This includes patterns of ongoing vertical and horizontal segregation (see Kenny et al. 2021; EMCC 2023). In publishing, museums and galleries, for example, women make up a high percentage of the workforce, but are not as well represented in senior positions, with women of colour particularly under-represented. In film and television, meanwhile, women are better represented than men in off-screen jobs, but make up a minority of writers and directors, and are more likely to be concentrated in 'feminine' coded positions like costume and wardrobe (Creative Diversity Network 2023, Kreager and Follows 2018). However, intersectional data gaps remain, and many studies and reports continue to focus on the UK as a whole, rather than provide Scottish-specific data.

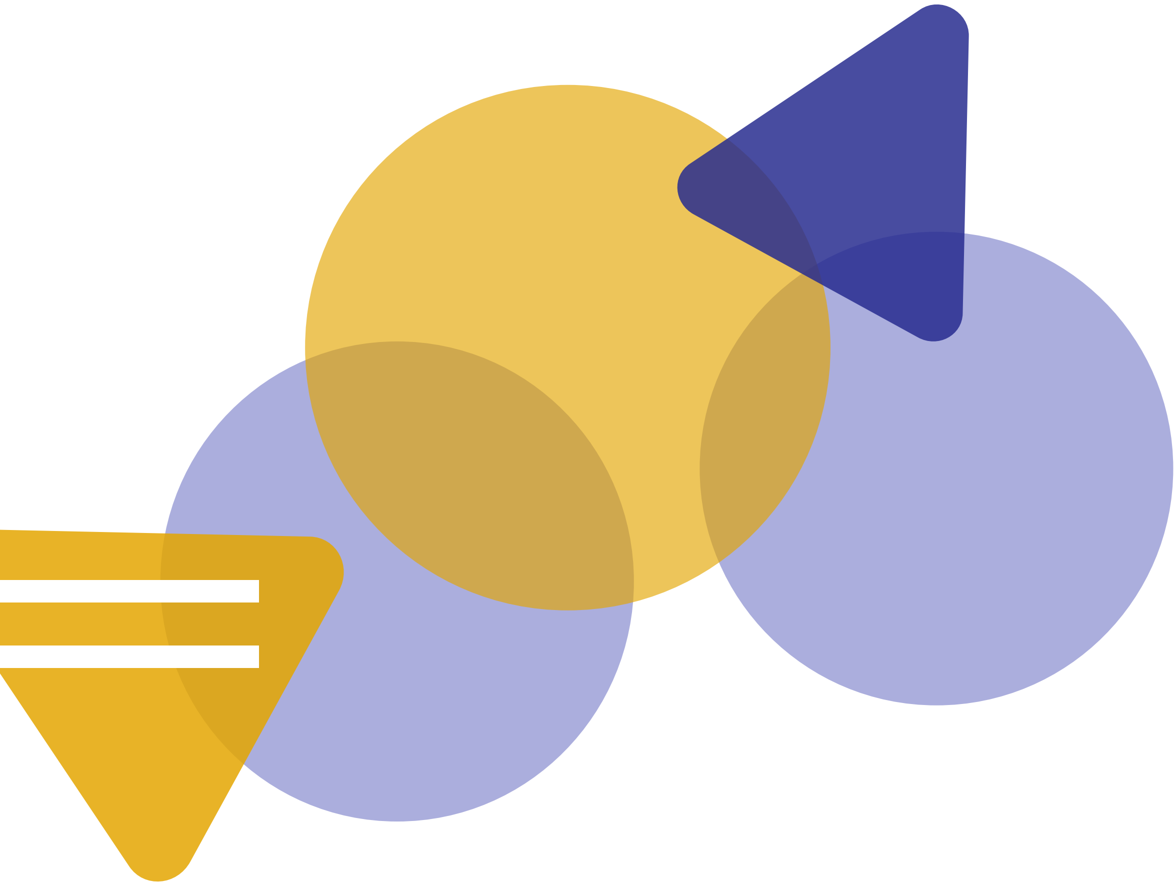
Amongst these industries, journalism, film and television, have been the most researched sectors – including both on and off-screen. Here, there has been a promising move towards intersectional data collection – Ofcom, for example, now includes new cross-sectional data for their Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in TV and Radio annual report. This includes data on, for example: race and ethnicity with socio-economic background; race and ethnicity with disability; race and ethnicity with sex; and disability with socio-economic background (see Ofcom 2023). The Scottish media monitoring project hosted by Pass the Mic, meanwhile, investigated where and how women of colour were represented in Scottish news, focusing on the 'top' news stories of each day, including the journalists involved in reporting those stories (Boyle et al. 2024). The Equal Media and Culture Centre's (EMCC) (2023) *Diversity at the Top* report on leadership and board representation in Scotland's art, media, cultural and sport industries counted CEOs, Executive Directors, board members, and Chairs according to sex and race. Nevertheless, the majority of organisations and studies continue to take a single-axis approach, treating different characteristics as separate, and largely focusing on gender inequality first – whilst also pointing to data collection issues and privacy concerns with regards to small sample sizes.

Beyond data collection and monitoring, EDI strategies in media, creative and cultural sectors have focused on diversifying outputs, workforces and leadership, recognising the relationship between who works in these industries and what they produce (EMCC 2023; see also Eikhof 2023). The Amplifi gig series at the Queen's Hall in Edinburgh, for example, curates and promotes performances from Black musicians and musicians of colour; while the disability-led Birds of Paradise theatre company seeks to develop and promote disabled actors. On-screen initiatives like the BBC 50:50, The Equality Project and STV Diversity and Inclusion, for example, aim to secure gender balance and diversity across content. In Scotland, efforts like STV Expert Voices and Pass the Mic encourage producers to draw on diverse expert voices in media; with the latter also running annual training and writers' group sessions for women of colour interested in media commentary.

Strategies aimed at workforce representation often focus on critical career junctures, for example, on recruitment, progression and/or promotion. Targeted internship programmes – like the Black Professionals Scotland Internships with the BBC – aim to help under-represented groups enter the professional pipeline. Mentoring and development programmes seek to provide support and build networks for women and marginalised groups – examples include the Scottish Documentary Institute's New Voices programme for aspiring women and non-binary documentary directors and producers; or Women in Journalism Scotland's free training, networking and mentorship initiatives, including a recent initiative to ring-fence sports journalism mentorships for women. Anti-sexual harassment initiatives seek to recognise and stop sexual harassment at work and provide advice and support for victim-survivors – for example, the intersectional feminist theatre company Stellar Quines's #ArtsAgainstHarassment campaign.

Inequalities in representation in content and in participation ‘behind-the-scenes’ are inter-linked with leadership inequalities. Initiatives like diversity targets for boards and executive leadership are aimed at including diverse experiences and enabling more equitable decision-making, with the argument that this will have positive impacts on internal workplace cultures and externally facing content (Engender 2022; EMCC 2023). For example, following the launch of the Scottish Government’s 50:50 by 2020 campaign in 2016, Scotland’s national performing companies – including the National Theatre of Scotland, Scottish Ballet, Scottish Opera, and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra – all committed to gender-balancing their boards.

