



REVIEW OF 2024 EDI PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

2024's EDI plan was focused on evolving our thinking around the anti-racism action plan, acknowledging that to ensure anti-racist organisational practice we had to focus more widely on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion practice and ensure that the organisation had a robust culture led through our values of collaboration, inclusivity, creativity and thoughtfulness. These values, developed in 2023, were part of Magic Me's practice but not necessarily at the core of how we operated. Additionally, 2023 was a year of significant turbulence with 75% turnover of Magic Me's direct workforce. As such, the priority for 2024 was to embed the values as a means to creating an inclusive and psychologically safe workplace and ensure we retained and developed a strong team of staff, artists and board members while maintaining our commitment to anti-racist practice across delivery and operations.

CULTURE & PRACTICE

Objective: Embedding our Values throughout Magic Me

Progress: Magic Me has made significant progress with embedding our values of creativity, collaboration, inclusivity and thoughtfulness. Practical examples of this are:

- A values-based performance management framework within which staff evidence how they are meeting the values on a monthly basis.
- Values contained within group agreements (between artists and participants) and documentation to participants at the start of a new project.
- Inclusion of a values section for all newly created/updated policy documents.
- Regular use of values as a guide for decision making at SLT level.

Objective: Building an inclusive and psychologically safe workplace for all.

Progress: Significant progress has been made in this area with a raft of new support for staff through our people leadership strategy including; weekly wellbeing meetings, weekly work 1:1s between staff and line managers, an additional week of shared annual leave in summer, coaching of staff to develop confidence and skills in specific areas of practice. Additionally, we have monthly pulse surveys for staff and regular touch points to gather artist feedback through our artist learning and development days.

We held two anti-racism training sessions for staff and two for artists at which colleagues got the chance to explore areas of their own specific practice. Artists fed into who they would like to present the second of their anti-racism sessions which led to Tas Emiabatta delivering scenario-based training exploring previous situations where racism had occurred and how artists and project managers might address this.

The Anti-racism Book Clubs (ABCs) have provided the staff team a safe container to explore a variety of content (books, documentaries, educational videos etc) and have rich and challenging discussions about individual, collective and organisational racism. We developed a set of guidelines to decide on and review content and, so far, have had six conversations facilitated by a different member of staff. The next steps for this are to ensure concrete actions come out of these meetings.



One area we fell short of our target was reviewing and agreeing language around race, age and other characteristics in an effort to ensure that our language is consistent and aligned with the evolution of language. This will remain a target for 2025.

Objective: Reviewing and Renewing our Arts Practice

Progress: Our Learning and Development Days have been a major success in terms of helping to embed the Magic Me practice across our artist body. and have included anti-racism training, anti-ageism training and dementia training. The sessions have been a major success with an average surveyed score of 4.6 in response to "After the 2024/25 L&D Days, I feel more confident to apply Magic Me's principles and practice into Magic Me project planning & delivery" and 4.44 in response to "Overall, these L&D days help me improve or develop my practice / work outside of Magic Me" (both scores out of 5). Some quotes that evidence the impact of these sessions can be found below:

"The workshops from other artists have been fantastic, there has been so much from those to take away, with lots of ideas to integrate and develop into my work. Also particularly the discussions on racism have been very impactful on my work outside magic me"

"I have benefitted incredibly from the days about safeguarding or matters like racism...It has really helped me in my own practice. We are amongst a large number of other artists also sharing our experiences."

Additionally, staff and artists have been instrumental in developing improved practice including improving our Group Agreement process for participants joining new projects and in the creation of an end-of-session reflection framework which has allowed Magic Me to better monitor participant inclusion, engagement and safety.

We have started work in earnest on our artist scaffolding in the past month following the implementation of the final stages of our staff people leadership strategy. This includes surveying artists about the support they want to see from us. The development of this scaffolding is a key target for 25/26 and will be built up alongside our new Project Management Framework. This framework features specific EDI lenses to be applied across the 5 key areas of project delivery and alongside our values will provide a powerful and practical way for staff and artists to guide projects from conception to completion.

We have successfully introduced an evaluation framework for our Creative Mix project and in 25/26 intend to roll this out across the rest of our projects. We want to involve participants more fully in helping to steer Magic Me's approaches and creative priorities and to that end have established a Creative Strategy Committee on the board which will engage an advisory group of artists and participants. The committee will meet for the first time in the last board cycle on 24/25 and at that meeting will begin the process of discussing how we establish said advisory group.

Objective: Experimental Project Partnerships



Progress: Lab's creative research programme, Roots and Routes, focused on reaching our local community so that our programme could serve direct need. We spoke to 24 community organisations and delivered 6 workshops with those organisations and members of their local community. We have formed a partnership with community hub [Island House](#) in the Isle of Dogs, co-designing a project focusing on intergenerational connection which is responsive to the needs of their hyper-local community.

As part of Spark we have developed a set of creative activities for care home workers to run with their residents (and a corresponding booklet disseminated to care home partners) specifically designed to engage the most marginalised care home residents. This year's Spark programme has focussed on the training model for care staff and we are now arriving at the opportunity to measure impact on wellbeing quality of life of residents by starting the process of engaging an evaluation partner.

Our second year of delivering Creative Mix working with lots of different organisations, community groups, and housing schemes to break down barriers to bringing older participants into the project and arts activities more widely. While Magic Me has created a welcoming environment at our base in Pott Street more work needs to be done to support (often lonely or isolated) older people into activities. Additionally, we recognise the need for our EDI programme targets for next year to be better distilled and more measurable.

