

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre

Equality, Diversity & Inclusions



All patrons, staff and volunteers at Birr Theatre & Arts Centre are of equal value.

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, in everything it does, strives to respect, support and ensure the inclusion of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today, from all sections of society, from existing and new communities and from all social backgrounds, ethnicities and traditions. This policy is built on the foundation that everyone in Ireland has an equal right to engage with and participate in the arts, regardless of age, civil or family status, disability, gender, membership of the Traveller community, race, religion, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.

Our policy is underpinned by, The Arts Council's *Making Great Art Work and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan 2023 – 2028*, Article 27 of The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Offaly County Council's Arts Strategy *Inspire - Imagine - Involve*.

We aim to:

- Foster an equitable and inclusive environment for all at Birr Theatre & Arts Centre;
- Promote an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome and able to participate in, contribute to and benefit from, the arts;
- Build programmes and partnerships that support and promote a diversity of voices, experiences and perspectives;
- Provide equitable access to opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds, identities and experiences.

We believe that diverse perspectives enhance creativity and innovation and that inclusion is essential for our mission to inspire and engage audiences through the arts. We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength.

We take account of differences and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face in relation to disability, ethnicity, gender, religious belief or faith and sexual orientation. We believe that diversity is a strength which should be respected and celebrated.

We foster positive attitudes and relationships and actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other.

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre took part in the discussion sessions lead by Offaly Local Development Company in the development of '*Nothing About us, Without Us*' a Diversity & Inclusion Toolkit for Local Festivals in 2024.

Accessibility

We are committed to best practice with regard to physical accessibility to our building. Examples of what we do, but not limited to:

- keep entrances and exits clear of hazards for those less mobile; provision of wheelchair accessible toilet etc.
- for ticket holders that require the support of a carer we provide a chair beside a wheelchair user or if required two chairs in the front of the seating rig where a patron may find the seating rig steps a problem.
- we encourage patrons to advise us of their needs (mobility, sensory, hearing, visual etc) and endeavour to work with audiences in ensuring a comfortable experience.
- Assistance dogs are very welcome.
- Offer affordable ticketing options and outreach programs to remove financial barriers for low-income individuals and communities.
- Conduct regular accessibility audits of our physical spaces and digital presence to identify and address any issues.

Inclusion and Respect

It is our policy to ensure that every patron, volunteer, staff member, artist and performer are made to feel equally welcome and included at Birr Theatre & Arts Centre. Sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic or otherwise offensive and inflammatory remarks and behaviour are not acceptable. These constitute harassment and have no place at Birr Theatre & Arts Centre.

Dealing with Discrimination and Harassment

If anyone feels they have been discriminated against or harassed at any of our events they should raise this with management as soon as possible where the issue will be investigated in line with our Customer Complaints Policy and/or, our Dignity and Respect at Work Policy. We will support people who feel they have been harassed or discriminated against, and will not victimise or treat them less well because they have raised this.

Staff Training

Our programmes demonstrate our team's appetite to not only meet the legislative requirements of an EDI policy, but to bring the topics into the creative space. Birr Theatre provides opportunities for staff to partake in training events with organisations such as Arts & Disability Ireland / Inclusion Ireland / Screen Ireland and details of staff training are recorded on staff records.

By providing training on EDI issues, including unconscious bias and cultural competence, we reduce the barriers for new staff and our audiences.

Training

Unconscious Bias Basic Awareness In The Workplace – Screen Ireland

<https://www.screenireland.ie/courses/addressing-unconscious-bias-basic-awareness-for-the-arts-and-creative-sectors>

Audience Development & Programming

We aim to work alongside as many community groups as possible to suit the interests and meet the needs of a wide variety of people. For example, we partner with local community and youth liaison services to make these connections. We are open to new ideas and particularly prioritise opportunities for those whose circumstances mean that they are infrequent patrons at our events.

We:

- Collect and analyse demographic data to better understand the diversity of our current audience and identify gaps.
- Develop targeted outreach strategies to engage underrepresented groups, including communities of colour, new communities, people seeking asylum, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Strive to develop culturally relevant programming that celebrates diverse perspectives and ensures our curatorial, educational and artistic initiatives represent a broad spectrum of voices, cultures and identities.
- Seek to establish partnerships with local community organizations to co-create initiatives and foster stronger relationships with marginalized groups.
- Seek to provide support and resources for emerging artists from marginalized communities, including mentorship, residencies and exhibition opportunities.
- Regularly review and assess our programming to ensure it reflects the diverse and evolving interests of our audiences.

Conclusion

This EDI plan represents Birr Theatre & Arts Centre's commitment to fostering a more equitable, diverse and inclusive organization. By embedding these principles into every aspect of our work, we aim to create an environment where everyone can participate, contribute and benefit from the arts. Our success will depend on the collective efforts of our staff, artists, audiences and partners, and we look forward to continuing this journey toward a more inclusive future for the arts.

This plan will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect the evolving needs of our organisation and the communities we serve.