

Summary of Bluecoat's Race Equality Action Plan

	Action	Progress to date, August 2024	Next steps
1	Internal change		
1.1	Set up an action-focused mechanism to drive change	We established a Bluecoat Race Equality Task Force during summer 2020. We drew up terms of reference and created an action plan. The group met fortnightly for two years. Due to staff changeover a new group has been established and will meet monthly from July onwards to develop and review the action plan and ensure implementation, updating staff and reporting to the Board.	Membership of our Race Equality Task Force will be regularly reviewed to ensure its effectiveness. It will continue to communicate with staff throughout the organisation to deliver the action plan.

1.2	Diversify Bluecoat staff including freelancers and contractors	<p>A targeted recruitment programme took place October 2020-May 2024 aimed at reaching a more inclusive field of candidates for several new project-funded posts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advertising in local Black/diverse community publications and spaces • targeted marketing campaign using social media and other networks • more accessible and inclusive application packs • anonymising applications • more diverse selection and interview panels <p>The diversity of staff has improved as a result, and we are awaiting outcome of the 2024 staff survey to report results.</p>	<p>We have used the learnings from this programme to inform our approach to recruitment.</p> <p>We are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● analysing data from recruitment drives ● creating and maintaining effective networks to share job opportunities ● developing an inclusive induction programme for new positions
1.3	Implement staff training programme	<p>We developed a plan and content for open conversations with staff about race equality, racism and speaking out, and piloted it.</p> <p>We introduced training for specific teams, particularly front-line staff, in dealing with racism.</p>	<p>We will build on the findings of the pilot and roll out inclusion training across all staff, starting with new recruits.</p>

1.4	Diversify the Bluecoat Board	<p>Makeup of the Board is monitored against targets set in our Equality and Diversity Action Plan and reported to Arts Council England (ACE), as part of National Portfolio Organisation monitoring.</p> <p>The Board is actively engaged in ensuring we strive to become a more inclusive and anti-racist organisation, and race equality is a standing item at all its meetings. Current Board membership can be found on our website.</p>	<p>We will continue to monitor and report on the makeup of the Board and actively recruit to make it more reflective of protected characteristics we have prioritised, including race.</p>
1.5	Organisational partnerships review and development	<p>We are currently reviewing the partnerships we have with a view to further develop these.</p>	<p>We plan to communicate race equality values to our existing partners and develop a Memorandum of Understanding and/or shared statement with them.</p> <p>We will forge relationships with more diverse cultural organisations and groups, providing mentoring where appropriate.</p>
1.6	Review policy gaps	<p>Our Equality and Diversity Action Plan has been updated as part of our Inclusion and Diversity Investment Principle (a requirement as a National Portfolio Organisation of ACE). We submit quarterly reports to ACE as part of our Investment Principles reporting.</p>	<p>We will align our Equality and Diversity Action Plan with our Race Equality Action Plan; review our Procurement Policy; and focus on ensuring that race equality underpins all policies as part of an annual review.</p>

		We have reviewed our current whistleblowing policy to include a specific race equality dimension.	We will review our whistleblowing policy periodically.
1.7	Creative community	We have included a statement in new licence agreements with our creative community (the building's tenants).	We will continue to emphasise race equality as our creative community renews
2	Supporting artists		
2.1	Profile Black Artists and Artists of Colour in the programme	<p>Creating a rich and varied programme, with different voices and perspectives, continues to be a priority.</p> <p>Our recent, current and forthcoming gallery and events programme, together with residencies, commissions and other support for artists, is summarised here.</p> <p>We remain committed to providing opportunities for dedicated solo exhibitions or substantial presentations of work, continuing the Bluecoat's profiling of Black artists that began in the mid-1980s. This exhibitions and performance history, much of it archived and available in the library section of our website, is generating increased interest from artists, students and academics.</p>	<p>We will continue to exhibit and commission new work by Black Artists and Artists of Colour and support public discourse around their work.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor the diversity of the artists we work with.</p> <p>We will develop ways to disseminate and make more accessible our diverse arts history over the next two years.</p>

