

Diversity in Journalism



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Introduction

In February 2020, Marsha de Cordova MP closed a [speech in the House of Commons on media diversity](#) by saying: ‘Without a diverse workforce made up of every part of our society – without reporters with an understanding of, say, Bristol and Birmingham, and without executives from Oxton as well as Oxbridge – the media will always fail to speak for us all. It is time for real action and time for real change so that our media is by us, for us and about us.’

As the COVID-19 pandemic has developed in the months that followed, we’ve seen how important it is to understand how different communities are impacted by the same issues, with research highlighting the [disproportionate effect on BAME communities](#) and how [lockdown and social distancing can be harder for young LGBTQ+ people](#).

Any journalist should be able to find and tell these stories but as Dorothy Byrne, Head of News and Current Affairs of Channel Four, told a [seminar at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#): ‘If you yourselves are not representative of your audience or your readers, then you cannot understand and represent their interests. As society changes, if you don’t change with it, you will lose viewers, listeners and readers... If you change you who defines the news agenda, you change the agenda.’

Birmingham City University’s Visiting Professor in media diversity, Marcus Ryder, has [even pointed out](#) that ‘the UK’s reporting on the COVID-19 outbreak seemed to be woefully slow and failed to grasp the full magnitude of the problem for a long time’ partly because ‘there simply aren’t enough East Asians deciding the news agenda in UK newsrooms’. Many people of East Asian descent or living in East Asia had been following the outbreak since January and journalists with this connection might have been alerted to the risks sooner.

Changing the agenda

The [BBC’s 50:50 Project](#) is one example of changing the news agenda that proves a positive impact on audiences, with younger age groups in particular saying they were ‘likely to enjoy content more as a result of a better gender balance’.

Journalists across the ResponseSource community are factoring diversity in to their own coverage, with 57% telling us that diversity and representation is something they consider when sourcing experts or case studies, and only 11% saying they or their employers never consider it.

Our recent webinar [Reflecting Reality](#) in March 2020, began our exploration into the subject, and in this whitepaper we hear from a range of experts, journalists and charities about their efforts to increase diversity in the media, the research they’ve produced, and why it should matter to all of us: readers, listeners, viewers and journalists alike.

Contents

Introduction	2
Changing the agenda	
Contents	
How journalism should improve the way it supports and mentors Black journalists	3
Have and keep relationships with stakeholders/ people at the top	
Don’t let a lack of resources hold you back	
Reach out to journalists you admire and return the favour	
Always refer back to your collective, and keep promoting them to editors	
Improving diversity in journalism through recruitment processes	4
‘We don’t get the applications’ is not an excuse – the media needs to represent the industry it reports on	
Bring your recruitment process to the candidates	
Reach out more effectively	
Provide networking opportunities	
Think twice about internal recruitment	
Look hard at who are in your top positions	
Demonstrate that diversity is an investment	
Opening Doors with the London Met Journalism Diversity Network	6
The power to shape the debate	7
The courage of conviction	8
Representing the voice of learning disability	9
Respect, trust and building relationships - how to report inclusively	10
Language	
Stereotypes	
Voices	
Funding diversity – initiatives from across the industry	11
NCTJ Journalism Diversity Fund	
BJTC Placement Assistance Scheme	
PressPad	
Resources to help improve diversity and inclusiveness	12

How journalism should improve the way it supports and mentors Black journalists

Hannah Ajala, founder of We Are Black Journos

This is a topic that we at We Are Black Journos continuously touch on in our events, in common with the many other platforms we follow online (@BJCUK1, @theracebeat) who are advocating towards more inclusion of Black journalists in the industry.

To be very honest, we've seen some great examples of initiatives trying to achieve this. I believe when trying to tackle the issue, it starts with us first, not the industry sadly, to encourage ideas and plans to support Black journalists.

Our tips include:

Have and keep relationships with stakeholders/people at the top

It starts with getting in touch with, for example, an editor of a well-respected programme in a high-profile organisation, such as BBC Radio 4's Today programme. Not only is this programme widely known for having a large majority of white staff, if the editor sees what you're trying to do, and is interested in making their department more diverse but unsure of how to, that's where you come in. Build on it, think of a realistic plan and strategy to ensure that hopefully one day there won't be the need for diversity schemes or placements, because the word 'diversity' will no longer be used as a buzzword, it will just be normal.

Don't let a lack of resources hold you back

Start creating content with whatever you have – start a blog, use your iPad or phone to film interviews and produce your own documentaries, create a podcast. Having your own portfolio – or YouTube channel – to take to the organisation you approach will showcase your initiative and passion and help you to stand out.

