




Eliot Smith Dance (ESD)

Policy and Procedures on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

For further information or to report a concern please contact ESD
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Name	Date	Reason for update	Signature	Version
Eliot Smith	06/02/24	P5&6: Updated current pledges P11: Review date updated	<i>E.Smith</i> (approved at Board Meeting 23 Feb 2024)	V02
Eliot Smith	24/02/25	P5: May 2021 now complete P11: Review date updated	<i>E.Smith</i> (approved at Board committee Meeting 25 Feb 2025)	V03
Eliot Smith	27/03/26	P6&7: Actions to Pledges added. P11: Review date updated.	 (approved at Board Committee Meeting 27 March 2026)	V04

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Introduction

At ESD, we believe dance is for everyone. At the core of ESD is to embrace, promote and celebrate diversity and treat everyone fairly.

In June 2020, the cultural sector of the North East of England (UK) initiated a statement, hosted on the Culture Against Racism (CAR) website, denouncing racism and seeking to bring about a collective change in thinking and action as organisations and individuals.

“WE STAND TO DENOUNCE RACISM IN ALL ITS FORMS

We, the undersigned from the cultural sector of the North East, declare that silence is not OK and silence is seen as complicity. Racism has no place in a just and humane society.

Whilst we cannot undo pain and neglect, we are calling on all of us in the arts, cultural, heritage sectors; professional and voluntary to work together to address racism and its deep roots. We must listen, have conversations and most importantly act, we know we need to do better.

Everyone is part of the solution – artists, staff, trustees, partners, promoters, audiences and communities.

We want to tackle this together in sharing better understanding and practices. We stand united to bring about change in our thinking and actions as a collective of organisations and individuals.

In the weeks and months to come we will collectively act to build on this statement with concrete steps and actions to demonstrate our commitment to bringing about real change. We ask you to stand with us.”

— Signees to Culture Against Racism



ESD’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy has been brought together through consultation with members of the Board, workers, volunteers in the sector. It was adopted by the Board of Directors in November 2022.

Statement

Recent times and events have caused many of us to re- evaluate our outlook and views regarding ethnicity and its place in our society. The Black Lives Matter movement has illuminated the continued presence of systemic and structural racism within our society.

We chose to take some time to consider our place and contribution in these cultural systems, critically analyse our actions and proceed with a more educated and deliberate intention.

During this time we looked inward and tried to use unbiased eyes. We looked objectively at our small company and used unfettered honesty to inform ourselves.

We had considered ourselves a company that supports equality and diversity fervently, we assumed that our prior ethnically inclusive hiring policy based on hiring people regardless of their age, ethnicity or gender preference was enough.

We realise our approach has been lacking. We have not paid enough attention to the existing systems within the world and the arts that inherently create barriers for minority groups.

We realise we can be more active in removing those barriers, aiming for an inclusive and welcoming space for the Company, participants and audience.

ESD's artistic vision is based in the art of storytelling, and as such many previous works have focused on local, regional and national stories of note. These works were predicated on the assumption that this historical record, culturally accepted, was both comprehensive and truthful. This was a flawed assumption.

The truthful history of this nation is as colourful as the people who live here.

As part of this policy we will implement our intention of shifting focus from a sanitised history and look at telling the stories of a more truthful and colourful past, drawing inspiration from the rich culture of the minority communities that make up our shared history.

We will no longer make assumptions.

ESD will make a concerted effort and commitment to consider diversity, equality and inclusivity in all aspects of its operation. We will be more tenacious in our cultural due-diligence in our governance, collaborations, our audiences, our performances and interactions with our audience.

We have already begun to implement change and will continue to do so, this will be an ongoing mission for ESD, it will evolve as long as the company exists.

— Board of Directors, February 2021

Pledges

Date pledges made	Pledges	Action taken	Progress (Complete / Ongoing)
May 2021 (To be implemented within 12 months)	Speak Up: Publicly presenting our statement against racism, discrimination and inequity on our website and in our office.	ESD publicly has the 'We Stand To Denounce Racism' logo on its website, social media channels and in office space.	Complete
May 2021 (To be implemented within 12 months)	Diversity in decision-making: Broaden the diversity and equality of ESD Freelance Dancers.	ESD not only hosts auditions in its home region (Gateshead) but also in London and Online. This widens ESD approach on recruiting potential dancers and supports dancers who might be able to effort unexpected expenses to attend ESD auditions (travel / accommodation). ESD does not charge dancers to audition. ESD asks all auditionees to fill out anonymous equality forms to asses and diversify ESD recruitment.	Complete. Between 2022/23 ESD recruited four new Board Members that represent different age groups, ethnicities, and gender. More work can be contributed by recruiting Members who are in the 21-25 age group. Between 2022/23 ESD hosted auditions at Gateshead, London and Online and recruited, resulting in 7 freelance dancers from various backgrounds paid work at ESD and represent different communities.
May 2021 (To be implemented within 12 months)	Diversifying Repertoire: Using a more inclusive approach when creating contemporary dance works including R&D, thematic content development and representation.	In Eliot Smith's work, LIFE (autumn 2021/22), ESD had taken his research beyond his previous approach which included following various climate campaign groups and standing up for the rights of rainforests, indigenous communities and Female, Intersex, Non-Binary & Trans people in the face of climate change. Eliot invited writer of Climate Change is Racist, Jeremy Williams into rehearsals and	Complete. ESD participated in the International Touring and Environmental Responsibility round 2 programme funded by Arts Council England, Danish Arts Foundation, led by Julie's Bicycle. This led ESD collaborating with Danish-based artist Liv Vester Larsen via a new interdisciplinary work. ESD travelled to NYC in residence at Paul Taylor Dance

