



July 2020

Inclusion Policy



SAVVY Theatre Company's inclusion policy is based on the Social Model of Disability, which as its core principle believes that society needs to change to support people with a disability.

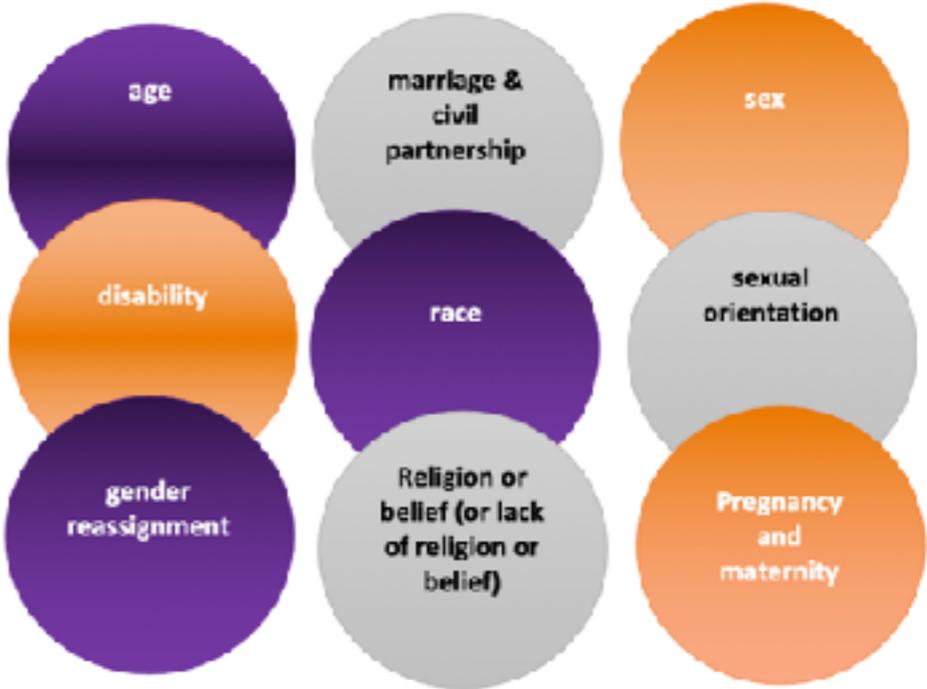
Equality & Diversity

“Equality” means that everyone should be treated fairly. It recognises that everyone has individual needs and they have the right to have their needs respected.

“Diversity” recognises that our background, knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and experiences are all different and that our differences should be valued and appreciated.

Equalities Act 2010 – protected categories

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all previous anti-discrimination laws and legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Act introduced and defined nine protected categories. These are shown in the diagram below: -



At SAVVY we believe that all people have the right to be part of society and actively work towards a culture where no one is discriminated or excluded due to disability, race, socio-economic circumstances, mental health, anxiety, trauma, self-identity or any other potential obstacle that may pose as a barrier to inclusion.

