



**Maximising Opportunities:  
Broadening Access  
to the PR Industry**

An Independent Commission  
set up by the PRCA to  
remove Barriers to  
Entering the PR Industry



## **Maximising Opportunities: Broadening Access to the PR Industry**

An Independent Commission set up by the PRCA to remove Barriers to Entering the PR Industry

### **Objective of the Commission:**

To agree a series of goals and set-out practical recommendations and actions which PRCA members and the broader PR and communications industry could take, in order to widen access to the PR industry for the best talent within the UK workforce, irrespective of background.

## **Contents**

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Guiding Principles</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3 The current state of the workforce and the case for change</b>	<b>5</b>
• The current state of the workforce	
• How the industry portrays itself	
• The business case for diversity	
<b>4 Recruiting a diverse workforce</b>	<b>11</b>
• Internships in the PR industry	
• Improving diversity in practice	
• Fair recruiting to bring a wider pool of talent into the industry	
• Apprenticeships: Opening up the industry to people who do not go to university	
<b>5 Flexible working to improve staff retention and maintain a diverse workforce</b>	<b>20</b>
• Flexible working	
• Welcoming disabled people to the industry	
<b>6 Conclusion</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7 Summary of recommendations</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>8 Acknowledgements</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>9 Appendix: portrayal of the PR industry in the media</b>	<b>30</b>

---

# 1 Introduction

**For an industry that is concerned with reputation above all, our behaviour in perpetuating unpaid internships and even auctioning them off to the highest bidder is a real cause for shame. This is a practice which has cut the industry off from the reality of society and shown us to be elitist and inward looking.**

The PR Week/PRCA Census highlighted an industry in 2011 that is overwhelmingly white, with few disabled role models. Yet talent recruitment is the number one concern of CEOs in the UK industry, and globally, according to the latest Holmes Report. Our industry can only advise clients and colleagues on strategies and programmes if we reflect and understand the society we seek to engage and influence. Because of the subtle barriers to entering the communications profession, we have a duty to ensure a level-playing field, in which candidates in currently under-represented groups understand the career options and can access the industry. As I sometimes put it, whether it is the under-graduate from Handsworth, or the post-graduate from Hampstead, our industry has to offer equal chances. The dinner party circuit which sees parents securing placements for their children or the free long-term work placement has served some in our industry well, but the gifting of internships has excluded many talented people and in the long-term it will not deliver the diversity that is critical to our businesses.

There is a determination on the part of the Public Relations Consultancies Association (PRCA) to effect lasting change, and the independent commission members were therefore pleased to play their part in making hard-hitting recommendations to move the industry forward.

This report sets out how the PR industry can be open to anyone with the talent to succeed. A future where securing an internship is a fair process open to all and recruitment and employment practices reflect the diverse needs of the workforce. For this to happen, we cannot tinker at the edges, we need comprehensive reform. That is why I strongly support the Commission's recommendation to consign the unfair and outdated practice of unpaid internships to the history books. In October 2011, the

PRCA launched its Intern Campaign<sup>1</sup> publishing a list of PR agencies who would commit to paying interns at least the National Minimum Wage. The list, which started with 21 companies, has quickly doubled. I would like to see all PRCA members make this pledge within the next year.

But even ending this practice will not be enough. The Commission's report provides information, guidance and recommendations on other steps the PRCA, our members and the industry more widely need to take to widen the appeal of the industry to new talent and recruit and retain a new generation of PR professionals. We have to be honest with ourselves. The industry is not diverse enough and this must now be addressed. It would be naïve to think that without reflecting society we can understand it or effectively communicate with it. In this we are failing our clients and limiting our successes.

In writing this report we want to work with the PRCA, as the face of the industry, to respond with an action plan on the areas they are in a position to implement. We want to ensure monitoring of progress is vital and want to be able to look back in a year or two year's time and see the difference in our industry.

The Commission members served on working groups to build an evidence base on the cause of the challenge, to gather research and evidence from other industries, and to propose recommendations for consideration. We cannot act alone and external validation is vital to making our recommendations a reality. We are grateful to the advice and input from individuals and organisations who have reviewed and commented on our draft recommendations. We hope that our collaborative approach, working with different parts of the industry will give us the strength to make real changes in the future. Our 30 recommendations on page 34 are the gold standard, but all areas that can be achieved by the industry collectively and individuals companies – and certainly those with ambition, determination and a can-do attitude.

PR and Public Affairs make a terrific contribution to enhancing the reputation of the clients and companies we advise through sustained communications programmes. It is time to enhance the reputation of our own industry, and firm action through a sustained programme on recruitment and retention will deliver the diversity critical to our own future.

**John Lehal**  
Chair, PRCA Access Commission

---

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.prca.org.uk/about/intern\\_campaign](http://www.prca.org.uk/about/intern_campaign)

---

## 2 Guiding Principles

### **We have written these principles to guide member companies to start to make changes to become fairer employers and to recruit and retain the best talent.**

1. Discrimination in the workplace and bullying must not be tolerated. This includes any form of hate or discriminatory language, or language that is designed to cause offence. Any accusations of discrimination, bullying and use of discriminatory in the workplace should be fully investigated by employers.
2. We must aim to improve the industry for future employees and challenge the status quo.
3. We must create and embed an inclusive environment in the workplace.
4. Human resources policies should be in writing and should promote diversity.
5. We must be open to new talent and look in new places to find it.
6. We must put an end to the culture of “it’s who you know, not what you know”.
7. We must challenge recruitment agencies to demonstrate they can reach diverse candidates.
8. We must work towards creating a more flexible workplace.
9. We must ensure that we welcome disabled people into the industry and enable them to remain working in it.
10. We must work to present a more diverse image of the industry through our spokespeople, marketing and communications, and use of industry experts.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

PRCA member companies to endorse the Guiding Principles, disseminate them to all staff, and commence a programme with a staff working group to embed the principles into practice, and implement the recommendations made in this report. PRCA member companies should enhance their understanding of the business and ethical case for diversity through training where needed.

However, endorsing these principles are only a start for any organisation. The evidence base, rationale, detail and recommendations behind these aspirations are outlined in the report.

---

## 3 The current position and the case for change

### In this section we consider:

1. The current state of the workforce
2. How the industry portrays itself
3. The business case for diversity

#### 1. The current state of the workforce

##### What does the current PR workforce look like?

Statistics show that the UK's demographics are shifting significantly, and that the PR industry has not kept up with this pace of change. This means that there is a deficit in our ability to communicate effectively with a range of people, both at home and abroad.

According to national population data, "only 20% of the UK working population is now white, male, able-bodied and under 45"<sup>2</sup>. Between 2010 and 2020 the UK will need 2.1 million new entrants to the adult workforce, and we can only meet this need if we make optimum use of the people we have<sup>3</sup>.

The latest PRWeek/PRCA Census (2011)<sup>4</sup> demonstrates the specific issues faced by the PR industry:

- Gender balance: almost two thirds of the workforce is female and women make up the majority of the new entrants to the industry. However this is not reflected amongst senior roles where men are in the majority. Women are not rising to the top, despite powering the industry at the lower levels.
- Ethnic background: the industry is overwhelmingly white, with 84% of people identifying as White British. The rest of the workforce breaks down as 8% Other White, 2% Black Caribbean/African/British and 6% Other. This does not reflect the working population of the UK and is a major challenge to be answered.

We also know that disabled people are under-represented (particularly among those entering the industry). Furthermore, the industry is seen as very secular with few practitioners demonstrating religious dress. Detailed analysis on the socio-economic background of industry practitioners has not been carried out.

The lack of diversity in the industry presents us with a problem in terms of developing authentic and resonant campaigns to reach sectors of the community that we may have no contact with ourselves.

##### Highlighting the current state of disabled people's employment

Disabled people are one of the most excluded groups in the workplace. Disabled people's employment is currently below 50% for those able to work, while it stands at

around 75% for the non-disabled population. Once in work disabled people are also less likely to progress to senior roles. Non-disabled people are three times more likely to earn over £80,000<sup>5</sup>.

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as: 'A physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities'. Clauses in the Act place certain duties on employers in terms of making adjustments and taking positive action. However, in reality disabled people do not fit neatly into definitions or stereotypes. Disability covers a wide range of conditions including amongst others, mental health issues, learning disabilities, sensory impairments, people who are deaf or blind, and those with physical impairments. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to disabled people or to the employment of disabled people.

From a disability perspective, the PR industry and careers in it should be no different to working in any other sector. But there is a view that there are few disabled people working in the industry. Whilst surveys give a demographic breakdown of those working in the PR industry in terms of gender and race, there are no reliable figures for the number of disabled people in the sector. A CEBR report published in 2005 suggested that 2% of PR practitioners are registered disabled "PR Today: 48,000 Professionals; £6.5 Billion Turnover". Whilst there are some disabled people in the communications industry, there are very few in senior roles and high profile figures are rare.

Awareness of disability issues is improving across society. As a result of the aspirations of disabled people, the work of the Department for Work and Pensions, specialist providers of employment support to disabled people, disability third sector groups and employer groups such as the Employers Forum on Disability, the right of disabled people to work in mainstream employment is now largely accepted in our society and is enshrined in law.

However the PR industry is not taking advantage of the legislation or accessing the information and support that there is, to employ more disabled people in our ranks. One of the issues is a lack of understanding of disability issues amongst many in the PR sector. However there is also a view (from a senior disability consultant) that there may be some disabled people who self-exclude from certain industries, including PR because of a perception that PR is about rushing around to lots of functions for networking, and some disabled people might think that it will be difficult for them to handle that element of the role. It is of particular concern that this view may be held by disabled students and recent graduates. One in eleven people who graduate each year has a disability. It would diminish the talent pool available to the PR industry if these candidates were to self-select out of applying to the industry.

### **A lack of flexible working**

At a time when public relations consultancies consistently report that acquiring and retaining talent is one of their main strategic challenges, the case for flexible working becomes ever more compelling. For the industry to thrive and compete, addressing this is no longer something that can be ignored. Economic, technical and societal changes are forcing (and enabling) employers globally to review their practices and build in more flexibility.

A common concern amongst PR colleagues is the perception that working flexibly is inconsistent in a profession where we serve clients, and a fear that it will create extra costs and administration that would be too much of a burden for smaller businesses. Our challenge is that the increased retention, motivation and productivity that accrues from staff that work flexibly offset these concerns, and increasingly it is the very clients that we serve who are adopting these practices themselves.

In the UK, parents of children under the age of 17 and carers have the statutory right to request flexible working from their employers. Regardless of the statutory right, it makes good business sense for employers to extend the options for flexible hours.

A poll by the Commission Working Group of small to medium PRCA members with between 13 and 74 staff showed that while all offered some degree of flexibility, there were common concerns including:

- That colleagues need to be together in the same room to discuss issues (rather than emailing each other which could be less productive)
- Clients demanding access to their individual account manager during working hours
- Continuity of service for clients, workload management
- Flexible working is generally taken up by senior people, which can lead to problems with junior team support and practical issues such as meeting availability, causing disruption and lack of continuity for the teams

The 2011 PRWeek / PRCA Benchmarking study<sup>6</sup> shows that overall, only 11% of the industry works part-time. 65% of members offer part-time working for senior employees, but only 39% for junior employees and there is a similar split for home working and flexible hours.

### **Business in the Community BME Research: Race for Opportunity**

Research carried out by Business in the Community's race diversity campaign Race for Opportunity<sup>7</sup> investigated the levels of career ambition and subsequent career progression

of black, Asian and minority ethnic workers in the UK. Race to progress: breaking down barriers, found that, despite high levels of ambition, BME workers feel they are promoted less regularly than their white counterparts and nearly half feel that they have to leave their employer in order to progress in their career. According to the findings, BME workers go on fewer training schemes and lack access to mentors – despite high demand for both in order to develop their careers – and also have low confidence that their senior management treats all ethnic groups fairly. Perhaps of most concern is the finding that nearly half of BME employees feel that they have to leave their current employer in order to progress. By contrast, less than one-third of white British workers feel that they have to do the same.

