

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Lewisham Youth Theatre is committed to equality and inclusion at all levels of the organisation, and actively opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. LYT values the role diversity plays in engendering a positive working environment. We therefore aim to ensure equality of opportunity in all levels and activities by adopting equitable approaches to all that we do and working to ensure that our policies and practices (formal and informal) remain lawful, fair and actively inclusive.

This policy includes preventing discrimination associated with the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion and belief (or lack thereof), sex and sexual orientation.

LYT recognises that those who use our services are individuals with different needs that may impact on their ability to access services. LYT may sometimes deliver projects aimed expressly at engaging specific groups, with the aim of increasing the diversity and inclusion of service users across our activities, in line with our Business Plan. We will work hard to ensure that project criteria is appropriate to needs identified in our community, and that all those who fit the criteria for engagement have the opportunity to access our services.

SCOPE

These principles apply to LYT's provision of services, working practices and its employment and training practices. The policy applies to the treatment of all Council of Management members (Trustees), staff (permanent or temporary, including those on contracts), applicants, trainees, consultants, volunteers and members (including youth and community participants).

RESPONSIBILITY

LYT's Council of Management (Trustees) is responsible for overseeing the effective implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy in all areas of our work, including staff recruitment. The Council of Management have delegated responsibility to the Executive Director for the day-to-day policy implementation.

All those working and interacting with LYT have a duty to uphold the Equal Opportunities Policy. Trustees, staff, tutors, trainees and volunteers have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and that they support service users and other stakeholders to act in accordance with the policy principles.

PRACTICE

In order to ensure that Lewisham Youth Theatre's services are accessible to all, the following principles will be followed:

- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect and are able to feel confident of the support of others.

- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Fulfilling all our legal obligations under the equality legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, and all associated codes of practice.
- Complying with our own equal opportunities policy and associated policies.
- Publicity materials, publications, advertisements, events, workshops and performances shall avoid language which presents a stereotyped, offensive or detrimental view of any group or individual's background on any of the above grounds. However, performances and workshops may present such language and views when the context of use is clear.
- LYT will aim to ensure that its work is known about as widely as possible in the borough of Lewisham. A free service is provided to our members so no young person is economically excluded.
- LYT will make its services available to disabled people, including wheelchair users – by using premises that are wheelchair accessible for its activities whenever possible, by using signers and interpreters where appropriate and by ensuring these facilities are publicised to potential participants.
- LYT shall not allow its publicity, events, premises or facilities to be used for the expressions of views in conflict with this policy.
- LYT values diversity and recognises the wealth of benefits this can bring to the organisation.
- We explore the ideas, feelings, prejudices and ambitions of the young people, as well as encouraging them to put themselves in the shoes of others. We aim to break down stereotypes and challenge gender roles through discussion and role-play.
- Breaches of equal opportunities policy shall be regarded as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

IMPLEMENTATION

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Ensure the policy is communicated to all employees, volunteers, Council of Management members, job applicants and other relevant people.
- Provide training and guidance as appropriate for all staff.
- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into appropriate communication practices.
- Obtain commitments from other persons or organisations, such as sub-contractors or agencies, that they too will comply with the policy in their dealings with our organisation.
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to meet the policy's objectives.

IMPLEMENTATION WITH SERVICE USERS

Lewisham Youth Theatre works with young people between the ages of 3-24, and our programmes aim to be inclusive of all young people regardless of background or ability.

LYT is committed to raising awareness of issues related to equal opportunities in its work, to ensuring that all service users act in a way that enables equality and inclusion. We aim to achieve this by striving to provide an environment in which all feel safe, respected and valued. Consideration is given to each person as an individual with particular needs, skills and physical abilities.

Service Users (also referred to as members and participants) will be supported in an age-appropriate manner to understand and uphold the principles of the Equal Opportunities Policy by:

- Receiving LYT's Terms & Conditions, including an inclusion statement, details of unacceptable behaviour and consequences to such behaviour
- Signing a registration form to confirm that they have read and agree to the Terms and Conditions
- Creating and signing a group contract that will be displayed in workshops

All youth members receive LYT's Terms & Conditions, which include the following statement:

LYT brings young people together from across the Lewisham community to take part in exciting theatre projects. Participants come from diverse social and economic backgrounds, and have different levels of experience with drama. We are committed to providing a space where every participant can feel welcome, valued and effective. By taking part in LYT, you agree to work with and act respectfully towards people who may be different to you.

