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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY SCHEMES ON CAREER TRAJECTORIES

Screen Industries Growth Network

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Acknowledgements

About SIGN

The Screen Industries Growth Network (SIGN) is a unique, business-facing initiative supporting the TV, film and games industries in Yorkshire and the Humber. SIGN aims to make this region the UK's centre for digital creativity, and a model of diverse and inclusive activity. In order to do this, SIGN connects companies, support agencies and universities through a programme of training, business development, research and evaluation.

SIGN is a £6.4m project, starting in summer 2020, and funded by Research England, the University of York and its partners. The University of York leads the initiative, working with Screen Yorkshire and eight other Yorkshire universities. An extensive network of collaboration ensures that SIGN is equipped to deliver maximum impact across the region.

Report published summer 2023

Executive summary

This report summarises the findings of a study into the impact of diversity schemes on career progression in the screen industries. Funded by Research England, the research was carried out by the Screen Industries Growth Network (SIGN), based at the University of York. The report draws on interviews with organisers (eight) and participants (27) of four diversity schemes (two entry-level and two mid-career) in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Interviews focused on how schemes helped participants from under-represented backgrounds to overcome barriers to access and progression in the screen industries, exploring the extent to which schemes were responsible for outcomes since they took place.

Our report shows:

- Schemes, when run well by people committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles, provide valuable experiences that can positively impact people's immediate career trajectories. However, structural inequalities continue to exist, limiting career progression.

- Access to work and successful career advancement in TV and film are shaped by enabling factors. Participation in individual diversity schemes is only one of them, alongside a wider set of interventions, and personal circumstances such as proximity to work, employment status, financial resources and existing networks.

- Schemes have the potential to improve industry cultures and practices by promoting supportive and inclusive values. However, to be meaningful, this work needs to be accompanied by a culture of accountability.

Diversity schemes in the screen industries

Building a career in the screen industries can be hard. Firstly, the range of job opportunities available is often not understood beyond those in a show's title sequence. Next, it is not always clear what training is required for entry: employers often expect a university degree and commonly a work placement, but universities are expensive and good placements are rare. Even when someone has the required skills, informal hiring practices exclude those who do not know the right people to get them through the door, and progression depends on who you have worked and socialised with. Finally, hours are long and intense, with those unable to commit being stigmatised and/or excluded.

Together, these conditions mean that the sector is rife with inequalities. Previous research tells us that those who can meet the demands of work in the screen industries are more likely to be white, male, middle class and without caring responsibilities (Friedman and Laurison, 2020; Brook et al., 2020). People outside of this norm – the working class, women and people of marginalised genders, people of colour, those with disabilities and those with caring responsibilities – struggle to access and progress in the screen industries. Consequently, it proves harder to address the industries' critical skills gap and shortage of culturally diverse products.

In an attempt to address this lack of diversity, organisations use varied interventions, generally referred to as diversity schemes. The schemes tend to focus on addressing individuals' lack of resources and connections, while not tackling more entrenched problems. As a result, diversity schemes are criticised for failing to challenge the 'structural dimensions of exclusion and inequality that remain the underpinning factor in film and TV diversity' (Nwonka and Malik, 2021, p.5).

However, in a report commissioned by SIGN, Ozimek (2020) underlines the difficulties in assessing such claims, given the lack of evidence. The report further highlights shortfalls in research such as these: it tends to be limited to issues of gender and race and is not intersectional; it is focused on career entry as opposed to issues over the life course; it provides limited evidence on the regions outside London/the South East; and it lacks qualitative data that centre the experiences of workers.

To address the evidence gap and gain a more nuanced understanding of what diversity schemes are able to achieve, SIGN commissioned research into the impact of diversity schemes on participants and their career trajectories. This report explains how we conducted our research, details the schemes and discusses examples of good practice in the running of schemes. The report also looks at the activities employed by the schemes, highlights the challenges faced by participants once schemes are completed and shares success stories. Finally, a number of recommendations are made for future interventions.

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What we did

We interviewed a total of 35 people running or taking part in four diversity schemes[1] for TV and film[2] in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Five interviews (with a total of eight people) were conducted with scheme organisers to understand the values, experience and organising principles behind the delivery of the schemes. Participants of schemes were initially recruited via the scheme organisers,[3] with those interviewed early encouraging others to take part, instigating a number of additional interviews. These 27 interviews looked to understand participants' backgrounds and employment history, their experiences of taking part in the schemes and the outcomes of taking part, especially the ways in which the schemes helped them access and progress in work in TV and film. Several participants had already worked in the screen industries for some years and many had taken part in multiple diversity initiatives. This offered extensive insight into this field of research. Overall, the participants were highly reflective about their place in the screen industries.

Together, organiser and participant interviews were designed to explore whether and how the interventions addressed a lack of training; limited or no access to social networks; and financial hardship faced by participants, and, as a result, the extent to which interventions improved career prospects. Other findings reveal more detail about what makes a diversity scheme impactful.

This offered

extensive

insight into this field of research

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[1] Two entry-level and two mid-career schemes.

[2] No diversity schemes in other screen industries were suitable for study at the time of research.

[3] Scheme participants were offered payment for taking part, in the form of a £20 voucher. The decision to incentivise interviews was made in response to our experiences of recruitment in previous research, and advice from a scheme organiser who indicated that without payment people would be reluctant to volunteer their time.

Who was involved

The research concerned two entry-level and two mid-career schemes from the Yorkshire and Humber region, with a total of 27 participants interviewed. Each of the four schemes is described below, with details of its aims, target group(s), content, format, duration and (ongoing) support.

The schemes

'Get into TV'[4] is a six-month programme designed for 18–30-year-olds in a specific area of Yorkshire and the Humber. The aim of the scheme is to tackle the 'actual and perceived barriers' that young people face when considering a career in TV and film. The programme covers information about the industries, skills training, and support to build confidence and resilience. Participants are mentored and have the opportunity to apply for a paid placement at a production studio. An alumni network is active in supporting participants after course completion.

'Screen Industries Grad Scheme' is a six-month programme for recent university graduates who are based in the Yorkshire and Humber region and are from one or more under-represented groups. The aim of the scheme is to 'furnish participants with some tools and techniques to help them feel more confident pushing into the screen industries'. This is achieved by developing participants' transferable skills, building their understanding of what personal capacities are needed to operate in the screen industries and informing them of the range of roles available. There is no alumni network.

'Career Accelerator' is a six-month programme that targets those in mid-career who have developed skill sets and experience but struggle to break through and/or achieve financial stability. The programme is focused on supporting teams of content developers to come up with ideas that are then pitched to industry. This is facilitated by a range of activities including workshops, keynote speakers, interaction with industry (including experience of pitching), mentoring, and a £5,000 development bursary for each team. An alumni network is active in supporting participants after course completion, and a grassroots network has developed.

'Balanced Sound' is an eight-week programme for people of marginalised genders who want to transition to/return to working in sound in the screen industries and radio/podcasting. It looks to address lack of opportunities in sound, providing experiences of the different aspects of sound production. There is no alumni network.

