



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

**A guide to what you need to know
as a volunteer at the Playhouse**

March 2018

VOLUNTEERING AT CHELTENHAM PLAYHOUSE

The theatre relies upon enthusiastic and hard-working teams of volunteers for a variety of roles as they are the lifeblood of the organisation. Roles are many and varied and include public facing roles such as Front of House. Volunteers are our biggest asset, particularly when carrying out front of house duties such as ticket checking; programme and ice cream selling; serving drinks etc. You are the front line as far as the audience experience is concerned and their enjoyment will depend, in part, on how they are dealt with by you.

If you prefer, there are other roles behind the scenes associated with show production: costumes; set building; lighting; sound etc, as well as general maintenance of the complex. Are you good with a paintbrush/screwdriver?

If you have a particular skill that you feel would be useful, then please let the Volunteer Manager know and we'll try to accommodate it.

What you can expect from Cheltenham Playhouse

- We provide you with training, briefings and support for your role
- We aim to provide a positive and friendly atmosphere so that you'll enjoy your time with us as much as possible
- We offer you a free drink or ice cream to say thank you for your help
- We listen to your feedback and make improvements wherever we can
- We invite you to events in the Green Room.

As a volunteer you'll be able to develop new skills, make new friends, face a fresh challenge, make your own contribution as part of a team – and have fun too. Cheltenham Playhouse is run almost exclusively by volunteers and the theatre can't function without you.

What Cheltenham Playhouse expects of all volunteers

- You are enthusiastic, reliable, and courteous
- You approach audience members with a friendly attitude and a smile
- You appreciate and respect other volunteers
- You maintain a respectable appearance, the dress code being smart casual
- You commit to your volunteering responsibilities, attend training and briefing sessions, adhere to safety and safeguarding policies and respect confidentiality
- You don't discriminate against or harass others
- You tell us if something isn't working out, share your concerns and ask for help if you need it

Feedback

Let us know how volunteering was for you. Talk to the Duty Manager or Volunteer Manager and let us know what was good – and not so good. This will help us improve the volunteering experience and enable us to support you.

ID

You may need to wear either a FOH badge which we provide. Dress code for volunteers is smart casual—black top preferred but not essential!

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by the theatre's liability insurance. Unfortunately Cheltenham Playhouse is unable to insure any personal items you bring with you, and therefore we advise that you do not bring any items of value (such as cameras, laptops, tablets, etc) onto site. For any items you do decide to bring, please make sure they are covered by your own insurance policy.

VOLUNTEER ROLES

This list is by no means exhaustive, but covers most of the main areas. Like any dynamic organisation new roles and opportunities will be created from time to time. Any suggestions welcome. For most performances, the theatre tries to provide a Duty Manager (Dylan Thomas or Lisa Capener) to be on site as an overall supervisor; if you have any problems at any time, please don't hesitate to speak to them.

FOH MANAGER

- 75 minutes before the show begins pick up keys and float from the box office, open up Lounge Bar (the code is on the key in the float bag) and put on coffee (instructions by machine)
- Arrange floats in the till, ice cream and coffee containers
- Ensure lounge wall light is switched on
- Organise Ushers with programmes and floats (programmes and programme float should be provided by the company putting on the show). Always at least 1 Usher at each entrance to the auditorium to check tickets - right theatre/right performance?
- Check with Stage Manager (SM) that the 'House' may be opened 20 minutes before curtain up
- Assist wheelchair users into the theatre (via theatre lounge lobby external doors, or via ramp into foyer – ramp is located in switch room off the vomitorium)
- Remind Ushers of the emergency procedure in the case of a fire. If there is an incident phone through to the SM (top left button on the phone), say that there's been an incident use the code word 'sand'. The SM will stop the show. You will take

the public, quickly but safely, through the foyer exit or middle door, across to the car park opposite

- Ascertain if First Aiders are on duty during the performance and where, in the building is acceptable but preferably in the first aid seats N5 & N6
- Find out interval and finishing time from SM, check that the clocks in the foyer show this time
- Be on hand to help wherever there is a need, especially with meeting and greeting people and dealing with latecomers, or early leavers
- Check with Stage Manager that the 3,2 and 1 minute bells will be rung. The SM should give a 5 minute welcome to the audience
- Phone the SM to say when the audience are all in and give clearance for the show to start - also after an interval if there is one
- The vomitorium ceiling lights are not controlled by the SM. Make sure they are switched off once the wall (House) lights come on. There is a switch on the wall in 4 locations for convenience
- Fill tray with ice cream before the interval and take ice cream tray into Ushers at the interval
- After the interval, cash up using the appropriate bags
- Switch off small fridge light and bar/kitchen lights. Once the bar is locked put the bags and keys in the Green Room safe
- After the performance, say thank you to helpers, check all has been done (such as emptying of bins, checking the auditorium is clear of ice cream cartons and plastic glasses) and say they can safely leave the auditorium
- Secure the two front exits, the ones with crash bars, once audience members have left. They need to be secured (but must NOT be chained) immediately all audience members have left, to ensure that nobody has free access back into the theatre before the SM is in a position to lock the building
- Have one drink as a thank you for your help
- NOTE: If someone has an accident, fill out a form in one of the accident books (located in box office, green room bar and SM Corner)