Before the start of each project, delivery staff, tutors and volunteers will receive the Equal Opportunities, Anti-Bullying, Data Protection and Safeguarding Policies in order to help them support participants to uphold equalities principles.

LYT recognises that practical application of inclusion includes a firm stance on preventing bullying in all its contexts, whether physical, emotional, verbal or online. LYT's separate Anti-Bullying policy should be read along with this policy as supporting the culture of equal opportunities in the organisation.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, LYT has instituted several practices to ensure equality of access to our activities, including a device loan programme for those without technology to access online activities. Please refer to our Online Activities Policy for more information on these initiatives.

TRAINING

All workers and volunteers will receive and be asked to familiarise themselves with this policies alongside our Terms and Conditions, Anti-Bullying Policy, Social Media Use Policy and Risk Assessments. All workers and volunteers will be provided an induction at the beginning of their engagement, with specific training in safeguarding, health & safety, equal opportunities and data protection.

Employees may be asked to take additional external training that supports the implementation of equal opportunities in their roles, including training in working with marginalised groups.

COMPLAINTS

Any party who believes that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation or has witnessed this kind of behaviour directed at another person is entitled to raise the matter through either the complaints or grievance procedures. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. There will be no victimisation of any person as a result of them making a complaint.

In addition to our internal procedures, employees have the right to pursue complaints of discrimination to an industrial tribunal of the Employment Tribunal under anti-discrimination legislation. However, parties wishing to make a complaint to a tribunal will usually be expected to raise their complaint under our internal grievance procedure in the first instance.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

Regular monitoring of Lewisham Youth Theatre services and participants takes place to ensure that the equal opportunities policy is implemented and effective. LYT is proactive in programming services and activities which target under represented groups in particular.

- Reports are made to the Council of Management detailing ethnic origin, disability etc. of participants, where appropriate, and targets are established to promote the increased integration and encouragement of disenfranchised young people. These are clearly identified in relevant plans.
- A comprehensive induction programme for new participants, staff and volunteers incorporates the Youth Theatre's Equal Opportunities Policy and emphasises the role and expectations upon all new individuals to assist in ensuring its implementation.
- Our volunteer policy will also support and include Equal Opportunities principles and practices which all volunteers sign up to.

RECRUITMENT

Before recruitment begins, LYT Executive team will give full consideration to duties, responsibilities, appropriateness and necessity of the proposed role.

- Filling the Role

All roles, paid & volunteers, will have a full Job Description & Person Specification with clear roles and responsibilities.

- Advertising

All posts will be advertised widely to ensure as wide a pool of candidates are reached with an appropriate lead in time.

- Enquiries

All enquirers will receive an information pack detailing the requirements of the post. Wherever possible, this will be provided in electronic format.

- Selection

Candidates will only be shortlisted for interview if they meet all the essential criteria defined in the person specification.

- Interviews

All roles will have a formal interview with at least two members of LYT's core team present. For more senior post, a member of the council of management will be invited to attend.

All candidates will be asked a standard format of questions, which will have been decided by the interview panel prior to the interviews. All questions must be related to the job requirements and the candidate's suitability to undertake the role.

- Skills Assessment

As part of the selection process, candidates may be asked to partake in a series of skills tests. These tests must be directly related to the role in question and must be measurable against objective criteria. Candidates must be informed of the details in the letter inviting them for interview.

- Appointment

The choice of candidate will be determined by the interview panel. The panel will take into account any other information generated as part of the process.

A formal offer will be made by phone and confirmed in writing and is conditional upon receipt of suitable references, satisfactory evidence of eligibility to work in the UK and other appropriate checks, such as Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), if applicable to the post.

- Confidentiality

All application details are treated with the utmost confidentiality

- Documentation

At all stages of the recruitment process, notes will be kept detailing the reasons for selection or rejection of candidates. These notes could be called upon as evidence of the fairness of the process.

- Monitoring

For equality and diversity purposes, recruitment statistics are monitored on an annual basis by gender, ethnicity, disability, age.

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