



Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Document Control

| Version | Approved by/date | Next review due |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 2 | Board/Feb 2015 | Feb 2017 |
| 2.1 | Oct 15 | Oct 17 |
| 2.2 | Sept 18 | Sept 21 |
| 3 | Sept 2021 | Sept 2022 |
| 3.1 | 10 Jan 23 | Jan 24 |
| 3.2 | 8 Feb 2024 | February 2025 |
| 3.3 | Jan 2025 | Jan 2026 |

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the commitment of Bedford Creative Arts to the promotion of equality and diversity and for ensuring that all people feel included in our activity.

We believe that art is essential for a full life as it engenders self-expression, confidence, connectedness and a sense of belonging. It builds strong and resilient communities; it empowers individuals. It is essential, therefore, that all people have the ability to access, enjoy and participate in arts activity. That means we have a duty to ensure all our activities are accessible and inclusive of people from every background, and especially those under-represented in cultural activity in Bedfordshire who may need our support the most to feel included.

The arts have the intrinsic power to provoke and facilitate change. This means that the arts have the power to showcase our wonderfully diverse society, to embrace and share the talents of richly diverse communities, to challenge discrimination in creative ways, to increase representation from people with protected characteristics in the creation of art, and to facilitate conversations that enable issues of equality, equity, diversity & inclusion to be radically debated and explored.

Therefore, this policy does more than just ensure we continue to adhere to our legal obligations to prevent discrimination as directed under the Equality Act 2010; it outlines how, through all of our creative and business activities, we will constantly strive to embrace the rich benefits of living in a diverse world. It guides all of our staff, trustees, volunteers, artists, partners and contractors to understand our values, know what is required of them, and encourages a culture of constant challenge and questioning that aims to support access and inclusion whilst generously embracing diversity.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant Bedford Creative Arts policies set out at the end of this document. It is not intended that anything in this Policy affects an individual's statutory rights.

2. Definitions

The following definitions are useful in understanding the terminology of this policy:

- Direct Discrimination – where an individual is treated less favourably because of an actual or perceived protected characteristic or because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.
- Indirect Discrimination – where a rule, policy or procedure limits an opportunity for everyone with a protected characteristic or means they are disadvantaged.
- Harassment – unwanted conduct or behaviour that an individual finds offensive and has the purpose or effect of violating their dignity or creating a degrading, humiliating, hostile, intimidating or offensive environment. The conduct is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 when it is connected with an actual or perceived protected characteristic. Other forms of harassment are also unlawful under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

- Victimisation – negative and unfair treatment directed towards an individual because they have made or are believed to have made or might make a legitimate complaint under the Equality Act 2010.
- Equality – the state of being equal, especially in status, rights or opportunities.
- Equity – the quality of being fair and impartial. Freedom from bias. In order to avoid bias you may need to treat people differently in order to ensure equity (e.g. a wheelchair user may need to receive additional free tickets to an event for their carers in order to be treated equitably to an able-bodied person).
- Diversity - the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations and other protected characteristics and backgrounds. Diversity describes the range of visible and non-visible differences that exist between people.
- Inclusion and belonging – the feeling that people have when their needs are met to enable them to participate fully in an activity and to feel equal, listened to and respected alongside others.

3. Scope

This policy is applicable to all potential and established employees, volunteers, trustees and contractors of Bedford Creative Arts. In addition, we will share this policy with our partners and peers and encourage them to consider and adopt these positive approaches in their work and attitudes.

4. Policy Statements

Bedford Creative Arts celebrates the diversity of our communities, workforce, volunteers, creatives and partners. We aim to make, produce and facilitate art and creativity that is meaningful to, includes, and engages the widest possible range of people in our community.

The following statements outline the values of the organisation and the aims of the guidance in this policy:

