

PRIMARY

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – Policy and Action Plan Revised, October 2023

Introduction

Primary is an artist-led space that supports creative research through artist studios and residencies, public exhibitions and events. Our mission is to commission, produce and present art exploring ideas that affect societal change. We are a dynamic space for creative research, new work, and collaboration, expanding who is involved in making art and connecting local and global communities.

We are committed to working towards equity, diversity and inclusion, and to understanding and changing structural inequality and oppression. We recognise that this requires ongoing organisational learning and change. This Policy is a tool to keep on developing this area of work and to hold ourselves accountable. It is a working document that is reviewed regularly through our EDI Action Plan monitoring document and updated annually.

Primary is committed to equality of opportunity for all, and actively opposes any discrimination based on protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Equality Act 2010). Primary is committed to supporting and working with people from a diverse range of cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds; and reflecting a range of age, race, class, gender, sexuality and disability through our work.

Our work is rooted in our local context, and our programme aims to respond directly to the needs and challenges within the local area and to embed reciprocal relationships where local communities influence Primary's work and we have a corresponding positive impact on the neighbourhood. We aim to increasingly reflect the diversity of our neighbourhood within the organisation - from resident artists, staff and board to public programme and audiences. This has led to us thinking more about redistribution and regenerative practices – recognising the power and resources the organisation has and how these could be shared more fairly.

This policy reflects ongoing organisational development to deepen our understanding of intersectional oppressions and social justice. We acknowledge that any work to challenge structural inequality, including racism and ableism, is an ongoing journey of (un)learning: “we do not all have the same starting point and are not all socially conditioned or educated in the same way.” (‘The Social Justice Curriculum’, Wellcome Collection – Teresa Cisneros and Selene Burn).

Objectives and Action Plan

The objectives below set out a summary of key changes we want to make in each area of our work over the next year. This Policy is accompanied by a detailed Action Plan that will be reviewed and updated through a regular monitoring and evaluation process.

Across all areas of work, we aim to better reflect local demographics and support communities historically and currently underrepresented in the arts. We actively seek feedback from different perspectives to inform change – through focus groups, training, work with partner organisations, and our work with Critical Friends.

Studios and Artist Development

Increase the diversity of artists supported through Primary's Studios, Membership and Artist Development Programme.

- Effective monitoring to understand who we are working with and set targets for change.
- Inclusive Artist Development programme offering free membership to underrepresented groups.
- Effective partnership working to support a greater number of artists.
- Improving access and transparency in opportunities and application processes.

Public Programme: artists

Represent a diverse range of artists and practice through our Public Programme; and create opportunities for those currently underrepresented.

- Effective monitoring to understand who we are working with and set targets for change.
- Offering fair pay, adequate resources and accessibility support for artists. Reviewing pay annually, benchmarking across national organisations.
- Providing greater clarity and transparency for opportunities, and ensuring people are not excluded through use of language or application and selection processes.
- Sharing power and diversifying voices in decision-making to co-produce the programme.

Public Programme: audiences and participants

Engage diverse audiences and provide access to experiencing high quality contemporary art. Provide opportunities to engage with critical thinking, learning and reflection.

- Effective monitoring to understand who we are working with and set targets for change; listening to feedback to shape our offer.
- Improve the consistency of programme, to provide varied routes into engaging with our work.
- Make our programme more welcoming and accessible – including online and in person programming, website and marketing, accessibility for events, and access documents for visitors.

- Develop projects co-produced with communities.
- Test out a 'Takeover' programme – providing free space and resources to local groups.

Access (building)

Improve accessibility for all users of Primary.

- Improve studio/workshop provision through refurbishment and annual maintenance schedule.
- Obtain feedback from users, including Critical Friends, to reflect on first-stage refurbishment works and plan for future work.
- Undertake Access Audit to update Primary's 'Access Review and Action Plan'.
- Continue to improve access to the building, considering: comfort, experience, signage, welcome.

Board, Staff and Recruitment

Maintain an artist-led organisation, with a diversity of voices at board level and reflect the diversity of our local area and city in our Staff and Board.

- Use revised recruitment processes and checklist for consistent, standardised, transparent recruitment.
- Use positive action where appropriate in shortlisting and selection, to remove barriers and encourage applications from underrepresented groups.
- Board recruitment to expand diversity of voices at governance level (2023/4).
- Recruit an Associate Curator from the global majority (2024).
- Broaden pool of freelancers/contractors.
- Offer fair pay and accessibility support for staff and freelancers.
- Relevant training and critical reflection, to continue to build knowledge and good practice on equity, inclusion, diversity and social justice.
- Work with 2 Critical Friends per year to offer feedback and thinking from different perspectives.
- Include EDI as a regular agenda point for all sub-committees.

Marketing & Audience Development

- Increase capacity to expand ability to undertake targeted PR, marketing and audience development.
- Increase consistency, accessibility and reach of marketing and communication.
- Website audit and staff training to improve website, improving to complying with web content accessibility guidelines to get AA standard.
- Actively research and work with diverse media and press outlets.
- Implement suggestions from visitor feedback and focus groups (marketing, access), and work with Critical Friends and data analysis to continue to make our marketing material more accessible.

Appendix: Local context

Primary is in the Radford Ward of Nottingham in Area 4 of the city, which is a particularly diverse area in terms of ethnicity, cultural background and class compared to the wider city. We aim to reflect this diversity, increase representation, and address intersecting cultural and social barriers in our resident artists, staff, board, public programme, and in the audiences we attract. The local area is more racially and culturally diverse than the wider city. Data from the Radford Ward Profile (2023) shows that 46.8 % of the population identify as White British, as compared to 57.3% for the city. 19.4% identify as Asian/Asian British, as compared to 14.9% for the city and 14.4% identify as Black/African/ Caribbean/Black British, as compared to 10% for the city.

Radford and Area 4 have an unusually high percentage of working age adults: 88.5% in Radford compared to 69.9% in the rest of the city. This is partly due to the high student population in the area, with nearly 50% of households in Radford and Lenton being student households, compared to 9.7% in the rest of the city.

Radford Ward ranks highly in terms of 'deprivation' (Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019) and is within the 10% of most deprived areas in England. This data includes analysis of barriers to accessing housing and services; access to education and training; poverty affecting children and older people; crime rates; living environment and factors affecting health and disability.

At the heart of Primary's approach to working within this local context is a desire to not simply increase access to art, but to think about who shapes its content, and to challenge what kinds of cultural production are seen as 'valuable'.

We serve a neighbourhood that faces many challenges – reflecting national structural and systemic inequalities including poverty, health, housing and food inequalities, and racial and economic injustice. We are embedded in this locality and provide accessible art activity and a community facility. Primary works collaboratively with local groups to recognise and develop people's skills, support confidence and agency, and opportunities for knowledge-exchange across diverse groups to create change.