

# #DifferenceMakers

Inspirational people making a difference





# Introducing the Difference Makers

Welcome to the first issue of our Difference Makers report, a celebration of extraordinary individuals who are making a significant impact in business and society. This report highlights the inspiring stories of those who have gone above and beyond to make a difference in the world.

We feature a diverse array of *difference makers*, each with a unique story. For instance, Robbie Lyle, founder and group CEO at GFN (Global Fan Network), has revolutionised football fan engagement and built the largest football fan network in the world. Graeme Farrow, chief creative and content officer at Canolfan Mileniwm Cymru, has transformed the Wales Millennium Centre into a vibrant hub of creativity, fostering collaboration and innovation. Sophia Warner, BEM, a Paralympian and founder of the Superhero Series, has broken barriers in inclusive sports, creating events that are accessible to all. Living with HIV for 34 years, Mike Phillips has dedicated his life to driving social change and empowering others through education and advocacy. Lastly, our very own Marcia La Rose has been breaking down barriers and leading initiatives that drive both business success and societal impact.



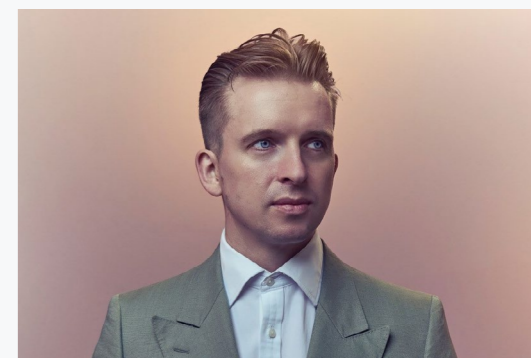
These stories, and many more within this report, serve as a testament to the incredible impact that *difference makers* can have. I hope you find inspiration in their journeys and enjoy the read!

**Nan Williams**  
Group chief executive



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## Robbie Lyle: the voice of football fans

Robbie Lyle is an entrepreneur and media personality who has built the world's fan broadcaster. He is best known for being the face of Arsenal fan channel, AFTV, which is now just one of many Global Fan Network channels. Robbie is a name synonymous with football fan culture who has revolutionised the way fans engage with the sport making him a true *difference maker*.

Robbie's journey began with a simple idea: to create a space where Arsenal fans could share their opinions on the club. Inspired by a friend's boxing channel, he saw the potential for a similar platform in football. Despite having no prior experience in filming or editing, Robbie's passion for Arsenal and his determination to give fans a voice drove him to start AFTV. Armed with a borrowed camera and microphone, he began interviewing fans outside the Emirates Stadium.

The response was overwhelming. Initially sceptical, fans quickly embraced the opportunity to share their views. Robbie's authentic approach resonated with the football community and AFTV rapidly gained popularity. Today, it is one of the most influential fan-led platforms, with millions of viewers worldwide. Robbie has even bigger ambitions and wants GFN to become a major player in the media industry, valued at £100 million and with significant influence globally.

Robbie's work has taken him across the globe, connecting with Arsenal supporters in diverse locations. From Nigeria to Ghana, his interactions with fans have been nothing short of extraordinary. In Nigeria, a watch party organised by AFTV saw an incredible turnout showcasing the passion of Arsenal fans in the region. Similarly, in



Robbie Lyle, founder & group CEO at GFN (Global Fan Network)

Ghana, Robbie witnessed the dedication of nearly a thousand fans who gathered to watch a match on a big screen. These experiences have highlighted the unifying power of football and the global reach of AFTV.

Beyond football, Robbie is deeply involved in charitable work. His recent walk across London's football stadiums for Prostate Cancer UK raised significant funds as well as awareness for the cause. He was inspired to do the walk by the alarming statistics about prostate cancer, particularly among Black men – and he is committed to doing more.

Robbie's impact goes well beyond the football pitch. His dedication to giving fans a voice and his philanthropic efforts make him a true *difference maker*. Through AFTV, Robbie has transformed fan engagement and demonstrated the power of football to bring people together to drive positive change.



# Jo Loughran: the vanguard of age positivity



Jo Loughran, director, Beech Hill Consulting

Holding a degree in psychology and boasting a career spanning over two decades, Jo's path illustrates the strength of resilience and adaptability rather than following a linear trajectory.

Challenging stigma and discrimination have been the cornerstone of Jo's career for two decades. During her 18 years at Rethink Mental Illness, Jo has been the architect behind campaigns that challenge us to rethink our preconceived notions. This was the precursor to her passion for behaviour change campaigning.

Her latest endeavour with the Centre for Ageing Better, *Age Without Limits*, is a clarion call against the tide of ageism. It's a campaign that seeks not just to enlighten

but to ignite a societal shift in how we perceive ageing.

Jo's approach is both strategic and heartfelt. Targeting the 45-55 demographic, she is tapping into a group on the cusp of older age with social influence who can help create a new narrative around ageing. It's about dismantling stereotypes and developing an environment where later life is seen as full of opportunities.

The impact has been tangible. A quarter of adults (24%) have engaged with the campaign, finding it informative and thought-provoking. It has sparked conversations, challenged personal bias and shone a light on ageism's insidious nature. As Jo puts it, "we're not saying people won't experience limitations, but what we can change are the limitations imposed by negative attitudes to ageing."

Looking ahead Jo's vision is clear: "I want a society where ageing is not a barrier but a bridge to new horizons. It's about passion, advocacy, and tenacity." These are key elements that define her. In Jo's world, making a difference isn't just important, it's imperative.

As for inspiration? Jo nods to Ashton Applewhite, whose voice against ageism echoes through blog posts and TED talks. But Jo's real heroes are the unsung individuals who champion change in their everyday lives: "Those who understand that collective whispers can combine into a roar for justice".