USHERS

- Arrive 1 hour before the show begins.
- Face the audience members as they arrive, meet and greet and direct them to the bars until the 'House' opens 20 minutes before the performance.
- Sell programmes and encourage interval drinks to be pre ordered.
- When the House opens, there should be one usher on each entrance to the auditorium to check tickets and ensure they are for the performance due to commence (date and time).
- Ensure glass bottles are not taken into the auditorium (reusable plastic glasses are used in the bar).

- Close auditorium doors once clearance has been given by the FOH Manager
- Sit on a firewatch seat during the performance (not on a seat in the auditorium) and keep an eye on what is happening in the auditorium during the performance
- Assist members of the audience who may wish to leave during the performance
- Alert the FOH Manager if an incident occurs, such as smoke where you don't expect it, or if someone feeling ill (if a First Aider not available)
- Sell ice creams in the interval (Ushers are allowed an ice-cream or tea/coffee as a thank you for helping)
- After the performance, open exit doors and say goodnight as people leave, and take any reusable plastic glasses from them and return to the bar.
- Check the auditorium floor for rubbish (place in bins) or plastic glasses (return to bar).
- Empty bins, after checking the floor of the auditorium, put in fresh bin liner. Please check bins to ensure reusable plastic glasses are not thrown away in error but returned to the bar.
- Full bin bags should be placed by Green Room bar door.

BAR/COFFEE SERVICE

- Arrive 1 hour before the show begins
- Check and restock items if required, ensuring items with earliest best before dates are at the front of the displays/chiller
- Serve pre-show and interval drinks in plastic glasses so that they can be taken into the auditorium.
- Encourage interval drinks to be pre-ordered.
- Replace glasses after washing (glasswasher is in the Green Room bottle store with instructions on the wall alongside) and restock shelves and fridge and chiller unit, again ensuring items with earliest best before dates are placed to the front
- Wipe tables and kitchen counters
- Have one drink as a thank you for your help
- Dispose of rubbish into large green bins in workshop if possible or place rubbish bags in Green Room bar store. Put in fresh bin liner.

GREEN ROOM BAR

- Arrive at 7pm, last drinks 10.50pm. Close at 11pm. We have a licence until 12pm but this needs to be agreed in advance if people are willing to serve later.
- Encourage interval drinks to be pre ordered, people watching shows are allowed to use the Green Room.
- If patrons wants to take their drink into the auditorium, it must be transferred into a reusable plastic glass. If the drink is purchased post-show, then glass may be used.

- Replace glasses after washing and restock shelves and fridge, including the large fridge. Wipe tables and counters
- Have one drink as a thank you for your help.

STAGE MANAGER

The Stage Manager is responsible for all that relates to the stage, including, but not limited to: the preparation of the stage for rehearsal and performance, liaising with the artist/speaker and seeing to their requirements, coordinating any sound checks, and liaising with the Technical Staff. The Front of House Manager and Stage Manager work very closely to ensure the smooth and successful running of an event. Although they have specific responsibilities in the venue, as detailed above, there is an element of overlap and collaboration. The Stage Manager will confirm when back of house is ready to run so the Front of House Manager can close the doors and start the event.

OTHER ROLES

We have a number of Technical roles available, including lighting technicians, sound engineers and AV technicians. They work closely with the Stage Manager.

The **Lighting Technician** will attend rehearsals and work with the production company/artist/speaker, to provide the appropriate level/variety of lighting and equipment as required by the production.

The **Sound Engineer** will attend rehearsals and work with the production company/artist/speaker, to provide the appropriate level/variety of sound and equipment as required by the production.

The **AV Technician** will attend rehearsals and work with the production company/artist/speaker, to provide the appropriate level/variety of AV equipment and content as required by the production.

Backstage Crew will work with the Stage Manager to provide the appropriate level of support as required by the production.

Projectionist Stage Managers will operate the showing of films as well as open and lock the building for cinema screenings.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Box Office

The Box Office is open from 6pm on show nights.