[4] Names of schemes are pseudonyms.

The participants

Despite the small sample, the data presented below give some indication of the diversity of participants. For clarity, information is sometimes split between the entry-level and mid-career schemes to indicate the differences in cohorts, and, whenever it proved possible and meaningful, presented intersectionally.

Table 1. Gender composition

	Female	Male	Non-binary
'Grad Scheme'	2	3	0
'Get into TV'	6	1	0
'Career Accelerator'	5	4	0
'Balanced Sound'	4	N/A	2
Totals	17	8	2

Of the early-career schemes, 'Get into TV' initially targeted those between 18 and 24 but later expanded to 18–30. 'Screen Industries Grad Scheme' was available to those over 30, but the sample did not include anyone over 34. In contrast, those on mid-career schemes range more in age.

Figure 1. Age of participants in entry-level and mid-career schemes
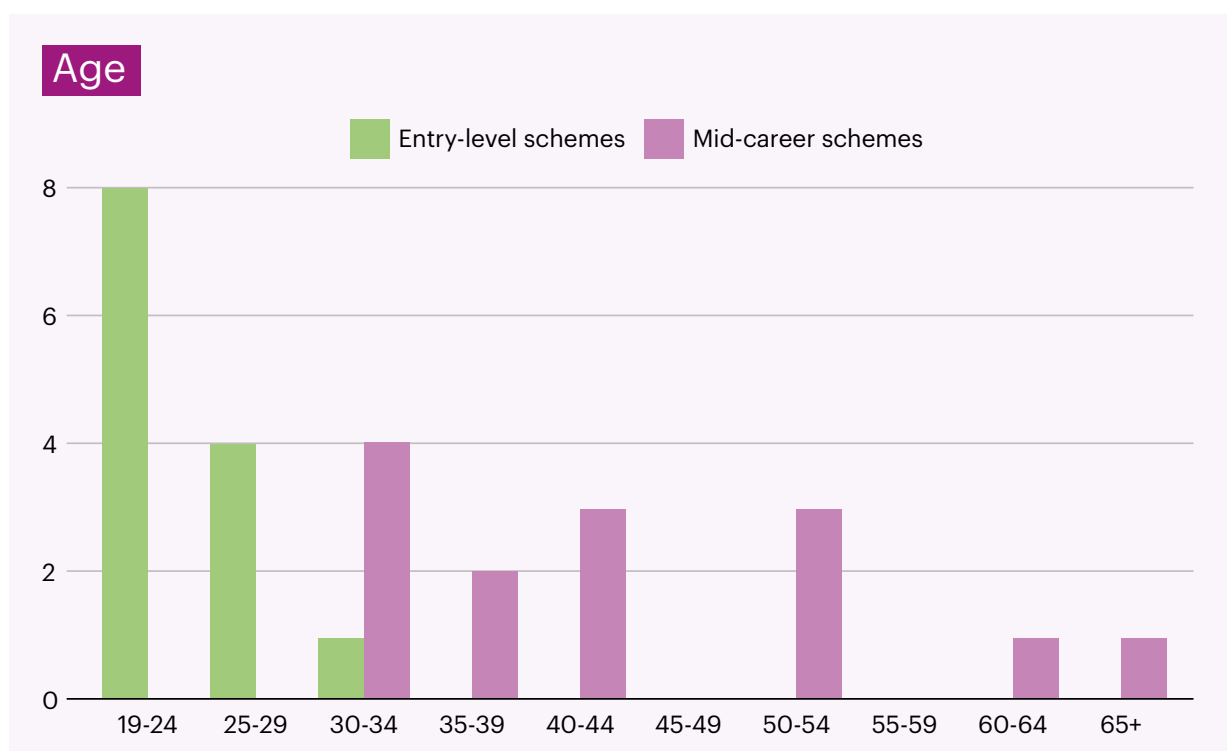
Compared to the workforce average of 19%, and for TV just 7%[5], the sample has a higher disability rate of 33% (9 out of 27 participants).

Four participants reported some form of caring responsibilities for adults. Interviews revealed that the degree of care required varied, but in each instance the ability to commit to work has previously been affected. Two male participants have dependent children. Interestingly, no women in the sample have dependent children. This could potentially indicate that those who do may not be able to undertake screen industry work.

Self-described class categorisations indicate that while the majority of participants of entry-level schemes were working class, those from mid-career schemes were predominantly middle class. This suggests both that the entry-level scheme organisers have made efforts to recruit from under-represented groups and that by mid-career working-class people may not be able to sustain careers, issues we return to later.

Figure 2. Class position in entry-level and mid-career schemes

The sample is less white (66%) than the population of Yorkshire and the Humber (85.4%[6]) or the TV and film workforce (86%[5]). However, given that 8.9%[6] of the region's population is of Asian heritage, there is under-representation in those interviewed, with just two participants identifying as having a mixed ethnicity. Similar to the trend in class position, there is a greater proportion of white people in the sample on the mid-career schemes, potentially indicating that by mid-career more people of colour have been excluded or driven away from the screen industries.

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[5] Ofcom (2020). *Diversity and equal opportunities in television and radio 2019/2020*.

[6] 2021 Census data.

Figure 3. Ethnicity in entry-level and mid-career schemes
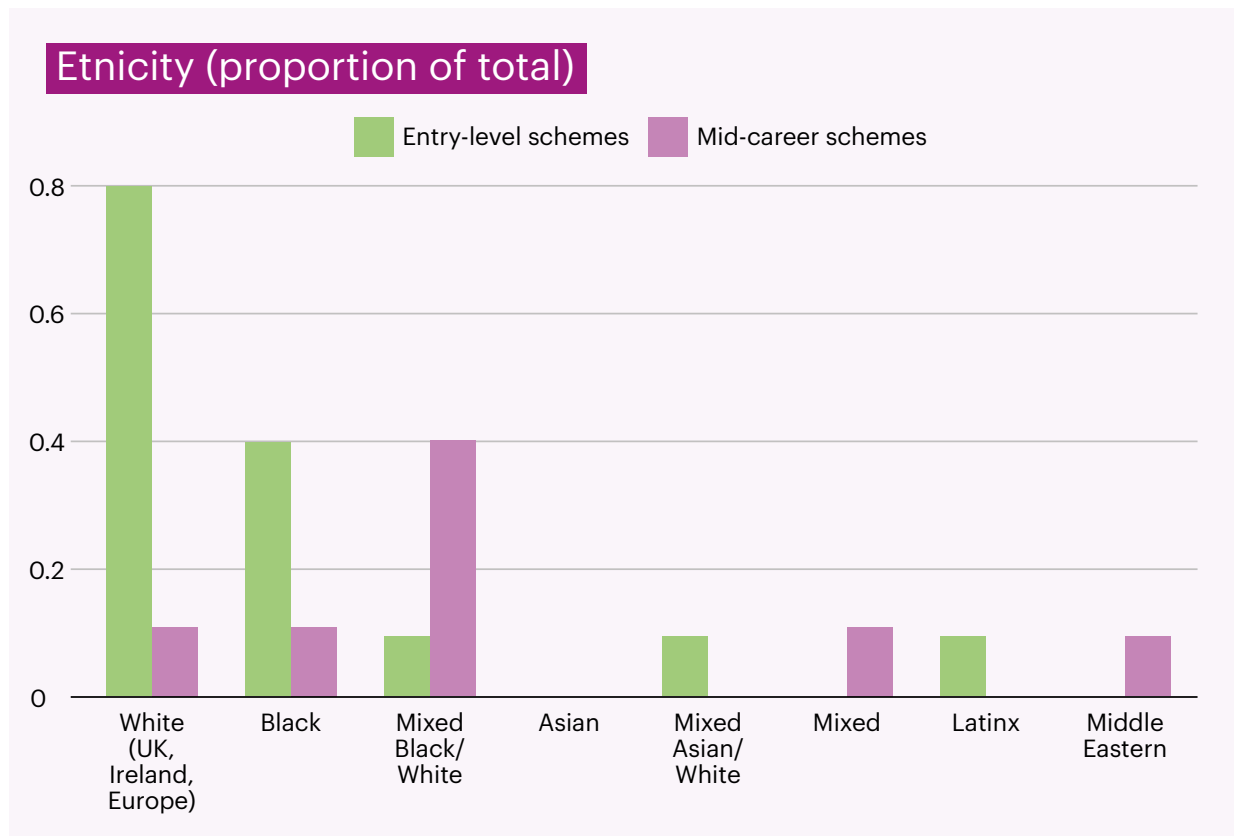
Comparing gender, class and ethnicity (white and all 'others'), we can see that the sample becomes more middle class and more white as it moves from entry-level to mid-career (a proxy for age). While the sample size means these figures are not statistically significant, the data indicate that by the time people reach mid-career, those from working-class and non-white backgrounds are increasingly under-represented.

