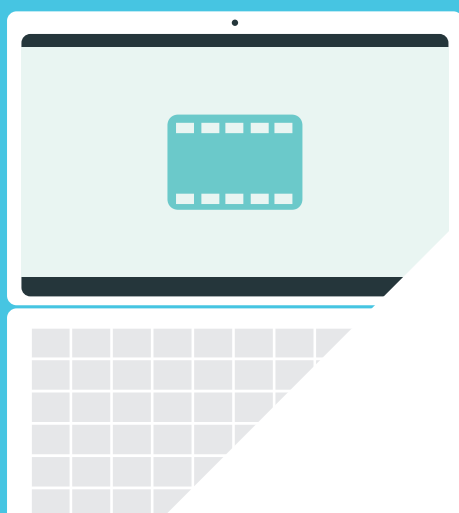


Access Tech: Tech for Diversity 2022 Roundtable

Tech London
Advocates & DCMS



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport



TECH
LONDON
ADVOCATES



Access Tech: Tech for Diversity Roundtable

INTRODUCTION

In June 2022, Tech London Advocates and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport convened a group of tech leaders to discuss best practice and solutions that can be rolled out at scale to make UK tech companies more diverse and inclusive.

The valuation of the UK's tech sector recently passed \$1 trillion, the third country after the US and China to have reached this milestone, and marking its position as a World leading tech ecosystem

There has been continued growth for British tech companies, and the UK's global reputation as a tech ecosystem. London Tech Week 2022 showcased the world-class tech companies across the UK reported record breaking levels of tech investment and number of tech unicorns.

However, whilst every other metric shows success, there's widespread recognition that the sector could be further boosted if the tech sector better represented the diversity of the UK

Amidst economic turbulence, there is a risk that tech companies are now less inclined to invest in D&I strategies, despite talent, people and the race for skills being more important than ever.

The roundtable was hosted by Russ Shaw CBE, founder of Global Tech Advocates and Nadine Dorries, Secretary of State for DCMS on the first day of London Tech Week. The purpose of the roundtable was:

- To bring British tech leaders and the government together to better understand the diversity and inclusion challenge facing British tech companies and to share the latest thinking around policies being implemented to address the issue.

This report outlines the key discussion points and conclusions from the roundtable.



Attendees



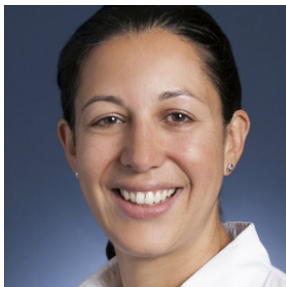
**Russ Shaw CBE, Founder,
Global Tech Advocates &
Tech London Advocates**



**Nadine Dorries, Secretary
of State for DCMS**



**Marie-Claire Fenech,
TLA Tech for disAbility**



**Priya Guha MBE,
Merian Ventures**



**Debbie Forster,
Tech Talent Charter**



**Grace Owolade-Coombes,
TLA Young Entrepreneurs**



**Flavilla Fongang, 3
Colours Rule & GTA
Black Women in Tech**



Lee Jones, Microsoft



Bina Mehta MBE, KPMG



Attendees



Mark Martin MBE,
Urban Teacher



Naomi Timperley,
Tech North Advocates



Sanghamitra Karra,
Morgan Stanley



Suki Fuller, Miribure &
TLA Women in Tech



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KEY FINDINGS

This was an important opportunity to talk directly to the Secretary of State and co-create solutions that can make a real difference.

It's evident that 'diversity' has a multifaceted meaning depending on who you ask. The tech sector is pioneering the next frontier of innovation – but inclusivity has not become synonymous with the industry's success.

The UK is in the throes of a skills crisis. Despite the £12 billion of investment into the sector in the first half of 2022, the sector is struggling to plug an ever-growing skills gap. Tapping into diverse talent pools around the UK is the answer to this.

It tends to be the same groups of people benefitting from the industry's prosperity. Despite the fact that the business case for diversity has been made and the advantages of fostering a more inclusive industry are evident, accessibility remains an issue.

