

THE CULTURE AT THE OLD VIC

There is a collective will to sustain an environment at The Old Vic that is safe, inclusive, welcoming and happy. We want our theatre to be a beacon of enlightenment, entertainment, engagement and empathy



We want a workplace where everyone has an equal voice that they feel empowered to use.

We are not different from other workplaces or industries. There are some aspects of working culture that are heightened for us — our dependence on freelance and casual workers, irregular working patterns, the call for intimacy on stage. But in every workplace open, clear and respectful communication is necessary for there to be an effective working environment.

At The Old Vic, we believe in common sense and simplicity. We want the spirit of our interactions to be confident, informal, considerate and relaxed.

There are a few behaviours that are never ok. Outside of that, everyone can (and does) have a different view, and every scenario depends on context. What that means is that we all need to be respectful and responsive to each other.

At The Old Vic, it's less about what you can and can't do, and more about what you should and shouldn't be made to feel. We want to instill a culture of respect from the top down.

When you work with us, you can expect to be treated fairly, respectfully, and with care. You will be supported in your endeavours and, we hope, inspired by your colleagues and environment.

We believe in creating an environment that is free from people losing their temper or swearing or shouting in anger at a colleague. We believe it is wrong to forcefully insist that someone does something they don't want to do. Wrong to abuse power through violence or by any other means or to be physical with someone who doesn't welcome it. Wrong to discriminate against anyone from a minority group or not to listen or respect another point of view. Wrong to drink alcohol in the workplace when it's not appropriate, to be a bully or to harass someone in any way.

We also don't want a workplace where people can't touch other people. A culture so prescriptive that people cannot carry on a conversation outside of the workplace or where we legislate against swearing and drinking in moderation in the bar after work. We don't want an environment where people are fearful, either of being victimised or of being wrongly accused of victimisation.

We want to be ourselves, yet always mindful of how our actions may be perceived by another person.

We take responsibility for the power and influence we have, understand the impact of using it, and how to harness it for good.

We value inclusivity, appreciate difference, and consider people equally without prejudice or favour.

We build relationships based on mutual respect.

We believe in giving and receiving feedback in a constructive way, that genuinely promotes creativity and productivity. And if something goes wrong, we want to ensure that everyone feels confident that they have a voice and that they will be heard.

We recognise that it doesn't always feel easy to call behaviour out and report it, especially if you are at the start of your career, a freelancer or actor in the building for a short time, or a student or member of the community unused to being in our building. Please be assured that we want you to feel comfortable doing just that; we support and value you sharing your experiences with us.

We have trained members of staff called Guardians who you can confidentially and informally speak to and share your concerns. Guardians understand our processes, procedures and culture, and will signpost the various ways you can escalate your concerns.

Integrity, hard work, creativity and social responsibility are key to making The Old Vic what it is today. We believe in the power of creative imagination, engaging with life on all its levels. We believe in creating group experiences and generating laughter. We view entertainment as enlightenment: eye-opening, mind-expanding and heart-expanding. We want to share the benefits that theatre has with as wide a group as possible, unlocking ideas, communication and wellbeing.

Above all, The Old Vic is a values-led organisation. We have high standards and we operate with heart. We care very much about our audiences, our staff, the impact we have on societal and community issues, and about contributing a body of world-class work. We want to sustain and grow our theatre, but not by compromising our standards or values. Each day, we want people to be reminded of why they joined us, and the attraction, excitement and welcome they felt when they first arrived.

We want everyone to enjoy being here.

GUARDIANS AT THE OLD VIC

As part of our commitment to providing a safe and supportive working environment, The Old Vic has appointed seven trained members of staff to act as Guardians.

WHAT IS A GUARDIAN?

A Guardian is a trained member of staff who helps to ensure a consistent understanding of culture throughout The Old Vic, and who acts as a sounding board for colleagues who have something that they might want to share, but are unsure about the best way of doing so.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- The Guardians are neutral, confidential and are here to listen to any concerns or questions you may have about behaviour in the workplace
- They are trained on all of the relevant policies, procedures and resources available to you
- If you have a question, concern or issue that you would like to explore confidentially you can get in touch with one of the Guardians or email on the general inbox below
- A Guardian will be able to set up a discussion and run through options available to address and help to resolve any concerns you have

GUARDIANS NETWORK

A Guardians Network has been formed to bring together the group of organisations from all sectors (not just the arts) who have implemented the principles of a Guardians Programme. Through the Network, organisations can access pro bono legal training for their Guardians three times a year from Lewis Silkin, share best practice within the group on anonymised trends and learnings and centralise resources. Together we can effect lasting change.

CONTACT

If you would like any further information about the programme, or to join the Guardians Network, contact:

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PROMOTING OUR CULTURE

For all those working with us, here's how you find out what we believe, how we work and where to go if your experience doesn't match that

Watch the way people conduct themselves within this building. Leadership by personal example is at the core of our culture.

This Cultural Statement was created by our workforce and we all live by it. Our Guardians (a listening and signposting service run by trained members of staff) understand and share it and everyone, no matter how senior, works to embed it. Nobody is above it or exempt from it.

Our Culture Statement and our Dignity at Work policies are available at Stage Door, in our Box Office, in our green room, in our rehearsal room, on our website, in the Staff Handbook and in the Company Welcome Packs. Our HR Department and all Line Managers, including the Company Stage Manager, are versed in and uphold our culture and values, and are happy to help. Our Trustees are committed and engaged, and would love to hear from you.

If you are a member of a Union, you can find out who your Union rep is by contacting your local branch. For freelancers, there are other resources: Arts Council England, BECTU, Equity, Federation of Drama Schools, ITC, SOLT, Stage Directors UK, UKT, and other industry bodies. If you have any immediate safeguarding concerns, contact the Safeguarding Lead, who will be able to help.

Our new pastoral initiative, Guardians, has been devised to support those who have concerns about behaviour or culture at work. Guardians are a group of trained staff who offer a confidential listening outlet for colleagues, and can signpost options for dealing with the concern that you might have.

Spend time in our building for your own meetings and working. This applies to casual staff and freelancers in particular. Hold meetings here that might otherwise happen at home or in a bar. Spend time with our staff and experience how they operate and what The Old Vic's approach is.

Attend either the planned staff sessions or (for company members) Meet and Greets in the first week of rehearsals. You will be asked to listen and confirm that you understand our culture, escalation routes and Guardians Programme.

Attend any additional learning and development sessions that are provided to gain a deeper understanding of how we work, what standards we keep to, and what standards we expect of everyone in the building.

For students and young people attending our workshops and education projects, you will be asked to listen and confirm that you understand our culture, escalation routes and Guardians Programme.

For everyone walking into our building, be that on the first day of a permanent role, for a production period or for a half day workshop, you can expect everyone to be helpful, supportive and enabling. If this isn't your experience, tell us through one of the routes listed above. And if you have a great experience, tell us too. It's always good to know when we're getting things right.