As these different examples and initiatives demonstrate, ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion in practice is a complex and contextual undertaking, requiring interconnecting and intersectional strategies to deliver change.



METHODOLOGY

Building on the above studies, this report focuses on the qualitative experiences of key stakeholders participating in and/or leading on EDI-related initiatives across media, creative and cultural sectors in Scotland. Qualitative methods provide in-depth and thematic insights into lived experiences of those doing EDI work, and their evaluation of different (and often inter-locking) strategies. It is particularly insightful when dealing with smaller sample sizes. We interviewed ten women from across media/journalism, performance, TV & film, music, libraries and publishing sectors between January and March 2024. Participants were asked about their experiences of EDI initiatives, and invited to reflect on opportunities, obstacles, and effectiveness; as well as on how change might be achieved through additional or further initiatives and strategies. Participants are identified by number and the broad sub-sector in which they work, in order to preserve anonymity.

The breakdown of the anonymous participants' broad sub-sectors are as follows:

- **Interviewee 1: Publishing/Music**
- **Interviewee 2: Publishing/Journalism**
- **Interviewee 3: Film**
- **Interviewee 4: Journalism/TV**
- **Interviewee 5: Journalism/TV**
- **Interviewee 6: Journalism**
- **Interviewee 7: Music**
- **Interviewee 8: Film**
- **Interviewee 9: Theatre**
- **Interviewee 10: Libraries**

The research project was approved through the ethical review process in the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh.

RECRUITMENT

Different industries in the Scottish media, creative and cultural sectors have different practices, recruitment pipelines, and funding landscapes. Nevertheless, shared themes can be identified across our interviews in terms of the critical 'life-cycle' junctures where change strategies were seen to be most effective.

Early Interventions

Interviewees highlighted the importance of intervening early in the educational pipeline - 'it needs to start in school' *[Interviewee 3]*. In line with the findings of previous reports (Kenny et al. 2021), outreach in schools was seen as a crucial strategy to encourage a more diverse range of young people to seek careers in media, creative and cultural industries:

> **"It has to be at school-level, with younger people, so we are seen as a potential employer"**
> *Interviewee 4*

> **"I think it needs to start either, you know, early secondary school or even like late primary because I think by the time it gets to university it's almost too late"**
> *Interviewee 5*

Visibility was seen as an important facet of this, particularly in terms of normalising and facilitating the presence of multiply marginalised groups of women in these sectors, including women of colour and women from working class backgrounds *[Interviewee 3]*. One interviewee reflected on her own experiences:

> **"When I was at school, you know, I kind of knew early on that I wanted to be a [XXX], but ... I didn't see any other woman of colour doing it in Scotland. And maybe if I had, I would have been a bit more confident about wanting to pursue that"**
> *Interviewee 1*

Several interviewees stressed the importance of continuous engagement, rather than shorter 'one-off' talks or events: 'It should be constant encouragement and emphasising there's a place in that industry for that person' *[Interviewee 1]*. Others highlighted the impact of initiatives such as specific in-house educational activities for children and their families, including youth festivals, and talent development opportunities for those interested in a career in a specific sector, with a particular focus on marginalised communities *[Interviewee 3]*.

Teachers and local authorities were identified as key actors for change. Interviewees highlighted the limiting power of entrenched attitudes, including institutional racism, and the impact of this in shaping stereotypes about who should be encouraged to pursue careers in these sectors: '[it is] really important to invite educators and teachers to this discussion' *[Interviewee 2]*. Local authorities were seen to be both key facilitators and potential obstacles to school outreach efforts – for example, one interviewee spoke about their experiences trying to get local authorities to disseminate promotional materials in schools, and the need to understand that: 'one size doesn't fit all in terms of being able to deliver stuff and seeing the value of it and wanting to kind of help out a little bit more to make things happen' *[Interviewee 7]*.

Workplace Recruitment

The importance of the pipeline from education into professional posts was highlighted by many participants, and recruitment was a major theme across all interviews: 'there needs to be more work at the start of this, so there is a pipeline...to get people into the schemes for that phase, especially for marginalised women' *[Interviewee 3]*. Interviewees framed their answers in terms of the links between diversity in the workforce and diversity in content, stressing the importance of hiring processes in ensuring the former and thereby enabling the latter. These were seen to be self-reinforcing – greater visibility of more diverse 'talent', for example, can shape hiring practices, and vice versa *[Interviewees 1, 8]*. Many interviewees called for greater emphasis and transparency in terms of how EDI is integrated and embedded in recruitment practices and how these are monitored. These related to monitoring who applied for posts and how organisations were engaging with diverse communities in their processes:

> **"I can see a lot of progress, there are more discussions and there are some [who] are taking some steps towards that ... but it is not enough, I don't see, for example, initiatives that are more actively working to employ people from diverse backgrounds"**
>
> *Interviewee 2*

Interviewees highlighted generational shifts (particularly post-Covid and the #MeToo era) in terms of the expectations of younger workers who they say are 'less willing to tolerate having to be resilient to, you know, bad practice in the workplace' *[Interviewee 6]*.

Ways of working and informal work cultures, particularly those which are in challenging, 'fast-paced environments' *[Interviewee 4]* were seen to be a specific barrier in recruitment in these specific sectors. This was even more so the case when employers needed 'ready-skilled' workers in a post quickly, rather than going through lengthy recruitment processes:

> **"Inevitably when you talk about targeted recruitment or reaching out to different communities, that takes time to nurture those relationships, to bring in talent pools, so people often will say "I don't have time to spare"**
>
> *Interviewee 4*

Employers were also cited as a specific barrier. As Interviewee 7 put it, employers would say they had an 'open door' policy when it came to diverse recruitment, but didn't do more to understand and address the systemic barriers which stopped more diverse groups of people applying for posts in their sector:

> **"That's a limitation of their understanding if they think they're being inclusive by saying, "Oh yeah, we're here," as opposed to actually going out and engaging with people ... I think that's a kind of widespread attitude that exists, particularly in [...] sector, is people think that because they've... made an open call that they've done their job"**
>
> *Interviewee 7*

Low pay, high cost of living and lack of stable employment were all cited as issues for those beginning their careers in the media, creative and cultural sectors, which interplayed with issues around precarious contracts, freelance work and more ad hoc hiring practices for production-based roles, rather than administrative ones:

> **"We especially see for freelancers just so many inequalities ...you've got no employment rights. It's hard luck in terms of whether you're working with an editor or commissioner who is flexible and understanding"**
>
> *Interviewee 6*

> **"...we can do some really great recruitment, really great proper processes when it comes to hiring someone who works in admin but when it comes to hiring [someone in production] we tend to fall back on who do you know, what can be seen, who's really visible and who you've worked with before**
>
> *Interviewee 9*

Interviewee 6 said that there was also a need for more transparency about pay scales and grades at the point of recruitment, with low or undefined starting salaries exacerbating pay inequalities. They recommended establishing more transparent standards across their sector:

> **"It's about trying to lobby the industry to improve their practices, because, you know, with recruitment saying "competitive salary" it puts women and other minoritized groups at a massive disadvantage in terms of securing fair and equal pay for the work they do"**
>
> *Interviewee 6*

Interviewees also cited examples of best practice in organisational recruitment processes, including work in their own organisation/body on developing staff training in diverse and inclusive recruitment practices, such as amending questions asked as part of the interview process *[Interviewee 10]*. They also emphasised the importance of linking recruitment with monitoring retention as part of an 'overall inclusive practice', which we return to below: 'are we creating a work environment, where even if we were to successfully appoint people, are they going to stay?' *[Interviewee 10]*.

