

The NewBridge Project

Black Lives Matter

Our next steps and continued commitment to anti-racist action

In June we published a [short statement in support of the Black Lives Matter movement](#), and our commitment to making real and permanent change across our public programme and our organisation, structure and policies.

We recognised then and now that it should not have taken the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer for us to interrogate our complicity in upholding structural racism and our understanding of white supremacy, and that much more needs to be done to affect sector wide change.

Our commitment does not start and end with a series of statements, but is activated through ongoing discussion, learning and anti-racist actions. We are sharing our next steps publicly as starting points for discussion and action with our community, showing our ongoing commitment to actively challenging racism and acknowledging that we need to do more and do better.

Through our public programme we have a commitment to centring discussion, bringing in and listening to different voices and learning together. But we want to be clear that this commitment is across our organisation, in some of the more invisible ways such as with our structure, governance, and culture as an artist-led space.

In our statement from June, we committed to sharing our plans publicly, and below is a list of actions and intentions that we are making in order to dismantle and challenge systemic racism and inequality within our organisation.

What we will do:

Across our programme

- Continue to develop a programme that is responsive to the location, situation and time from which it emerges, with the aim of driving forward and supporting positive incremental change in society.
- Continue to work with a rotating Programme Committee of artists, ensuring diversity of curatorial voices across our programme and allowing new narratives, approaches and methodologies to emerge across our programme.
- Continue to work with Co-Investigators to platform voices that are underrepresented in the cultural sector. These community researchers provide feedback on our programmes, as well as offering insights into social or political contexts or environments we exist in. For example, we are currently working with 9 individuals to gather a wide range of insights in response to Covid-19 that will inform our future programme and prioritise immediate needs within our communities.
- Continue and extend our work on For Solidarity – building networks of support and solidarity, which aim to challenge all forms of racism, oppression, inequality and injustice.

- Continue to offer free opportunities through our current artist development programmes to those currently underrepresented in the sector, including those who face barriers associated with race, disability, age, gender identity, sexuality, socio-economic background and low-income. We do this through:
 - annually offering [10 free bursaries for Practice Makes Practice](#) Associate and hot-desk membership.
 - annually offering 6 free bursaries for Studio, Hot-desk and Associate membership for [The Collective Studio](#).
- In 2021 we are piloting a programme of artist development for people who are currently underrepresented in the arts sector and have no university degree to pursue their creative ambitions or start on a pathway to a career in the arts. Both through our own evaluation and national statistics we see a lack of diversity in people from protected characteristic groups and different socio-economic backgrounds working as artists or in the cultural sector, which we are aiming to address in a range of ways through all our work. Through this new programme, we hope to make all our development programmes accessible, so that we can support emerging artists and art workers who reflect the diversity of our region.
- Make a commitment to set targets for diversity – this will not be a tick box exercise, but a commitment to platforming artists from all protected characteristic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.
- We have continued to populate a [shared google doc reading list](#), this is an open source document that anyone can add content to. Further to this, we will be setting up a *Resource / Reading Library* in 2021, which will have a collection of books on anti-racism alongside other social and environmental justice issues. We know that books can be expensive, so this will be a free resource.
- Use our platform and social media channels to continue to raise awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement and share resources for learning and action, in order to keep up anti-racist momentum.

Across our organisation, workforce and policies:

- Critical Discourse & Evaluation – we are reallocating some of our programme budget to host a series of sessions in early 2021, to which we will invite people we have worked / are working with (including staff, trustees, commissioned artists, community groups and members) to collectively feedback on our programme and organisation with specific focus on care, inclusivity, diversity and equality. All contributors will be paid for their time.

We hope this will support us to look critically at NewBridge and our work, recognising what needs to be changed and what can be built upon, and that conversations hosted through this will aid us in driving forward real, permanent, embedded change across our organisation.

These conversations will support our annual policy and Business Plan review and will inform future programme and opportunities. As an organisation we are always learning, and we aim to always be ready to be responsive and make urgent and considered change. We will aim to secure future funding to run sessions like these at least once a year.

- The NewBridge Project currently has an all-white staff team and board. We will be taking [positive action](#) through our recruitment processes to address this, which we hope will encourage applicants from a diversity of backgrounds to apply for future opportunities.

- We will be providing training to staff including: antiracism training, unconscious bias training and training in inclusive language and communication. This training will be extended to our trustees and shared more widely with our members.
- Artist 'rider' – we aim to embed an ethos of care into our work at NewBridge but are aware that it is not always easy to start a conversation about support needs or concerns. As part of our contracting process we are creating a template for an artist 'rider' that can be completed or used as a prompt for a conversation by anyone who is working with us – whether on something big or small. This will enable everyone we work with can ask for what they need, and for us to support people to do their best work.
- Safer/Braver spaces policy– we want to ensure that we create spaces that are welcoming and respectful to everyone. Through our consultative processes are working on creating a code of conduct that members, staff, artists, communities and visitors commit to when in our spaces.
- Our team are continuing their learning, both in and outside work hours, in order to understand our privilege and complicity in racism and white privilege.
- We will work with [Culture Against Racism](#) in the North East to build on the collective commitment that was made in the [Culture Against Racism statement](#) in June.

If you want to contact us to chat about anything outlined in this statement – be it feedback, criticism or suggestions – then please get in touch with our Director Rebecca Huggan at r.huggan@thenewbridgeproject.com