***EQUITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI): OUR COMMITMENT AND ACTION PLAN***

As part of our vision for resilient, thriving and inclusiverural communities throughout the UK, Plunkett is committed to the application of EDI in everything we do. We will go beyond equality legislation to tackle inequalities and barriers. We have an important leadership and facilitation role in respect of EDI across our sector – in the many community businesses we support and represent. We will use our resources and influence to drive positive change within Plunkett and across the sector.

***Why EDI matters***

We believe addressing EDI is fundamentally the right thing to do. Having a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive culture, and representation across our organisation and our membership will help ensure we and rural community businesses are more relevant, resilient and impactful. Why is this? Crucially, a positive approach to EDI will help attract and retain diverse staff, volunteers and customers for our community businesses reaching into all parts of the community. Taking EDI seriously also increases the chance of maximising the wider social and economic impact which is so important for community businesses and a key part of our strategy.

***What EDI means to Plunkett***

**Equity**: means ensuring a fairer society which recognises that we do not all start from the same place and acknowledge and make adjustments for inequities.

**Diversity**: means recognising and valuing the benefits of different perspectives, backgrounds and experiences. Identifying and acknowledging under-representation, and taking active steps to address it through: initiatives, policies, and systemic change.

**Inclusion:** means valuing equity and diversity and treating everyone with respect, honesty and integrity. Creating welcoming spaces that enables all in society to feel a sense of belonging.

Our approach to EDI goes beyond ‘protected characteristics’ to thinking more broadly about inclusion. Every individual will think and feel differently and we believe that these differences should be embraced, and individual needs taken into account. Additionally, the makeup of rural communities makes it harder to focus our efforts on particular aspects of diversity or exclusion because diversity is so much more dispersed than in urban areas. Our approach to EDI, both internally and externally, has been tailored to Plunkett and the communities we serve.

***Our commitment***

Ultimately, we are working towards our vision for a resilient and thriving countryside which is welcoming and inclusivefor all to live, work and visit.

To achieve this **externally**, we commit to:

1. Obtaining a greater understanding of the issues rural communities are facing, especially underrepresented groups and individuals, and those who are marginalised.
2. Extending our geographic reach to areas where the community business model is underrepresented.
3. Removing barriers from accessing Plunkett’s support, particularly from groups in areas of disadvantage, places currently underrepresented by community businesses, and individuals who are marginalised.
4. Supporting new and existing community businesses to provide a wider range of services that communities value and depend on especially benefiting people currently marginalised and excluded in those communities. In particular, we will share and promote good practice and practical cases studies of where and how community businesses have embraced EDI in a positive way, increasing their impact.
5. Helping community businesses boost opportunities for employment, training and volunteering – especially for people excluded from the labour market and from under-represented communities.

**Internally**, we commit to:

1. Continued learning on issues relating to EDI in the workplace for all staff and Trustees
2. Continue to remove any barriers for any individual to join Plunkett as a staff member, trustee, adviser or volunteer, and to ensure that our recruitment, development and progression processes are fair and equitable
3. Ensuring “equity” throughout our organisational culture, systems and practices
4. Tracking our progress and sharing our work and learning with key stakeholders

***Progress so far***

Much work has already taken place to embed a positive culture of EDI throughout our internal operations, including:

1. An external audit examining the diversity profile of our people and stakeholders including recommendations to diversify our governance, operations, culture and communications.
2. Embedding ‘inclusivity’ at the heart of our organisational strategy, driving forward our vision, mission and values.
3. Adopting the Charity Governance Code which encourages action on EDI and creates a process for reviewing and improving our practices.
4. Designing a number of internal policies and external statements that not just reinforce our commitment to EDI, but which also follow through with tangible positive actions.
5. Refreshing our recruitment policy, ensuring objective, consistent and non-discriminatory practices are followed.
6. Establishing an internal EDI staff working group (now staff forum) to ensure EDI remains an ongoing journey to removing barriers for people feeling included within our organisation.

Secondly, we have been working on understanding how our work is regarded externally, and what barriers we need to remove to allow a greater diversity of communities and individuals to access our support, including:

1. Investing in research to identify geographic ‘cold spots’ where community businesses are less prevalent and to understand what can be done about it.
2. Refreshing our communications, copyright and imagery to include more diverse imagery of people (as opposed to buildings).
3. Shifting the narrative of our case studies and press releases to include a greater focus on the diversity of people and people related impact rather than statistics or business related updates.
4. Publishing bilingual resources, subtitling film, and embedding accessibility tools online.
5. Maintaining a bespoke, personalised community business service including an advice line operated by experienced customer-friendly staff via phone and email.

There is much more to do to but we accept this is a long-term journey and one we will take by listening, learning and working with others.

