Groundswell ARTS
Growing creative communities

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESS POLICY
AND ACTION PLAN

Groundswell Arts is committed to devising creative projects that support high levels of community engagement and inclusion. As a charity working within and alongside diverse communities, our creative practice is rooted in care, collaboration and accessible participation for all people involved.

We are committed to providing access for all children, carers and teachers to the arts as participants, practitioners and audience, throughout the range of our creative programmes. Access is incorporated at the earliest planning stages of every project to ensure that barriers are removed rather than managed later.

Core principles and values include

- Unconditional positive regard: valuing everyone for who they are and their strengths
- Intentionality
- Curiosity
- Belonging
- Voice of the people
- Active Listening
- Non-judgemental practice
- Trauma awareness
- Creating safety
- Access
- Representation
- Co-creation

To achieve these Groundswell Arts undertakes to ensure that all job applicants, participants, team and audience members across the range of our activities are treated equitably and encouraged to develop and realise their full potential, irrespective of age, lived experience, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, *socio*- economic background, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, religion or belief (including lack of belief), or sex and sexual orientation.

We recognise discrimination as being a process of acting unfairly against an individual or group by exclusion, verbal comment, denigration, or by failing to recognise and respond to access needs communicated or demonstrated by participants.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, Groundswell Arts is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, creating an environment of respect,understanding and joy, which welcomes and values people's differences across our workforce, and in which no form of bullying, harassment, disrespectful or discriminatory behaviour is tolerated.

We are dedicated to encouraging a supportive and inclusive culture that ensures all participants, employees, and job applicants are given equal opportunity and that our organisation is representative of all sections of society. We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination and recognise that all individuals are different and should be treated fairly and equally in accordance with their needs. This includes proactively supporting access requirements, offering flexible approaches to participation and work, and embedding accessible communication methods across our programmes.

This policy outlines our commitment to providing equality and fairness to all, and we must reflect this policy within the content areas of our programme of work.

It is the responsibility of the Artistic Directors to monitor the effectiveness and ongoing development of the Policy and the Action Plan, in consultation with the Board of Trustees. Each

member of the company has responsibility for their own compliance.
All staff, freelancers and volunteers share responsibility for ensuring our work is accessible, inclusive and safe for everyone we work with.

This policy is delivered across all aspects of Groundswell Arts' work: from managing our workplace to selecting employees, to our communications. These include:

- the appointment of members to its Board
- the appointment of staff, their conditions of service and employment procedures
- The contracting and management of freelancers
- the appointment of volunteers
- all dealings with the public and participants
- the design and accessibility of artistic content, workshops, public spaces, communication materials and digital resources

This policy and the associated Action Plans are monitored and reviewed annually by the Groundswell Arts Board of Trustees. Access actions will additionally be reviewed every six months to ensure we continue to respond to community needs and emerging best practices in inclusive arts.

Public and Participants

Groundswell Arts is committed to ensuring that all projects are accessible, inclusive, and representative of our diverse communities. We work proactively to identify and remove barriers to participation by:

- Scheduling events at suitable times for children, families, and community members.
- Meeting cultural and religious needs wherever possible, including dietary requirements.
- Providing translation support, particularly for programmes such as *Sing Our Story*.
- Developing SEN/D-appropriate resources, including visual timetables, learning stories, and clear signage.
- Training practitioners in basic Makaton to support children's communication.
- Designing activities that accommodate a wide range of needs and abilities.
- Selecting venues that are accessible and welcoming.
- If hosting an event, ensuring quiet spaces are made available if needed.
- Ensuring marketing materials are accessible in both format and content.
- Covering transport costs when local delivery is not possible.
- Offering free provision for low-income families to remove financial barriers.
- Encouraging participation from underrepresented groups.
- Ensuring that disability, mental health, or other disadvantages are never a barrier to taking part.

Working With Freelancers

Groundswell Arts works with freelance practitioners, volunteers, and permanent staff. We are committed to supporting all team members by:

- Paying at least the London Living Wage to all staff and freelancers.

