



StrongBack Productions Limited: Equal Opportunities Policy

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StrongBack Productions Limited: Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction:

StrongBack Productions is committed to achieving a working environment which provides equality of opportunity and freedom from unlawful discrimination; and believes that all employees and clients are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity.

Context:

StrongBack Productions was established to reflect the Caribbean heritage and multi-racial and multicultural perspective of its co-founders, Jamaican playwright Patricia Cumper and Trinidadian composer Dominique Le Gendre. StrongBack Productions is a small project funded arts charity that embodies the diversity and plurality of ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexuality, marital status, class, religious and spiritual practises and beliefs and disability that are the norm across the Caribbean region. Within the limits of its resources StrongBack is committed to contributing its lived experience of diversity to the current national conversation that seeks to redress the balance of equity and reflect contemporary Britain.

Purpose of Policy

This Policy aims to prevent, reduce and stop all forms of unlawful discrimination in line with the Equality Act 2010 and to encourage full contribution from its diverse community. StrongBack Productions is committed to actively opposing all forms of discrimination and to ensure that recruitment, promotion, training, development, assessment, benefits, pay, terms and conditions of employment, redundancy and dismissals are determined based on capability, qualifications, experience, skills, and productivity.

StrongBack Productions also aims to provide a service that does not discriminate against its clients and customers in the manner in which they can access the services and goods supplied by the company.

Scope of Policy

The requirements set out in this policy are mandatory and will apply to all staff, trustees, volunteers and/or other agents acting on behalf of the company in all capacities.

StrongBack Productions seeks to apply this policy in the recruitment, selection, training, appraisal, development and promotion of all staff, freelancers and volunteers, as well as providing services or goods to clients and customers.

Definitions

The words “**employment**” and “**employee**” includes all staff, trustees, artists, freelance staff, volunteers and external consultants engaged by StrongBack Productions regardless of whether they receive direct remuneration from the company for their work or are engaged under a standard contract of employment.

Discrimination is the unequal or differential treatment which leads to one person being treated more or less favourably than others on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and includes discrimination by perception and association.

Responsibility for the implementation of this Policy

All employees, subcontractors and agents of the company are required to act in a way that does not subject any other employees or clients to direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation on the grounds of their race, sex, pregnancy or maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation.

The co-operation of all employees is essential for the success of this policy. Managers are expected to follow this policy and to try to ensure that all employees, subcontractors and agents do the same.

Employees may be held independently and individually liable for their discriminatory acts by the company and in some circumstances an Employment Tribunal may order them to pay compensation to the person who has suffered as a result of discriminatory acts.

Equality and Diversity Code of Practice

StrongBack Productions will take active steps to promote equality and diversity best practice and will actively monitor this through the Equality Action Plan on an ongoing basis.

In particular, StrongBack Productions will:

- Aim to create working environments in which people from all backgrounds can work together harmoniously by combating prejudice, stereotyping, bullying, harassment and undignified and disrespectful behaviour.
- Promote an inclusive culture and good management practice, through the development of codes of best practice, policies, and training.
- Work with all venues to ensure that as far as possible, events and workshops take place in rooms with full disabled access and that no one is excluded by the venue for any of the reasons outlined in this policy
- Take positive action wherever possible to support this policy and its aims.
- Monitor the company's performance against this policy annually.
- Publish this policy widely.
- Ensure that policies will be subject to ongoing assessment to examine how they affect all sections of the community and to identify whether policies help to achieve equality of opportunity and fairness for all groups, or whether they have an adverse impact.

Types of Discrimination (Please also see Harassment and Bullying Policy)

Direct Discrimination:

This occurs when a person or a policy intentionally treats a person less favourably than another on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation.

