


Sunderland Culture
Equality and Diversity Policy
April 2021

DISTRIBUTION: all staff and volunteers of Sunderland Culture; Sunderland Culture Board of Trustees.

Approved by	Rebecca Ball, Interim Chief Executive
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Next review	May 2022

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1.0 Policy Statement

1.1 Sunderland Culture recognises, celebrates and values the diversity of our audiences, staff, creative partners and community. As an organisation with high profile venues, receiving public funds, we aim to act as an exemplar of good practice and to influence our participants, stakeholders, creative partners and local community to share in our values. We do this in three ways:-

- We do not tolerate discriminatory practices of any kind. In line with our strategic aims, we work to create a positive environment where all members of our community treat one another with mutual respect and dignity and do not face discrimination with regard to any aspect of their identity, such as age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, economic status, marriage/ civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation.
- We ensure that this commitment is embedded across our organisation through our governance structure, staff recruitment and training, learning and engagement programme, exhibitions programme and audience development activities, including online.
- We actively promote and support the work of artists from diverse backgrounds and to enable our audiences from diverse backgrounds to enjoy and participate in our work. We support the priorities of Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity through the delivery of our arts programme.

2. Policy scope

2.1 This policy applies to all staff working for Sunderland Culture on a paid or voluntary basis, the visitors to our venues and participants of our programme.

2.2 The principles also apply to the way in which we work with artists, contractors, subcontractors, service providers and anyone associated with the functions of Sunderland Culture.

2.3 This policy covers discrimination based on the following, including the 9 protected characteristics as outlined in The Equality Act (2010): -

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and/or belief
- Sex

- Sexual orientation

In addition, we have chosen to include:

- Socio-economic circumstances

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Sunderland Culture Board's responsibility is to: -

- Take the lead in promoting equality and diversity.
- Own and monitor implementation of this policy.
- Nominate a Board-level Equality and Diversity Champion

3.2 Sunderland Culture Chief Executive's responsibility is to: -

- Ensure implementation of this policy.
- Provide strong leadership on equality and diversity.
- Drive delivery of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan.
- Work closely with the Equality and Diversity Group to monitor progress against the annual action plan.

3.3 Sunderland Culture's Equality and Diversity Group's responsibility is to: -

- Act as equality champions and role models.
- Act as a forum for regular updates and sharing of best practice from each venue/team/project within Sunderland Culture.
- Proactively promote and publicise the Equality and Diversity Group's strategies and plans to their teams across the organisation.
- Develop, deliver and monitor the Equality and Diversity Action Plan.
- Monitor the make-up of the staff team regarding age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability to ensure we proactively work towards reflecting the make-up of the communities we serve.
- Identify, recommend and deliver equality and diversity initiatives.
- Act on feedback and concerns from staff members, and challenge and question policy and practice in a safe environment.
- Monitor the effectiveness of training, communication and publicity, and initiating action to maintain a high standard.
- The Chair of the Equality and Diversity Group to report to the Chief Executive and the Board on progress of the action plan.

3.4 Sunderland Culture Line Managers' responsibility is to: -

- Ensure that staff, volunteers and contractors are aware of this policy and understand their rights and responsibilities contained within it.
- Role model behaviour that supports this policy and challenge those they manage to do the same.
- Allocate their time and support and any training or development opportunities.
- Build specific actions into their team and individual's goals that contribute to the delivery of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan.
- Act objectively, fairly and without discrimination.
- Communicate regularly with their teams about equality issues in a way that keeps this policy and its action plan live.

3.5 Sunderland Culture staff and volunteer responsibility is to: -

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Report discrimination, bullying, unfair treatment or harassment that they experience or witness to their Line Manager or member of the Equality and Diversity Group.
- Help identify discriminatory practices or procedures and bring these to the attention of their Line Managers.
- Attend mandatory staff training and development events, and refresher training on an annual cycle.
- Express opinions constructively with sensitivity and respect in a confidential and supportive environment.
- Support the work of the Equality and Diversity group when required.
- Play an active part in delivering the Equality and Diversity Action Plan through their work and inputting into it through team meetings.

