

How to have fair and transparent recruitment practices



**THE
WHOLE PICTURE
TOOLKIT**

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What do we mean by fair and transparent recruitment practices?

Our industry's approach to hiring crew is generally through our networks and contacts. Whilst this speeds up the process, it lacks fairness and transparency, reducing opportunities for people to enter and progress.

- Fairness can be shown in how we define the role and adhere to that guidance in our selection process. Clearly specify the key responsibilities and skills for the job and select the right person based on objective criteria, with the same principles applied to all. Recruiters must be aware and challenge their own unconscious bias and how it might be influencing them when hiring.
- Transparency focuses on our process — where we recruit, and how openly we do this to promote the opportunity to ensure the widest possible reach. Again, our bias can have an impact. So, think about how to actively reach out to communities and people that our sector has often excluded.
- Bias is a form of prejudice that favours, or is against a person, or a group. This prejudice is usually unfounded and can exist in an individual, group, or institution. More detail is given in Legal below.

We have the power to change this

We can all improve on ensuring we treat our disabled colleagues better, increase diversity, social mobility and equality within our sector, by adopting some simple steps to broaden our reach when selecting the team. As the scale and number of commissions within the UK increases, it's vital to have a wide and diverse talent pool to call upon to meet the challenge of production schedules and budgets. In the long term, widening our pool can ensure a healthy supply of talent, which improves opportunities for people and reduces the pressure to get the right crew on board for the job.



What should we be aware of?

Legal

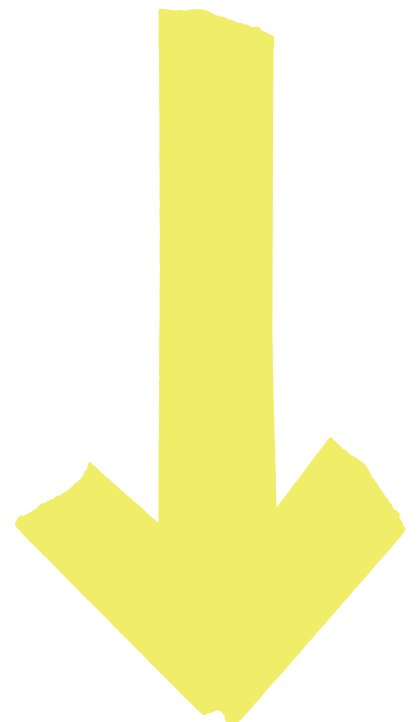
We have a legal obligation to ensure that recruitment is non-discriminatory. It is possible to discriminate against someone at the recruitment stage and this is unlawful. Our industry, more than others, relies on networks and shorthand processes that can often be exclusionary. We often favour people who look like us, sound like us and reflect our values and window on the world; this is our unconscious bias. Unconscious bias is something we are not aware of. It is typically learned stereotypes or automatic, unintentional ideas, and can be hugely damaging to the target group. You are naturally more likely to lean towards someone who is “like you” or to recruit on the basis of a stereotype and you should challenge this within yourself.

It can be so systemically ingrained that it can alter our behaviour and how we interact with the people around us. For instance, it could be unconscious favouring of male over female candidates for certain roles, especially technical ones.

Unconscious bias can manifest towards any personal characteristic, like a person’s hometown or favourite sporting club, but especially protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010). Protected characteristics are race, sex and sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity and age. [The Human Rights Commission has a useful Employment: Statutory Code of Practice guide](#), which can help you understand the law around discrimination.

We should also be mindful of socio-economic background and geographical location when considering barriers to access. To make sure managers and those responsible for hiring are aware of possible issues, they might want to consider training in areas such as unconscious bias along with, Disability Awareness, Bullying, Harassment and Racism and Equality Awareness, to look at protected characteristics and other key issues in more detail, and ensure the right person is selected for the role.