Figure 4. Proportion of white or other working-class men by scheme type

Proportion of men: class, and white or other, split by scheme type

Legend: Others, White

Figure 5. Proportion of white or other working-class women and non-binary people by scheme type

Proportion of women and non-binary people: class, and white or other, split by scheme type

Legend: Others, White
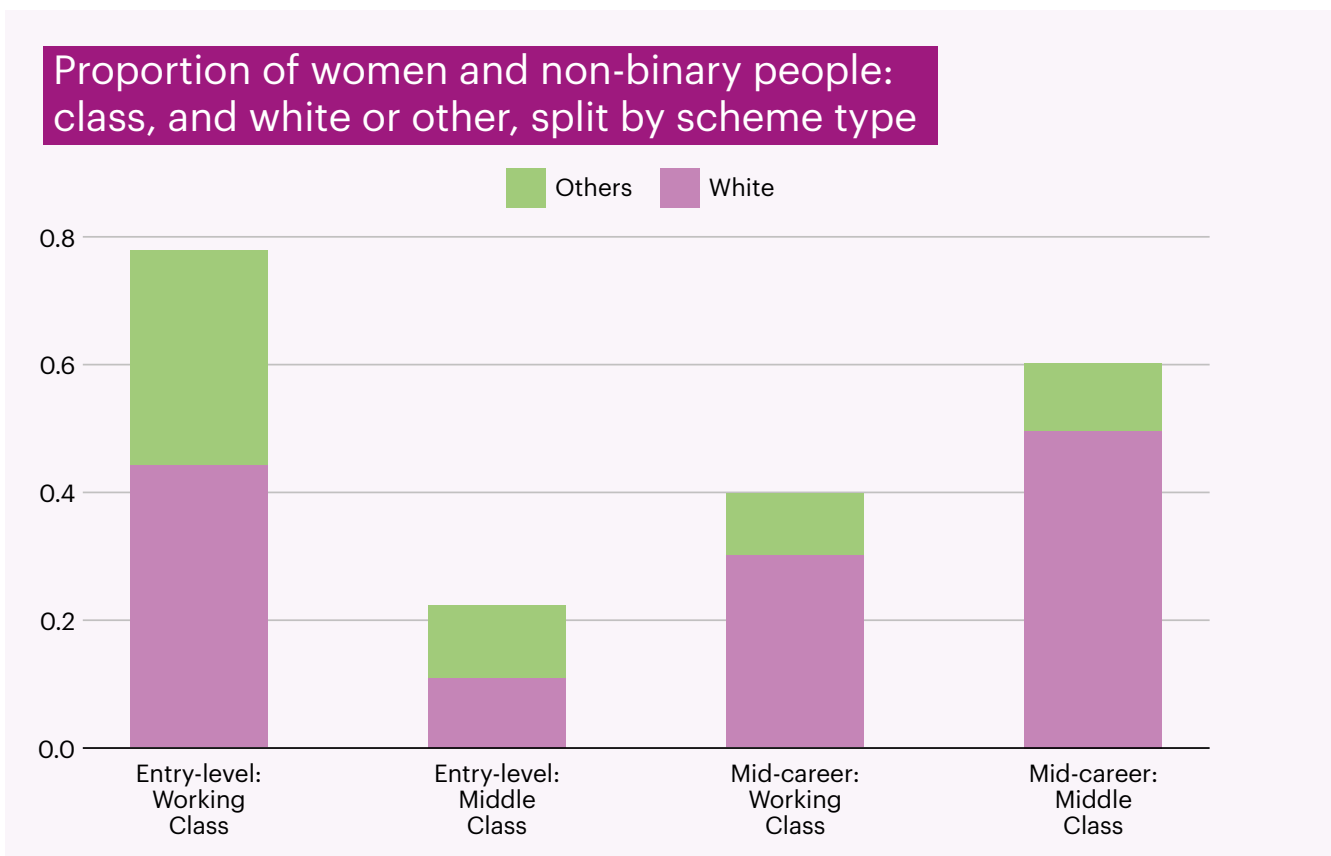
Findings

Schemes are not the answer to structural inequalities. Nevertheless, schemes offer valuable experiences that can have positive impacts on careers after completion. Furthermore, our findings show that by fostering supportive and collaborative values and nurturing new regional networks, the schemes have the potential to move beyond supporting individuals to addressing industry cultures and practices. That said, entrenched barriers to access and progression in the screen industries should not be underplayed, with our findings highlighting a range of challenges that diversity schemes fail to address.

In the following section we discuss planning, recruitment, delivery and overall impact of the four schemes.

Foundations for impactful diversity schemes

Diversity schemes are often sold as addressing the lack of skills, networks and money that people from under-represented backgrounds need in order to pursue a career in the screen industries. However, the research identified a number of other key elements of the preparation and delivery of schemes that have a big effect on their impact, in relation to both participants' experiences and the 'return on investment' for organisers.

Scheme personnel: values and experience

Different personnel brought a variety of experiences and expertise to the planning and delivery of their programmes. This had an impact on the quality of the experience for participants.

