

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

The Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech and Drama is committed to an equal opportunities policy in respect of all aspects of its activities and functions.

We actively promote equality for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability or illness, religion or beliefs (this is not an exhaustive list).

Our Equal Opportunities Policy has been developed to ensure that all users of the Festival are fully aware of our commitment to provide equal opportunities in all of our activities and functions.

Furthermore, the Festival will monitor the implementation and application of our Equal Opportunities Policy and ensure that it reflects and meets of the increasingly diverse community, which we seek to serve.

A copy of our complete policy is available from the Secretary/ website.

Policy – January 2008
(Reviewed in February 2015)

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

The Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech & Drama (“The Festival”) wishes to secure genuine equality of opportunity in all aspects of its activities. This applies to entrants to the Festival as participants (“Entrants”), Adjudicators, Accompanists, Stewards, Committee Members and any other volunteer or user of the Festival. The policy will be implemented within the framework of current legislation.

The Festival is a Registered Charity and a voluntary organisation. It is a member of The British & International Federation of Festivals (“The Federation”). It is run by a Committee of volunteers who are responsible for the introduction, maintenance and enforcement of the policy. The Committee is led by a Chairman.

It holds an annual festival in many areas of the performing arts where Entrants are required to perform in their respective areas. All performances are held in appropriate accommodation to which the general public are admitted. The performances are adjudicated by independent, appropriately qualified persons (“Adjudicators”). Prizes and certificates may be awarded. Depending on the performing art, in accordance with Federation Guidelines and concepts of fairness, the entrants may therefore be split into different classes either by area, age or technical ability or combination of these factors. The Festival issues a syllabus each year outlining the classes into which entrants can be entered and the conditions of entry appertaining thereto.

Policy

The Festival recognises that in society, many types of discrimination may arise and is committed to achieving equal opportunities in all aspects of its work.

Our policy is that entrants and volunteers are able to participate and enjoy the Festival without discrimination.

The Festival will aim to ensure that all persons involved with the Festival, either current or potential, are not discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, colour, nationality, cultural origin, religion, belief, disability, experience of mental distress, HIV status, caring responsibility, class, education, employment status, political belief or criminal conviction (this is not an exhaustive list).

The Festival believes that all persons involved with the Festival, either current or potential, should not be excluded from any opportunity without due reason.

The Festival is committed to making this Equal Opportunities Policy effective. Our policy aims to ensure that all persons involved with the Festival:

- Receive no less favourable treatment on the grounds of any of the matters outlined above
- Are not disadvantaged by conditions and/or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

We will ensure that the syllabus, selection criteria, procedures and all aspects of the running of the Festival are frequently reviewed to ensure that all persons involved with the Festival are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and in accordance with any relevant legislation.

Entry, Recruitment and Selection

It is the intention of the Festival that entry and recruitment decisions are based solely on the relevant merits and abilities of candidates. The Festival will require, therefore, that those involved with establishing the syllabus and selection of adjudicators, accompanists, Committee members and other volunteers do not discriminate, whether directly or indirectly, in the making of those decisions.

Literature, including the syllabus, shall not imply that there is a preference for one group of applicants unless this is relevant to either the post for which an exemption from relevant legislation is available or the class is governed by the standard criteria for fairness such as age or grade of attainment to promote fairness.

Any application forms for any involvement with the Festival shall be as clear as possible and shall not be phrased in too narrow or restrictive terms. They shall be free of personal questions except those addressed to an entrant. With respect to volunteer helpers, the Festival may make such checks with external authorities as may be necessary for, say, working with children, given the nature of the Festival.

Application forms for entrants may ask personal questions such as age and/or ability so that the Festival can ensure the entrant has applied for the right class for their performance. The Festival reserves the right to refuse entry if it would appear that there are breaches of the conditions for classes contained in the syllabus. The Festival also reserves the right to refuse applications that may give rise to performances which may not be suitable for a mixed-age audience or which would be offensive under the Festival's Equal Opportunity Policy.