2.2	Create opportunities for curators/producers/gate keepers	<p>We created a post (2021-22) of Project Facilitator (Colonial Legacies) to work with young people at Greenhouse Project in Toxteth to interrogate Bluecoat’s history and archive and produce a public programme in response. See 3.4 below.</p> <p>In 2024 we created a Project Facilitator post for the programme development strand of our Heritage Funded ‘Resilience’ project, ‘The Bluecoat: A Cultural Heritage for Liverpool’, and three Curatorial Advisor consultancies (from British Art Network Emerging Curators Group) to bring diverse perspectives to our thinking and planning.</p>	<p>The external curatorial input into the R&D project ‘The Bluecoat: A Cultural Heritage for Liverpool’ will feed into our future programme planning and be reflected in a final report (March 2025). The ideas generated will inform the period to 2030 – in our arts, participation and other public programmes.</p> <p>We will also ensure we’re working with a broad range of voices and perspectives though curators and cultural producers, both through staff and freelance contracts.</p>
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2.3	Diversify Bluecoat's celebration calendar	<p>As part of our ongoing planning cycle, we are identifying key cultural dates through the year for potential collaborations, in order to embed more diverse cultural programme activities beyond Black History Month and Slavery Remembrance Day.</p>	<p>We aim to raise awareness of different cultural celebrations across the year through our communications channels.</p>
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3	Speaking Out		
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3.1	Participate in city-wide discussions	<p>The Bluecoat’s Director of Cultural Legacies was the culture sector representative on Liverpool’s Race Equality Task Force and continues to feed into both city- and region-wide fora to support and develop greater race quality in the sector.</p>	<p>We will continue to engage with this work and bring learning from the process back to the Bluecoat.</p>
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3.2	<p>Take part in sector-wide discussions</p>	<p>In October 2020, the Bluecoat prompted Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium (LARC)'s discussion of Black Lives Matter in relation to the arts and culture sector, and from this a collective response and strategy was developed. We drafted terms of reference for a new LARC Race Equality Action Group (REAG) that merged with members of Creative Organisations of Liverpool (COoL) to develop a Race Equality Manifesto for the city region's arts and culture sector. This was launched in May 2023 and the REAG continues to monitor and administer the Manifesto.</p> <p>We have participated in debates around decolonisation, with particular reference to our building's colonial legacies and the arts centre's history of working with diverse artists. Contributions made include presentations at various discursive events including Association for Art History conference (2021).</p>	<p>The Bluecoat's Director of Cultural Legacies chairs the Race Equality Action Group which will continue to meet monthly until September 2025 (then reviewed), supporting implementation of the Arts and Culture Race Equality Manifesto.</p> <p>We will continue to be active and vocal in local and national networks and debates around race equality and decolonisation in the arts and culture sector and will look for further opportunities to discuss Bluecoat's colonial legacies in public forums.</p> <p>Director of Cultural Legacies is contributing discursive book chapters on the Bluecoat's <i>Trophies of Empire</i> (1992) and <i>Echoes and Origins</i> (2021-22) projects, both to be published in 2025.</p>
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3.3	Build external alliances	We have an ambition to be an actively anti-racist organisation, but we know we can't do this alone and we will need to work with other organisations to realise this.	We will research and be open to anti-racist and race equality alliances, as well as using our organisational voice to openly support anti-racist and related campaigns. We will consider if there is any in-kind support we can give to campaigns and organisations.
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<p>3.4</p>	<p>Interrogate the colonial history of the Bluecoat building</p>	<p>We developed a 'Colonial Legacies' strand in our <i>Echoes & Origins</i> heritage participation project, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund over two years (2021-22), working with young people from Greenhouse Project, Toxteth to explore Bluecoat's origins in relation to their own cultural backgrounds.</p> <p>This culminated in a public programme of exhibitions and events curated by the young people.</p> <p>We continued to research the transatlantic slavery links of founder of the former charity school that occupied the Bluecoat building, Bryan Blundell and his family, and other donors. Local Black Lives Matter discussions and supervising a PhD student interrogating this history helped inform this work.</p> <p>We advised Liverpool Blue Coat School in relation to its response to Black Lives Matter petitions to decolonise its history and its connections to transatlantic slavery.</p>	<p>A display relating to Blue Coat School founder Bryan Blundell's links to transatlantic slavery is now on permanent show at the arts centre.</p> <p>New research on our building's links to transatlantic slavery and other colonial legacies will be added to the Bluecoat's website.</p> <p>We will continue our dialogue with Blue Coat School about our shared history, and work towards collaborative creative projects that interrogate it.</p> <p>The Bluecoat building's colonial history is a key reference point in R&D work during 'The Bluecoat: A Cultural Heritage for Liverpool' project, 2024-25.</p> <p>We will continue to provide material and give presentations to academic, community and other groups about our work with artists interrogating the Bluecoat's colonial legacies.</p>
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3.5	Diversify and respond to new, representative audiences	We are actively diversifying our audiences for family activities and have developed a new visitor experience team to provide a warm welcome to visitors, with a specific focus on inclusion and understanding of cultural differences.	We will undertake a series of campaigns to test different strategies for attracting a more diverse audience to Bluecoat. Using intelligence from the visitor experience, we will develop a new communication policy for audiences, our creative community and
3.6	Log and respond to feedback and criticism effectively	We have created a feedback log to keep track of all comments coming to us with regard to our race equality activity. We are using feedback to inform how we communicate our work here.	We will continue to monitor and respond to feedback to improve communications with regard to race equality activity.