## **2. How the industry portrays itself**

### **Perceptions of PR**

A key role of the PR and communications industry is to promote ideas and markets and shift perceptions of products, people or politics. Yet as an industry we need to do more to change perceptions of our own role and the people who work in the sector.

Successful PR agencies understand their clients' and stakeholders' needs. For instance, it would be absurd if a PR campaign aimed at young black women was led entirely by middle-aged white men. In order to understand a demographic, it is usually best to have at least some personal experiences of it. The PR industry needs to reflect society.

There is still a significant job to do to overturn some popular misconceptions of the industry – particularly marked amongst some ethnic groups research suggests, where traditional professions such as law, medicine or finance are held up as the target sectors – and to correctly position the broad nature of disciplines and opportunities available. Business in the Community's report 'Aspiration & Frustration' looked at BME perceptions of a number of professions<sup>8</sup>. The media (which incorporates PR) is perceived to be one of the most difficult professions to enter. The report cites a lack of entry guidance and the 'old boy's network' which enables friends and families to take advantage of connections which, in turn, places an opaque barrier in front of BME people seeking to gain access to the profession.

We conducted research to look at how the face of the industry is reflected in trade publications. The analysis demonstrates a real lack of diversity particularly amongst senior staff and industry experts.

## Analysis of Trade Publications

For our research we undertook analysis of 18 issues of PRWeek (structure and content), as the primary trade publication for the industry, plus the PR Powerbook, 2011. For our study 1,334 stories were analysed across the 18 issues. The news stories, profiles and features clearly portray who the industry rates as being high profile and important.

When we analysed the images presented we found that 94.8% of practitioners portrayed were white, with 5.2% non-white. Of the women depicted, 26% were depicted as members of a group (e.g. in shots of award-winning PR teams), as compared to only 14% of men depicted in this way. All non-white women were in group shots.

The higher prevalence of men pictured on their own corresponds with the more frequent use of men as expert commentators on news and features in PRWeek, and reinforces their over-representation in management. This pattern is also reflected in the PR Powerbook 2011, where the breakdown is 31% female / 69% male; 2.5% non-white / 97.5% white.

## Why particular professionals are featured

Three trade publication editors were interviewed and in describing their newsgathering processes, stated they had a list of contacts who they would regularly call in relation to stories, for opinion and comment. Practitioners were on this list either because they had been a source of previous stories, because the journalist had used them as a source for comment previously, through networking, or because they had been seen elsewhere making interesting comments. This can lead to the “usual suspects” being featured, though the greater use of social media does mean that some new commentators are getting more of an opportunity to break through.

## Representation in the wider media

In response to how the profession was represented in the print and broadcast media, the editors tended to agree that the profession was represented inaccurately in wider media, perhaps “shallow”, “lightweight”, and “shadowy”, working for particular interests rather than the wider good and focusing on high profile characters rather than ‘serious’ PR practitioners. This was particularly bad on TV with notoriously bad caricatures of PR. It was noted in particular that the strategic end of PR work is perceived poorly and negatively as ‘lobbying’. When PR people are used as commentators on radio, a bit more balance tended to emerge. The lack of diversity was noted as well; the editors all said that the profession probably appeared to be white, middle class and dominated by men, because men tend to dominate at the senior level.

It is the responsibility of the PRCA, the industry as a whole and individual employers to continue to educate and help over-turn inaccurate perceptions of the PR industry. It is also recommended that the PRCA and industry media such as PR Week, support initiatives to profile successful industry employees of all levels from diverse groups.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

PRCA member companies to ensure that opportunities for media commentary are offered to diverse staff within the company in order to reflect a wider range of talent amongst media spokespeople.

- PRCA members to review which staff are currently acting as media commentators in sector press, and ensure staff from under-represented groups are put forward in future by July 2012.
- PRCA to develop a diversity database of staff from under-represented groups in member companies for commenting in trade media by July 2012.

PRCA to share the Commission’s report and recommendations with PR trade media, including the detailed research compiled by Dr Lee Edwards and the presentation of the industry working group.

- PRCA Communications Department in ongoing dialogue with journalists in the trade media, should reinforce the need for inclusion of under-represented groups in their publications.

PRCA and PR Week to consider an industry award for a company or individual which excels in promoting diversity.

- PRCA to action by July 2012.

<sup>2</sup>Government Actuaries Department, National Population Projections, 2004

<sup>3</sup>Chris Humphries, Skills in a Global Economy Report, Director General, City & Guilds, January 2006

<sup>4</sup><http://www.prweek.com/go/prcensus/>

<sup>5</sup>INSERT SOURCE

<sup>6</sup>PR Week / PRCA Benchmarking Study, 2011

<sup>7</sup>[http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/research/rfo\\_race\\_to\\_progress/index.html](http://www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/research/rfo_race_to_progress/index.html)

<sup>8</sup>[http://www.bitc.org.uk/workplace/diversity\\_and\\_inclusion/race/aspfrust.html](http://www.bitc.org.uk/workplace/diversity_and_inclusion/race/aspfrust.html)

---

### 3. The business case for diversity

As a concept, promoting diversity has become a fashionable topic for many industries. However it is important to realise that behind this is a serious message about the real need to improve diversity. In addition to the legal and ethical motivations there is a strong business case to back this up.

Chris Sullivan, chief executive of the Corporate Banking Division at RBS, was recently quoted in Management Today about diversity and the bottom line, saying, "All the evidence demonstrates that diversity gives you a competitive edge in terms of insight and understanding. The more diverse the inputs to decisions and an organisation's activities, the better the results you get."<sup>9</sup> There is also data to back up the business case showing the positive impact that having women on the board can have on companies' financial position. A report by McKinsey found that companies with gender balanced boardrooms were 56% more profitable than those with all-male boards<sup>10</sup>.

Potential savings and benefits can be made by businesses by increasing diversity and introducing flexible working. However, in the PR industry, there is also a more fundamental reason to make these changes. We need to reflect the people we engage and communicate with. We will be successful if we reflect the diversity in society. We need to understand the issues and demands of all sections of the community so that we can be authentic in our strategies to reach them.

We are also a powerful industry with a voice, projecting images that are seen by millions. We are in an influential position to act on promoting diversity and encouraging social mobility. In the past, many people have entered our industry through the influence of their parents or because of attendance at a particular group of universities which the industry has favoured. This has resulted in a workforce which fails to reflect the social breadth of society, and again this is limiting our ability to communicate with diverse groups. In this report we talk about the non-university route into university, this is important in tackling the uniformity of the workforce. By opening up our recruitment and intern policies we should also reach a new audience of potential recruits who can help us create a stronger, more responsive PR industry. This agenda is important to the coalition government, who have appointed former Labour MP, Alan Milburn as their Social Mobility Tsar. He will make recommendations to the Government on improving the life chances of the least well off and opening up workplaces to these recruits is a key part of that work.

#### The benefits of fairer recruitment

Recruitment in PR typically takes place subject to significant time and resource pressures and employers tend to be risk averse, following a "stick to what you know" or "replace like with like approach". Despite a growing and encouraging number of PR employers having diversity policies in place (though implemented to varying degrees), there persists a perception that diversity policies may lead to sub-standard hires and increased costs in recruitment, without clear and persuasive business benefits. This is not the case and so first and foremost, the education must continue amongst those responsible for PR recruitment.

By investing in sound recruitment practices that take diverse candidates into account, longer term recruitment spend will in fact reduce. By finding the right candidate, clearly employers will save costs linked to high levels of attrition. In 2008, seven professional services firms reported that losing a trained employee cost them over £100,000 once training costs were factored in<sup>11</sup>. More generally, according to a 2009 CIPD survey, the average cost of attrition per employee was £6,125, rising to £9,000 for senior managers or directors<sup>12</sup> and the average cost of filling a single vacancy is £4,667, rising to £10,000 for senior managers and directors, according to the CIPD<sup>13</sup>.

The improvement that diverse workforces bring to business delivery is of course intrinsically linked to the diversification of the marketplace. 80% of consumer purchasing decisions are made by women<sup>14</sup>; ethnic minority consumers in the UK have significant disposable incomes (recent figures indicate that by 2011 that total will be as much as £300 billion)<sup>15</sup>; and 10 million disabled people in the UK have an estimated annual spending power of £80 billion<sup>16</sup>. In order for an organisation to better service and communicate with this diverse marketplace and tap into the aggregate spending power, it is naturally important for its workforce to understand and reflect that diversity.

Furthermore, in an industry experiencing an accelerating pace of change, new models, markets and approaches are appearing all the time. This has the effect of creating demand for new skills (such as multi-media production) and increasingly a greater reliance for many parts of the industry on project work or contract/freelance work. This means new opportunities for different types of diverse candidates.



## Reasons to introduce flexible working

There are many business reasons to introduce elements of flexible working and it is important to recognise the benefits for the employer as well as the staff.

### a: Widen the recruitment pool and attract higher quality candidates

Higher quality candidates have higher expectations of their potential employers and are more attracted to roles that offer flexible working practices. 42% of employers have reported that flexible working had a positive effect on recruitment<sup>17</sup>.

When planning recruitment, businesses need to consider the different ways of filling the role. Our natural response to a vacancy may be to look for a full time replacement, but for example by focusing on finding someone to work 5 days a week for 60k the business is ruling out many potential candidates who are looking to work for 2.5 days a week at 30k<sup>18</sup> and by refusing to provide senior roles with flexible working options, businesses are often effectively blocking high quality female candidates from applying<sup>19</sup>.

Recruitment agency Women Like Us has seen an increase in top level roles such as CEO and CFO being advertised through them as employers have started to understand than to attract more applications from senior female executives they need to offer flexible packages that do not stick to the rigid 35 hours or more a week<sup>20</sup>.

### b: Improve employee retention

Overall churn as reported in the 2011 PRCA Benchmarking is 21.9%, with the highest average for the critical Account Director level at 26.7% which typically is the main talent pipeline, and correlates with the life and career stage that female talent typically leaves the workplace to have children.

There is increasing demand for flexible working, and employee attitudes are changing, for example Charlie Mayfield of the John Lewis Partnership says that flexible working policies allow them to retain their best talent<sup>21</sup>. The Department for Work and Pensions found that 45% of individuals working in organisations that did not offer flexible working had thought about leaving compared to 36% working for employees that did offer flexible working<sup>22</sup>.

## INDUSTRY COMMENT

*Avril Lee, partner and deputy CEO of Ketchum Pleon, argues that: "We [the PR industry] need life-friendly approaches that allow flexible working hours, enable more home working, provide ways to balance life and work and create environments that are inspiring and supportive for both the young graduate in their first job and the seasoned senior with outside commitments."*

*"Flexibility for all types of living is needed – we have a large number of people who work part-time and they are not all parents, but they do all want to enjoy their job and their lives. We're also designing roles to fit both client needs and personal interests; allowing people to play to their strengths (a specialist passion or working cross-practice for example) and focus on what they enjoy doing<sup>23</sup>".*

### c: Increase in engagement and morale

Research by the Institute of Directors<sup>24</sup> found that employers showed that the biggest impact of introducing flexible working was an increase in staff morale and motivation. The Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce<sup>25</sup> reported that 70% of employers said that introducing flexible working significantly improved employee relations. The Work Foundation also reported that RBS<sup>26</sup> found that the introduction of flexible working increased employee commitment and motivation.

### d: Contract flexibility

Agencies that are contracted to provide clients with a specific number of hours a month can fulfil this in a variety of ways such as hiring a freelancer to service the account. The Work Foundation reported that RBS<sup>27</sup> found that introducing flexible working practices has enabled the business as a whole to be more flexible.

### e: Reduction in overheads

The average cost of providing office space in London is £7,700 per person per annum, and it averages £4,178 across the UK (per person, per year). It also costs money simply to move employees around an office – estimated at between £400 to £1,000 per person, per move. At a time when discretionary expenditure is under pressure, home working becomes a more compelling business benefit.

