

Theatre Arts Action Trust Volunteer Policy

Introduction

Theatre Arts Action Trust is a registered charity trading as the Headgate. The Headgate Theatre is managed by a small team of paid staff, and the Headgate Director is accountable to the Trustees. Volunteers support many aspects of the Headgate's operation and the success of the theatre depends on the dedication and passion of individuals who freely give their time and expertise.

This Volunteer Policy outlines Theatre Arts Action Trust's approach to volunteering. It defines the roles of volunteers within our organisation, establishes expectations, and details how volunteers will be supported. By providing clarity and consistency, this policy aims to foster a positive and inclusive environment while celebrating the central role volunteers play in the success of the Headgate.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Affirm Theatre Arts Action Trust's commitment to volunteering and to our volunteers.
- Promote fairness, equity and consistency in the treatment of all volunteers.
- Clearly communicate expectations and provide guidance for volunteers.
- Ensure volunteers know where to seek support or raise concerns.
- Highlight the essential role volunteers play in sustaining and advancing the Headgate's mission.

What is a Volunteer?

By definition a volunteer is a person who, by choice, gives their time and expertise to benefit others. It can involve spending time at the theatre, or undertaking tasks off site. There is no contract of employment between the individual and Theatre Arts Action Trust.

A volunteer works as part of a team, and the ethos of the organisation encourages

- ❖ Initiative
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Learning
- ❖ Mutual Investment

At The Headgate some volunteering is rostered and monitored by the staff team – such as the front of house roles, bar duty or duty manager roles. We ask that those undertaking these roles do so on average once per month.

Other roles may be in support of a specific activity such as publicity and marketing or programming of events and workshops, where there is an annual cycle of activity, frequently volunteer led.

Further volunteering roles involve various aspects of building maintenance or supporting the backstage or technical aspects of a specific production organised by our in-house volunteer group, Headgate Theatre Productions. There are on average six such productions each year. The Headgate does not currently provide volunteer technical support to external venue hirers.

Performers who take part in Headgate Theatre Productions are not classed as volunteers, although the Directors will be registered as a volunteer and will be expected to reflect the organisation's values and policy aims.

Recruitment of Volunteers

Theatre Arts Action Trust adopts an informal approach to recruiting volunteers, ensuring that wherever possible, opportunities are accessible to all who wish to contribute. Volunteers should be aged 16 or over at the time of application.

Our recruitment process works as follows:

- **Expressions of Interest:** Anyone is welcome to express their interest in volunteering at any time, usually by one of the following methods:
 - Registering via <https://headgatetheatre.co.uk/get-involved/volunteers/>
 - Speaking to a current volunteer or staff member
 - Attending a specialised Volunteer Recruitment Session
 - Attending a Heritage Day or Open House event
- **Tour and Role Discussion:** Prospective volunteers are invited to meet a current volunteer to tour the theatre and discuss available roles.
- **Young Persons Risk Assessment:** This is required for any volunteer between the ages of 16 and 18, and is attached as **Appendix 1**
- **Information Packs:** Based on the roles of interest (or in the case of a role offered in a show) volunteers will receive a guidance sheet/checklist and access to a specific role summary on the website.

We are actively working to improve our recruitment systems to ensure a smoother onboarding experience in all aspects of volunteering.

Fairness and Equity

Theatre Arts Action Trust is committed to treating all volunteers with fairness and equity. We welcome individuals from diverse backgrounds and strive to provide equal opportunities for everyone.

If adjustments are required to make a role accessible, we will make every reasonable effort to accommodate those needs.

Induction and Training

We aim to equip volunteers with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in their roles. While our induction and training processes are evolving, current provisions include:

- **Role-Specific Training:** Provided for Bar, Front of House and Duty Managers. Also provided for certain backstage roles.
- **Mentorship:** New volunteers receive guidance from experienced members in their respective roles.
- **Volunteer Information Sessions and social events:** Hosted approximately three times a year to keep volunteers informed and engaged.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Training:** Conducted regularly to promote an inclusive environment.

We recognise the value of effective training and are committed to continually improving our induction process to enhance the volunteer experience.

Where volunteers are participating at The Headgate in order to complete a programme (eg Artsmark or DofE) or to gain work experience, then the objectives and requirements of the programme should be clearly communicated at the outset to allow for the appropriate induction and mentorship to be established.

Expenses

Theatre Arts Action Trust does not reimburse personal expenses incurred during volunteering. However, if volunteers purchase items on behalf of a show, they may submit a reimbursement claim. A receipt must accompany the claim, and reimbursement will be processed promptly.