		reached out to campaigner Aja Barber. ESD commissioned Martin Hylton to create a work for ESD Repertoire and very recently ESD moved its office space in Gateway in Gateshead, led by Martin Hylton.	Company to rehearse Taylor's DUET from 1964 - broadening ESD's international connections, creative thinking, and enhancing business ideas.
November 2022 (To be implemented within 5 years)	Accountability: Create, draft and publish ESD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to increase ethnic diversity, creating an inclusive environment and dismantling racism will be included in every department and performing company's goals and key performance indicators. While this pledge sets out our overall commitment and approach to racial equality, our plans and targets will be specific to people's distinct identities, the issues they face, the ways we address these, our targets and our reporting. ESD with culturally diverse people, bringing expertise from within and outside arts and culture, to scrutinise and hold the ESD accountable.	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
November 2022 (To be implemented within 5 years)	Self-Education: Creative Director and Board at all levels to take part in mandatory training and personal development, led by external specialists and tailored to facilitate deeper exploration of department-specific issues and leadership responsibilities. To strengthen ESD approach when	Since 2025 to Spring 2026, Eliot Smith on behalf of ESD has been attending four LGBT+ Roundtable Meetings led by Newcastle City Council. ESD with key partners to explore current challenges, share best practices, and identify meaningful opportunities to enhance LGBTQ+	Ongoing.

	<p>creating contemporary dance works including R&D, thematic content development commissioning guest choreographers and representation.</p>	<p>inclusion across our communities. We're looking forward to another open, constructive, and forward-thinking discussion that drives real and lasting change.</p>	
<p>November 2022 (To be implemented within 5 years)</p>	<p>YOUTH TALENT: Increase the number of young people of African diaspora and South Asian diaspora heritage who benefit from Education and Beyond programme. ESD will work with primary and secondary school partners (including established local youth groups) to grow the number of child dance performers from these under-represented backgrounds.</p>	<p>Between 2023 and 2025, ESD delivered dance workshops in the Newbiggin Hall and Sandyford areas of Newcastle upon Tyne. These areas have seen a growing population of young people attending primary schools, many of whom are from African diaspora and South Asian diaspora backgrounds. This work was funded by the Newcastle Culture Investment Fund, administered by the Community Foundation. Evidence of impact is available through ESD's Progress Response Forms, which can be provided upon request.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>

ESD Approach

The approach the Board use to decide the Company is welcoming are:

- Is the Company working to give EVERYONE the opportunity to enjoy dance?
- Is the Company reaching people who are LESS ABLE to experience or interact with dance?
- Is the Company connecting with people who are LESS CONFIDENT in being associated with the arts?
- Is the Company encouraging people with DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, ETHNICITY AND PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH DISABILITIES?
- Is the Company promoting and including DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY in its work?
- Is the Company offering opportunities for YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS to experience and participate in dance?
- Is the Company programming and presenting PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE dance performances, particularly in rural areas which are afforded comparatively reduced opportunities to engage with the arts?

Primary Grounds

ESD acts on the following primary grounds in line with the UK's Equality Act 2010. These are referred to in brief below:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race / Ethnicity and Culture
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Equality and Pay

ESD are committed to a pay system that is transparent and based on objective criteria. This includes a commitment to transparency and fairness in the allocation of bonuses, allowances and any other aspects of reward and remuneration.

Equal pay, free from gender or other unjustified bias, for the same or broadly similar work (that is, for work that rates as equivalent and for work of equal value), operates within ESD.

ESD pay its staff, dancers, artists and creatives alike in line with Independent Theatre Council (ITC) rate.

ESD encourage its staff, dancers, artists and creatives to join Equity UK.

Equality Monitoring and Data

ESD is committed to understanding the diversity of those we work with and engage, including staff, dancers, artists, participants and audiences.

To support this, ESD may collect anonymised equality and diversity information through recruitment processes, participation forms and other appropriate methods. This information will be used to:

- Identify under-representation and barriers to access;
- inform decision-making and future planning;
- Measure progress against ESD's equality, diversity and inclusion commitments.

All data will be handled sensitively and in line with applicable data protection legislation. Participation in equality monitoring is voluntary, and individuals will not be identified through any reporting.

ESD will review this information periodically and use it to support ongoing improvements in access, representation and inclusion across all areas of its work.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment are about misuse of power and should not be a part of our working culture or practices. There can sometimes be a tendency for incidents of bullying and/or harassment to be 'swept under the carpet' which means they are ignored and not treated seriously as they should be. ESD encourage everyone to speak up using relevant procedures (see section on the Speak Up section below).

