Fruitmarket

Creative Access and Inclusion Strategy

> ‘Access involves more than checking off a list of practical accommodations. It is a way of thinking about the world that challenges us to imagine how another body, another self, experiences it. What could be more intellectually engaging than imagining another’s world? Isn’t this something like what we do when we read a novel?’ **Kristin Lindgren and Debora Sherman**

> ‘And I can really recommend [Fruitmarket] to other visually impaired people, which I didn't think I'd be able to do that before. That's been a massive outcome from this, that ability to find a mainstream organisation that takes on access at its heart.’ **Kirin Saeed, *See with Me* Lead Artist, Fruitmarket**

From May 2026 we are reframing our ‘Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy’ as a ‘Creative Access and Inclusion Strategy’ in order to reflect our commitment to understanding and learning from the creative possibilities of access and inclusion. It also reflects our desire to recognise the move we have already made, and seek to strengthen, in widening the responsibility of EDI from the realms of education and visitor services to encompass all aspects of our operations. We have made great strides in co-producing an engagement programme with and for people with lived experience of marginalisation, and we also seek to understand the creative value of access and inclusion in curatorial programming. This is an approach that benefits from the small scale of Fruitmarket – teams are not siloed off into separate parts of the building, but share an office and come together in weekly (office staff) and monthly (all staff) meetings. This creates space for listening, learning and working together towards a more creatively accessible gallery.

‘Creative access’ is a term coined by disability scholar and curator Amanda Cachia to explore ‘how access can be used in more delightfully creative ways rather than as something that is to be approached with a checklist in mind.’ Cachia writes of access in the context of disability, but our use of it here is wider, allowing us to think about how we can creatively reduce barriers to access for people of diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

This Strategy states our values, achievements and aspirations for development. It sets out our approach to EDI as a creative process that evolves through evidence, action and reflection, rather than one that is fixed or prescriptive. This document is updated annually with a particular focus on updating outcomes and setting actions for the year ahead.

As a Plus Tate member, we use Plus Tate's Creative Access Toolkit to inform our work.

1. Fruitmarket Vision, Mission, Values, Objectives

Vision
To provide inspiration and opportunity for artists and audiences in a public space for culture right in the centre of Edinburgh – free and open seven days a week.

Mission
To develop and present a diverse, international programme of artistically excellent exhibitions, commissions, publications, performances, events and engagement activities. To celebrate creativity's ability to make space for meaning, and to welcome people into that space so that they find themselves reflected, represented and recognised, and encouraged to think with contemporary art and culture in ways that are helpful to them.

Values
To be an inclusive, fair, ambitious, sustainable organisation that centres artists and empowers audiences. To combine the professionalism and impact of a large organisation with the warmth, flexibility and entrepreneurial spirit of a small one.

Objectives

- To be an accessible place of inspiration and creativity which values ideas, community and collective endeavour
- To work collaboratively with artists to help them create and present high quality art and develop their practice and careers
- To contribute to visitors' health and wellbeing, helping them to think with art and artists about things that matter to them
- To engage with communities across Edinburgh, using creativity to develop confidence and skills
- To play a confident, valued and distinctive role in the wider cultural offer of Edinburgh and Scotland.

2. Equalities Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

Fruitmarket is committed to creating equal opportunities for people to work in, engage with, participate in and experience the arts and creativity. We recognise that equalities, diversity and inclusion are separate yet interrelated. Equality is about treating people differently, not treating everyone the same, so that everyone has the opportunity to participate. Diversity celebrates difference in the many and varied characteristics of

people. Inclusion necessitates an openness to a wide variety of people, challenging conscious and unconscious bias and actively seeking to widen the demographic of our audiences.

We recognise the complexity of living with a disability, of the interaction between the body and the barriers created by the disabling or exclusionary social and built environment (informed by Tobin Siebers' theory of complex embodiment). We seek to remove as many as possible of the physical and socio-economic barriers that might prevent people from accessing our services or working for us or with us, while recognising that some access measures can unintentionally create barriers for others. By removing barriers, we are diversifying our staff, artist and visitor profile and increasing audiences to the Fruitmarket and online.

Fruitmarket's Creative Access and Inclusion Strategy and EDI Policy are written in the context of our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, that consolidates legislation for a range of groups with Protected Characteristics, and Fruitmarket's aspiration to be open, inclusive and accessible to all. Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

Age
Disability
Gender reassignment
Marriage and civil partnership
Pregnancy and maternity
Race
Religion or belief
Sex
Sexual orientation

Alongside these, we also recognise other areas of potential discrimination that are not listed in the 2010 Equality Act, such as neurodiversity, paternity, menopause, socio-economic background, parenting and caring responsibilities.

This Policy applies to all employees, artists, contractors, job applicants, visitors and other customers. It operates in conjunction with the Fruitmarket's Strategic Plan, and its principles apply to all other policies, requiring staff to incorporate EDI considerations into strategic planning.