### f: Increased productivity

With flexible working comes a more flexible attitude, higher productivity and improved creativity, criteria that businesses and clients alike value. Research by the Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce<sup>28</sup> reported that 58% of SMEs reported improved productivity as a result of flexible working. BT<sup>29</sup> found that employees working from home were 30% more productive than their office based counterparts. Over 75,000 of its 86,000 workforce have some kind of flexible working arrangement with 17% working from home.

## **g: Reduce Absenteeism**

Figures from the Office for National statistics showed that around 2 million working days were lost due to sickness absence in 2010. Companies such as BT<sup>30</sup> have found that the absenteeism levels of employees working from home fell by 20%. In the PR profession we report relatively low absenteeism of 3 days per employee per year, however incremental improvements in absence are always welcome and help deliver seamless service to clients.

## **h: Work-life balance**

Flexible working is not just about women returning to work after having a child. It's about anyone – men or women, young and old – who just want to be more in control of how work fits into their lives. Some employers may hold the attitude of “this is how it was for me coming up in the business, so shall it be for you” but in practice such attitude can alienate a talented group of people. These people will eventually leave for an employer who understands that work has to fit around their lives.

<sup>9</sup><http://www.managementtoday.co.uk>

<sup>10</sup>[http://www.mckinsey.com/locations/swiss/news\\_publications/pdf/women\\_matter\\_english.pdf](http://www.mckinsey.com/locations/swiss/news_publications/pdf/women_matter_english.pdf)

<sup>11</sup>Personnel Today, At Work and Working Well; CBI/AXA absence and labour turnover survey, May 2008

<sup>12</sup>CIPD, Recruitment, retention and turnover survey, 2009

<sup>13</sup>People Management, Guide to Recruitment Marketing quoting Recruitment, retention and turnover survey, CIPD 2009, 17 June 2008

<sup>14</sup>Opportunity Now Women and Work: The Facts, quoting Business Weeks, 2005

<sup>15</sup>Weber Shandwick, Understanding The Multicultural Market: the MCC Insight Study, 2007

<sup>16</sup>Employers Forum on Disability, Family Resource Survey, 2002/2003

<sup>17</sup>pg.7, Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce, Flexible Working: working for families, working for business, <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/family-friendly-task-force-report.pdf>

<sup>18</sup><http://www.hrmmagazine.co.uk/hro/news/1018880/the-story-increase-workers>

<sup>19</sup><http://www.workingmums.co.uk/working-mums-magazine/all/2849701/how-to-attract-and-retain-the-top-talent.html>

<sup>20</sup>WLU press release, Comment ahead of the Lord Davis review findings, 24 Feb 11 <http://www.womenlikeus.org.uk/about/pressreleases.aspx>

<sup>21</sup>pg.11, Reinventing the Workplace, Demos, 20 July 2011 [http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Reinventing\\_the\\_Workplace\\_-\\_web.pdf?1310724451](http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Reinventing_the_Workplace_-_web.pdf?1310724451)

<sup>22</sup><http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2011-2012/rep751.pdf> p.44, Research Report, Health and well-being at work: a survey of employees, Viv Young and Claire Bhaumik, July 2011

<sup>23</sup><http://www.prmoment.com/322/why-we-need-more-healthcare-pros-by-avril-lee-partner-and-deputy-ceo-of-ketchum-pleon-london.aspx>

<sup>24</sup>[http://www.iod.com/MainWebSite/Resources/Document/policy\\_paper\\_flexible\\_working.pdf](http://www.iod.com/MainWebSite/Resources/Document/policy_paper_flexible_working.pdf)

<sup>25</sup>pg.7, Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce, Flexible Working: working for families, working for business, <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/family-friendly-task-force-report.pdf>

<sup>26</sup><http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/RBS.pdf>

<sup>27</sup><http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/RBS.pdf>

<sup>28</sup>pg.7, Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce, Flexible Working: working for families, working for business, <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/family-friendly-task-force-report.pdf>

<sup>29</sup>p.11, Equality and Human Rights Commission – A Managers Guide to Flexible Working – <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/here-for-business/working-better/working-better-a-managers-guide-to-flexible-working/>

<sup>30</sup>p.11, Equality and Human Rights Commission – A Managers Guide to Flexible Working – ibid

---

## 4 Recruiting a diverse workforce

### In this section we consider:

1. Internships in the PR industry
2. Improving diversity in practice
3. Fair recruiting to bring a wider pool of talent into the industry
4. Apprenticeships: Opening up the industry to people who do not go to university

### 1. Internships in the PR industry

Internships, in various forms, have been the route into the PR industry for many people. They have been operated in an informal way, often advertised solely through word of mouth and frequently recruited to without structured processes. Many sectors are looking to increase the diversity of their workforce and the PR industry must certainly address several of the same challenges faced by others across the economy. However our use of internships (and in particular unpaid schemes) has ingrained an inequality in the sector from the entry level and it is this particular model that needs urgent reform.

An internship is not a glorified term for work experience. It is also not an opportunity for an employer to find cheap (or free) labour or to give a job to a friend's son. Instead an internship should be a mutually beneficial arrangement. Advertised, recruited fairly and lasting for a limited time, an internship should give a person new to the industry an opportunity to learn and the employer a bright, enthusiastic worker. Some internships can lead to permanent jobs with the same company but this is not always the case and there should be clarity about whether that is a possibility from the start.

Internships are a negative and detrimental entry route into the industry only if unpaid and based on nepotism. There are many reputable agencies and in-house teams with credible, paid intern programmes that attract a great number of high calibre, diverse applicants.

A distinction has to be made between work experience (about a fortnight's experience) and an internship (a two to three month role with clear duties and responsibilities). Many organisations and academic bodies also offer year long workplacements, these are generally paid and again are outside of what we mean by internship.

A report by Internocracy and The Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) found that internships are "concentrated in particular industries, including some of the most competitive and attractive sectors. These include Parliament and politics, [and] creative industries.<sup>31</sup>"

In their submissions to the PRCA Commission, both Internocracy and InternAware demonstrate that such internships in the PR industry are largely informal, unpaid and often based in London. The submissions argue that while internships can be of clear benefit for both employers and interns, the effect of internships in this form is to limit the opportunity to those from wealthier backgrounds who can afford to work for free, who have influential connections, and who live in, or within commuting distance of, London.

Specific research on the sectors includes:

- A Unite survey of approximately 450 interns working in Parliament in 2009 found that interns carry out about 18,000 hours of unpaid work each week. 44% of those surveyed received neither food nor travel expenses. The effect, Unite argued, is that young people from less financially privileged backgrounds were discouraged from seeking these positions.<sup>32</sup>
- The 2011 PR Census found that the majority (51%) of the PR industry is based in London, with the South East and the Midlands together representing a further quarter (12% each)<sup>33</sup>.
- Skillset research in 2008 found that 44% of the creative media workforce said they had carried out unpaid work to get into the industry. Skillset noted that entry is often based on 'who you know rather than what you know'<sup>34</sup>.

The submissions and research pieces are supported by recent high profile media exposure of controversial practices, including:

- A BBC2 documentary in February 2011 which exposed Modus Publicity for hiring 20 unpaid interns at a single time;
- Coverage in February 2011 of the 'internships for cash' scandal at the Conservative's Black and White Party, which included a winning bid of £2,000 for a week's work experience at Bell Pottinger;
- Comments from senior Conservatives supporting informal internships – including the Prime Minister, who stated in an interview that he is "very relaxed" about internships gained through social circles<sup>35</sup>;
- Nick Clegg's admission in April 2011 that he secured a work placement at a Finnish bank after university through his father's connections – revealed at the same time that he launched the Government's Social Mobility strategy.

There are laws and guidelines in place which provide some direction for employers:

The National Minimum Wage Act 1998 states that all 'workers', unless subject to an exemption, are entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW). Under s54, a 'worker' is someone who has entered into a contract of employment, whether express (written or oral) or implied, to personally undertake work or services.

However there are exemptions relating to students and volunteers which have covered some internship roles in the past:

- students undertaking a placement of up to 1 year as part of a university course,
- volunteers, defined as those whose agreement does not entitle them to a financial reward to perform a service, who does not have to turn up for work, and who cannot be dismissed, sued for breach of contract, or have payment withheld if they fail to perform a service.<sup>37</sup>

In September 2011, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) provided greater clarity for employers on paying interns the National Minimum Wage. The guidance, published by BusinessLink and DirectGov includes a new worker checklist which clarifies that where all the following apply, an intern is a 'worker' for the purpose of The National Minimum Wage Act 1998, and entitled to NMW:

- A contract exists (written or oral) which entitles the individual to a monetary payment or benefit in kind (such as a future contract of employment), over and above compensation for expenses incurred
- The individual is required to turn up for work even if they don't want to
- Work must be provided personally by the individual for the length of the contract<sup>38</sup>.

The Common Best Practice Code for High Quality Internships, produced by the industry and BIS recommends that recruitment procedures for interns mirror practices for employees. Recruitment should be "conducted in an open and rigorous way so as to enable fair and equal access to the available internships."<sup>39</sup>

The 2011 PR Census indicates that the youngest entrants into the PR industry tend to be White British, female, and educated to Masters level:

- The youngest age group of professionals, aged between 18 and 24 (where juniors are more likely to be found) equates to 10% of the industry. The 25 to 34 age bracket equates to 42%.

- 4 in 5 of those aged between 18 and 24 in the industry are female.
- 7% of all PR professionals are from ethnic minorities. In the general population, ethnic minorities make up 13% of the population, though within the working population in London the figure is closer to 30%.
- 22% of all PR professionals surveyed have obtained a degree to Masters level<sup>40</sup>.

These findings corroborate ESRC-funded research undertaken by a member of the commission, Dr Lee Edwards, in her exploratory study of the experiences of 'BME' (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) PR practitioners in the UK between January 2009 and January 2010. Dr Edwards found that the 'PR profession in the UK can be characterised in broad terms as White, middle-class and gendered'<sup>41</sup>, meaning that there is a gender split in terms of fulfilling different roles in the industry.

The findings suggest that, at an internship and graduate entry level, the key barriers to entry remain:

- The wide scale prevalence of unpaid internships
- Internships which are mainly based in London
- Informally gained internships based on personal connections
- The growing number of graduates with Masters degrees
- Ethnic grouping, low level of BME candidates entering the industry
- Religious – e.g. Muslim women who cover
- Gender, lower levels of males at the entry level
- Barriers to disabled people entering the industry, e.g. lack of disability awareness amongst employers

<sup>31</sup>Lawton K and Potter D (July 2010) Why interns need a fair wage

<sup>32</sup>Unite (2009) [http://www.unitetheunion.org/news\\_events/2009\\_archived\\_press\\_releases/\\_unfair\\_working\\_conditions\\_of.aspx](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news_events/2009_archived_press_releases/_unfair_working_conditions_of.aspx)

<sup>33</sup>PR Week / PRCA 2011 PR Census

<sup>34</sup>Skillset (2008) [http://www.skillset.org/companies/your\\_staff/placements/](http://www.skillset.org/companies/your_staff/placements/)

<sup>35</sup>Daily Telegraph, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/8469292/David-Cameron-interview-I-wanted-to-berate-him-but-Dave-won-me-over.html>

<sup>36</sup><http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/39/contents>

<sup>37</sup><http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1096811534&r.l1=1073858787&r.l2=1084822773&r.l3=1081657912&r.l4=1096811513&r.s=sc&type=RESOURCES>

<sup>38</sup><http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1096704592&r.i=1096811767&r.l1=1073858787&r.l2=1084822773&r.l3=1081657912&r.l4=1096811513&r.t=RESOURCES&type=RESOURCES>

<sup>39</sup>Common Best practice Code for High Quality Internships, July 2011, p11

<sup>40</sup>PR Week / PRCA 2011 PR Census

<sup>41</sup>Edwards, L. (2010) An exploratory study of the experiences of 'BAME' PR practitioners in the UK industry, Industry Report. Manchester: University of Manchester. ESRC grant RES 00-22-3143.

