

# **GUARDIANS** AT **THE OLD VIC** INFORMATION

**‘The Guardians programme is an inspired way of achieving two difficult things: disseminating and maintaining your desired culture across all areas and locations of the business; and empowering staff with concerns to make well-informed and appropriate choices regarding escalation of issues’**

Richard Miskella, Partner, Lewis Silkin

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# WHAT IS A GUARDIAN?

A Guardian is a trained member of staff who helps to ensure a consistent understanding of culture throughout the organisation, 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.

The Guardians programme is designed to help an organisation go further in its commitment to creating a safe and secure working environment for all, offering information resources for colleagues who have questions or concerns about behaviour or the culture at work.

## **THE ROLE OF A GUARDIAN**

The role of a Guardian is to listen and give neutral support on issues and, where relevant, to advise upon which processes and staff may assist. This could relate to something serious, or a more everyday matter. Guardians respect and maintain absolute confidentiality over issues raised with them except in cases in which the issues might amount to a criminal offence. Guardians are not in post to call out inappropriate practice; nor intervene and try to fix problems. They will only advise colleagues as to actions they can take themselves, if they wish to; and model, promote and uphold the organisations culture.

## **APPOINTMENT**

Guardians can be appointed either directly or through an application process. The Old Vic held an open workshop with a subsequent selection process. Guardians will receive specialist training on facilitation and mediation, safeguarding and listening, the culture and values of the organisation, and its structure and processes before the programme formally begins. They will then receive ongoing training and support throughout the year.

Guardians are selected from across the current workforce based on their open minded, friendly, approachable manner. They will be an available resource for both permanent, part-time, casual and freelance workers and will support an open, considerate culture where anyone feels they can raise something in good faith.

## **WHAT ARE THE COSTS?**

Implementing a Guardians programme can be no, or relatively low cost depending on preference. The terms of reference in this pack can have universal application and are provided here free for organisations to use and adapt. The additional papers in this pack may be helpful in establishing your own scheme.

You can arrange the initial training for Guardians yourself or make use of the pro bono training being provided by Lewis Silkin on 13 June (time tbc). Additionally, ongoing training for organisations who are part of the Guardians network will be provided pro bono by Lewis Silkin.

The Guardians Network is free to join and is an information sharing resource — for more detail on the Network see p4 'Join In'.

# JOIN IN

We want to share this pack as widely as possible in the hope that it will help keep a wide range of organisations and workforces safe and happy. As such please feel free to use the documents contained here in their entirety, or select specific sections that might work for you, and pass them to those who might be interested in joining the scheme.

## **GUARDIANS NETWORK**

If you are interested in implementing a Guardians programme, or a variant thereof, in your organisation, please let us know. We have had many initial conversations with organisations from both within the arts industry and in other sectors, and there has been immediate and enthusiastic response to the principles of the scheme.

As such, in order to continue to share best practice and training, we are forming the **Guardians Network**. The Network is a group of organisations who have implemented the principles of a Guardians programme. The Network receive free training, and — in between times — can share with the group anonymised trends and learnings from their own programmes, together with centralised resources through a webpage which we are in the process of establishing.

The Network is **free to access**. In order to ensure as many as would wish to are able to introduce the scheme, we have arranged with Lewis Silkin for Guardian training to take place free of charge. This will be a four hour Guardian training session by Richard Miskella (Lewis Silkin) and Joanna Nicolas (Safeguarding Consultant) to take place in July (date tbc) with your chosen or potential Guardians. This four hour session will equip Guardians with the necessary training to fulfill the role in your organisation.

Ongoing training for organisations running Guardians programme will also be provided pro bono by Lewis Silkin for any organisation who signs up to the Guardians Network, with a further two sessions held in 2018 and thereafter three sessions a year. In advance of the sessions, those in the Network will be encouraged to share anonymised feedback on trends and scenarios from within their organisations so that we can all be responsive to current cross-sector issues in the workplace.

Each organisation, each industry, will have experiences and solutions with universal application that, through an open collaboration of resources and ideas, can benefit and strengthen us all.

