

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Introduction

It is the aim of Horncastle Theatre Company to create a supportive, inclusive and respectful environment where everyone is able to access our facilities, further their understanding of theatre and the arts, and enjoy taking part in the creative process.

The conduct and behaviour of all individuals is fundamental to the ability of the Company to operate fairly, appropriately, and in the best interests of all involved. We recognise that members and volunteers offer their time and services because they enjoy being part of an amateur dramatic society. To ensure that all members/volunteers can enjoy their experience and to safeguard our people, property and facilities, we are committed to maintaining satisfactory standards of conduct.

Section 2, *The Rights of Individuals*, applies to everyone involved in Company activities, no matter at what level.

Section 3 sets out a Code of Conduct which should be adhered to at all times, including by members of the public.

Section 4 sets out the procedures by which the Company may deal with any alleged breaches of the above.

Section 5 sets out guidance designed to avoid the malicious or vexatious invocation of the Code of Conduct or disciplinary policy

All individuals should be aware of both the general and particular requirements of conduct that apply to them and must appreciate that it is their personal responsibility to fulfil them on every relevant occasion. If there is any doubt, they should seek advice.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct prohibits conduct ranging from serious criminal acts to a lack of courtesy. Not all breaches will justify the taking of formal disciplinary action.

Individual directors, producers, or committee members will be able to resolve, formally or informally, many issues arising from breaches occurring within their own activities, and are expected to do so in the first instance. Horncastle Theatre Company encourages all individuals to work together in a collaborative manner to identify and resolve minor breaches.

Any significant or repeated breach of this Code of Conduct may be investigated under the appropriate disciplinary or grievance procedures. Reports or complaints should be made in the first instance to the Chairman or another appropriate member of the Managing Committee.

In addition to the outlined expectations in this document, all individuals should be knowledgeable of, and abide by:

Horncastle Theatre Company Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy

Horncastle Theatre Company Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Horncastle Theatre Company Privacy Policy

For more information, go to horncastletheatre.co.uk/policies/

2. Rights of Individuals

Everyone involved in Horncastle Theatre Company has the right:

1. to participate in creating and enjoying theatrical productions and associated events
2. to enjoy safe participation in theatre without fear or harassment
3. to be respected and treated as individuals at all times
4. to receive support for their individual needs
5. not to be pressurised to take part in specific events
6. to be communicated with in a manner which reflects respect and care
7. to be treated in accordance with Horncastle Theatre Company policies and regulations
8. to enjoy an environment free of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity
9. to challenge discrimination in whatever form it takes
10. to enjoy an environment free of sexual harassment, sexual abuse and any behaviour that could be construed as abuse
11. to make a complaint, and to be heard and have their complaint acted upon in accordance with the disciplinary and grievance procedures of Horncastle Theatre Company.

3. Code of Conduct for All Participants

It is the aim of Horncastle Theatre Company to ensure through this Code of Conduct that the desired standards of ethical conduct, behaviour, business dealings, social and interpersonal interactions are maintained and to provide a general guide as to what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviours or actions by -

1. Providing an opportunity and environment for people to talk to others about any concerns they may have;
2. Providing an environment that encourages individuals to feel comfortable and confident, by challenging bullying and any attitudes or behaviours that may be discriminatory in any way (e.g. racial, sexual or homophobic, or in relation to disability, etc.); or that compromises the dignity or self-worth of others – whether verbally, written or electronically communicated. ‘Remember that others may misinterpret your behaviour and actions regardless of how well intentioned they may be’;
3. Taking seriously allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse by any person that is reported, following appropriate procedures;
4. Risk-assess all situations and activities to ensure all potential dangers have been identified and the risks minimised;
5. Documenting known risks and hazards, and effect suitable controls.

Respect, Tolerance, and understanding

All individuals should:

1. Adhere to the letter and spirit of Horncastle Theatre Company policies and regulations;
2. Be aware of and follow the policies and procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all individuals;
3. Follow the directions of directors, stage managers, committee members, front of house team leaders, and other elected or appointed volunteers;
4. Be a positive role model at all times;
5. Act in a friendly, inclusive and welcoming way during rehearsals, performances and other Company events;
6. Avoid acting in any manner, within or outside of Company activities, which could bring the good name of Horncastle Theatre Company or amateur dramatics into disrepute, or otherwise cause reputational damage;
7. Not act in any way which would result in an actual or potential conflict of interest.

