

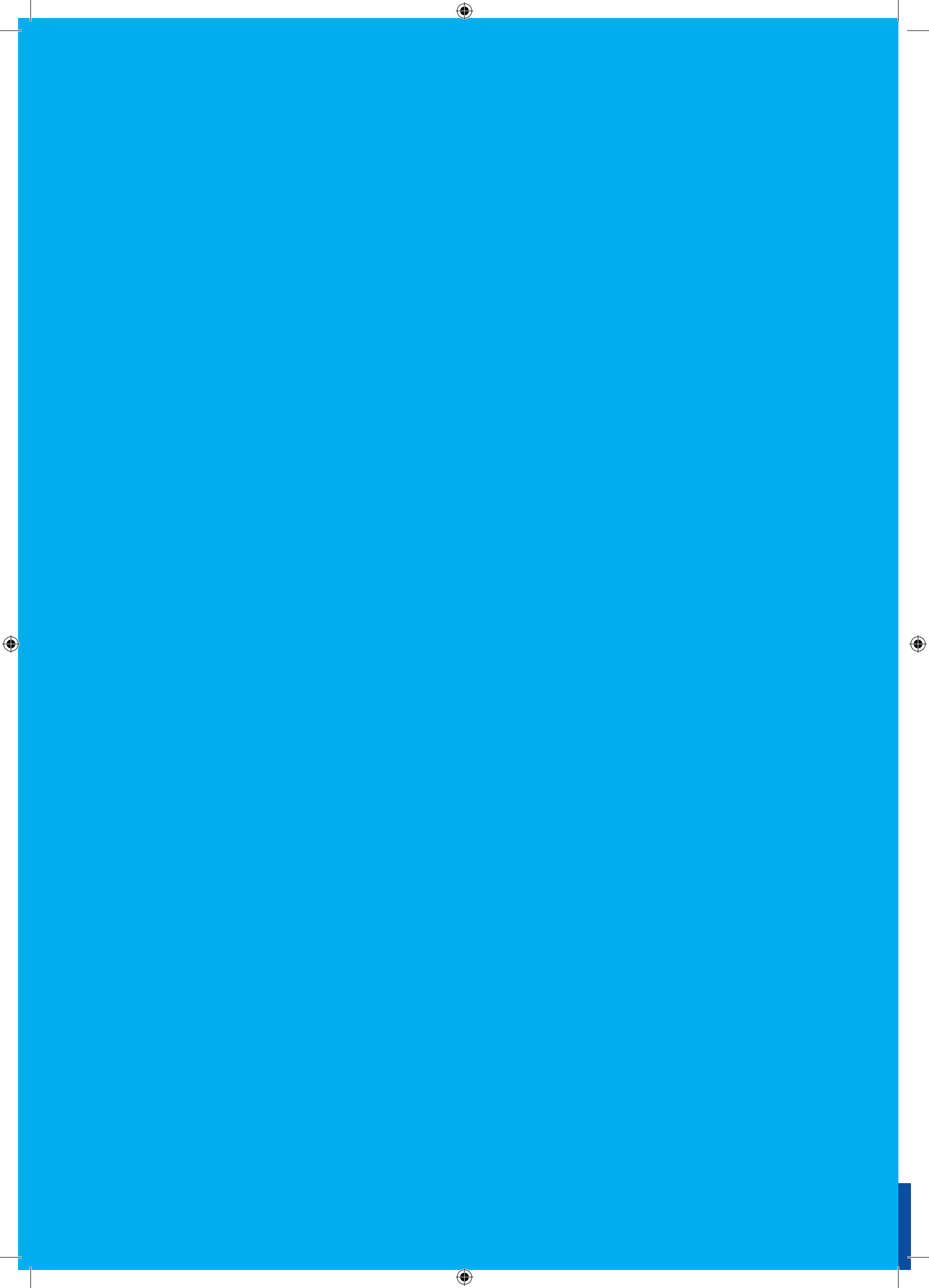


CITYLIT

INSPIRING PASSIONS · REALISING AMBITIONS

# Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report

Reporting period:  
May 2025 – April 2026



## Foreword

City Lit exists to bring people together to enrich lives through learning. As a charity, we provide lifelong learning that is accessible and impactful for all, alongside a programme of events and partnerships that widen participation.

