

# The Guardians

The Guardians programme is a simple way of achieving two difficult things:

1. Disseminating and maintaining your desired culture across all areas and locations of the business, and
2. Empowering staff with concerns to make well-informed and appropriate choices regarding escalation of issues, no matter who is involved

The concept of the Guardians programme was conceived by Lewis Silkin and The Old Vic in response to the Kevin Spacey investigation at The Old Vic. We worked with the management of The Old Vic to create a scheme which provides a supportive information resource for staff to help them resolve problems they experience at work in a manner consistent with the organisation's values.

The scheme has been embraced by more than one hundred organisations to date, across all sectors. We are proud that Lewis Silkin was the first law firm to internally implement the scheme.

## 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.

Guardians offer a peer-to-peer information resource for colleagues, provided in an empathetic and confidential context. They are not part of the official management of the business.

## The role of a Guardian

The role of a Guardian is to listen empathetically and give neutral information on issues that staff discuss with them. They are a 'living library' of information about:

- The culture and values of the organisation
- Escalation methods such as grievances, peer-to-peer discussions, line manager engagements and whistle blowing services, and
- Support services and benefits offered by employers, such as EAPs, counselling services, mentoring services and even debt management services

They inform colleagues and act as a sounding board for concerns. Their work 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; they do not intervene in situations or try to fix problems. They only advise colleagues as to actions they can take themselves, if they wish to; and model, promote and uphold the organisation's culture.

## How can we help?

We can assist you with the design, implementation and operation of your own Guardians programme, including:

- ▶ Designing the program
- ▶ Drafting terms of reference
- ▶ Selection and appointment of Guardians
- ▶ Training Guardians
- ▶ CPD for Guardians; and
- ▶ Confidential advice and support to Guardians

## Suggested content for training Guardians

### Preparation

- ▶ An initial scoping discussion with HR and sponsor of the programme
- ▶ An understanding of all policies and procedures related to Diversity & Inclusion, grievance protocols, support services to employees such as EAP etc
- ▶ Agreement of naming conventions
- ▶ Development of training content
- ▶ Client sponsor to sign off content

### The Guardians training programme

(delivered by way of two, 2 hour training sessions)

#### 1. An introduction

#### 2. An overview of the Guardians Programme

- a. Why is it being adopted?
- b. What attributes does a Guardian have?
- c. The role of a Guardian
- d. The principles and terms of reference (the terms of reference is a document that explains the role of a Guardian)
- e. Soft skills

### 3. Operating the Guardians Programme

- a. Practical advice
- b. How to contact an individual Guardian
- c. Raising awareness
- d. Feedback of themes arising (on a confidential basis)
- e. What policies and procedures you need to know about
- f. Our culture and values

### 4. Role Plays

In session 1, the trainers act out a role play, with one playing Guardian and one seeking support. The participants watch and listen, and we discuss the points that arise from the scenario.

After session 1, the participants are provided with their own role plays to do as "homework". They are split into pairs for this purpose and take it in turns to play the Guardian and the individual seeking support. In session 2, we will discuss the various points that arise from the role plays. Finally, we provide a set of role plays for the Guardians to take away after session 2, to ensure that they keep practising together.

Each role play is focused on a particular 'pillar' of the Guardian engagement: confidentiality; neutrality; empathy; and signposting. This brings to life for the Guardians the terms of their engagement and prepares them for the types of conversation that they may have.

### 5. Any final questions / next steps

The objective is for each Guardian to be confident in the expectations of their role, equipped to handle enquiries from employees and have a good knowledge of all the support mechanisms available to signpost to employees.

#### Fees

The fees for the preparation and delivery of the Guardians training programme would be £5,000 + VAT. Our client training team would lead the sessions.

Should refresher training (continuous professional development) for existing Guardians be required in the future, this would be delivered by a member of the training team at a fee of £2,000 + VAT.

Other advice and support before and after the launch of the programme would be charged at £350 + VAT per hour, or a fixed hourly fee arrangement can be put in place.

For more information please contact:



**Richard Miskella**  
**Joint Managing Partner**

+44 (0)20 7074 8175  
[richard.miskella@lewisilkin.com](mailto:richard.miskella@lewisilkin.com)



**Eleanor King**  
**Senior Legal Trainer**

+44 (0)20 7074 8091  
[eleanor.king@lewisilkin.com](mailto:eleanor.king@lewisilkin.com)

Find out more

 [twitter.com/LewisSilkin](https://twitter.com/LewisSilkin)

 [linkedin.com/company/lewis-silkin](https://linkedin.com/company/lewis-silkin)

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