

FIRST LIGHT FESTIVAL

Equality and Diversity Policy

Revision History

This policy and related procedures and guidance will be monitored by First Light Festival C.I.C. board directors on a regular basis for compliance and will be reviewed at least annually.

Date	reviewed by (print name and role)	Approved by (print name, director)
31/7/2020	REDACTED, Project Manager	REDACTED
12/3/2021	REDACTED, Project Manager	REDACTED
26/10/2022	REDACTED, Project Manager	REDACTED
06/01/2023	REDACTED, project manager	REDACTED
06/01/2024	REDACTED, Project Manager	REDACTED

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1. Definitions

Arts Council England define equality as ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are not treated differently or less favourably because of a characteristic that they share. However, this does not mean treating everyone the same. It means making sure that no one is disadvantaged from participating in art and culture because of barriers that disproportionately affect people who share the same characteristics as them. Diversity is about recognising, respecting and valuing people's differences to contribute and to realise their full potential by promoting an inclusive culture for all.

The Equalities Act 2010 defines nine protected characteristic groups:

- Age
- Being or becoming a transsexual person
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

First Light Festival C.I.C also include Socio-economics as a protected characteristic. It is recognised that class and economic disadvantage and social and institutional barriers prevent people from participating in and enjoying the arts. This is in line with our key funder's, Arts Council England and East Suffolk Council, equality and diversity policies

2. Context

First Light Festival C.I.C is a Community Interest Company responsible for management and delivery of First Light Festival and affiliated activities.

First Light Festival took place for the first time in 2019. It was conceived as part of the vision for South Beach and Lowestoft's wider cultural regeneration as a whole, building a new positive narrative that celebrates its position as England's most easterly point. The festival is a key part of the East Suffolk Business Plan for Lowestoft and the Lowestoft Cultural Strategy.

The INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION 2015 shows that deprivation levels in Lowestoft South are very varied, with one part ranked in the top 20% least deprived LSOAs in the country but four are in the second most deprived quintile and five are in the most deprived quintile. 27.5% of households in Kirkley Ward, where the festival takes place, are families with children who have limited budgets and can struggle to make ends meet, compared to 5.9% in wider in East Suffolk. 3.3% of population of Kirkley are long term unemployed, compared to national average of 1.7%.

13.6% of Kirkley residents identify as being limited by their health in their day to day activities, compared to 17.6% nationally. At First Light Festival 2019 16% of audiences surveyed identified as deaf, disabled or having a long term health condition.

According to the latest data (2011 Census), 97.3% (18,778) of the population of Lowestoft South are white, which is a similar diversity profile to Waveney district, and generally lower proportions of minority ethnic groups than Suffolk as a whole. There are 516 (2.7%) people of black or minority ethnic origin in the division.

Lowestoft South shows a higher than average proportion of people over the age of 55. The commonest age group in Lowestoft South is 65-69-year olds and like many parts of Suffolk there is a much lower than average number of people of working age, particularly 20-39 year olds

Data is not currently available regarding religion, sex or sexual orientation.

(Statistics from <https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/>)

3. Policy

First Light Festival C.I.C is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive culture amongst our workforce, audiences, and partnerships to produce a Festival that is accessible for all.

We recognise that discrimination is unacceptable and although equality of opportunity has been a long-standing feature of our employment practices and procedure, we have made the decision to adopt a formal equal opportunities policy. Breaches of the policy will lead to disciplinary proceedings and, if appropriate, disciplinary action.

We will take positive action to promote equality wherever possible through our artistic programming, community engagement, employment practices and in the delivery of our activities. We see diversity and equality as an opportunity to develop our working relationships, encourage new talent, raise the bar for artistic excellence, inspire innovation and broaden horizons.

All First Light Festival C.I.C key decisions and activities should take into consideration the specific needs of the nine protected characteristic groups, as well as ensure our obligations to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equalities Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The socio-economic profile of Lowestoft is likely to point towards less cultural participation than the national average. Retaining and engaging with our local audience is central to First Light's values of inclusivity and accessibility - it is very important that Lowestoft residents feel that First Light is for them and that it inspires and empowers them and participating in the festival both in the run-up and at the festival is key to this.

We are always happy to listen to suggestions as to how access and provision for diversity and equality can be improved.

We will regularly review our processes to ensure we are in line with latest practice.

We will appoint a member of our team as Equality and Diversity lead for First Light Festival. They are responsible for maintaining this policy, ensuring procedures are implemented appropriately and that all members of the team are considering access as part of their own area of work at all times.