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) shape how we teach, support students, work together and make decisions. Over the past year we strengthened our whole-college approach to inclusion. This includes improving accessibility and reasonable adjustments, developing staff capability, strengthening student voice, and taking practical actions to tackle discrimination and systemic inequality.

This report summarises progress, shares evidence of emerging impact, is transparent about where there is still work to do and structured around our EDI priorities for 2024-27.

## 1. Our commitment, context and legal responsibilities

### Our commitment

City Lit serves a diverse adult student and staff community. We aim to create a learning and working environment where everyone is respected, heard and feels valued for their unique selves. We understand that inequity can show up in both obvious and subtle ways, so we focus on culture, behaviours, systems and curriculum that promote inclusion and reduce inequalities.



### Our legal responsibilities

This report supports City Lit's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The PSED requires us to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations between different groups.

Compliance with the Equality Act is not treated as a standalone obligation. We embed these duties into governance, decision-making, curriculum design and delivery, workforce practice and student support. This ensures equality is considered at the point of planning and delivery, rather than addressed retrospectively.



## How EDI is embedded in day-to-day practice

### Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation

City Lit aims to be an inclusive and welcoming college where students and staff feel safe and valued. Creating an equitable, inclusive City Lit is a shared responsibility. All, students and staff have a part to play in this. Our approach is underpinned by clear values, behaviours, policies and procedures, reinforced through ongoing professional learning and leadership accountability.

We build staff capability to prevent, challenge and respond to discrimination through ongoing professional learning and practical guidance for tutors and managers. In classrooms, we support tutors to establish inclusive ground rules from the outset, maintain safe learning environments, and respond appropriately to unacceptable behaviour. Leaders and managers are expected to champion EDI, uphold respectful practice and take prompt action when concerns arise.

### Advancing equality of opportunity

We advance equality of opportunity by identifying and removing barriers to participation and progress for both students and staff. This includes financial support, reasonable adjustments, specialist support, and inclusive curriculum and teaching.

Access, Inclusion and Support (AIS) provides tailored support for Deaf and disabled students, and for students with specific learning differences (SpLD) and learning disabilities. The team assess students on an individual basis and work with tutors, curriculum teams and other staff to respond to each student's support needs and course requirements. AIS also run a confidential counselling service for students who may be struggling and would benefit from talking to someone.

Inclusion is embedded in City Lit's Characteristics of Effective Learning and shapes how we set expected teaching and learning practice. We ensure a safe and supportive environment for learning, underpinned by reasonable adjustments and targeted support. This enables all students, including those with additional barriers, to achieve well and make good progress.

We build staff capability so inclusive practice is part of everyday teaching – not an add-on. Ongoing training in inclusive teaching, alongside targeted development in neurodiversity, hearing loss, mental health in the classroom and cross-cultural communication, helps tutors plan proactively and adapt pace, language, assessment and participation approaches.

Financial barriers are addressed through our cross-subsidy model, widespread fee concessions and targeted bursaries. These measures support access for students who would otherwise be unable to participate, particularly those on low incomes or facing multiple disadvantages.



*Our Students*



City Lit's curriculum includes targeted provision that advances opportunity for protected groups, including:

- English, Maths, ESOL and Digital Skills supporting unemployed/low-paid students and those returning to study, with accredited pathways from Entry 1 to Level 2 including GCSE English and maths.
- Speech Therapy offers courses for both people who stammer and for those who are qualified speech and language therapists. It supports students to overcome communication difficulties and develop a positive approach to managing communication, leading to improvements in well-being, social life, and employment.
- Centre for Deaf Education enables Deaf and hard of hearing students to access skills provision taught in BSL, as well as the wider curriculum through specialist teaching and support. We deliver the only Deaf-led BSL teacher training course to address national teacher shortages in this subject.
- Learning Disabilities Education's bespoke non-accredited performing and visual arts programmes build independence, creativity and self-advocacy, with achievements celebrated through performances and exhibitions. City Lit's inclusion work is nationally recognised, with the Centre for Deaf Education and Centre for Learning Disabilities Education receiving prestigious Inclusive Provider of Adult Education awards from the Mayor of London.
- Londoners earning below the living wage, or who are unemployed and looking for work, benefit from taking part in vocational training within sectoral priorities of London's economy. Students enrolled through Free Course for Jobs further their careers in complementary therapies, counselling or e-commerce.