Retention

As the above quote highlights, once marginalised groups are through the door, there also need to be interventions in place to keep them there. While some interviewees gave credit to 'all sorts of schemes in the creative industries where they're targeting minoritized groups, or you know, work experiences or internships' *[Interviewee 6]*, many felt there was an absence of longer-term or later-career initiatives and support to help with sustainable career progression and to combat the 'leaky pipeline' of people leaving these sectors:

> **"I think the initiatives that happen to get more people involved, I think they're great that they exist … but often the problem is there is no follow-through afterwards and people that are involved with those initiatives are just left to figure it out and it's the next step we need more help with"**
>
> *Interviewee 1*

> **"The thing is, there's loads of initiatives. A lot of them are focused on getting people into the industry, but then they're not, like, "okay...well then what do you do?" There's nothing to sustain career progression"**
>
> *Interviewee 6*

> **“There was always a passion to get women training and seeing them succeed...but then disappointed at seeing them not being able to sustain a career”**
>
> *Interviewee 8*

The mid-career stage, in particular, was identified as a crucial stage for women, as a critical career juncture on the path to more senior roles, as well as a key moment where mid-career demands intersect with caring responsibilities and career interruptions. In addition to care, interviewees also pointed to the importance of other key support initiatives for mid-career and older women, for example, menopause support *[Interviewees 9, 10]*:

> **“I don’t think there is a problem getting people through the door, I think it’s mid-career. More pastoral care to move up, at that stage... I think it’s that mid to senior level that we’re still not seeing enough diversity”**
>
> *Interviewee 4*

> **“I do think there is a mid-career point where there is a real need for that support and injection in terms of creating leaders and retaining people and turning those beginning opportunities to something sustainable because I think that’s where we lose a lot of people”**
>
> *Interviewee 9*

> **“In my experience, women are still taking up the vast majority of caring duties...it is putting women in [...] at a disadvantage. When they come back, they have to fight their way back into what they were doing before. I don’t think that has changed”**
>
> *Interviewee 5*

Masculinised work cultures and inflexible or irregular working patterns were seen to further compound care-related inequalities, with networking and events often taking place in the evening or outside regular working hours *[Interviewee 10]*. This was seen to further limit access and opportunity for women with care responsibilities, with women being ‘pigeonholed into ‘a women’s issue thing’ or ‘missing out’ on shifts, contracts or other opportunities because they are perceived to be ‘unreliable, because they’re women’ *[Interviewee 6]*. Many of the industries within these wider sectors rely on freelance or contract work affecting entitlement to, and provision of, policies around maternity, parental leave and unpaid care: ‘until this changes, it will be harder for women to push their way forward’ *[Interviewee 5]*. Others pointed to long and irregular hours and ‘greedy’ institutional cultures, arguing that a ‘five day working week, rather than a seven day working week’ would help mitigate inequalities *[Interviewee 9]*.

While post-pandemic working cultures were seen to open up opportunities, access and flexibility *[Interviewee 10]*, others highlighted how this might inhibit the formation of mentoring and networking relationships, which largely operate informally *[Interviewee 6]*. Flexibility – or inflexibility – in work practices was often put down to the attitudes of those in leadership positions, whereby those that were more attuned to the needs of different groups would be more supportive:

> **“There are many who are super inclusive and tuned in…and then on the other side of the scale, you have no flexibility”**
>
> *Interviewee 8*

Though many acknowledged there were changes happening in their sector, and the important role of trade unions in this *[Interviewee 3, Interviewee 6]*, some felt progress was undermined by a lack of resources and slow processes:

> **“We’re trying to learn about the things that we can do, but I think [we’re] still in our comfort zone. It’s maybe a wee bit of tweaking around the edges type stuff, which is good and it is positive, like it’s not negative, but big transformational change isn’t something that I would say we’ve seen yet in our work … when everybody’s stretched and tired do you get those transformative projects?”**
>
> *Interviewee 3*

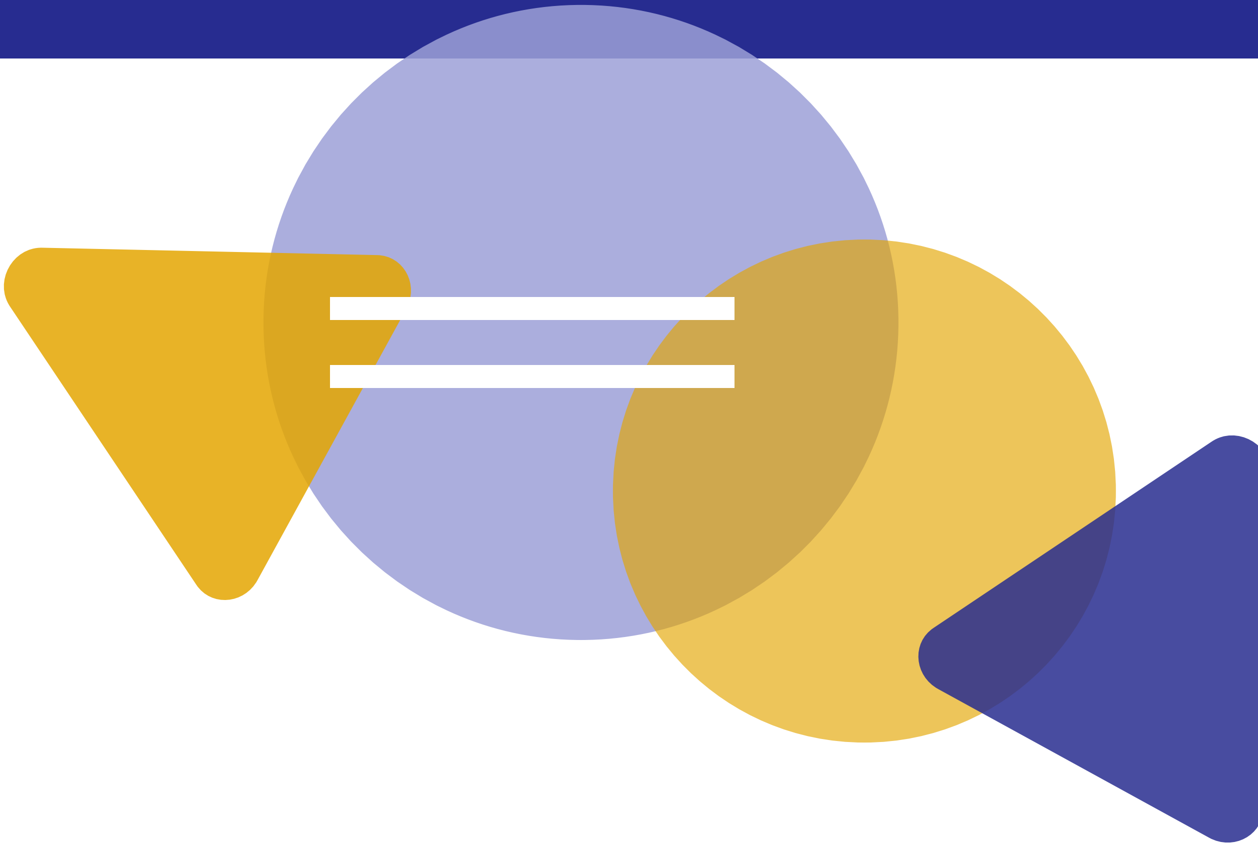
> **“A proactive thing would just be able to do away with some of the kind of quite old school rules as well. So we are gradually pushing through different real changes through our […] member democracy processes, but it’s slow”**
>
> *Interviewee 7*