Jo's advice for aspiring *difference makers* is simple: "Find your passion and follow it. Find others who share your values and work together to make a difference."







## Graeme Farrow: the champion of creativity



Graeme Farrow, chief creative and content officer at Canolfan Mileniwm Cymru | Wales Millennium Centre

Graeme Farrow's path into the arts wasn't straightforward. Growing up in Sunderland, he was more likely to be found on the football terraces than in a theatre. It was through his love of music, particularly live gigs, that he began to find the arts. After relocating to Belfast, he volunteered at a festival and worked nights at an independent cinema, immersing himself in the world of film and music. Within fifteen years he was running film and music projects.

Graeme's current role as the artistic director of the Wales Millennium Centre followed his tenure as executive producer for the UK's first City of Culture, Derry/Londonderry. He was drawn to the idea of building something lasting with a focus on creating a vibrant, creative enterprise that collaborates with artists, young people, and communities.

At the Wales Millennium Centre, Graeme is dedicated to promoting an environment

where creativity can flourish. This involves strategic planning, securing funding and reimagining spaces to be more than just evening performance venues. "We're trying to be more for the people in Wales - to be useful and exciting all day, every day. The goal is to make Wales a vibrant, creative nation that tells its story to the world."

One of Graeme's significant achievements is a series of new studios for young people which encompass theatre, radio, music and digital arts. Designed with input from young people, these spaces provide a rare opportunity for creative collaboration in a world that can often feel isolating. He is also excited about the potential new technology, like XR and AI, has in expanding storytelling possibilities and growing audiences.

Graeme believes that being a difference maker requires a clear vision, patience, and a willingness to collaborate. "Listening is so important when you're creating a space for reflection and new ideas. We're all about supporting positive change and making a difference to the community within our sphere of influence."

Admiring figures like American social practice installation artist Theaster Gates, Graeme is inspired by those who rebuild communities and support artists with transparency. He also draws inspiration from global figures like Iranian human rights activist Narges Mohammadi who fight for justice in challenging circumstances.

Graeme's goal is to make the Wales Millennium Centre one of the most dynamic creative spaces across the globe. A space which will thrive long after his tenure. His advice to aspiring *difference makers*? "We will achieve great things if we care less about who gets the credit."



# Sophia Warner: the inclusive sport superhero

Meet Sophia Warner, a dynamo in the world of sport who's been breaking barriers and redefining what it means to be an athlete.

Growing up in a sporty family, Sophia was always active. Her brother was a cross-country champion and Sophia was just as competitive.

Her first brush with disability sports didn't happen until she was 19 years old. Initially she was involved with swimming. Then she was effectively headhunted into athletics while running the London 10K. She would later shine in the Paralympics T35 (para classification for Cerebral Palsy track athletes) 100 and 200 metre sprints. But her path wasn't without its hurdles. Mainstream sports events were often a logistical nightmare for athletes with disabilities, and Sophia experienced this first hand.

Enter the Superhero Series, Sophia's brainchild and a game-changer in the world of inclusive sports. Frustrated by the lack of accessibility in mainstream events, she decided to create something where the answer was always "yes." "I never wanted to criticise other events," she says with a smile. "But there's no one-size-fits-all solution."



Sophia Warner BEM, Paralympian & founder of Superhero Series



The Superhero Series – a mass participation, multi-sport series - is all about fun, inclusivity, and breaking down barriers. Whether it's helping a visually impaired participant navigate the course or accommodating someone with autism who prefers not to attend live events, Sophia's mission was clear - make sport accessible to all, not just the Paralympians. "Superhero Series is like Tough Mudder for people who want to drink wine all week and still have fun on the weekend," she quips.

Sophia's role working at British Athletics taught her that real change often requires stepping outside the system. The Superhero Series was her answer, offering a platform where everyone, from those with feeding tubes to those with visual impairments, could participate without barriers. "Superhero Series was all about

overcoming what it was that was stopping someone from taking part in sport when they're an everyday superhero rather than a Paralympian."

Her creativity and determination have driven the success of the Superhero Series. Sophia believes that real change comes from lived experiences and a genuine purpose. "You need people with real purpose to drive change," she says. "When you have someone with purpose behind a change, it's going to happen."

For Sophia, being a *difference maker* means simplifying challenges and finding creative solutions. Her advice to others? "If you don't like something, rather than sitting there moaning about it, get up and do something about it yourself." It's something she's put into practice with fantastic results.





# Mike Phillips: the relentless advocate for change

Growing up in Wales, Mike's early years were a whirlwind of disruptive experiences that shaped his values and passion for justice.

As a teenager, Mike found solace in music and drama, rubbing shoulders with future stars like Russell T Davies and Michael Sheen whilst studying together at the West Glamorgan Youth Theatre. But life threw him a curveball when he was diagnosed HIV+ in his final year of drama school in 1990. Told he had only a year or two to live, Mike didn't just survive, he thrived and channelled his energy into driving social change.

Alongside his friend Martin, who sadly died aged just 27, Mike co-founded Cardiff Body Positive, a HIV charity with the bold mission of "kicking back against stigma and discrimination." His move from aspiring actor to HIV activist is a testament to his resilience and unwavering commitment to making a difference.

Fast forward to today and Mike is a freelance trainer, facilitator, consultant and coach. Since 2008, he's been on a mission to release potential through learning and development, working with charities and health & social care organisations. His focus is broad and includes EDI, dementia care, communication, management and leadership.

Mike's work is all about empowering others. Take the carer whose husband had dementia. After attending Mike's course, she went from nervous novice to delivering a standing-ovation-worthy speech at a major conference. Or the non-binary individual who shared their story in Mike's training, opening hearts and minds.