## **WHO TO CONTACT**

The Guardians programme is an Old Vic innovation. This pack was prepared by The Old Vic, with legal advice in relation to the new programme from Richard Miskella of Lewis Silkin and Safeguarding Consultant Joanna Nicolas.

If you would like any further information about the programme itself or to join the Guardians Network, do contact Executive Director, Kate Varah or Head of Business Development (and EA to Kate) Rowena Russell — contact details at the end of this pack. We would love to enthuse about this programme with you and share what we've learnt thus far so that what we have learnt can be put to widest possible use.

## **Resources**

### **Lewis Silkin: Richard Miskella**

Richard has been with Lewis Silkin LLP for 15 years and a Partner for nine. Richard advises on employment issues and legislation. As well as his advisory work and training, Richard's particular focus is on disputes and mediation. He is a CEDR-accredited mediator, and acts for clients as well as mediating disputes of all kinds.

### **Safeguarding Consultant: Joanna Nicolas**

Joanna is a national commentator on safeguarding children, appearing regularly across the BBC, Sky and ITV. She chairs and speaks at national conferences and is a writer and published author. Joanna is advising and working with us more widely at The Old Vic on all best practice across all safeguarding policies, activities and training.

# THE GUARDIANS NETWORK

**In order to share best practice and training, we have formed the Guardians Network.**

The Network is a group of organisations who have implemented the Guardians programme (or a version thereof) who come together to benefit from:

- Pro bono training offered by Lewis Silkin throughout the year
- Sharing with the group anonymised trends and learnings from their own programmes
- Centralised resources through The Old Vic's website.

The Guardians Network is free to access and virtual. Pro bono training sessions are delivered by a Lewis Silkin lawyer in person three times a year in a central London location.

Each organisation will have experiences and solutions with universal application that, through an open collaboration of research and ideas, can benefit and strengthen us all.

**‘We are getting significant interest from clients across a wide range of industries, who want to achieve both of these goals and think the framework can be usefully adapted to meet their specific needs. We’re proud to support the programme with free training three times a year from our offices’**

Richard Miskella, Partner, Lewis Silkin

# THE OLD VIC'S GUARDIANS PRESS RELEASE

## **Empowering the individual: The Old Vic launches new 'Guardians' programme as part of its commitment to the Way Forward**

The Old Vic has created a new Guardians programme. A Guardian is a trained member of staff who helps to ensure a consistent understanding of culture throughout the organisation, 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.

As outlined in the Way Forward, our commitment to creating a safe and secure working environment for all, the role of a Guardian is to listen and give neutral support and advice on issues and, where relevant, to advise upon which processes and staff may assist. This could relate to something serious, or a more everyday matter. Guardians respect and maintain absolute confidentiality over issues raised with them except in cases in which the issues might amount to a criminal offence. Guardians are not in post to call out inappropriate practice; nor intervene and try to fix problems. They will only advise colleagues as to actions they can take themselves, if they wish to; and model, promote and uphold our culture.

Four to six Old Vic Guardians will shortly be appointed following a workshop and interview process. They will receive specialist training on facilitation and mediation, safeguarding and listening, the culture and values of The Old Vic, and its structure and processes before the programme formally begins in March 2018. They will then receive ongoing training and support throughout the year. Guardians are being selected from our current staff based on their open minded, friendly, approachable manner. They will be available to both our permanent and freelance workers and will support an open, considerate culture where anyone feels they can raise something in good faith.

Executive Director Kate Varah says,

*'The idea for The Old Vic's Guardians programme grew out of our desire to help reassure people they have a voice. We want everyone to have a way to share their concerns with someone outside of the 'regular' reporting line. Our Guardians will actively listen and support, offering confidential advice on options, with discretion and empathy. A heartening outcome for us would be other theatres, and sectors, taking the concept of Guardians within their business, and making it their own.'*

–ENDS–

## **PRESS CONTACT**

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# THE WAY FORWARD

**The Old Vic is committed to a new Way Forward that will build on existing practices and procedures to ensure that the theatre fulfills its duty of care to all who work in the organisation. The Way Forward is committed to rapidly evolve an intelligent new standard of protection and support in and around the workplace.**

## **DEFINING RIGHTS & PRESCRIBING ACTION**

We commit to creating a safe and secure working environment for all.

