



Equal Opportunities Policy

Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company both directly employ actors, workshop facilitators and other drama professionals and subcontract them on a project by project basis as and when required.

Whilst having to be very specific with regards to casting certain parts that require a particular race/age/gender, etc., whenever this is not the case (such as workshop facilitators and multirole characters) it is our policy to provide equality in contracting and service delivery irrespective of:

- Gender, marital status or family status
- Religion or belief
- Age
- Disability
- Race, ethnicity or nationality
- Sexual orientation
- Gender re-assignment

Equality Scheme

As a commitment to removing barriers to equal opportunities LOL Theatre is committed to taking positive steps including the following:

- preventing any form of direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- promoting equal opportunities
- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promoting good race relations between people of different racial groups
- promoting a good and harmonious working environment where all are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation or harassment will be tolerated
- fulfilling all legal obligations under relevant legislation and associated Codes of Practice

LOL Theatre recognises that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is good management practice. The policy will help all contractors to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation. Breaches of the equal opportunities policy and practice will be regarded as misconduct that may lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Definitions of Discrimination

Direct Discrimination

Generally direct discrimination consists of treating a person on grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief less favourably than others are or would be treated in the same circumstances. Examples include:

- providing a service to someone on different terms because they are from one of the above groups
- refusing to provide a service to a person/group

- the terms on which offers of employment/offer of a contract are made
- refusing to offer employment

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination consists of an employer/contractor applying, on grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, a provision, criterion or practice which, although applied equally to all groups, is such that a considerably smaller proportion of a particular group can comply with it and it cannot be shown to be justifiable on other than these grounds. Examples include:

- a rule about clothing or uniforms which disproportionately disadvantages a racial group
- requiring longer or wider experience, or qualifications, than are needed to carry out the duties of the post
- in recruitment to specify physical attributes, that are not genuine occupational requirements, that could exclude females or older persons from applying

Harassment

Harassment at work is a form of abuse and will not be tolerated. It may be physical contact or violence, or it may take other forms. Possible examples include:

- ridicule, offensive, intimidating or humiliating remarks
- exclusion from job-related conversations
- exclusion from work-related events
- unfair allocation of work
- offensive signs, pictures or calendars
- demands for sexual favours

Victimisation

Victimisation is where a person is treated badly or is subjected to a detriment because they have made a complaint about discrimination or have supported a complaint under the Equality Act.

Implementation of the Policy

LOL Theatre will regularly review its practices and procedures to ensure that they do not unlawfully discriminate against individuals or groups; whether directly or indirectly, and changes will be made where it is found that they are. The main areas of legislation are covered by the Equal Pay Act 1970, Race Relations Act 1976, Sex Discrimination Act, 1975 and 1986, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Employment Relations Act 1999, Sex Discrimination (gender re-assignment) Regulation 1999, Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Human Rights Act 2000, Employment Equality (Religion or Beliefs) and (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, or any other relevant legislation or code of practice.

In order to implement this policy, LOL Theatre will ensure that:

- The policy is communicated to all company directors and contractors, through director's meetings and contractor team briefings, and made known to job applicants
- Managers are aware of their responsibilities through appropriate training
- Appropriate training and guidance is provided. In particular, all those involved in assessing candidates for recruitment will be briefed in non-discrimination practices
- All company directors adhere to the Equal Opportunities Policy to ensure that the company's commitment to providing services fairly to all sections of the community is met

Action to Eliminate Discrimination

LOL Theatre aims to promote equality of opportunity for all existing and potential employees. By avoiding working and recruitment practices or arrangements that are discriminatory and engendering a working environment that develops good practice it eliminates prejudice and values diversity. All decisions relating to recruitment, training, promotion or termination will be made on a purely objective basis relating to the skills, knowledge, experience and ability of the individual.

LOL Theatre will take action to eliminate discrimination. This will include the following:

Recruitment

- All vacancies will be advertised in a way which does not discourage groups from applying for the post
- Qualifications or conditions applied must be justifiable in terms of the demands of the job
- Training will be given to all involved in recruitment to ensure they understand, apply and actively promote this Policy
- All applicants with disabilities, as defined within the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, who meet the essential requirements for a job will be interviewed

Training and Development

- All employees will receive training as part of their induction to ensure they understand and implement all aspects of LOL Theatre's commitment to equality of opportunity
- Positive action, as allowed in legislation, may be taken in order to equip employees from disadvantaged groups with the necessary skills to enable them to compete effectively

Working Environment

- Wherever possible, suitable access for employees with disabilities will be provided throughout all workplaces
- Wherever possible, the special needs of employees with disabilities will be met including providing adapted equipment and changes of working methods to help meet these needs

Harassment

LOL Theatre will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of employees by others, whether they be other employees, clients, service users, or members of the public in any circumstances and will take appropriate action against the perpetrators. Harassment by employees of others will not be tolerated either.

Monitoring

The Company Directors have overall responsibility for ensuring the aims of LOL Theatre, within this policy, are met and that it is being applied effectively.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy, monitoring is essential. By collecting and analysing information on employees, potential employees, contractors and service users, LOL Theatre will be able to identify whether its aims are being met.

Positive Action

It is unlawful to discriminate positively (for example by employing women or members of a minority ethnic group) just because monitoring reveals a shortfall in a particular area. LOL Theatre, however, may take positive action to encourage people from a particular sex or racial group or who are disabled to apply for jobs, or to give them suitable assistance so that they can be considered for certain vacancies. Such positive action may be taken when monitoring reveals an imbalance in particular categories of employees, or in applicants for jobs.

Dealing with Complaints of Discrimination

It is essential for those who feel they have been discriminated against to have an opportunity to challenge the actions about which they feel aggrieved.

If an employee suffers discrimination from another employee they should report the matter immediately to a Company Director.

If an employee is discriminated against by a non-employee, e.g. service user, member of the public, contractor, councillor, etc. they should inform a Company Director immediately who will decide on the appropriate action.

Should an employee who believes they have been discriminated against be dissatisfied with actions taken by their Manager they have the right to raise a grievance under LOL Theatre's Grievance Procedure.

LOL Theatre will take action against any employee if he or she is found to have been discriminating against service users, members of the public, contractors, councillors, or any non-employee. This may be dealt with through LOL Theatre's Disciplinary Procedure and any non-employee should use the LOL Theatre's Complaints Procedure to bring it to the attention of the authority