

# HASTINGS CONTEMPORARY

## Equality and Diversity Policy

### Policy

*'Art and culture in England should reflect the diversity of contemporary society, recognising the value of both what we have in common and our differences which contribute to the creative and cultural aesthetics of arts and culture in England.'* – Arts Council England

Hastings Contemporary is a national beacon for modern and contemporary art in the South East of England. We explore and celebrate the creative and social power of visual arts. We believe diverse life experiences can be a creative driver and we seek to give a platform to work that expresses this, bringing fresh perspectives that add to the richness of our artistic offer.

We nurture creative relationships with artists and our community. We offer a welcoming space for families to explore our exhibitions and quiet spaces for creativity for those who are neurodivergent; we facilitate workshops and courses to energise people to get creative and to gain skills and knowledge to pursue careers in the arts. We also work extensively with local schools. We want local families to feel that Hastings Contemporary is a space where they can create, as well as to visit, reinforcing our ambition of creating a shared cultural space for our community. We want art to matter more to more people.

Equality and Diversity recognises that all individuals are different and should be treated fairly and equally in accordance with their needs and the Equality Act 2010. Organisations are not allowed to discriminate, harass or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics. People are also protected from being discriminated against because they are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics, or because they are associated with someone who has protected characteristics. The nine protected characteristics are: age, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation. We also recognise that there are many other ways in which people might be considered different (e.g. politics, geography, socio-economics, neurodiversity, etc.) which are not covered by the Equality Act and we strive to continue to learn about ways in which people are diverse and the best ways to welcome them.

Hastings Contemporary is committed to a policy of diversity and equality of opportunity in its programme, employment practices and in the provision of its services. We will also go beyond

recognising the importance of diversity and inclusion and adhering to legal requirements and will move towards equity, where diverse people who have been previously underrepresented will be valued as offering unique insights, both as artists and members of Hastings Contemporary staff. We recognise that we have much work to do to deliver our commitment to the social power of visual arts and to equality and diversity. Staff and the Board are dedicated to delivering the following plan – and ensuring it is embedded across everything we do – with the aim of creating a more equitable, diverse and fair society and making Hastings Contemporary a place where everyone feels welcome, and where we celebrate visual artwork made by diverse artists.

Staff, volunteers and the Board will be mindful of the complex range of barriers that are in place and that continue to make it difficult for underrepresented people to fully flourish within arts and culture. These barriers might be physical or attitudinal, and staff, volunteers and the Board will be provided with appropriate ongoing training to identify and tackle these barriers. As we strive to be a cultural hub for Hastings, we acknowledge the high levels of deprivation in the town and are committed to working with our local communities to increase access and remove barriers for local residents so that we can offer a safe and welcoming space for creative activities.

*“The social model holds that a person isn’t ‘disabled’ because of their impairment, health condition, or the ways in which they may differ from what is commonly considered the medical ‘norm’; rather it is the physical and attitudinal barriers in society – prejudice, lack of access adjustments and systemic exclusion – that disable people.” – Shape*

## Objectives

1. Support and embed an inclusive culture as integral to all our operations and business planning, ensuring we provide equal opportunities for all and that the people we engage and work with reflect diversity.
2. Create and supply a supportive environment for all our workforce and visitors, with a particular focus on those with protected characteristics, and from all socio-economic backgrounds and geographical locations.
3. Champion the creative case for diversity in all our work.

### **1. Support and embed equalities and diversity as part of the overall business plan of the organisation.**

1. The Board has agreed not to have a separate Equality & Diversity Action Group but to have the whole Board fully responsible for the policy and its implementation. Chair of Trustees to take overall responsibility for delivering the objectives of the

policy and liaise with the Director to ensure that monitoring is duly reported to the Board at each meeting.

2. Operations Manager to review and update the action plan with the Board in March each year.
3. Operations Manager to report on the action plan at all Board meetings.
4. The Director to ensure that the artistic programme includes artists with diverse life experiences and meets our equality targets in terms of the programme.
5. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to nurture partnerships with organisations that can help us better understand and implement our equality and diversity commitments such as Outside In, Accentuate and Project Art Works. Annual partner survey to be undertaken in January each year, to inform the following year.
6. Diversity and inclusion are key considerations of our recruitment policy for staff and Trustees and all recruitment to be monitored carefully by the Director of Operations, with the aim that staff and Board reflect the diversity of audiences, artists and communities we are working with and working to reach.
7. Director of Operations to ensure recruitment procedures reach under-represented communities; that applicants with under-represented characteristics are interviewed automatically if they meet essential criteria; and that each recruitment is monitored and reviewed to build in continual improvement. See Action Plan for specific targets.
8. Operations Manager to report achievements of the Action Plan to Arts Council England Relationship Officer quarterly.
9. Director to seek funding to resource our commitments to equality and diversity, setting annual targets and budgets with staff and Trustees.
10. Staff and Board to agree target audiences for their annual business plan and develop a detailed logic model on how to address their needs and a detailed Equalities and Diversity Action Plan to implement the required actions. This to be monitored at Board meetings and at monthly staff meetings.
11. Marketing Manager (or equivalent) to update the website so it is as accessible as possible within our designated resources and encourages visits by more diverse visitors year on year. Monitor visitor data monthly.
12. Visitor Services Manager to ensure visitor data is monitored monthly and Audience Finder survey targets are set and met weekly to ensure we can monitor the diversity of our audiences in order to be more inclusive. Regular surveys track improvements to visitor diversity month on month with an annual report produced on progress. Survey targets to be set for all front of house (FOH) staff and monitored weekly.