- We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination on the grounds of all protected characteristics as defined in The Equality Act 2010 (age; disability; gender and gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; and sexual orientation), and of any characteristic that might create inequality such as income, class or educational attainment.
- All potential or established employees, volunteers, participants, audiences, contractors, artists, and trustees will be treated fairly and will not be subject to discrimination. Decisions about recruitment, selection, promotion, training, or service provision will be made objectively and without discrimination.
- We are mindful that Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 imposes particular duties on ‘public authorities’ and other bodies when exercising public functions. We are committed to supporting our public authority partners and funders in delivery of these duties both by seeking opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and through fostering good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don’t and seeking to build trust with the communities around us to treat them fairly, with equality and respect.
- We acknowledge that we are not experts in all aspects of equality and diversity, but we can do all we can to initiate conversation and encourage learning to help to explore, express, debate and challenge our own and others’ practices to strive for continual improvement. Our business model allows us to be flexible and responsive and we will turn that to our advantage when we feel we need to make changes to how we work by acting quickly.
- We acknowledge that embracing diversity provides us with immense opportunity to experience new things and showcase our richly diverse society. We will seek to go above and beyond mere representation to ensure that people from under-represented backgrounds in art & culture have opportunities to create and participate in our work.
- We will seek to understand and reflect the communities in which we work, acknowledging that Bedfordshire is a richly multi-cultural geography inhabited by people from many diverse communities.
- We will embrace a data-led approach to championing equality & diversity by capturing and monitoring data on our reach and representation, and setting targets to improve. We will at all times aim to be ambitious and stretch ourselves.
- We acknowledge that we are all at risk of unconscious bias and unintended discrimination and will foster a culture of ‘challenging with respect’ to preserve everyone’s dignity whilst calling out bias and discrimination and being vigilant against it at all times.

5. Policy Guidance

The following principles, approach and objectives will be observed in upholding the aims of this Policy.

Our Workforce and Internal Practises

- We will ensure that recruitment of employees, trustees, volunteers or non-creative contractors will be undertaken without discrimination. Our Recruitment Policy sets out fair and transparent ways for recruiting staff and trustees to avoid the risk of discrimination. Only where we have candidates of equal measure apply for a role, may we use positive action to prioritise candidates that will support better representation amongst our teams and workforce. If we feel that a characteristic is under-represented in our workforce or board, we may actively seek to encourage applicants to a role from those characteristics through statements of encouragement and targeted advertising.
- Where we appoint creative practitioners by open call, no personal characteristics will be used in the selection of candidates for opportunities to avoid discrimination unless we have a specific need for inclusion or representation that we feel we must address to enable the inclusion of beneficiaries. For example, if we are seeking to work with vulnerable women, we may request a female practitioner in order to support the inclusion and safety of participants. Otherwise, only where we have candidates of equal measure apply for an opportunity, will we use positive action to prioritise candidates that will support better representation amongst our creative teams. If we have a need for representation when undertaking an open call, we will state this in our advertising and justify our reasons for doing so.
- Where we appoint creative practitioners or partners without an open call, we will be transparent about our reasons for doing so and assess the risks for bias and under-representation in our decisions. We will only do this where we can demonstrate a firm business case for our actions and will document our reasons for selection.
- Bedford Creative Arts' employees, volunteers, contractors and trustees have the right to be free from harassment and unwanted behaviour and are expected to treat all colleagues and customers with respect and consideration at all times and not to practice discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of any personal and/or protected characteristic. Anyone who witnesses or experiences discriminatory activity is asked to report it immediately under the procedure documented in our company Grievance Policy. Bullying & harassment will not be tolerated. Anyone who reports a concern can expect to be listened to and have their considerations taken seriously and addressed.
- Staff and representatives must challenge and avoid negative stereotypes such as those relating to race, gender, age and disability. For example, insinuating that women should take notes at meetings and organise the tea.
- Staff and representatives must at all times use inclusion and respectful language and behaviour. They should challenge any language or behaviour in others that does not do this. Language and behaviour should avoid the risks erasure of people from certain backgrounds (e.g. "Mums and Dads" is not as inclusive as "Parents and Carers"), doesn't reflect reality, indicates binaries where they do not exist, and does not show universal respect. Humour is to be used carefully to ensure it falls within these guidelines. If not everyone finds a joke funny, it should not be told. No one should ever find themselves the subject of a joke that singles them out due to their identity or any identifying characteristic.
- All Bedford Creative Arts' HR policies, remuneration opportunities, employment terms and conditions, procedures and benefits will be designed to promote equality of opportunity and protection for all employees and will be strictly reviewed by an independent HR consultant to ensure they adhere to legislation and best practise.