All individuals must:

1. Not engage in acts of verbal or physical abuse or violence, actual or threatened;
2. Respect the rights, dignity, and worth of other individuals, and not discriminate;
3. Not allow any form of discrimination or victimisation to go unchallenged;
4. Not engage in bullying or any other behaviour that could reasonably be viewed as inappropriate;
5. Avoid inappropriate relationships which involve one person having a position of authority or influence over another;
6. Respect individuals' right to privacy and comply with data protection legislation;
7. Not make unwelcome advances or repeated behaviour towards another individual, or make sexually suggestive comments;
8. Not make comments or engage in behaviours which could be interpreted as discriminatory, inappropriate or demeaning;
9. Not be under the influence of any prohibited substances, recreational or social drugs at any time within the Lion Theatre, Horncastle, or while taking part in any activity associated with Horncastle Theatre Company;
10. Never deliberately put yourself or others into compromising or potentially dangerous situations;
11. Respect the property and premises of Horncastle Theatre Company and the Lion Theatre;
12. Not be under the influence of alcohol or other mind-altering substances whilst engaged in rehearsal, performance, acting as a front of house volunteer, or otherwise in a position of responsibility towards others;
13. Not rely on just your good name to protect you.

Individuals working with children and young people must:

1. Not engage in sexual relationships with a child;
2. Not force any child to participate in activities, or place undue pressure upon them;
3. Observe appropriate boundaries and relationships with children, including use of contact and in language and communication;

4. Always be publicly open when working with children, and avoid rehearsals, meetings or situations where a child or children and the individual are completely unobserved;
5. Maintain an environment free of fear and harassment;
6. Work with the child's parent/carer to ensure that the level and type of participation is appropriate to the child's stage of development.

4. Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

The object of these procedures is to ensure that disciplinary and grievance matters are resolved in a fair, effective, and timely manner. Any deviation from these procedures shall not invalidate any finding or decision made unless the deviation raises a significant doubt as to the fairness of the finding or decision.

The following principles apply:

1. Where appropriate, minor disagreements and acts of misconduct are expected to be resolved informally in the first instance, as assessed by affected individuals, particularly those elected or appointed to positions of responsibility (team leaders, directors, etc.);
2. If this step is inappropriate or unsuccessful, the matter should be raised to the Company Chair, Deputy, or to the Management Committee for resolution;
3. Any individual may request that the matter be so escalated as a formal grievance;
4. The Company will not take any disciplinary action until an allegation of misconduct has been investigated and all parties have been given an opportunity to put forward their views;
5. All parties should take reasonable steps to attend any meeting(s) to discuss any alleged misconduct;
6. Investigations and decisions shall be made by persons nominated by the Company's Managing Committee, usually members of this committee, who should, within reason, be independent and impartial;
7. Where appropriate, we may temporarily suspend individual membership and/or require individuals not to attend Company activities during the investigation. This will not be considered a disciplinary action.
8. 'Misconduct' comprises inappropriate and/or unacceptable behaviour and includes (but is not limited to) breaches of our rules, policies and procedures, including our Code of Conduct, and damage to the Company's property or premises.
9. 'Gross misconduct' is the most serious form of misconduct, which includes, but is not limited to:
 - theft, fraud or any act of dishonesty;
 - any act or attempted act of violence, threatening or abusive behaviour towards people or property;
 - any sexually inappropriate or threatening behaviour;
 - a major breach of Company rules, policies and procedures or code of conduct;
 - deliberate and/or major damage to Company property;
 - deliberate breach of Company health and safety obligations;
 - any form of discrimination, victimisation, harassment or bullying on the grounds of gender, pregnancy, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, disability or age;
 - any acts or omissions calculated or likely to bring the Company into disrepute.

If the matter cannot be resolved on an informal basis, or is more serious, the Company's managing committee may consider the following options:

1. **Oral warning** – this will usually be issued for a first instance of misconduct;
2. **First written warning** – this will be issued if any form of misconduct is repeated within the relevant period after an oral warning has been issued and/or is sufficiently serious to warrant a first written warning;
3. **Final written warning** – if your misconduct is sufficiently serious or where you repeat any form of misconduct within the relevant period after earlier warning(s), you will be issued with a final written warning which will inform you that any further misconduct may result in expulsion from Horncastle Theatre Company and/or termination of your membership;
4. **Expulsion** – where misconduct amounts to gross misconduct or any further unacceptable conduct occurs within the relevant period after a final written warning has been issued, you may be expelled from Horncastle Theatre Company and/or your membership terminated.
5. When a warning is issued, you will be advised of the relevant period for which it will remain in force and will be taken into account in the event of further misconduct.