Reach out to journalists you admire and return the favour

Building strong personal and professional relationships is crucial to progressing your career. Asking for help, mentorship and guidance from others in the same industry can help everyone grow. Once you do get a foot in the door, keep searching for ways to expand your network – one of the aims of We Are Black Journalists is to do just this, by creating a safe networking space in a predominantly white industry. Ultimately, you'll be the person passing on your knowledge and expertise to other aspiring journalists and we can all learn from each other.

Always refer back to your collective, and keep promoting them to editors

Let your visibility be shown so that people at the top can see the network of Black journalists who you already have on file, and can promote opportunities to. They may be looking for someone with strong experience in history documentaries or digital video production – establishing yourself as someone who can make connections will open up opportunities for you as well as for your personal network.

I would like to see it become common practice to regularly (every two to three months) have meetings and discussions with diverse members of staff in each organisation to highlight ways to engage more Black journalists, and to measure the progress of this each time they meet.

Hannah Ajala is a BBC-trained broadcast journalist and writer for I Am New Generation magazine, currently based in West Africa. She is the founder of We Are Black Journos, a networking community and event platform celebrating and connecting Black journalists and aspiring broadcasters. See @weblackjournos on Twitter and @weareblackjournos on Instagram for details of both virtual and live events featuring speakers from outlets including the BBC, CNN and Channel 5 News or connect with Hannah directly on @hannah_ajala.



Improving diversity in journalism through recruitment processes

Leon Mann, founder of Black Collective of Media in Sport

‘We don’t get the applications’ is not an excuse – the media needs to represent the industry it reports on
African and Caribbean people are significantly underrepresented in the sports media despite these communities’ disproportionate interest and achievement on the field of play. It’s estimated that up to 30% of professional footballers in the English professional leagues are black, while professional boxing and athletics boast a high percentage of black athletes. Many other communities are under-represented – sports media is largely middle class, women are too often pigeonholed into certain roles, while the British Asian community is almost non-existent in sports media. There is coverage of disability sport, but too often disabled talent is restricted to working on Paralympic sport only. It’s up to the industry to invest in new ways of finding the talent that undoubtedly exists in a wide range of communities.

Bring your recruitment process to the candidates

Use social media to advertise jobs and allow candidates to be more creative in an electronic application form – attaching YouTube clips or online links; students and aspiring journalists are reading different content to your 50-year-old media executives. The traditional long application form can marginalise people who don’t already have connections and experience in the media industry, significantly impacting your pool of potential recruits.

Reach out more effectively

Build partnerships with the huge range of community media outlets that already exist, and with universities and training colleges known for a diverse student base. If you need to, employ an HR expert who understands diversity to advise on how to target underrepresented groups, and make sure your recruitment panel is diverse in itself in order to identify the strongest candidates. Blind CVs (blanking out names and demographics) can remove unconscious bias and is proven to increase diversity in interview opportunities and employment.

Provide networking opportunities

Get your industry’s recruiters out networking by working with other organisations. Face to face contact helps candidates to build relationships and challenges stereotypes on both sides. Think ahead by connecting with schools and other younger age groups by showcasing career paths available in sports media, and, within your organisation, look for opportunities for effective mentorship. Minority employees may face additional challenges and you need to constantly nurture and develop the talent you get through the door.

Think twice about internal recruitment

Challenge the way things have always been done, even if it means standing up to unions and internal directives – a policy of recruitment and promotion from within risks perpetuating a non-diverse pool of candidates. Shout about the schemes and opportunities you offer to make sure minority candidates know that positions are not just open to them but that you are actively looking for them to apply.

Look hard at who are in your top positions

When you’re head-hunting for top positions think about the message your leaders give to potential employees. Is there a way you can reach a wider and more diverse pool of candidates for senior roles? Again, this is where external HR expertise can help. Greater diversity among key decision makers will provide your organisation with better understanding, inform all areas from recruitment to storylines and benefit the business as a whole.

Demonstrate that diversity is an investment

A more inclusive workforce is money well spent. Monocultural workforces stifle debate and discussion, and can perpetuate stereotypes. As media outlets need to discover and improve on new revenue streams and reach a global audience, diverse voices and expertise help allow you to provide credible expert reporting on the sportsmen and sportswomen you cover.

BCOMS (Black Collective of Media in Sport) is a networking, support and campaigning organisation for Africans & Caribbeans in the UK sports media. Founded by film maker, consultant and former broadcast journalist Leon Mann, it is volunteer run and not funded. Its members and supporters are committed to helping the sports industry evolve and activities include providing expertise and consultancy, organising masterclasses and networking events, bringing aspiring journalists and mentors together, and connecting media organisations diversity expertise. Its biannual conference, The D Word, provides a forum for debate but also collates the discussions in to practical positive solutions, advice and recommendations to help the sports media to take bold steps towards becoming a more diverse industry. News outlets, broadcasters and publishers are encouraged to get in touch with for a confidential chat about how they could work together. See bcoms.co for more information about opportunities, research and future events or connect with them on Twitter [@bcomstweet](https://twitter.com/bcomstweet).

