

Abbey Theatre

Diversity,
Equality, and Inclusion
Policy

Abbey Theatre Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy

Contents

- Vision, Policy Statement and Core Principles
- Scope and Development of Policy
- Implementation Plan
- Reporting Path, Oversight and Review
- Control Sheet

Abbey Theatre Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy

Vision:

To propel the National Theatre of Ireland forward as a vital 21st-century institution for all of Ireland.

Policy Statement:

The Abbey Theatre is dedicated to fostering a culture of diversity, equality and inclusion across all aspects of its operations. As Ireland's National Theatre, we seek to reflect the diversity of our society, provide equal opportunities, and create a safe, welcoming environment for all artists, audiences and staff. This is rooted in our belief that the arts should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances.

By embracing a wide range of perspectives and experiences, we aim to enrich our artistic output and ensure that our theatre is a true representation of the people it serves. Our DEI Policy is designed to break down barriers, challenge inequalities and unfairness, and promote a culture of respect and understanding within our organisation and our wider community. Through continuous reflection, education and action, we strive to create an inclusive space where all voices are heard and valued.

Core Principles:

This section outlines the core principles of our DEI policy and the actions we take to ensure our theatre remains a representative and inclusive institution.

At the Abbey Theatre, we are dedicated to cultivating an environment that embraces diversity, promotes equality, and fosters inclusion. This reflects our belief that the arts should be accessible to all.⁵

In all our operations, we aim to create a space where every individual, regardless of their background or circumstance, can feel valued and respected.

Diversity: *Celebrate and represent the richness of Ireland in all its diversity.*

We will promote an inclusive and vibrant culture through diversity. We will embrace diverse backgrounds, perspectives and traditions to create a truly inclusive community.

Equality: *Provide fair and equal access to opportunities, resources, and participation.*

We identify and strive to eliminate barriers that prevent equal participation in our theatre.

Inclusion: *Ensure all individuals feel valued, respected and supported.*

We recognise the intersectional nature of identity and lived experience and strive to create an environment where everyone can contribute their unique perspectives and talents.

Abbey Theatre Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy

Scope of Policy:

This policy applies to all employees, artists, collaborators, audiences, and stakeholders engaged with the Abbey Theatre. It encompasses every aspect of our operations, and will be supported by an implementation plan so that diversity, equality and inclusion will not be just ideals, but will be actively practiced and promoted.

We recognise that achieving true equality requires a continuous effort and a willingness to adapt and grow. Therefore, we are committed to reviewing and updating regularly our DEI Policy and related strategies to address emerging challenges and opportunities. This involves collecting and analysing data on our workforce and audience demographics, seeking feedback from our community, and implementing best practices from the wider cultural sector.

Moreover, we are dedicated to fostering an environment where open dialogue and mutual respect are paramount. Through workshops, training sessions and collaborative projects, we seek to educate our team on the importance of DEI. We also encourage the sharing of diverse perspectives and experiences, which we believe enrich our artistic endeavours and enhance the relevance and impact of our work.

Our goal is to create a theatre that not only reflects the diversity of Ireland but also champions the principles of fairness and inclusivity. We aim to embed these values into the fabric of our organisation, and we hope to inspire positive change within our community and beyond.

We also recognise the ways in which our current built infrastructure limits access for artist, audience and staff and will continue to mitigate this as much as is possible in the present while planning for a better more inclusive national theatre building in the future.

Our approach to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion is also grounded in statutory obligations, which provide a baseline for protecting individuals. Beyond compliance, we seek to embed these protections into the culture and daily practices of our organisation, ensuring that all who work with or engage with the Abbey Theatre feel respected, valued and safe while preventing discrimination, harassment or victimisation on any of the following legally protected grounds:

1. **Gender** – including men, women, non-binary people, and transgender people.
2. **Civil Status** – including single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, in a civil partnership, or formerly in a civil partnership.
3. **Family Status** – covering individuals who are parents or carers, including those providing care to people with disabilities.

Abbey Theatre Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy

4. **Sexual Orientation** – including heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, and other orientations.
5. **Religion** – including people of all faiths and people of no religious belief.
6. **Age** – covering all ages, including younger and older adults.
7. **Disability** – encompassing physical, sensory, intellectual, mental-health, and neurodiverse disabilities, whether current, historical or episodic.
8. **Race** – including race, nationality, ethnic origin, and skin colour.
9. **Membership of the Traveller Community** – recognising the distinct cultural identity and long-standing marginalisation of Travellers in Ireland.

The Abbey Theatre upholds these protections by ensuring that our policies and employment practices, and audience experience are free from discrimination and responsive to the needs of those who may be affected by structural inequalities. These nine grounds form a core foundation of our DEI work, informing our decision-making, accountability structures and organisational culture.

Development of DEI Policy

In formulating our DEI Policy, we engaged in a collaborative process involving staff, Board members and external stakeholders, thereby incorporating nuanced and intersectional perspectives.