SUMMARY

- **Early interventions in the educational and professional pipeline are important, particularly in terms of normalising and facilitating the presence of multiply marginalised groups of women.**

- **Participants emphasised the importance of diverse, inclusive and transparent recruitment practices – as well as pro-active engagement with marginalised groups.**

- **Employers need to give more consideration to EDI initiatives aimed at supporting the career progression and retention of diverse women and other marginalised groups over the medium- to longer-term, and specifically, through critical career junctures (including, care-related and other career interruptions, and menopause.)**



MONITORING AND METRICS

As previously highlighted, data collection can be used strategically both internally and externally to monitor trends in workforce numbers, leadership and outputs, and to push for change. Many interviewees highlighted the importance of data collection and monitoring in terms of building an evidence-base to support future initiatives and policies: 'you need to know what you're working with, and where the gaps are, and how to improve and focus your resources according to that' *[Interviewee 6]*.

Interviewees acknowledged that it was sometimes easier to track trends in production and content and audience rates, rather than workforce patterns. Some called for more resources to be targeted at monitoring both recruitment and retention: 'where are the women falling out of our [recruitment] process?' *[Interviewee 4]*. It was also seen to be important to track career progression (or not) into leadership roles *[Interviewee 4]*.

At the same time, there were concerns that focusing on data collection and monitoring risked employers relying upon 'blunt statistics' *[Interviewee 6]*. Focusing on disability specifically, one interviewee raised concerns that this focus might hinder deeper engagement with barriers to diversity and inclusion:

> **"If the proportion of disabled people [working as XX] is more or less equivalent to the number of disabled people in employment…the risk of just a blunt statistic like that is that employers go… "Okay, everything's fine with disability." It really isn't. I can tell you it really isn't, you know there are so many barriers. But there's a nuance behind it"**
>
> *Interviewee 6*

Interviewee 4 highlighted how focusing on separate categories in data collection, rather than taking a more nuanced, intersectional approach, could be restrictive: 'you are immediately forced into a certain way of thinking – of five key strands or whatever it might be,' later adding 'we tend to pick and choose depending where we think people fall.' Others highlighted the importance of adopting multiple methods of data collection, in particularly highlighting the importance of properly resourced qualitative research on lived experience: 'make sure you're bringing in lived experience but also rewarding lived experience because it's helping to improve the organisation' *[interviewee 6]*.

Data collection and monitoring was also seen to be difficult for smaller organisations with limited resources. For some, this meant relying on qualitative, ad hoc feedback rather than 'hard data' *[Interviewee 3]*. Challenges were identified around medium- and longer-term monitoring: 'We are a small organisation so we have not gone back to people in six months' time, we don't have that process. We ask for feedback at the time' *[Interviewee 9]*.

SUMMARY

- Data collection (both internal and external) can provide an important evidence-base for EDI-related initiatives and policies.
- Qualitative research can add important depth and nuance to quantitative patterns, but the sharing of lived experience should also be recognised and supported accordingly.
- Intersectional approaches to data collection and monitoring continue to be limited; but should be integrated where possible and appropriate.

TRAINING, MENTORING AND NETWORKING

Workplace cultures, conditions and lack of opportunities for career progress and advancement continue to inhibit different groups of women within particular sectors (Engender 2022). Interviewees reflected on progress and barriers to developing inclusive workplace cultures, as well as development-oriented schemes aimed at supporting the recruitment, retention and advancement of women and marginalised groups in their sectors.

EDI & Workplace Culture

Many of the interviewees, particularly those who worked for larger organisations, pointed to an increased focus on EDI in their workplace culture, associated training and implementation of policies and initiatives. While most participants felt there had been improvements with regards to gender equality in their sectors, and a move towards a more "joined-up" and intersectional approach, they also felt that in some respects progress had been more limited and slower than expected.

To many, there was still work to do in terms of developing fully inclusive workplace policies and strategies, with some EDI initiatives seen as tokenistic, 'superficial' *[Interviewee 4]*, 'rhetoric-heavy' *[Interviewee 2]* or 'performative' *[Interviewee 7]*, which was also seen to affect the buy-in of the wider workforce. For example, Interviewee 3 described the 'hypocrisy' of being asked to write fair work strategies while facilitating big sector events where speakers were not paid.

Varying understandings of what constitutes EDI was also seen as a barrier to change. This was to some extent reflected in the different trends in terminology and abbreviations, such as EDI, D&I, DEIB: 'there is no set meaning and it is so different for different people' *[Interviewee 4]*. This extended to the term 'inclusion' in particular:

> **"I don't think there is a set meaning of the word inclusion, which I think is probably part of the problem. I think when we talk about diversity, people know what we talk about, we talk about differences … inclusion is all of those differences, i.e. different people with different experiences, feeling valued to be their best self"**
>
> *Interviewee 4*

The relationship between diversity and inclusion was seen by many to be crucial to issues of retention and sustainable career progression:

> **"People talk about diversity without recognising you can't have diversity without inclusion. Because okay, yes, you might temporarily add a couple more women to the team, but they're not going to stay if they don't feel that they're a full and equal part of that team. If they're not valued by the organisation. People are tuned in to sniffing out stuff that is inauthentic and tokenistic. Nobody wants to be the token woman or the token disabled person, or any other. You want to know you're there on your own merit, and that you have the same opportunities to progress as everybody else"**
>
> *Interviewee 6*

Others pointed to the persistence of some resistance to EDI initiatives, rooted in arguments that change should happen 'naturally' or 'organically' over time, rather than through direct action:

> **"There were a few people that were like, "Oh, you know, this is box ticking. "Why are we doing this? "This should just happen organically."...we had to kind of go through other reasons why that probably wouldn't happen. I would see a tiny bit of resistance, but those voices were in the minority rather than the majority"**
>
> *Interviewee 5*