- We will undertake equal opportunities monitoring of our staff, trustees, volunteers, and contractors/artists in order to monitor our reach and representation and help us to set targets for continual improvement.
- Staff will be invited to share their views on the organisation's policies and practises through a number of ways including being welcome to suggest ideas to managers and trustees at any time as well as by way of a twice annual Staff survey and twice annual Performance Reviews. Any concerns or feedback about company polices and practises will be considered seriously by the SMT and acted on immediately if any discrimination is found.
- We will ensure equality of opportunity for all our employees in matters relating to their employment including promotion opportunity, equal pay and any other benefits. Pay will be set by level in the organisation and will be benchmarked annually by the Board of Trustees.
- Staff and potential staff (under job offer) who have a health condition, disability or personal situation (this could include a life event such as divorce, gender transition, caring responsibilities or any other circumstance) that affects their work, will be supported with a risk assessment to determine if any reasonable adjustments are needed to enable them to deliver their role and aid their wellbeing. Anyone with a health condition or disability that requires adjustments to attend an interview for a role will be supported with any necessary adaptations to enable them to attend.
- All staff and trustees will be provided with training to support them with diversity awareness and confidence in debating and challenging bias and discrimination. All staff will be provided with Diversity Awareness training and Unconscious Bias training at least every 3 years.
- The Board of Trustees will appoint representatives to form an Equality & Diversity Committee to meet regularly to check and challenge the company's approach this this policy and set and monitor its Equality & Diversity Action Plan.
- The organisation will review its Equality & Diversity Action Plan annually, including monitoring targets and setting future goals. All staff will be engaged in the process of developing these actions and inducted in the commitments of the organisation to equality and diversity.

Our beneficiaries and communities

- The design and delivery of our projects will ensure that they do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any section of our community - except where this is justified by the express intent of the programme (for example where the intention of a service is to target particular groups or communities and is a proportionate response to an identified need).
- We will seek opportunities through our projects and services to promote and foster positive relationships between all sections of our community and in particular, to engage with those communities who have traditionally had less opportunity to engage. This includes targeting our work in a way that seeks to increase representation and participation by communities that have been systemically disempowered in society, are marginalised or the minority in a community, or have had negative stereotypes associated with them in the past.

- We will undertake an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) of all our projects to consider the risk of discrimination against people with protected or unequal characteristics. We will use this process to outline options to mitigate against any discrimination and to propose active measures to improve access and promote diversity in our project's scope and design.
- We will listen to our communities & consult people from a range of relevant backgrounds during the design of our work. This may include meeting with community representatives, potential audiences, experts and residents to consider their views and experiences.
- We will tailor our approaches to evaluating and monitoring, promoting and delivering projects to support the needs of those people for which the activity is aimed. We acknowledge that one size does not fit all and we may need to change our usual approaches in order to support access to our activities by a range of people.
- We will ensure that our marketing activity embraces diversity and avoids bias towards any majority characteristics. This includes evaluating the language used, images, locations and means of distribution and any other activity to consider how we can support awareness by people from a range of backgrounds.
- **Our Partners & Collaborators**
- We will seek to challenge funders, partners and peers in areas of equality and diversity including calling out concerns about funder monitoring that we deem to be unfit for purpose or discriminatory, and encouraging partners and peers to reflect on their practices.
- We will keep up to date with best practice in our sector/s (including the arts, charity, voluntary and education sectors) and constantly seek opportunities to explore what others are doing. This includes discussing equality and diversity with peers, reading about best practice, following national debate and inviting peer review.
- We will consider the opportunities for fully embracing diversity and ensuring a commitment to equality in the design and selection of projects in our programme by assessing this attribute using our Equaliser system (in our Programme Policy).

6. Complaints

Complaints of discrimination will be dealt with via the organisation's Grievance Procedure (internally), Feedback and Complaints Policy (externally) and any acts of discrimination will be dealt with via the organisation's Disciplinary Policy if required.

7. Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring that Bedford Creative Arts has a legally compliant *Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy* in place and that it is reviewed regularly.

The Director has responsibility for ensuring the maintenance, regular review, dissemination and updating of this policy.

The Programme Producer & Company & Projects Manager have responsibility for ensuring that all commissioned artists and contractors are made aware of the requirements of this policy.




All those persons within the Scope of this policy are required to adhere to its terms and conditions and in particular must:

- Co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity.
- Report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices.
- Not induce or attempt to induce others to practice unlawful discrimination.



8. Review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed **12 months** after the date shown on the front page or when necessary following changes in legislation or other relevant event.

9. Other Relevant Policies

- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Bullying & Harassment Policy
- Equality and Diversity Action Plan
-  Feedback & Complaints Policy
-  Health & Wellbeing Policy
-  Modern Slavery Policy

10. Legal Framework

- Equality Act 2010 and its associated Codes of Practice
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Act 2008
- The Human Rights Act 1998
-  The Criminal Justice Public Order Act 1994
-  Modern Slavery Act 2015