

Equal Opportunities Policy of Tinderbox Theatre Company

1. Introduction:

Tinderbox Theatre Company ('Tinderbox') is committed to a policy of equal opportunities employment and integrated casting in which individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities without regard to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (referred to as 'protected characteristics') and are given equal opportunities within the company. The aim of this policy is to ensure that no job applicant, employee, volunteer, freelance worker, audience member or project participant receives less favourable treatment on grounds related to any protected characteristic.

When making recruitment and selection decisions we will aim to select the best person for the job and all decisions will be made objectively and lawfully. Likewise, we will follow the same principles when making other employment-related policies and decisions, such as those relating to pay and benefits, opportunities for promotion and training, flexible working arrangements, absence and performance management and, if necessary, redundancy.

We will promote a good and harmonious working environment in which our employees will be treated with dignity and respect. We will not tolerate harassment on the protected equality grounds or bullying.

We recognise that our workplace and our employment policies and practices may potentially cause barriers for job applicants and employees who have disabilities. We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that these are removed when needed. We recognise that a failure to comply with the reasonable adjustment duty would be an act of unlawful discrimination.

Where appropriate, we will take lawful, affirmative and positive action to encourage participation from groups that are under-represented in our workforce.

Tinderbox monitors all recruitment processes and this policy is reviewed by the Board of Tinderbox at least every three years.

2. Policy Statement

Tinderbox's policy and practice is that entry into employment with the company and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular position. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration.

Code of Practice: The company welcomes diversity amongst its employees and seeks to ensure that all candidates for employment are treated fairly, and that selection is based solely on the individual's abilities and qualifications. The company will use the following procedure for recruiting and selecting individuals for all positions:

- A. **Selection Criteria:** The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. Selection criteria for all positions will be clearly defined and reflected in the further particulars sent to applicants which will also include details of the company's commitment to equality of opportunity. Job qualifications or requirements which would have the effect of inhibiting applications from members of particular groups, such as those of one sex, persons of a particular religion, marital status or sexual orientation, persons of a particular racial group, persons within a certain age bracket or those with a disability, will not be demanded or imposed except where they are justifiable in terms of the job to be done.
- B. **Advertising:** Job vacancies and castings will be advertised widely to enable and encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced candidates. Tinderbox will endeavour to ensure that advertisements are not restricted to areas or publications that would exclude or disproportionately reduce applications from a particular gender, religion, age group or racial group and should avoid prescribing requirements as to marital status or age. All job advertisements placed on behalf of the company will state the company's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- C. **Selection Methods:** The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. All those handling applications and conducting interviews must be aware of the principles of the Equality Act 2010. The selection of new employees will be based on job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do the job and information sought from candidates will relate only to the qualifications for or requirements of the job.
- D. **Interviews and auditions:** The staff responsible for shortlisting, interviewing or auditioning and making or recommending an appointment will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and the need for consistency. Wherever possible, at least two people will interview applicants and all questions will relate to the selection criteria. No questions will be based on age, health (except where permitted by the Equality Act 2010), assumptions about roles in the home and the family or the assumed suitability of different ethnic groups for the post in question. Where it is necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect the performance of the job (for example, if the job involves irregular hours or extensive travel) this will be discussed objectively and will be asked equally of all candidates. In the case of disabled applicants who identify themselves at the application stage, appropriate interview arrangements (such as accessible interview rooms or the assistance of a sign interpreter) should be offered to enable candidates to compete on an equal basis.
- E. **Integrated Casting:** Theatre is a powerful and very visual means of communication. The images of theatre reflect, and in turn affect, our society and our culture. The power of theatre brings with it responsibility. As theatre practitioners we have a responsibility to reflect the multiracial and many faceted nature of our society and to break down traditional barriers and restrictive attitudes based on sex, marital status, age, creed, colour, race, national origin, class, sexuality and disability. In line with ITC's policy of 'Casting irrespective of skin colour or disability' was agreed in 1983 (and expanded in 1986), Tinderbox will ensure that:
- a prime objective when casting for a season or year is for the company to reflect the composition of society as a whole in terms of race, sexuality, sex and disability.

- The principle criteria for selecting an individual should be the person’s ability to fulfil the role/task(s) irrespective of his/her/their sex, sexuality, race or disability.
 - Integrated casting should promote positive images and not perpetuate traditional stereotypes of race, disability, sexuality and sex. Writers, directors, designers and all those involved in the devising process will be made aware of their responsibilities in this respect, and wherever possible should encourage the extension of existing casting boundaries.
 - Integrated casting forms part of an active equal opportunities practice for the theatre company which will cover and influence: the programme of work; employment of all personnel; monitoring; recruitment policies; training; composition of the board of directors; marketing of and access to the product.
- i. **Grievance Procedures:** All allegations of discrimination against a person because of a protected characteristic will be dealt with seriously and confidentially.
 - ii. **Keeping:** Details of candidates and of selection decisions (including the rationale for selection or rejection) will be kept for at least six months after an appointment has been made in case they are required as evidence by an employment tribunal or for other proceedings. The company will keep anonymous records of the sex, ethnic group, age and any disability of its employees and of all candidates and of those shortlisted and appointed. Records may be used to determine whether members of one sex or persons of a certain racial group, religion or age bracket or those with a disability do not apply for employment or apply in smaller numbers than might be expected or are shortlisted or appointed in a lower proportion than their application rate or are concentrated in certain jobs.
 - iii. **Review of Recruitment Practice:** Recruitment procedures and practices will be kept under review so as to ensure that this policy is being adhered to and to ensure that they do not include requirements or conditions which constitute, or may lead to, unlawful discrimination.

3. Employees’ Rights:

Our employees have a right to work in a good and harmonious environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment and to complain about such behaviour should it occur.

We have established an internal grievance procedure to deal with such complaints and we would encourage aggrieved employees to use it. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Our internal grievance procedure does not replace the right of aggrieved employees to also pursue complaints to an Industrial Tribunal or the Fair Employment Tribunal. Those who wish to consider that option may obtain advice from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (telephone: 028 90 500 600).

Employees who make complaints of discrimination or harassment and others who give evidence or information in connection with such complaints, will not be victimised (i.e. they will not be discriminated against or harassed in retaliation for their actions). Victimisation is also discrimination contrary to the equality laws and this policy.

4. Employees' Responsibilities

All our employees must comply with this policy. They must treat each other with dignity and respect. They must not commit any acts of unlawful discrimination or harassment against any other person, such as their co-workers, job applicants or customers. Such behaviour will not be permitted or condoned. We will treat it as misconduct which may warrant dismissal from employment, or other employment-related penalties as is appropriate.

All our employees should discourage discrimination and harassment by making it clear that they find such behaviour unacceptable and by supporting co-workers who suffer such treatment. Any employee who is aware of any incident of discrimination or harassment should alert a manager or supervisor to enable us to deal with it.

5. Employer's Responsibilities

We will continually make good faith efforts to implement this policy. This responsibility will be carried out by the General Manager, supported by the Board of Directors. We will:

- provide all employees with a copy of this policy.
- ensure that all complaints of discrimination and harassment are dealt with promptly, seriously and confidentially and in accordance with our internal grievance procedure.
- set a good example by treating employees with fairness, dignity and respect.
- be alert to unacceptable behaviour and will take appropriate action to stop it.
- monitor all incidents of discrimination and harassment and review the effectiveness of this policy periodically.

6. Monitoring and Review

We will monitor all incidents of alleged discrimination, harassment and bullying and we will review the effectiveness of this policy no less than every three years.

Where such monitoring or review identifies any areas for improvement, we will develop an action plan to address the issue.