The Equality and Diversity lead and contact for First Light Festival is:

- REDACTED, Project Manager. REDACTED.

The Directors will be responsible for ensuring that the Equality and Opportunities policy is properly implemented, monitored and reviewed.

All First Light Festival C.I.C policies and procedures shall be kept under review to ensure that they do not operate against the Equality and Diversity Policy.

4. Procedures

4.1 Employment and recruitment.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

First Light Festival C.I.C is currently overseen by 4 directors, who are responsible for:

- Formulating & reviewing wider strategy
- Ensuring policy & practices keep to the organisation's aims
- Ensuring the organisation functions within its legal and financial requirements, and strives to achieve best practice
- Promoting the objectives of First Light Festival C.I.C
- exercise independent judgement, reasonable care, skill and diligence

We are working to develop equality amongst and diversify our Board of Directors by:

- Directors, in conjunction with project leads from key funders, will undertake a regular review of the board of Directors to identify need for changes or additional capacity, skills and knowledge.
- New Directors will be recruited through open recruitment and selection procedures and wherever possible vacancies will be advertised and fair and equitable shortlisting and interview processes will be followed.
- Being transparent in our decision making. Minutes of governance meetings detailing decision processes are kept for 10 years as per statutory duties.

STEERING GROUP:

First Light Festival benefits from a strong steering committee with representation from key local community leaders, educational providers, and cultural organisations. Members of steering group use their experiences, skills, and knowledge of specific areas to help us make programming, participation, and fundraising decisions locally.

We are working to develop equality amongst and diversify our steering group by:

- creating a group agreement of what their purpose is and to ensure all voices are heard.
- Being transparent in our decision making. Minutes of meetings detailing decision processes are kept for 10 years.

CORE TEAM

First Light Festival C.I.C employs a core staff and a regular team of freelancers working on long term and short-term contracts. The number of people working on the festival and affiliated projects throughout the year changes considerably due to the annual festival cycle.

We are working to develop equality amongst and diversify our team by:

- Putting in place appropriate and fair recruitment and employment practices and procedures. Recruitment and selection procedures will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Board of Directors.
- All job applicants and current staff will be asked to complete equal opportunities form to help us accommodate any specific requirements and identify possibilities for organisational improvement.
- When appointing individuals to positions or promotions the selection process and their suitability for the role will be solely based on their aptitude, ability and behaviours. We will ensure that no job applicant, freelancer or volunteer receives less favourable treatment than another on grounds of age, disability, ethnic origin, marital or parental status, political belief, religion, gender or sexual orientation.
- Support an engaged workforce that feels empowered and involved, who are encouraged to put forward new ideas, and who receive praise and recognition. We are committed to providing all team members with opportunities to maximise their skills and achieve their potential, offering training and flexible working arrangements wherever possible.
- Ensure working space and office is accessible and close to public transport routes.
- We are committed to ensuring all workers at the Festival have the right to work in the UK and are paid in line with the National Living Wage.
- We are committed to ensuring all personnel uphold our values and will be provided with copies of all relevant policies and procedures, including Diversity and Equality, Access, Whistleblowing and Safeguarding.
- We will also ensure that the changing and developing needs of personnel's individual needs are continuously recognised and appropriate adjustments made to working conditions and/or training provided.
- Discrimination, bullying and harassment are not tolerated. It is intended that this responsibility is shared by everyone and that all team members are comfortable to raise any concerns so we can apply corrective measures.

4.2 Suppliers and contractors / Procurement:

First Light Festival C.I.C aim to work with locally based contractors and suppliers where possible to support and encourage investment and development of infrastructure in the area. We are committed to acting ethically and with integrity in all the Festival's business relationships.

A large proportion of the Festival's casual staff are employees or workers engaged directly by third party contractors. This includes technicians, bars staff, traders, waste management, lifeguards, security and first aid. We will perform an annual review of our major labour providers to ensure they are fulfilling their obligations with regards to equality and employment practices.

As part of our tender evaluation criteria, suppliers are required to provide evidence that they have appropriate equal opportunities policies in place and are committed to them.

