

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Policy

LYT Mission Statement

All young people have a powerful voice and a right to be heard. Lewisham Youth Theatre (LYT) nurtures and inspires young people’s voices through free participatory theatre activities, helping them to develop enduring and transferable skills that lead to increased chances of life and long-term well-being. We bring young people together from across the Lewisham community to create outstanding theatre in an environment of high expectations and collaboration. We work from the core belief that artistic excellence is key to expanding young people’s horizons and creating lasting transformation.

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Statement of Policy

LYT is committed to equality and inclusion at all levels of the organisation and exceeding the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 by addressing systemic inequities and the lived experiences of all individuals. We aim to go beyond compliance by tackling structural inequalities and making our work meaningfully inclusive. Terms like intersectionality (how race, gender, disability and class combine to shape experience) are central to our understanding.

We actively oppose all forms of discrimination. We value the role diversity plays in engendering a positive working environment and 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, race, disability, sexual orientation, sex, gender reassignment, religion and belief (or lack thereof), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity.

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 (CoM) members (Trustees), staff (permanent or temporary, including those on contracts), applicants, trainees, consultants, volunteers and members (including youth and community participants).

The policy outlines how LYT will oppose and avoid all forms of discrimination and harassment.

Responsibility

LYT's CoM is responsible for overseeing the effective implementation of the IDEA Policy in all areas of our work, including staff recruitment. The CoM have delegated responsibility to the Senior Producer for the day-to-day policy implementation. All those working and interacting with LYT have a duty to uphold the IDEA Policy.

Trustees, staff, freelancers, trainees and volunteers have a duty to act in accordance with this policy, and that they support young people and other stakeholders to act in accordance with the policy principles.

Our Principles

To ensure that LYT's services are accessible to all, the following principles must be followed:

- We challenge anti-Black racism in all its forms.
- We affirm and support transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse people.
- LYT welcomes people of all faiths and beliefs. We aim to create a space where participants and staff can engage fully in our programmes without compromising their personal values or cultural practices.
- LYT will make its services available to disabled young people, including wheelchair users in our accessible building, by using signers and interpreters where appropriate and by ensuring these facilities are publicised to potential participants.

- 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.
- Promoting a good and harmonious working environment in which all persons are treated with respect and can feel confident of the support of others.
- Preventing occurrences of 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 IDEA 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.
- 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 the IDEA policy shall be regarded as misconduct, which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Our Practise

We offer the following strategies to ensure inclusive and supported participation:

Anti-Black Racism

- We aim to centre Black voices in programming and leadership by employing staff, freelancers, young people, and volunteers from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- We offer staff and Board members ongoing anti-racism training and embed this lens in reflective practice and policy development.
- Celebrate Black History month in October in a culturally relevant and meaningful way that fits into our programming.
- Microaggressions are treated as a form of discrimination and will be addressed in line with our behaviour policies.

Transgender & Gender-diverse Inclusion

- We actively respect people's chosen names and pronouns by making pronoun badges available, offering multiple opportunities for young people to change their names or pronouns and repeating everyone's name and pronouns during check-ins.
- Provide gender-neutral toilets as standard.
- Challenge transphobia and homophobia within sessions, public events and external workshops.

- Offer staff training in trans awareness.
- Celebrate LGBTQ+ History month and Pride month in a culturally relevant and meaningful way that fits into our programming.
- Have an LGBTQ+ Ambassador on staff that young people and staff can talk to.
- In casting, we hold open and respectful conversations with participants to ensure safety, choice and artistic integrity.
- Intentional misgendering or deadnaming is treated as a form of discrimination and will be addressed in line with our behaviour policies.

Faith, Belief and Cultural Inclusion

- We are mindful of holy and sacred days such as Eid, Ramadan, Diwali etc when scheduling internal and external events for both our staff and young people.
- Provide a quiet space for prayer and allow staff and young people to step away at any point without judgement.
- If content conflicts with sincerely held beliefs, staff and participants can opt out without judgement.

Supporting those with needs

LYT works with participants experiencing a range of needs, including special educational needs, mental health difficulties, family disruption and marginalisation. Some of our participants are on the autism spectrum, have ADHD, or are dyslexic. LYT has developed practices to support those with additional needs:

- Relevant staff will be briefed on specific needs of young people, to support them to take part.
- Session plans are displayed on the wall at each session. Participants can refer to these plans before and during the session. Participants who may seem anxious about what they will be doing particularly benefit from being shown the plan.
- Creating a dedicated sensory space (The Zen Den) where participants can self-regulate in a quiet space away from other young people. We provide tools to manage sensory difficulties (fidgets, mindfulness activities, headphones etc) in all our sessions.
- Facilitators will adjust games or exercises to make sure everyone can participate in a way that's accessible for them.
- We work with partner organisations to refer young people to LYT who might need additional support to take part. Including, 1 to 1 mentoring, social stories, private tours, face to face meetings with facilitator staff and regular updates home to parents/careers.
- We support young people to gain leadership skills and the confidence to advocate for their own needs. This may include speaking directly to participants about how we can support them, in addition to parents/carers input.