Opening Doors with the London Met Journalism Diversity Network

Wendy Sloane, Associate Professor of Journalism at London Metropolitan University

London Metropolitan University Journalism, Film and Television Studies mature student Channette Carleo had a dream: to work for the BBC. She applied unsuccessfully for BBC work placements five times, and each time was rejected.

During her second year at London Met, Carleo applied again: this time through the London Met Journalism Diversity Network. She got a placement and was noticed by a Senior Newsnight Producer, who encouraged her to apply for an eight-week paid summer internship. She beat 1,000 others for the spot, and less than a year after graduation is working full-time as an Assistant Producer for BBC Radio 1Xtra, co-hosting on-air four days a week.

Her mentor, Newsnight Producer Sam McAlister, said: 'Channette is really fantastic, with a great self-starting attitude, full of verve and ideas, keen to learn, excellent at receiving feedback and asking for advice and exactly the kind of person any organisation would be lucky to have.'

I founded the London Met Journalism Diversity Network in 2018 to give our diverse students a foot through the door in the highly competitive world of journalism work placements. Our students often struggle to get decent internships as they lack industry contacts and previous relevant experience, and it was soul-destroying to see differently qualified students get consistently turned down.

We have 142 nationalities at London Metropolitan University, with 69.2% from a BAME background (2017-2018). This is in stark contrast to journalism in the UK, which is 55% male and 94% white (Changing Media summit 2016).



Second-year work placements are integral – and mandatory – to our Journalism courses. Placements so far through the Network have included not only the BBC but also Sky News and Sky Sports, Marie Claire, Grazia, Heat, Closer and Bella Magazines, an independent production company and beauty and fashion PR agencies, among others.

The Network has been successful not only in providing practical, work-related learning but also in transforming the way students perceive their own capabilities. Second-year Beauty Marketing and French-Senegalese Journalism student Mame Sarr said she'd never get her dream job – representing a major beauty brand – in her hometown of Paris because she's black. A placement at Marie Claire magazine has helped her realise her own potential.

In the UK, many newsrooms are exclusively white, and only 0.2% of all UK journalists are black. In addition, there is a distinct lack of women, BAME journalists, and those from poorer backgrounds – 51% of the UK's top journalists went to private schools, more than seven times the national average. In contrast, I have only taught a handful of privately educated students in nine years at London Met.

Today, more and more news organisations are beginning to realise that diversity is vital – not only in the journalists they hire, but the people they choose to interview. Why did so few US journalists predict a Trump win? Because their own inner circles were voting for Hillary. Diversity in the media provides more balance and fairness in coverage and ensures those reporting the news get it right.

The Network helps our students and, conversely, helps the way in which news is covered, by including more diverse points of view. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

With this in mind, we've now expanded to a three-pronged approach: competitive work placements, diverse guest speakers and varied student site visits. Speakers have included Lloyd Bradley, a former NME journalist who writes about Black music, and documentary filmmaker Ed Accura, who produced 'Blacks Can't Swim'. Recent (pre-COVID-19) trips included Bloomberg's new headquarters, and we gave away several free Guardian masterclasses with Gary Younge. A workshop with Gal-Dem is in the pipeline, as is a placement with Black Beauty and Hair magazine.

Perhaps most excitingly, the Network won a Drapers grant for an all-expenses paid trip to Paris during Paris Fashion Week this February for 18 Fashion Marketing and Journalism students.

Wendy Sloane is an Associate Professor of Journalism at London Metropolitan University and is the Course Leader for the Journalism courses. She worked for Time Magazine in New York and then as a journalist in Moscow from 1989 to 1995, and has been a magazine editor in the UK for Eva, Marie Claire and Woman's Own. She now freelances for The Sunday Times and the British Journalism Review, among others.

The power to shape the debate

James Turner, Chief Executive of the Sutton Trust

'If you have a diverse workforce in journalism, you are much more likely to produce good strong journalism' – Professor Diane Kemp's opening remark in ResponseSource's recent webinar neatly sums up why diversity in the media is so crucial.

It is not about tokenism or quotas: it is about ensuring the industry harnesses the talents of people from a wide range of backgrounds, so that it can speak to and for the whole nation, not just a narrow segment of it.

The Sutton Trust's landmark report in 2019, *Elitist Britain*, examined the educational backgrounds of those in the country's most influential and sought-after professions including judges, sports personalities and popstars. Seven percent of the population attend a private school (where fees average £15,000 a year), yet this group is five times more likely to make it to the top of key industries. The media is no different. On average 40% of journalists attended an independent school, with 39% attending Oxbridge. We saw similar results for newspaper columnists, for example, with 44% attending both an independent school and Oxbridge.