Indirect Discrimination:

This is the application of a policy, practice or criteria in which the employer applies to all employees but is such that

- It is detrimental to a considerably larger proportion of people from the group than the person the employer is applying it to represents
- The employer cannot justify the need for the application of the policy on a neutral basis
- The person to whom the employer is applying it to, suffers detrimentally from the application of the policy

Harassment:

This occurs when a person is subjected to unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating their dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Victimisation:

This occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they have brought or intend to bring proceedings or they have given or intend to give evidence.

Unlawful Reasons for Discrimination

Sex: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably on the grounds of sex, marital status, civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment or transgender status. This applies to men, women and those undergoing or intending to undergo gender reassignment. Sexual harassment of men and women can be found to constitute sex discrimination. Example: Asking a woman during an interview if she is planning to have any (more) children constitutes discrimination on the ground of gender.

Age: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their age. This applies to people of all ages but does not currently apply to the calculation of redundancy payments.

Disability: It is not permissible to treat a disabled person less favourably than a non-disabled person. Reasonable adjustments must be made to give the disabled person as much access to any services and ability to be employed, trained, or promoted as a non-disabled person.

Race: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their race, nationality or ethnic origin.

Sexual Orientation: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their sexual orientation.

Religion or Belief: It is not permissible to treat a person less favourably because of their religious beliefs or their religion or their lack of any religion or belief.

Equality and Diversity in Recruitment

StrongBack Productions reflects diversity amongst its freelance staff and Trustees and seeks to ensure that all candidates for positions in the company are treated fairly, and that selection is based solely on the individual's abilities and qualifications. The company will use the following procedure for recruiting and selecting individuals for all positions:

Positive Action

Under the Equality Act 2010, positive action in recruitment and promotion applies as of 6 April 2011. 'Positive action' means the steps that the Company can take to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past record of disadvantage or low participation, to apply for positions within the Company.

If the Company chooses to utilise positive action in recruitment, this will not be used to treat people with a protected characteristic more favourably, it will be used only in tie-break situations, when there are two candidates of equal merit applying for the same position.

Entry into employment with the organisation and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and by the

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application of criteria which are related to the duties and conditions of each particular post.

Subject to statutory provision no applicant for employment, no employee, no employee of a partner organisation, no one attending a StrongBack Productions workshop or event nor anyone from the wider community will be treated less favourably than another on the unlawful grounds stated in this policy.

Advertising

Job vacancies will be advertised widely to enable and encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced candidates. StrongBack Productions will endeavour to ensure that advertisements are not restricted to areas or publications that would exclude or disproportionately reduce applications from a particular gender, religion, age group or racial group and should avoid prescribing requirements as to marital status or age. All job advertisements placed on behalf of the company will state the company's commitment to equality of opportunity.

Selection Criteria and Methods

Selection Criteria: The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. Selection criteria for all positions will be clearly defined and reflected in the further particulars sent to applicants which will also include details of the company's commitment to equality of opportunity. All those handling applications and conducting interviews must be aware of the principles of the Equality Act 2010. Job qualifications or requirements which would have the effect of inhibiting applications from members of particular groups, such as those of one sex, persons of a particular religion, marital status or sexual orientation, persons of a particular racial group, persons within a certain age bracket or those with a disability, will not be demanded or imposed except where they are justifiable in terms of the job to be done.

Interviews: The staff responsible for shortlisting, interviewing and making or recommending an appointment will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and the need for consistency. Wherever possible, at least two people will interview applicants and all questions will relate to the selection criteria. No questions will be based on age, health (except where permitted by the Equality Act 2010), assumptions about roles in the home and the family or the assumed suitability of different ethnic groups for the post in question. Where it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect the performance of the job (for example, if the job involves irregular hours or extensive travel) this will be discussed objectively and will be asked equally of all candidates. In the case of disabled applicants who identify themselves at the application stage, appropriate interview arrangements (such as accessible interview rooms or the assistance of a sign interpreter) should be offered to enable candidates to compete on an equal basis.

Grievance Procedures: All allegations of discrimination against a person because of a protected characteristic will be dealt with seriously and confidentially.