## **2. Create and supply a supportive environment for all our workforce and visitors with protected characteristics.**

1. Director of Operations to review the staff handbook annually to ensure it is compliant with the latest legislation and ensure it has robust procedures to create a welcoming and safe workplace for all staff and volunteers.

2. Visitor Services Manager and Volunteer Coordinator to nurture a volunteer programme that offers training opportunities, career growth and engagement for a representative range of people from Hastings and surrounding area and monitor annually.
3. Allow free entry for everyone with a PIP; for under 18s; for East Sussex College students and for all carers accompanying someone with a disability and show a 2% increase year on year.
4. Trial free entry with detailed surveys in 2022 and 2023 with view to increasing audience diversity and look to increase free entry by moving the pay point to the Collection Galleries by the end of 2024.
5. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to set up a Partnership Club in 2022 to ensure that we develop open feedback channels for our target audiences and listen to their needs.
6. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to survey local partners annually and use feedback to inform the programme and this action plan, setting up an Audience Panel that will help inform our programming and provide constructive feedback.
7. Staff and Trustees are tasked with expanding networks to ensure selection processes are as inclusive as possible and better representation and inclusion is achieved over all creative practitioner roles and monitored annually by the Board.
8. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to create a dedicated safe space for our neurodiverse visitors with a designated monthly slot in the Learning Studio. To be advertised through appropriate channels and local partners.
9. Director of Operations and Head of Partnerships and Engagement to ensure the exhibition and engagement programmes cater for our target audiences of local families from low socio-economic backgrounds, neurodiverse visitors, local elders and people with dementia, and local refugees and asylum seekers; visitors to be surveyed to assess success and reported quarterly. We will continue to review target audiences to increase inclusion across our potential audiences.
10. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to develop a programme with local schools to reach children and parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds and from diverse ethnic backgrounds and to define what success looks like and to monitor this quarterly.
11. Operations Manager with support from Visitor Services Manager and Audience Development Manager to monitor visitor data monthly; track progress and report to Board and ACE quarterly.
12. Head of Marketing (or equivalent) to ensure that appropriate channels and plans are in place to communicate effectively with our target audiences and use analytics to monitor success and this to be reported to the Board on a quarterly basis.
13. Head of Marketing (or equivalent) to use Audience Finder (or similar) to help benchmark our audience and ensure we meet our audience diversity targets. See Audience Development Plan.
14. Head of Marketing to ensure that the language we use is appropriate for the audiences we are trying to reach and to check this with the Audience Panel.

### **3. Champion the creative case for diversity in all of our work.**

1. Director to ensure the exhibition programme reflects HC's commitment to diversity, with a commitment to make aspects of our programme representative and relevant to our target audiences and empower under-represented people to share their stories and lived experience, and to publicly recognise the value of their unique creative offer. Our targets include promoting women at all career stages; 1 of 4 exhibitions per year to be by an artist/s with protected characteristics. See logic model for details. (e.g. Project Art Works and Artist Support Pledge in 2022)
2. Director to take every opportunity to play a leadership role in promoting HC's commitment to diversity and equality and to sharing best practice with the sector and local partners and stakeholders and to report this to the Board quarterly.
3. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to devise a public programme of learning and engagement activities and events that appeals to a diverse audience and is relevant and accessible to our target audiences; track progress and report quarterly. Consideration to be given to transport needs, time of day, refreshments offered, price and content, etc. See Logic Model and Audience Development Plan for details.
4. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to devise ways of reaching beyond our building and taking our work to communities who may not be able to visit. This outreach programme to be developed for 2023/24 and a fundraising plan put in place to resource it by March 2023.
5. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to create a young ambassador scheme that supports young people (a key target group with lower engagement levels) and encourages continued education in the arts and to offer work placements and volunteer development and to track success, reporting annually.
6. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to explore a range of possibilities for widening access for people with various impairments, such as BSL guided talks or audio description and work with partners such as Vocal Eyes to seek to improve our offer for those visitors who are blind or have visual impairments by 2023; and to develop events and tours in BSL for Deaf visitors.
7. Head of Communications (or equivalent) to ensure subtitles are added to all films playing in house and online by end 2023. A suitable subtitler to be contracted to do this work and resources identified to fund it by the end of 2022.
8. Operations Manager to oversee installation of push button doors on main gallery doors and install added power points to facilitate robot tours for people with disabilities or who are shielding or socially isolated by end March 2022.
9. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to develop a new project with Chestnut Tree Hospice that supports sick children and their families, for 2026.
10. Head of Partnerships and Engagement to instigate new projects with local refugees and asylum seekers to share their stories, for 2025.
11. Director to ensure that selection panels and judging panels are diverse.
12. Director of Operations to ensure that all call outs and advertisements are accessible and to take positive action where appropriate to ensure this policy is delivered.

13. Director to ensure that more diverse people join the talent development pipeline into the sector, ensuring that talent development actively removes barriers to participation, monitors success and reports annually to the Board.
14. Board to monitor exhibitions programme to ensure it meets the aims of this action plan.

## **Monitoring and accountability**

*“Audience development is not a one-off activity. It’s easy to get a diverse audience for a single project, but real change only happens when you cultivate relationships with local communities over the long term.” – David Bryan, Xtend.*

Our annual action plan will set out how we monitor the impact of our policy and action plan; who is tasked to do the monitoring and by when; and how it is reported and to whom. In this way we can ensure continuing improvement against the above goals.

We will continue to work closely with Arts Council England and other partner organisations to benchmark our progress and receive constructive feedback. We will also ensure feedback from our Audience Panel, made up of a diverse group of visitors, our participants and stakeholders and our Partnership Clubs, that will provide deeper insight into the needs of local people, particularly our designated target audiences.