Overall, there was a need for important shifts in mindset about why EDI initiatives were undertaken, rather than forcing people to do something in this area or linking it to self-promotion, it should be seen something "business-critical" *[Interviewees 4, 6*], with organisations helping people be better informed to why it matters:

> **"We want to be challenged by different people ... and so I think a really simple thing I'd like to see people understanding is that challenge is good. And where there is difference, naturally comes challenge, but that's a good thing"**
>
> *Interviewee 4*

Siloed understanding and delivery

Many said that EDI in their sector was often approached in a segmented way, whereby 'inclusion, to a lot of people is one, two or three points and they don't go beyond that' *[Interviewee 1]*. Others similarly pointed to the tendency for initiatives to be 'siloed' around specific characteristics or experiences: 'it is like they can only do one at a time' *[Interviewee 4]*. This was a common theme across interviewees:

> **"Gender balance is still a big thing. Once [you have] got a 50/50 split, people think that their work is done and they don't really go to that extra level to talk about where there's people of colour, people from working-class background, people who have disabilities"**
>
> *Interviewee 1*

> **"You tend to see with EDI initiatives, it's: "Okay this year, or this month, we're focusing on Black people. And then we'll focus on disabled people. And then we'll focus on women" And then, "We've done that group, so we don't need to worry about them now"**
>
> *Interviewee 6*

> **"Any room I was in, racial representation was never a factor in that...in the spaces that were for female talent, it was white women, but still seen as a success"**
>
> *Interviewee 4*

This was seen to be more pronounced in organisations that didn't already have an EDI focus: 'the non-equalities organisations, it does feel quite siloed, they tend to do one form of marginalisation at a time' *[Interviewee 9]*. Similarly, there were also difficulties in 'retrofit[ing]' intersectional approaches into top-down strategies as an 'after-thought' *[Interviewee 4]*. For Interviewee 3, a more sector-wide approach with a 'wider, national, strategic focus' would be 'transformational across the country'.

It was expressed as being particularly important for women from marginalised backgrounds for example, disabled women, migrant women, LGBTQI+ women, women of colour and working class women to be not only visible in EDI efforts but part of the development and ownership of such efforts.

> **"I still feel like a lot of stuff that I see for women, struggles to be representative, particularly of global majority women... I think that for me, is very visible, that I think we've still got a long way to go there"**
>
> *Interviewee 7*

Three interviewees (all women of colour) also expressed the additional labour, as women who experience intersecting inequalities, of having to influence and encourage intersectional efforts in EDI delivery. As noted by one interviewee:

> **"I have been part of a [steering] group within the [xxx] sector… I do think that was done well, but only because I flagged, you might want to think about nuance within [xxx] representation; making sure they got, a bit of, gender split, making sure that they've got people from different … cultural groups, faith groups as well and age differences…"**
>
> *Interviewee 7*

Training

The importance of training was highlighted across many interviewees, including examples of in-house schemes, outreach training from small and large organisations and consultancy training bought in. Many interviewees positively cited external training initiatives, either as something they had attended themselves or that they were aware of in the sector and through their networks. These also acted as useful networking and mentoring resources.

Interviewees from larger organisations who facilitated in-house training initiatives for staff felt that these had been received positively, but also pointed to challenges in terms of achieving wider workplace 'buy-in', particularly when training is voluntary. Interviewee 10, for example, called for more organisations to implement compulsory training: 'a lot of people don't want to do EDI training, they think they know it all already.'

Several interviewees spoke positively about the use of EDI consultants to facilitate training in their organisations. Interviewee 10 cited positive experiences of implementing various consultant-run training schemes targeted at both senior level and the wider workforce 'to make sure that everyone is really committed and driven to achieving these principles'. This also extended to training 'centred on understanding your own privilege, which is beneficial to all workers … where people can ask questions on any topic without fear of repercussion so they feel they can ask questions on topics they might not fully understand' *[Interviewee 10]*.

Others, however, cited concerns that training initiatives often put the onus for change on marginalised groups themselves, suggesting barriers to more structural thinking and approaches:

> **"I'll tell you what I don't want to see. I don't want to see more confidence building initiatives. I'm sick to death of seeing them. I think people very often go into "okay they need to work on themselves". Personally, I think we are way past that"**
>
> *Interviewee 4*

> **“I have sometimes wrestled with doing specific sessions… I have had HR people say can you not just do a session for people who feel like they are under-represented?”**
>
> *Interviewee 5*

> **“Some of these initiatives … it’s about teaching women how to do better, and it doesn’t actually address the fact that the system isn’t there, and it’s not equal from the start … And so fundamentally, it kind of grated with me… a lot of it was teaching people how to be authoritative, how to dress, how to speak in a certain way etc, which actually isn’t embracing diversity. It’s about teaching people how to be like an alpha male”**
>
> *Interviewee 10*

Challenges were also highlighted, however, in terms of resource and organisational priorities. Interviewee 3, for example, reflected on their experiences where initially ‘staff were really appreciative of the training conversations,’ particularly when there was ‘organisational buy-in,’ but then encountered difficulties in keeping momentum when their organisation’s priorities shifted. Who organisations approach is also shaped by their agendas and understandings of EDI and often lack an intersectional framework for recruiting external advice *[Interviewee 4]*. Interviewees who provided consultant work themselves felt that involvement could sometimes be superficial, particularly when ‘[their] expertise in that area will not be called up until the 11th hour’ *[Interviewee 7]*. Referring specifically to local authorities, they cited experiences of being called for consultation events with an EDI focus that ‘don’t feel like they are going anywhere’ and ‘are not joined up’ *[Interviewee 7]*. Indeed, some felt that the focus should be more squarely on systemic organisational, sectoral and structural change, rather than on training individuals:

> **“I want to see initiatives on the way the industry works, the processes we have in place and really making us question the way we work and the way we do things and be open to the way we do that and restructuring a bit”**
>
> *Interviewee 4*

Mentoring and Networking

Mentor relationships and networks were cited as being crucial to recruitment, retention, and advancement of marginalised groups in these sectors. This included both internal and external initiatives and connections, both of which were positively cited by interviewees – including connections and networks with stakeholders and groups outwith specific sectors. Some interviewees particularly highlighted the importance of internal networking at specific critical career junctures, including the mid-career: 'where people are exposed to more influential people in the organisation and they're connected to them' *[Interviewee 4]*. Several interviewees from larger organisations pointed to the expansion of linkages between different internal staff networks (women's networks, BAME networks, disability networks etc.), and/or union committees, and their role in facilitating the sharing of learning and resources, as well as hosting events which cut across different groups. They also cited working with smaller organisations with specific outreach initiatives as particularly beneficial.

Mentorship and networking from external organisations were highlighted by multiple interviewees as a crucial source of support for women, particularly when support was not available through their own organisations:

> **"In the beginning, I was really isolated and then I didn't know exactly where to find support or how to start, and then step by step I started to get connected with women and also with projects, organisations and initiatives, and then I realised ... it could be more supportive or I can have more outcomes being connected with other organisations"**
>
> *Interviewee 2*

> **"What I think is really instrumental is having like go-to people, you know, that can reassure you and build confidence, because I think it's quite easy to lose confidence in it or in yourself as being the person who should be driving it forward"**
>
> *Interviewee 3*

There were, however, barriers to accessing these kinds of networks and support for those with caring responsibilities and/or accessibility requirements, particularly in sectors predominated by ad-hoc and non-standard working hours *[Interviewee 10]*.