Reasonable Adjustments: The Company has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to facilitate the employment of a disabled person. These may include:

- Making adjustments to premises
- Re-allocating some or all of a disabled employee's duties
- Transferring a disabled employee to a role better suited to their disability
- Relocating a disabled employee to a more suitable office
- Giving a disabled employee time off work for medical treatment or rehabilitation
- Providing training or mentoring for a disabled employee
- Supplying or modifying equipment, instruction and training manuals for disabled employees
- Any other adjustments that the Company considers reasonable and necessary provided such adjustments are within the financial means of the Company

If an employee has a disability and feels that any such adjustments could be made by the Company, they should contact their manager.

Acting on Discriminatory Behaviour

In the event that an employee is the subject or perpetrator of, or witness to, discriminatory behaviour, please refer to the Harassment and Bullying Policy, Grievance Policy and Disciplinary Policy in the company handbook.

Advice and Support on Discrimination

Freelance staff in the first instance should contact the Project Manager directly. However, should the staff member feel they may need to seek further advice, other contacts include:

Equality and Human Rights Commission:

Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX

Phone: 0808 800 0082, Textphone: 0808 800 0084

Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com

Citizens Advice Bureau: 3rd Floor North, 200 Aldersgate Street, London, EC1A 4HD, Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Brixton Advice Centre: 165-167 Railton Road, London SE 24 0LU. [Brixton Advice Centre](#)

Community Legal Services Direct: Telephone: 0845 345 4 345,

Website: www.clsdirect.uk

Record Keeping and Data Protection:

Details of candidates and of selection decisions (including the rationale for selection or rejection) will be kept for at least 6 months after an appointment has been made in case they are required as evidence by an employment tribunal or for other proceedings.

The company will keep anonymous records of the sex, ethnic group, age and any disability of its employees and of all candidates and of those shortlisted and appointed. Records may be used to determine whether members of one sex or persons of a certain racial group, religion or age bracket or those with a disability do not apply for employment or apply in smaller numbers than might be expected or are shortlisted or appointed in a lower proportion than their application rate or are concentrated in certain job roles. Any and all personal data used in connection with this policy shall be collected, held, and processed in accordance with the Company's Data Protection and Data Retention Policy.

This Policy has been approved & authorised by:

Name: Susan Benn
Position: Chair, StrongBack Productions
Date: 27th January 2023

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Benn" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

StrongBack Productions: Equal Opportunities Policy - Action Plan

StrongBack Productions believes that our staffing and activities should reflect and promote the diversity of the UK. In order to achieve this, the organisation takes proactive steps to ensure that barriers are removed for people to actively engage with us; this includes staff, audiences, service users, volunteers and other stakeholders. The Action Plan seeks to address equal opportunities for all protected characteristics with particular focus on race, age, disability and socio-economic status.

(Our Action Plan is supported by the Equal Opportunities Policy which sets out the standards by which the organisation will carry out its activities.)

By this we mean that we are committed to ensuring that:

- No-one involved with our organisation is treated unfairly because of ethnic or national origin, colour, sex, sexuality, gender identity, age, religion, physical ability, mental health, marital or parental status or on any other inappropriate distinction.
- All our presentations, activities and opportunities are made accessible to the broadest range of people and communities.

What this means in practice for Staff, Trustees and Volunteers

StrongBack Productions wishes to ensure the benefits of a diverse, talented and committed team of staff, artists, volunteers and trustees and also to contribute to social inclusion nationally. To achieve this, StrongBack Productions will:

- Not discriminate (treat less favourably for reasons that are not relevant and that cannot be justified) in any aspect of recruitment, employment or volunteering activity
- Use fair and lawful recruitment procedures to employ the 'best person for the job'. These procedures will recognise potential, allow the organisation to make imaginative use of diverse perspectives, and open doors for people traditionally under-represented in the arts sector
- Offer a working environment where staff and volunteers are treated with dignity and respect, valued for who they are and supported to develop their skills

