Company of Wolves

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

We believe everyone has the right to make, attend and participate in art.

We want to break down any barriers that prevent people from being involved in our work and in the creative life of Scotland more widely.

Our artistic practice is based around the idea of inclusion - that we can become more whole by learning to listen to parts of ourselves and others that have been suppressed - that we can transcend the limits put on us by ourselves and others.

Our EDI approach is based on the premise that we can contribute to a more resilient, equitable, accessible and inclusive performance sector in Scotland, and is integral to everything we do as a company. We want to lead by example by putting inclusion at the heart of all our work.

We aim to support access, remove barriers and promote diversity for:

* our audiences;
* participants in our workshops and trainings;
* the people who work with us, and
* people who work in the wider creative sector;

Although we aim to improve access across everything we do, we believe we can make the most difference by supporting sustainable careers in the performance sector for people who have experienced barriers to participation due to socio-economic exclusion, oppression or prejudice.

In 2016, Creative Scotland commissioned a report into diversity in careers in the arts; the greatest barriers to diversity in the arts were identified as:

* Economic Barriers (76% of respondents)
* Lack of connections (68% of respondents and 81% of artists) - this particularly applied to respondents from lower income backgrounds;
* Gender (44% of respondents) - in particular caring responsibilities were cited as barriers to careers in the arts, and this applied overwhelmingly to women rather than men.

Accordingly, over the period 2024-26 we will focus on removing barriers associated with exclusion, prejudice or oppression due to:

* Race or ethnicity;
* Socio-economic deprivation;
* Gender and sexuality

**EDI Aims, Objectives and Targets**

NOTE: Although we are focusing on support for people who face barriers due to one or more of the factors mentioned above, "diverse backgrounds" should be taken to mean *anyone* who has experienced systemic oppression, exclusion or prejudice.

##### Aim 1: Support inclusion and diversity in the performing arts sector in Scotland, and create better routes to opportunity for under-represented talent in Scotland

* Lead by example – be transparent and vocal about what we’re doing to support inclusion and diversity;
* Establish annual Labs to provide vital career development, skill-building, community-building and networking opportunities to artists who work in devised theatre in Scotland, particularly those from diverse backgrounds; to also assist their longer-term mental health, and to give paid work to more artists in Scotland.
* Pilot our Associate Artist Programme for 2 emerging theatre-makers: prioritising individuals who have experienced exclusion, oppression or prejudice. This will be a transformative, bespoke programme of medium-term regular support and development, including a significant chance to showcase their talents as part of the cast of a Company of Wolves production. The artists will benefit from learning new skills, observing and contributing to the practical aspects of running a theatre company, gaining new contacts and connection with the performing arts community in Scotland, and developing their own practice.
* Work with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Fair Access programme to support young people from excluded backgrounds (including from SIMD20 postcodes, care-experienced, or refugees/asylum seekers) to access performing arts training.
* Teach on the RCS MA Classical & Contemporary Text course to contribute to training more diverse, highly skilled, open-minded and resilient actors and directors in Scotland.
* Create a placement opportunity for a less experienced technician/stage manager (usually a recent graduate) to shadow and learn from the more experienced technical & production team on each of our productions, to help address the severe shortage of highly skilled and experienced touring technicians and SMs in Scotland. People from under-represented backgrounds will be prioritised for placements.
* Through engaging young people with our shows, talks and workshops (as described below), to give young people who experience significant barriers to participation in the arts their first taste of what contemporary theatre can be, and some vital insights into how they could find a place / forge a career within this world (a world that may previously have seemed impenetrable to them).

##### Aim 2: Consolidate and expand our activities to reach a diverse audience, and help cultivate a wider audience for devised theatre in Scotland in general