While all the schemes aimed to improve diversity in the screen industries, there were noticeable differences in what drove the formation and delivery of the schemes. Three of the four schemes had a clear social justice focus, shaped by the organisers and their experiences of marginalisation in the screen industries. Personal investment of this kind shone through in their delivery, which, to various degrees, communicated issues of inequality and the scheme's mission to tackle them alongside participants. In contrast, the fourth scheme was developed by career specialists who had an interest in expanding career options for recent graduates but were less focused on issues around social justice in the industries. Participant interviews suggest that this lack of focus on tackling issues of marginalisation meant the scheme felt less supportive and less personal.

Who planned and delivered the programme of activities was significant. When this was done by industry professionals with a focus on EDI, the programmes seemed both more relevant and more impactful. In contrast, when activities were outsourced in order to access relevant experience, the training turned out to be of variable quality, with some trainers displaying attitudes that seem to clash with the values of the intervention. One of the participants explained:

I felt that some of his [the trainer's] opinions were quite dated. Like telling ladies that they should smile. I thought that was something just weird to say, like, 'Oh, you should always be smiling, because if you are smiling, everyone will enjoy working with you.' I just thought, that is an odd thing to say, you know.

1-P-2

Even in those schemes organised by industry experts, some sessions that were run by external facilitators did not live up to the values that the schemes espoused, a point we return to later. Clearly, to ensure that the planning and delivery of activities echo the values of the scheme, employing the right people is key. When schemes capitalise on the expertise and experience of industry professionals who are committed to EDI principles, this appears to improve the overall experiences of participants. However, reliance on a few exceptional individuals, as had been the case with the schemes researched, is a risky strategy and means that the sustainability of schemes is threatened when people move on. We agree with Marsden et al. (2022), who argue that to address this and to maintain good practice, institutional knowledge needs to be developed so that others can continue when individual personnel leave.

Recruiting the right participants

The value of the schemes is determined by whether they recruit those who would benefit most from interventions and who have an interest in pursuing a career in the screen industries once the schemes are over. However, findings indicate that there has been varied success in recruiting participants who are in most need of this support and who do indeed want to pursue screen industry roles.

How schemes are marketed is critical, especially when engaging with hard-to-reach groups. All schemes used mailing lists and/or social media to advertise. As a result, the promotion was limited to those who had already signed up for the mailing list and those following specific social media channels. However, one entry-level scheme, 'Get into TV', adopted the principle that 'if someone is already on the mailing list, they're not people that we need to target for this programme'. In fact, they went to extra lengths in their outreach efforts:

We didn't advertise in The Guardian *or anything like that. I went out in my car with leaflets and put them in cafes, and libraries, and places where people from working-class backgrounds would go. For instance, in [suburb], there was a cafe in the middle … The local library, that's got a job shop in there. We even did sessions in a Jobcentre and got people who were unemployed to come to tell them about the scheme, to say, this won't affect your benefits if you do it, but it's going to give you another skill, why not? If you've never thought about it, do it. So it was just important that we got out there to marginalised groups the best that we could to introduce them to something that they'd never had before.*

3-O-2

Consequently, their cohort captured more of the diversity that it intended to than other schemes' cohorts did.

to **ensure** that the planning and delivery of activities echo the values of the scheme, employing the right people is key

13

How applicants are selected is also important: firstly, to make sure that participants with targeted backgrounds are included, and secondly, to check whether they are interested in pursuing work in the screen industries.

Two schemes relied solely on online forms with no follow-up interviews. This approach appeared to be ineffective at teasing out how suitable and motivated applicants were. As a result, a number of participants had little or no interest in pursuing careers in the sector. In contrast, the two other schemes used some form of discussion or workshop process to understand the suitability and aptitude of participants, thus achieving recruitment of highly invested participants.

Finally, it was clear that there were a number of participants across all schemes who, other than having marginalised status as women or LGBTQ+, had a range of privileges and prior successes. This suggests that selecting applicants can be tricky: if the aim of the schemes is to better reflect the general population within the screen industries workforce, then diversity criteria need to be considered intersectionally, to include factors such as socioeconomic status. However, getting this right presents challenges as multiple checks would be needed that would be both labour-intensive and intrusive.

The pros and cons of online versus face-to-face delivery

Various iterations of schemes have, initially due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, been conducted online. Online delivery allowed those with limitations related to travel, caring responsibilities and health issues to take part. Participants from 'Balanced Sound' found that the online format was more inclusive for these reasons. After Covid, two schemes, 'Get into TV' and 'Career Accelerator', continued to offer participants access to the sessions online. One adopted a hybrid format and the other allowed participants to 'Zoom in' if they were unable to attend the face-to-face sessions.

Yet there was a downside to online delivery. Many participants found it somewhat awkward. One participant explained that online communication made it harder to engage with other people, and made them less confident to contribute:

> *When it's online it's sometimes a little bit – it's not the same as being in person. It's always a little bit harder ... With the online stuff, I always feel a little bit more shy and reserved than I would do if I was in a room with people, but that's just the nature of online, I think.*
>
> 4-P-6

Others found it challenging to develop connections with other participants, especially in the absence of 'in-between time' when sessions were online only and run as lectures, as explained here:

> *I think it's difficult [to make connections] when you've got to do the course over Zoom, and you don't get that sort of in-between time, kind of socialising with people, and maybe there wasn't as much of a camaraderie as there would be if we'd been doing that in person.*
>
> 4-P-3

complimenting online accessibility with some element of face-to-face would be **beneficial**

In contrast, in-person activities were, without exception, welcomed by the participants. In fact, being in the same physical space seemed especially rewarding:

> *I really enjoyed it at the beginning … like, meeting everybody. We had a day [where] all the cohort got together. I really enjoyed meeting everybody and having the opportunity to just meet with no pressure.*

<div align="right">2-P-6</div>

Having dedicated time for people to get to know each other was seen as valuable, particularly in relation to developing a sense of belonging. This not only improved the overall experience of schemes but also helped to build foundations for horizontal networks that supported careers once a scheme had finished. Given the central role of networking in the screen industries, our findings show that complimenting the advantages of online accessibility with at least some element of face-to-face events, that dedicates time to cohort bonding, would be beneficial for participants' careers.

Facilitated discussion on marginalisation

Despite the positive experiences of getting to know each other, some of the participants felt that there was a missed opportunity to discuss experiences of marginalisation, which could have developed deeper bonds. When asked about whether there was any affinity between participants, this participant compared their experience to that of taking part in another scheme:

> *No. I felt it just felt quite distant between us, especially as opposed to [a different] course that I was on where we discussed a lot of difficult stuff. We were discussing very openly barriers and difficulties in trying to learn or achieve what we wanted in our careers, and so that leaves a certain air of vulnerability and opens the floodgates into communication and bonding. We didn't have that on the course.*

<div align="right">4-P-1</div>

It was noted that in 'Career Accelerator' people shied away from difficult discussions about differences and inequalities. One participant with a wealth of experience in working in diversity issues in another industry explained:

> *I really wish they'd really got into the under-representation conversation. We kind of pussyfooted around it, but we need to really … talk about it. Because everybody in that room has a possibility of change … If they're all booking people and training people or building teams, every single one of them has a responsibility to change. And chatting around it is not going to help us change.*

<div align="right">2-P-7</div>

Considering the shared experiences of under-representation among the cohorts, facilitating discussions on marginalisation and solidarity, while challenging, could have been rewarding, and could have galvanised people into working together and supporting each other once the scheme was finished. For this deeper cohort development to be achieved, the capacities of organisers and facilitators need to be enhanced so they can support these discussions.