Mike Phillips, freelance trainer, facilitator, consultant and coach

For Mike, being a *difference maker* isn't about grand gestures, it's about those "magical, meaningful moments." The small, human connections that make a world of difference. Whether helping dementia care workers see their impact or encouraging leaders to embrace their values, Mike's ultimate goal is to create ripples of positive change.

In a world facing countless challenges, Mike Phillips stands as a beacon of hope and resilience. His message is clear: "We all have the potential to make a difference, no matter how small. So, let's celebrate our commonalities, respect our differences and strive to make the world a kinder place." Mike's story is a powerful reminder that every action, no matter how small, can contribute to a better future.



# Koray Camgöz: the PR industry reformer

Growing up in North London with a Muslim father and a Catholic mother, Koray Camgöz experienced a mix of cultural influences from his Turkish Cypriot and Irish heritage. This diverse family background, paired with the differing religious perspectives of Islam and Catholicism, instilled in him an early appreciation for embracing various, often opposing, viewpoints.

At 16, Koray witnessed the Iraq war unfold on Turkish television. He was struck by the stark contrast in how the war was portrayed by UK and US media versus the rest of the world. This ignited an interest in strategic communication and the power it has to shape public perception.

Koray's career in communications and PR spans more than 14 years, culminating in his recent appointment as chief executive of the Taylor Bennett Foundation. The foundation's mission is to encourage young people from diverse backgrounds to pursue careers in the industry. For Koray, leading an organisation that has such a profound impact on people's lives is a privilege.

He is acutely aware of the lack of diversity in the sector: "Despite the sector being predominately based in London, where nearly half the population is from an ethnic minority, nine out of ten professionals in PR are white. And 28 per cent of communications professionals attended private school, which is in stark contrast to the national average." Koray believes that shutting out diverse talent is not only morally wrong but also bad for business.

The Taylor Bennett Foundation's mission resonates deeply with Koray. When he entered the industry in 2011, he was struck



Koray Camgöz, CEO, Taylor Bennett Foundation

by how homogenous it was, instantly feeling he couldn't relate to any of the small talk or culture. He is determined to change this by cultivating an inclusivity that welcomes and empowers people from all backgrounds.

His goal is to make the communications industry a place where everyone feels they can belong and thrive. He emphasises the importance of active listening in the industry, advocating for a conscious effort to understand and reflect on diverse perspectives.

In today's world, Koray believes that being a *difference maker* is more important than ever. "The UK in 2024 shows that societal divisions are only deepening. I would urge everyone to make sure that the voices shaping our industry and its policies reflect the diversity of the people they serve."





# Lady Lucy French: the architect of dreams



Lady Lucy French, OBE, chief executive officer, Fleet Street Quarter and founder & co-chair of Never Such Innocence

Lady Lucy French is a trailblazer. She seamlessly combines two very different roles as chief executive officer of London's Fleet Street Quarter and founder & co-chair of children's charity, Never Such Innocence (NSI).

She wears many hats – campaigner, change-maker, community mobiliser, fundraiser and children's champion. All of which she delivers with the flair of a visionary – whether she is leading the renewal of historic Fleet Street or campaigning for children's rights, for which she was awarded an OBE in 2019.

Lucy's tale began in Liverpool's cultural renaissance, where she honed her craft in PR and journalism. Her passion for "the art of the possible" led her to NSI in 2014,

a charity to amplify the voices of young people in the dialogue about armed conflict. Through poetry, art and song, NSI empowered children to process and reflect on war, building a global conversation that transcended borders. Her work with NSI has touched lives in 129 countries, proving that even in global conflict, unity and understanding can flourish.

As CEO of Fleet Street Quarter Business Improvement District, Lucy is helping to create an area of connected communities with safety, sustainability and growth at their heart. Her vision is to resurrect Fleet Street as a vibrant hub, marrying its rich history with an innovative future.

Under her leadership, Fleet Street Quarter has blossomed into a nexus of culture and commerce. From climate festivals to green construction hubs, Lucy's initiatives are shaping a sustainable and inclusive future for this historic part of London.

Lucy's mission is clear: to champion the voices of children in war-torn landscapes and to curate a renaissance of one of London's most iconic quarters. For Lucy, being a *difference maker* is about bold ambition and collaborative spirit. She draws inspiration from the men, women and families of the armed forces and the collective drive of policymakers and placemakers.

Lucy's advice for aspiring difference makers is simple yet profound: "Be bold, be passionate and believe everything is possible!" In the era of uncertainty, Lady Lucy French emerges not just as an architect of dreams – a visionary shaping the future one child, one street at a time.





# Rob da Bank: the beat behind the bliss



Rob da Bank, DJ and co-founder of Bestival

In the eclectic world of music and mindfulness, Rob Da Bank stands out as a true virtuoso. His evolution from a starry-eyed teenager to a festival pioneer and wellness guru shows his boundless creativity and passion for making a difference.

Rob's story kicks off with a love for John Peel's Radio 1 shows in the late 1980s. Armed with his first DJ decks at 16, he dived headfirst into the Madchester scene. Goldsmiths University followed, where he met his future wife, Josie. From there, it was a whirlwind of experiences: working at Wall of Sound, a seven-year stint at a music magazine and a DJ career that took off like a rocket.

But Rob was not just about spinning records. In 1995, he launched Sunday Best, a club night that evolved into a record label. Then came Bestival in 2004, a festival that

redefined the landscape with its quirky charm and inclusive vibe. Camp Bestival followed, offering a family-friendly festival experience that's become a beloved staple in the UK.

