

## Things to consider when trying to engage under-represented communities

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Because we work with a wide range of under-represented artists and writers (and many of them ascribe to more than one category), it is difficult to give detailed guidance on how to approach people from each category. Also, generalisations about groups of people are potentially stigmatising and misleading. However, here are a number of things to consider which may help your recruitment activities, especially if your organisation is relatively new to working with under-represented and / or vulnerable writers:

- **Personal contact goes a long way.** Artist and writers who have faced multiple barriers to accessing artistic development opportunities will often assume that such activities aren't 'for them'. Personally inviting them to attend the workshop (in person, by email, or over the phone) helps to assure them that they are welcome, and that their individual needs are being heard.
- **Assume the person you're speaking to is a talented, capable, intelligent artist or writer – because they are.** It's easy to see a person's marginalisation at the expense of seeing the rest of them.
- **Make sure to ask about (and make reasonable accommodations for) individual access needs.** It's really important that participants know that their access needs are going to be taken into consideration. If you don't know whether you can make adjustments, don't over-promise. Tell them you'll look into what can be done and get back to them as soon as possible with detailed information. Creative Future staff are here to support you with this.
- **Marginalised status should always be treated as confidential (unless permission is given otherwise).** Just because a person has declared that they fit one of our categories of marginalisation, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're comfortable with that information being shared publically.
- **When phoning, try to ensure that you're calling from a quiet environment.** Many people including those with hearing impairments, anxiety, and learning disabilities can find background noise very distracting.
- **Try to provide information in and market across a range of formats.** While social media is becoming an increasingly popular way to recruit participants and get the word out about events, not everyone will have access to a computer or smart phone. Try using a range of formats. In addition to emails and tweets, use texts, physical mail-outs, printed posters and flyers and – most importantly – going to spaces where your target groups live, work, and socialise. Don't forget – word of mouth is an excellent recruitment tool, so make sure to ask people in your existing networks to spread the word.
- **Utilise (but don't over-use) community leaders and organisations,** as they are likely to have strong relationships in the communities you're trying to target. However, it is important that any requests for help are seen as mutually beneficial, so think about what you could provide in return.

## **Guidance and resources for working with specific groups**

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Here is a list of useful organisations that can help you to consider how to make your work more accessible and inclusive. This list is far from exhaustive, but should be a good place to start!

- Time To Change have created a toolkit for organisations interested in organising event for and with **people with lived experience of mental health problems**:  
<http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/sites/default/files/Community%20project%20toolkit.pdf>
- The DC Office of Disability Rights made a video about working with **people with disabilities**. It's tongue-in-cheek, but still has lots of great tips.  
<https://youtu.be/Gv1aDEFIXq8>
- Homeless Link and Streetwise Opera have put together some excellent guidance around using arts activity to engage **homeless people**, but these principles could be applied to working with almost any group of vulnerable adults:  
<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Get%20Creative%20good%20practice%20%26%20core%20values.pdf>  
*(If you only have time to read one piece of guidance and don't have a history of working with vulnerable adults, we'd recommend this one!)*
- The Social Care Institute for Excellence has an extensive database of resources for people working in under-represented communities. Of particular interest is their guidance for working with **refugees and asylum seekers**.  
<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide37-good-practice-in-social-care-with-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/>
- Mencap have issued 'Top Tips for Communication', which outlines a great approach to communicating with a wider range of people including those with **learning disabilities**. <https://www.mencap.org.uk/about-learning-disability/information-professionals/communication/communicating-people-learning-disability/top>
- While this guidance is geared towards working with older LGBT people, many of the principles apply when working with LGBT people more generally:  
<http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Top-Ten-Tips.pdf>
- Spread the Word have commissioned an excellent report about the barriers facing BAME writers:  
[https://issuu.com/londonshortstoryfestival/docs/18894\\_stw\\_writing\\_the\\_future\\_report](https://issuu.com/londonshortstoryfestival/docs/18894_stw_writing_the_future_report)