



## MADS Theatre

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy Statement

At MADS Theatre we aim to put Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, or EDI as it is more commonly known, at the heart of all that we do. Opening access, being representative and acting with fairness and respect for all, are core strategic aims of the Society. All of our processes and policies are driven by the aspiration for MADS to be a demonstrable place of equal opportunity for all, with diverse, brilliant and accessible plays on stage, and inclusive company and membership. We aim to eradicate prejudice and discrimination on the basis of an individual's protected characteristics.

As a non-professional theatre working in the heart of a local community, our mission is for a membership that represents our town and local area; encompassing diversity and inclusivity in age, sex, race - including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin - sexual orientation, gender/gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, religion or belief, and additionally, social class - the so-called "protected characteristics"<sup>1</sup>. It is our mission to actively encourage, nurture and develop without discrimination artists from the widest possible pool of talent and ensure that our work reaches the maximum audiences across our local community, town and region.

We therefore ask all our members, volunteers, stakeholders and contractors to sign up to an ethos of equality, diversity and inclusion, as individuals and as an organisation, and to commit to furthering EDI within our society and beyond it into the wider theatre and arts arena.

This document outlines our guiding principles with regard to equality, diversity and inclusion within our organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights>; for more detailed definitions of the UK Quality Act 2010 protected characteristics, see Appendix 1.

## **What is EDI?**

Although EDI has some universal norms, the exact definitions of “equality, diversity and inclusion” vary depending on national and cultural beliefs and values. However, one clear set of definitions of the EDI components is:

### Equality

- At its core, equality means fairness: ensuring that individuals, or groups of individuals, are not treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics. Equality relates to the legal obligations in which organisations must not unlawfully discriminate.

### Diversity

- Diversity is about recognising difference. It’s acknowledging the benefits of having a range of perspectives in an organisation’s operations and decision-making, and taking steps to aid that diversity.

### Inclusion

- Inclusion is where people’s differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive in that organisation. An inclusive organisation is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters, and they are able to perform to their full potential, no matter their characteristics, background, identity or circumstances.

## **Why is EDI important?**

MADS is an equal opportunities organisation, which aims to ensure that no one who comes into contact with our theatre in any capacity receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of characteristics including but not limited to sex, race, colour, nationality, disability, neurodivergence, ethnic or national origins, class, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, political or religious belief. In addition, at MADS we need to be outward-looking, inclusive, and long-term-focused, allowing talented individuals from the widest possible proportion of people to thrive. We strongly believe that EDI contributes to our artistic innovation and creativity and to the social purpose of our theatre group.

To that end we aim to demonstrate excellence in EDI across all aspects of our society and our theatre. Some of the key areas where we feel EDI behaviours are critical are: (1) Play Casting; (2) MADS Tech, Stage, Wardrobe and Front of House; (3) Artistic Programming; (4) Audience and Public Engagement; (5) MADS Facilities. Our EDI goals in these areas are outlined below.

## **1. Play Casting**

We are committed to promoting and maintaining an excellent standard and quality of actors cast on the MADS stage. However we do recognise that casting is by its very nature selective; it can be a very subjective process and may appear to conflict with EDI. Nevertheless, we look to champion EDI in all forms within casting decisions and we are dedicated to creating a safe and supportive audition, rehearsal and performance environment where actors are empowered to do their best work. We are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all actors regardless of their protected characteristics. We understand the importance of visibility and representation onstage and front of house (see below), and we want to reflect the diversity of our local community in our work.

We operate an open audition process for all our productions and we openly advertise all our auditions.

We are committed to the principle of open casting, meaning that the management and casting committees will encourage and work alongside all directors to cast with an open mind, without prejudice and with maximum flexibility around protected characteristics. Without wishing to downplay the importance of all the protected characteristics, in the areas of ethnicity, race, age and gender we acknowledge that the historical makeup of theatre in the UK<sup>2</sup> means that we must pay close attention to these particular characteristics as part of our casting and audition processes. As a general principle we will start from a position of race/ethnicity neutral casting for all productions. Where race/ethnicity or other protected characteristics are central to the story, we will make this clear in audition notices and at the audition, and make relevant consideration, otherwise casting will be race/gender/age neutral by default, and this will be made clear during the audition process.

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<sup>2</sup> White males predominant.

## **2. MADS Tech, Stage, Wardrobe and Front of House**

As with casting, MADS is fully committed to promoting and maintaining excellent standards, quality and EDI in our Technical, Stage, Wardrobe and Front of House departments. MADS will ensure a safe and supportive EDI environment in all our departments. Any MADS member who wishes to be involved helping out in any department should be comfortable knowing they can volunteer for that department without prejudice based on their protected characteristics and that MADS will look to accommodate them, notwithstanding any Health and Safety considerations that may apply.

## **3. Artistic Programming**

MADS is committed to putting on a balanced artistic programme of the highest quality, diversity and innovation for our audiences. We need to ensure that the stories which we represent through our productions are as diverse and inclusive as they can be in relation to our town and local community. We will strive to improve the reach of our plays through careful and targeted selection, so that they directly speak to the widest possible proportion of audiences.

## **4. Audience and public engagement**

MADS constantly aims to attract new audiences and encourage repeat attendance and loyalty. We will seek to broaden our local and regional reach, thinking about different EDI marketing strategies to reach out to all sections of our community.

We strive to make our building and our performances as accessible as possible to all and we review this regularly. We want to be open, friendly and welcoming, and provide an environment in which we can all come together to make and experience the best theatre.