Accidents and Incidents

Accidents are classed as anything that results in an injury or illness. Incidents are anything out of the ordinary, such as thefts, broken equipment, slips/trips, etc. For either an accident or an incident, it is important that we take a record. In the first instance, please report any accidents or incidents to the Duty Manager, Front of House Manager or Stage Manager who has access to forms that you will need to fill in.

Handling Complaints

Comments or complaints should be listened to patiently and with your full attention. Remain polite, respectful and sympathetic, offering practical solutions to help and apologise if appropriate. Don't get angry, offer excuses or make promises you can't keep. If at any point you are feeling uncomfortable talking to a customer with a complaint, invite them to talk to the FOH Manager. If a complaint has not been resolved the FOH Manager should inform the Theatre Manager, in the first instance, for a response.

SITE INFORMATION

Smoking

Cheltenham Playhouse operates a non-smoking policy, this includes cigarettes and e-cigarettes.

Alcohol

Drinks may be taken into the auditorium as long as they are served in plastic glasses (which are reusable). Bottles must not be permitted to be taken in to the auditorium.

Wi-Fi

Public Wi-Fi is available in the building; the password can be found in the Green Room.

Toilets

There are ladies toilets by the box office and men's toilets off the auditorium. There is a wheelchair adapted toilet with baby-changing facilities accessible from both the auditorium and Green Room, where there are also additional ladies and men's toilets.

Accessibility

The theatre has 4 designated wheelchair spaces and a hearing loop and we endeavour to provide suitable seating for those with visual impairments.

POLICIES

Cheltenham Playhouse has operational policies to help the smooth running of the theatre.

Fires

The venue has been provided with sufficient fire extinguishers and some members of the Playhouse are trained in the use of fire-fighting equipment. DO NOT attempt to fight a fire unless you are trained to do so. However, please familiarise yourself with the location of fire extinguishers and blankets in case you need to lead someone to them.

Evacuation

Evacuation of the venue will be instigated by the Stage Manager but led by the FOH Manager assisted by FOH volunteers. When evacuating an area and once you've been given instruction from the FOH Manager, take control, remain calm, and use a firm voice to give instruction. Check that all the audience remain calm and informed of the situation and keep making regular announcements for as long as the situation continues.

The assembly points are in the car park on the corner of Bath Parade opposite the theatre for those using the front exits. Those exiting from the rear of the building should gather in Wellington Street.

No one should re-enter the building until clearance has been given by the Stage Manager who will liaise with the appropriate authorities. If an evacuation does occur, alert the Theatre Management/Trustees as soon as possible thereafter.

Safeguarding

The Playhouse is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults (CYPVA), and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Health & Safety

We have a duty of care to protect you as a volunteer with Cheltenham Playhouse and to keep you informed about health and safety matters. As an individual you have a responsibility to look after yourself and others. Much of what you need to know is common sense and if something looks unsafe, please raise it with the Front of House Manager or Duty Manager.

First Aid

Please ensure that you report any accidents, incidents or near misses to the Front of House Manager, or Duty Manager, or Stage Manager, however minor. This does not just apply to audience members – it includes anything that may happen to you, we need to record everything on our accident book. If you discover somebody requiring first aid, do not attempt to administer it yourself unless you are qualified to do so.

- Do reassure the casualty and try to keep them calm

- Do seek First Aid assistance – try to get someone to contact the First Aider or Front of House Manager
- Do keep members of the public away from the casualty
- Do not leave the casualty unless you are alone and need to do so to get help (you are unlikely to be alone in a public event)
- Do not leave once the first-aider has arrived – you may be needed to call an ambulance or fetch some support

Alcohol and Drugs

Any member of public incapacitated by drugs or alcohol and causing a disturbance to others will be asked to leave. Any volunteer suspected of using or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on duty will be removed from the volunteer programme.

Equal Opportunities and Harassment

Cheltenham Playhouse does not tolerate discrimination. Harassment is not allowed. It is not permissible to harass others on the basis of the gender, age, race, colour, national origin, religion, marital status, citizenship, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

USEFUL TIPS

If you don't know the answer to a question, find it out. It's always better to find out the right answer rather than guessing and getting it wrong

Learn where everything is so you can help audience members, or performers, find their way

Assume everyone around you is important and you can't go wrong!

VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

- To perform your volunteering role to the best of your ability
- To approach audience members with a friendly attitude and a smile, and ensure their safety
- To meet time commitments and to give reasonable notice if you are not able to attend
- To appreciate and respect other volunteers and staff members
- To tell us if something isn't working out, share your concerns and ask for help if you need it
- To read the Volunteer Handbook

Basic ground floor plan

