



Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Inquiry into BBC Charter Review

Across the UK: Creating a workforce that is representative of the UK

For almost 100 years, Spotlight has provided an opportunity for performers to showcase their skills and talent to the industry. As a central, professional resource, Spotlight has played our own small part in the outsize influence that UK talent has had on the global stage. We do not take our responsibility, nor our heritage lightly, and we see advocacy as central to our role. Supporting efforts to deliver sustainable careers for our subscribers and all actors who work in our sector is an imperative. It is therefore important that we respond to the Select Committee inquiry into the Charter Review of the BBC.

Our focus is on the question relating to the creation of a workforce that is representative of the UK. Performers are the literal face of that representation on the BBC. They are what audiences associate with their favourite programmes and who children will consider their childhood television experiences tied to. It is therefore essential that representation on screen matters to the BBC when looking at how it demonstrates inclusion and portrayal of all parts of the UK: geographically, class, gender, sexuality, disabilities and race.

To ensure a broad representation of the UK on screen in BBC products, steps must be taken to ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, feels that the creative industries and performing in particular, is a viable career choice that can and will be financially sustainable.

Financial concerns are a significant issue for performers. Those without a familial financial safety net can struggle while they build their career and may choose to leave the sector for a job that provides greater financial stability. Similarly, some under-represented groups do not consider performing as a sensible choice for their children because of the fluctuations in income and may actively counsel against it. The BBC is not responsible for the entire creative industries ecology in the UK. However, as its cornerstone it can set examples and develop practices that ensure performers are able to build their careers and earn enough to provide stability during any periods of unemployment. It has a role in encouraging and sustaining performers in our sector.

Spotlight considers that the BBC should therefore invest in a structure that allows creativity to thrive. This should mean setting appropriate pay, providing remuneration for the exploitation of moral and performer rights of their work on different platforms and investing in programmes that allow performers to train and develop their skills while they work for the BBC. Without investment in the front of camera talent, the BBC would be unable to create the world class and globally competitive programmes that it is known for.

With the loss of several long-running shows on the BBC that have traditionally provided opportunities for new talent to develop their skills in an established environment, it is important that the BBC develops and supports local production bases. Opportunities to develop experience and grow confidence are particularly important for new talent and local hubs provide accessibility to our industry to all. Investment in local creative clusters ensures that there are opportunities for a wide range of talent from diverse backgrounds, which is then bolstered by the BBC's ongoing support for the independent production sector across the nations and the regions. This investment would feed directly back into the overall offer made by our performing talent both to the UK and on a global stage.

It is therefore important the BBC develops long term strategies for regional creative sectors. Being geographically representative prevents the BBC output from becoming homogenised, which reduces its value to the British public, and for actors it also makes performing a realistic career choice no matter where you live. Even as commissioning trends move from soap operas to long form video streaming, the BBC should continue to produce British content in UK hubs with voices and experiences from around the whole of the UK. To achieve that, they will need the talent to deliver it.

The BBC has a wider responsibility than to inform, educate and entertain. As our creative industries have grown and become part of the standard setting across the world for creative output, the BBC now has a responsibility to represent the United Kingdom as it is. As such it can only do that through its performers and without investment and active engagement, a smaller range of people will choose to become actors which will ensure the BBC will become increasingly narrow in its representation and that would be a loss to the BBC, performers and the British public.