4. Our objectives

Sunderland Culture will work to promote a culture of equality and diversity through the following six objectives: -

4.1 Governance

- Board members to be representative of those served by the organisation.
- Board members to have a full understanding of the importance of ensuring a positive approach to equality and diversity through regular training and development, and quarterly updates from the Equality and Diversity Group.
- Board members to adhere to and champion the Creative Case for Diversity and all equality and diversity issues at Board level. Equality and Diversity is a standard item on every Board agenda.

4.2 Staff and volunteer recruitment and training

- Staff to have a full understanding of the importance of ensuring a positive and informed approach to equality and diversity, so that Sunderland Culture are operating to the highest standards. Equality and Diversity to be embedded into team meetings, staff appraisals, planning of future initiatives.
- Understand the make-up of our workforce and our local community and aspire to address under-representation in future recruitment where possible and appropriate.
- An Equality and Diversity Action Plan is developed, regularly checked and challenged and there is a forum to develop project ideas supporting equality, diversity and the Creative Case.

4.3 Accessibility

- Sunderland Culture venues and programmes of activity to be as inclusive and accessible as practicable, e.g., building requirements; staff welcome and approach; range of exhibitions and programme; marketing approach. We will undertake regular accessibility audits, and this will be monitored by the Equality and Diversity Group.

4.4 Learning Programme.

Sunderland Culture's learning programme to be diverse and accessible to all, but in line with our Business Plan objectives, we will specifically support the following:-

- Increase access for ethnically diverse communities.
- Increase access for older people.
- Increase access for families affected by autism.
- Increase access to artistic activity for audiences living in areas of economic deprivation.
- Increase number of hours of employment offered to freelance artists based in the North East.

4.5 Cultural Programme

- The diverse experiences, backgrounds and stories from across our communities voices should be at the heart of our exhibition and performance programmes.
- Sunderland Culture to be rated at least "Strong" by Arts Council England in relation to Creative Case.
- Interpretation of our collections and archives to accurately acknowledge equality and diversity issues.
- Support and promote the creative development of artists in the city from diverse backgrounds through our talent development programmes.

4.6 Audience Development

- Increased understanding of audience profile to ensure that our programmes reflect and attract the communities that we serve.
- Formal communication channels and active membership groups established for under-represented audiences to act as loyal ambassadors for Sunderland Culture and shape and inform Sunderland Culture's operations and programming.

5.0 Implementation and monitoring

- Sunderland Culture as a whole share responsibility for the application of this policy, whilst specific responsibility falls to Line Managers and representatives of the Equality and Diversity Group.
- This policy will be implemented through Sunderland Culture's Equality and Diversity Action Plan. Progress against actions and objectives will be reported into the Senior Management Team by the Chair of the Equality and Diversity Group. Updates will regularly be given at staff meetings.
- This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Equality and Diversity Group to ensure that it reflects best practice and current legislation. The review will focus on tracking progress, identifying challenges to delivery and devising ways to overcome these as well as checking that the policy objectives and actions remain relevant.
- Sunderland Culture will train our staff and volunteers on an annual cycle, including Board Members, to implement this policy and embed equality principles into all relevant training including induction, 1-2-1s and team meetings.
- We will communicate this policy to all our stakeholders so that they are aware of our commitment to treat them fairly and their obligation to operate in line with this policy.
- Take appropriate action when incidents occur which breach this policy (see section 6).
- On an annual basis, monitor and review the success of this policy in promoting equality and evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of our Equality and Diversity Action Plan.

6. Handling complaints

- 6.1 Sunderland Culture take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, visitors, artists, participants, volunteers and any others in the course of our work activities.
- 6.2 Should staff or volunteers experience or witness breaches of this policy, perhaps involving direct discrimination against an individual or bullying and harassment, then they should in the first instance speak to their Line Manager or a member of SMT.
- 6.3 The Line Manager or SMT member will investigate the breaches thoroughly and provide opportunities for the person making the complaint to speak in a safe environment about their experience. Staff employed by the University of Sunderland or Sunderland City Council will go through the complaint's procedure of their organisations.
- 6.4 If the complaint is against an individual, they will also hear their point of view. They will decide the action to take based on the principle of ensuring the continued inclusion and safety of any member who has experienced discrimination or harassment.
- 6.5 Members of the public should address complaints to the Line Manager of the team in question in the first instance and follow the Sunderland Culture Complaints Procedure which can be found at <https://sunderlandculture.org.uk/terms-and-conditions/feedback/>