*Our Students*

## Fostering good relations

City Lit welcomes adults from all walks of life, cultures and identities. Our largely open-access provision brings students from different backgrounds into shared learning and working spaces, widening perspectives, supporting social cohesion and positive relationships.

Our approach to teaching and learning fosters good relations in the classroom by using inclusive teaching methods so students can learn effectively from their own starting points, while promoting participation by all. We host and partner on inclusive events that celebrate community and amplify underrepresented voices, including Deaf Day, Mental Wealth Festival, Silver Sunday (with Age UK), Pride, and Refugee Week events. Cultural projects foster connection, such as Percussion Orchestra for adults with learning disabilities in partnership with the Royal Academy of Music and Creative Exchange Projects with the Royal Ballet and Opera, most recently with Deaf refugees and migrant students.

We also strengthen relationships across our workforce by creating opportunities for connection, shared learning and celebration. Staff initiatives such as *World on a Plate* and tutor *Sharing Practice* events help colleagues build relationships and learn from one another.

## Our EDI priorities (2024-27)

For 2024-27, City Lit's EDI commitment focuses on four priorities:

- Accountability leading to measurable change
- Eliminating discrimination
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Tackling systemic inequality – anti-racism

### Priority 1: Accountability leading to measurable change

For City Lit, this priority means embedding EDI into how the college is led and run, so there is clear ownership, regular oversight and evidence of progress across all teams. To support this, we have developed a cross-college EDI accountability structure with executive oversight, and an EDI Strategic Forum supported by an operational forum for Teaching & Learning.

Professional services teams and curriculum departments take responsibility for delivering their EDI priorities as part of day-to-day work. EDI actions are built into the cross-college quality cycle, so improvement is continuous and evidence-led. Actions, accountability and impact are recorded through EDI action plans for professional services and curriculum Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs), which are monitored via termly progress reviews.

We have further strengthened accountability by making clear external commitments, including signing the Race at Work Charter and aligning with the AoC Mental Health Charter – both of which provide practical frameworks for action and improvement. We also continue progressing College of Sanctuary recognition, supporting a more coordinated and embedded approach to meeting the needs of sanctuary-seeking students across the college.

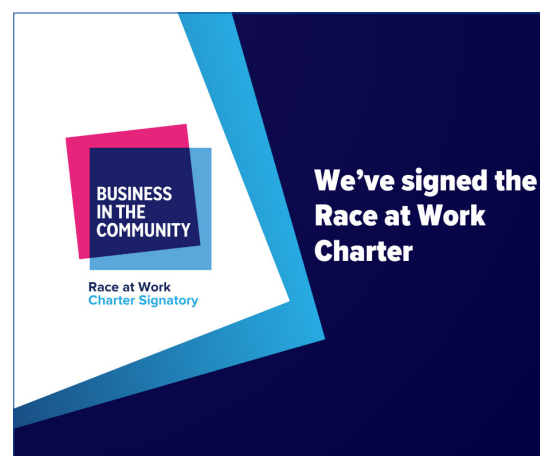
Student voice, through panels, boards of study, focus groups and surveys, continues to shape improvements to curriculum, resources and services.

#### Evidence of impact

Embedding EDI within departmental action plans and the quality cycle is supporting clearer ownership and more consistent follow-through across the college. Early quality impact includes more consistent use of reasonable adjustments across departments, higher engagement in EDI professional learning, and curriculum improvements shaped directly by student feedback. We will build on this by strengthening how we measure and share impact across teams.