Allyship was often found in networks and relationships with smaller organisations, campaigns or groups/individuals who were interested in EDI and equalities *[Interviewee 8]*, and/or who were focused on supporting and promoting marginalised groups as part of their core mission. Some interviewees also highlighted the importance of collaboration with academic researchers, to gather new data and/or evaluate the effectiveness of their initiatives *[Interviewee 5]*. These relationships were seen to have a diffusion effect throughout the sector, allowing for cross-organisational learning and support:

> **“I believe that being connected with other initiatives and other projects and other individuals working in this field was technically really important because it gave me more tools to understand what I am doing and how to move forward”**
>
> *Interviewee 2*

> **“Through very strong relationships, we were able to, even just talking about the campaign and raising awareness about how awful the industry can be for women, and just how under-represented they were… we could feel production companies and organisations… we could feel them agreeing with us that something needed to be done, and they began doing that in their own organisations”**
>
> *Interviewee 8*

> **“People who have worked with us have gone on to ask others what they need, they advocate for themselves when they have had a good experience with us”**
>
> *Interviewee 9*

For Interviewee 9, working with bigger partner organisations offered challenges in terms of engaging with working practices which were – or were not – in line with their own policies. There was also recognition that larger organisations might not also give credit for the work of smaller organisations around EDI initiatives and promotion:

> **“It’s not that we necessarily need or want credit, it’s just that it’s a nice thing to say well, “this where we discovered this person” and just an acknowledgment because this then shows this whole thing is working and the reason we’re doing this is working”**
>
> *Interviewee 1*

Importantly, one interviewee reflected that they could do more to join up different organisations within their sector to share learning and best practice:

> **"You know, maybe that's something we should be thinking about is, you know, how we use our convening pillar. We are certainly not the experts, but we're able to convene people, bring the sector together. So maybe the next thing for us is looking for those people that we can work with to pull people together"**
>
> *Interviewee 3*

SUMMARY

- **Participants highlighted ongoing confusion over the relationship between diversity and inclusion, with some organisations continuing to focus on the former rather than the latter.**
- **Many initiatives continue to be siloed around specific characteristics, focusing on gender equality in the first instance, rather than adopting an intersectional approach.**
- **Training initiatives can have an impact, particularly when they are aimed at organisations and leadership, rather than putting the onus for change on members of marginalised groups.**
- **Networking and mentoring (whether internal or external) are important sources of support and opportunity for womenand can facilitate cross-learning and diffusion across organisations and sectors; but a more joined-up approach is needed to enable the sharing of best practice.**

LEADERSHIP

Initiatives which focus on top-down measures were recognised as a key priority in advancing and implementing change. Leaders, including those who are responsible for hiring, funding, and other production- or content-based decisions, have the power to drive innovation and change, sending important signals about who and/or what is included in their organisation or industry and wider society.

Leadership

Echoing findings of previous reports (Kenny et al. 2021) and studies (see literature review), diversification in leadership was seen as a key area where intervention was needed, both in terms of numerical representation and in influencing the adoption and implementation of EDI initiatives. Most interviewees noted a lack of, and need for, diversity in leadership in their sectors (with some exceptions):

> **"I think our industry is a lot more hierarchical than other industries, there is a lot of decision-making power at the top and not anywhere else, we hide behind the "great artist" idea...and that is where women are not well-represented"**
>
> *Interviewee 9*

> **"[interventions need] to be at mid and senior level, because there are so few of us at the top"**
>
> *Interviewee 7*

> **"Boards can have a massive influence on an organisation, so having diverse boards is really important"**
>
> *Interviewee 10*

Others noted the 'invisibility' of particular groups of women at the top, such as women of colour *[Interviewee 2]*. This translated to a lack of diversity in production and outputs: 'Issues that are about those communities are either not covered or covered the wrong way/ not the same angle as people from those communities' *[Interviewee 2]*. In terms of EDI leadership, specifically, some interviewees highlighted the stagnation of representation on EDI bodies or groups, and the need for 'regular change-over' to ensure that 'new voices can be brought in' *[Interviewee 7]*.

Again, however, interviewees stressed that the onus for changing leadership was on those in power rather than on members of marginalised groups, requiring changes in workforce and organisational practices beyond numbers and content:

> **“For me, it is about the deep work. It is about how are you running your organisation? Rather than what is in your programming? … It is not enough to say we have to programme with more women, we have to change how we work”**
>
> *Interviewee 9*

> **“It’s not a case of the people who are in charge and in positions of power, telling them that they have to leave their jobs or have to quit because their time is up, it’s more having conversations where we can show why it’s so important for these people in these positions to be supportive of certain things or be willing to accept change… because that’s something I see a lot, a reluctance to change in higher positions”**
>
> *Interviewee 1*

Rather than making women try and ‘fit’ existing ideas of leadership, it was suggested by some interviewees that leadership was something which needed to be marketed differently to women and how ‘women see themselves within it’ *[Interviewee 4]*. Others pointed to the often-hostile context facing women and others ‘championing’ EDI in public-facing roles, including social media backlash, and wider ‘culture war’ and anti-EDI narratives *[Interviewees 3, 10]*.

Funding & Resources

Leadership commitment to EDI initiatives is closely interlinked with resource commitments – and most interviewees cited resource as a key facilitator, but also persistent barrier, to change in the media, creative and culture sectors. Interviewees pointed to the tension between ‘a bigger ask in equitable working practices at a time when financial resources are harder [to come by] than ever’ *[Interviewee 9]*.

> **“One of the big things that always comes up, but, and it’s just so obvious, but funding is such an issue… there needs to be a bigger commitment from funders, not just to support initiatives, but to support continuous development”**
>
> *Interviewee 1*

Participants highlighted the importance of external funding for projects that 'filled gaps' for specific groups of women (such as support for content creators) and long-term funding for people to lead their own projects *[Interviewee 2]*. External funding might have specific restrictions, as Interviewee 8 noted, who gave an example of having to bend to decision-makers about the type of language which was used in funding calls. Restrictions or indeed specific requirements were often seen as a burden on smaller organisations:

> **"One of the big ones is always the time and capacity issues… I don't want it to sound like an excuse, but it is the money side of it. We hold ourselves to a higher standard because we care, but the predominantly tiny organisations are historically under-funded, but asked to do the most by funders"**
> *Interviewee 3*

> **"Pay is low and funders expect too much in return"**
> *Interviewee 7*

> **"There is of course a resource issue, if we want to do more of this work, we need to take funders on that journey, so they are able to resource it financially"**
> *Interviewee 9*

> **"We get told, genuinely, to do more for less, and the burn-out is real. And if you use that for equalities…this is work that takes time, and needs valued, but you are always just trying to squeeze it in"**
> *Interviewee 3*

