

NORFOLK
NORWICH
FESTIVAL

IMAGE: LILY MONSEY

2025-2026
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy

ABOUT NORFOLK & NORWICH FESTIVAL

Norfolk & Norwich Festival (NNF) shares exceptional arts experiences across East England. We lead and support celebration, creativity and curiosity in our community to make our part of the world a great place to live, work and play.

Norfolk & Norwich Festival takes place in Norwich and around Norfolk for 17 days each May. The Festival programme encompasses many different artforms, it is contemporary, international and for everybody. The Festival is distinctive because we collaborate with artists – from down the road and around the world – to explore the unique physical and cultural identities of our place and to make art which is meaningful to the lives of our audiences.

Festival Connect & Create encompasses all our work in cultural education, creative learning and participation.

Festival Connect & Create, will take place year-round, foreground creative participation for all, and create and facilitate partnerships and networks that improve the cultural offer for children and young people across Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Peterborough and Suffolk.

Norfolk & Norwich Festival is an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation; and financially assisted by Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council. Our annual turnover is around £2 million each year. We are a registered Charity.



OUR CORE VALUES

CREATIVE

We champion artistic excellence and value creativity in everyone.

CURIOUS

We explore and reflect the changing social and physical contexts in which we live.

INCLUSIVE

We are respectful of the diversity and difference of people and their views and values.

COLLABORATIVE

We work with artists, communities, peers, partners and stakeholders to achieve common goals.

STRATEGIC

We balance artistic and social ambition with sustainable business.

OUR GOALS ARE...

- To have more people experience and value the arts
- To hold a unique and distinctive arts festival, which supports creative practice and is valued by audiences
- To be a champion for excellence in our cultural offer for all children and young people
- To be embedded in Norfolk and Norwich and to extend our reach and influence across East Anglia and beyond.
- To be socially responsible, committed to questions and actions about a changing world
- To have a stable and adaptive business structure with diverse income streams.

PROGRAMME PRINCIPLES

- **Art relevant to today**, blurring the boundaries between art forms and between art and everyday life.
- **'Festival spirit'** which we bring to our work to celebrate, to share cultural experiences and to bring our community together
- **Questions and actions about a changing world**, with a focus on: Equality, diversity and inclusion; placemaking; and environmental sustainability



LANDSCAPE

Throughout the 21st century, there has been a growing discussion around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). This is in part due to:

Globalisation – There is a greater need to understand other cultures and communities as people move around the world, whether you work for a company on a different continent, go on holiday, watch an international film or try a new cuisine.

Growing acceptance – People having more exposure to people “different” to themselves fosters communication and learning. In turn, this helps to break down the stereotypes or stigma.

Social media – With the increased use in social media, more people are able to share information and voice opinions. This can help to inform those who may not usually engage, hear different perspectives or experiences and to build community.

News and politics – certain events such as the death of George Floyd (2020) and Mark Duggan (2011), the same sex marriage law being passed (2013) and the Me-Too movement (2017) have highlighted injustices, stoked conversations and pressured people to action change. This also links to the rise in protests we have seen over the last two decades, allowing more voices to be heard and issues to be brought into the public eye.

LEGISLATION & GUIDANCE

This plan has been written in part, by condensing the following documents.

Equality Act 2010 - The Equality Act legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society. It determines our legal duty to improving EDI and provides a baseline for everyone in the UK. This feeds into areas such as our recruitment and employment processes. The Act outlines the groups who cannot be discriminated against (protected characteristics) and for who we are aiming to improve our practice.

Lets Create Strategy 2020 - 2030 - Let's Create is Arts Council England's (ACE) current 10-year strategy for culture and creativity. The Let's Create strategy underpins all ACE work including activity they fund. Funding is steered by their four **Investment Principles**, one being Inclusivity & Relevance. In this they note that organisations must have clear, measurable plans to ensure their leadership, governance, workforce, programme and audiences are more reflective of communities in terms of geography, socio-economic background and the protected characteristics.

Investment Principles Plan - As an ACE National Portfolio Organisation receiving regular investment for the next 3 years, we have set out a list of actions against this Investment Principle which we report on quarterly. For consistency, we have aligned the actions in the Investment Principles plan with this EDI Action Plan.