#### Next steps

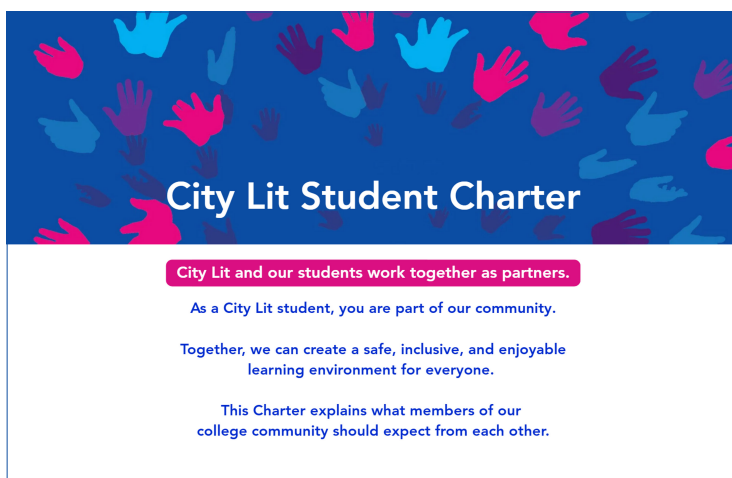
We will strengthen how equality impact considerations are taken in strategic decisions and further support the building of staff networks so lived experience can inform ongoing improvement.



## Priority 2: Eliminating discrimination

This priority focuses on building confidence in reporting and strengthening staff and student capability to prevent, challenge and respond to discrimination, harassment and bullying.

We used staff insight, including staff surveys and focus groups, to identify priorities for improving inclusion and strengthening trust that concerns will be addressed. Through consultation with staff and students, we developed a Student Charter that reflects our shared values and the behaviours that support a respectful learning environment. 'Everyone is Welcome' signage is visible across the college, reinforcing our commitment to inclusion and making it clear how concerns can be raised. We are rolling out a Tutor Guide which translates the values of the Charter into practical classroom approaches. It supports tutors to agree shared 'ways of working', model inclusivity, address unacceptable behaviour promptly, and signpost, record and report concerns.



As the Charter is embedded, we will monitor reporting levels, and themes to understand what is changing and where further action is needed. We will use this insight to take timely, concrete steps to prevent and address discrimination, and to track whether confidence in reporting and resolution improves over time.

### Next steps

We will expand delivery of the mandatory workshop *EDI Essentials for Tutors* through

a train-the-trainer programme, increasing capacity to deliver high-quality training for all teaching staff. In parallel, we will continue to explore options for anonymous reporting that allow us to identify themes and trends while ensuring we can act appropriately where a concern may indicate a breach of policy or legal requirements. We will also strengthen managers' confidence and consistency in responding to concerns fairly, promptly and in line with agreed procedures. These actions will be communicated clearly to all staff, alongside our ongoing zero-tolerance commitment to discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

#### We value everyone

Together, we will:

- Create an environment where a sense of belonging is key — one where staff and students feel accepted, valued, and connected.
- Treat each other fairly and respectfully, no matter who you are.
- Welcome and value everyone's differences in experience, identity, culture, opinion, needs, and appearance.
- Take personal responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of ourselves and others.
- Follow City Lit's policies and procedures, such as Student Conduct, Safeguarding & Prevent, Feedback & Complaints, and Equity, Diversity & Inclusion.
- Have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
- Stand against intimidation, harassment, bullying, or discrimination — including victimisation and racism — and report this if we experience or witness it.

Students can report any concerns to their tutor, the relevant department, the Duty Manager, the Safeguarding Team, or by emailing us at [feedbackandcomplaints@citylit.ac.uk](mailto:feedbackandcomplaints@citylit.ac.uk).

City Lit always investigates your reports and works proactively to stop such behaviour.



## Priority 3: Advancing equality of opportunity

We remain committed to improving accessibility, removing barriers that limit participation and outcomes, and strengthening our sense of community. Inclusive teaching, accessible services, community events and diverse partnerships will continue to underpin this work. We will keep reviewing their impact and use feedback to target improvements where they are needed most.

Work to increase accessibility, remove barriers affecting participation and outcomes, strengthening our sense of community through inclusive teaching, services, events and partnerships remains high on our agenda.