Supervision and Support

While Theatre Arts Action Trust does not operate a formal supervision system, volunteers have access to support and guidance as follows:

- **Front of House Roles:** The staff team or the Duty Manager are able to provide advice and guidance.
- **Production Related Roles:** Volunteers can approach their show Director, the Technical Lead, the Production Champion or the HTP Co-ordinator for assistance or advice.
- **Publicity and Marketing:** The chair of the Publicity and Marketing group will support individuals working on activities in support of the overall publicity and marketing objectives.
- **Building Maintenance:** Whether it be working on maintenance or other aspects of health and safety a named person will be allocated

We try to foster a collaborative and supportive culture where volunteers are encouraged to seek help whenever needed.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of our volunteers are a priority at the Headgate Theatre.

We have a clear Health and Safety policy, and as we work to formalise our health and safety guidelines for each specific role, we ask all volunteers to:

- Prioritise their own health and safety.
- Report hazards, accidents or concerns to the Duty Manager or a member of the staff team or a Trustee.
- Know how to access the First Aid box, defibrillator and how to complete an Accident Form.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Volunteers are expected to maintain confidentiality and adhere to Theatre Arts Action Trust's Data Protection Policy. Any personal data encountered during volunteering must be handled in compliance with this policy.

Safeguarding

Theatre Arts Action Trust is committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all individuals, including children and vulnerable adults. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of those who come into contact with our organisation. All volunteers must adhere to Theatre Arts Action Trust's Safeguarding Policies

Volunteers should report any concerns related to safeguarding to the Headgate Director or designated safeguarding leads (currently Alison Gaukroger) immediately.

Problem Solving and Complaints

Theatre Arts Action Trust values open communication and is committed to resolving concerns promptly and fairly. If volunteers encounter issues or wish to raise concerns, they can follow these steps:

- **HTP Production related Concerns:** Contact the Headgate Theatre Productions Co-ordinator or the Headgate Director
- **Other Concerns:** Approach the Headgate Director, or any member of the Trustee Board.

Theatre Arts Action Trust encourages a respectful and constructive approach to addressing challenges, and from time to time Trustees will establish small focus groups to gain a view from volunteers on a particular issue or general progress of the organisation.

A volunteer who wishes to raise a concern or issue formally should use the Theatre Arts Action Trust Complaints Procedure.

Conclusion

This policy underscores Theatre Arts Action Trust's commitment to its volunteers, who are the heart of our organisation. We acknowledge that as the organisation changes so some volunteer roles will change, and we are committed to enhancing the volunteer experience.

Your contributions are invaluable, and your support enables the Headgate to thrive as a community-focused theatre.

Policies or documents that are relevant to this policy can all be found on the website [Not fully operational at time of drafting]

- Health and Safety
- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion
- Complaints Policy
- Safeguarding
- Data Protection
- Bullying and Harassment

There is also guidance on specific procedures which is relevant to all volunteers

- Evacuation procedures
- First aid during performance

Appendix 1

Young Persons Risk Assessment

Hazard	Risk	Persons at Risk	Control Measures	Risk Level
Working at height (e.g., lighting rigs)	Falls from ladders or platforms	Young volunteer	No access to high-level work; only trained adults allowed. Young volunteers supervised at all times.	Medium
Lifting heavy equipment	Back injuries, strains	Young volunteer	Manual handling training given. Only light lifting permitted. Team lifting encouraged.	Low
Electrical equipment	Electrocution, burns	Young volunteer	PAT testing done. No unsupervised use of electricals. Only competent persons allowed to handle technical gear.	Low
Moving scenery/backstage traffic	Trips, collisions, crush injuries	Young volunteer	Induction includes backstage awareness. Supervised at all times. High-risk areas restricted.	Medium
Slips, trips, and falls	Minor injuries	All theatre users	Clear walkways, good housekeeping, anti-slip flooring where needed.	Low
Fire	Burns, smoke inhalation, panic	Everyone	Fire exits clearly marked, fire drills practiced, volunteers briefed on evacuation.	Medium
Late hours / travelling home	Fatigue, safety risk when travelling	Young volunteer	Shifts not exceeding legal limits. Safe travel arrangements required. Curfew or early finish encouraged.	Medium
Emotional stress	Anxiety from high-pressure performances or customer conflict	Young volunteer	Mentoring provided. Debriefs after performances. Supervisor available.	Low
Working with the public	Risk of abuse, inappropriate behaviour	Young volunteer	Never left alone front of house. Staff always nearby. Safeguarding training provided.	Medium

- **Parental/guardian consent** required before starting.
- **Induction and training** tailored to their role.
- **Supervision** at all times, especially in technical or backstage areas.
- **No lone working.**
- Hours follow **Working Time Regulations for young people** (e.g., max 8 hours/day, 40 hours/week, no night shifts without proper risk justification).
- **Designated safeguarding officer** available.
- **Emergency procedures** clearly explained.