The Festival will encourage members of groups from all sectors of the community to offer themselves as volunteers or for election to the Committee.

All persons involved with the Festival shall be informed that the Festival operates an Equal Opportunities Policy. Such information will be conveyed in all relevant documents such as the syllabus, guidance to Stewards and Adjudicators and in any advertisements or press releases. The Policy shall be available through our website. A copy of the policy statement will be provided to all persons involved with the Festival on request and it shall be displayed in a prominent place in any Offices used by the Festival during the Festival itself. A copy of the Policy shall be given to all new members of the Committee.

The Festival - Syllabus and Programme Setting

In setting the syllabus and in its planning and programming for the Festival, Equal Opportunities will be considered in rules setting, timing of classes, allocation of resources.

The Committee will set the syllabus with a view to welcoming entrants from members of groups from all sectors of the community. The Committee will use their best endeavours to consult widely regarding the setting of the syllabus to ensure that it reflects the developments in the performing arts that are necessary to achieve the Festival's Policy.

Discrimination

Various statutes make it unlawful to discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of sex, race, disability and age. The definitions are very widely drawn and the Festival's policy is not a suitable vehicle for outlining these. All syllabus setting and other activities must be undertaken in a way that they do not inadvertently, directly or indirectly discriminate against a group on the grounds of age, sex, race, religion etc.

Indirect discrimination can occur when everybody is treated the same but in a way, which results in some people not being able to comply where others from a different grouping can.

Harassment

The Festival wishes to make it quite clear that harassment on the grounds of sex, race religion, age and disability may be unlawful and views harassment of any type very seriously.

Examples of harassment could include (this not an exhaustive list):-

1. sexually discriminatory remarks which may be offensive to the recipient
2. repeated or unwanted verbal advances, oral or physical, of a sexual nature
3. racial insults/jokes/name calling
4. graffiti/other written insult of a racial, sexual or other offensive nature
5. provocative behaviour which could be offensive to a mixed age audience or other entrants
6. offensive (under the terms of our policy) literature of any form or in any medium, brought to any of the Festival's activities or premises.

Monitoring

All members of the Committee will be responsible at all times during the Festival and during the Festival's other activities for implementing the Festival's Policy and monitoring its adherence. Stewards, adjudicators, accompanists and other volunteers have a duty to see that the Festival runs in the spirit of the Policy. In particular, adjudicators or members of the committee who are designated as either Child Protection Officers or Responsible Persons under the Festival's Child Protection Policy may feel that a performance may be offensive under this Policy and will be at liberty to ask the performer/s to stop immediately. Such a performance will not be adjudicated and the entrants shall not be entitled to any refund of entry fee.

Complaints

Any complaint or grievance under the policy should be made to any committee member who will refer the matter to the Chairman for investigation. The Chairman shall, within the rules of natural justice, investigate the matter, allowing witnesses etc as appropriate. If, as a result of the investigation, the Chairman considers that the complaint or grievance is reasonable, they shall recommend to the committee that appropriate action shall be taken.

If the complaint is to the conduct of an entrant, committee member, steward or other user of the Festival, that action may take the form of a verbal or written warning or for repeated or serious complaints, resignation from or discontinuance of involvement with the Festival.

Any complaint, if upheld by the Chairman's investigation, about the conduct of a Federation adjudicator will be referred directly to the British and International Federation of Festivals.

If requested, the Chairman shall institute an appeal process that shall be chaired and conducted by a Vice President or Vice Chairman of the Festival whose decision shall be final. Where a complaint is made against the Chairman, the matter shall be investigated by the Vice Chairman. Should an appeal from that process be necessary, this shall be chaired and conducted by a Vice President.

Review and Responsibility

The Committee will be responsible for the monitoring and implementing the content of the Policy. The equality and diversity policy will need to be reviewed annually by the committee. All aspects of the policy will be monitored as an ongoing practice.

Adopted by the Committee on ...10 January 2008.....

Signed by the ChairmanE Slack.....

Reviewed and re-adopted by the Festival Committee – February 2015

Date of Next ReviewJanuary 2016.....