Resourcing was also seen to be closely linked with the institutionalisation and sustainability of EDI initiatives over the long-haul – with organisations sometimes prioritising 'one-off' short-term events (e.g. targeted 'diversity days') over 'year-round inclusion' *[Interviewee 6]*:

> **"… very often people do an initiative, think "that wasn't very good" and they throw it away and leave it … I think one of the biggest downfalls of organisations doing initiatives is it's a kind of one try and then we don't give it another try after that. But you have to persevere with them"**
> *Interviewee 4*

Multiple interviewees pointed to the need for resourcing and funding frameworks [including both money and time] that allowed innovative policies and initiatives to ‘bed in’:

> **“I was asked to take forward a strategy…but we had jumped to solutions, or ideas of what should be solutions, before we did the research, the learning…there became an organisational impetus”**
>
> *Interviewee 3*

> **“Radical funding shifts – funding where you’re allowed to try and fail…when we’re talking about equality-related projects, we don’t feel like we can do that”**
>
> *Interviewee 7*

> **“One of the biggest downfalls of an organisation, is to kind of, give it one try, you have to build connections and the initiatives…that takes time”**
>
> *Interviewee 4*

Echoing findings of previous reports (Kenny et al. 2021), interviewees highlighted the additional and invisible ‘costs’ of EDI work, including the ways in which the (sometimes unpaid) burden of EDI work continued to fall on marginalised groups, or was expected to be done on top of existing workloads *[Interviewee 6]*. Some suggested that EDI targets should be meaningfully integrated into performance reviews for all staff, with expertise through lived experience considered in the criteria:

> **“If part of everybody’s performance review, or appraisal included equality targets, then that’s making everybody think about equality. So, what are the actions that we, as individuals, need to take? What actions do I need to take as a manager…but also individuals who are giving their time and their lived experience to support the organisation, to improve diversity, can then count towards their career progression and their targets”**
>
> *Interviewee 6*

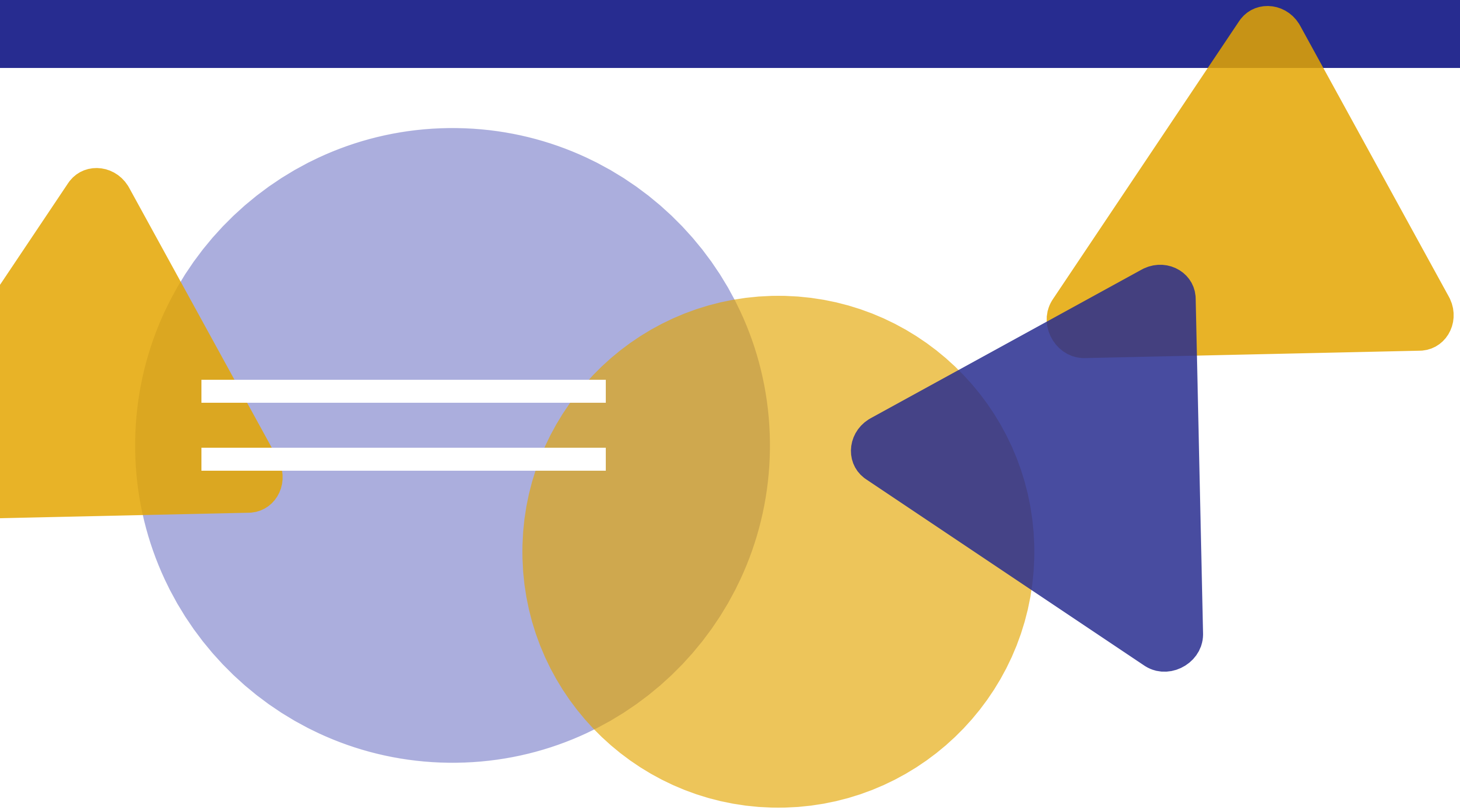
EDI work done by individuals and large teams in organisations was similarly seen to be often ‘on the sidelines’, rather than owned by the organisation and its leadership:

> **“… you can get pockets of good practice at individual departments and teams, and then, for whatever reason, it doesn’t spread across”**
>
> *Interviewee 6*

> **“I think that it’s probably important for all [...] organisations that, you know, it’s led from the front and that [leaders] are leading with it and it’s not just one person’s job somewhere on a sideline….. sometimes it feels like the onus is always on women to help other women”**
>
> *Interviewee 5*

SUMMARY

- **Diversification of leadership, including boards and executives, is a key site of necessary change. The onus for change is on those in power, rather than on members of marginalised groups to ‘lean in’ to leadership.**
- **Resource allocation can facilitate, but is also a key barrier to change, particularly for smaller organisations. Longer-term, sustained investment and support is needed to trial and institutionalise EDI initiatives over the long-haul.**
- **EDI work is ‘business critical’ and should be properly resourced, recognised and rewarded, including as part of the criteria for career progression.**



CONCLUSION

> **“There is no one area that we can work on that would solve the problem. But I think we need to work together”**
> *Interviewee 10*

Building on the findings of previous studies and reports, this report highlights the continuing gendered and intersectional obstacles – and opportunities – to the participation and inclusion of women and marginalised groups in the media, creative and cultural sectors in Scotland. In engaging with key stakeholders in these sectors, this report provides new data about lived experiences of navigating EDI initiatives, exploring opportunities and obstacles to change, and areas of best practice. Despite the focus on qualitative experiences, the report points to broad themes and lessons, applicable across different and diverse sectors, which also provide a starting point for future work in this area.