Assistance dogs at LYT

LYT defines assistance dogs, according to the Equality Act (2010) as:

- A dog, which has been trained to guide a blind person;

- A dog, which has been trained to assist a deaf person;
- A dog which has been trained by a prescribed charity to assist a disabled person who has a disability that consists of epilepsy or otherwise affects the person's mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination or ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects;
- A dog of a prescribed category, which has been trained to assist a disabled person who has a disability (other than one falling within paragraph (c)) of a prescribed kind.)

To ensure the safety of our participants, staff and volunteers, we cannot allow participants to bring their pets into sessions, nor can we allow assistance animals aside from an assistant dog. If possible, staff will endeavour to provide alternative adjustments, depending on visitor's need and length of their stay.

We welcome assistance dogs (including emotional support dogs), for visits or longer stays, so long the owner and assistance dog can meet LYT's requirements, which are detailed below. The assistance dog must also be well trained.

We define a well-trained assistance dog as:

- Willing to follow commands and understand when to stay or come.
- Can interact respectfully with other dogs and people.
- Can be trusted off the leash.
- Is toilet trained.
- Is able to act safely around others, particularly young people.

Just visiting

If a person and their assistance dog would like to visit LYT, e.g. for a meeting, tour of the building etc., they should inform a member of staff beforehand via email or phone. The staff member, along with the team will assess whether it is appropriate and safe to allow the assistance dog to attend.

When deciding, we will consider the following factors:

- The time and length of their stay.
- The number of people within the building at the time of the visit.
- The type of occupants within the building (e.g. very young children, external guests etc.).
- The health and safety of the occupants within the building (e.g. severe allergies or phobias).

These factors do not apply to registered service dogs, or those who have an assistance dog symbol on an access card.

During sessions and workshops

If a current or new member would like their assistance dog to attend sessions or workshops, their parent/carer or the participant if over 18, must inform a member of staff beforehand via email or phone. We would then action the following steps:

- **Step 1: Initial meeting** - Staff will set up a meeting with the participant and the family to discuss how LYT can support the participant to take part and what needs they may have. We try to encourage participants to engage at LYT without their assistance dog.
- **Step 2: Trial** - If is not possible for the participant to take part at LYT without the assistance dog, or would severely affect their mental or physical health, we would then set up a trial meeting with core staff members. We would ask the participant and the assistance dog, along with family if relevant, to meet our staff members. Here we would assess how the dog interacts with staff and the space. We would also look at how the participant engages in a typical workshop whilst managing their assistant dog.
- **Step 3: Meeting other members of the group (optional)** – If necessary, we would then conduct a final trial with other participants. This may happen if there are members of the group who have dog/animal phobias or other learning needs that may affect their participation if an assistance dog was in the space.
- **Step 4: Continued support** - Staff and facilitators are on hand to support our members with assistance dogs to positively take part at LYT. Members may want to interact with assistance dogs or can be distracted by their presence. Facilitators will support the participants and the owner to assert boundaries around the assistance dog, phrases like “please treat David’s dog like a member of staff who is working” can be particularly helpful.

Staff can create a dedicated space within the workshop room for the assistance dog to sit while the participant takes part. Staff members will continue to monitor the assistance dog’s behaviour and how it affects the young person and review the decision if necessary.

If the assistance dog meets the above criteria, and the participant is still happy to take part at LYT, we ask that all assistance dogs wear a hi-vis vest, as well as a collar and tag (in case the dog becomes lost).

During performances and events, only trained service dogs can accompany their owner, to ensure the welfare of the animal and those around them. We may request a form of certification to demonstrate this. We accept training certificates that show they are a registered service dog or the assistance dog symbol on an Access Card.

We can arrange suitable seats with space for the trained service dog to remain with the owner. For the welfare of the dog, other customers, and to maintain safe venue evacuation routes, dogs are only allowed within our designated seating areas.

PEEPS (Personalised Emergency Evacuation Plans)

The purpose of a PEEP is to enable visitors to the building with restricted mobility or those who may not be able to evacuate unaided to become familiar with the layout, location of exits and refuges, and evacuation procedures.

A PEEP will be made with any individual that needs assistance to evacuate in the event of an emergency. This may include an individual with visual, hearing or mobility impairment, a wheelchair user or other needs. PEEP questionnaires are located here. We encourage visitors who may need assistance to evacuate to inform a member of staff before visiting via email or phone, so that steps can be taken to manage any emergency evacuation. If a guest who needs assistance has not informed staff, or has not had a PEEP created, the duty manager will discuss with the individual about the best way to evacuate in case of an emergency.

Upon a completed PEEP, a member of staff or 'buddy' will be assigned to the disabled person to aid them in the evacuation. These roles are decided and allocated at the staff briefing prior to any visit, event or performance.

Should visitors with sight or hearing disabilities require assistance, they should be accompanied by someone who can provide the necessary information about what is happening and guide them towards their exit.

A staff member can be assigned for this. Where a wheelchair user or person with mobility impairments is present, it must be carefully explained the procedure in the event of an evacuation. The 1st floor of LYT's building is not accessible for wheelchairs, and we recommend those with mobility issues not to access the location.