* Aim that at least 25% of our venues on each tour will be in areas within the top 20% on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), or in geographically excluded areas. Venues in areas high on the SIMD whom we already have connections with include the Beacon in Greenock, Platform in Easterhouse, Heart of Hawick and Rothesay Pavilion. We’ll also reach out to venues new to us, such as community centres in deprived areas around Glasgow and the Central Belt, particularly under-served by cultural offers. (E.g. we’re currently beginning a conversation with East Dunbartonshire Council.) We give equal priority though to geographically remote areas as to areas high on the SIMD, as we understand that many areas are significantly disadvantaged due to remoteness limiting the cultural opportunities for their residents, even though the data does not identify them as deprived. We will continue to nurture relationships we’ve developed with venues we’ve toured to several times before, but aim that each tour will include at least 20% of venues that we don’t have a regular relationship with.
* Begin a partnership with the Alwaleed Centre at Edinburgh University to give access to our shows for the Syrian refugee populations that they support across Scotland: offering them free tickets and bespoke workshops, talks etc where possible.
* Encourage the participants from disadvantaged backgrounds whom we work with to attend our shows: including care-experienced young people reached through our work with Who Cares Scotland, and young people from other diverse backgrounds reached through the RCS Transitions and Widening Access to the Creative Industries programmes. RCS will also connect us with other organisations who reach diverse demographics of young people in Scotland, including Intercultural Youth Scotland, LGBT Youth Scotland, GMAC Film, Impact Arts, etc. We’ll offer targeted ticket discounts to these groups wherever possible.
* Promote our work to graduates of PASS at Edinburgh College, MGA Academy, New College Lanarkshire, Glasgow Kelvin College, QMU, University of the West of Scotland etc.
* Continue to promote our work in a way that emphasises its accessibility to audiences who might automatically feel that experimental theatre would be excluding or “not for them”. Including making work based on classic texts, making work drawing from familiar forms such as traditional songs and folklore, and making work that relies just as much on a visual and physical language as on text (e.g. for those who don’t have English as a first language).
* Continue to create work that, implicitly or explicity, questions gender roles and the limitations of society’s categorisations of gender and sexuality; and make connections with LGBTQ+ audiences who would particularly relate to these themes.

##### Aim 3: Consolidate and improve our approach to supporting access to our workshops and trainings for participants from diverse backgrounds

* Annual review of all workshop/training publicity materials to ensure they are inclusive and welcoming to people from diverse backgrounds; supported by consultancy from our Board Working Group which includes Ayo Schwartz (head of HR at NTS) and Dr Stephen Greer who is highly experienced in LGBTQ+ inclusivity.
* Offer 50% bursaries for up to 25% of all paid workshop places.
* Allow an access budget to support participants with additional access needs such as BSL interpretation, or to cover the costs of travel, childcare, or lost work as far as possible.
* Promote our training opportunities to students on and graduates of the RCS Transitions programme, and to the Scotland-wide network of drama teachers that the RCS Fair Access team are connected into.
* Work with MACCT to embed inclusion in our teaching at RCS. (The MACCT course is also deeply committed to accessibility, diversity, anti-racism and social justice, and our work with the course allows us to deepen our understanding of these vital themes, while working with a notably diverse and socially committed cohort of young theatre makers.)
* Make all participants aware of our digital learning offers including our new online archive, where they can learn more about our making processes and the creative journeys of past shows. We’ll talk to schools we’re partnering with, and to other colleagues who work in Further/Higher Education, to assess how our digital learning material could tie in with curricula, and how it could be made as useful and accessible as possible so it can be part of teaching in schools and colleges.

##### Aim 4: Continue to evolve Company of Wolves working culture and methods to better understand and embed inclusion

* Continual cultural evolution and learning within Company of Wolves to better understand exclusion and prejudice. Particularly focusing on increasing our understanding of how to overcome disability-related barriers, and less visible barriers faced by groups such as LGBTQ+ people and those from economically marginalised backgrounds.
* Refine our recruitment processes to ensure they are as inclusive and accessible as possible for people with different needs – supported by consultancy from Board member Ayo Schwartz – to help us ensure diversity among our workshop participants and our artistic and backstage teams.
* Continue to diversify the range of voices and backgrounds represented on our Board: recruit at least one new Trustee by the end of 2024.
* Evolve our working practices, strategies and access support so that participants and freelancers we engage who have caring responsibilities (including our core team) can participate fully and effectively in the company’s work.
* Hold open recruitment processes wherever practical; including for long-term recurring roles with the company such as Company Manager, Producer, Marketing Manager, Assistant Producer etc. We will also always hold open callouts for performers (informed by Tonic’s Theatre Casting Toolkit).
* Continue to require all freelancers we work with to sign up to our Dignity at Work policy and to subscribe to the core values of openness, equality and respect that we expect everyone working with us to uphold.
* Continue to consult with leading organisations such as Freelancers Make Theatre Work, Federation of Scottish Theatre and the Scottish Government Fair Working policy toolkit to develop a formal Fair Working Policy and to ensure that we remain abreast of best practice within our activities.
* Provide a system of wellbeing support to all freelancers we work with; with budget in place to allow this. This could involve supporting performers’ physical wellbeing through e.g. a chiropractic session, or supporting mental wellbeing through a therapy session / a dramatherapist attending to work with the group- whatever proves to be needed.