

Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy

Harwich Festival and Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre

Policy 04 | Version 2.0 | Revised 25 October 2026

Owner: General Manager | Scheduled review: 25 October 2027

Our statement

Harwich Festival is committed to equality, inclusion and fair opportunity in its activities, employment, volunteering, governance, programming and partnerships. We recognise that discrimination and social or financial barriers can prevent people from taking part. We will challenge unfair treatment and make practical changes that help people participate in the arts and the life of the centre.

This policy applies to trustees, staff, volunteers, performers, artists, contractors, hirers and users. We expect partners and groups using our spaces to respect these standards. The trustees oversee the policy; the General Manager coordinates implementation. Those recruiting, programming or supervising activity must apply it to their decisions.

Equality and wider inclusion

We will comply with the Equality Act 2010 as it applies to our roles as employer and service provider. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The precise legal protections vary between employment and services.

Our commitment also includes fair treatment irrespective of social or economic background, caring responsibilities, HIV or AIDS status, refugee or asylum-seeker status, lawful trade-union activity and lawful political views. These wider commitments do not imply that every characteristic has identical statutory protection. The Public Sector Equality Duty applies only where the relevant legal conditions are met; receiving public funding does not itself make HF a public authority for every purpose.

Fair decisions and access

Use clear and relevant criteria for recruitment, opportunities, room hire and programme selection. Consider barriers in publicity, application methods, cost, timing and physical or digital access. Avoid assumptions about a person's ability, needs or background. Encourage a range of perspectives and participation without promising quotas or identical outcomes.

We will anticipate and consider reasonable adjustments for disabled people and respond to individual requests. Adjustments may concern communication, formats, seating, support, booking or access arrangements. We will explain available facilities and any limitations honestly and explore suitable alternatives. Decisions must consider the applicable legal duty, effectiveness, practicality and resources; a general reference to cost must not replace proper consideration. Do not promise access improvements that are not yet in place.

Respectful behaviour and harassment

We do not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying. Unwanted conduct may be verbal, physical, written, visual or online. Sexual harassment can be a single incident. A person does not need to ask the behaviour to stop before reporting it or receiving protection. Intent does not determine whether behaviour is acceptable.

Managers must assess and address risks from colleagues and third parties, including audiences, clients, hirers, artists and contractors. We will apply the prevention standard required by law, provide appropriate training and act on concerns. Policy 16 contains the reporting and prevention procedure, including preparation for the strengthened duty described in current Acas guidance

from 30 October 2026.

We recognise that disability, illness or distress can affect communication and behaviour. We will respond sensitively, consider adjustments and provide support where reasonable, while protecting others from harm. Adjustments do not require us to accept threatening or abusive behaviour. Any restriction must be justified, proportionate and reviewed.

Raising a concern

Raise concerns with the General Manager through contact@harwichfestival.com or 01255 319191. You may also write to the Chair of Trustees, privately, at Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre, Main Road, Dovercourt, Essex, CO12 4AJ, particularly if the concern involves management. Safeguarding or urgent safety concerns must use the relevant immediate reporting route.

We will take concerns seriously, consider support and protective steps, and deal with them fairly under the complaints, grievance, safeguarding or disciplinary procedure as appropriate. Nobody will be penalised for making a good-faith complaint, providing evidence or requesting an adjustment. An unsubstantiated complaint is not, for that reason, malicious. Deliberately false allegations may be addressed through a fair process.

Monitoring and review

Trustees and management will consider feedback, access requests, complaints and patterns in recruitment and participation. Collect equality information only where necessary and lawful, protect it and use anonymised reporting where possible. Review this policy and practical actions at least annually and after significant changes or incidents. Communicate the policy and relevant training to everyone who implements it.

Prepared for adoption. Record authorised approval in the master register. Review sooner after a significant change or incident.

Reference guidance

[acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk) - [steps for employers to prevent sexual harassment](#)
[acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk) - [harassment](#)