- Including planning and research time in freelance contracts.
- Running freelance payroll every two weeks to ensure timely payment.
- Providing opportunities for professional development and practice sharing.
- Offering access to shared resources, equipment, desk space, and digital/technical support.
- Supporting freelancers through networking opportunities, signposting work, and providing references.
- Offering paid for supervision
- Offering freelance wellbeing daysEnsuring all teams are consulted on their access needs

- Developing riders to support team access needs

We are committed to:

- Ensuring recruitment decisions are based solely on merit and ability.
- Creating an organisational culture that promotes dignity, respect, and inclusion.
- Valuing individual differences and contributions.
- Meeting legal requirements to prevent discrimination.
- Designing accessible volunteer and job application processes.
- Making reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and staff.
- Maintaining a workplace free from intimidation, bullying, and harassment.
- Providing fair access to training and development opportunities.
- Ensuring all team members feel included in organisational life.

Current actions already carried out

- Maintaining Disability Confident employer status.
- Prioritising accessibility across all programmes and locations.
- Reducing barriers for children with SEN/D, including the use of Makaton and translation.
- Encouraging cultural sharing within programmes to strengthen community connection.
- Offering free activities in areas of deprivation wherever possible.
- Using evaluation tools that capture verbal and non-verbal participant experiences.
- Providing livestream or remote access for those unable to attend in person.
- Supporting a diverse range of practitioner backgrounds and experience levels.

Action Plan for March 2026/ March 27

Learning and Training

- We will arrange IDEA training for all staff in 2026/27

Diversity

- Broaden recruitment platforms and networks to increase diversity among applicants.
- Increase trustee representation from the global majority
- Ensure an increase of diverse resources and artefacts used within the Communication Pod programme
- Appoint a New Board member responsible for EDIA
- Increase representation of the global majority / disabled and male practitioners with reference to 2026/27 programmes including Sing Our Story, The Communication Pod, Light Box, and Invention Lab

Anti-Racism

- Arrange organisational training and or consultation with Shaddai Tembo for 2026/27
- Fundraise to further develop work around trauma awareness and practice linked to Rayne Foundation programme.

- Audit Sing Our Story repertoire and consider producing some anti-racist guidelines for creative practice within sessions

- Explore developing more culturally relevant resources within our Dancing Together and Communication Pod programmes
- Build in links and resources to global majority scientists and inventors in Invention Lab programme.

Accessibility

- Ensure we produce accessible resources across all programmes and training programmes
- Develop a Groundswell access announcement slide to be used across all training sessions
- Develop an access statement outlining expectations for communication, introductions, and sharing access needs in sessions.
- Increase access features on the website, including audio description buttons
- Include access descriptions on all photographs on social media posts.
- Ensure we have fully adopted the principles of the social model of disability and develop learning with staff around this

- Read and research and develop knowledge around autism in the early years.

Inclusi

- Ensure all digital and print communications reflect the diversity of our communities.
- Embed inclusive approaches across marketing and press activities that reflect the language adopted through the social model of disability
- Include visual descriptions in social media content, and develop knowledge in inclusive social media posting
- Adapt all programmes for special schools by building in longer site visits, delivery periods and a greater amount of time for planning and resources to be built into budgets.
- Ensure all staff are informed, briefed about and comply with the equality and diversity policy.
- Make partners, funders, and applicants aware of this policy wherever relevant
- Review employment practices to maintain fairness.twice a year
- Use visual descriptions and pronouns at events and online sessions.
- Ensure up-to-date language is used across all communications, and the most relevant accepted terminology is used, e.g. Global Majority, Neurodiverse, pronouns given etc.
- Increase our work in trauma-aware and informed practice, increasing this particularly in our development of Sing Our Story with care-experienced children with the Rayne Foundation. Arrange further consultation and training work with Kazzum Arts in 2026/27

Monitoring and Review

- Review progress of policy twice a year with the Board of Trustees, developing action plans to address any underrepresentation.
- The Executive Directors are responsible for implementing this policy; the Board oversees policy development and compliance.
- This policy is supported by senior management, the advisory board, and employee representatives.
- This policy will be reviewed twice yearly with directors making relevant updates and updating trustees.
- We will have a nominated trustee responsible for EDIA.

March 2026