Individualised Health Care Plan (IHCP)

LYT can support young people who require an IHCP, either due to severe allergies, medical conditions or other conditions that may require additional support. IHCP templates can be found here.

If a current or new member requires or already has an IHCP, their parent/carer or the participant if over 18, must inform a member of staff beforehand via email or phone. We would then action the following steps:

- **Step 1: Initial meeting** - Staff will set up a meeting with the participant and the family to discuss how LYT can support the participant to take part and what needs they may have. This is where they will either complete LYT's IHCP or discuss an already completed one. Please note LYT is not able to support any participants who require 1 to 1 support.
- **Step 2: Informing staff** – Upon completion of an IHCP, staff will share this document with all first aiders and print out a copy. Staff will treat a participant's IHCP as personal data and will share, protect and store it in accordance to GDPR laws and regulations.

General Access Information

The Building

LYT's Creative Hub is comprised of 2 floors; ground floor, and 1st floor. There are 3 main fire exits from the building, one out of the front entrance on the ground floor (suitable for disabled access), one at the right hand side of the building on the ground floor (suitable for disabled access) and one on the left hand side of the building leading from the 1st floor.

Where possible the ground floor front doors will be the preferred exit route.

From the ground floor: Exit through the front doors unless it is unsafe to do so. A further fire exit via the right hand side, which leads to the front of the building, can be used if the front doors are inaccessible.

From the 1st floor: Exit via the staircase unless it is unsafe to do so, this leads to the front of the building.

For more information on LYT's Creative Hub, including a visual tour and door measurements, please visit our website.

Communication

We support parents, partners, volunteers and visitors to communicate with LYT in ways that are most accessible to the individual. We offer a range communication styles and ways to pass on information, such as:

- Voice messaging
- Easy-read documentation
- A range of contact methods (telephone, WhatsApp, Video Messaging etc.)
- Printing letters or communications on yellow paper for dyslexic readers
- Low-tech and in-person options for sign-ups and forms

Implementation

To implement this policy across our staff team, we shall:

- Ensure the policy is communicated to all employees, volunteers, CoM members, job applicants and other relevant people.
- Provide training and guidance as appropriate for all staff.
- 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.

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 IDEA Policy by:

- Receiving LYT's Membership Agreement, 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 Membership Agreement.
- Creating and signing a group contract that will be displayed in workshops.

All workers (including employees, delivery staff, facilitators and volunteers) receive contracts requiring them to uphold LYT's IDEA, H&S, Anti-Bullying, Data Protection and Safeguarding Policies, which are provided with the contract. Contracts also reference LYT's Code of Practice, which includes a specific guidance on:

- Dealing with discriminatory language and behaviour
- Managing bullying and harassment
- Equity in casting and role assignments

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.

Training

All workers and volunteers will receive and be asked to familiarise themselves with this policy alongside our Membership Agreement, Anti-Bullying Policy, Safeguarding 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, equalities and data protection.

Senior Leadership will hold discussions at weekly team meetings about the application of equalities in day-to-day practice. Employees take additional external training that supports the implementation of equalities in their roles, including training in engaging and working with specific marginalised groups. Staff present on all external training at team meetings, lead discussions and make suggestions on how to implement learning across LYT practices. Training undertaken is recorded in the staff training matrix.

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.

All workers who witness discrimination, harassment or victimisation should report the behaviour as soon as possible to their line manager. Staff receiving these reports should report the concern to Senior Management.

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 LYT services and participants takes place to ensure that the IDEA policy is implemented and effective.

LYT is proactive in programming services and activities, which target underrepresented groups, by delivering a supported recruitment and referral process to ensure participants disclosing need can engage in LYT projects. We collect demographic details on participants including age, race, gender, pronouns (for over 11s), social need and economic status.

We use this data to review and report our participant reach by comparing:

- Socio-economic and ethnicity data to borough-wide data
- Percentage of participants experiencing disadvantage (across needs) with the target of minimum 75% to promote the increased integration and encouragement of disenfranchised young people. This target is clearly identified across strategic plans and literature.
- Percentage of participant completions for vulnerable participants vs non-vulnerable participants

Where data shows a significant disparity in these figures, LYT will put plans in place to address these deficits.

LYT asks all staff to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form on application. We will review the anonymous responses annually compared to the demographic profile of our workers.

Recruitment

Before recruitment begins, LYT's senior leadership team will consider 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 is reached with an appropriate lead in time.

- **Application**
The application form will be accessible in digital format as a Google form, Doc or Microsoft Word Document. You may also apply via voice note or video.
- **Selection**
All applications are anonymised to ensure there are no unconscious bias in selecting candidates. They 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. The interview can take place online or in person.

All candidates will be asked a standard format of questions, which will have been decided by the interview panel prior to the interviews. The interview questions are provided to all candidates at least 24 hours before interview. 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 email inviting them for interview.
- **Appointment**
The choice of candidate will be determined by the interview panel. 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 equity and diversity purposes, recruitment statistics are monitored on an annual basis by age, race, gender, disability, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership.