We completed a significant website digital accessibility improvement programme following audit. By October 2025, critical, medium and minor issues had been addressed, and we established a plan to sustain improvements through re-auditing and feedback.



Deaf Day, April 2026

Use of Reasonable Adjustment Plans (RAPs) has been strengthened through clearer guidance and targeted training where monitoring showed inconsistency in practice.

We also developed targeted approaches for students facing structural disadvantage, including coordinated work to support Deaf refugees and asylum seekers with complex needs. Inclusive engagement activities and partnerships helped widen participation and representation.

As departmental student voice work grows and becomes more diverse, it is deepening our understanding of barriers to inclusion and informing the diversification of learning resources and the curriculum.

We marked Pride Month with Home, curated by City Lit Fellow Russell Tovey, creating an affirming space for LGBTQIA+ artists and allies. We honoured Refugee Week by centering refugee histories and community, including hosting Journeys of Hope with the Ruth Hayman Trust, to amplify refugee voices and deepen understanding. Our Gallery programme widened representation through The Story Starts Here, featuring alumni work and an interview with City Lit Fellow Malorie Blackman. We also delivered the Mental Wealth Festival, bringing partners and the public together around inclusive well-being through talks, workshops, performance and exhibition. These highlighted how creative learning can build connection and reduce barriers to participation. Across generations, we joined Age UK's Silver Sunday with free workshops for older students, and we celebrated achievement and representation through the City Lit Awards, including an Excellence in EDI Award.

## Evidence of impact

We reduced financial barriers through concessions and bursaries, awarding 430 bursaries totalling £63,960, plus an additional £9,900 supporting Advanced Practice Visual Arts students through a grant from the Royal Female School of Art.

Overall student outcomes remain strong and stable. In 2024/25, non-accredited provision achieved 96% retention, 99% pass, 95% achievement and 88% attendance. 2025/26 to date performance is comparable, with 97% retention, 99% pass, 95% achievement and 88% attendance, indicating sustained high performance.

In 2024/25, accredited provision achieved 88% retention, 90% pass, 79% achievement and 92% attendance. For 2025/26 to date, retention is 89% (95% in-year retention) and attendance is 93%, providing encouraging early indicators. Full 2025/26 accredited outcomes will be reported in the end-of-year SelfAssessment Report and in the next EDI annual report.

We continue targeted actions where accredited achievement is not yet consistent across all demographic groups.

## Next steps

We will strengthen early identification and support of needs so barriers are addressed sooner and sustain action to reduce achievement gaps on accredited provision using data, student feedback and quality improvement actions.



Sharing Practice Event for Tutors, April 2026



## Priority 4: Tackling systemic inequality – anti-racism

Our aim is to make anti-racism visible in everyday practice – building shared understanding of how racism and inequality show up in systems and behaviours, taking targeted action to address them, and tracking progress over time.

We delivered a Racial Literacy programme for a group of senior leaders led by Dr Penny Rabiger. It focused on how race and inequity operate in systems and in day-to-day decisions, including in recruitment, retention, development and curriculum design.

We also supported college-wide reflection and action through Black History Month micro-learning and a '5-Day Challenge' using daily prompts. Facilitated sessions such as *Teaching in Turbulent Times* and *Beyond Black History Month: Make the Change Meaningful* helped staff identify specific changes they could make in teaching and curriculum.



*Counselling and Psychotherapy programme*

As an example of best practice, Counselling and Psychotherapy offers a department-led approach to anti-racist education that can inspire practice across City Lit. Counselling and Psychotherapy leaders have developed a strong anti-racist approach that recognises how race and racism shape lived experience, mental health and access to support. Race is embedded across the accredited Counselling provision, helping to ensure students from all backgrounds feel included and supported. Where appropriate, students are encouraged to explore and reflect on race and identity, and to consider how these shape lived

experience and practice. Through this, students develop as reflective, reflexive, culturally aware and culturally sensitive Integrative Counsellors prepared to work effectively within a multicultural society. Key characteristics of this department-led approach include: engaging with race and ethnicity as core elements of training rather than optional themes; sustaining a reflective, practice-based culture that builds students' awareness of how power and identity can shape therapeutic relationships; and making a continuing commitment to sharing and strengthening anti-racist practice across the department to build consistency and confidence in teaching and learning. This work offers important learning for City Lit's wider practice.