## 2. Improving diversity in practice – working examples of schemes undertaken inside and outside the PR industry to improve workforce diversity

### a: Openly advertised and transparent intern recruitment

Good practice demonstrated by the best companies included clearly advertising:

- The internship application process (requirements and timelines)
- Competencies against which the applicants will be assessed
- The duration of the internship
- Remuneration the intern will receive
- Whether or not the internship can lead to a full time position

### b: Paid graduate-level internship programmes

Many (large) private sector organisations in London do offer paid summer internships for final year undergraduates and graduates. Lasting a minimum of 6-8 weeks, these internships offer a wage which equates to much more than the National Minimum Wage (NMW), and even the (London) Living Wage (a pay rate calculated to keep someone comfortably out of poverty based on the costs of living). Corporate employers and organisations within large sectors such as banking; accountancy and City law offer more than the NMW for interns, as well as often other benefits in kind.

Examples also exist of smaller sectors offering at least the NMW, including individual employers within the PR industry, at present around 40 companies have signed up to commit to this as part of the PRCA's Intern Campaign. There was also an announcement from the Liberal Democrat Party in April 2011 that from 2012, interns working at Liberal Democrat Party HQ will be paid.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

PRCA to draft specific guidelines for member companies on the recruitment and employment of PR interns. All PRCA members should limit internships to last no longer than 3 months.

- Guidelines to adhere to best practice – for instance ensuring full line management, structured training, exit interviews, and draw on the CIPD's guide *Internships that Work: A Guide for Employers*<sup>42</sup> (December 2009) and the guide published by government through the BIS Collaborative Forum on Fair Access to the Professions, *Common Best Practice Code for High-Quality Internships*<sup>43</sup> (July 2011).
- PRCA to publish guidelines by July 2012.

PRCA to develop an online hub dedicated to internship opportunities in member companies. Each advertisement must comply with the minimum requirements with an overview of the application process, job description, Competencies, duration and remuneration; and companies must adhere to the PRCA internship guideline before they will be hosted on the site.

- PRCA to implement by July 2012.

PRCA to support InternsAware and Internocracy in any campaigns they undertake recommending to websites such as W4MP that they should not advertise unpaid internships in private sector companies.

PRCA members should pay their interns at least the National Minimum Wage and ideally pay the Living Wage (or London Living Wage as applicable).

- PRCA members to implement by December 2012.
- Members to sign the PRCA Intern's Campaign pledge by July 2012.
- PRCA to advise other industry umbrella groups representing businesses, charities and in-house PR to follow suit.

PRCA members should clearly set out their internship and graduate recruitment policies on their website. As a minimum, this information should include an overview of the application process, job description, competencies, duration and remuneration.

- PRCA members to implement by December 2012.

PRCA members to offer to pay travel expenses for candidates attending internship interviews.

- PRCA members to implement by December 2012.

PRCA Consultancy Management Standard Audit to be amended to include an assessment within the People Management section on intern procedures, management and guidelines, to ensure that consultancies are taking steps to implement the recommendations in this report.

- PRCA to adapt CMS by December 2012.

PRCA to undertake an audit in December 2012 to assess the impact on recruitment of new interns.

### c: Diversity-specific internship programmes

The Equality Act 2010<sup>44</sup> has made it legal to introduce an element of positive action into workplace law (clause 158). Where a company is faced between choosing between two candidates of equal merit they are allowed to select the one from a background which is currently under-represented on their workforce for example a person from an ethnic minority or a disabled person. For disability, positive discrimination is permitted as well as a wider sphere of positive action, as the Equality Act only protects disabled people, it does not protect non-disabled people (unlike on say gender where both men and women are protected under the Act).

Of relevance for internships under the Act, action may be taken to train or encourage people from an underrepresented background to overcome the disadvantage faced by this group, the Equality and Human Rights Commission has helpful guidance here<sup>45</sup>.

The following are examples of schemes that run specifically targeting groups which have been underrepresented in the annual internship schemes.

- **The Civil Service Fast Stream Summer Diversity Internship Programme**

This 6-9 week training programme was established over eight years ago. It is aimed at ethnic minority university students / graduates as well as those from an under-represented socio-economic background. The key objectives of the programme are around development and providing training and support to students, giving them an opportunity to raise their career aspirations and increasing awareness of the Civil Service as an employer of choice. Candidates receive a weekly training allowance of £350, and expenses for attending corporate events are reimbursed.<sup>46</sup>

- **Pearson Diversity Summer Internship Programme**

This is a paid (£1,100 a month) eight to twelve week journalism placement for 25 BME graduates or final year university students, placing them within one of Pearson's companies in the publishing industry. Candidates apply for the positions in lines with the guidelines and timeframes on the website. According to Pearson, the scheme has been 'recognised in the national and industry press as an innovative and successful programme for increasing diversity in the publishing industry.'<sup>47</sup>

### RECOMMENDATION:

PRCA members to assess and monitor the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of their workforce and consider introducing diversity internship placements.

- PRCA members to identify which groups are underrepresented in their workforce and consider introducing programmes to challenge this by December 2012.
- PRCA to share with member companies specific guidelines and advice on recruiting for diversity internships by December 2012.

### d: Mentoring, support and awareness-raising for under-represented graduate groups

The following are examples of existing schemes which successfully use outreach to improve diversity in PR and political roles.

- **Taylor Bennett Foundation**

The Taylor Bennett Foundation was set up in 2008 to tackle the lack of ethnic diversity in the PR industry. The scheme involves black and ethnic minority graduates spending ten weeks getting intensive PR training, work-based experience and career guidance. Following the placement, the Taylor Bennett Foundation has secured a number of high profile PR professionals to act as mentors to graduates to continue providing career guidance as well as building networks for those from diverse networks who may not have access to such connections through their personal background.<sup>48</sup>

- **Ignite**

Ignite was established in April 2009 as an inclusive networking group for public relations professionals. Its aim is to promote the benefits of cultural diversity in the profession, through activities including: making the contributions of diverse people in the profession more visible; encouraging diverse entrants into the profession by providing a source of role models; facilitating career progression by providing access to networks and generating connections between people; developing a substantive dialogue within the industry about diversity in order to influence change and establish best practice benchmark; supporting research looking at diversity in the profession; hosting a series of networking events.<sup>49</sup> Ignite are currently in the process of setting up an independent mentoring scheme.

- **Three Faith Forums**

This non-religious group works with politics undergraduates in London of primarily Muslim, Christian and Jewish backgrounds. One particular programme, UndergraduateParliaMentors, launched in 2007, allows trios of students to be mentored by Parliamentarians in order to equip them with the skills, experiences and networks they need to advance leadership careers. This scheme aims to support students who identify with a particular faith or belief into a future career in leadership.<sup>50</sup>

- **Operation Black Vote**

One of the many schemes run by OBV allows young BME students to shadow magistrates, Parliamentarians or councillors for six months. This enables participants to view legal and political process first hand, while also receiving career advice should they wish to progress in the field.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

PRCA members to establish and promote an online “match-making” mentoring programme to support candidates from diverse backgrounds to understand the industry and entry routes.

- PRCA to identify existing mentoring organisations and develop links to support the development of a “match-making” mentoring programme by July 2012.

PRCA to pilot a scheme approaching 10 universities with high BME populations and / or lower socio economic populations, offering industry representatives to attend their 2012 career fairs to explain careers in PR and entry routes.

- PRCA to action in 2012.

PRCA to work with Disability Alliance to explore the viability of a programme targetting disabled people in Higher Education Institutions, by offering industry representatives to attend their 2012 career fairs to explain careers in PR and entry routes.

- PRCA to action in 2012.

### e: Recruitment of disabled people

Whilst awareness and support are necessary steps to improving access of disabled people to jobs in the PR industry, the role of employers and recruiters is paramount.

PR agencies and other employers can access information and advice, from the DWP and organisations such as the Employers Forum on Disability (EFD), an employers’ membership organisation that can give specialist advice to PR firms interested in improving disabled people’s access to the sector.

The role of specialist communications recruitment agencies in raising awareness of disability and ensuring that disabled people have fair access to jobs within the sector, which they have to do under the Equality Act, will also be necessary. Training in disability awareness for recruitment agencies is a positive step that can be taken now. In March 2011 a RADIATE event (a networking

organisation for senior disabled professionals) heard from two recruiters on what can be done to support promotion and advancement of disabled people into senior positions. Openness and understanding are essential, as one recruitment company represented at the meeting said, “We want them to have a conversation with us that they can explore the options for themselves, and talk to us about any potential barriers with the clients and how we might help them to address those issues”

The PR industry does not have to reinvent the wheel, there are other professions and sectors who have made greater progress in the employment of disabled people – for example the financial services sector. There are lessons to be learned from these sectors, such as:

- Flexible working and job sharing / working from home.
- Programmes aimed at disabled people.
- Application processes and accessible web sites for those disabled people, for example those with visual impairment and forms of dyslexia.
- Human Resources awareness and training.

<sup>31</sup>Lawton K and Potter D (July 2010) Why interns need a fair wage

<sup>32</sup>Unite (2009) [http://www.uniteunion.org/news\\_events/2009\\_archived\\_press\\_releases/unfair\\_working\\_conditions\\_of.aspx](http://www.uniteunion.org/news_events/2009_archived_press_releases/unfair_working_conditions_of.aspx)

<sup>33</sup>PR Week / PRCA 2011 PR Census

<sup>34</sup>Skillset (2008) [http://www.skillset.org/companies/your\\_staff/placements/](http://www.skillset.org/companies/your_staff/placements/)

<sup>35</sup>Daily Telegraph, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/8469292/David-Cameron-interview-I-wanted-to-berate-him-but-Dave-won-me-over.html>

<sup>36</sup><http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/39/contents>

<sup>37</sup><http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1096811534&r.l1=1073858787&r.l2=1084822773&r.l3=1081657912&r.l4=1096811513&r.s=sc&type=RESOURCES>

<sup>38</sup><http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1096704592&r.i=1096811767&r.l1=1073858787&r.l2=1084822773&r.l3=1081657912&r.l4=1096811513&r.t=RESOURCES&type=RESOURCES>

<sup>39</sup>Common Best practice Code for High Quality Internships, July 2011, p11

<sup>40</sup>PR Week / PRCA 2011 PR Census

<sup>41</sup>Edwards, L. (2010) An exploratory study of the experiences of ‘BAME’ PR practitioners in the UK industry, Industry Report. Manchester: University of Manchester. ESRC grant RES 00-22-3143.

<sup>42</sup>[http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A12DBDE1-5AA3-41FF-BB3A-0EE89EB31629/0/Internships\\_that\\_work.pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A12DBDE1-5AA3-41FF-BB3A-0EE89EB31629/0/Internships_that_work.pdf)

<sup>43</sup><http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/higher-education/docs/C/11-1068-common-best-practice-code-for-quality-internships.pdf>

<sup>44</sup>[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga\\_20100015\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf)

<sup>45</sup><http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/guidance-for-employers/career-development-training-promotion-and-transfer/using-positive-action-to-target-training-or-promote-a-wider-range-of-people/>

<sup>46</sup>Available at <http://faststream.civilservice.gov.uk/Global/Docs/Summer-Diversity-Internship-Programme.pdf>

<sup>47</sup><http://summerinternships.pearson.com/about-programme.htm>

<sup>48</sup><http://www.prweek.com/news/rss/1066000/Taylor-Bennett-Foundation-calls-PR-mentors-promote-diversity-industry/>

<sup>49</sup><http://www.ignitepr.org.uk/about-us>

<sup>50</sup>Three Faith Forum <http://www.threefaithsforum.org.uk/mentoring/>

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

PRCA to host a session of disability awareness training, in particular focusing on employment and recruitment. The PRCA should also recommend training to the industry and PR recruitment companies as a matter of course.

- PRCA to identify a supplier of training and work with them to deliver a training day tailored for the PR industry. All PRCA members should be entitled to send one member of staff on a complimentary basis. Offer course and send information about suppliers out to members by July 2012.

PRCA members to amend their application forms and recruitment processes in line with best practice on accessibility.

- PRCA to circulate a template form by July 2012.

### f: Higher Education

The vast majority of entry level jobs in the PR industry are graduate level, and access to the profession is difficult. Disability Alliance provides information to university students, including on employment opportunities. However the PR industry, which is highly attractive to graduates, needs to consider what value there might be in representatives of companies and the PRCA, actively targeting marketing materials directed at disabled students.