4.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - VOLUNTEERS and PARTICIPANTS:

First Light Festival C.I.C aims to engage with as wide a range of people as possible. We are working to develop and diversify our participation and volunteer programmes by:

- Working effectively in partnership with all sectors of the community.
- Engaging with relevant experts, organisations and individuals working with key groups when developing new projects.
- Encouraging and enabling people from underrepresented groups to participate by actively identifying and working to reduce barriers to participation at the festival, for example cost.
- Volunteering opportunities to publicised widely and application forms available in a simple, accessible format. Same for participation opportunities where applicable.
- Volunteers and participants to complete equal opportunities form to help us accommodate any specific requirements and identify possibilities for improvement.
- Ensuring training, activities, roles and responsibilities can be adapted to meet an individual's needs where possible.
- Providing on site facilities that ensure everyone is treated with dignity, respect and fairness
- Ensuring that language and design of publicity material is appropriate and accessible.
- Ensuring that no participant or volunteer receives less favourable treatment than another on grounds of age, disability, ethnic origin, marital or parental status, political belief, religion, gender or sexual orientation.
- Training core staff, event management, workshop leaders and volunteers to understand and meet the specific needs of audiences and each other.
- Taking positive action to promote equality wherever possible
- Monitoring take up of our services to ensure equity

4.4 ARTISTIC PROGRAMME

First Light Festival C.I.C aims to programme work which is broad, accessible and of very high quality, mixing world class artistes with highly regarded local talent. It encompasses live music, dance, theatre, cinema, talks, sport, workshops, wellbeing, science and much more across various stages and performances spaces. Partnerships with cultural organisations, science partners, museum and library services and education providers as well as community groups contribute to programming and outreach activities.

We are working to develop and diversify our artistic programme by:

- Actively considering this equality and diversity policy in decisions on artistic activity and programming
- Engaging with relevant organisations, individuals and communities when developing new projects
- Being transparent about the basis upon which we make decisions
- Working with groups and artists from the nine protected characteristic groups to facilitate their participation in projects and performances.
- Ask performers to complete equal opportunities form to help us accommodate any specific requirements, to ensure equity and identify possibilities for organisational improvement.
- Ensuring that no performer receives less favourable treatment than another on grounds of age, disability, ethnic origin, marital or parental status, political belief, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

4.5 AUDIENCES:

Our audience development plan aims to embed the festival locally, to make positive efforts to increase and broaden our participation opportunities and audiences, secure financial sustainability and integrate it with the wider cultural regeneration ambitions of Lowestoft.

We are working to develop equality amongst and diversify our audiences by:

- Work with community groups and leaders to actively identify and helps us work to reduce barriers to participation at the festival.
- Keep access to the festival site and the majority of events free and unticketed.
- Where events are ticketed, ensure ticket prices and other pricing, including traders, consider income deprivation where possible.
- Devise and implement education and outreach activity in relation to artistic programming
- Train staff and volunteers to understand and meet the specific needs of audiences
- Ensure marketing and publicity is accessible and available in a range of formats, including approaches necessary to reach particular sections of the population (e.g. disabled people and communities where a minority language is dominant)
- Providing on site facilities that ensure everyone on site is treated with dignity, respect and fairness
- Monitoring take up of our services to ensure equity

5. Monitoring and Measuring Equality Impact

We will conduct internal and external equality monitoring to inform our policies and ensure that we are meeting our commitment to equal opportunity for all team members, artists, community and audiences.

To meet this commitment, we will, through audience surveys and equal ops monitoring, request information relating to the 'protected characteristics'. We understand that some people will be reluctant to provide personal information relating for example to their age or sexuality and we will respect their decision. We will treat the information that is provided with discretion and appropriate confidentiality and data controls. The information will be used to ensure that we are meeting our commitment to equal opportunity for all team members, artists and audiences.

We also will make use of community mapping and statistics published by East Suffolk Council to support our work and to benchmark our performance.

6. Discrimination and harassment

First Light must protect the rights and promote the interests of those we work with to ensure their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people.

Our responsibilities are both legal and moral. Legally, First Light has to comply with the Equality Act 2010 in ensuring that no one working with us experiences unfair discrimination on the basis of their sex, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and gender reassignment. Morally, we all want First Light to be an organisation where everyone can feel valued, comfortable, supported and secure.

First Light take very seriously any complaint of bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation. Any report of discrimination or harassment will be investigated in line with our Grievance Policy and ACAS guidelines.

Definitions can be found here: <https://www.acas.org.uk/handling-a-bullying-harassment-discrimination-complaint>

First Light Festival C.I.C. Equality and Diversity Policy

References

East Suffolk Council Equality and Diversity policy, as of July 2020

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/equality-and-diversity/>

Arts Council England Equality Action guide

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Equality%20Action%20Guide%20-%20Introduction.pdf>

Statistics from <https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/>