

# THICK & TIGHT'S EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

## Overview

Promoting equality and diversity is central to Thick & Tight's ethos, as a company whose queer identity reinforces the importance of solidarity with any marginalised group or individual. We believe that the arts are an essential part of society, where diversity and integration must be taken extremely seriously, to promote equality, respect and representation for everybody and challenge bigotry and elitism of all kinds. We value and celebrate difference, believing that diverse perspectives and experience are vital for the creation of an integrated and fair environment, within our company and in society as a whole.

Thick & Tight aims to proactively tackle any discrimination and disadvantage on account of race, colour, religion or belief, ethnic or national origins, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity or gender expression, socio-economic situation, age, disability, neurodiversity, nationality, parenthood, marital or part-time status. We seek to ensure that no individual or group is directly or indirectly discriminated against for any reason with regard to employment or accessing our work. Discrimination means acting unfairly against a group or individual, for example through exclusion, verbal comment, denigration, harassment, victimisation, a failure to appreciate needs or the assumption of such needs without consultation. All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, regardless of whether there was any intention to discriminate or not.

When you work with Thick & Tight you have a duty to co-operate with us to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination. Freelancers should bring the attention of the Co-Directors (Daniel Hay-Gordon and Eleanor Perry) to suspected discriminatory acts or practices or cases of bullying or harassment.

NB. We choose not to use the term 'inclusivity' as we feel it implies a dominant or mainstream position which chooses to include or not to include others, thereby upholding an imbalance of power.

## Principles

- Honour people as individuals and respect their ways of living
- Employ people solely on the basis of their merit and suitability for the role, whilst also having conversations with performers about the incorporation of their identity within the work
- Seek to acknowledge a performer's identity in our work without consuming it
- Support marginalised artists and participants through engagement
- Acknowledge our (the Co-Directors') privilege as white, non-disabled, university educated people and understand the implications of such privilege. Take individual responsibility to deal with this privilege without bringing it into the room, putting it on other people or centring it
- Shift the power structure of the company by appointing an Advisory Committee, to diversify decision-making and ensure accountability. The Committee are a carefully considered group who represent a range of identities and personal and professional backgrounds. You can find them here: ([www.thickandtight.com/company](http://www.thickandtight.com/company))
- Adapt our working methods and approaches quickly in response to concerns, complaints and needs, being open to constructive criticism
- Make our work and working methods as accessible as possible while never belittling or presuming other peoples' abilities or understanding
- Avoid voluntary roles within Thick & Tight and their potential for excluding those from a low-economic background
- Pay equal rates to artists and collaborators within a project wherever possible, to equalise the value of everyone's time and skill; never making an employee feel uncomfortable around discussions about money or payment schedules
- Never employ someone based on a desire to 'tick-boxes' or unlawfully positively discriminate, but broadly seek to ensure that we are promoting individuals from underrepresented backgrounds
- Interrogate how artistic talent, taste and merit are defined, discussed and rewarded, to challenge elitism surrounding 'artistic excellence'; consider how that links to recruitment and programming
- Work with the Advisory Committee to create targets and action plans to diversify the people working for Thick & Tight and the audiences and participants our work reaches
- Recognise that the institutions we work with are likely to have problems with inequality and lack of diversity to some degree. We will seek to work with and

learn from institutions we feel take equality and diversity seriously and to challenge the policies and practices of those that don't. We will encourage an institution to reconsider its approach if we feel improvement is needed and will share what we have learned about equality and diversity to support the change. We will give the institution or people who work there a chance to improve their practice and welcome opportunities for co-learning. If we decide to stop working with an institution because of problems with their approach to equality and diversity, we will try to continue conversations around work they are doing, contributing where we can and taking learning back into Thick & Tight for our own improvement.

- Bring as much transparency and clarity to all areas of company communications (both externally and internally) as possible
- Make all freelancers or participants aware of our grievance procedure and support them to take action if they feel they have been wrongly discriminated against. Freelancers will not be victimised in any way for making such a complaint in good faith. Complaints of this nature will be dealt with seriously and as soon as possible
- Take disciplinary action against any freelancer found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination. Allegations of discrimination which are not made in good faith will also be considered a disciplinary matter. We will keep confidential records of ongoing matters dealt with in accordance with this policy
- Work with our Advisory Committee to establish our 'red lines' - situations in which we feel obliged to step away from working with an individual or organisation or end a contract/agreement if they are not in line with our company values; in such a scenario, focus on what we can action for our own learning and impact beyond that situation

### **The need for improvement**

Thick & Tight's Co-Directors feel strongly that improvement in diversity and integration within society is vital, but understand that change comes from within too. We have identified areas we know need improving within the company at all levels and are committed to doing so. The list below will be addressed and reviewed regularly with the Advisory Committee. We will decide on actions to take to achieve

our aims, adding new points as they arise. We will create an action plan with a timeline and undertake this work with support from the Committee.

We aim to:

- Keep considering how to ensure that people who work for Thick & Tight represent a variety of lived experiences and that working for us isn't inaccessible to certain demographics. We recognise a particular lack of diversity among those who work in production, management and technical roles for Thick & Tight and must work to improve this
- Identify areas for access improvement by looking at access riders of artists who have shared these publicly and asking our partners and collaborators for more information about this
- Look at how we recruit and find people to work with. We need to challenge our nepotism, which was a natural result of starting out as a small informal company but needs to change now that we are more established. Expand the way we seek to employ artists, extending our network and challenging the culture of elitism in the arts
- Make an effort to see a wider array of performances and sit among audiences we aren't used to being part of
- Improve representation within our productions and consider how we tackle issues of identity, especially race, through discussion with our Advisory Committee, artists and collaborators
- Think about the audiences we reach and what we can do to bring our work to new and more diverse audiences. Consider how this relates to who is represented on stage and who our commissioners, partners and venues are
- Use our resources to support other artists or small-scale organisations within the sector
- Take responsibility as queer people to be in kinship with those who experience discrimination for any reason
- Be more outspoken and use our voices and work for positive change
- Stay informed and abreast of societal challenges and differing perspectives
- Contact Common Wealth Theatre for advice about data monitoring to better measure the socio-economic background of people working for us as our company grows
- Stay abreast of changes around appropriate language and terminology and adapt our policies accordingly

Date of last policy review	29 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
Date of next review	Autumn 2022
Signed	Eleanor Perry
Position	Co-Director