Programmes of activity

The main programmes of activity focused on addressing the perceived 'deficits' in individuals' capacities that are thought to limit their ability to succeed in the screen industries. These capacities include skills training, industry knowledge, networks and financial resources. In addition, this section considers another aspect of schemes, which is the work done on promoting supportive and collaborative values. This work, alongside the new regional networks that some schemes have formed, has the potential to move beyond the individual to influence organisational cultures, breaking down barriers to participation for marginalised groups. The degree to which this work is successful is discussed.

Free access

The financial cost of training and other career development activities, whether via university or other paid courses, excludes many from participation in the screen industries. To remove this impediment, the schemes were offered free of charge. However, participants highlighted how taking part in a scheme meant that they had to turn down work to attend sessions or spend time on development tasks. This was especially challenging for those on 'Career Accelerator' because their programme was more intensive than the others, and they were the most reliant on their own earning power.

Developing industry knowledge

Scheme organisers recognised that careers services and universities do not do enough to inform people about the range of roles and modes of working in the screen industries, an issue echoed in other research (ScreenSkills, 2022a; Jones et al., 2023). To address this, trainers, guest speakers and mentors were brought in to share insights and inform participants of available opportunities. For many, this proved to be an 'eyeopener', and for others, it helped to broaden their horizons:

> *Being exposed to those kinds of worlds … we didn't even know those career paths existed, that these people existed, these companies existed. So that was all really cool … Yes, they tried to really diversify it. They were very interested in showing us that it's not just about writing and directing and acting, that there are all these other routes that you can take into it.*
>
> 3-P-6

Skills training

Critical skills shortages have been reported in the screen industries (ScreenSkills, 2022b). At the same time, accessing skills training can be tricky, especially if you are not doing a specialist degree or do not have the ability to pay for other courses (Jones et al., 2023). Moreover, there is an acknowledgement that a university degree does not always sufficiently prepare people for work (Carey et al., 2017). Consequently, skills development played a major role in each scheme. Skills development focused on a combination of the soft skills needed for navigating the industries and technical skills, with different schemes offering different emphases on each. Soft skills training involved communication skills, help with CVs and interviews, and resilience training. Technical skills support ranged from camera training to help with editing. This participant indicated what she gained from the experience of being given free access to a prestigious film course as part of the scheme:

> *I did get to do a film course, so it's how to use a camera and how to shoot and stuff … that was really helpful and beneficial [for] learning and developing skills.*

> 3-P-7

Mentorships

Three of the four schemes offered mentorships with industry experts. Different mentors offered different things, ranging from opportunities to chat about work – where mentors provided insights into the industries, structured skills training such as pitch development, useful contacts to get work, and signposting – to other help. When mentorships went well, participants were noticeably enthusiastic about the benefits that they brought, clearly being inspired by experienced professionals. For some, help has also extended beyond the schemes, providing continued value to participants' careers and, as described below, a foothold in industry:

> *We were all assigned a mentor. My mentor … I still talk to [him] now. It was only meant to be your six-month mentorship but he helped me. [After] I did my internship with [mentor's company], which was an edit assistant thing, he helped me … get on their books as an actual freelancer. He got me six weeks of work, paid. He really helped with advice and stuff, and gave me CV tips. We still chat now. He's still interested and everything.*

> 3-P-3

However, not all experiences were as positive. Some participants felt that their mentor was not as committed as they would have liked, or that sessions were not as focused on development as they could be. In some cases, the sessions felt like a chat over coffee. With clear guidelines for mentors, training and examples of good practice, these disappointing experiences could have been prevented.

Developing networks

Given the importance of networks to attaining work in the screen industries, gaining access to existing networks and developing new ones are valuable outcomes of diversity schemes. Over and above contact with industry professionals, the schemes have developed networks in two ways. Firstly, horizontal networks were developed between participants on Facebook and WhatsApp, which were used to exchange knowledge, provide support and offer work opportunities. This participant discusses how they have been able to pass on job opportunities to fellow participants when they personally have not been available:

> *Whenever I get offered a job and I can't make it I will always turn it down and recommend someone else to help them out. On this particular occasion I recommended this person and they got the job through that. You help each other out through that, really.*
>
> 3-P-3

Another participant discussed how valuable this mutual support is, indicating both the closed nature of the industries and consequently the positive impact that having someone offering access can have on participants' careers:

> *I think one of the biggest issues for me, personally, is a lack of a network and a lack of access … Sometimes it feels like there's a wall, you just need one person to welcome you through the wall and then you're on the inside. So I think building those networks has been really, really valuable to me and it's something that I need to continue to do, and the experience of it has been great.*
>
> 2-P-6

Secondly, where available, top-down alumni networks have shown to be valuable sources of ongoing support and opportunity. Scheme staff's roles included providing support to these networks through regular emails, phone calls and drop-ins. These have been greatly appreciated by entry-level and mid-career participants alike. Early-career participants from 'Get into TV' have benefited from additional training and work experience through the alumni network. This participant from 'Career Accelerator' indicated the value she places on the lasting support provided to help maintain the connections developed on the scheme:

> *We've already arranged a meeting at BAFTA in November … so we're all regrouping in London to ensure we continue that relationship and to touch base, which I think is great … Yes, it hasn't just ended because the programme has ended, we are still in contact. I've met [organiser] since. I think that's the great thing. The cut-off point wasn't the cut-off point. It doesn't feel like that … It doesn't feel like the programme's ended, it still feels like there is this group of people who have got each other's backs, still with the support of [scheme and funder] on the back, which none of the other schemes I've ever been involved in has lasted this long once a scheme has ended. It [normally] very quickly drifts, whereas this still feels like, yes, there's still a connection.*
>
> 2-P-3

In contrast, for participants involved in schemes without alumni networks, there was a strong sense that once the scheme was over, any support was withdrawn. This participant highlighted what they thought was missing.

It would benefit from having some kind of follow-up support, really, just like a mailing list or something that makes people aware of other opportunities coming up that are related to that. Or maybe having some kind of social check-in after we've finished, see how people are doing.

4-P-3

When horizontal and alumni network development has been successful, participants have felt a lasting connection with the schemes. More importantly, schemes that facilitated the development of these networks have generated a greater impact on short-term career trajectories because barriers to access have been broken down and opportunities for work have been shared. While it is too early to say whether these opportunities will have a lasting impact on participants' access to work in the screen industries, the data from schemes without good networks signal less chance of career progression.

Placements

Far and away the most engaging and impactful experiences came from work placements. These opportunities incorporated acquisition of industry knowledge, skills training, development of networks and that all-important CV-boosting 'credit'. This hands-on experience also provided the best opportunity to develop the 'cultural fit' that enabled participants, to some extent, to integrate themselves into the workforce.