Make sure your Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies are up to date, or if you do not have one, create a simple policy to cover how you will work in this area, and who holds responsibility, along with a process for reporting issues. Find out more in our [Mini Guide 2 – Be clear about bullying, racism, harassment and other forms of discrimination](#).



You might also want to share the details of your organisation's wellbeing policy, if you have one, or approach to mental health, so that people are aware of your process and how to report any issues.

Moral

Whilst we have legal protections for our rights, we often overlook the moral case for a fair and just recruitment process, which benefits everyone. When thinking about recruitment, don't just think about what you need from the person, but what they can expect from you in return. How will they be treated, is there management support, career progression opportunity, fair pay, training and development? What is the reputation you carry, are you seen as a good employer? This will help new team members bed in more quickly and feel valued, which is critical to morale and creating a mentally healthy environment

Want to get started? Here's what to do...

Prep the job specs

Consider job spec criteria — Sometimes job specs themselves have an element of unconscious bias, for example university degrees or other qualifications being used as shorthand for skills. This can put certain groups at a disadvantage. When writing job specs, be specific about objective, testable, demonstrable measures related to required skills and avoid using shorthand.

Use plain English — sounds simple, but we often overcomplicate things. Use short, concise sentences, with key information relevant to the role. Avoid jargon and industry or internal acronyms.

Avoid gender-coded language — In adverts, 'Lead' was found to still be most commonly male gendered in language, with 'Support' roles being most commonly female gendered (Total Jobs 2017). Other examples of language that may be off-putting to some include: ambitious, assertive, determined, and self-reliant. Keep it neutral to appeal to diverse groups, gender identities and cultures.

Think about font & formats — Any written documents must be accessible, so consider colour, font size, typeface and sufficient white space to makes adverts and specs easier to read. Using Ariel, Century Gothic and Sans Serif on electronic communications helps. To create inclusion in your job adverts, check that any graphics or images contain alt-text, and include a contact for those who require alternative formats.



Build and support an inclusive culture

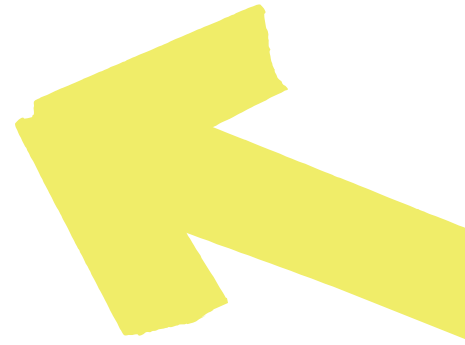
How diverse is your workplace? – Is your workplace attracting and supporting underrepresented talent? If not, reach out to underrepresented communities, acknowledging the value that diversity brings to productions. In a predominantly white, able-bodied environment, isolation and lack of identifiable role models can lead to unnecessary stress and people leaving roles where they might not feel supported or see themselves reflected elsewhere in the workplace. Do you have diversity at senior management level? Could you think about offering mentoring or a buddy-system to help create mentally healthy workspaces?

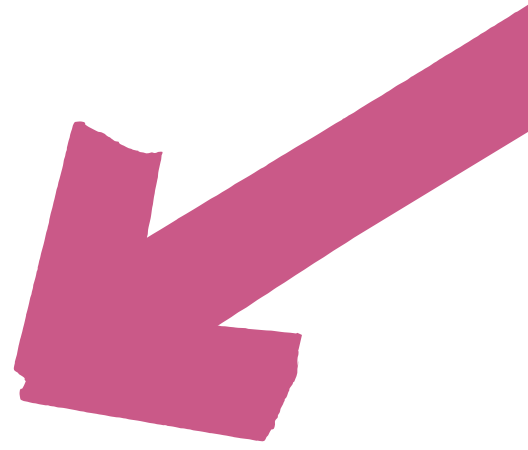
Be more confident about disability – With 1 in 5 disabled people in the working population, you should assume you will be working with disabled talent. Choosing locations which are accessible, studios with good facilities including disabled toilets are key to an inclusive production. Also make sure you are considering disabilities which may not always be physical. [Reasonable adjustments](#) are required by law for those with a disability (as defined under the Equality Act 2010).