## **5. Facilities**

We constantly strive to make our Little Theatre and the facilities within it as accessible to all as we can, with special attention being placed on the protected characteristics. We do, however, have to be mindful that the Grade 2 listed status of our building does limit what we might wish to do to be more EDI-compliant. This is particularly true when it comes to making all parts of our building accessible to disabled people.

On the other hand, MADS aspires and has been actively working specifically in recent years towards making all its facilities more easily amenable and accessible to members and patrons with protected characteristics. This is especially the case for those characteristics that may warrant more privacy, e.g. sex and sexual identity, gender and gender reassignment. MADS will accommodate all people according to their gender identity, respecting their privacy wishes and adapting specific situations where needed to ensure that their comfort, respect and dignity are upheld. This includes but is not limited to bathrooms and changing facilities, both in our dressing room area and backstage. If any member or patron has any privacy concerns they should raise their concerns with a senior MADS official (e.g. a member of MADS Management Committee). The matter will be discussed with the individual and a joint decision made as to how to resolve the issue. MADS management committee will mediate discussions in a cordial and respectful way to allow all parties to reach a joint, EDI-compliant solution. In the event that a mutually agreed outcome cannot be reached, the committee will communicate an appropriate, EDI-compliant solution..

### **Infractions of the MADS EDI Policy**

In the event that the behaviour of a MADS member infringes the MADS EDI policy, be it intentional, perceived, alleged or otherwise, the impacted member should report the infringing person and details of the infringement to one of the Officers of the Society (Chair, Vice-Chair, Hon. Secretary or Treasurer). That Officer should then discuss the reported infringement with the other Officers. A sensitive and discreet course of action should be proposed and communicated back to the impacted member for their agreement. The Society's full Management Committee should only be included as appropriate. In the majority of cases the infraction should be dealt with by talking to and counselling, again sensitively and discreetly, the at-fault member, but *in extremis*, if the infringement is seen as sufficiently serious then it may be deemed a disciplinary matter. MADS disciplinary matters are covered by the MADS Constitution, but can result in expulsion.

### **Monitoring and Review**

MADS acknowledges that developing and evolving better EDI within our theatre is an ongoing activity, and we commit to an annual review of this policy to drive progress towards improving EDI within our theatre through appropriate, clear, "owned" and deliverable objectives.

This EDI Policy is supported by a range of connected policies and procedures including:

MADS Health & Safety Policy

Casting and Auditions Guidelines

Director's Guidelines

MADS Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy

MADS Constitution

## Document Version Control

This document should be reviewed by the MADS management committee and signed off by the chair annually. The occurrence of that process should be minuted in the MADS Management Meeting minutes and the dates and personnel captured in the e-version of this document which will be stored here in the MADS Management Dropbox.

Version Number	Date Reviewed / By Whom	Date Signed off/By Whom
1	April 2022 / Richard Shute	
2023	June 29 <sup>th</sup> 2023 / Richard Shute & Cameron Chandler	July 4 <sup>th</sup> 2023 / MADS Management
2024	May 2024 / Richard Shute, Jack Morrison, Heather Smith and others	August 21 <sup>st</sup> 2024 / MADS Management

## Appendix 1: The Equality Act 2010 Protected Characteristics

In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 “protected characteristics” are listed below (in alphabetical order). These are not comprehensive definitions of protected characteristics. In addition, types of discrimination go beyond direct and indirect, e.g. associative (associating with someone with a protected characteristic), perceptive (being thought to have a protected characteristic), victimisation (treated unfairly for supporting a complaint) etc.

### 1. Age

- Unfair or unfavourable actions, language or treatment of people due to their age e.g. treating people differently or dismissing/restricting their roles due to their age. This applies to both young and old.

### 2. Disability

- Prejudice against people with long-term (12-month+) mental or physical disabilities alongside failure to make sufficient adjustments to remove hindrances or barriers caused by the disability.

### 3. Gender reassignment

- The law protects trans<sup>3</sup> men and women regardless of any medical process e.g. a trans man who was assigned female identity at birth but has a male gender identity and lives as a man.

### 4. Marriage and civil partnership

- This is treating people differently on account of their relationship status, be it between a man and a woman or members of the same sex.

### 5. Pregnancy and maternity

- This is victimising or being unfair to a woman due to their pregnancy or for being on maternity leave.

### 6. Race

- Discrimination against a person, directly or indirectly, due to their race, colour or nationality. Direct discrimination is, for example, rejecting any application due to nationality, race or colour (real or perceived by name). Indirect discrimination is placing procedures or policy which places

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Trans’ is an umbrella term used to define a range of different gender variant identities. The term ‘non-binary’ refers to people who class themselves as neither exclusively male nor female. These individuals fall under the trans umbrella but may not consider themselves trans.



people at a disadvantage, i.e. placing a requirement for a UK-only qualification which then restricts the opportunity for others to apply.

#### 7. Religion or belief

- This is where a person is discriminated against due to religious or cultural beliefs e.g. not recruiting or dismissing a person due to their religion (direct) or placing barriers to allow a person to practise their religion, such as holding meetings at the same time as prayers (indirect).

#### 8. Sex

- This is treating a man or woman differently because of their sex, including positive discrimination. Common examples are, asking job applicants different questions due to their sex or not promoting women due to future pregnancy concerns. Remember, sex is not gender.

#### 9. Sexual orientation

- This is where people are discriminated against for being gay, bisexual, heterosexual or asexual, i.e. treated less favourably due a person's emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to another person.