One of the key learnings from the roundtable was around access to funding. The vast majority of investment capital falls into the hands of white males.

It was suggested that this is because investors tend to invest in those that they see likeness in. There's a lack of grassroots representation in the industry. Women, those from BAME or LGBTQ communities and those with disabilities are not adequately represented.

Support pathways and networks are crucial to breaking down these barriers. The word "tech" in itself can be deemed as a barrier. It's an intimidating and often isolating term – to many, tech seems to be all about coding and it puts people off breaking into a career in the industry.

We shouldn't be teaching computer science to every student with an end goal for them to become a programmer. We should teach it to young people so that they can understand the world around them.

Education is imperative. The national curriculum is not diverse. We need to apply digital skills to real world problems – and view the tech industry as a lens through which we can solve issues in local communities. Not necessarily because tech is inherently good, but because the industry is desperate for talent.

This roundtable takes place during a challenging time for many across the country. There was a sentiment that we should capitalise on the pockets of growth that exist – and the opportunity in the tech industry is a prime example of this.

It's important to remember that white males have an important role to play in this force for change. Whilst we want to ringfence 'safe spaces' for minority groups we also need to make sure that white men are included in the debate so that they are part of the solution and not just the problem.

There are inequalities across the UK in funding from private investment. Northeast, the East of England, the Northwest gets very little. There are cities across the country - Durham, Newcastle, Sheffield, Norwich, Bradford – that are home to people that feel excluded from opportunities witnessed elsewhere across the UK.

There are over 60 million people in the country – and we need to ensure that everyone is welcome.



Access Tech: Tech for Diversity Roundtable

KEY FINDINGS

Priya Guha, Merian Ventures

“For me, it’s about education. We need to make it not a choice between science and arts. We need to create a curriculum where kids can do both.”

Debbie Forster, Tech Talent Charter

“What I love about what is working in this room, is that we have the likes of KPMG and Microsoft, sharing what they’re doing with other smaller companies – so we can then spread this to the SMEs and startups. So, the best practice is there. We need to get behind it and start holding everyone else to that standard.”

Grace Owolade-Coombes, TLA Young Entrepreneurs

“Where is the grassroots representation when you’re making those decisions? In senior levels in those institutions, where are black female leaders? Because if they were there maybe things would be different.”

Naomi Timperley, Tech North Advocates

“This is all about making sure that we’ve got people from the industry going into the colleges, and actually working in the colleges.”

Mark Martin MBE, Urban Teacher

“I think all of us would agree the UK has the great opportunity to make this the most innovative and diverse place in the world. But in order to do that, I think the government needs to support more in terms of how we bring more culture capital into tech.”

Marie-Clare Fenech, TLA for disAbility

“How do we communicate with them? How do we bring them in? It’s embarrassing, we’re not really sure how to do it. It’s a huge loss in the tech industry because disabled people navigate the world in extraordinary ways, that creativity is exactly what tech is all about. One of the areas that I’ve found very, very helpful is disability awareness training.”

Sanghamitra Karra, Morgan Stanley

“So you tend to invest in people who look like you. So use it, get more investors, collaborate on ethnic minorities or other diversity into the other side. And one of the things that we’re seeing is actually emerging fund managers who happened to be looking at funds that are very specific to such ethnic minorities.”

Suki Fuller, TLA Women in Tech

“We all know the data exists. So we don’t need to rehash that. We’re just going to get into analysis paralysis. Data is already there. Move on. Integration from ideation is the thing that needs to happen.”

Bina Mehta, KPMG

“You get a lot of resilience in the entrepreneurs who have come through a diverse background. And so actually investing in them is good business.”

Flavilla Fongang, 3 Colours Rule & GTA Black Women in Tech

“Inclusion is not an act of kindness, its good business. People come together.. We can bridge the gap so: framework, education, telling stories and sending stories.”

Lee Jones, Microsoft

“If you’re a young person, and you don’t see leaders that identify as LGBTQ, we look around and think: Where are the leaders that represent me? They’re going to think this is an additional barrier too. From a big organisation perspective, it’s very much a case of going into different areas and being visible.”