Many higher education institutions have Disability Co-ordinators, and a part of the approach of the sector will be an awareness campaign of PR to these coordinators.

## RECOMMENDATION:

The PRCA should approach Disability Alliance regarding an information campaign to widen access to the industry, by identifying and highlighting the role of disabled role models in the sector and aiming the campaign at undergraduates, graduates and other entry level candidates.

- PRCA Board to discuss ideas by July 2012.

## 3. Fair recruiting to bring a wider pool of talent into the industry

Whilst a significant area of study in its own right, 'unconscious bias' and the impact this has on the ability to recruit a diverse workforce is certainly worth addressing. The sub-conscious decisions made to recruit people similar to ourselves, and promote working styles to which we are used, thus leading to a perpetuation of the status quo.

There is of course sweeping change affecting all sectors not least the creative industries, PR and communications. This manifests itself in a changing skills base requirement for PR recruitment. The impact of the digital/social media revolution is to not only demand new and alternative skills of new hires, but it also has implications for how and where employers might find such talent. This could have a potentially positive impact on diversity.

The 'Recruitment of Under-Represented Groups into the Senior Civil Service report'<sup>51</sup>, showed some interesting and relevant trends in relation to how and where different minority groups search for employment:

- Black and Asian managers were more likely than those from white and mixed backgrounds to report that they would use online job searches. Black managers were most likely to say they would look at press and online adverts, as well as using professional associations and interim work. Online job adverts are on a par with press adverts for the potential candidates from ethnic minority groups.
- Taken together, the use of online searches and online advertising were among the top three type of job search methods (after press advertising) when looking for jobs.

### Also of note:

- While female managers were more likely to say they would look at press and online adverts, male managers were more likely to say they would work with head-hunters if they were looking for a new job.
- Managers with a disability were more likely than non-disabled managers to report that they would use professional associations.

Finally, as regards recruitment at more senior levels, there is still a reluctance to hire people with less traditional backgrounds or directly relevant experience, limiting movement between PR specialities.

<sup>51</sup>Recruitment of Under-Represented Groups into the Senior Civil Service report, prepared by the Institute for Employment Studies for DWP in 2008



---

## Supply side issues

Employers and recruitment agencies expressed a view that they simply do not receive CVs from under-represented groups. In a fast-moving industry, much recruitment takes place within a preferred tight timeline. Therefore, candidates viewed as proven entities that can hit the ground running and represent minimum risk, are frequently hired over those from alternative backgrounds, despite 'best intentions'.

As a pre-requisite for more specific recommendations, it is important to make a case for 'employer branding'. That is, for employers to 'package' their diversity offering as part of their overall employer proposition (in all recruitment communications), alongside other more 'standard' criteria such as benefits, role specifics and prospects; on the proviso that diversity and inclusion is genuinely embedded within their organisation.

### Key overriding guidelines for employers:

- Ensure that all internal staff involved in the recruitment process, from senior management to line managers, have received training on diversity issues and understand and support the organisation's commitment to diversity – so that messages/brand are communicated consistently to the market.
- Ensure that the commitment to diversity and interest in a rich, diverse pool of candidates is communicated to all internal key stakeholders, your recruitment partners, as well as in external communication including recruitment advertising and websites.
- Ensure that diversity is an integral and important part of the briefing process to recruiting partners, and that departments are proactive in managing this process and relationship.
- Enter into an open, honest dialogue and partnership with recruitment partner/agency to improve the calibre and diversity of the candidates provided.
- Encourage PRCA members to introduce diversity targets for all recruitment and to monitor the diversity of candidates provided on a regular basis. Employers should recognise that some disabled people will choose not to declare their disability for perfectly acceptable reasons.

### Specific areas for improvement:

#### Advertising

Sometimes employers make the mistake of thinking that they need to increase the medium through which a job is advertised rather than focusing on changing what the job advertisement actually says or looks like. For some vacancies, especially if recruiting qualified professionals, trying to identify niche media is not necessarily the best way to increase diverse candidates. Instead, the use

of mainstream advertising sources ensuring that there is explicit encouragement of applications from diverse candidates; include a clause that explicitly articulates this and speak about the reasons why diverse candidates matter. Organisations can embrace diversity through the use of diverse imagery as well.

#### (Online) recruitment advertising

If online sources are used, it is important to be conscious of how accessible the adverts are for disabled candidates, especially those with visual or auditory disabilities. For specific advice on this see [www.efd.org.uk](http://www.efd.org.uk) and / or refer to Clearkit™ a guide to the recruitment of disabled talent containing top tips, employer case studies, detailed guidance, sources of information and support together with downloadable checklists<sup>52</sup>.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

PRCA members to assess their current use of advertising in relation to reaching diverse groups.

- PRCA companies to look at advertising strategy and requirements by December 2012, and then implementing alternative strategies in 2013.

#### Pre-Screening

There has to be a consideration of the tools used for selection processes, and ensuring that those tools and processes do not adversely affect any group of individuals. Sometimes the recruitment process does not address the needs of candidates who are new to the organisation and / or sector, who may require a detailed exposition of the organisation or division. It can be effective to engage the candidate at several points throughout the process. This has particularly positive effects on recruiting candidates from under-represented groups. The more effort and time that goes into hiring, the more likely it is that they will accept an offer and spread a positive message about the process. Informal feedback about the process amongst diverse candidates can have a very positive impact on recruitment. This process is about preparing candidates to make sure the selection process is fair before it even begins and ensuring that all candidates have the opportunity to demonstrate their full range of skills, attributes and experiences.

---

<sup>52</sup>[www.clearkit.co.uk](http://www.clearkit.co.uk)

## Interviews

Interviews should ideally be arranged flexibly, with sensitivities around reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities, and those with family commitments as well as cultural norms. Employers should be as flexible as possible regarding the interview eg time of day, location etc. This would make candidates feel that the organisation is really interested in them and avoids the “take it or leave it” sense conveyed by a fixed arrangement. Consideration should also be given to issues such as prayer times on Fridays for Islamic candidates and issues around special times such as Ramadan, and ensuring that time is built into the process in case there is a need to book communication support, for example with signing.

Interviews should be competency based and not just focus on experience in the PR industry. Job descriptions should clearly list competencies and skills required. Firms such as Deloitte and PwC are successfully including unconscious bias training at senior management and recruiter levels to help reduce occurrences of bias when recruiting and assessing colleagues. Clearly there is a significant financial investment in this type of training, but this is an area where the PRCA can help, publishing guidelines by summer 2012 and/or establishing a short course to communicate guidance. Some British companies have already begun stripping out personal details so those deciding who to invite for interview are only told about the candidates’ qualifications, skills and experience, and not their ethnicity, gender or age. This is a potential approach to consider, and has been used at St George’s Hospital, London.

### RECOMMENDATION:

PRCA members to review interview processes to assess flexibility in meeting the needs of diverse groups.

- PRCA member to review by December 2012, and adopt alternative strategies if needed from 2013.

## Post-Appointment

Following the recruitment of new employees, particularly those from underrepresented groups, it is important that support processes are put in place (for example buddy systems) not only to aid retention but also to demonstrate to potential recruits that an organisation has a good and diverse work culture. If it is known by the future employer that there are problems to be managed, be honest with recruits and clearly communicate the action plan in place to mitigate such issues and their harmful effects.

## Careful selection of recruitment partners

Before selecting a recruitment partner, an employer should:

- Ensure they have prepared full and thorough brief (including the diversity approach).
- Introduce agencies / recruitment partners into the diversity process early on.
- Be very clear on how diverse their lists are expected to be, and what this means to the employer.
- Ask the recruitment agency how they reach out to diverse candidates, what do they do to ensure their lists include underrepresented groups. The Business in the Community’s ‘Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment’ provides a useful framework for initial conversations and ongoing engagement between recruitment agencies and employers<sup>53</sup>.

### RECOMMENDATION:

PRCA members to challenge their recruitment partners to demonstrate how they attract diverse candidates.

- PRCA members to implement by March 2012.

## 4. Apprenticeships: Opening up the industry to people who do not go to university

The public relations sector may be missing a trick by not looking more seriously at non-graduate routes into the sector, such as apprenticeships. With the introduction of the new higher rates of university tuition fees it is likely that more young people will choose an alternative route into work.

PR companies currently almost exclusively recruit graduates (90% of those working in the industry according to the PR Census 2011) and often from a limited number of the universities. This dramatically limits the breadth of the new intake into the industry and means the industry is missing out on many young people who may have the natural skills (such as communications and creativity) but do not wish to go to university or cannot afford to do so.

## Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes for employees, designed around employer needs, which lead to national recognised qualifications. They involve a structured programme of training covering a wide range of occupations. They take between six months and four years to complete, depending on the role, and can work as a progression route through to higher education. The Government subsidises training costs at different levels according to the age of the apprentice (fully covering the costs for 16-18 year-olds) and employers can opt to use external providers to deliver all of this training if required and deal with all the administration.

There are also a number of recent developments which make apprenticeships more attractive to business. The diversity of roles has increased from areas like manufacturing and engineering, to the extent that there are now over 200 frameworks available in roles such as ICT, Finance and business administration. While there are not currently many PR apprentices, there are some examples in 2011 Bentley Motors announced they would be recruiting an apprentice PR officer<sup>54</sup>. Core skills which in the criteria might include office administration and communications skills.

Apprenticeships are also a key focus for the coalition government, which has invested increasing resources in this area, including an additional £1.4bn in 2011-12<sup>55</sup>. Also, employers who use apprenticeships increasingly cite their value – in a 2009 National Survey of Employers by the National Apprenticeship Service, 77% of firms with apprentices thought this improved their competitiveness and found that 76% thought it improved their overall productivity<sup>56</sup>.

In the last couple of years, companies such as HSBC, Accenture, Norton Rose, and Royal Sun Alliance have all decided to take on apprentices as a way of trying to access a more socially diverse pool of talent than their traditional graduate recruitment reaches. This also reflects a re-thinking of approaches to recruitment in the light of changes to Higher Education, where the introduction of high tuition fees, is likely to increase the number of students looking for alternative routes. Within the industry, Edelman UK has launched an Apprentice Scheme for its 2012 recruitment programme. The company is changing the structure of the scheme by opening up its talent development programme – formerly its Graduate Scheme – to all entrants. The scheme sees criteria weightings modified, to place far less emphasis on academic qualifications and instead focus on writing skills, work experience and passion for PR.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

PRCA to work with the larger member companies to identify opportunities for apprentices and agree a target.

- PRCA to meet with the National Apprenticeship Service and disseminate guidance on Apprenticeships to member companies by July 2012.
- PRCA to support larger members to recruit apprentices, assess successes and make recommendations about turning this into a credible route into the industry – PRCA to evaluate by January 2013.

---

<sup>53</sup>[http://www.bitc.org.uk/workplace/diversity\\_and\\_inclusion/race/rfo\\_riei\\_toolkit.html](http://www.bitc.org.uk/workplace/diversity_and_inclusion/race/rfo_riei_toolkit.html)

<sup>54</sup>[http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/About-Us/~/\\_/link.aspx?\\_id=EEA46155DC804095A5A729591A49779D&\\_z=z](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/About-Us/~/_/link.aspx?_id=EEA46155DC804095A5A729591A49779D&_z=z)

<sup>55</sup><http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1354420/Vince-Cable-100-000-new-apprenticeships-2014-1-4bn-drive.html#ixzz1cMyDpV1n>

<sup>56</sup><http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Employers/The-Benefits.aspx>

---

## 5 Flexible working to improve staff retention and maintain a diverse workforce

### In this section we consider:

1. What do we mean by flexible working
2. People looking for flexible working
3. Best practice guidance and developing flexible working policies
4. Welcoming disabled people to the industry

An understanding of employee needs is vital for companies wanting to improve staff retention and to create and maintain a diverse workforce. Flexible working is a key part of creating a modern workplace and it is important to realise the benefits for the employer as well as employees. In addition companies need to ensure that they have human resources policies that are in writing and updated in line with current law.