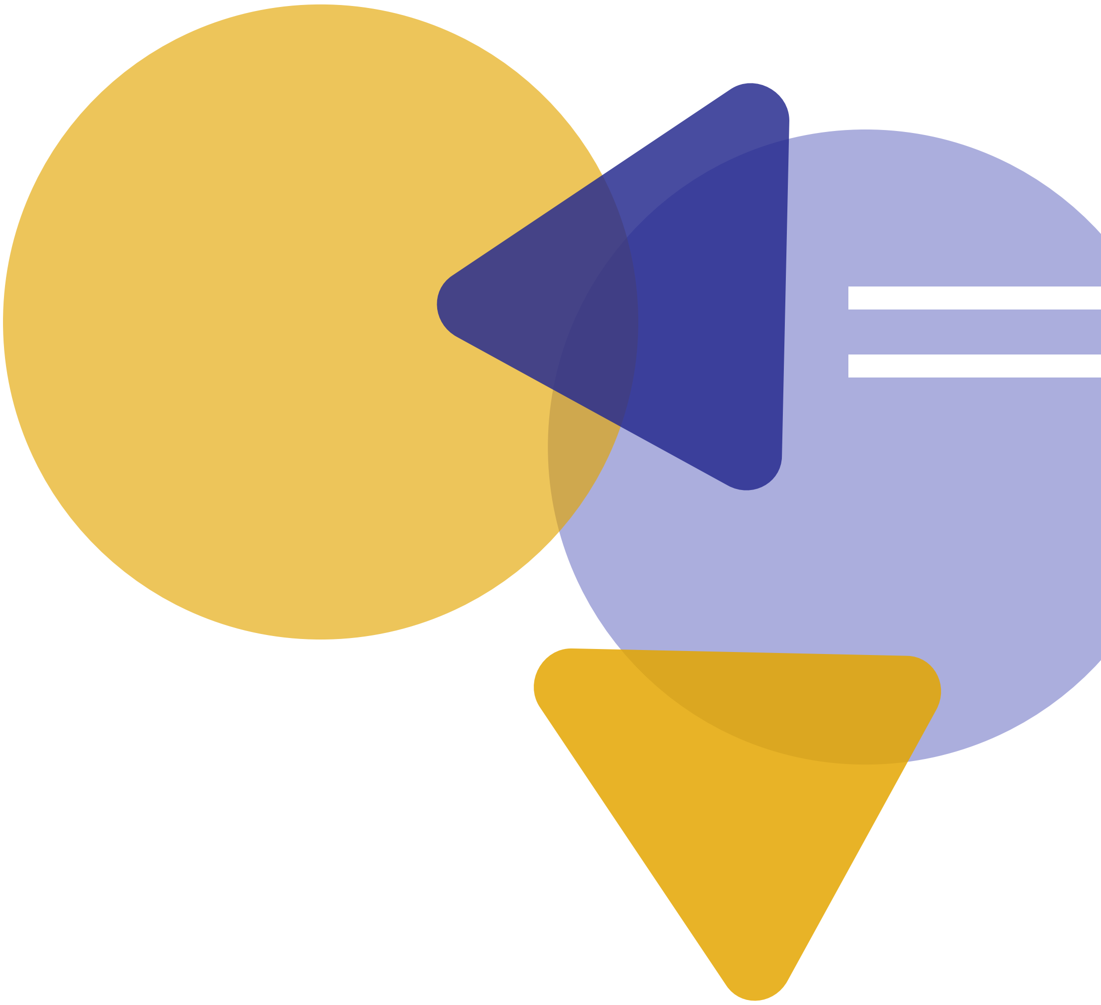
What works and what doesn’t? In line with previous studies, the report points to the importance of targeting **critical career junctures** across different ‘life-cycles.’ One clear theme was the importance of early interventions through **schools and youth organisations**, which are particularly important to normalise and open career possibilities, particularly for multiply marginalised women. Engaging with marginalised groups to shape **inclusive and transparent recruitment practices**, was seen as a crucial step to ensuring diversity in professional pipelines. Equally important is ‘what happens afterwards’, with more consideration needed in terms of support for **career progression and retention** of diverse women over the medium- to longer-term. This was considered of particular relevance in mid- and later-career stages (for example, initiatives aimed at supporting women with care-related and other career interruptions, or women going through menopause).

The collection where possible of intersectional, sex-disaggregated **data** was identified as a crucial foundation and evidence-base for EDI initiatives and policies – tracking patterns in outputs, workforces and leadership. While there has been progress in this area, **intersectional data gaps remain**, and there is still a lack of Scottish-specific data in some sectors. There are also established challenges for collecting and analysing intersectional demographic data, particularly for smaller organisations. Nonetheless, as Close the Gap (2022) shows, organisations which do collect relevant data can also fail to sufficiently act on that evidence to develop action points and enact change. This demonstrates the need for **more incentivisation or even compulsory measures** to be implemented where appropriate.

While numbers matter, numerical targets do not in themselves rectify wider inequalities in processes, structures and attitudes (Eikhof 2023). As the Equal Media and Culture Centre’s (2023: 29) *Diversity at the Top* report argues, **intersectional change is about more than numbers**, it requires ‘critical self-reflection, investment in radical structural change, and long-term commitment to race and gender equality’ and other intersecting identities. Ongoing **qualitative research on lived experience** is therefore also important to both shape strategies, and to evaluate them over the long haul.

This does not mean that the onus of EDI initiatives should always fall upon the shoulders of women and marginalised groups. As demonstrated above, women expressed a passion for being part of, and leading, EDI initiatives but also highlighted the **burden of additional labour** of having to influence and encourage intersectional efforts in this area. A clear theme of the report is the importance of embedding EDI as a **concern for everybody** and indeed as a 'business critical' component of organisational strategy. Similarly, training shouldn't just be about behaviour change for those trying to 'lean-in' to spaces that are not necessarily open to them. **Leaders should take responsibility** to ensure diversity across their own boards and management positions, meaningfully engaging with initiatives that demonstrate their commitment to long-term change and sustainability.

This report points to the **ongoing good work and desire for change** across the sector but also suggests that there could be more efforts to share examples of best practice. This should occur across organisations and sectors through cross-learning and collaboration – for example, **building on successful examples of mentoring and networking** initiatives. This should also have a greater emphasis on how to facilitate more **nuanced approaches**, rather than be siloed around specific characteristics to support women who are multiply marginalised. Efforts should be focused on **addressing intersectional gaps**, rather than measures still being mainly aimed at an under-represented majority (i.e. white women). As has been shown, there is not one area of focus that would address the issues outlined here. Yet, there are further opportunities for these important sectors to work together with an **intersectional**, **joined-up approach** to enact real change.



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