Creative Case for Diversity - The Creative Case for Diversity is ACE's approach to equality and diversity and how organisations can enrich their work by embracing a wide range of influences and practices. The Creative Case for Diversity focuses on Equality (removing barriers to release potential) Recognition (new conversations to place artists from diverse backgrounds in culture) and A New Vision (a framework to have it centrally to decision-making)

IMAGE: KEZIA TAN



CONTEXT

There is a perception of Norfolk as a place lacking in diversity and change is therefore unable to happen. However, comparing the last two census reports, we see that Norwich has become more culturally diverse in the last 10 years. The city was named the bisexual capital of England after the 2021 census results found that 3.89% of residents identify as bisexual, the highest of any local authority in England and Wales. Additionally, communities from diverse backgrounds are also apparent in pockets of the county.

Areas of our work, such as recruitment processes, will consider equal opportunities across all protected characteristics as part of our legal duty. As an organisation however, we are specifically interested in addressing the lack of diversity around disability, cultural diversity and socio-economic background. We focus on these demographics because:

A) these are the demographics that [ACE identified](#) have “traditionally had least access to our resources” and will address using their Let’s Create Strategy. As a recipient of regular ACE funding, we want our work to align with their outcomes.

B) We understand we can’t “do everything for everyone” and having a focus will allow us to be more effective.

C) Our programmes of work naturally supports the development of these demographics. For example, our Festival Connect & Create work target areas of need and socio-economic deprivation through their place-based projects.

While socio-economic background isn’t a protected characteristic, the Equality Act 2010 requires the public sector to consider how to reduce inequalities resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. As we are largely funded by public sector bodies (ACE and Norwich City Council) it is also in our best interest.

We also understand that there are large pockets of deprivation in Norfolk and East Anglia which directly impacts the opportunity of, or exposure to, arts and culture.



CONTEXT (cont)

We want our work around EDI to be meaningful and address places and people who have been disadvantaged by historic patterns of public funding. While our focus demographics listed above apply to all our programmes of work, there may be times when conversations develop to look outside of these chosen characteristics. For example, we understand that there has historically been a lack of female composers in classical music and so this may be something we look to address when commissioning new work in that genre.

As an organisation who want to engage with communities and experiences of the UK today, who want everyone to be able to access culture and creativity and who want to support artistic excellence, we have a vested interest in progressing our EDI plans. This can only be done by broadening our audience and bringing in new thought. As a large scale, multi-artform festival we have a responsibility to create equity where we can, both providing a platform for artists from diverse backgrounds to showcase their work and also enabling audiences from diverse backgrounds to experience and engage with our activity.

Thought and practice around EDI can often be fast changing and look very different across the sector, the country or between organisations. We will keep abreast of what these differences look like and adopt good practice where we can and where appropriate. However, to ensure we continue on a forward trajectory, we need to make sure our actions are manageable.

Other organisations may be delivering more or better. We see these people as guides of where we can get to. We want to challenge ourselves but not at the cost of falling short or biting off more than we can chew...

...This action plan is an evolving document, setting out our current ambitions for the year 2025 - 2026. Actions may take a month, a year or more to achieve but by listing them here they can be considered and adopted in our day-to-day work. This action plan will be reviewed each year to add new actions or evolve those which have been achieved.

CONSIDERATIONS MADE WHEN DRAFTING THIS PLAN...

- **LANGUAGE** – preferred language around EDI can vary depending on who/where you are. We will be mindful of this but also acknowledge we need consistency across all our communications to ensure our aims are clear.
- **DEFINITIONS** – We have chosen specific words and phrasing for our EDI work. Words such as “diversity” or “culture” can be interpreted in a variety of ways. We have provided a short glossary to give context to our documents.
- **FLEXIBILITY** – Our organisation and outputs change throughout the annual cycle and from year to year. Rather than setting specific targets for our actions and measures, we will ask our staff and artists to consider what is appropriate for our audiences. This ensures that EDI is being embedded into our decision-making and is tailored to be effective rather than becoming a tick-box exercise.
- **INTERSECTIONALITY** – While we focus on certain protected characteristics in our EDI work, we understand the growing conversation and barriers around intersectionality. Some work will address this as it has natural overlap but we will also be mindful of artistic work or our internal processes which looks at this.

GLOSSARY

EQUALITY – Treating people fairly and equally, regardless of their background, identity or experiences and ensuring everyone has the same opportunities.

