

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Allyship & How to be an Active Bystander – Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Effective

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The Policy

1. About the School's Inclusivity Policy & Protocols

1.1 The School's Inclusivity Policy and Protocols is designed to embed and support an inclusive environment for all members of the School, from staff to students and beyond. There are several sections to the Inclusivity Policy and Protocols, including:

- Allyship & Being an Active Bystander
- Bereavement Support
- Disabilities
- Gender Identity
- Health and Wellbeing
- Religious Belief and Religious Observance
- Sexuality and Sexual Orientation
- Tackling Racial Inequality

2. About this section of the Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Allyship and How to be an Active Bystander

2.1 The School is committed to ensuring the inclusion of students from all backgrounds, of all genders, sexualities, religions, and regardless of any disabilities. The School recognises that structural inequalities in the arts, education, and society more broadly often negatively impact many groups of our students and staff. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that everyone in the School community feels seen, heard, valued, and safe.

- 2.2 This section of the Policy and Protocols is intended to provide practical strategies to ensure that everyone in the School community feels empowered to be an Active Bystander and challenge negative behaviours as and when they appear.
- 2.3 This Policy and Protocol has been written with the needs and feelings of a person who may need an ally at its core. The tone is intentionally forthright and blunt as a demonstration of solidarity with marginalised groups. The tone and wording may cause some feelings discomfort and perhaps even defensiveness. It is important to acknowledge these but also to interrogate what they ultimately serve.

3. Allyship

- 3.1 Allyship is an important aspect of social justice and addressing the structural inequalities in our society. People who are oppressed, marginalised, or discriminated against due to their identity, cannot and should not be solely responsible for dismantling the systems that have historically underserved them.
- 3.2 Being an ally means you take on the struggle of a group with which you do not identify and use your privilege to support those who lack it. To be an ally, you must decentre yourself and focus on the pain felt by others; acknowledge, own, and learn from your mistakes; and stand up to negative behaviour and structures even when it is uncomfortable.
- 3.3 Being an ally is a full-time consistent commitment- not a set of actions undertaken only while a certain issue is in the news or when you are around others. In other words, if you are only an ally some of the time, you are actually an ally none of the time.

4. What is Bystander Intervention and Why is it Important?

- 4.1 Everyone is a bystander at some time. You may hear comments that you feel are inappropriate or you may see another person being harassed in any number of situations.
- 4.2 The School encourages all members of our community to be active bystanders who intervene to provide help in such scenarios, where it is safe and appropriate. This is important because it indicates to both the offending person and the person being offended where the larger community stands. Ignoring offensive and unacceptable behaviour often only reinforces the perceived acceptability of such behaviours.
- 4.3 It is important to be an active bystander even if this means calling out a friend or if there is no one from the discriminated group present.
- 4.4 There are several ways that one can intervene from the subtle (distraction and interruption of an event) to the direct (direct challenge). You must decide what is appropriate in the context you find yourself in. If you judge a situation to be dangerous, you can be active bystander by calling for help. You should never place yourself in danger.
- 4.5 It is important to highlight that when a person is facing discrimination, whether direct or indirect, or shares characteristics with a group who is being discriminated against, the responsibility of being a bystander should not fall only to them. Bystander intervention is particularly effective when an ally leverages their privilege in the support of a group.

5. Context and terminology

- 5.1 **Allyship** - Allyship is the practice of building relationships of trust, support, and accountability with marginalised groups or individuals. Straight people can be allies to the LGBTQIA+ community; men can be allies to women; white people can be allies to those who face racism, etc.
- 5.2 **Bystander** - A bystander is a person who observes a conflict or unacceptable behaviour. It might be something serious or minor, one-time or repeated, but the bystander knows that the behaviour is destructive or likely to make a bad situation worse
- 5.3 **Bystander Intervention** – Bystander Intervention is the action taken by a bystander to address or challenge inappropriate or harmful statements, actions, or behaviours.
- 5.4 **Active Bystander** – An active bystander is aware when someone’s behaviour is inappropriate or threatening and chooses to challenge it. This does not necessarily have to be a direct challenge- sometimes it is best to alert a third party: a member of staff, security or someone else in a position of authority to the behaviour.
- 5.5 **Microaggressions** – Microaggressions are small, difficult to prove events, that are based on and perpetuate assumptions about people of certain groups. These are often unintentional and unrecognised by the perpetrator. It is important to call these behaviours out. Even if the perpetrator did not mean to harm, microaggression do harm and perpetuate negative social norms. Impact always matters more than intention.
- 5.6 **Calling out/in-** Calling out is the practice of publicly addressing or challenging an unacceptable statement, action, or behaviour. Calling in is the practice of opening a non-judgemental dialogue that seeks to support someone in understanding why their behaviour may be unacceptable and how they can educate themselves.

In our communities, where people are known and trusted, calling out and calling in should be used in tandem. Call out the behaviour, but call in the person. However, there may arise times when one action is appropriate and other is not. Use your judgement. In all cases, remember to be safe, be kind, be effective.

- 5.7 **Performative Allyship/Performative Activism** – Performative allyship or activism is when a person’s motives for engaging with allyship or activism are ultimately selfish, such as seeking praise, or when engagement is inconsistent. It is essentially talking the talk, without walking the walk. This can encompass professing support in an unhelpful way, or in way that draws attention away from or actively harms the oppressed group.