4.2 Expulsion

If we are contemplating expulsion and/or the termination of your membership, the following procedure will apply:

1. The Committee will set out in writing the alleged misconduct and invite you to attend a meeting as soon as reasonably practicable to discuss the matter;
2. A meeting will take place to discuss the allegations before any action is taken. A decision will be given, if reasonably practicable, within five working days of the meeting and confirmed to you in writing.
3. Where expulsion is felt by the Committee to be appropriate, this may be for a fixed period of time or indefinitely, to be decided by the Committee at its discretion.
4. If your membership is terminated in these circumstances, you will not be entitled to a refund of any membership fee.

5. Vexatious or Malicious Complaints

Horncastle Theatre Company is committed to ensuring all complaints are dealt with in a fair, effective, and timely manner, and in accordance with this Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Occasionally complainants may focus on their own concerns to the extent that persistent and vexatious complaints can place a strain on time and resources of the Committee or volunteers who have to deal with them.

All staff and volunteers are expected to deal with individuals respectfully and in a professional manner, however there are times when nothing more can reasonably be done to address a real or perceived concern.

The Company expects members and volunteers to be treated with courtesy and respect at all times and will protect them from unacceptable behaviour by complainants. Unacceptable behaviour may include:

- abusive, threatening or inappropriate language, either verbally or in writing;
- sending multiple emails, especially over a short timescale;

- making multiple calls / leaving multiple voicemails; or
- otherwise unreasonably pursuing a complaint.

Where an individual is raising a legitimate query or criticism of a complaints procedure as it progresses, such as time scales not being met, this would not normally, on its own, be regarded as vexatious or unreasonable. A vexatious complainant is an individual who:

- is raising a complaint contentiously, without reasonable grounds or with little merit or substance, and with the purpose of causing annoyance or disruption; or
- is pursuing a complaint to an unreasonable degree or after appropriate procedures have been followed and exhausted.

Examples of unreasonably persistent / vexatious complainants:

1. Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
2. Refusing to follow the correct procedure at the correct level, for example not exhausting informal processes before escalating;
3. Refusing to accept that issues do not come within the disciplinary and grievance procedure, despite having been provided with information about the scope of the policy and procedure;
4. Refusing to accept that issues are not within the power of the Company to investigate, change or influence;
5. Insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure or with good practice (e.g. insisting that the Company does not make any written record of the complaint);
6. Making what appear to be groundless complaints about the person dealing with the complaint(s) and seeking to have them dismissed or replaced;
7. Making an unreasonable number of contacts by any means in relation to a specific complaint or complaints;
8. Making persistent and unreasonable demands or expectations of the Committee/volunteers and/or the complaints process after the unreasonableness has been explained to the complainant (an example of this could be a complainant who insists on immediate responses to numerous, frequent and/or complex letters, faxes, telephone calls or emails);
9. Raising numerous subsidiary or new issues whilst a complaint is being addressed that were not part of the complaint at the start of the complaint process;
10. Adopting a 'scattergun approach' such as pursuing a complaint or complaints not only with Horncastle Theatre Company, but at the same time with NODA, their local council, the police, solicitors and/or any other body;
11. Refusing to accept the outcome of the complaint process after its conclusion and attempting to escalate it.

By agreement of the Committee, the making and continuation of vexatious or malicious complaints to the Company shall itself be considered a conduct matter, to be dealt with through the Disciplinary Procedure.

Definitions

Child or children

anyone under the age of 18

Member

A paying, life, or associate member of Horncastle Theatre Company

Conflict of Interest

A situation in which an individual has competing interests or loyalties or there may be a perception of or actual bias.

Individual

All participants in Horncastle Theatre Company activities, including children, parents/carers, participants, volunteers and spectators.

Social Media

Media designed to be disseminated through social interaction. Social media use internet and web-based technologies to communicate with one another and receive news, information and entertainment. Types of Social Media include networks like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, BlackBerry Messenger and also blogs and podcasts.

Volunteer

An individual who freely gives their time to contribute to the running of Horncastle Theatre Company. They may or may not be a paying member.

Managing Committee

The managing committee of Horncastle Theatre Company, as set out in the Constitution

Chair/Deputy

The Chairman and Vice Chairman as set out in the constitution