These days, Rob's life is a blend of roles. He's got a weekly residency at Pikes in Ibiza, runs two music festivals, releases new music on his label, teaches meditation and has even ventured into wellness with his sauna brand, Slomo.

Rob's mission is simple: "I want to spread happiness and help people live their best lives. There's so much unhappiness in the world," he says. "I want to touch people and say, 'This is your one life. Please wake up and enjoy it.'"

For Rob, being a *difference maker* is all about hard work and authenticity. He believes in doing the little things—taking out the bins, making the tea, and always smiling. "It's these small acts that set you apart and help you rise above the crowd."

He draws inspiration from a host of other *difference makers*, including his wife Josie, meditation teacher Jonni Pollard and industry legends like Richard Branson. His ultimate goal is to help people realise they have the power to change their lives from within.

And if he could make one change in the world? He'd have everyone meditate twice a day. "It would very quickly change the world," he insists.

Rob's parting advice is practical: get up an hour earlier. It might be tough at first, but it's a small step towards becoming a *difference maker* yourself. So, as you start your day, let Rob da Bank's story inspire you to make a difference, one beat at a time.







Image credit: Ann Charlott Ommedal



Image credit: Beth Evans



Image credit: Alexandra Constantinides



Image credit: Ann Charlott Ommedal

# Sam Bompas: the alchemist of gastronomy and joy

As a pioneering “culinographer” and “experience designer”, Sam and his childhood friend Harry Parr have shifted our perception of food from mere sustenance into a multi-sensory extravaganza.

Seventeen years ago, the dynamic duo founded Bompas & Parr, embarking on a path that began with artisanal jelly and evolved into grand gastronomic spectacles. Picture jellies weighing 50 tonnes, feasts cooked over molten lava, and fruit fireworks that mesmerise audiences of a quarter of a million. This isn't just cooking; it's culinary architecture at its finest.

But Sam's work transcends just awe-inspiring experiences. It's about shaping the future of food. Working with governments and cultural institutions worldwide, he aims to carve out a space in our minds for food that rivals the power of the biggest brands on our food choices.

So, what drives Sam? It's the desire to make us truly see what's at the end of our forks. Through his taste experiences, like those at the Guinness Storehouse in Dublin, he introduces people to new sensations that are nothing short of transformative.

His ultimate ambition is to establish a global network of food museums. With humanity facing the daunting task of producing more food than ever before in the next fifty years, education and inspiration are key. “Just as we've built museums for modern art and design, I have a vision of temples dedicated to the art of food.”

To be a *difference maker* in his world Sam believes you need “grit, wonder and an unyielding optimism.” He draws inspiration from William Blake's proverb: “If a fool persists in his folly, he becomes wise.”



Sam Bompas, founder and director at Bompas & Parr Studio

It's this blend of tenacity and whimsy that sets him apart.

In today's world, where permanence is an illusion, Sam believes in making an impact. He admires fellow trailblazers like Henry Dimbleby for his activism, Carolyn Steel for her writing and leader of the SDG2 Advocacy Hub, Paul Newnham, for his efforts to eradicate hunger.

Sam's difference-making heroes span history: from P.T. Barnum's showmanship to Agnes B Marshall's ice-cream ingenuity and Alexis Soyer's culinary flair. If he could make one difference in the world? “To create experiences that bring joy at 1000 smiles an hour.”

For those aspiring to make their mark, Sam advises: “Taste life in the mouth. Pay attention. Be useful. Lick plates when you like the sauce.” It's good to see you can have fun whilst making a difference.



# Arabella Willing: the environmental protector

Growing up in various countries, Arabella's childhood was a whirlwind of adventure. Her love for snorkelling in Cyprus, where she would launch herself off jetties after school, set her on a path to marine biology. Inspired by family friends who were marine biologists, she pursued the field at university. There she discovered that sometimes the best way to help nature is to step back and let it flourish:

"I was quickly humbled into realising that we don't help nature by interfering; to protect wildlife, we should interfere less. Humans and our systems are the thing to focus on to bring about meaningful change – nature knows what it's doing already."

For nearly five years, Arabella has been a driving force at Emirates Nature WWF in the UAE (part of the global WWF network). She has worked on various programmes such as *Connect with Nature and Leaders of Change* which struck such a chord with young people in the UAE. She has also led a turtle conservation project in Abu Dhabi. In her role, Arabella tackles the monumental ecological challenges we face. With just 50 colleagues, she strives to harness the community's passion and potential to create a brighter future.



Arabella Willing, head of conservation, outreach and citizen science, Emirates Nature-WWF

Her mission is to empower everyone to contribute to environmental protection, whether from a school, a business, or a garden.

Arabella's goal is to reveal nature's true value. It provides us with essentials like food, water and air, and it is stunningly beautiful. Her infectious enthusiasm brings this message to life, making a tangible difference.

Her vision is a sustainable future where humanity and nature coexist harmoniously. "Picture clean air, lush green spaces, thriving wildlife and endless energy. It's an achievable dream if we choose the right path." An expert storyteller, Arabella knows

that emotions often drive decisions more than data. She believes that blending science with creativity can inspire change more effectively than cold facts alone.

"In today's world, being a *difference maker* is crucial. We're losing biodiversity at an alarming rate, and climate change is already impacting our lives. We need to face these challenges head-on, with honesty and courage."

Arabella admires conservation icons like Dr Jane Goodall and Her Excellency Razan Al Mubarak. If she could make one global change, it would be for everyone to act as if their life depends on protecting the environment - because it does.





