



Project WordPlay CIC

Equal Opportunities & EDI Policy

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Applies to	All staff, freelancers, volunteers, trustees and participants
Contact	hello@projectwordplay.co.uk

Our commitment

Project WordPlay CIC believes that creativity, communication, and connection belong to everyone.

We are committed to equality of opportunity — in our programmes, our employment practices, and everything

we do. We actively work to remove barriers so that every person can participate, contribute, and thrive.

We do not just aim to avoid discrimination. We aim to be genuinely inclusive.

1. Introduction

Project WordPlay CIC is a Community Interest Company that uses the arts to create connection and build communication skills, particularly with children and young people who face barriers to participation — including those with EAL, SEND, SEMH needs, and those from asylum-seeking or refugee backgrounds.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are not add-ons to our work — they are woven into our purpose. This policy sets out our commitment and our approach, and explains what we expect of everyone associated with Project WordPlay CIC.

This policy applies to:

- Our programmes and participant experience
- Our employment and volunteer recruitment practices

- Our relationships with partners, funders, and suppliers
- Our governance and decision-making

2. Legal framework

This policy is grounded in the Equality Act 2010, which protects people from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on nine protected characteristics. We have duties both as an employer and as a service provider.

The nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

Protected characteristic	What this means for Project WordPlay
Age	We welcome children, young people, and adults of all ages. We do not assume capability or need based on age.
Disability	We design our programmes to be accessible. We seek to understand and accommodate each participant's needs, including SEND and physical disabilities.
Gender reassignment	We respect and affirm the gender identity of every participant, staff member, and volunteer.
Marriage and civil partnership	We do not discriminate against anyone based on their relationship status in employment matters.
Race	We celebrate cultural diversity. We work with communities from a wide range of ethnic and national backgrounds and ensure all feel equally valued.
Religion or belief	We respect all faiths and none. We do not impose our own beliefs and create space for all worldviews.
Sex	We treat all genders equally in our programmes and our employment practices.
Sexual orientation	We affirm and include LGBTQ+ participants, staff, and volunteers without exception.

In addition to our legal duties, we recognise that many of the communities we work with face intersecting disadvantages that go beyond protected characteristics alone — including socioeconomic deprivation, language barriers, immigration status, and experience of trauma. Our commitment to inclusion extends to these dimensions too.

3. Types of discrimination

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under the Equality Act 2010 and by this policy:

- **Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic — for example, refusing to cast a child in a role because of their race.** Direct discrimination

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- **Applying a policy or practice that disadvantages a group sharing a protected characteristic — for example, holding sessions only at times that exclude certain communities.** Indirect discrimination
 - **Unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates a hostile environment.** Harassment
 - **Treating someone unfairly because they have raised a concern or complaint under equality legislation.** Victimisation
 - **Treating someone less favourably because of their association with a person who has a protected characteristic.** Discrimination by association
 - **Treating someone less favourably because you assume they have a protected characteristic, even if they do not.** Discrimination by perception

We will take all instances of discrimination — whether direct or indirect, deliberate or unintentional — seriously.

4. Our programmes — inclusion in practice

Inclusive practice is at the heart of how we design and deliver our work. We will:

4.1 Programme design

- Design workshops and activities that are accessible to participants with a range of abilities, learning styles, and communication needs
- Use a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach where possible — building flexibility in from the start rather than retrofitting accommodations
- Offer EAL-friendly approaches as standard in our work, including visual cues, peer support, and multilingual resources where available
- Provide sensory-friendly options for participants with SEND who need adapted environments or materials
- Work with schools and partners to understand individual participant needs before a programme begins

4.2 Language and communication

- Use plain, accessible language in all written communications — avoiding jargon and unnecessary complexity
- Provide key information in translation where there is a clear need and it is within our capacity to do so
- Never make a participant feel embarrassed or excluded because of a language barrier
- Celebrate linguistic diversity — the fact that many of our participants speak multiple languages is an asset, not a deficit

4.3 Venue and physical access

- Use venues that are physically accessible to wheelchair users and those with mobility needs wherever possible
- Raise any access concerns with the venue in advance
- Inform participants of access arrangements in advance so they can plan accordingly