Only one of the three early-career schemes, 'Get into TV', offered placements. These were paid. The following quotes indicate the benefits for participants.

First, the benefits of practical experiences were explained:

I did manage to get a placement on a three-day film set, which was probably the most useful thing for me because I actually was able to get onto a set and see how it worked. That was really useful … What I got from it was that practical experience.

3-P-2

Participants from 'Get into TV' would often continue in paid work for the company after the scheme stopped paying for them, indicating that placements are an effective way of getting participants into work, at least in the short term:

The first month I actually did as a traineeship through 'Get into TV'. So 'Get into TV' essentially paid my first month's wage, and then I carried on working with them. I were there for ten months, I think. Yes, I definitely wouldn't have found out about that job role without 'Get into TV'.

3-P-7

the most engaging and impactful

experiences

came from work placements

The connections made on set with those established in the industries have been valuable for participants, with this participant discussing how she developed a mentor relationship with someone from her placement:

> *The third AD on that film, I'm still in touch with, because she kind of agreed to be my mentor after the work experience had ended, and we still keep in touch. I would say that was really pivotal.*
>
> 3-P-5

While placements were undoubtedly a strength of 'Get into TV', their cost to the scheme must have been considerable, and participants had to interview for a limited number of roles. This cost makes scaling these opportunities up to more people a major challenge.

Promoting supportive and collaborative values – benefits and challenges

Beyond supporting participants' individual development, two of the schemes included activities that had the potential to change wider organisational cultures. These related to actively promoting supportive and collaborative values that worked to counter the individualised and highly competitive culture of freelance work within the TV and film industries.

'Get into TV' did this by promoting a culture of care and support through its activities that implicitly communicated values that challenge the dominant culture. This quote is indicative of the support that was offered:

> *[Organiser 1] would say, 'If you want help with CVs or anything like that,' to always drop her a message, or … she'd do practice interviews and things like that… They weren't just trying to get [us] in the industry. They also tried to better us as people … so that was really nice … I know I wouldn't have been where I am now if it wasn't for [Organiser 1] and [Organiser 2].*
>
> 3-P-1

As discussed earlier, the alumni network of 'Get into TV' remains a way for participants to benefit from ongoing support.

While the values of 'Get into TV' were expressed implicitly through organisers' actions, 'Career Accelerator' did explicit 'values work'. A day was devoted to creating a manifesto intended to shape how people treated each other throughout the programme. A number of participants found this work engaging and valuable, discussing how they would carry it forward into their professional lives:

> *It felt really, really good, like this is actually really important, I wish people did more of this … I think about how I want to do things on my own projects, and it reassures me of the things that I want to do, [and how] others out there in the industry believe in the values I believe in … I've turned down a few things just because people aren't aligned with my values*
>
> 2-P-8

Another participant discussed the potential legacy of the scheme:

> *If it keeps forming these networks of people who have all signed up to this manifesto of nurturing and kindness, then maybe it would have an impact ... I definitely think there's the potential for it to change the way that we're working ... The industry is made up of individuals and if those individuals are valuing kindness and compassion and collaboration, then that's a good thing.*
>
> 2-P-5

This quote highlights that 'values work' has the potential to move beyond just individual outcomes, to include/address wider industry culture: not through individuals' careers, but through a 'critical mass' of people striving to improve cultures and practices of work.

Despite this good work, there were times when 'values work' was undermined, compromising the experiences of the schemes and perceptions of industry. As previously mentioned, the trainer who suggested that women 'should always be smiling, because if you are smiling, everyone will enjoy working with you' (1-P-2) was not using language that one would associate with an EDI intervention. The damage this sort of stereotyping/sexualising of women can do to the experience of a scheme, and its reputation, should not be understated.

More fundamental concerns were voiced by a couple of participants. One shared their misgivings about doing 'values work' when people were not held accountable to the agreed values:

> *It's bullshit! ... Because [they're] not carrying it through! You talk [about values] one day, and then everyone leaves that [behind] ... People behaved in a very different [way] ... [T]here's some unpacking to do for some people's language and behaviours ... they were never challenged.*
>
> 2-P-7

These misgivings extended to the actions of scheme organisers. Another participant highlighted how these values were not upheld by organisers when guest facilitators behaved inappropriately:

> *I did my pitch ... and they said that instead of doing queer content, I should make it more relatable by making it straight because then everyone could relate to it, and it felt a little bit like, 'that's homophobic' but okay ... and no one from [the scheme] said anything or interjected ... and then the next group after me who pitched, [the facilitators] also said some weird stuff about trans and race because that's what theirs was about – and again, no one intervened.*
>
> 2-P-4

Without accountability, 'values work' risked being undone. Therefore, schemes need people who have the capacity and confidence to challenge poor behaviour, as well as the time and space to make sure lessons are learned. This way, the intervention becomes meaningful.

Summary

Overall, participants found great value in participation in the schemes. Interviews suggest that the aims of the schemes have been met. Activities have raised awareness of the range of roles available, helped participants develop soft and technical skills, provided an element of practical experience and developed networks to support participants going forward. Despite some misgivings by participants, two of the schemes have shown promise in effecting wider cultural shifts within the industries that could lead to more sustainable work practices. While there is room for improvement on a range of elements, the evidence suggests that the good practice shared in the interviews goes a long way to addressing the 'deficits' in skills, networks and income that are barriers to participation in the screen industries.

However, it is worth noting that three of the four schemes were completed within the past year, meaning that we do not know whether the positive initial outcomes will stick. Evidence from the fourth scheme, which has been running for over three years, indicates that despite early successes in getting people into work, longer-term positive outcomes have not been seen. Continued barriers to access and progression mean that many participants' careers have stalled, or participants have stagnated in entry-level roles, revealing the limits of what a diversity scheme can achieve in the face of pervasive inequalities.

Challenges that limit impact

Buoyed by the support and encouragement offered by the schemes, many participants left them excited about what the future might hold for them in the screen industries. However, for most, the sobering reality of work in this highly competitive and unequal sector has meant that their work towards a career in TV and film has been compromised by practical and cultural barriers. This section brings to the fore those challenges that the diversity schemes could not address, indicating the limits to the impact that schemes can have and therefore why more transformational change is needed to make the screen industries equitable.

participants found great value in **participation** in the schemes

Exclusionary cultures

Despite the schemes going some way to preparing participants for work in the screen industries, organisational cultures and informal hiring practices that rely on old networks continue to exclude participants of diversity schemes from equal participation in the workforce. Of those who have gained access to the industries since completing an entry-level scheme, the vast majority have remained at junior level, sometimes for two or more years. This suggests that the help that the schemes have been able to provide does not seem to extend beyond entry-level roles. Participants have expressed frustration at the nepotism that they have encountered, witnessing how this has helped better-connected colleagues who started at the same time as they did. Participants from working-class Northern backgrounds have felt out of place in industries that are still middle class and London-centric, even when shows are produced in the North:

> *I've worked on shows where I have felt like the odd one out … I did a show, it was filmed up here, but they brought all the crew from the South and they were all private school crew. It was a bit weird because they didn't understand my accent for a start.*

<div align="right">

3-P-3

</div>

Another participant reflected on what this sort of marginalisation means for the cultural outputs:

> *I've sat in roundtable situations where, one, I've been the only person who talks like I talk; two, I've been the only person who is an older female; and, three, I've been the only person who's not really middle class … That is reflected in a lot of the content that is being produced…*

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2-P-9

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Experiences such as these, which leave participants feeling marginalised by people from outside the region, are not conducive to the development of a thriving regional industry that is representative of the regional workforce. In the wake of the relocation of broadcasters and the work that local initiatives like SIGN have engaged in, it remains to be seen whether a shift to using local, representative talent will follow.

