

Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA) Equity, Diversity and Representation Policy

1. Introduction

The Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA) is the national membership organisation for creative health in England. We exist to connect, support and advocate for individuals and organisations using creativity and culture to improve health and wellbeing. We recognise that systemic inequalities impact who benefits from these practices – and who is included in shaping them.

This Equity, Diversity and Representation Policy sets out our organisation's values and intentions in addressing these inequalities. It articulates our principles and provides the rationale for our Equity Action Plan (2025–2027), which sets out our practical commitments.

Our Equity Action Plan can be found at

<https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/news/general-news/introducing-our-new-equity-action-plan>

We understand that equity is not about treating everyone the same, but about recognising structural barriers and actively working to remove them. This includes the ways racism, ableism, classism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of systemic injustice intersect and are embedded in our society, including in arts, culture, and health sectors.

Our approach is informed by ongoing learning, reflection and lived experience, and underpinned by CHWA's Theory of Change, which centres equity, care, imagination, and accountability.

2. Why This Policy Exists

We recognise that:

- Structural inequalities shape access to cultural and creative opportunities and impact health outcomes.
- Representation alone is not enough—people must also feel a sense of safety, respect, and belonging.
- Power imbalances exist within our sector and within CHWA itself; equity work must acknowledge and challenge these.
- Our influence as a national membership body can and must be used to challenge injustice and redistribute resources and opportunities.

This policy underpins our Equity Action Plan by setting out our beliefs, ethical stance and organisational responsibilities. It clarifies that equity is not a side project but embedded in our leadership, strategy, operations and communications.

3. Statement of Intent

CHWA recognises that individuals and groups continue to experience discrimination based on disability, race, ethnic origin, culture, socioeconomic status and background, gender, sexuality, religion, belief, marital or parental status, and age.

We are committed to challenging these inequalities across all aspects of our work.

We also acknowledge the relationship between inequality and place, and the compounded impacts of intersecting forms of marginalisation.

In response, CHWA commits to:

- Embedding equity and anti-discrimination practices across our programme of work, partnerships, and employment practices.
- Becoming more representative across our Board, staff, freelance contractors, membership and socioeconomic background.
- Valuing lived experience as essential to the development of the creative health movement.
- Investing consistent time and budgetary resources in building a more inclusive, diverse and representative organisation.
- Using our platforms to amplify the voices of minoritised and racialised communities.
- Continuing our focus on addressing structural racism, as outlined in our public commitments since 2020.

We understand this is a long-term journey, and that becoming a more equal organisation requires us to continually reflect, learn, and adapt our approach.

4. Our Role and Responsibilities

We understand our responsibilities in different ways:

- **As an employer:** We will model inclusive recruitment, fair pay, flexible working, and accessible practices. We are committed to providing professional development and wellbeing support for staff and volunteers, including training, reflective practice, and regular supervision.
- **As a host of freelancers:** We recognise the financial precarity many freelancers face and commit to fair pay, clear contracts, inclusive onboarding, and opportunities for input and influence. We will avoid unpaid labour and advocate for the rights of freelancers in the wider sector.
- **As a network leader:** We will amplify underrepresented voices, share learning, and create platforms that value and centre lived experience.

- **As a sector advocate:** We will embed equity into our policy and communications work and collaborate with others to shift systems and redistribute power.
- **As a learning organisation:** We will remain open to critique, foster cultures of care and challenge, and evolve our practice in response to lived experience, dialogue, and sector developments.

These responsibilities are enacted through our Equity Action Plan.

5. Accessibility

CHWA is committed to creating accessible environments in our digital communications, in-person and online events, recruitment, and partnerships. This includes:

- Providing subtitles or captions at all public meetings and in all videos
- Offering Easy Read and alternative formats by default for major publications and on request for other work
- Asking all event attendees about access needs in advance and endeavouring to meet those needs where possible
- Ensuring website and documents meet recognised accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 level A minimum)
- Using plain language wherever possible
- Ensuring application processes are flexible, including accepting video or audio format

We know access needs are not static and commit to ongoing review and improvement based on feedback from our community.

6. Relationship to the Equity Action Plan

This policy provides the ethical and strategic foundation for the Equity Action Plan, which is appended to this document. The Action Plan translates this policy into specific goals, actions, timelines and evaluation processes.

Together, they form a living framework that supports CHWA to:

- Set and monitor goals relating to inclusion and equity
- Build long-term, values-led collaborations
- Be transparent about both our progress and limitations
- Contribute meaningfully to systemic change in the creative health sector

7. Review and Learning

This policy and its accompanying Action Plan will be reviewed every two years by the CHWA Board. Progress will be reported publicly through CHWA's annual report, and informed by feedback from staff, members, partners, and the forthcoming Critical Friends Equity Group.

We are committed to learning in public and approaching this work with humility, transparency and care.

Any new legislation or developments in existing legislation will be considered as and when required and the policy will be updated to reflect these developments.

This policy was approved and agreed by the Board of Directors on the date shown below.

Signed: 

Name (please print): Matt Walsh

Position: Co-Chair of Board of Directors

Date: 18 September 2025

Review dates: Every two years after date above

Organisation name: Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance CIC

Company Number: 12359172