

Equality and Diversity

at The Theatre Chipping Norton

The Theatre Chipping Norton is a small independent theatre, cinema and arts centre in the Cotswolds. We produce our own creative work and showcase the work of others.

What we believe

We believe that our offer should be accessible to everyone without exception, and that cultural diversity is a source of creativity, fresh perspectives and renewal for all. We work on the belief that diversity, in all its forms, will improve both artistic and managerial decisions and benefit both The Theatre and its audience.

In its simplest form, we believe that working with people from all walks of life, all backgrounds and lived experiences will make us better at what we do and improve the work that we make and share. We believe that encountering people and ideas arising from different life experiences makes for a richer life and a stronger community.

In approaching the issue of equality, we recognise that historically – even in very recent history - certain groups of people with particular characteristics e.g. race, disability, sex and sexuality, have experienced discrimination and that it is necessary for organisations such as ours to take positive action to address this.

In particular, we look to achieve better representation in our work, our audience and our staff and Trustees from the following groups with protected characteristics:

- People from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds (BAME)
- People with disabilities
- People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersex and queer/questioning (LGBTIQ+)
- People from economically disadvantaged communities and/or backgrounds.

Bringing About Change

We recognise that the current make-up of The Theatre's staff and Trustees does not yet reflect the communities that we serve or a full diversity of lived experiences. We recognise that we as an organisation, and the theatre sector as a whole need to work harder to ensure more proportional diversity, and that the best talent gets due opportunity.

We will create a Diversity Action Plan within our strategic plan to target and help to drive change. This may include taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate and practicable, to promote equality of opportunity and encourage diversity.

We will work with our chair over the next 3 years to create a Board which as well as being skilled, supportive and engaged can bring more diverse life experiences and backgrounds to bear on The Theatre's decision making processes.

Monitoring Change

Equality and Diversity will be on the agenda for every meeting of our Trustees (aka Council of Management), giving the management of The Theatre a clear opportunity to reflect on our performance in this area. We see Equality and Diversity as concepts that become changed and better understood over time, and we intend to keep a running and contemporary debate on what these concepts might mean for us.

Equal Opportunities

The Theatre Chipping Norton is an equal opportunities employer. It aims to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, colour, nationality, disability, ethnic or national origins, class, marital status, civil status, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, pregnancy or parental status, age, trade union activity, political or religious belief. Applications from candidates with disabilities or access requirements are actively encouraged. Selection criteria and procedures will be kept under review to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

It is the policy of The Chipping Norton Theatre to comply with the terms of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Employment Act 2002, the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation. As a registered charity in receipt of public funds, The Theatre has a responsibility to operate in a principled way and in accordance with the requirements of funding bodies.

We will review, refresh and revise our recruitment procedures and practices to ensure we are reaching and attracting candidates with the greatest diversity of background and experience alongside their work based skills. We will ensure advertisements are not confined to areas or publications which could disproportionately reduce the number of applicants with protected characteristics. In our person specification criteria we will avoid setting any unnecessary provisions or criteria which would exclude a higher proportion of people with a protected characteristic.

All employees will be given access to and supported to take advantage of suitable opportunities for training and advancement and we will consider opportunities for training in making recruitment decisions, particularly in the case of under-represented groups. We will deliver a positive and harmonious working and creative environment in which all individuals are treated with respect, are able to give of their best, are not subject to harassment or bullying and where all decisions regarding their employment or opportunities to participate are based on merit. Staff will be required to comply with The Theatre's Respect Charter and Workplace Harassment Policy.

To maximise our access to the best staff, The Theatre will attempt to accommodate staff requests to work flexibly, whether part-time or some other working arrangement, for whatever reason, so long as agreement is consistent with the needs of the organisation.

We will report the findings of our Equal Opportunities employment questionnaires to the Board annually.

Our programme of work:

We seek to deliver a diverse programme of work, both in the work that we make and the work that we showcase. This includes a commitment to ensure that our cast and creative teams are a 50/50 gender split when calculated across the year.

As well as the work we present reflecting the diversity of our society, we recognise the importance of highlighting this diversity in the way we market and showcase our programme. We will drive visible diversity by monitoring our website and season brochures against strategic targets for the

clear visible indication of minority themes in the work we present. This will include targets for BAME and LGBTIQ+ representation.

In casting our own work, we will consider, audition and cast actors without regard to race or colour unless the race of the character is considered to be essential to the reading of the work and/or where casting actors of a particular ethnic origin and/or cultural background may give an extra depth or dimension to the production. We will ensure that we can offer disabled access to any audition process, and that access is strongly prioritised in the planning of rehearsal and performance spaces.

Our audiences:

We recognise that despite improvements over recent years, those who choose to attend The Theatre do not fully reflect the breadth of backgrounds and lived experiences in the wider community. In particular we recognise that there is a lot of work to do around attracting people from economically-disadvantaged backgrounds. We recognise inequalities of opportunity within our community, and want to be a part of changing rather than sustaining these inequalities.

We will undertake an annual review of our marketing tools, campaigns and reach with a view to driving diversity and accessibility in those who attend The Theatre. Including direct marketing to BAME and LGBTIQ+ communities. We will undertake analysis of our audience data to understand more about who comes, and to what. We will ensure that each major campaign is viewed not just in terms of income delivery, but delivery of our equality and diversity aims.

We will strive to make our building and our performances as accessible as possible and audit this regularly, internally and externally. Our Disabled Access Policy is available here:

<https://www.chippingnortontheatre.com/your-visit/access/access-policy>

We will further develop a pricing policy of maintaining accessible prices with concessionary rates as appropriate. We are also passionate about creating work for rural audiences, where sections of the local demographic experience isolation and social deprivation, as well as offering opportunities to young people in rural areas who do not have the same access to the arts as young people in urban areas.

We want to be open, friendly and welcoming and provide an environment in which everyone can be accommodated without fuss or embarrassment.

July 2020, JT.

This policy is kept under periodic review