## Karish Andrews: the legal advocate for diversity



Karish Andrews, corporate partner at Lewis Silkin

Karish Andrews stands as a notable figure in the City of London legal profession. With his South African Indian heritage and a passion for anti-racism, Karish has devoted over two decades to the legal field, primarily advising clients within the creative economy. His journey was deeply influenced by his early involvement in the anti-apartheid movement in West London and has been marked by a strong commitment to social justice.

At leading law firm Lewis Silkin, Karish has led the Race & Ethnicity Group and chaired its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Board. Under his guidance, the firm has embraced kindness and bravery, fostering an environment where personal stories and open discussions drive awareness and

understanding. This ethos has become integral to the firm's culture, with each employee committing at least 30 hours annually to DE&I or responsible business activities.

One of Karish's proudest achievements is the introduction of a new parental leave policy at Lewis Silkin. "Our policy now allows all new parents, regardless of gender, to take a year of leave on six months of full pay. It challenges traditional expectations and helps to promote workplace equality."

Karish's commitment to education and continuous learning is also evident in the firm's diversity initiatives. "Our gender group supports colleagues experiencing menopause and nearly half the firm attended an event on the mixed heritage experience. These have genuinely enhanced the firm's engagement with diversity issues."

As Karish steps down as chair of the DE&I Board to welcome fresh perspectives, his commitment to making Lewis Silkin more inclusive remains steadfast. His ultimate goal is to create an environment where everyone can bring their true selves to work, whether in a virtual or physical office.

For Karish, being a *difference maker* means creating a space where people feel empowered to speak up with kindness and respect. He believes that honesty, bravery, tact and listening skills are essential qualities for anyone looking to make a difference today. Inspired by figures like psychologist John Amaechi and Nelson Mandela, Karish's vision is to leave a lasting positive impact on his firm and the wider community.



# Paul Burston: the bigotry eradicator

First a short history lesson. Polari is a UK slang language that originated in the 19th century and was used by gay men and marginalised groups to communicate covertly during a time when homosexuality was illegal. Despite being largely considered a "dead" language, Polari has seen a revival in various forms, with some words like "camp" and "drag" entering mainstream culture.

Step forward our next *difference maker*, Paul Burston, who has been a leading figure in the Polari's revival, preserving its legacy and continued relevance today. As a celebrated author, Paul has dedicated his life to amplifying LGBTQ+ voices and to creating platforms for those who are often sidelined. He is the driving force behind the Polari Literary Salon and the Polari Prizes. Born in York and raised in South Wales, Paul's progress into activism began in the mid-80s, inspired by his experiences at Pride marches and his involvement with ActUp during the AIDS crisis.



Paul Burston, founder Polari literary salon & Polari Book Prize

Paul believes that being a *difference maker* is crucial in today's world: "The world can still be a very prejudiced, uneven and unfair place. Without people willing to make change, take risks or make sacrifices, progress would stall." Paul points to ongoing battles, like the banning of LGBTQ+ books in America, as a stark reminder that the fight for equality is far from over. "We can't rest on our laurels; we must be ready to come out fighting again."

Paul's ultimate goal is a publishing world where no one questions the inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters. He hopes for a future where publishers never again ask, "Does this character have to be gay?"

He also emphasises the importance of allies and mentors. From Michelle Hudson, the first director to invite Polari to be part of her festival, to avant-garde filmmaker, Derek Jarman, a friend and mentor, Paul is keen to emphasise the collective effort behind his personal success. "Too often, people who reach the top kick the ladder down after them. I firmly believe it's crucial to lift others up and share the platform with the community."

If Paul could make one difference in the world, he would eradicate bigotry. "Forcing bigots to spend a week in the shoes of those they discriminate against would teach a valuable lesson. Bigotry, in this day and age, shouldn't exist."

Paul offers simple advice to those looking to become *difference makers*: "Reach out to those in your circle facing struggles. Make a stand on their behalf because we all need allies."





# Dr Sarah Louisa Birchley: the diaspora advocate



Dr Sarah Birchley, professor at Toyo Gakuen University, Tokyo and board member of GlobalWelsh

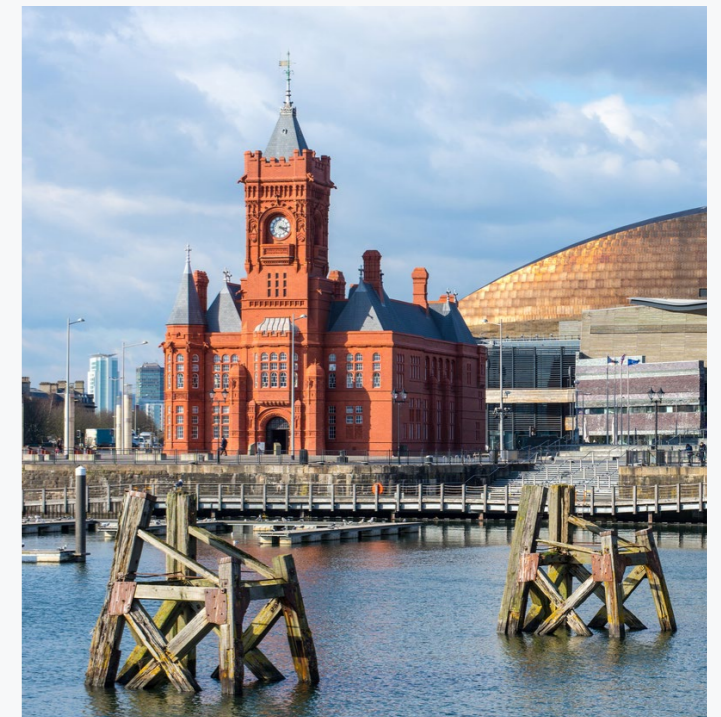
Dr Sarah Louisa Birchley is a professor in the Business Administration faculty at Toyo Gakuen University, Tokyo. Specialising in global diaspora entrepreneurship, she also serves on the board of GlobalWelsh and is leading groundbreaking research into the “brain drain” in Wales.