In particular companies need to ensure that the way they treat their staff is fair and non-discriminatory. This means thinking in advance about how the company might respond to employee requests relating to personal matters as well as having awareness of the needs of disabled people at interview stage and in work and also allocating budget to cover possible adjustments that may be required.

In this chapter we seek to set out the key attributes of a flexible workplace as well as looking at some of the steps that companies can take to improve their disability awareness.

### 1. What do we mean by flexible working?

Traditionally, flexible working was seen as offering part-time options, so a reduced number of working days. Increasingly, flexible working options have increased, particularly with flexible start and finish times. Flexible working may include:

#### a: Working remotely

Virtual or remote working whether that's from home full time; from home part-time and in the office part-time; or from other remote locations. It can also be regular and contractual, or irregular and informal. This can be beneficial for businesses with a geographically disparate workforce.

#### b: Flexible hours

Flexible hours schemes offer alternative working-hour patterns than deviate from the standard 9 to 5 that many employees are contracted to work. In the UK parents of children under the age of 17 and carers have the statutory right to request flexible hours and have their application seriously considered, and if rejected it must be for good business reasons.

Options for flexible hours arrangements can include: compressed hours, staggered hours, term-time working, annualised hours or job sharing.

#### c: Part-time working

Part-time working allows for a shorter working week, so either a reduced number of days per week, or patterns such as a nine day fortnight. Traditionally part-time working has been seen as the domain of students, working parents or the semi-retired. The recession as well as attitudes of millennial workers seeking a different work life balance has meant that people are increasingly either turning to, or requesting part-time working. Job sharing is also an option here.

### 2. People looking for flexible working

#### a: Parents

##### Working mothers:

According to the PRCA Census, 64% of the PR workforce is female, yet this is not reflected at Board Director/Partner level, which is still male dominated. It's not the practical considerations of having a child that is always the main driver, there may also be cultural pressures for a change in lifestyle or a desire to move away from such a pressurised style of work.

As a result, more women in PR are finding alternative ways to work, such as freelancing. They are also starting their own agencies which practice flexible working. However, relatively small changes and a flexible attitude can have disproportionately positive results for the individual, the client and the business, as described in the case studies below.

#### INDUSTRY CASE STUDY

M – Has a 18 month old – and works 3 days per week in a large international agency in London .

##### Why do you work flexibly?

I didn't want to outsource my childcare. The company that I was working for when I went on Maternity leave didn't offer me flexible working when I wanted to return. They wanted me to come back full time, 5 days per week without the option for even working from home.

##### How easy/difficult did you find it to find an employer who would offer you flexible working?

I was anxious about approaching companies and asking for flexible working up front as I am conscious that in an agency environment the tradition has been for long-hours and full time work. In the end I was pleasantly surprised as I ended up with 3 job offers for 3 different companies. I was the one who ended up choosing my preferred company.

### How do your clients respond to your flexible working?

I have had no problems at all with clients. I was clear with them when I started that I would be working 3 days per week. They all understand. The benefits of an agency environment is that we work with a good team structure, the clients know that if I am not available that they can contact another member of the team. They're not ever left with no-one to contact.

### What advice would you give to others in your situation who wanted to work on a flexible basis?

Stick to your guns about what you want. You may have to compromise a little, on little things – but it is worth being firm about what the areas where you won't compromise.

#### Working fathers:

Fathers are starting to expect and demand more time with their families. Figures from the Fatherhood Institute<sup>57</sup> show that 21% of fathers of children under five are solely responsible for childcare at some stage during the working week, with 43% of fathers of school age children providing care before or after school. 23% of fathers said that their working arrangements caused tension and stress at home<sup>58</sup>.

Flexi-time and working from home are the most favoured options by men. But the culture of some workplaces can make it hard to change work patterns in this way. 49% of fathers said that some form of flexible working was available to them, predominantly flexitime, staggered start and finishing times and working from home. But only 30% of them used flexible hours. 36% of fathers admitted to worries that if they requested flexible working they would be seen as not committed to their job, and 44% felt that it would negatively impact their promotion prospects. While 51% of mothers said that part-time working was available to them, only 20% of fathers thought that they had that option<sup>60</sup>.

### INDUSTRY CASE STUDY

F has a 3 year old – he has worked flexibly for 18 months since his wife returned to work from maternity leave.

#### Why do you work flexibly?

There are a couple of reasons why I work flexibly. First, I get to spend some quality time with my son. I can do the nursery run, but also it gives me a chance to spend an entire day with him every now and then. I'm also a musician and a DJ and having the extra day allows me to arrange gigs and spend some time on my music as well.

#### How easy/difficult was it to start working flexibly?

I put in a request just prior to getting promoted. I knew that the promotion was coming, but was hesitant as I wasn't sure

what the reaction would be to my request. My company was great, they talked through the options for me and we settled on a 9 day fortnight. I'm pretty strict about ensuring that I get my day off – there has only been one occasion where I have been asked to come in for an important client meeting.

### How do your clients respond to your flexible working?

I have no problem with my clients at all. Some of them aren't even aware that I work part-time.

### What advice would you give to others in your situation who wanted to work on a flexible basis?

Go for it! The worst that your company can say is no, and even if they do – you've raised it and given them food for thought. I think it makes it easier if there are others in the company who have gone before and requested part time working.

#### b: Disabled people and people with health problems

Flexible working is an adjustment that may well benefit people who are unable to commit to a 9 to 5 work pattern due to disability or a long term health problem.

Although some PR agencies may offer flexible working elements and enticements such as duvet days and flexible start times, the practicalities of agency life may mean that employees often feel unable to take advantage of what's on offer.

Research does show that flexible working practices have a noticeable benefit on the health of the employee and helps to create a sense of wellbeing that benefits the employer through having a more engaged, motivated and productive workforce. Research by Wolfson Research institute<sup>61</sup> based at Durham University, found that mental health, blood pressure, and sleep patterns were better among people who could determine their own working hours.

#### c: People caring for a dependent

By 2050 there will be twice as many people over the age of 65 as under 18. Britain's aging society means that employers may find their best people have the extra commitment of being the main carer for an elderly relative<sup>62</sup>.

Becoming a carer is not usually a matter of choice, but necessity. Employees may find themselves having to travel away from home to care for their relative. They may find that the demand for their care gradually increases over time as illness or infirmity progresses, or becomes a sudden urgent need due to injury. A white paper by myfamilycare.co.uk also highlights the fact that many people don't realise that they are carers, they just find that their family commitments start to impact their working life<sup>63</sup>.

Businesses that are committed to employee wellbeing are already putting support mechanisms in place. Procter & Gamble have added a Backup Adult & Eldercare service to their parent support packages from the family support service My Family Care<sup>64</sup>. The award winning Centrica flexible working scheme seems to be more targeted at employees with caring responsibilities<sup>65</sup>.

**d: Portfolio workers and freelancers**

An increasing number of people want to have a portfolio career – one which may see them working in a diverse range of roles for different companies or for themselves. These individuals need intellectual and creative challenges and are not comfortable with doing the same old thing on a daily basis – in short, the daily “9 to 5 grind” just isn’t for them<sup>66</sup>. The recent PRCA Census showed that 55% of freelancers were aged 35 and over. Individuals cite a number of reasons for choosing to freelance, but the main reason is usually the ability to have more control over their work and how it fits into their lives. PRWeek has recognised the importance of freelancers through featuring profiles for this category of worker.

**e: Under 30s**

Under 30s (Millennials/Gen Y) often have a different work ethic to their managers. They have been raised with mobile technology and understand that this enables them to be always connected, in and out of the office. In 2010 a study commissioned by Orange<sup>67</sup> showed that 53% of graduate respondents expected to work out of the office or outside traditional office hours, with 69% of them saying it was important to them. In addition, 45% expected to be able to access work files and emails remotely.

**f: Over 50s and those seeking a flexible retirement**

The 2011 PRCA Census revealed that 43% of individuals working in the PR industry are in the 25-34 age group, and the smallest age group were those aged 55 and over (5%). The industry may be attracting young talent – but it is losing its most senior and experienced counsellors.

Agencies, which tend towards a younger workforce, employ 4% of over 55s, and in-house 5%. This compares very poorly with the economy as a whole with 25% of the workforce aged 50-64.

A comparatively large 22% of freelancers are over 55 years of age (33% of freelancers are aged between 45 and 54). This demonstrates that these individuals are still earning their living through PR, but they are considerably less likely to be contributing to industry knowledge or mentoring younger PROs within an agency setting. At a time when economic and pension pressures mean that older workers often need to continue to supplement their incomes and

continue working beyond retirement age, enlightened employers can benefit from this high value cohort.

**INDUSTRY CASE STUDY**

Mike works one day per week for a global consultancy.

‘Like many people who have been in our industry for some time (more than 40 years in my case) we feel we have a good deal of knowledge that still has value but we are also looking at reducing our time commitment and also, to be honest, wanting to avoid the exertions of early morning and late evening commuting. I have been able to gradually reduce my commitment from the usual 5-7 days a week by stages to 50 or so days a year. It has worked well for me and I’m grateful to have had the support of my company in doing this.

For this to work, I believe that any ‘older’ employee working in our business does need to be flexible and not work in a rigid time structure. Flexibility works both ways. I am happy to work flexibly (some days more than others and vice versa), switching the days I am in the office and so on. There’s certainly real satisfaction in continuing to play a role without the pressures of relentless deadlines – or concerns about company hierarchies and promotion prospects. If it’s handled sensibly on both sides everyone wins and hopefully it also gives a sense to younger employees that it is possible to continue in the industry well past the assumed sell-by date’.

58% of people in their 50s and 60s want to continue working after the age of 65, with 10% not wanting to retire at all<sup>68</sup>.

In other examples of best practice, ASDA<sup>69</sup> has removed any reference to nominal retirement age and treats older workers like every other employee.

Part of Innocent’s philosophy is to enable employees the time to pursue other interests, as they find that it helps them retain skilled individuals.

Happy Computers say that by offering flexible working hours they have been able to retain staff and keep turnover low in a sector where it is usually very high. All employees are able to determine their own work hours and job descriptions.

And the Environmental Services Department at Slough Borough Council had problems recruiting and retaining Environmental Health Officers, who spent about 70% of their job working outside the office but were still expected to return to their desks to do office based work. WiseWork<sup>70</sup> helped the council create a culture of trust around home working, which they now offer as an alternative to the financial incentives that other councils provide.

### 3. Best practice guidance and developing flexible working policies

The ACAS guide, Flexible working and work-life balance<sup>71</sup>, has a great deal of advice about policy development and implementation and provides a best practice check-list. Not all of the suggestions will suit all businesses, and the size and scope of the organisation will always be a factor in deciding which approaches are consistent with the business and organisation strategy.

As well as flexible working, ensuring that there is a consistent and clear policy that applies to time away from work for incidences such as compassionate leave, bereavement leave and jury service can help both employers and employees. All employees are entitled to reasonable time off without pay to deal with family emergencies. After all of the research and consultation has been done, a policy will need to be drafted, which should to include monitoring the time worked by employees. ACAS recommend several methods, but the most practical one for the PR industry is the timesheet.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

PRCA members to undertake an assessment of how they currently use flexible working and to evaluate which further elements (eg home-working, core hours, job share) can be adopted.

- Companies to look jointly with staff at formal and informal arrangements by July 2012.

The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard Audit to be amended to include an assessment within the People Management section on use of flexible working.

PRCA members to ensure they have written policies on maternity and paternity leave and pay.

- Shared with staff by July 2012, and for these to be available for candidates to see at recruitment stage.

PRCA members to consider part-time and job share options when making recruitment decisions.

- Companies to ensure by July 2012 that when an employee leaves or a new post is created that flexible options are looked at alongside the option of a full-time member of staff.

PRCA members to assess the possibility of implementing the introduction of elements of flexible working including core hours, with flexible start and finish times, with an option of one work from home day per fortnight available for staff.

- PRCA members to review and revise their human resources policies to include consideration of all elements of flexible working, by January 2013.