Those in the media are in a powerful position to shape the debate on political and social affairs – a debate which should be informed by a wide range of articulate voices. It is in all our interests to see more journalists coming through from backgrounds which are currently underrepresented, adding their own perspectives to the issues of the day and bringing knowledge of communities and neighbourhoods too often overlooked.

Indeed, the stories that are given coverage are important, but equally as important are the stories that are not covered. There is a perceived disconnect between those in the media and the general public. Channel 4's Jon Snow [highlighted this in a speech](#) given to the Edinburgh TV Festival, lamenting that journalists had not noticed the blog from a resident predicting the Grenfell Tower tragedy. 'We can accuse the political classes for their failures, and we do. But we are guilty of them ourselves. We are too far removed from those who lived their lives in Grenfell'. The case for diversity in the media has rarely been made so clearly.

Many news organisations have recognised the importance of socio-economic diversity and have started to measure this among their staff. Channel 4 found that [67% of its employees](#)

had parents with professional and managerial jobs, while the BBC found that [a quarter of its news staff](#) were privately educated. Monitoring social and educational backgrounds is an important first step, but tackling the issue of diversity also requires creative thinking on the part of media organisations to produce solutions. One example of this is the [Spectator's paid internship scheme](#), which operates a 'no-CV' policy when recruiting for candidates to limit the importance of prior experience. The BBC also has a number of entry routes designed to widen access to journalism, including its apprenticeship programme, developed with input from the Sutton Trust.



However, far too many work experience programmes in the media are still unpaid, which acts as a barrier to entry for those from lower income backgrounds. Sutton Trust research shows that [the minimum cost of carrying out an unpaid internship in London is over £1,100](#), making it nearly impossible for those who cannot rely on financial support from parents to get their foot in the door.

Many of these placements are offered in London or other large cities, with the high cost of living making these opportunities even less accessible. Our [recent report](#) on the elites found that London is difficult to access for people from working class backgrounds outside the capital, with those from an already privileged background more likely to move to the capital for work. The role of local and regional newspapers and radio stations is crucial in helping young people to get the experience they need to start their career outside of big cities.

Social mobility is on the agenda of more and more organisations. It is encouraging to see more media organisations thinking about diversity and the benefits that this brings -- but there is still a long way to go. It is not just important for an equitable and fair society, but also for high quality journalism that has relevance to all walks of life.

The Sutton Trust is a charity working to address low social mobility in the UK, where the educational opportunities and life chances of a child born today are strongly linked to their parents' socio-economic background. The Trust fights for social mobility from birth to the workplace so that every young person – no matter who their parents are, what school they go to, or where they live – has the chance to succeed in life. Find out more on suttontrust.com.

The courage of conviction

Jon Holmes, Senior Home Page Editor at Sky Sports, and founder of Sports Media LGBT+

The suggestion that both our work and our workplaces are not as inclusive as we imagine should be a troubling thought for editors and journalists.

Our daily lives bring us into contact with people of all backgrounds, faiths, experiences and communities. However, the focus of our reporting and the content we produce do not always reflect this. Representation often requires a 'see the difference, be the difference' mindset – and as we look around our newsrooms, our colleagues who are LGBT+ don't fit readily into a distinct group.

These colleagues are even less likely to be vocal about this part of who they are. Research by YouGov for the equality charity Stonewall's 2018 LGBT in Britain: Work Report found more than a third of staff in the UK who are lesbian, gay, bi or trans have hidden their identity due to fear of discrimination.

Some might consider the media industry to be further ahead than other sectors on LGBT+ inclusion but reputation is not enough to deliver representation. Sky, the company I work for, is one of only three from leisure, arts and media to feature on Stonewall's 2020 Top 100 Most Inclusive Employers list. Determining factors include the commitment of senior leadership to engaging with LGBT+ staff and customers; network groups and allies programmes; the championing of role models; and having comprehensive policies, such as to tackle discrimination and for those transitioning at work.

Taking practical steps to create an LGBT+-inclusive culture empowers all in the workforce – whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity – to raise their own voices and amplify those of others. When Sky Sports signed up to be the media partner on Stonewall's Rainbow Laces campaign for LGBT+ inclusion in sport in 2016, I felt personally appreciated and accepted. Since then, I have co-ordinated a collective effort to produce content that recognises the challenges faced by LGBT+ athletes, coaches and administrators, from grassroots to the elite, and celebrates their achievements.

Within a year, I had founded a network called Sports Media LGBT+, with a vision to help build a stronger sense of community in our own industry and across sport. We conducted our own workplace survey, asking LGBT+ people in sports media whether they were out at work – almost half responded 'no' or 'only to close friends'. A similar percentage (45.2%) of all those surveyed, whether LGBT+ or not, said they had witnessed or been subjected to anti-LGBT language or behaviour in the preceding two years. Our friends at BCOMS, a major inspiration, then gave us the opportunity to share our findings with the wider industry through their D Word event and guide.