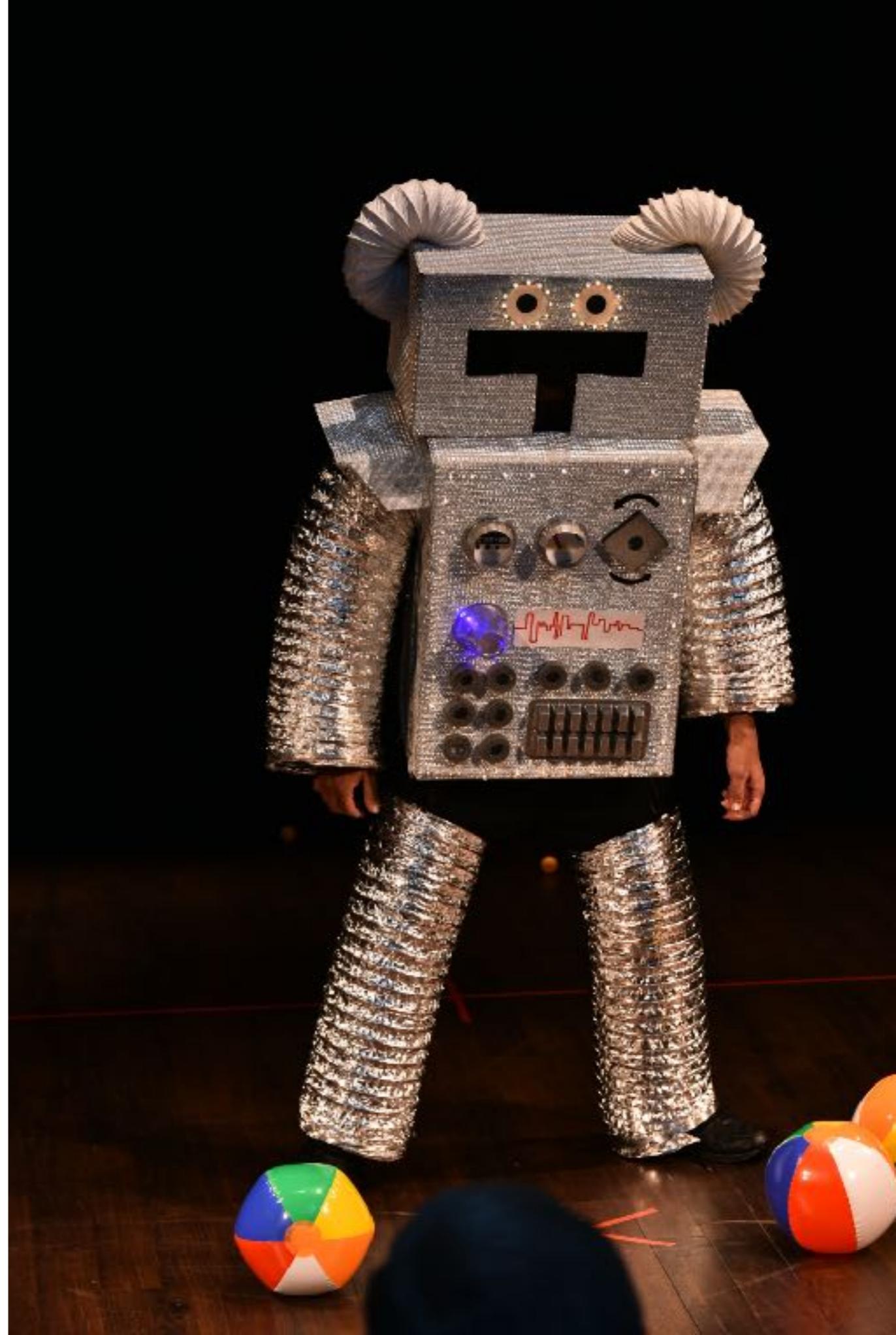
Case Study

Example-1

We had a Young Company member who originally contacted SAVVY under the name 'Lesley'. Lesley who was struggling with their gender identity, had problems at home due to these identity issues and was in temporary foster care.

At SAVVY we called Lesley 'Alex' and referred to him as 'he' however (as requested), whenever communication went home, it was under 'Lesley' and 'her'. This minimised stress for this young person and allowed 'Alex' to explore his identity in a safe environment whilst at SAVVY.

We also worked in partnership with the local LGBTQI+ Forum and introduced Alex to Oliver (who was also transgender). Oliver worked as his mentor and provided him with support links within the LGBTQI+ community. This mentoring and safe environment at SAVVY helped Alex through his teenage years. Alex is now in his early twenties and living openly as a man and although no longer a young company member, stays in touch with us via social media.



Our aim at SAVVY is to create theatre and provide training in a supportive environment, modelling best practise for our community (which includes but is not exclusive to the members who directly access our services, staff, audience, partner organisations and the wider cultural sector).

By using the social model of disability as a starting point, SAVVY aims to weave inclusion into the fabric of our practise through a number of ways and we are always reviewing this practise with open discussions, training, continued professional development, and ongoing practical experience.

Here are some of the ways SAVVY actively works to be inclusive:



1. We get to know our individual members.

No two disabilities, abilities or people are the same and at SAVVY we avoid a tokenistic (one size fits all) approach to inclusion.

A person's disability is only one aspect of them, but it doesn't define who they are and we are constantly asking, "what can you do and what would you like to

do?", rather than looking at what a person can't do based on what their disability, anxieties, or personal circumstances say about them.

This is our starting point, and we use theatrical conventions and creative ideas to challenge perceptions of what a person can and can't do, to create ambitious inclusive theatre.

Case Study

Example-2a

Anne is on the autistic spectrum, had left formal education and was struggling to find volunteer work experience in a supportive environment. She liked the Arts but was unsure where in the creative industries she would like to be.

We initially provided Anne with a structured work experience placement for one term with one of our weekly drama groups. We met with her and clearly outlined her roles and expectations and throughout the placement continued to discuss with her what skills she liked and what she might want to develop further. She supported the company backstage on show days and developed her confidence by running drama games in the session. We also worked with her on time-keeping and other work-placement issues that could be applied to other placements.

Anne went on to complete two more terms with SAVVY and extended her placement to work with some of our other weekly groups.