PRCA members to ensure they have a consistent and clear policy that applies to time away from work for incidences such as compassionate leave, bereavement leave and jury service.

- PRCA members to also hold clear guidelines for staff during periods of ill health and for attending GP, counselling and hospital appointments.
- Policies to be in place by July 2012.

<sup>57</sup>pg.4, Fathers, Families and Work, EHRC, [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/research/41\\_wb\\_fathers\\_family\\_and\\_work.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/41_wb_fathers_family_and_work.pdf)

<sup>58</sup>pg.9, Fathers, Families and Work, EHRC, [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/research/41\\_wb\\_fathers\\_family\\_and\\_work.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/41_wb_fathers_family_and_work.pdf)

<sup>59</sup>pg.10, Fathers, Families and Work, EHRC, [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/research/41\\_wb\\_fathers\\_family\\_and\\_work.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/41_wb_fathers_family_and_work.pdf)

<sup>60</sup>pg.10, Fathers, Families and Work, EHRC, [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/research/41\\_wb\\_fathers\\_family\\_and\\_work.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/41_wb_fathers_family_and_work.pdf)

<sup>61</sup><http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/7250150/Flexible-working-is-good-for-health-as-well-as-family-review.htm>

<sup>62</sup>[http://www.myfamilycare.co.uk/download\\_files/Adult-and-Eldercare-Employers-Guide.pdf](http://www.myfamilycare.co.uk/download_files/Adult-and-Eldercare-Employers-Guide.pdf)

<sup>63</sup>[http://www.myfamilycare.co.uk/download\\_files/Adult-and-Eldercare-Employers-Guide.pdf](http://www.myfamilycare.co.uk/download_files/Adult-and-Eldercare-Employers-Guide.pdf)

<sup>64</sup>[http://www.myfamilycare.co.uk/download\\_files/Case-Study-Client-002-PG.pdf](http://www.myfamilycare.co.uk/download_files/Case-Study-Client-002-PG.pdf)

<sup>65</sup><http://www.centrica.com/index.asp?pageid=139>

<sup>66</sup><http://www.bl.co.uk/pdf/Article%20-%20Quit.pdf>

<sup>67</sup><http://www.itpro.co.uk/625585/graduates-expect-flexible-working>

<sup>68</sup><http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5019568.stm>

<sup>69</sup>pg.7, Flexible Retirement: A Snapshot of Large Employers' Initiatives, Department of Work and Pensions, <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/reports2005-2006/agepos25.pdf>

<sup>70</sup>[http://www.wisework.co.uk/recruitment\\_slough\\_bc.html](http://www.wisework.co.uk/recruitment_slough_bc.html)

<sup>71</sup><http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=661>

---

#### 4. Welcoming disabled people to the industry

##### **‘Access to Work’**

‘Access to Work’ (ATW) is a Government scheme which supports disabled people to take up and retain paid employment by helping with payments for aids, adaptations and support so disabled people can work effectively. Support includes specialist equipment, help with travel, support workers. It is paid where the employee requires support or adaptations beyond those “reasonable adjustments” which an employer is legally obliged to provide under the Equality Act 2010. ATW also provides to employers on reasonable adjustments.

In 2009/10 Access to Work supported over 37,000 people to keep or get employment. A study in 2002 (Thornton and Corden `evaluating the impact of access to work’) found that 45% of customers would be out of work but for the support that they receive through ATW.

However whilst some larger companies and public bodies use ATW, smaller companies and many disabled people themselves are not aware of it.

The PRCA should promote Access to Work amongst its members. Working with the DWP a targeted campaign to the PR industry could be developed which outlines its value to disabled individuals and employers.

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Information on Access to Work to be made available to PRCA members, and the PRCA to explore with the DWP a PR campaign around Access to Work aimed at the PR industry.

- PRCA to seek meeting with the DWP to input into this work by March 2012.
- Commission to draft a short briefing on Access to Work tailored to the PR industry and distribute to members by July 2012.



---

## 6 Conclusion

**There is clearly a long way to go in opening up the PR industry to a broader intake of talent. We hope that the recommendations made in this report will enable practical changes to be made quickly, though the impact may take longer to emerge.**

This report has shown that there are specific challenges in reforming graduate entry, introducing flexible working and increasing the numbers of disabled people, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and other underrepresented groups in PR.

However, what has also come through in the report is that there are a number of examples of good practice where companies are making a difference, not only because it makes sense for their employees but because it helps their bottom line.

It is imperative that the PR industry embraces the equality agenda, shares best practice and delivers solutions which result in a more accessible and representative sector in the future, better able to serve our clients' needs. In particular, making full use of existing guidance and legislation, such as the Equality Act, provides us with a clear way forward to make recruitment and working practices fairer.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

PRCA to respond to each recommendation together with an action plan by March 2012. PRCA to conduct an audit in a year's time to review how companies are meeting the recommendations, share examples of good practice and provide guidance to companies which are lagging behind.

- PRCA to conduct audit in January 2013.

## 7 Summary of recommendations

### SECTION 2 – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1. PRCA member companies to endorse the Guiding Principles, disseminate them to all staff, and commence a programme with a staff working group to embed the principles into practice, and implement the recommendations made in this report. PRCA member companies should enhance their understanding of the business and ethical case for diversity through training where needed.**

### SECTION 3 – THE CURRENT STATE OF THE WORKFORCE AND THE CASE FOR CHANGE

- 2. PRCA member companies to ensure that opportunities for media commentary are offered to diverse staff within the company in order to reflect a wider range of talent amongst media spokespeople.**
  - PRCA members to review which staff are currently acting as media commentators in sector press, and ensure staff from under-represented groups are put forward in future by July 2012.
  - PRCA to develop a diversity database of staff from under-represented groups in member companies for commenting in trade media by July 2012.
- 3. PRCA to share the Commission's report and recommendations with PR trade media, including the detailed research compiled by Dr Lee Edwards and the presentation of the industry working group.**
  - PRCA Communications Department in ongoing dialogue with journalists in the trade media, should reinforce the need for inclusion of under-represented groups in their publications.
- 4. PRCA and PR Week to consider an industry award for a company or individual which excels in promoting diversity.**
  - PRCA to action by July 2012.

### SECTION 4 – RECRUITING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

- 5. PRCA to draft specific guidelines for member companies on the recruitment and employment of PR interns. All PRCA members should limit internships to last no longer than 3 months.**
  - Guidelines to adhere to best practice – for instance ensuring full line management, structured training, exit interviews, and draw on the CIPD's guide Internships that Work: A Guide for Employers<sup>72</sup> (December 2009)

and the guide published by government through the BIS Collaborative Forum on Fair Access to the Professions, Common Best Practice Code for High-Quality Internships<sup>73</sup> (July 2011).

- PRCA to publish guidelines by July 2012.
- 6. PRCA to develop an online hub dedicated to internship opportunities in member companies. Each advertisement must comply with the minimum requirements with an overview of the application process, job description, Competencies, duration and remuneration; and companies must adhere to the PRCA internship guideline before they will be hosted on the site.**
    - PRCA to implement by July 2012.

**PRCA to support InternsAware and Internocracy in any campaigns they undertake recommending to websites such as W4MP that they should not advertise unpaid internships in private sector companies.**

- 7. PRCA members should pay their interns at least the National Minimum Wage and ideally pay the Living Wage (or London Living Wage as applicable).**
  - PRCA members to implement by December 2012.
  - Members to sign the PRCA Intern's Campaign pledge by July 2012.
  - PRCA to advise other industry umbrella groups representing businesses, charities and in-house PR to follow suit.
- 8. PRCA members should clearly set out their internship and graduate recruitment policies on their website. As a minimum, this information should include an overview of the application process, job description, competencies, duration and remuneration.**
  - PRCA members to implement by December 2012.
- 9. PRCA members to offer to pay travel expenses for candidates attending internship interviews.**
  - PRCA members to implement by December 2012.
- 10. PRCA Consultancy Management Standard Audit to be amended to include an assessment within the People Management section on intern procedures, management and guidelines, to ensure that consultancies are taking steps to implement the recommendations in this report.**
  - PRCA to adapt CMS by December 2012.

- 
- 11. PRCA to undertake an audit in December 2012 to assess the impact on recruitment of new interns.**
- 12. PRCA members to assess and monitor the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of their workforce and consider introducing diversity internship placements.**
- PRCA members to identify which groups are underrepresented in their workforce and consider introducing programmes to challenge this by December 2012.
  - PRCA to share with member companies specific guidelines and advice on recruiting for diversity internships by December 2012.
- 13. PRCA members to establish and promote an online “match-making” mentoring programme to support candidates from diverse backgrounds to understand the industry and entry routes.**
- PRCA to identify existing mentoring organisations and develop links to support the development of a “match-making” mentoring programme by July 2012.
- 14. PRCA to pilot a scheme approaching 10 universities with high BME populations and / or lower socio economic populations, offering industry representatives to attend their 2012 career fairs to explain careers in PR and entry routes.**
- PRCA to action in 2012.
- 15. PRCA to work with Disability Alliance to explore the viability of a programme targetting disabled people in Higher Education Institutions, by offering industry representatives to attend their 2012 career fairs to explain careers in PR and entry routes.**
- PRCA to action in 2012.
- 16. PRCA to host a session of disability awareness training, in particular focusing on employment and recruitment. The PRCA should also recommend training to the industry and PR recruitment companies as a matter of course.**
- PRCA to identify a supplier of training and work with them to deliver a training day tailored for the PR industry. All PRCA members should be entitled to send one member of staff on a complimentary basis. Offer course and send information about suppliers out to members by July 2012.
- 17. PRCA members to amend their application forms and recruitment processes in line with best practice on accessibility.**
- PRCA to circulate a template form by July 2012.
- 18. The PRCA should approach Disability Alliance regarding an information campaign to widen access to the industry, by identifying and highlighting the role of disabled role models in the sector and aiming the campaign at undergraduates, graduates and other entry level candidates.**
- PRCA Board to discuss ideas by July 2012.
- 19. PRCA members to assess their current use of advertising in relation to reaching diverse groups.**
- PRCA companies to look at advertising strategy and requirements by December 2012, and then implementing alternative strategies in 2013.
- 20. PRCA members to review interview processes to assess flexibility in meeting the needs of diverse groups.**
- PRCA member to review by December 2012, and adopt alternative strategies if needed from 2013.
- 21. PRCA members to challenge their recruitment partners to demonstrate how they attract diverse candidates.**
- PRCA members to implement by March 2012.
- 22. PRCA to work with the larger member companies to identify opportunities for apprentices and agree a target.**
- PRCA to meet with the National Apprenticeship Service and disseminate guidance on Apprenticeships to member companies by July 2012.
  - PRCA to support larger members to recruit apprentices, assess successes and make recommendations about turning this into a credible route into the industry – PRCA to evaluate by January 2013.
- 
- <sup>72</sup>[http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A12DBDE1-5AA3-41FF-BB3A-0EE89EB31629/0/Internships\\_that\\_work.pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A12DBDE1-5AA3-41FF-BB3A-0EE89EB31629/0/Internships_that_work.pdf)
- <sup>73</sup><http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/higher-education/docs/C/11-1068-common-best-practice-code-for-quality-internships.pdf>

---

## **SECTION 5 – FLEXIBLE WORKING TO IMPROVE STAFF RETENTION AND MAINTAIN A DIVERSE WORKFORCE**

### **23. PRCA members to undertake an assessment of how they currently use flexible working and to evaluate which further elements (eg home-working, core hours, job share) can be adopted.**

- Companies to look jointly with staff at formal and informal arrangements by July 2012.

### **24. The PRCA Consultancy Management Standard Audit to be amended to include an assessment within the People Management section on use of flexible working.**

### **25. PRCA members to ensure they have written policies on maternity and paternity leave and pay.**

- Shared with staff by July 2012, and for these to be available for candidates to see at recruitment stage.

### **26. PRCA members to consider part-time and job share options when making recruitment decisions.**

- Companies to ensure by July 2012 that when an employee leaves or a new post is created that flexible options are looked at alongside the option of a full-time member of staff.