Black participants discussed their experiences of feeling out of place as the 'only Black person in the room' (3-P-5) or being stereotyped based on their appearance:

> *You might want to get to know me rather than the person that I remind you of because of my skin and my race.*

<div align="right">

2-P-7

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Being a 'visible minority' affects employability. This participant contrasted his experience of being pigeon-holed with how someone from a white middle-class background is perceived as being able to apply their talent universally:

> *If you come from a certain background, you have the proximity to direct anything you want and make anything you want, whereas, I can almost self-niche myself out, just by default, just by existing. I can't do these shows... [They think:] How would I know what a white [experience] is like? How would I know what a white working-class family thinks like? ... So that's where [prejudice] comes into play, I think.*

> 2-P-8

From everyday experiences of feeling out of place to hiring and commissioning, work cultures that exclude people from diverse backgrounds remain stubbornly present, despite any differences that schemes have made.

Low pay and precarious working conditions

While the schemes offered free training, paid for expenses and provided paid placements, once the schemes ended this economic support dried up. Participants, having gained a foothold in the industries, struggled with the conditions of precarious and short-term work. Without financial support, this concern was pressing:

> *I'm a bit worried about the next couple of months because I have actually been struggling already ... There can be weeks or months at a time [without work] ... It can be quite stressful, the constant searching for work. At the moment I'm really trying not to have another job but instead I'm just being very frugal because I don't want to make myself unavailable.*

> 3-P-6

The need to be available for work puts pressure on people to not earn money elsewhere, causing stress and limiting the viability of pursuing screen industry roles. For young working-class people, these conditions can push them out of the industries:

> *I have tried living at home and trying to do film and TV full-time, and I just found it wasn't sustainable for me to do that ... Because I do come from a working-class background, that money situation, as much as I would love not to think about it, is a very real situation ... So I did try that for about a year before I started getting into [another industry]. It wasn't sustainable.*

> 3-P-5

The industries are missing out on talent because precarious employment conditions make the pursuit of this work extremely difficult. Without major improvement of working conditions in TV and film, working-class people are likely to be filtered out of the industries before they can properly establish their careers. With the relatively low numbers of working-class people on mid-career schemes compared to early-career schemes and the population as a whole, there are signs to suggest that this filtering may already be happening.

Work/life balance

Issues of poor work/life balance within the screen industries are both well documented (for example, Swords et al., 2022) and of concern for participants, who, even from an early stage, feel that the time pressures of work are unsustainable:

> *It is really long hours, but if you're doing dailies, you do get some time off here and there so it's more maintainable. Whereas I'm not sure how the people who I work alongside who … have been doing five or six days a week [for months], I'm not really sure how they're still alive because it is so intense. I don't know if I would make it … I don't know how they do it because you are getting up at four in the morning sometimes and not finishing until ten at night and then doing the same thing the next day for five days and being on it the whole day, working at one hundred the whole day. It is just intense.*

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1-P-1

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A mid-career participant discussed how these pressures of high-intensity work continue into more senior roles, where burnout is a common concern:

> *I think every producer I speak to [who's] my age … you go for a coffee with them all and they're like … I feel like I'm going to be burning out very soon! I think our industry has a real problem with that in terms of how people sustain themselves. Particularly when you're a woman.*

<div align="right">

2-P-5

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This nod to the gendered nature of the problem echoes research on how women are unequally affected by childcare responsibilities, which adds to their workload (Raising Films, 2016). The concern about work and parenthood is shared by early-career participants who recognise how inflexible working conditions limit careers for those who one day wish to start a family.

For those with medical conditions that require a combination of medication and rest, the inflexible, long and intense working hours are often unworkable. One of the participants explained that this, coupled with a lack of understanding from production companies, has meant that she has effectively been excluded from freelance work. Considered alongside the stigma associated with mental illness (Film and TV Charity, 2022), production practices and cultures of work do not support those who have health issues that limit full participation. Given this, schemes are of little help to participants unless they address these fundamental issues.

Location and access to reliable transportation

The patchy provision of public transport in the region makes it hard for people who live in remote areas to access work. This is especially difficult for participants who do not have access to their own transportation, which is often a reflection of their class position. This quote is typical of the frustration felt about the state of public transport and how this affects their ability to access work:

> *We have one of the worst [public transport systems]. It's really bad. The amount of times that a bus just doesn't turn up, and then they put the bus fare up ... There's certain areas that I can't even get a bus to, or if I do, it's one bus, and if it doesn't turn up, I'm screwed.*
>
> 1-P-5

While schemes have been able to signpost people to bursaries for driving lessons, they cannot address the more fundamental issue of a lack of money to invest in a car and its upkeep. This participant highlighted how this problem constitutes a barrier to work:

> *I'm already getting a little bit worried about what I am going to do once I pass because I'm probably going to have to get a car. How am I going to afford to keep a car? ... Not having a car is potentially stopping me from getting work.*
>
> 3-P-6

Poor connectivity is a feature of life in the region that is not experienced by those in areas where public infrastructure has been maintained, such as London. Without improvements to infrastructure or more support for people to have their own transportation, people in the region who cannot afford a car will have limited access to work.

the success stories illustrate the extent to which schemes can shape careers ...

What creates successful outcomes?

Having taken into account the schemes' interventions and the challenges that limit impacts that stick, the report now turns to examples of participants doing particularly well following their participation in the schemes. These 'success stories' highlight where schemes have helped people to get a foothold or make progress in the industries. Yet they also point to factors that have provided additional support for these outcomes. In essence, the success stories illustrate the extent to which schemes can shape careers and what else might be needed to bolster their impact.

Becca[7]

For Becca, a working-class woman in her late twenties, the experience of 'Get into TV' was very positive. Having already completed an undergraduate degree in film production, she joined the scheme and was successful in gaining a couple of paid placements, first with a production company and then a locations company. She also had a successful mentor relationship, and got funded to do a camera operator course via the alumni network once the scheme had finished. She really valued the networks that developed throughout the scheme.

That said, after the scheme, Becca struggled to get jobs as a runner in an extremely competitive field where she did not have the contacts to break in. Therefore, she decided to use her non-screen industry work experience in digital marketing to aim for a related role promoting content on social media. Becca eventually got a job at a large broadcaster with an office in Leeds.