This requires:

- Leadership and commitment from our Board to set the tone and culture of the organisation and ensure accountability
- Thoughtful engagement from the theatre management and staff in order for solutions to be workable, and avoid negatively impacting on creative relationships
- In-depth discussion led by industry bodies and with colleagues to share learnings and best practice so that our solutions are impactful and meaningful.

The Old Vic cannot change behaviours and theatre culture in isolation. Engaging with the rest of the UK theatre community and establishing practices which minimise the opportunity for inappropriate behaviour and seek to ensure that such behaviour is addressed when it occurs are key.

Creating a healthy and dignified environment in which to work is essential for every profession. It is a right that everyone should be able to reasonably expect.

## **RULES & EXPECTATIONS**

We will develop with our people, our own set of conduct rules and behavioural expectations based around two categories of behaviour: 'OK/Not OK'.

Both the general life of the theatre and specifically productions will be covered. Every member of staff and member of the company and creative team will sign up to and will be encouraged to ensure that it is implemented effectively and adhered to.

It will include clear guidance regarding one-on-one meetings in isolated locations, especially outside The Old Vic building, and in particular late at night or involving alcohol.

It will include clear guidance on what to do in a circumstance that feels uncomfortable or Not OK.

It will establish a zero tolerance policy on inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.

## **GUARDIANS**

The Old Vic will establish a Guardians programme.

A Guardian is a trained member of staff who helps to ensure a consistent understanding of culture throughout the organisation, 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. The Guardians programme is designed to help an organisation go further in its commitment to creating a safe and secure working environment for all, offering an alternative way for colleagues to share concerns about behaviour or the culture at work.

Guardians will be approachable, informed, responsive. They will receive additional training to support them in this role. Any person working at The Old Vic can contact a Guardian at any point, knowing that they will be a safe point of contact with information to help colleagues make empowered and informed decisions.

## **GUIDANCE**

Additional training for all staff, including creative and production staff, will be initiated on diversity issues and acceptable workplace behaviour.

This will be designed in conjunction with the creative and production staff so that it properly takes into account the features of theatre productions at The Old Vic.

Training will demonstrate how people should speak out and report concerns quickly. It will cover boundaries and what constitutes inappropriate behaviour.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Protocols and processes will be drafted and enacted. They will not sit on a shelf. All who work here, regardless of seniority or role, will be held to them.

Some, like our Dignity at Work policy already exist. Others, like an extended whistleblowing policy will be drafted and put in place to provide a clear, formal route for incident escalation where necessary.

Specific and supportive guidance about alcohol use will be written, together with guidance on The Old Vic's expectations, all to be given without it having a 'chilling' effect on camaraderie and the creative culture, or driving performers and staff away from the bar as a place to relax post-work or show.

Clear reporting lines will be established for swift escalation of concerns. Guardians will sit alongside this to give an additional mechanism for support should a formal approach not feel right.

## **CHECKS & BALANCES**

A governance review will be undertaken to check that the programme of modernisation and improvement that has taken place since 2014 within The Old Vic Board of Trustees has gone far enough; and to ensure that it remains fully equipped to fulfil its role in providing independent oversight of The Old Vic.

Regular 360 feedback will be requested not just for permanent staff and their managers during appraisals and reviews, but within acting companies and creative teams to provide clarity around effective line management, and include confidential questions regarding culture and behaviours.

In all we do, we will strive to make The Old Vic a healthy, happy, safe place to work.



## CONTACT

For further information please contact us using the details below:

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Executive Director

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**‘There are those that talk and those that act. The Old Vic is leading the way in ensuring a cultural shift that we need to see across all industries and organisations. It is hugely exciting and a privilege to be involved in something that is groundbreaking. Organisations that take this approach can be confident they are creating a happy, safe environment in which everyone can thrive’**

Joanna Nicolas, Safeguarding Consultant