3. Standing commitments

We have had an active and integrated EDI Strategy and Action Plan since 2014. Since then we have developed Standing Commitments that we carry forward in our work. Within the framework of supporting a culture of creative access and inclusion in the organisation, this checklist serves as a useful tool to keep us accountable to our

commitments.

3.1 Policy and Governance

- EDI Champions on the Board and staff.
- EDI is a standing item in our weekly team meeting, and our monthly all staff meeting to ensure it is central to our thinking, practice and day-to-day operation.
- 'Taking action on EDI' is a core value against which staff members are appraised annually.
- Monitoring data gathered regularly from Board, staff and artists.

3.2 Staffing and Training

We aim to provide a supportive working environment with structures that recognise people's differences. We have been able to change the make up of our organisation over the last 5 years and have more people with protected characteristics throughout the organisation including board and management.

- Commitment to ongoing diversification of staff team. Roles are advertised widely through channels and networks that reach potential applicants from marginalised groups. Job descriptions are available both in PDF and plain text formats. Applicants may provide written video or audio applications.
- Providing a work environment that values equality of opportunity and diversity by offering flexible working for staff wherever possible. Other workplace adjustments are made in discussion with each staff member.
- Trained Mental Health First Aiders.
- Staff wellness support through an employee assistance programme with counselling options and targeted coaching programmes.
- EDI Group with colleagues from the Senior Management, Engagement and Communications teams that actively brings the EDI policy to life, reviews actions and reports on them.
- We pay all staff in line with the Living Wage and support secure employment practices (permanent contracts where practicable, guaranteed hours contracts for front of house staff).
- EDI training for all staff.
- Up-to-date books on EDI topics available for staff to borrow from the library.

3.3 Creative Programme and Engagement Programme

- Maintaining diversity within the creative programme, which provides a platform for a diverse range of artists including those with Protected Characteristics (see section 2).
- Artists are urged to consider equality of access at the earliest stages of exhibition planning, including physical access, handling boxes, sensory and sound environments. They are encouraged to see this as a creative conversation rather than one that limits the possibilities of their exhibition with us.

- We pay Scottish Artist Union rates in line with freelance artists age and experience.
- We use Access Riders where requested by artists, but are also proactive in instigating individual, tailored conversations with all artists in our programme from the earliest possible stages, in order to understand their needs and the adjustments we can make that will allow them to work at their best.
- Access to exhibitions and learning and engagement programmes is free, with the majority of our events free or heavily subsidised.
- Fundraising to continue to co-produce engagement programmes for and with people with lived experience of marginalisation that are informed by their needs.

3.4 Access

We have embedded equality, diversity, inclusion and access into the running of our building. Since redevelopment and re-opening in 2021, we have greatly improved access and made it easy for visitors to find out about access provision.

3.4.1 Visit planning

- An access video is available on our website to allow visitors to plan their visit. This is reviewed annually and additions made accordingly.
- We use WelcoMe, a free disability aware tool that helps visitors let us know about their planned visit to the Fruitmarket, so that we can meet their needs.

3.4.2 Building access

- All spaces in the building are wheelchair and buggy accessible.
- Portable wheelchair available.
- Guide dogs, hearing and registered assistance dogs welcome.
- Portable stools available in all exhibition spaces.
- Fixed hearing loop at café and bookshop counters as well as a portable hearing loop available.
- Gender neutral toilets in single occupancy fully enclosed rooms. Two accessible toilets, and baby changing facilities are available. Period products provided in all toilets.
- Braille signage from the entrance and throughout the building.
- Sensory backpacks available for visitors containing a variety of sensory aids.
- Free-to-use water fountain in café, designed by artist Tania Kovats.

3.4.3 Communications and digital access

- Our house style is plain English and our promotional materials are written with consideration of the widest audience. We include images representative of the artists and audiences we work with and want to feel welcome.
- We use alt text on social media which gives a short sentence description of the image for people who are visually impaired.
- Our entire exhibition history is available online, with ongoing efforts to digitise related material.

3.4.4 Exhibitions access

- Adjustments made considering accessibility of exhibition layouts.

- All exhibition films are subtitled, where possible. Transcripts are provided where subtitling is not possible.
- Audio of exhibition guide and audio labels provided in the gallery via QR code. Transcripts also available in the gallery.
- A ‘house style’ guide with 12-point standardised font, 20-point minimum large print and at least 25% contrast used for design.
- Word versions provided alongside PDF documents online.
- Handling boxes created for each exhibition.

3.4.5 Events access

- Visitors can provide access requirements when booking for events.
- Event end times are advertised and adhered to.
- HEPA filters, FFP2 masks and ear plugs provided at busy/noisy events.
- Audio and video recordings of events are made available after each event, where participants have given permission.

3.5 Audience

- Understanding that increasing accessibility increases our audience.
- Ensuring audiences see themselves reflected in our programmes through marketing material that represents a diverse audience. We regularly document our events, workshops and projects to ensure we capture images which represent the diverse audiences and communities we work with.
- Continually improving our evaluation processes through experience and knowledge and responding to feedback.