In addition, our DEI Policy aligns with the ambitions set out in our current strategy, A vibrant and vital future – 2025-2030¹, alongside existing national policy and legislation, such as the Equality Acts², the Arts Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy³ and the Public Sector Duty⁴ (Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014).

¹ **Abbey Theatre 2025-2030 Strategy** | <https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/governance/five-year-strategy/>

² **Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts** | <https://www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/equality-laws-ireland/#:~:text=Equality%20and%20discrimination%20are%20two,promotion%20or%20getting%20equal%20pa>

³ **Diversity and Inclusion at the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon** | <https://artscouncil.ie/about/working-with-us/diversity-and-inclusion-at-the-arts-council/>

⁴ **Public Sector Duty** | <https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/>

⁵ **Gender Pay Gap Report**, <https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Abbey-Theatre-Gender-Pay-Gap-Report-2025.pdf> Published this year, showed equitable pay across the Abbey Theatre. This outcome is an important marker of progress and reflects our dedication to building an organisation where fairness, transparency, and equality are embedded in our culture and practice.

Abbey Theatre Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy

Implementation Plan:

At the Abbey Theatre, we recognise that diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) must be more than just words; it requires a clear and actionable plan. Our DEI Implementation Plan is designed to embed DEI principles into our organisation.

The Plan sets forth specific actions and timelines so that our policies and practices are not only reflective of our values but also effective in fostering a truly inclusive environment.

This Plan is being designed and imbedded by the Senior Management team in Q2 2026.

Underpinning the plan are eight specific DEI Focus Areas, namely:

- Representation and Visibility: Focuses on increasing diversity in leadership, staff, board, and artistic teams, amplifying diverse voices, and fostering belonging.
- Recruitment, Progression, and Career Development: Aims to implement inclusive recruitment processes, mentorship programmes and standardised onboarding to support career growth for minoritised groups.
- Accessibility and Inclusive Practice: Advocates for physical accessibility upgrades, relaxed performances and inclusive facilities to ensure equitable access for all.
- Organisational Culture and Psychological Safety: Seeks to create a safe environment for raising DEI concerns, bridging gaps between teams, and protecting artists from tokenism.
- Training, Learning, and Development: Implement DEI training, focusing on inclusive practices and embedding DEI into professional development.
- Measurement, Reporting, and Accountability: The SMT will establish diversity metrics, transparent reporting, and performance-based DEI KPIs.
- Community Engagement: Deepens connections through engagement programmes and artist-led initiatives to promote inclusivity.
- Irish Language: We also recognise the cultural and societal significance of our national language (Gaeilge) and are committed to supporting its visibility and vitality within our organisation.
- Resource Allocation: Advocates for increased investment in DEI.

Abbey Theatre Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy

By implementing our Plan, we aim to create a theatre that mirrors the rich diversity of Ireland's communities and offers equal and fair opportunities for all. We are dedicated to review the Plan and its focus areas on a regular basis to address new challenges and opportunities, facilitating continuous improvement and adaptability,

By implementing this dynamic approach, we aim to foster an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for all individuals engaged with the Abbey Theatre, including employees, artists, audiences and stakeholders.

Abbey Theatre Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy

Reporting Path:

We are committed to providing clear, confidential, and accessible pathways for reporting concerns related to discrimination, harassment or breaches of this Policy.

All individuals engaging with the Abbey Theatre will be supported to raise concerns without fear of reprisal. Reports will be handled sensitively and in line with our established procedures. Concerns raised under this policy will follow the steps outlined in the Abbey Theatre's Disciplinary and Dignity at Work policies, ensuring a transparent, fair and timely process for addressing issues and supporting all parties involved.

DEI Policy Oversight and Review

The Implementation Plan for DEI will provide for the establishment of reporting systems to enable proper, transparent and regular oversight and review of ongoing progress, and to address any emerging concerns effectively.

A "review and refresh" mechanism every 18–24 months will be put in place so the Policy and Plan will remain agile and responsive. Progress on this will be added to our Annual Report.

Additionally, DEI accountability frameworks will be introduced specifically for leadership roles, ensuring that responsibility is clearly assigned and measurable. This structured approach aims to maintain momentum and foster continuous improvement in DEI outcomes across the organisation.

1. Control Sheet

Title:	Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy
Ref:	PC20
Author (Responsible):	Co-Directors, P&C Director
Owner (Accountable):	SMT
Department:	SMT
Contact:	Co-Director
Version No.	2.0
Status:	Approved
Reviewed by (Consulted):	Senior Management Team
Approved by:	Board
Date of approval:	11 Feb 2026
Applicable to (Informed):	The Board and staff of the Abbey Theatre
Communicated on:	
Last reviewed:	May 2018
Frequency of review:	18 Month
Date of next review:	August 2027
Related policies & procedures:	Gender Equality Principles Equal Opportunity Policy