Case Study

Example-2b

Craig is a young, enthusiastic and extremely talented man who was keen to pursue a career as a lighting designer. He has downs syndrome and first came to us on a placement through a partner organisation, working alongside a professional lighting operator on one of our shows.

Craig stayed on with us for the next two years, working the lighting desk on a number of shows, including a Young Company production at the Chichester Festival Theatre as part of the National Theatre's Connections Festival. We also developed a bespoke backstage programme with him to explore the impact of lighting design on a production, and created a visual, step-by-step guide to programming the lighting desk at the theatre we were currently using.

This step-by-step guide has since been used by the technical department at a local secondary school to support their students in achieving their AQA qualifications).

2. We don't audition.

At SAVVY we believe everyone has the right to take part in cultural activities and we have a 'no experience necessary' policy for anyone wanting to join our Take Part Programme. It is important that everyone feels welcome and able to attend. Auditions are nerve-racking enough for professional artists, so we do not expect our community casts to endure this!

SAVVY is committed to developing innovative, ensemble-based theatre projects, ensuring our members have ownership in the work being created.

Case Study

Example-3

Joseph has cerebral palsy and attends one of our weekly groups with a support worker who is responsible for his mobility and personal care issues. Joseph is able to use speech, however as most of his energy is used in forming words, he struggles to project and be heard. We initially invested in a personal



microphone and speaker for him to use on show days, however this is limited in its capabilities and we currently exploring other technological options for him.

Joseph's head naturally turns to the right, so when directing him, we ensure he is placed on stage right in order to not have to use energy to turn his head to face the audience.

Joseph's speech can also be difficult to understand to an untrained ear, so we continue to explore creative ways to

minimise this access barrier for an audience.

We are very conscious that Joseph has an active role in shows and is not simply 'pushed on and off the stage' and have in the past devised roles that integrate his support worker. For example, he was a criminal mastermind in one show, with his support dressed as a 1930's flapper girl, responding to the boss's every demand. In another we actually sent him off into space, building a cardboard spaceship around his wheelchair!

3. We keep our fees to a minimum and provide support through our Financial Support Programme.

All of our sessions are heavily subsidised, and we do not charge for show days, production expenses or additional rehearsals. Members can also pay the term fees in instalments if needed.

We do not want financial pressures to stop people from attending as members or audience and want to remove any stigma or guilt attached to not being able to pay fees or buy tickets to shows. We therefore offer assistance to anyone facing financial difficulties through our Financial Support Programme. We have also ensured our application process for this programme is kept simple and provide additional support (such as doing a verbal interview rather than a written request) for anyone wanting to apply.

4. We support potential new members through our dedicated Welcome Team and with two free trial sessions.

As an inclusive company it is important that we find the right group for participants to thrive in and that we get to know individuals so as best to support them. Our welcome policy is for any new member to help them access and fully participate in our ongoing weekly groups and take part in our shows.

It is also important that new members get to try out SAVVY without worrying about obligation as we might not be the right company for them.

Our new member Welcome Policy is available on request.

5. No question is a silly question if it is honestly asked.

We promote an open dialogue across our entire company, from members to staff, audience to associated companies and partners.

Without an honest dialogue and the forum to ask questions, we cannot promote or deliver a genuinely inclusive community. This open communication is also for any member who feels uncomfortable with another member's behaviour.

All communication is kept in confidence and we want people to tell us rather than keep feelings to themselves if it is impacting on their ability to take part in the group.

Our full Code of Conduct policy document outlines our procedures regarding behaviour is available on our website.



Case Study

Example-4

We had an enquiry from a mother who was keen for her son Matthew (who was on the Autistic Spectrum) to gain more social confidence. He was 17 and came along to our Young Company group for a trial. However, he was very sound sensitive, and his Autism meant that his manner could be perceived as abrasive with the comments he would make to the group. Two points come from this example. Firstly, we ascertained that the Young Company would not be the right group for him, but as he wasn't yet ready to join some of our other groups (due to other daytime commitments), we discussed with his mother the possibility of him staying with the Young Company for the term as an observer of the group rather than participant. We gave him a chair to sit on by the door, which provided him with a defined, safe space in the room and an exit should he feel uncomfortable with the noise levels. It also meant he could get used to the space, SAVVY staff and group members in his own time, without any pressure to join in.

The second point to come from this example, was the inclusion and the open discussion of his autism and needs with the rest of the Young Company. The group would greet Matthew (using his name) on arrival at the sessions and would ask if he would like to sit with them at break times. They used clear and precise language and weren't offended if Matthew made a comment from the side of the room about the activities taking place. Although Matthew didn't join in, he was included, and the young company members were better informed on autism.