DIVERSITY – Recognising, respecting and valuing the differences in people from all walks of life, identities and lived experiences and the range of perspectives they can offer.

INCLUSION – Actively enabling people with different perspectives, backgrounds and experiences to participate and feel included in activities or processes.

EQUITY – Recognising that people may face more or different barriers than others and resources or opportunities may be needed to address inequality.

GLOBAL MAJORITY – Specially referencing people and communities of colour. In the past, this has been referenced by the acronym BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic). Where possible, we will specify ethnicity.

ACCESSIBLE – Making information, activities, experiences and environments useable by as many people as possible by reducing barriers (e.g physical, digital) that prevent them from participating

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS – The law defines the protected characteristics as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. While socio-economic background isn't a protected characteristic, we include this in our considerations, monitoring and areas of focus.

TARGET AUDIENCE – for the purposes of this plan, our target audiences are people with disabilities, people from culturally diverse backgrounds and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Where possible, in our updates and reporting we will specify who the people are e.g artists, audiences, staff, and their community e.g wheelchair users, the Portuguese community.

IMAGE: PINE AGENCY



PROGRESS TO DATE

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion has been a specific focus for Norfolk & Norwich Festival since 2013. During that time, we have put the following actions in place:

Moved to Norwich Guildhall – The office move allowed for accessible working and meeting spaces for staff and visitors. Building work was undertaken to adapt the doorframes and install a lift to achieve this. It also enabled us to open up the building for events.

Diversified our Board – Diversity of our Trustees has increased from 9% to 36.5% since 2016. We have also recruited Trustees with a broader range of experience and skills and have also nominated a Trustee as the EDI lead for the Board.

Founded a subgroup – We have created an EDI subgroup who meet every six weeks to push action forward. The membership includes representation from each department.

Created a data pack – Using various publicly available data sources, we have a data pack which gives an overview of the diversity across Norfolk and Norwich. We aim to use this as a starting point for where to target work, specifically around Festival Connect & Create projects.

All staff training – We have provided EDI training for all staff to ensure everyone has a baseline understanding of current practice, language and bias. This was led, most recently by Tonic Theatre.

Flexible working – Our staff are able to work in a variety of ways to do their job in the way that suits them. This including flexible working requests, hybrid working, annualised hours, job shares.

IMAGE: LILY MONSEY



PROGRESS TO DATE (cont)

Mainstage programming – We have opted to use our “mainstage” events to programme artists from diverse backgrounds, giving them more visibility and wider reaching audiences. For example, in 2025, our opening act was Pakistani-American singer Arooj Aftab and the headline Spiegeltent show *Showdown* was by a black-led, UK based circus company.

Programmed in physically accessible venues – The past couple of years, all our Festival venues have had level access to ensure there are not physical barriers stopping people attending our events. We aim to ensure all events through the year meet this standard.

Ticket concessions – We offer the following concessions: Jobseekers, students, D/deaf or disabled people, Go4Less cardholders, under 18s and under 25s. We also offer a free essential companion ticket.

Developed Volunteer opportunities – Since 2022, we have worked alongside organisations such as City College Norwich and New Routes to deliver a buddy scheme to provide volunteering opportunities for those who may have barriers to taking part. In 2025, we had 37 volunteers take part through the buddy scheme.

Adapted our recruitment process – We have adapted our recruitment process to make it more inclusive and to ensure it caters to people who have access needs. This includes allowing applicants to submit sections by video, providing a large-print option and asking for any reasonable adjustments for interview. In 2025 we began trialling anonymous applications.