Over and above her experience at university, making the most of the opportunities provided by 'Get into TV', and her other work experience, Becca's success is due to two key reasons. Firstly, as an employee, Becca has managed to avoid the precarity of freelance work. She has indicated that freelancing is something she would find very stressful, especially when thinking about starting a family. As we have seen from other scheme participants, freelance work is very insecure, and only a few people we interviewed have been able to build a career in this way. Those who have tried have often struggled financially. For someone like Becca, who is from a working-class background, having a secure contract has been essential. Secondly, the location of the role has meant that she is able to continue to live in the town she grew up in. Not having to relocate for a role, and being able to rely on her family support network, has been really important to her.

Becca's abilities and aptitude, coupled with the two 'enabling conditions' of employed status and proximity to work, have been essential in allowing her to pursue a career in the screen industries once her participation in the diversity scheme was over. These conditions are not available to many people, due to the prevalence of freelance work and the dominance of a handful of 'creative hubs'.

… and what else might be needed to bolster their **impact**

7 Names used in this section are pseudonyms.

Adrianna

Where Becca's story is of a working-class person able to succeed due to a set of supportive conditions, Adrianna's story is an example of challenging conditions being overcome with economic and social capital.

Adrianna is a middle-class woman in her mid-twenties who went to a private school in Yorkshire before completing an undergraduate degree and starting a master's in media production. Having completed the scheme, she was offered a placement in an art department via the alumni network. She took a break from her master's in order to do the placement.

At this point, Adrianna's class position became crucial to her ability to make the placement work. The financial support of her parents meant that she could move to a different city and rent a flat, as well as making use of a family car.

Once Adrianna completed her master's, she secured a series of TV and film entry-level roles from her contacts in industry, made while at university, which underlines how important these connections are. To pursue further work, Adrianna has relocated to an area nearer to London, again with the financial support of her parents.

Adrianna's story reinforces the findings from the previous section, that low pay and precarious conditions are only manageable by those with the financial support to compensate for this, and that many roles require their own transport. While 'Get into TV' was important for Adrianna to gain a placement that has set her on her career path, the necessity of financial support is evident. Ongoing financial support into mid-career was also shown to be important in another case: it helped a participant from 'Career Accelerator' to make it as a writer, in the form of her parents providing her food and accommodation while she worked on projects with little income.

Joseph

Joseph is a gay mixed-heritage working-class man. He recently completed a degree in filmmaking, after which he had no success in applying for roles through traditional routes. However, Joseph has since made use of a series of different diversity schemes and paid placements to help build his early career.

Soon after graduating, Joseph took part in 'Get into TV', where he got a paid placement with a production company. As that placement ended, he joined 'Screen Industries Grad Scheme'. He then proceeded to get a placement through the alumni network of 'Get into TV', after which he found out about a 12-month diversity-focused training scheme through a contact at 'Screen Industries Grad Scheme'. He is currently working there as an employed member of staff on a fixed-term contract.

Joseph has discussed his unease at using diversity schemes to build his career, but he does recognise that it is his background that is preventing him from accessing certain opportunities. While one scheme has not given him enough support, through the use of multiple schemes, a practice that we have termed 'scheme hopping', he has been able to make some good progress in starting his career.

Others have had similar experiences with multiple schemes that have provided extended access to industry professionals and opportunities to develop the right 'fit' for work in TV and film. Further help, such as bursaries for driving lessons, have been signposted while on the schemes, with participants going on to take advantage of these. Those from 'Career Accelerator', who have often already had a lot of previous experience of diversity schemes, have been able to use this scheme as a springboard for accessing well-established development programmes from the likes of BAFTA.

Considering the challenges set out earlier, the practice of scheme hopping is helpful, and even necessary, as participants try to build their careers. Nonetheless, this raises the question: if people are taking advantage of multiple schemes and other sources of help such as bursaries, are they crowding out other people? This presents a dilemma. Should scheme hopping be encouraged so that a select number of people are able to succeed, or should places be limited to those who have not had access to previous schemes? Are those who 'scheme hop' the people who are more able to make the necessary social connections and successfully navigate application processes? If so, are they the people most in need of the interventions?

Recommendations

Based on the report's findings, the following recommendations are made for participants, organisers and funders.

Participants

- Make scheme organisers aware of your needs.
  - Despite the best efforts of organisers, they might not understand what support you might need. Speaking to them could help.
- Make the most of the opportunities presented to you.
  - Attend as many of the activities as you can, ask questions, and put yourself up for extra opportunities such as placements.
- Network with other participants as much as possible.
  - Networks are key to finding work.
- Support each other.
  - Being willing to offer help to others can help you in the long run.
- Understand that one scheme is unlikely to provide all that you need in order to access and progress in the screen industries.
  - Continue to look out for fresh opportunities, which might include bursaries, placements and other schemes.

Organisers

- Ensure effective recruitment.
  - Invest in robust recruitment practices so that suitable candidates, who wish to pursue careers in the screen industries, are selected.
  - Where practical, target resources at people who would get the most benefit from schemes, considering applicants' backgrounds, including socioeconomic status.
  - Ensure all staff and guests adhere to good EDI practices.
    - Use interviews to recruit the right people.
    - Provide training so that the values of the scheme are both understood and supported.
- Provide opportunities for the cohort to bond.
  - A balance of online and face-to-face sessions aids accessibility while allowing for informal interaction.
  - Dedicate time for participants to get to know each other.
  - Include discussion of experiences of marginalisation and under-representation in order to build cohort solidarity.

- Provide a space to develop shared values that participants agree to be held accountable to.
    - Run dedicated sessions to discuss and agree a set of shared values of support and collaboration in order to support each other, during the scheme and going forward.
    - Ensure there is time to maintain a focus on values beyond the initial session, such as follow-up group work, and ad hoc time to address issues as they arise.
    - Develop the capacity of organisers and facilitators to hold people to account to agreed values by challenging inappropriate behaviour/language.
- Offer access to a range of industry professionals who can provide skills training, share industry knowledge and act as inspiration for participants.
- Develop more formalised mentor programmes.
    - Provide guidance and training for mentors where the parameters of mentoring and expected engagement levels are explained.
- Offer paid work placements as part of the schemes.
    - Funding for paid placements provides the best experiences for participants, and often leads to paid work and useful contacts.
- Maintain alumni networks.
    - This ensures further opportunities and ongoing support for scheme participants, following the initial programme.
- Diversity schemes should be complemented by more transformational interventions that look to professionalise the industries with more transparent and formalised training requirements, hiring processes and progression avenues. This would help to remove some of the entrenched barriers to participation and ensure the schemes are more effective.

Funders

- Allocate long-term investment to diversity schemes.
    - This allows schemes to plan ahead and recruit the best staff in a timely fashion.
    - This will facilitate the development of large regional networks of ex-participants, help a diverse regional workforce to find work and, with time, support a shift in organisational cultures.
- Success criteria should include the impact that schemes have had on regional networks and cultures of work, not just immediate outcomes for individuals.

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