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- Not exclude any participant from a session solely because of a physical access issue without first exhausting all reasonable alternatives

4.4 Cost and financial barriers

- Offer our programmes free of charge to participants wherever possible and within our funding constraints
- Never make a child feel excluded or different because of their family's financial situation
- Consider financial barriers when planning activities, trips, or materials

4.5 Cultural sensitivity

- Plan session content with awareness of cultural and religious observances (e.g. Ramadan, Diwali, Eid) that may affect attendance or participation
- Avoid making assumptions about participants' cultural backgrounds, family structures, or values
- Actively celebrate the cultural diversity of our participants and communities
- Seek feedback from communities we work with about whether our programmes feel culturally relevant and respectful

5. Employment and volunteering — equal opportunities

We are committed to ensuring that our employment and volunteering practices are fair, transparent, and free from discrimination at every stage.

5.1 Recruitment

- Advertise roles widely and in ways that reach diverse candidates
- Use clear, skills-based role descriptions that focus on what is needed — not on background or connections
- Shortlist and interview consistently, using the same criteria for all candidates
- Not ask questions that could reveal protected characteristics at interview unless directly relevant to the role
- Make reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities throughout the recruitment process
- Welcome applications from people of all backgrounds, including those with lived experience of the communities we serve

5.2 Terms and conditions

- Ensure that pay and terms are fair and do not discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic
- Apply policies on flexible working, leave, and reasonable adjustments consistently and without bias
- Support staff and volunteers who are pregnant or returning from parental leave

5.3 Development and opportunity

- Offer development opportunities fairly and on the basis of need and potential
- Actively seek to develop the skills and confidence of people from underrepresented groups

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- Ensure that informal networks or relationships do not create unfair advantages

5.4 Reasonable adjustments

We will make reasonable adjustments for staff, volunteers, and participants with disabilities. This means taking practical steps to remove barriers — which may include adjusting working arrangements, providing equipment or materials, or modifying how we deliver activities. What is reasonable depends on the circumstances; we will discuss needs openly and find solutions together.

6. Addressing discrimination and harassment

If a participant, staff member, volunteer, or partner experiences or witnesses discrimination, harassment, or victimisation connected to Project WordPlay CIC, we want to know about it and we will act.

Anyone who has a concern should:

- Speak to a Co-Director (Sophie Beckinsale or Nicki Watts) directly
- Or contact us at hello@projectwordplay.co.uk
- Or use our Complaints Policy if they prefer a more formal route

We will:

- Take all concerns seriously and treat them with sensitivity and confidentiality
- Investigate promptly and fairly
- Take appropriate action — which may include a conversation, a formal warning, or termination of engagement depending on the severity
- Support the person who raised the concern throughout
- Never penalise anyone for raising a concern in good faith

Where a concern involves a safeguarding element — for example, a child experiencing racial abuse from another participant — we will also follow our Safeguarding Policy.

7. Monitoring and continuous improvement

Commitment to EDI is not a one-off statement — it requires ongoing attention and honest reflection. We will:

- Monitor the diversity of our participants, staff, and volunteers over time and use what we learn to improve
- Seek regular feedback from participants and communities about whether they feel genuinely included
- Review this policy annually and update it when our activities, our team, or the law changes
- Embed EDI considerations into programme planning, funding applications, and partnership development
- Be honest about where we fall short and commit to doing better

We recognise that as a small, growing organisation we will not always get this right first time. What matters is that we remain open, responsive, and committed to learning.

8. Responsibilities



Every person associated with Project WordPlay CIC shares responsibility for upholding this policy. Specifically:

- Co-Directors are responsible for setting the tone, implementing this policy, and ensuring it is reviewed and improved
- All staff and freelancers are responsible for following this policy in their day-to-day work and for challenging discrimination if they see it
- Volunteers are expected to behave in line with this policy and our Code of Conduct
- Trustees are responsible for holding the organisation to account on its EDI commitments

9. Related policies

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy
- Volunteer Management Policy

10. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to the law, our activities, or the communities we serve. The current version will be available at www.projectwordplay.co.uk.