

HEADLONG'S JUSTICE PLAN

WOMEN

At Headlong it is our firm belief that making great art is inextricably linked with the pursuit of justice. Justice for women has come some way in our industry, but there is still a significant distance to go. Our hope is that through systemic change at Headlong we can help to address this imbalance.

As we tackle structural inequality at Headlong, we acknowledge that there is not one experience of being a woman, and the intersectionality of justice will be present throughout our planning. This is our 'Justice Plan: Women' and is the third part of our wider justice plans at Headlong; it will be published alongside our Justice Plan: LGBTQIAA+, which can be found on our website. Our previously published Justice Plan: Race can be found [here](#), our Justice Plan: Disability can be found [here](#). We continue to work on plans related to Climate and Socio-Economic Justice. These are 'working documents' and will evolve as we learn and grow.

Nb. In this plan we use the term 'women' to mean all women, including trans women and anyone who identifies as a woman. For anyone identifying as non-binary or gender-fluid, there are dedicated actions in our 'Justice Plan: LGBTQIAA+', which has been released in parallel. As the language and terminology surrounding these issues is constantly evolving, this document will remain under review.

Headlong would like to thank [Tonic Theatre](#) for their time consulting on this document.

ACTIONS:

1. Transparency

We will publish the data we have on employment for as far back as we have access and this data will remain on our website permanently. Going forwards we will publish each year's data on our website, making sure to highlight the women in leadership positions.

You can see this data on our website. This Justice Plan will also remain on our website.

2. Who is making shows at Headlong?

From 2017-2020, 41.4% of our casts, and 55.9% of our creative teams (including Associate and Assisting roles) have been women. Currently 75% of our core staff and 75% of our board are women, with 100% of our senior leadership positions being held by women from April 2022 (Artistic Director, Executive Director and Chair of the Board).

These figures show positive progress, but we also acknowledge the importance of the intersectionality within it. The below targets are intended to ensure that the company has a baseline commitment to gender equality, in order to safeguard against any such future

imbalances. These commitments are designed to intersect with the commitments of our other Justice Plans, to provide an intersectional framework for progress at Headlong.

- From 2022, at least 50% of lead roles will be women across a 2-year cycle of programming.
- From 2022, our aim for our casts is that per show, the average percentage of women across a 2-year cycle is at least 50%
- From 2022 at least 50% of creative team members will be women across a 2-year cycle of programming.
- For each production we produce, at least one of the following three positions will be held by women: writer, director & designer.
- At least 50% of our Associate or Assistant roles on our productions will be held by women across a 2-year cycle of programming.
- At least 50% of our core staff will always be women. (Currently 75% of our core staff are women).
- At least 50% of our board will always be women. (Currently 75% of the board are women).
- We have 3 senior leadership roles at Headlong (Artistic Director, Executive Director and Chair of the Board). Currently 100% of these roles are held by women. It is our goal to ensure that women continue to be part of this leadership structure.

Nb. For the purposes of this document, the term 'Creative Team' refers to creative roles within the production team including but not limited to: casts, designers, writers, directors. The term 'Associate' and 'Assistant' includes but is not limited to: Associate and Assistant directors and designers.

3. What stories are we telling?

Our ambition is for the work we produce to be as culturally rich as contemporary British society. The theatrical canon is largely populated by work that has been written by men, that features leading roles for men and has been preoccupied by the narratives and experiences of men. We are working to redress this imbalance with the work we commission and program. On average, Headlong commissions four writers a year and from 2017-2020, 50% of our produced plays were written or adapted by women. We will continue to represent women in this way, but we will also closely evaluate the diversity of representation across the women we commission.

Here are the initial commitments we are making to women to sustain this balance.

- We will continue with our current commitment of 50% of our commissions per year being by women, and commit to an ongoing audit and reflection on the demographic of women who we commission.
- We will continue to nurture stories that put women and their stories centre stage in our commissioning.

- From 2022, at least 50% of our productions across a 2-year cycle will be written or adapted by a woman.
- At least 50% of our productions across a 2-year cycle will be directed by a woman.

4. Who is Headlong making shows for?

Theatre audiences are majority women (according to the TGI figures of regular attendees, 62% are women) and it is our aspiration to better reflect these women on our stages. By embracing the intersectionality of justice, we hope to draw a broader range of women to the theatre by telling stories that portray a diversity of women and by supporting writing, design and direction from women who represent all parts of society.

We have some thinking to do on analysing the effectiveness of our points of entry for those who are traditionally excluded from the theatre. This includes reviewing how we invite audiences (the offer), how we build the bridge with disenfranchised audience members (packaging the offer) and how we welcome the audience (environment at the event or performance).