### Evidence of impact

Feedback indicates staff are making stronger connections between racial equity and practice, with practical commitments such as broadening curriculum perspectives, addressing inappropriate comments more confidently and reviewing the balance of Eurocentric course content.

### Next steps

We will expand racial literacy beyond senior leadership and translate learning into actions to improve people processes, curriculum and service design.

We will deliver Race at Work Charter commitments through visible leadership, improved ethnicity data analysis and manager accountability.

## Organisational EDI: Students

### Our approach

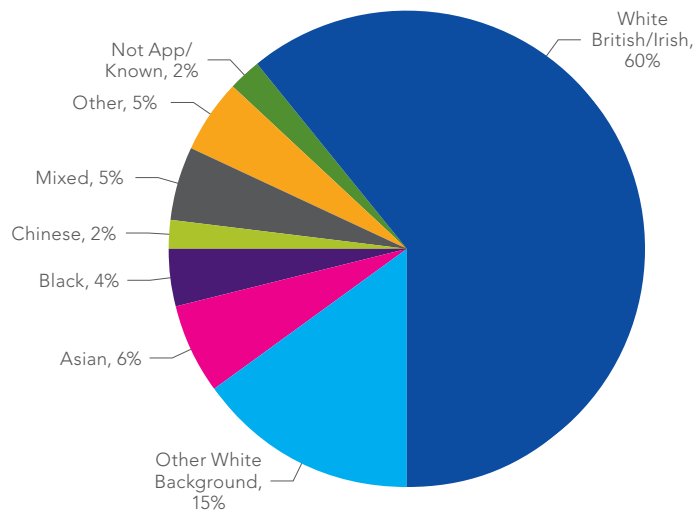
City Lit's student community is diverse and intersectional. As an adult education provider, we support students returning to learning and those facing structural barriers linked to protected characteristics and wider disadvantage.

We put fairness into practice by using data and student feedback, strengthening safe and respectful classrooms, reducing barriers through accessibility work and reasonable adjustments, and tackling systemic inequality.

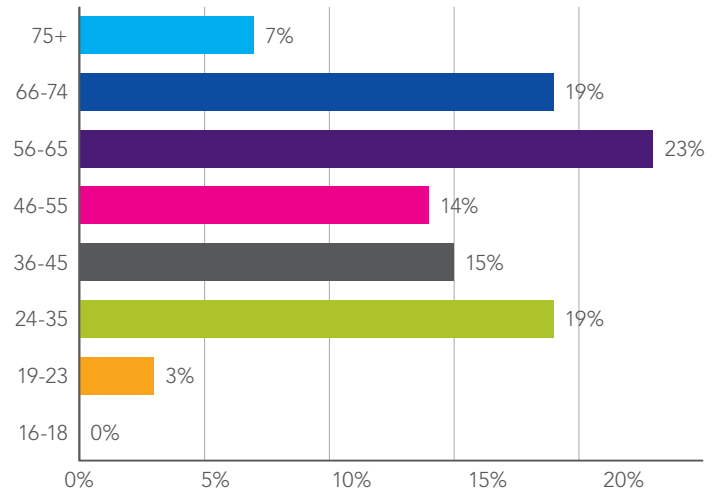
### Who our students are

During 2024/25, City Lit taught 26,270 students across 52,914 enrolments. 47% were returning students and 53% were new.

**Ethnic breakdown**



**Age distribution**



### What it is like to learn here

Learning at City Lit is purposeful, welcoming and ambitious. Students benefit from a rich curriculum, an active enrichment programme and a respectful college culture that supports wellbeing and belonging. They produce work of high quality and form positive relationships with their peers.

Across specialist areas, such as adult stammering and acquired hearing loss, students describe the value of learning in safe, supportive environments where their identities and experiences are respected and they can develop confidence, strategies and independence.



*Our Students*



## Organisational EDI: Workforce

City Lit is committed to an inclusive working environment free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to anticipating and responding to colleagues' diverse needs wherever practicable. This year we strengthened foundations by improving workforce equality data quality and investing in development that supports inclusive practice and a respectful culture.