PEOPLE & PARTNERS

Objective: Knowing who we are

Progress: We conducted an annual survey of trustees, artists, staff and volunteers to identify who works for us and who is missing. Our organisation as a whole is under representative of some key Tower Hamlets demographics particularly the Bangladeshi community and men. We have also successfully embedded participant monitoring within our Creative Mix project and a target for 25/26 will be to roll this out across all projects.

Objective: Improve recruitment and Integration of new Trustees, Artists and Staff

Progress: We led targeted recruitment aimed at securing trustees from these demographics but were unable to secure anyone although we did recruit some people living in Tower Hamlets through the locally run MET trustee recruitment scheme and more widely.

Our recruitment practice has undergone significant changes this year resulting in increases in the number of applicants across the board. There is still much more work to be done in this area including in equal opportunities monitoring which would allow us to measure the demographics of those applying to roles. We could also improve the exposure of the adverts we are creating by working in a more targeted manner with organisations who represent our target demographics. This requires more lead-in time to recruitment activities but is necessary to address the gaps in representation of the Tower Hamlets community.

One area of major success is the embedding of the organisation's new staff Integration approach which has received positive feedback with colleagues who have been through the process stating it's the best entry they've had into an organisation.

Objective: Collate and publish the best practice we are already using to ensure transparency and equity for potential applicants.



Progress: While we have some of this information available for candidates in individual job packs, we have not yet published our recruitment and selection processes and practice in a centralised location for potential candidates to see. This is due to making changes to the recruitment processes this year. This will remain a target for next year.

Objective: Artworks programme supporting marginalised people into arts careers

Progress: We learned a lot from our final year of Artworks, using it not only as an opportunity to develop and engage young talent but also as an opportunity to develop line management capacity in the programme team. We have been able to employ one of our 23/24 Artworks trainees again as a freelancer part of our Her Story, Our Inspiration project. We are working on a succession plan for each of the roles within the organisation which would allow us to potentially recruit from this pool of trainees in the future. Despite these positive steps it has been difficult to engage trainees post the programme to find out how they are progressing in their careers so measuring whether the programme has served its ambition of supporting marginalised young people into arts careers has been challenging.

SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES

Objective: Creation of a new Advisory Group

Progress: As indicated above, the Creative Strategy committee who are responsible for establishing this advisory group will meet for the first time in the last board cycle on 24/25. We have established Terms of Reference for this committee and it will be their job to create the Terms of Reference for the new Advisory Group. In order to support this, we have successfully recruited trustees with arts, freelance and community engagement experience to serve on this committee to ensure the Advisory Group can be as impactful as possible.

Objective: Budget for this work

Progress: Budget was set aside for this work, particularly for learning and development days and funded expert trainers to deliver anti-racism and dementia training.

CONCLUSION

Magic Me has made strong progress against the key aims of our 2024/25 EDI Plan, particularly in embedding our organisational values into everyday decision-making, staff development, and project delivery. Our focus on inclusive working practice has led to notable improvements in staff experience, artist engagement, and the ways we work together. The introduction of new systems, including the values centred performance management framework, regular wellbeing check-ins, and enhanced artist Learning & Development Days, have all contributed to a clearer and more consistent culture aligned with our EDI commitments and underpinned by our values.

We also successfully delivered anti-racism training for both staff and artists, with positive feedback on its impact in practice. Our Anti-Racism Book Club (ABC) has offered valuable space for reflection and learning, with staff leading conversations and shaping content collaboratively. Work on refining our project evaluation framework and incorporating EDI lenses into project planning is also underway, strengthening our ability to embed inclusion into project delivery.



Finally, our project partnership working has supported us to strengthen community connections, produced new creative resources for care workers, and test approaches to reducing barriers to arts participation reaching those who might benefit most from our participatory arts activities.

However, there remain several areas for improvement, which will shape our priorities for 2025/26:

- Language review: Our planned review of language around race, age, and other characteristics was not completed and remains a priority to ensure consistency and alignment with evolving inclusive practice. SLT will discuss the best way to take this forward which may be in tandem with the advisory group.
- Representation gaps: Despite targeted trustee recruitment, we were unable to appoint any Bangladeshi trustees, and our broader workforce remains under-representative of the Tower Hamlets community, particularly Bangladeshis and men. This highlights the need for longer lead-in times and deeper partnerships with community organisations to diversify our recruitment pipelines across staff, artists, and trustees which we will address in 25/26.
- Recruitment data & processes: While recruitment processes have improved, effective equal opportunities monitoring needs to be introduced. Currently we have a limited understanding of applicant demographics. Formalising this, alongside developing a targeted outreach strategy to engage under-represented groups, will be a priority for 25/26.
- Artist support & project management framework: The next phase of our artist scaffolding work will focus on providing clearer structures for support and development, aligned with our new Project Management Framework to ensure effective staff-artist co-design and consistent application of EDI principles throughout project design and delivery.
- Embedding participant and artist voice: Our ambition to involve participants more meaningfully in programme design and evaluation is still at an early stage. The first meetings of the Creative Strategy Committee and the establishment of an Advisory Group will be key mechanisms to ensure participant perspectives directly inform both delivery and governance.
- Action from anti-racism book clubs: To maximise the impact of the ABC, we will conduct a review of the ABCs once each member of staff has had an opportunity to facilitate an ABC meeting. We suspect that this will confirm the need to build in clearer follow-up processes to ensure each session generates actionable commitments which are agreed collectively and fed into our ongoing anti-racism work.

Finally, as part of our learning from 2024/25, it is clear that future EDI targets must be more clearly defined and measurable. This will ensure we can better track progress, assess impact, and hold ourselves accountable to the commitments we make in 2025/26 and allow us to build on this year's progress and address changes still required to create the most inclusive, anti-racist, and representative organisation possible.