5. Who is reviewing?

We recognise that the theatre critics of the mainstream media are majority men (the 2017 UK Theatre Report showed 90% men and 10% women with some positive movement in the last few years), and that often work is reviewed in a way that unconsciously reinforces patriarchy or preferential treatment for men. Plurality of voices reviewing work is therefore crucial. We currently make space for less traditional forms of reviewing by inviting bloggers, YouTubers etc to engage with our work who often represent a broader demographic of people.

We are committed to calling out misogyny in reviews of our shows or any media coverage and will continue to do so.

6. How will Headlong support the next generation of women in theatre?

We understand that the majority of senior roles in the industry have often been held by men for a variety of reasons, which might include sexism, nepotism, favouritism or perceived lack of senior-level talent in women. We want to tackle this problem both by continuing to employ more women in senior positions as well as providing support to women who have lacked the opportunity for career growth. We understand the need to commit to supporting both women at entry level in our industry, as well as retaining women who have had periods of time away due to responsibilities or structural ageism.

- We will commit to at least 50% of Origins Artists – our talent development scheme - being women.
- At least 50% of our Associate or Assistant roles on our productions will be held by women over any two-year cycle.

- We commit to offering guidance to women who are re-entering our workplace after taking a period of time out to raise children, or those who have caring responsibilities. This plan is in development and will be in place by the end of 2023.
- We will listen to the women we work with by creating clear ways to feedback so this can feed into improving the way we support women at work.

7. How will Headlong better support employees going forwards?

Headlong is fully committed to the professional support of women in theatre, and we acknowledge that there are many barriers and risks that need urgent addressing. The #MeToo movement only served to highlight the sexual harassment and assault that has been pervasive for too long. Women who are parents and / or carers still face discrimination and barriers to their professional development, as well as women who experience the menopause. 'Lad culture' is still prevalent in some parts of the industry (particularly on tour) and bullying continues to be an issue. Women may be carrying previous experiences of sexism and other negative experiences when they come to work with us. To fully support the women at Headlong is to acknowledge these battles and institute practical safeguards.

- We will make sure our Dignity at Work policy is communicated clearly to all employees and freelancers. We are aware that there are structural gaps in the way the upholding of these policies is monitored and are working to find ways to address this.
- We are committed to providing safe, discrete reporting options and we are clarifying all our policies and procedures in 2022 to ensure this.
- We acknowledge that the workload of caring and childcare still falls disproportionately on women. We are creating an internal 'Parents and Carers at Work' policy that will be in place by the end of December 2023 and will not discriminate by gender, but our aim is that this will go some way towards addressing the imbalance for women.
- We are committed to equal pay for women and to always stating salaries in our job adverts.
- We will continue to regularly review how we support the women who are employed by, or are freelancers at Headlong, from both a practical and pastoral perspective.
- We are continually improving the recruitment process for all our work, to better account for the barriers facing women. We have ensured with immediate effect that our recruitment panels are never overly representative of men, while acknowledging that women can also carry internalised bias towards other women. The board members on our Artistic Director recruitment panel most recently under-went unconscious bias training ahead of this recruitment.
- We are establishing feedback loops so we can hear about how people are finding working with our company, which will include confidential surveys and open meetings, for example a post-production debrief.

8. How will we hold ourselves accountable to these actions?

- We currently hold internal weekly justice meetings at Headlong for all staff (the Justice Working Group), currently attended by 75% of our staff and 100% of our senior management, to scrutinise and come up with solutions for possible exclusion and the systemic structural issues that allow biases to be perpetuated within our processes

and live projects. We commit to continuing these weekly meetings and we will collaborate with external consultants who have expertise in structural justice reform to review best practice as we work through specific topics.

- We currently invite board members to attend the Justice Working Group every other month and will continue to do so.
- We will ensure that Justice is kept at the top of the agenda at all levels at Headlong and will continue to discuss justice at every board meeting. A staff member from the Justice Working Group currently attends every board meeting at this point in the agenda to contribute to the discussion and will continue to do so.
- The staff and board at Headlong will undergo training designed to combat systemic biases, which will help us explore our own understanding, as well any limitations in our existing systems and how to best prevent those limitations from pervading our structures in future.
- We will create a 'Justice checklist' as soon as we know that a production is taking place to embed this plan into our producing process.
- We will debrief after every production to assess how we did with our justice goals on each production and create an action plan of how to meet any goals that we have fallen short of.
- We will annually hold a meeting to review what justice goals we did and didn't meet over the year, and create an action plan of how to meet these goals for the year ahead.
- We will ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are allocated for all our Justice Plans to be carried out effectively.