Her path to academia was unplanned, driven by curiosity and a desire to travel. In 2001, she embarked on an adventure to teach and explore South East Asia, which led her to Japan. What was initially a one-year plan turned into a long-term commitment as she became fascinated by her new environment and the connections between people and places.

Sarah's academic career began in 2006 and she achieved tenure in March 2018. Her work involves researching diaspora entrepreneurship, teaching human resource management, project management and global business and directing international programs. Adapting to Japanese business and academic culture was a challenge, but with the support of great mentors, she navigated it successfully. Her involvement with GlobalWelsh began during a sabbatical in 2018, when she spent time in Europe and the Americas. Visiting Welsh Patagonia and attending the North American Festival of Wales reignited her connection to her Welsh roots. The mission of GlobalWelsh, to connect Welsh business diaspora globally to further the prosperity of Wales, resonated with her and she felt compelled to support their efforts.

As a social scientist, Sarah's research focuses on understanding the lived experiences of diaspora entrepreneurs. She has studied Japanese entrepreneurs in South East Asia and Latin America and is leading the current research on brain drain in Wales. Her goal is to create more inclusive and effective societal institutions by analysing the stories of these entrepreneurs.

Sarah believes that social science can shape and influence policy decisions, human reactions and education. She aims to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs by bringing stories of diaspora entrepreneurship into classrooms. In Wales, she provides frameworks for understanding the complex dynamics of socioeconomic structures, political systems and cultural practices.



Her ultimate goal is to inspire young people, both Welsh and Japanese, to travel and explore while considering how they can contribute to their home countries' development. She emphasises the importance of empathy, communication, curiosity and a collaborative mindset as essential qualities for making a difference.

For Sarah, being a difference maker is crucial in today's world, as it requires creativity, courage, forward-thinking and empathetic leadership. She encourages others to be curious about the world around them and to embrace and celebrate similarities and differences.





## Martin Collins: the cultural transformer



Martin Collins, executive director, Arts Trust Foundation

From the stage to the streets, Martin Collins has always been a maestro of movement.

Starting his career as a professional dancer, Martin soon found his rhythm in dance education, leading The Centre for Advanced Training at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. This programme was a lifeline for talented young dancers aged 13-16 who lacked the financial means to pursue their dreams. After six years of nurturing future stars, Martin took a leap into broadcasting, partnering with the BBC to bring the magic of dance into living rooms across the nation.

But Martin's career didn't stop there. His work with the Greenwich World Culture Festival opened his eyes to the unifying power of culture. This epiphany led to the birth of Arts Trust Productions in 2012, an organisation dedicated to reducing loneliness and isolation among

young people in low socio-economic communities. One of their standout events, the Silent Disco StakeJam festival, targets youth at risk of gang involvement and knife crime, offering them a safe space to express themselves and connect with others.

Arts Trust Productions has grown under Martin's visionary leadership, now delivering 13 festivals across London and Essex. These events transform public spaces into vibrant cultural hubs, fostering community spirit and providing platforms for emerging artists. Martin's latest venture, a collaboration with Dame Evelyn Glennie, aims to revolutionise how the hard-of-hearing community experiences music through haptic technologies and a new syntax for British Sign Language signing.

At the heart of Martin's work is a commitment to amplifying community voices and address key issues like isolation and well-being. By creating inclusive cultural experiences, Arts Trust Productions enriches lives and strengthens community bonds.

In a world increasingly divided, Martin's mission is to nurture a sense of belonging and resilience. His efforts not only enhance individual well-being but also contribute to the overall health and harmony of society. Through the transformative power of art and culture, Martin Collins is truly making a difference.

For Martin, being a Difference Maker means listening, communicating and responding to the needs of the community. It's about building trust and engaging in open dialogue to drive meaningful change. In a world where social isolation is on the rise, Martin's work is a reminder of the power of art to bring us together and make a real difference.





## Lucy Cleland: the storyteller changing luxury

In the world of luxury lifestyle journalism, the editorial director of Country & Town House magazine stands out. Originally aspiring to be a vet and later earning a classics degree, Lucy Cleland discovered her passion for storytelling at Condé Nast.

Since co-founding Country & Town House magazine in 2007, she has grown into her role and it has grown with her. Her work is driven by a desire to inspire change through storytelling, collaboration, beauty and fun. She believes in the power of narratives to ignite ideas and shift perceptions about luxury, aiming to redefine what it means in today's world.

"My mission is to empower people to see themselves as active citizens rather than passive consumers. By providing trusted content, I try to influence how people make choices and encourage them to consider the impact of their consumption." Lucy's goal is to slow the rate of consumption, view waste as a moral issue and support brands that genuinely care about their impact.

She believes that not being afraid to try is key to being a *difference maker* in the world of media and luxury. "Mistakes are inevitable, but they are also opportunities for growth. I try to advocate for understanding and compassion rather than the current "pile-on" mentality."

Lucy recognises that being a *difference maker* is crucial in today's world to help everyone have a voice, even if they lack the confidence or platform to use it. "Those of us who do have a platform should use it wisely to amplify important messages." Lucy admires individuals like Amy Powney,



Lucy Cleland, editorial director of Country & Town House

Arizona Muse, Marine Tanguy, Rachel Arthur and Aisling Connaughton for their contributions to the industry.

If Lucy could make one difference in the world, it would be to use her platform to influence everyone to make a positive change. Her advice to aspiring *difference makers* is simple yet profound: "Stop, breathe, and reflect. Understanding the psychological reasons behind our actions can lead to more mindful and impactful choices."