Coming out is widely considered to be a brave act for LGBT+ people, even more so in certain sports, with all their traditions and segregations. But standing up as an ally requires courage too: will my motives be questioned? What if I get some of the terminology wrong? How can I show I'm not just 'ticking boxes' on diversity?

Firstly, don't worry so much, good intentions are easy to spot and you'll be looked upon with 'kind eyes'. Secondly, there are plenty of resources out there to show you the way forward. Sports Media LGBT+ has produced its own called 'Rainbow Ready', written to assist anyone in a media-related role who's responsible for communicating inclusion or is producing content about LGBT+ people. Whether you're a novice or already past that stage, there's a suggested strategy to follow plus practical reporting guidelines, potential pitfalls to avoid, and the kind of reactions you can expect.

A pathway towards pride is all about confidence, so it's understandable to have a degree of trepidation when taking progressive steps. It's never too late to start – invite LGBT+ people in and listen to them, show allies are valued, and encourage reporting that reflects the lived experiences of those in the community. The further you walk down this road, the greater the representation you'll see walking alongside you.

Sports Media LGBT+ is a network group and consultancy that advocates for inclusion in both the sports media and across sport in general. It was launched in November 2017 by Jon Holmes, Senior Home Page Editor at Sky Sports. The group aims to use the power of media and journalism to advocate for 'athletes, coaches, officials, administrators and all others involved in sport who are LGBT+, by amplifying their voices in order to highlight the benefits of "being yourself" and how that inspires others'. To find out more about the networking, advocacy, consultancy and expertise Sports Media LGBT+ offers see sportsmedialgbt.com or connect on Twitter @SportsMediaLGBT or with Jon Holmes directly on @jonboy79.

Representing the voice of learning disability

Harry Roche, Communications Assistant and Ambassador at Mencap

There are 1.5 million people with a learning disability in the UK. This is a big population and it's shocking that the majority of the public still don't understand learning disability, partly because they rarely see us in the media. [Research from Ipsos MORI and Mencap](#) found that, in 2016, just 10% of the public had seen someone with a learning disability featured in newspapers or magazines in the past six months.

A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability, which can make everyday tasks harder and affects someone for their whole life. But, with the right support, people with a learning disability can achieve their dreams, whether that's finding a job, getting married or even running a marathon!

It is so important that people with a learning disability are visible in society, in order to change public attitudes, challenge stigma and show the world what people with a learning disability can achieve. The media plays a big role in this.

Through my role at Mencap as a Communications Assistant and ambassador, I'm proud to have appeared in all kinds of media to talk about learning disability. I've been interviewed live on BBC Breakfast about inclusive sport, spoken about voting rights at the European parliament, and regularly present at events. I also recently launched my 'History with Harry' YouTube series that received 22,000 views on [Twitter](#). The media I have worked with have always been very supportive by taking time to help me understand everything and make sure I feel comfortable and prepared. Now I want other people to have those opportunities as well.

When a journalist works with a spokesperson who has a learning disability, they can better report on the issues that we are facing and the reality of our daily lives, which can help to change attitudes and tackle the stigma we experience every day. Mencap is the UK's leading voice of learning disability and we believe that, as much as possible, this voice should come from someone who has a learning disability. Like with any charity, it is the people with lived experience who can really understand the



issues and share their experiences. Because of this, we put forward spokespeople from the charity who have a learning disability.

Some journalists may get this confused and think I am acting as a 'case study'. I am not a case study, I am a Mencap spokesperson and ambassador who is sharing my experiences and advocating for others. If people see that in the media, it plays a big role in reducing stigma and discrimination.

Often all that people with a learning disability need, whether it's in healthcare, employment or the media, are reasonable adjustments. These are small changes that can make a big difference. It can include giving people with a learning disability more time, clearer information and better communication. So, if you are interviewing someone with a learning disability, avoid jargon, speak clearly and use everyday words.

The only way we're going to improve diversity and inclusion is for the public to see people with a learning disability and it can't just be a token appearance. The media should show the many different things we are involved in – whether it's employment, advocacy or sports – and they should do it more often.

My role at Mencap has already given me so many opportunities to tell the story of learning disability and now I am ambitious to appear in an even wider variety of media. I want different types of people to get to know me and to show what I can do, so I invite you to get in touch with our media team to help us shine a light on learning disability.

We've got lots of resources to help you, [like our Journalist's guide to learning disability](#), and we're happy to answer any questions you have. We want to work with you to help outlets make their work more inclusive and to tackle stigma in society.