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious and/or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, that undermines, humiliates, or injures the recipient.

Harassment, in general, is unwanted conduct affecting someone's dignity. It can be related to age, disability, ethnicity / race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or any personal characteristic of the individual. It may involve persistent incidents or an isolated one. The crucial aspect is that the actions or comments are deemed to be demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient and create a hostile environment.

Bullying and harassment can manifest in a variety of ways, including by one member of staff to another of a different or equivalent level / pay band, or by one group of staff to an individual member of staff, or an external contact. If bullying or harassment involves issues of gender including transgender, sexual orientation, marital - including civil partnership - status, caring responsibility, race / ethnicity, religion / belief, political belief, age or disability, relevant legislation may apply.

Grievances and/or Concerns

While it is hoped that personal concerns can be handled and indeed resolved informally, at least in the first instance, formal grievance procedures apply where informal resolution is not appropriate. Anyone working at ESD who has a concern may wish to contact a member of the ESD Board (info@eliotsmithdance.com), a Trade Union or Staff Association representative, Teachers' representative or a trusted colleague for support. All concerns will be handled in confidence.

Speaking Up

Speaking Up aims to protect everyone at ESD by providing a framework that encourages and enables staff, dancers, artists, creatives, Board members including participants and audiences to raise concerns about serious malpractice.

These concerns may be about financial malpractice, breaches of the law, serious misconduct by another person and breaches in the areas of health and safety, or indeed diversity. Built into this policy is a 'Welfare Officer' to give an assurance that there will be no risk to the person raising such concerns if actions are based on good faith.

The welfare officer is Angela Reay (Board Member) and can be reached via email at: acrey99@gmail.com

To report a concern please contact Angela Reay in the first instance or contact Eliot Smith (Creative Director) at eliot@eliotsmithdance.com

Responsibilities

As a Company representing and promoting high quality contemporary dance about stories that are relevant or historic, it is particularly important that we reflect contemporary UK society, good workplace and customer service practices. We must

also be open to learning from and applying the good practices and approaches of others. We must consistently apply our corporate values.

We must adhere to relevant legislation and behavioural standards and recognise that, as a general principle of law, workers may be liable for acts of unjustified discrimination committed by the Company during their engagement.

Putting this policy into practice is the responsibility of every individual worker. All staff, dancers, artists and creatives alike including those working from home, whether on full-time, part-time, indefinite, fixed or temporary contracts, regardless of length of service, are responsible for playing their full part in adhering to the policy.

This means becoming familiar with it, and its requirements, and carrying them out, as well as critically examining attitudes to ensure that unjustified discrimination is not allowed to affect judgement.

The law and the existence of an Equality Policy cannot by themselves prevent unjustified discrimination. It is therefore crucial that everyone takes personal responsibility to help ensure that the work environment, consistent with cultural relations, respects the dignity of everyone and in broad terms, values the differences that exist between diverse people and cultures.

All workers will continue to be supported to understand how unjustified discrimination can take place and to avoid this and any other action that might undermine respect and inclusion. This will be achieved through, for example, ongoing awareness and training initiatives, using diversity e-learning materials.

The Creative Director is responsible for ensuring that this Equality Policy is implemented for workers and for dealing with matters arising from it. The board retains oversight of EDI through scheduled committee meetings as part of reporting and matters arising.

As part of fulfilling this responsibility, the Creative Director with the Board must take care to deal effectively with complaints of unjustified discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation. They must not make assumptions that complaints are a result of 'over-sensitivity' and must take them seriously and deal with them sympathetically, with integrity and generally in a way that is consistent with principles of natural justice.

Working with Partners, Suppliers and Third Parties

ESD is committed to ensuring that its values in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion are reflected not only within the organisation, but also in its external relationships.

All suppliers, partners, collaborators and contractors are expected to operate in a manner that is consistent with the principles set out in this policy. This includes promoting fair and inclusive practices and not engaging in any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

Where appropriate, ESD will consider equality, diversity and inclusion as part of its decision-making when selecting and working with external organisations.

ESD reserves the right to review, challenge or discontinue relationships with partners or suppliers whose practices are not aligned with these principles.

Nothing in this Equality Policy is intended to interfere with the legitimate freedom of artistic or intellectual expression, investigation or discussion. We live, however, in a world of increasing polarity around political and cultural issues, often heightened on social media. As workers we must all take personal responsibility for abiding by ESD Code of Conduct and Social Media Policy embedded in workers contracts.

Unjustified discrimination has no place in ESD cultural relations organisation and our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion must be made clear to all who work with us and for us and all who use our services.

Communication

A copy of the Equality Policy is made accessible to all workers via the web. Requests for this policy in alternative formats are welcomed and every effort will be made to meet them.

All workers, including newly appointed ones must be made aware of this policy and responsibilities for achieving equality objectives.

Review

We undertake a review of this policy at least once every year and to communicate changes organisation-wide. The next review date is **March 2028**. To obtain further copies of this policy, or if you have any questions or comments about it, please contact info@eliotsmithdance.com