Through her work, Lucy continues to inspire and challenge the status quo, proving that storytelling can indeed make a difference.



# Abbas Mirza: the community champion



Abbas Mirza, engagement manager, Redbridge Council

Abbas Mirza, a community and engagement leader at Redbridge Council, describes himself as an "East London barrow boy done good." Born in Tower Hamlets, Abbas has dedicated his career to tackling inequalities and improving the lives of individuals and communities. His journey began at the Commission for Racial Equality and since then he has focused on giving communities a voice and helping people get involved in local decision-making through co-creation.

Abbas's work has taken him to some of the toughest estates in London, including Silwood Estate in Rotherhithe. There, he faced challenges such as the BNP marching through the estate, advocating for whites-only council housing. Despite these obstacles, Abbas remained committed to bringing communities together and addressing issues like employment, childcare and job skills. During the pandemic, Abbas witnessed an unprecedented level of community collaboration. "People from diverse backgrounds, including white, black and brown communities, came together to

support each other" he says "This reinforced my belief in the importance of building trusting relationships with the communities I serve. Trust takes ages to build, but you can destroy it within a minute."

One of Abbas's proudest achievements is his work with the Somali community in Tower Hamlets. During the pandemic, he helped secure funding for a Somali community engagement officer at Bart's Health Trust. This role, initially funded for one year, has now become permanent.

His approach to community engagement is rooted in empathy and understanding. "I firmly believe leaders must get out from behind their desks and engage with the communities they serve." This hands-on approach has earned him the respect and trust of many community members and leaders and has led to his approach being viewed as best practice in the NHS and with local authorities.

The death of his younger brother was a deeply personal experience that has driven his work. Abbas was profoundly upset by the system's failure to support his brother and he carries that pain with him in his efforts to make a difference. As with Doreen Lawrence, the Difference Maker he most admires, this tragedy has only strengthened his resolve to create lasting change by empowering communities to use their voices and experiences to tackle inequalities.

In his current role at Redbridge Council, Abbas continues to build on previous successes, collaborating with diverse communities to address issues like improving health and social care services. He remains a true champion of community engagement in East London and further afield.





# Daniel Lewi: the beacon of hope



Daniel Lewi, co-founder and chief executive, The Cure & Action for Tay-Sachs (CATS) Foundation

The Cure & Action for Tay-Sachs (CATS) Foundation was established in 2011 by Daniel Lewi after his oldest daughter, Amélie, was diagnosed with Tay-Sachs disease at just 15 months old. Faced with the grim prognosis that Amélie would not live past the age of three, Daniel and his wife refused to accept this fate. Instead, they embarked on a mission to find a treatment and connect with other affected families.

Realising the dire need for a support network, Daniel established the CATS Foundation. The charity has since become a lifeline for families grappling with Tay-Sachs and Sandhoff diseases, rare genetic disorders that cause the progressive destruction of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. It provides essential support and a sense of community. Despite the heartbreaking loss of Amélie at the age of eight in 2017, Daniel's resolve has only

strengthened. The foundation continues to grow, driven by the memory of Amélie and the countless families it aims to help.

Daniel's work is multifaceted. "On the one hand, the CATS Foundation offers unwavering support to families, ensuring they have access to the resources and information they need. On the other, we collaborate with global researchers and pharmaceutical companies to develop treatments. The progress we've made in starting clinical trials is evidence of our relentless pursuit of a cure."

The impact of Daniel's efforts is profound. By uniting charities across Europe, he has created a powerful network that accelerates research and improves care for those affected by these devastating diseases. His ultimate goal is nothing short of finding a cure, a mission he approaches with unwavering determination.

Daniel believes empathy is the cornerstone of making a difference in this field. "Understanding and supporting families during their darkest times is crucial. It is so important to be there for others, listening and sharing in their emotional stories."

Daniel's admiration extends to other rare disease advocates like Tanya Histed, CEO of the International Gaucher Alliance, who tirelessly works to transform care and access to therapies. His vision for the future is clear: universal access to treatments, regardless of geography or cost.

For those inspired to become *difference makers*, Daniel's advice is always to be willing to listen. "In a world where sharing personal stories can be daunting, creating a safe space for others to open up is a powerful act of compassion."



# Marcia La-Rose: the barrier breaker

Marcia La Rose's career at Four began over two decades ago when she joined as a finance manager. Back then, she was employee number 12, handling the entire finance function for the organisation. As Four grew, so did Marcia's role, evolving into a hybrid of finance and HR responsibilities. Despite her initial reluctance, Marcia discovered a passion for helping people, which became the cornerstone of her career.

Marcia's upbringing played a significant role in shaping her perspective. Her father was a pipe fitter and her mother worked as a nurse in mental health. Spending time in her mother's unit exposed Marcia to diverse individuals, fostering a deep sense of empathy and understanding. Although she never considered her upbringing privileged, Marcia acknowledges the unique experiences that shaped her outlook on life.

At Four, Marcia has become a passionate advocate for socioeconomic uplift. She believes that by addressing socioeconomic disparities, all underrepresented groups can benefit. Her work often involves engaging with state schools and inviting students from various backgrounds to experience the industry firsthand. Marcia's goal is to expose young people to opportunities they might not otherwise encounter, broadening their horizons and inspiring them to pursue careers in the industry.



Marcia La Rose, group people & diversity director, Four Agency Worldwide

Marcia's commitment to diversity extends beyond her role at Four. She is a trustee at the Taylor Bennett Foundation and actively supports smaller independent agencies through the Alliance of Independent Agencies. Marcia's willingness to help others is driven by her belief in the importance of removing barriers and creating opportunities for those striving to make a difference.