6. We monitor our use of language and promote awareness of unconscious bias.

We are aware that language is constantly evolving, however we ensure that we are sensitive with terms used in sessions and ensure new members are aware of any vernacular used that could be inappropriate. In 2016 we launched the Hidden Disabilities Project in connection with Mencap's National #HereIAm campaign which looked at the use of language and offensive terms amongst young people.

We also monitor the use of language among members and our wider community, who through unconscious bias, may use terms that support a culture of racism, exclusion and discrimination.

7. We regularly bring our entire membership together and encourage opportunities for members to get involved with other groups.

As we regularly bring our members together, our open dialogue policy is important.

We introduce all members to different methods of communication, such as Makaton, symbol scripts and clear ways of speaking and phrasing requests. We also ensure that no member is put in a position where they feel uncomfortable and work with them to ensure they (and the group) are supported.



Case Study

Example-5

Robert first came to SAVVY on a holiday workshop programme. He was 19, had a limited social circle and was struggling to find an outlet for his interest in drama (which at the time did not extend beyond repeating verbatim, scenes from movies and television programmes).

He had little confidence and spent most of his time in his bedroom. His mother was worried that his autism would prevent him from pursuing his passion and limit his career options.

He joined one of our daytime drama groups in September 2016.

Since then Robert has performed in numerous SAVVY productions and has discovered a flair for physical comedy. In 2017 we supported Robert for a week-long acting placement with Graeae Theatre Company in London, where he spent a week training at RADA.



We invited Robert to take part in the 2018 Adult Company production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. After the second performance, Robert joined the rest of cast in the pub afterwards. His mother told us this was the first time he had ever asked to go out with his friends.

She explained this was significant as Robert had never had a group of friends to socialise with before.

Since *The Dream*, Robert has joined the cast members on other nights out, is now part of their regular movie club and now attends the Adult Company as well as Action Replay every week.

8. We provide resources and use techniques to ensure everyone can access our services.

At SAVVY, we believe it is extremely important to understand individual ways of communicating and we spend time exploring various methods and tools. We are continually developing our practises to integrate a broad range of access resources into our projects, including:

- Use of Makaton
- Easy-read documents
- Social Stories and video guides
- Sound Synopsis and a relaxed environment and the opportunity to visit the space and meet with actors prior to the show
- touch tours of the set and space for people with visual impairments
- integrating audio description into our scripts
- travel training and visual documents to new venues for members and audience
- Integrated Signed Interpretive Performances (ISIP) for people with hearing impairments

- large clear-font scripts, double spaced and on coloured paper as requested for people with dyslexia or other visual impairments
- providing standard accessible information packages with Makaton symbols and pictures across all of our ongoing groups.

We also use techniques such as read and repeat to support line learning. This technique is used across our groups and takes away any stigma for people with conditions such as dyslexia or those who might struggle to read. (At SAVVY we don't assume people can read and so always start with a read and repeat technique, only offering scripts to those who want them.)

We also hide scripts in props (such as magazines or books) to help those with anxieties around line-learning.

9. Ensure all of our venues are fully accessible for people with mobility issues.

All of our rehearsal venues must be fully accessible for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. As many of our productions are site-specific (i.e. not in traditional theatre venues), we still ensure they are accessible. Where this isn't possible we aim to remove access barriers through creative thinking.

Case Study

Example-6

When performing Romeo & Juliet at Honeywood Museum (an Edwardian House in Carshalton), the entire upstairs was inaccessible. In order to ensure anyone unable to use the stairs could still access the show, we filmed the scenes that took place upstairs and showed these in the downstairs billiard room. The effect for the audience was that they were watching these scenes secretly on CCTV.

10. Understanding and developing external levels of support

We develop relationships with partner organisations, care homes and support staff and provide documents and guidance for people who attend our sessions as support for our members.

We understand that not everyone is used to theatre etiquette in a rehearsal room, so we outline our expectations when supporting someone and try to understand any individual home circumstances and/or changes in levels of care which might impact a member's



ability to access and be fully included in drama.

This is particularly important when selecting members for special projects, as we need to know what level of support they may have and where SAVVY is able to help bridge any gaps. For example, very often support on a weekend or of an evening can be limited and changes of work rota in care homes can make communication between staff difficult. We aim to minimise this with

frequent communication and a single point of contact for each group.

We also ensure that we provide wash bags, a change of clothes and additional food and drink on show days for any members who might need it.

Finally, we recognise that we will make mistakes and have a simple philosophy that once we know better, we do better.



CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH THEATRE

Copies of this document are made available to all staff, employed facilitators (paid or voluntary), group members of SAVVY Theatre Company and their parent/carers via our website and on request.

Any questions or concerns regarding this policy should be forwarded to:

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www.savvytheatre.co.uk