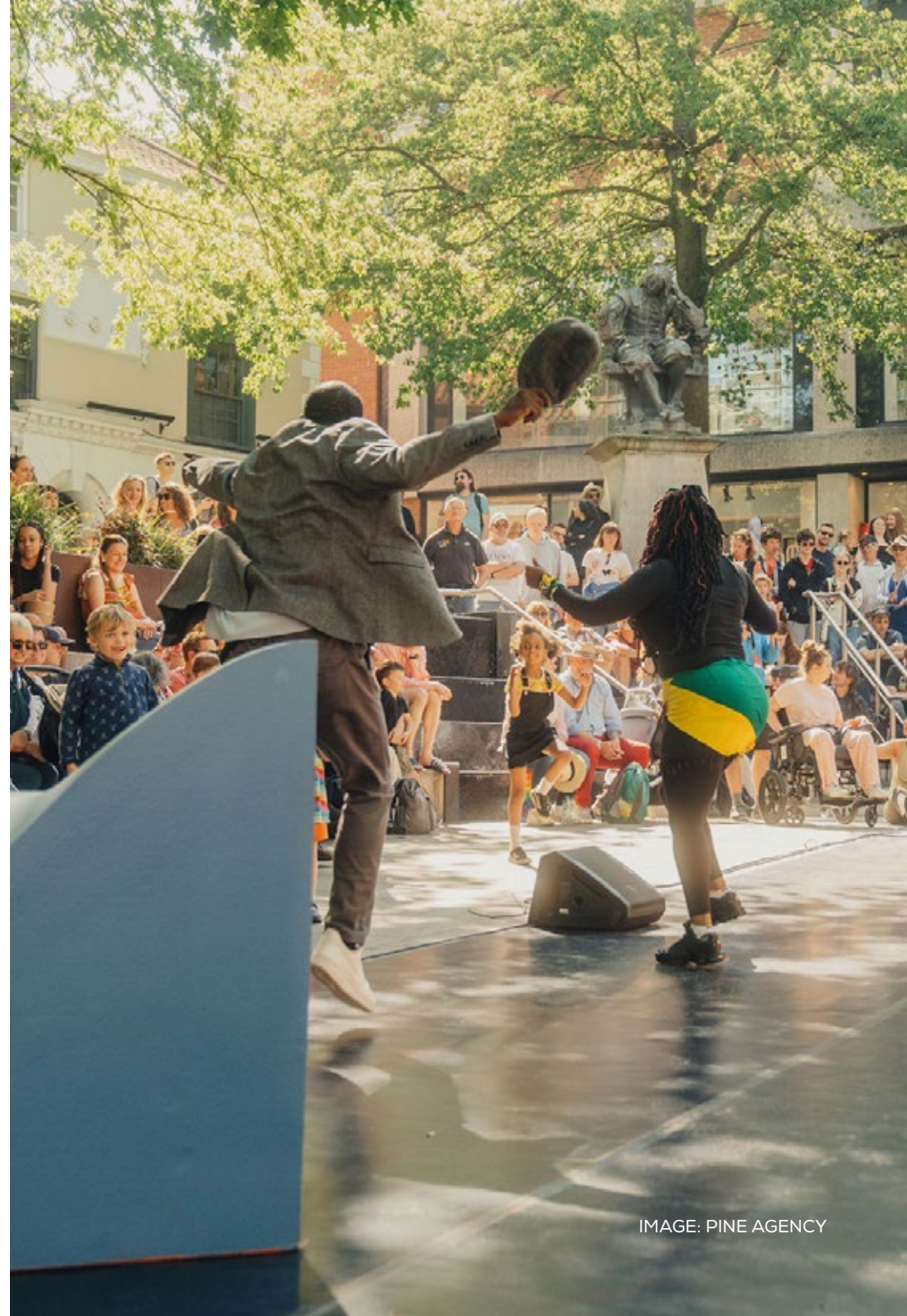


IMAGE: PINE AGENCY

PROGRESS TO DATE (cont)

Integrated our outreach work – in 2025, our Festival Connect & Create team started presenting work in the Festival with projects such as *MONSTERS*, *Norwich Nine* and *The River of Hope* with the aim of engaging new audiences specifically those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Access web page – We have created an access page which has all the Festival information for someone with access needs. This includes the large print and audio brochure, information on booking accessible tickets and which shows are British Sign Language (BSL) interpreted, captioned.

Put our action plan online – We have added a webpage which gives an overview of our EDI action plan so everyone is able to see what we have achieved and what we're aiming for. We update this each year.

Commissioned artists – We have commissioned a number of artists from diverse and different backgrounds, aiming to give an opportunity and voice to those who may be overlooked. These include artists such as South American circus company, Circolombia, two artists in residence each year since 2023, Dan Canham's work over three years and Joanna Holland as part of the Unlimited partnership.

Venue accessibility information – We have listed all venues we use for the Festival online which includes accessibility information so people can plan their journey and experience ahead of time.

IMAGE: LILY MONSEY



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IMAGE: KAT MAGER