### **27. PRCA members to assess the possibility of implementing the introduction of elements of flexible working including core hours, with flexible start and finish times, with an option of one work from home day per fortnight available for staff.**

- PRCA members to review and revise their human resources policies to include consideration of all elements of flexible working, by January 2013.

### **28. PRCA members to ensure they have a consistent and clear policy that applies to time away from work for incidences such as compassionate leave, bereavement leave and jury service.**

- PRCA members to also hold clear guidelines for staff during periods of ill health and for attending GP, counselling and hospital appointments.
- Policies to be in place by July 2012.

### **29. Information on Access to Work to be made available to PRCA members, and the PRCA to explore with the DWP a PR campaign around Access to Work aimed at the PR industry.**

- PRCA to seek meeting with the DWP to input into this work by March 2012.
- Commission to draft a short briefing on Access to Work tailored to the PR industry and distribute to members by July 2012.

## **SECTION 6 – CONCLUSION**

### **30. PRCA to respond to each recommendation together with an action plan by March 2012. PRCA to conduct an audit in a year's time to review how companies are meeting the recommendations, share examples of good practice and provide guidance to companies which are lagging behind.**

- PRCA to conduct audit in January 2013.

---

## 8 Acknowledgements

**This report was commissioned by the PRCA and written by the following people:**

**John Lehal** (Insight Public Affairs),  
Chair of the Access Commission

**Working group on internships and diversity:**

Lead – Poonam Arora (Insight Public Affairs)  
Rishi Bhattacharya (Edelman)  
Dr Nicky Garsten (University of Greenwich)  
Sandy Lindsay (Tangerine)  
Robert Minton-Taylor (Leeds Business School)  
Gina Ramson-Williams (Weber Shandwick )  
Sarah Stimson (Taylor Bennett Foundation)

**Working group on flexible working:**

Lead – Sarah Barrett (Ketchum Pleon)  
Leah Bryant (Grayling)  
Kate Hartley (Carrot Communications)  
Katie Pearce (CMG Group)

**Working group on disability:**

Lead – Dan Murphy (Remploy)  
Nick Bason (Bowel Cancer UK)  
Robert Khan (Law Society)

**Working group on fair recruitment:**

Lead – Jane Fordham (GolinHarris)  
Magda Bulska (Ignite)  
Bieneosa Ebite (Ignite and Bright Star PR)

**Working group on perceptions in the media:**

Lead – Dr Lee Edwards (Leeds Business School)  
Mike Morgan (Red Consultancy)  
Danny Rogers (Haymarket)

Our thanks also go to the team at PRCA for recognising the importance of action and asking for our support. Francis Ingham, Richard Ellis & Tom Hawkins have also provided ongoing support to the working groups in the development of the report.

Furthermore, we would like to thank Genevieve Bach at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Beck Heath at Internocracy and Gus Baker at Interns Aware for sharing their advice and expertise.

## 9 Appendix

### Research on portrayal of the PR industry in trade publications

We conducted research to look at how the face of the industry is reflected in trade publications. The following analysis demonstrates a real lack of diversity particularly amongst senior staff and industry experts.

#### a: Analysis of PRWeek

##### PRWeek

PRWeek covers industry stories, campaign news, awards and profiles. Most news stories focus on account wins, pitches and appointments in the industry.

For our research we undertook analysis of 18 issues of PRWeek (structure and content), as the primary trade publication for the industry, plus the PR Powerbook, 2011. For our study 1,334 stories were analysed across the 18 issues. The story type most frequently covered was related to the movement of money, people and work within the industry as well as campaign outlines.

The focus on industry news, combined with the feature-based articles (practitioner profiles, best practice features, reputation surveys), makes visible the expertise of the profession and the status of its 'winning' consultancies and individuals. The consultancies and individuals that are featured in the news are simultaneously presented (alongside others equally successful) as authoritative when they are used as sources of opinion on others' activities and on campaign executions featured in the magazine.

The people and organisations featured are selected on the basis of their significance in the industry. David Singleton (Associate Editor) noted that the people quoted may also be on a journalist's list of contacts, and therefore some of the first people given the opportunity to be featured.

The visual depiction of the industry consists in the main of abstract pictures relating to stories (e.g. of buildings or products), as well as pictures of practitioners. Table 1 indicates two dimensions of diversity that can be observed through the pictures (gender and ethnicity). No practitioners with a disability were depicted; sexuality and religious affiliation were not revealed through the practitioner pictures. Of the women depicted, 26% were depicted as members of a group (e.g. in shots of award-winning PR teams), as compared to only 14% of men depicted in this way. All non-white women were in group shots.

The higher prevalence of men pictured on their own corresponds with the more frequent use of men as expert commentators on news and features in PRWeek, and reinforces their over-representation in management. This pattern is also reflected in the PR Powerbook 2011, where the breakdown is 31% female / 69% male; 2.5% non-white / 97.5% white.

PRACTITIONER VISUALS	WHITE	NON-WHITE	TOTALS (PICTURES, NOT INDIVIDUALS)
MALE	398	19 (8 SEPARATE INDIVIDUALS IN 2010 SAMPLE)	417
FEMALE	175	12	187
TOTAL PICTURES	573	31	604
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL	94.87%	5.13%	

#### b: Interviews

We conducted three interviews for our study, with David Singleton (PRWeek), Daney Parker (PR Moment) and Helen Dunne (CorpComm magazine).

##### Why particular professionals are featured

The three editors interviewed were initially asked to describe their newsgathering processes. All the editors had a list of contacts who they would regularly call in relation to stories, for opinion and comment. Practitioners were on this list either because they had been a source of previous stories, because the journalist had used them as a source for comment previously, through networking, or because they had been seen elsewhere making interesting comments.

Daney Parker pointed out that she did not know what the demographics were with her sources, because she engaged with them on email. Helen Dunne also noted that social media such as twitter and blogs were also useful guides to who might have interesting comment (numbers of followers were useful, and she and her staff used tweetdeck to 'monitor our favourites').

##### How stories are chosen

All editors also regularly received press releases, which were accepted or rejected depending on their newsworthiness. David Singleton noted a series of news values that his team used to decide what should be included: current relevance, significance of practitioners, consultancies, accounts or clients involved [familiarity to the industry], controversy, financial size of the account / campaign, industry implications of the story. He also noted that negative and controversial stories were always more likely to be covered because they 'bring the news to life'. This news feed also can inform the features at times. The PRWeek team also had a number of daily / weekly meetings where the content of the daily web feed and the final running order of the magazine is decided.

PR Moment and CorpComm were more open to broader story suggestions, because they were not tied to a weekly news cycle. They were more driven by the editors' own interpretation of what was interesting (PR people trying to sell something was not regarded as acceptable), of current affairs and of industry trends that merited

---

attention. Daney Parker spoke about featuring ‘human’ issues to do with PR, rather than news (she also noted that she featured diversity and flexible working already, and had received quite a lot of response to the diversity feature – mainly from people pointing out their difference from the stereotypical norm, and highlighting the need to increase diversity).

### **Representation in the wider media**

In response to how the profession was represented in the media, the editors tended to agree that the profession was represented inaccurately in wider media, perhaps shallow (Daney Parker), ‘lightweight’ (David Singleton) and shadowy, working for particular interests rather than the wider good and focusing on high profile characters rather than ‘serious’ PR practitioners. This was particularly bad on TV (they noted Ab Fab and a recent episode of Waterloo Road as bad caricatures of PR). Helen Dunne noted in particular that the strategic end of PR work is perceived poorly and negative as ‘lobbying’. Daney Parker noted that when PR people were used as commentators on radio, a bit more balance tended to emerge. The lack of diversity was noted as well; the editors all said that the profession probably appeared to be white, middle class and dominated by men, because men tend to dominate at the senior level.

### **Representation in trade media**

The white, middle-class and male dominance of the profession’s presentation was also perceived to be an issue in the trade media. Here, where coverage tended to be more on financial achievement, rather than on strategy, or the background to different kinds of achievements, the industry also appeared rather narrow, and highly competitive. Daney Parker also noted that she focused on trying to have small agencies as sources as well as large agencies, since the ways they operate differ and small businesses are challenged differently because they are so close to the business, plus they are much more niche. In response to questions about how one might change the presentation of the industry to make it more diverse, the editors said that practitioners should be ready to get in touch and in particular, to speak out and be more controversial. All editors said the onus was on diverse practitioners putting themselves forward, since they chose from the pool that was available: ‘The more people from different backgrounds that put themselves forward, the more chance they have of getting picked’. They did not have time to think about diversity as a criteria for using people as commentators. They would be keen to have a wider range of views in their publications, but these needed to be both interesting and newsworthy. Helen Dunne felt the industry was actually quite accepting of different backgrounds in terms of sexuality and gender; part of the issue of the lack of ethnic minorities was put down to the lack of appeal of PR as a profession. ‘In the digital world the barriers to entry are much lower’ (Helen

Dunne) and this might help improve diversity in the future. Finally, the editors all commented that the trade media’s role was to report on the profession, to reflect the profession as it currently exists, and to communicate news and best practice. Dealing with the profession’s failings or problems was only relevant if they were newsworthy issues.

Implications for diversity in the representation of the profession in the media

### **a: Structure of publications**

The structure of the publications (and of PRWeek in particular, because it is heavily news-focused) does not leave much space to tackle industry issues like flexible working or diversity, since the focus is more on aspects of practice and current issues that are affecting the profession. There is relatively little journalistic impetus to actually examine these issues in-depth (they are relatively uncontroversial – most people agree something needs to be done, but exactly what is complicated and unclear).

In PRWeek, the news section is logically constructed in terms of industry sector, which makes journalistic sense. However, in some of the sectors people from diverse backgrounds may be even less likely to be represented than in the case of the industry norm (e.g. City & Corporate, or Public Affairs), so this in turn reduces the visibility of diversity.

### **b: Sources**

The editors use sources for comment and stories who are visible to them, opinionated and (for PRWeek) familiar and ‘significant’ in the industry. Practitioners engaged in social media, who clearly have an opinion on events and have the potential to be interesting and perhaps controversial, may have an advantage because of the importance of twitter as a source of intelligence about who thinks what in the industry. In addition, editors source contacts through networking (for Daney Parker, this networking occurred mainly online). Therefore practitioners who engage with events that bring them into contact with the publications are important.

The lack of diversity is to some extent related to the industry structure, in that more senior practitioners are used as sources, and white, middle-class men dominate at this level. These people are also more likely to be able to (and be invited to) attend networking events in the evenings or during the working day, which in turn makes them more likely to be used as a source.

### **c: Visual presentation**

The visual presentation of the profession tended to present it as white, gendered (with men at senior levels) and able-bodied. It is difficult to determine class, religion or sexuality from the visuals (there were no pictures of women who ‘cover’ in any of the publications). While the

---

limited information from a visual may disguise greater diversity than appears at first glance to be represented, this overall impression may still act as a barrier for practitioners who don't feel they 'fit' the norm.

**d: Improving diversity**

All editors agreed that improving diversity was important. Helen Dunne noted that this would probably come in part from more diverse people entering the profession – and so the self-presentation of the industry as a respectable and worthy career was crucial. The other editors also noted specifically that more practitioners from diverse backgrounds needed to put themselves forward as sources, since then the journalists would have more of them to choose from.

It seemed to be assumed that an increase in diversity in the presentation of the profession would automatically follow. However, it is worth bearing in mind that factors other than availability also determine whether a practitioner is used as a source. These include personal contact, level of controversy of the comment, size of the agency or organisation in which the person works. While current data isn't completely clear about how diversity is distributed across the profession, it may well be that people from minority backgrounds are less 'appealing' as sources when these other factors are considered (e.g. if they work primarily in small agencies, or are less senior, or specialise in a particular area that doesn't attract large campaigns or budgets).

That said, being visible on social media is likely to improve practitioners' chances of being visible and if they use social media to promote their own strong opinions about issues, they would perhaps improve their opportunities to be featured in the trade media.

Taking a lead by covering the 'topic' of diversity was not a popular option amongst editors unless it became an issue in itself, or associated with another issue (like internships) that was newsworthy.