- Regularly review Board membership to maintain representation of a range of perspectives, age-ranges, backgrounds and lived experience
- Advertise artist and volunteering opportunities widely and encourage a broad range of people to take up opportunities to work with the organisation, including working with partners and other agencies to ensure information about opportunities reaches a wide demographic

For Networks and Partnerships

- Continue to develop and sustain links with a diverse range of partners locally, regionally and nationally including those whose focus is on diverse groups including age, race, ability in professional performance and sector wide organisations.
- Be open to opportunities to work with other organisations or individuals who may demonstrate different ways of thinking or working
- Work to influence other organisations in relation to good equality and diversity practice

For Publicity and Audiences

StrongBack Productions wants all its programmes and activities to be accessible to, interesting for and valued by audiences that reflect the diversity of the United Kingdom and of visitors from further afield. To achieve this, we will:

- Monitor the profile of audiences and the quality of experiences and use this information to inform the development of programmes
- Constantly work to attract new audiences across socio-economic spectrum and from different cultural backgrounds
- Take opportunities to bring different groups together to broaden horizons and foster understanding
- Work to make all information and publicity material both accessible and representative in the widest possible sense including: ensuring that language used can be easily understood by presenting material in a format that is easy to read, by circulating information widely, through images representing a range of ages, bodies and cultural backgrounds., through subtitling digital content and employing BSL interpreters as appropriate
- Endeavour to use welcoming, safe and physically accessible venues and space
- Provide a hybrid programme integrating online and in real life experiences removing some physical and geographic barriers to access

For Artists and Programme

StrongBack Productions' mission is to work in collaboration with music, literature, cross art-form and multi-disciplinary organisations, participants and audiences across the country to provide innovative and quality art experiences for all and which reflect a range of perspectives and experiences and deliver social benefits. To achieve this, we will:

- Present 'culturally diverse' arts as the norm, and avoid pigeon-holing or labelling different groups, artists or styles
- Continue to regularly review our programme from a diversity perspective including all protected characteristics
- Promote, through our publicity that spoken word/poetry is accessible to everyone
- Take decisions relating to the content of activities that balance the right to freedom of expression and the benefits of challenging audiences, with the possibility that some material may cause offence
- Take ethical considerations into account in relation to the content of our programme
- Ensure access needs of artists are met removing physical and economic barriers to participation/performance work. Enabling all artists to have the same opportunities to perform and/or participate in our creative programmes.
- Provide a hybrid programme integrating online and in real life experiences removing some physical and geographic barriers to access

Implementation and Monitoring

StrongBack Productions is committed to making this policy a reality and to achieve this:

- All staff, artists, volunteers and board members will be made aware that they have individual and collective responsibilities for acting in line with the policy.
- Activities undertaken to fulfil the objectives described above will be integrated into organisational planning and included in the work plans of employees as appropriate
- Any equality-related concerns or complaints raised by staff, volunteers, artists or members of the public will be treated seriously, investigated sensitively and impartially and handled with confidentiality in mind. Employees who feel that they have been discriminated against should use our grievance procedure to pursue the issue, or consult our Code of Conduct Policy
- Any breaches of this policy by staff, volunteers or board members will be treated seriously, and potentially regarded as misconduct
- This policy will be made available to all stakeholders and audiences
- There will be an annual review of equality and diversity activity and progress on the board agenda
- StrongBack Productions will employ specialists to advise and support on different aspects of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging work to ensure our outlook continues to evolve and demonstrate best practice .

7. Review of policy and procedures

Recruitment procedures and practices will be kept under review to ensure that this policy is being adhered to and that they do not include requirements or conditions which constitute, or may lead to, unlawful discrimination.

8. Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Benn" followed by a horizontal flourish line.

Susan Benn, Chair, StrongBack Productions Limited

Date: 27/01/2023

9. Date of review

This policy will be reviewed in January 2024