Harry Roche is Mencap Communications Assistant and Ambassador. Mencap is the UK's leading voice of learning disability, working with people with a learning disability and their families and carers. Mencap works collaboratively, fighting for equal rights, campaigning for greater opportunities and challenging attitudes and prejudice. For more information about working with Mencap, contact media@mencap.org.uk or 020 7696 5414.

Respect, trust and building relationships - how to report inclusively

The Media Diversity Institute

For more detailed recommendations on this topic, we recommend the study [Getting the facts right: reporting ethnicity and religion](#) conducted by the Media Diversity Institute in partnership with the International Federation of Journalists and ARTICLE 19.

Language

When we talk about inclusive reporting, one of the first things we must evaluate is the language we use. Ideally, journalists should opt for neutral and fact-based language. When more emotive and sensationalist language is used, we can easily fall into the trap of conveying certain stereotypes and using slurs.

A common narrative we see used in non-inclusive reporting is the 'Us vs. Them' theme, which separates people into different groups and seeks to pit them against each other. While some do this deliberately, in an attempt to dehumanise minorities and go against integration, journalists may also find themselves easily fall into the trap of adopting this narrative. Pay attention to the language you use when talking about minority groups and ensure you are not ostracising them. Remember to portray people as individual human beings instead of representatives of different minority groups.

When it comes to specific terminology to use for a minority group the rule of thumb is: ask! As a journalist, you are one person and even if you consult colleagues, you will not know all the correct terminology. If you are interviewing someone for a news piece, ask them: what pronouns would they like used? Do they want their disability, for example, mentioned, and if so, with which words? In order to adopt the correct language, we need to consult the groups and people we are reporting on directly. Don't ask an expert to speak about the group, speak to the group or an individual.

Stereotypes

Everyone has an unconscious bias: automatic and unintentional stereotypes that may influence our behaviour, and in the case of journalists, influence reporting. We recommend all media workers take an [unconscious bias test](#), because only those who are aware of their unconscious bias are able to counter it and adapt their reporting accordingly. When it comes to specific stereotypes that minorities are targeted with, knowledge is power. Only by being

aware of these stereotypes will you be able to avoid them in your reporting. Consult organisations representing minority communities, as well the communities themselves, on which stereotypes affect them. Share this knowledge with your colleagues to ensure a more inclusive reporting environment within your news organisation.

Stereotypes are not only conveyed through language, they are also expressed through [images used in reporting](#). It is crucial for journalists to ensure that the photography that accompanies their work is as representative and inclusive as the work they are creating and does not advance any harmful stereotypes. A [recent report](#) showed that articles about Muslim women are often accompanied by a photo of a woman wearing a black abaya. While it is one type of traditional attire, it reduces the diversity of the Muslim community to a single image pushing the idea that Muslim women are invisible, mysterious or shrouded from public view.

Voices

An article is strengthened by the sources used, and successful inclusive reporting gives a voice to the voiceless. It can be easy to opt for the same approachable sources for a news piece on a minority group, especially in a newsroom that runs on a strict time schedule, but there is a lot of power in giving a platform to those who are often ignored by the media. It is through these people that you truly represent the different voices that make up a community. Relationships with minority groups take time to build. Show them that you are accountable and give them the space to share their experiences and opinions. If possible, also interact with them outside of your journalism profession. This applies especially to journalists who work in smaller communities and write for local papers. Show your interest in the different communities in your district by attending, for example, public faith events and interacting with faith members on a casual informal basis. This builds trust and means that when you are covering a faith-based issue, you are much more likely to be welcomed into the community to cover it. These relationships are key to a faithful and respectful portrayal of that group.

Media Diversity Institute (MDI) works internationally to encourage accurate and nuanced reporting on race, religion, ethnic, class, age, disability, gender and sexual identity issues in media landscapes around the world. While its work is grounded in the principles of freedom of expression and values of diversity and inclusion, the day-to-day focuses on cultivating practical skills to combat negative stereotypes and disinformation, improve media and information literacy, and influence the conversation on diversity and the media.

The visibility of disability

Chris Pike, programme manager - Reframing Disability in News at the Media Trust

Disabled people are woefully under-represented in the media. Where disabled people are visible, it's overwhelmingly in the form of tropes. In 1991, Paul Hunt analysed that almost all disabled people in the media – both fictional characters, and on-screen representation of real people – can be categorised as one of ten stereotypes, ranging from sinister, pitiable and laughable, through to heroic and 'special'. This is often noticeable in entertainment broadcasting, but the same also occurs in broadcast news and documentaries. Such shows exist precisely to teach and inform us about current affairs, and to tell a balanced story of what is going on in the world; and yet it is often the case that disabled peoples' stories are often missed, and where they are reported they are still presented as cause for pity, anger or unrealistic heroism.