Despite her significant contributions, Marcia remains humble. She does not see herself as a Difference Maker but recognises the impact others perceive in her work. Her ultimate goal is to see the industry become fully diverse, encompassing all forms of diversity, from race and gender to ability and sexuality. Marcia envisions an industry that is self-regulating and reflective of the

diverse audiences it serves. Marcia's efforts have not gone unnoticed. She was recognised by the PRCA and appointed as a Fellow, making her the first non-PR person to receive this honour. This recognition highlights her significant contributions to the industry and her unwavering commitment to diversity and inclusion.

For Marcia, being a Difference Maker is about creating an environment where everyone feels valued and heard. She believes that simple acts of communication, such as saying hello to neighbours and checking on the community, can also make a significant difference in society. Her story is a testament to the power of empathy, kindness and the relentless pursuit of a more inclusive world.



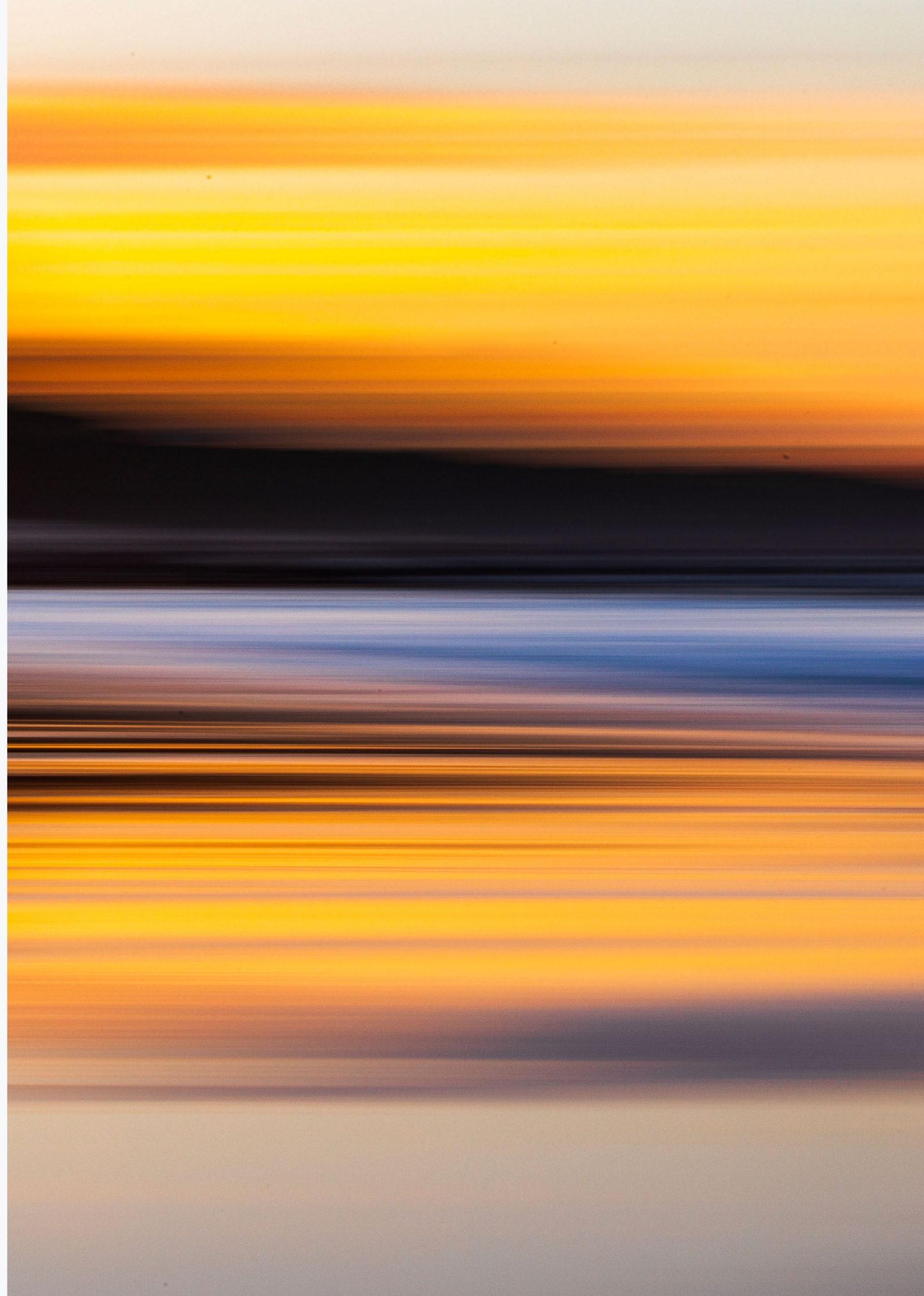
# How to become a Difference Maker

Top tips from those making a difference already:

- Make a stand on behalf of people who need allies
- Be bold, be passionate and believe everything is possible!
- Don't be afraid to push boundaries and breakdown barriers
- If you don't like something then get up and do something about it
- Find your passion and follow it
- Always be true to yourself and what you stand for
- You don't need to do big things - a smile, a gesture, listen
- Make more mindful and impactful choices
- Seek out different perspectives
- Care less about who gets the credit

At Four, we believe that generative AI is a difference maker. We are pioneering its use in marketing communications, as championed by Microsoft. Watch our Copilot partner video here: <https://www.four.agency/news-insights/microsoft-spotlights-four-ai-pioneers>

We used AI to transcribe interviews and create the initial articles for our difference makers. Humans then reviewed, finalised and approved all copy.





**#DifferenceMakers**

**Get in touch**

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