### Wellbeing, belonging and recognition

We promote a supportive working culture built on trust and proactively support staff wellbeing. Colleagues can access a range of tailored wellbeing activities and specialist advice, including counselling and practical resources. Staff engage in college cultural events and benefit from discounts on City Lit courses, supporting connection, learning and a positive staff experience. We celebrate staff and students through inclusive campaigns and awards.

### Developing inclusive practice and capability

New staff complete mandatory Deaf Awareness training, and basic use of British Sign Language (BSL) is an expected minimum standard for frontline teams. EDI is also embedded within the professional learning programme for managers, including a dedicated EDI unit as part of middle manager development. This programme is complemented by a vibrant programme of professional learning for tutors, tailored to their roles and responsibilities.

Alongside mandatory and targeted training, we provide flexible professional learning that strengthens tutors' inclusive practice and supports collaboration. This is grounded in class visits and follow-up development, including peer learning, subject-specialist training, shared teaching resources, and structured support for new tutors through the Tutor Toolkit and the Award in Education and Training. Mentoring and peer projects (for example, in Dance, Contemporary Crafts/3D and Learning Disabilities Education) help embed reflective practice and inclusive approaches, contributing to supportive learning environments where students progress and thrive.

Working with the Guide Dogs Association, we piloted sighted guide training for staff. Subject to evaluation, this will be incorporated into our annual training offer.

In response to increased staff self-reporting of Dyslexia, we have begun work with the British Dyslexia Association to develop training for managers and staff. Initial delivery is planned for summer term 2025/26, with further sessions scheduled during Mental Wealth Festival week.

### Strengthening workforce data and progression

This year we worked with our HR system provider to align staff equality monitoring fields with Census categories, enabling more robust reporting and external benchmarking. We targeted communications



*Sharing Practice Event for Tutors*

to encourage colleagues to review and update their equality information, improving data completeness and strengthening the quality of our analysis of representation, recruitment, retention and progression over time. The data update has now been completed; the next stage is to develop the associated reporting and benchmarking dashboards. This work will also inform ongoing review of recruitment processes, including how and where vacancies are advertised.

## Pay equity and statutory reporting

City Lit calculates and publishes annual gender pay gap figures where the organisation meets the 250+ employee threshold on the relevant snapshot date. In 2025, City Lit's mean gender pay gap was 0.64%, indicating pay outcomes that are close to parity. This continues a sustained downward trend since gender pay gap reporting commenced in 2017, when City Lit reported a mean gap of 2.3%. City Lit's median gender pay gap remains 0%, compared with the UK median of 12.8% (April 2025). This progress has been supported through the ongoing review of starting salaries, external pay benchmarking, and the consistent application of clear salary bands.

Click here to access the report: [THE CITY LITERARY INSTITUTE – Gender pay gap service](#)

## Preventing and addressing discrimination: reporting and response

We are strengthening confidence in reporting and response through a continued focus on consistency, learning and prevention. We are working with staff, including trade unions, to build shared understanding of reporting routes and to support confidence in how concerns are raised and addressed. Alongside this, we are rolling out practical guidance for tutors to help prevent and address discriminatory behaviour in the classroom, and to respond consistently when concerns arise. This year we introduced training sessions delivered with our legal partners on sexual harassment and discrimination.



Sharing Practice Event for Tutors, April 2026

## Conclusion

Over the past year, City Lit has made significant progress in strengthening equity, diversity and inclusion as a lived, practical commitment across teaching and learning, student support and workforce practice. Guided by our legal duties and public accountability, and shaped by lived experience, we have moved beyond intent to more consistent and embedded action – supported by clearer accountability, improved data, stronger capability and meaningful student voice.