Advertise and search for wider reach

Line Producers, Production Managers and Heads of Production are all too familiar with the pressures on recruitment caused by budgetary constraints – from Brexit and Covid 19 restrictions, to key role shortages. So, taking some time to think about where you can reach out and find new networks also makes good business sense.

Platforms, Agencies and Organisations – Think about advertising jobs in new places and not relying only on familiar networks. Some of the job platforms have already been shared in the Toolkit. They are not exhaustive. Take some time to scan Facebook groups that may be incredibly useful for targeted access, such as *Northern Freelance TV Production Staff*, *Northeast Film and TV Crew*. Screen Agencies in nations and regions can also open up access to diverse talent – *Screen Yorkshire*, *Screen Scotland* for example. *Look Beyond the List* may help you dig deeper than your usual networks and contacts, along with *Film London's Equal Access Network*, *Deaf and Disabled People in TV* and *The British Black List*, who you can email to advertise opportunities. Think about schemes by *ScreenSkills*, such as *Leaders of Tomorrow*, which has diverse talent looking for step-up opportunities, or *Trainee Finder* which can help you to secure talent at entry and assistant levels, giving paid placements that can be invaluable to both the production and trainee in kick-starting a career.





Creative England offers tailored suggestions to suit any production's requirements and could support diversity selection for crew outside of London. [Pact's Diversity](#) page has other useful contacts for connecting with more deaf and disabled and diverse talent. You can find further help on how to develop policies and strategies to become more diverse there.

Refresh your application process

What process of application do you use, and can it include video or audio recordings as well as written? CVs can save time, but can narrow access. What do we mean by this? Parts of the industry are often dominated by male, middle class, able-bodied and white people. It is therefore likely that they will access the most opportunities and have a more extensive CV of credits. If we are using this as our method of recruitment, then those who do not fit this category will possibly have less chance of fair consideration. Think about new ways of assessing skills and competence to counter this issue.

Arrange accessible interviews

Can the interview be remote, rather than in person, to open it up to regional talent? In the selection processes, this reduces costs on both sides. Have set questions that every candidate will answer – again this is about fairness and transparency. If someone discloses a physical or mental health condition or both, that needs support – or if a condition is disclosed during an interview, how do you manage this? This can be an area that can bring problems if a candidate feels they were subsequently denied a post because they disclosed disability or illness. Consider the points above in [prep the job specs](#) and follow your internal policies on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Make use of the [mental health risk assessment](#) to protect all staff, including those who are deaf and disabled. This is an opportunity to highlight where extra support may be needed or reasonable adjustments can be made.

Look at the induction

This usually forms part of the crew briefing process, you may find it useful to address some of the requirements in advance, so that training can be done before the start date. Aim to circulate a wellbeing pack in advance of start date and use the induction to run through any access issues for crew. For further information go to [Mini Guide 4 – Create a wellbeing pack](#) and send it out.

What else can help to widen your reach?

Job sharing for caregivers and disabled talent opens doors for people. Many women in the industry leave due to the pressures of care for children or elderly parents. Each year, we lose highly-skilled people, who then find it hard to come back due to challenging schedules and lack of support. Think about roles that could be shared to provide more people access to work, and also give the production flexibility, especially on long shoots, as it may provide the solution to rest days and time off, as well as benefiting candidates. Also consider other flexible ways of working, such as non-conventional hours of work to allow for time off during the middle of the day to pick up children.

Homeworking has risen during the pandemic in many industries. It has taught us a lot about how we can work, and how this can have significant positive impact at certain times, both financially and in terms of wellbeing. Does everyone have to be on site at all times in pre-production, for instance? This may open up opportunities for those returning to work after ill health or care duties and provide a method of easing back into the production environment.