In giving these examples I sound a little like Goldilocks complaining about porridge – on the other hand, negative portrayals are bad, but then when disabled people are portrayed as heroic and powerful, I also take issue with it! The issue with all these examples, however, is ultimately the same – they are **dehumanising**. Even when talking about an individual, anything 'individual' about that person is lost in the report or story, and the person becomes just a mechanism through which to talk about a medical condition. This is damaging for two reasons. Firstly, it contributes to the idea that all disabilities, and all manifestations of disability, are exclusively medical, and something to be treated. But more than that, it misses out the huge diversity of disabled people – their individual strengths, weaknesses, interests, passions, successes, failures, and everything else that makes a person. This means the public's understanding of disabled people is not just inaccurate but limited too. That's not to say that a disability won't play a large part in a person's life – but it is just one among many things that make a person, whether they're a character in a story or a feature in a news report, interesting.

So, what needs to change, and how? In October 2019, Media Trust ran a Reframing Disability summit, sponsored by Channel 4 and in partnership with Scope, Disability Rights UK, and ELVIS. The event brought together some of the biggest names in media and advertising with leading disability charities to look at how the representation of disabled people across television, advertising and journalism can be improved. These are some of the key findings:

1. Evolving landscape

Many media organisations are still working on outdated understandings of disability, built exclusively on the medical model of disability and with a narrow concept of what constitutes a disability. In order to represent disabled people in all their diversity, it will be essential to expand that understanding and to incorporate a social model understanding.

2. Changing disability's Cinderella status

If the situation is to improve for representation of disabled people in media, media organisations across the sector – as well as organisations of all kinds – must start to treat disability representation as seriously as they treat issues of diversity around race, gender and sexual orientation.

3. New angles

In order to reframe disability, we need to move away from the same old tropes and stereotypes and start to share new stories of disabled people participating in all walks of life.

4. Leadership and culture

It is not good enough for disability to be the responsibility of one junior member of staff. It must be taken seriously by senior leadership and permeate into organisational culture. Examples of organisations that have been successful in this have demonstrated that being disability-inclusive needn't be a chore; it can become second nature and part of normal working practice with time.

5. Data and tracking

The BBC's own 50:50 Project on gender representation has proven that by monitoring and tracking developments of who is visible on-screen, this gives a real impetus and motivation to individual departments to improve their diversity and visibility.

6. More accessible platforms

It's all very well prioritising an increase in disabled representation; but if your platforms and practices aren't accessible, then many disabled people will be left out. Often changes are small and easy to make, but ask the question, and be **openminded** about how flexible you can be.



Funding diversity – initiatives from across the industry

Financial difficulties are a significant reason why aspiring journalists from a wider range of backgrounds find it hard to get a start in the industry. There are several initiatives bringing together funding, mentorship and work opportunities from publishers and broadcasters to provide more individuals with the opportunity to gain qualifications and experience without having an existing network.

NCTJ Journalism Diversity Fund

In 2020 the Journalism Diversity Fund (JDF), administered by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), celebrates its 15th anniversary. Since it was established, in 2005, it has awarded 347 bursaries, at an average cost of £8,000, to support diverse candidates gain professional journalism qualifications on NCTJ-accredited, industry-recognised courses. Each bursary recipient is also paired with a professional working journalist as a mentor, and the NCTJ increasingly works with sponsoring organisations to offer work experience placements too; 80% of all JDF alumni remain in the industry.

The scheme was established with an annual grant from the Newspaper Licensing Agency (NLA Media Access). Today, more than a dozen UK media organisations, including the BBC, FT, Sky, Google, Bloomberg, Daily Mail Group, Newsquest and Reuters, provide support and funding for the scheme, which continues to expand, helping almost 100 new journalists in the last two years alone. The NCTJ this year set out an ambition to increase funding for the scheme to half a million pounds annually, and it recently announced that Dow Jones, publisher of the Wall Street Journal, had become a sponsor.

Will Gore, the NCTJ's head of partnerships and projects says the JDF is a vital part of the NCTJ's efforts to ensure a pipeline of diverse talent into the news media industry: 'The JDF has achieved so much, enabling people who would otherwise have been lost to journalism to bring their unique viewpoints to newsrooms across the UK. But we know there is more still to do, which is why we are looking to increase the fund's size.' Rianna Croxford, community affairs correspondent for BBC News, was a JDF recipient in 2017. She said: 'I could not have become a journalist without the Journalism Diversity Fund and I would not be the reporter I am now without NCTJ training.' Applications, offers of funding, and industry professional volunteers to shortlist, interview and mentor

candidates are welcome. More information on the Journalism Diversity Fund is available [here](#), and more information on the NCTJ is available on the [website](#).