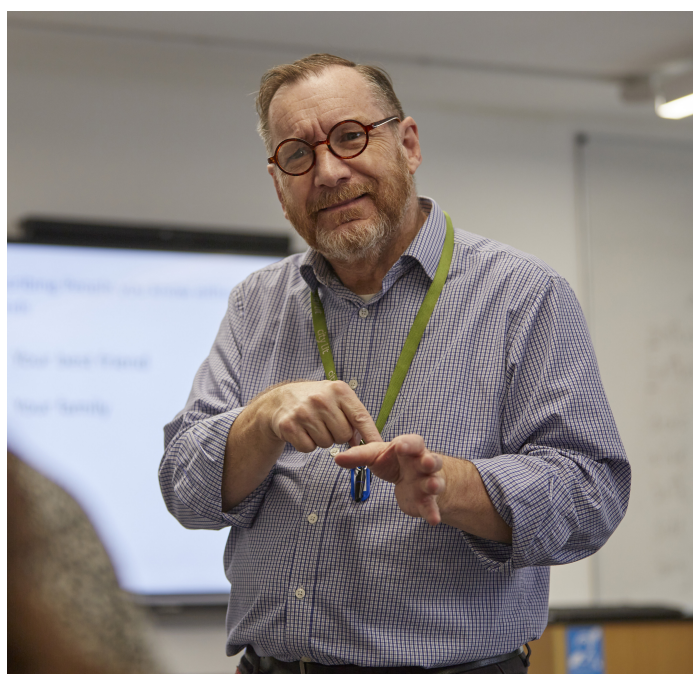
This work reflects the collective effort of our staff, students, partners and leaders, and the distinctive role City Lit plays as an open-access adult education provider serving diverse and intersectional communities. From inclusive classrooms and specialist provision, to targeted action on accessibility, anti-racism and student support, our progress this year demonstrates what is possible when inclusion is taken seriously as part of everyday practice.

We are clear-eyed that further work is needed, particularly in evidencing impact consistently and reducing outcome gaps in accredited provision, but the foundations laid over the past year are strong. They position City Lit well to move with confidence into the next phase: embedding good practice, strengthening assurance and ensuring that equity and inclusion translate into fair access, positive experiences and strong outcomes for all.

## What we will focus on in 2026-27

The next year marks a shift from building foundations to embedding and evidencing impact, focusing on:

- Consistency: ensuring inclusive practice, use of reasonable adjustments, and responses to discrimination are reliable across all areas.
- Early intervention and prevention: strengthening early identification of barriers to participation and learning, alongside the disclosure of needs and support.
- From learning to measurable change: translating EDI and anti-racism learning into improvements in curriculum, culture, people processes and outcomes.
- Stronger assurance and evidence: improving how we use data, lived experience and quality processes to demonstrate impact.



*British Sign Language (BSL) programme*



## Annex A: Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Compliance Table

This annex demonstrates how City Lit meets its statutory duties under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It shows how each element of the Public Sector Equality Duty is embedded into governance, strategy and day-to-day practice, rather than treated as a standalone compliance exercise.

| PSED Duty                                              | What the duty requires                                                                                                                                           | How City Lit complies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Where evidenced in this report                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation | Take active steps to prevent unlawful discrimination and respond effectively where it occurs                                                                     | Clear policies and standards of behaviour; consistent reporting and response processes; professional learning for tutors and managers focused on inclusive classroom culture and responding to discriminatory behaviour; leadership accountability for fair and respectful practice | Sections 2 (Eliminating discrimination); Priority 2; Organisational EDI – Students; Organisational EDI – Workforce |
| Advance equality of opportunity                        | Remove or minimise disadvantage linked to protected characteristics; take steps to meet different needs; enable participation where it is disproportionately low | Reasonable adjustments and specialist support through Access, Inclusion and Support (AIS); inclusive teaching practice; targeted professional learning; financial support through concessions and bursaries; monitoring of participation and outcomes                               | Sections 2 (Advancing equality of opportunity); Priority 3; Organisational EDI – Students; Priority 1              |
| Foster good relations                                  | Promote understanding, reduce prejudice and encourage positive relationships between different groups                                                            | Inclusive classroom practice; shared learning spaces; student voice; events and partnerships that bring people from different backgrounds together                                                                                                                                  | Section 2 (Fostering good relations); Priority 3; Foreword                                                         |

This table should be read alongside the main report, which provides narrative evidence, examples of practice and areas for further development.

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