***External Action Plan***

Having established a network of over 750 community businesses with a further 500 in the pipeline, we have a responsibility to play a leadership role in influencing more inclusive practice within these organisations and supporting their own EDI journeys. Over the next 12months, we will:

1. Build on our research to date in order to **better understand the needs of rural communities**, especially those from underrepresented groups, marginalised backgrounds and areas of disadvantage and the potential for community businesses to address this, for example:
   1. develop Plunkett’s phase one study into ‘cold spot areas’ to identify opportunities for community businesses to benefit people in areas where the model is lesser used
   2. articulate the role of community businesses as “gateways” for marginalised and minoritised individuals, through creating inclusive opportunities such as jobs and volunteering roles, or offering services provided to meet specific needs
   3. identify where community businesses have successfully engaged, benefited or been led by groups or individuals who are underrepresented, marginalised or from areas of disadvantage
   4. identify the barriers that prevent individuals and groups who are underrepresented, marginalised or from areas of disadvantage from approaching Plunkett and accessing our support to set up and run community businesses
2. Evolve our communications to raise **awareness of the community business model in areas of higher deprivation and in areas where community ownership is underrepresented**, and to inspire **community businesses to benefit, engage or be led by individuals currently underrepresented or marginalised**, for example:
   1. Review and refresh Plunkett’s brand, with an ambition to improve access to and engagement with our services
   2. Ensure our communications speak to, and on behalf, of the diverse rural communities we serve. We will tell the stories of impact that will promote Rural Community Businesses as innovative, impactful and inclusive spaces.
   3. Continue to reposition our communications on individual stories of social impact over and above saving businesses and milestone statistics
   4. Complete an accessibility audit of our website and printed materials, and producing an increasing number of materials in Welsh.
   5. Develop our portfolio of case studies of where and how existing community businesses benefit, engage or are led by individuals and groups who are underrepresented, marginalised or from areas of disadvantage
3. Continually review and adapt Plunkett’s services to ensure they are accessible to all including:
   1. Address barriers in accessing Plunkett’s support
   2. Develop new resources, events, training and business support which focus on the creation of innovative, impactful and inclusive community businesses
4. Support new and existing community businesses to develop their own approach to EDI to benefit **individuals and groups currently underrepresented, marginalised or disadvantaged.** 
   1. Cascade EDI training and resources to assist community businesses to make their organisations more equitable, diverse and inclusive
5. Extend our **partnership activities** including:
6. Building operational relationships with local community anchor organisations who can help raise awareness of the community ownership model in areas where it is underrepresented and inspire more communities to consider setting up a community business
7. Working with partners who can help us open up the countryside to a broader range of people, especially those who currently feel excluded such as youth, people with disabilities and ethnic and racial minorities
8. Plunkett intends to establish a wide range of national and local partnerships which will broker employment, volunteering and training opportunities for people who may currently feel excluded.

***Internal Action Plan***

Over the next 12 months, we will:

1. Reinforce EDI at the centre of our work place culture, including:
   1. Continued training and discussion with our Trustees, staff, and advisers to better understand issues relating to EDI, and grow our confidence in talking about them and applying to our work
   2. Maintain the staff forum’s remit to keep the EDI conversation alive and to challenge internal practices and culture accordingly
   3. The Chair and CEO to regularly share our EDI journey with external stakeholders and to provide thought leadership on how we are implementing our actions in a rural context.
2. Continually review our approach to governance and compliance, including:

* Introduce monitoring and reporting of diversity data to identify key demographics which are not present in the staff team or board.
* Introduce gender related pay analysis and reporting
* Undertake quarterly pulse surveys with staff to monitor their perception of Plunkett’s progress in addressing perceived inequities and discrimination
* Develop Plunkett’s approach to stress, wellness and mental health to positively support Plunkett’s people in the workplace
* Review and refresh all our policies and procedures with an EDI lens
* Maintain EDI reporting from the Governance and Nominations Committee to the Board.

1. Train employees to identify and address any unconscious bias in recruitment, career progression and performance management

* Implement equality and diversity monitoring (for both recruiting/existing trustees and staff)
* Consider using ‘Be Applied’ or a Plunkett version as part of our recruitment process
* Analyse data from new joiners, exit interviews and staff surveys to measure impact of EDI work
* Measure inclusion and wellbeing in our bi-annual external staff survey
* Use data from staff reviews and exit interviews to improve recruitment and retention of staff
* Review current salary levels to reduce any inequity.

***How we will work***

This work is cross-organisational. It is being sponsored by our Governance and Nominations Committee, which reports on progress to the Board, and is informed by the Chief Executive, Senior Management Team our internal Staff Forum, and our membership. We recognise that we need support, expertise and challenge in making change and we expect to work with external partners to achieve this throughout the life of the plan.

We will hold ourselves to some key principles as we develop this work:

* We will be open and share our learning as we go.
* We will involve all trustees, staff, advisors and members on the journey.
* We will resource the work effectively, giving it the time and space it needs to be done well.
* We will recognise that we do not have all the answers and work with experts of all kinds to get this right.
* We will collaborate with others to encourage change at a sector level as well as an organisational level.
* We will be brave, challenge the norm and encourage conversations that will lead to meaningful change.