BJTC Placement Assistance Scheme

The Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC) recognised an issue for graduates wanting to enter broadcast journalism, who frequently need to take unpaid work placements to gain experience and contacts. Industry placements are 'an essential element of the professional training standards our accredited courses are subject to', says BJTC Chief Executive Jon Godel. Transport, accommodation and lost earnings can make it impossible for individuals to take up opportunities outside their home area, reducing the opportunity to compete for entry-level jobs and helping to perpetuate low representation from working-class backgrounds.

With support from the BJTC, Google News Initiative, the BBC and ITV News, the scheme launched in January 2020 with the aim of helping up to 250 journalism students in its first year, with bursaries of £200 for those on BJTC courses meeting its social diversity criteria. More information is available on the scheme [here](#).

PressPad

Since its launch in 2018, PressPad has helped 54 interns to complete 122 weeks of work experience with the support of 100 hosts. Founder Olivia Crellin grew up in the Midlands and gained first-hand experience of practical difficulties of covering living costs for a typical fortnight of unpaid or low-paid work experience in London for a would-be journalist. When she eventually joined the BBC, where she still works as a reporter for the BBC World Service, she realised that like her, many journalists were motivated by the desire to make a difference in their industry and created the pilot scheme for PressPad to connect established journalists who could offer accommodation, professional support and mentoring to students and graduates on work experience placements and tight budgets. In 2020 the scheme was redesigned to make it more financially sustainable, but it continues to source bursaries and short-term accommodation placements for those who need it, as well as offering mentoring and networking opportunities. Financial and professional support is welcomed. Find out more about [PressPad](#).

If you or the publisher or broadcaster you work for are involved in similar initiatives and would like to let fellow journalists know, drop us a line on help@responsesource.com so that we can highlight your work on our blog or a future whitepaper.

Resources to help improve diversity and inclusiveness

This is a selection of the many resources that are available from media organisations, individual journalists and campaign groups to help improve diversity and inclusiveness both in reporting and in the journalism workforce itself. We don't pretend this is exhaustive and we'd like to build on this in future. Get in touch with us marketing@responsesource.com if you have a resource to add.

BBC

Since 2018 the BBC 50:50 Project has been a grassroots initiative designed to inspire and assist BBC journalists and other content producers to represent women and men equally in their content. Detailed reports are produced each year in to progress – [the 2019 report is here](#).

The BBC has also [published research](#) in to the socio-economic diversity of its own workforce, why it matters and what steps it is taking to improve balance.

Black Collective of Media in Sport

The D Word conference series reports are available for [2014](#), [2016](#) and [2018](#) and include advice and research on all areas of diversity in media.

Creative Diversity Network

Aiming to share, discuss and profile the work that the UK broadcasters are doing around diversity, the network produces guidelines, resources and research. [Its latest report is here](#).

Everybody In

This guide to inclusive reporting for journalism students by Diane Kemp, Marcus Ryder and Bob Calver, covers personal experiences of difference from a number of journalists.

Media Diversity Institute

Aims to promote media and information literacy, combat disinformation and encourage responsible coverage of diversity issues.

Mencap

Mencap's awards for journalism aim to encourage the journalists of tomorrow to write about issues surrounding learning disability, as well as allowing those with a learning disability to have a greater voice in the media. It offers [a guide](#) to journalists on reporting on learning disability positively, concentrating on the person first and their disability second.

NCTJ

The NCTJ has built on a number of years of research in to diversity in the journalism community. [Its latest report is available here](#), with personal stories from a number of Journalism Diversity Fund recipients on the impact of a bursary [here](#).

Ofcom

Ofcom's [diversity and equality hub](#) offers a gateway in to guidance for broadcasters who want to increase the diversity of their organisations.

PressPad

PressPad has conducted its own research in to diversity in newsrooms with links to further reading.

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

The [2019 report](#) makes the case that journalists need to both connect with increasingly diverse audiences and also convince young people from different backgrounds that journalism is a career choice they can and should consider.

Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity

The Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity is a newly established research centre, bringing together the expertise of established media professionals and academics. The Centre believes that accurate representation of all sections of society in all layers of the UK media is vital. Involved in the Centre are Sir Lenny Henry, Professor Diane Kemp (the Centre's Director and a contributor to ResponseSource's [Reflecting Reality](#) webinar in March 2020), Professor Marcus Ryder and Marverine Duffy, all leading figures in the efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in the UK media industry. [The Centre's website](#) collates information on diversity in the media and includes a timeline of research and diversity policies.

Sports Media LGBT+

The [2018 survey](#) on the sports media also includes data on location, age, gender, disability and ethnicity representation among sports journalists. [The Rainbow Ready](#) resource offers advice for reporters and communications professionals in any role on communicating LGBT+ inclusion in sport.

The Sutton Trust

The [2020 report on Elites in the UK](#) covers a number of industries and the reasons why social mobility can be a problem in certain professions. The Trust has previously looked at how [informal and unpaid internships can exclude those without existing networks and financial resources](#).