

WAOS and WOW Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

WAOS and WOW

WAOS has had great success as a charity, business and hobby club for amateur dramatists since its inception in 1921. Riding the ups and downs of the twentieth century, the society has long attracted loyal members with talent and verve. With WOW's creation in 1995 the tradition of musical theatre has been kept alive and reimagined by a younger sector of the community. The societies have created and performed many award-winning, sell-out shows and enjoy an excellent reputation in the community.

WAOS and WOW do not discriminate against anyone on any grounds, including on grounds of socio-economic inequalities, class, looks or size, age, disability, sex or gender identity, sexual orientation, marriage, mental health, pregnancy or maternity, race, parentage or carers, religion or belief. If the societies have reason to believe that any of its members is being made to feel uncomfortable because of the words or actions of another member, then disciplinary action will be considered. Although many of our show choices appeal to wide audiences, and WAOS' track record for membership retention appears to be good, the society can and should look for ways to increase its potential for inclusion.

This policy applies to all current members of Witham Amateur Operatic Society (WAOS) and Witham Operatic Workshop (WOW). With regards to WOW there are some natural links between this policy and the WOW Child Protection Policy; adults acting in loco parentis must be aware of the vulnerability of children and their duty to help and protect them under the Children Act (1989).

This policy does not exist to force new terms on those uncomfortable with change, nor to ban 'banter'. It exists to help everybody in WAOS and WOW to feel accepted as a person of value. As the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (article 5.1) states, "[signatory countries] recognize that all persons are equal before and under the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law". The society hopes to improve its ideology for future members and audiences, in order to be the society Witham deserves.

Our motivation

- **Ethical** – the members and committees of WAOS and WOW choose to be kind, and seek to protect every active member or new auditionee from bullying, discrimination or alienation.
- **Membership** – members are more likely to renew their membership if they feel happy, respected and fulfilled within the group. The societies seek to represent the local culture by advertising widely when selling tickets or recruiting for a show.

- **Business** – in order for any business to generate income, it is advisable to abide by current legal and moral standards. Also, any applications for external funding for the societies require evidence of a commitment to equal opportunities.
- **Creative** – WAOS and WOW have survived and thrived by evolving in their attitudes to choices in shows and performance style. To continue to grow creatively the societies must continue to challenge themselves, taking opportunities to learn from a broader range of people.
- **Legal** – there are many laws concerning equality, including the Race Relations Act (1976), the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), the Gender Recognition Act (2004), the Children Act (1989) and the Equal Pay Act (1985), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). The most recent and all-encompassing is the Equality Act (2010), which will be most used as a reference in this policy.

Our commitment to our societies

In order to achieve and maintain positive transformational change with regards to equality, diversity and inclusion, WAOS and WOW committees and members alike affirm their commitment to the following objectives:

1. Maintaining an atmosphere of kindness and support within WAOS and WOW so that members enjoy their time in the societies and keep returning.
2. Increasing accessibility to members of the community who might not be aware of the societies or who believe themselves unable to join, and actively aiming to better reflect the diverse cultures that the societies are part of, namely Witham, North East Essex, and amateur musical theatre.
3. Performances that all members of a diverse community can find accessible and enjoyable.
4. Taking action on discrimination and bullying whenever we find it. Discrimination is defined by the Equality Act (2010) as ‘the unjust or prejudicial treatment of an individual or group because of their protected characteristics’. The WAOS and WOW statement has added some extra protected characteristics to the list from the Act, namely class, looks or size and parentage.
5. A committee and leaders who are guided by a strong policy when making decisions on casting, show choice and direction and are answerable to any controversial decisions.

These aims will be achieved through the use of an approved and regularly reviewed Strategy, an appendix to this document available to all members.