6. Purpose of the Policy: Scope and Principles

- 6.1 This Policy and Protocols applies to students studying on a course of Higher Education who are registered students at the School. This Policy and Protocols also applies to staff employed by the School.
- 6.2 The Policy and Protocols are aimed at all staff and students at the School. It applies to and should be followed throughout all stages of the student recruitment and application, studies, and student life cycle with the School. Similarly, they apply to and should be followed in all stages of the staff recruitment, application, and employment cycle.

- 6.3 This Policy and Protocols seeks to provide a framework within which all members of the School can be empowered to be allies and active bystanders and foster an inclusive, supportive environment that does not tolerate discriminatory behaviours- no matter how seemingly benign.
- 6.4 Everyone is responsible for creating and maintaining an inclusive community that is positive and supportive for all its members.

7. Legislative Context

- 7.1 There is one piece of legislation that is relevant to allyship and bystander intervention in a Higher Education setting:
- Equality Act 2010
- 7.2 Equality Act 2010
- 7.2.1 Under the Equality Act (2010), public bodies, including higher education providers such as the School, must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2.2 Public bodies are required to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into their day-to-day business and to consider how a function can affect different groups in different ways. This enables a higher education provider to reasonably anticipate the needs of different groups of people, including staff, students and visitors and to address the potential impacts of any proposed changes to ensure they do not have an adverse effect.
- 7.2.3 By deciding to be an ally and/or an active bystander, you will help to contribute to creating an inclusive, safe, supportive, and welcoming environment within which all members of the School community can flourish and thrive.

8. Protection Against Harassment and Bullying

- 8.1 All staff, students and other stakeholders should expect to be treated with respect at all times. All complaints of harassment or bullying will be treated seriously and thoroughly investigated. Disciplinary action can be taken in cases where bullying/harassment have been proved.
- 1.1 Any act of harassment or bullying toward a person for whatever reason can be raised either by the victim/survivor, or by a third party on their behalf and in first instances, be dealt with under [UWE's Policy for Bullying and Harassment of or by Students](#) a reporting mechanism via which support needs can be identified and met, and matters may be referred into other procedures (such as the Non-academic Misconduct procedures for students, or School HR disciplinary procedures for staff) via the Stage 1 procedure of the Policy.

The Protocols

Protocol Aim	Protocol	How this might be achieved	Supporting guidance and information
Building a Community of Active Bystanders	When to be an Active Bystander	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and hold active bystander training during Induction Week for all new and returning students. • Plan and hold regular conversations about what being an active bystander means, to help familiarise the community with the concept and applying it to everyday thinking • Plan and hold an awareness campaign about being an active bystander that helps get the conversation started 	<p>You can and should be an active bystander whenever you suspect that intervention might challenge negative behaviour and/or positively impact someone in distress. There are many scenarios when you might decide to be an active bystander. Not all of these are immediately obvious and not all of these may seem important or severe enough to warrant intervention. However, it is important to challenge negative behaviours as and when they appear, even if they do not seem ‘that serious.’</p> <p>When deciding whether to intervene it is important to consider if it is safe to intervene and then how best to intervene.</p> <p>Below are some examples of behaviours that warrant bystander intervention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying – including but not limited to ableist, homophobic, misogynistic, racist, religious, and transphobic bullying. • Harassment - including but not limited to ableist, homophobic, misogynistic, racist, religious, and transphobic harassment. • Microaggressions - including but not limited to ableist, homophobic, misogynistic, racist, religious, and transphobic microaggressions. • Disrespectful or derogatory comments about others. • Violence or threats of violence. • Constantly interrupting others mid-sentence. • Taking more questions from one group of people than others. • Eye-rolling, loud sighing or similarly disruptive actions when others are speaking.

Building a Community of Active Bystanders	When to be an Active Bystander		<p>You can be an active bystander in any environment and the target of these inappropriate behaviours does not need to be present for you to address the behaviour. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your friends, family, or peers use slurs or make ableist, homophobic, misogynistic, racist, religious, and transphobic jokes you should call them out or call them in - even when a person from the particular group they are insulting is not present. • If you see a stranger acting inappropriately in a public place such as club or the classroom you should address this behaviour safely.
	Calling out and calling in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed and support the practice ‘calling out’ a behaviour (publicly attention to the unacceptability of discriminatory words and actions), while ‘calling in’ a person (taking the time to have a conversation with an individual so that they understand where their actions, words and/or behaviour may not be inclusive) by, for example, including these practices in the School’s Code of Behaviour and ensuring the whole School community knows what these terms mean 	<p>Bystander intervention can take many forms such as calling for help, diffusing a tense exchange, or lending support to someone in distress. Bystander intervention also includes calling behaviours out and calling people in. This is particularly pertinent when the person who has behaved in a negative way is a friend, loved one, someone who you trust or someone that you believe will be willing to listen to your point of view.</p> <p>It is important to stop and address negative acts as they arise, it is also important to support someone in changing their behaviour so that it does not happen again. Approaching these moments with kindness and understanding is often most effective.</p>

<p>Building a Community of Active Bystanders</p>	<p>Supporting Others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed and support a development a culture that is actively supportive of all members of the community by, for example, including an expectation of active kindness in your Code of Behaviour. • Include supporting others in any active bystander training. 	<p>You should also seek to be an active bystander when you recognise that someone is in distress. Being an active bystander is not just about confronting negative behaviours, it is also about supporting those around you and creating a more inclusive society.</p> <p>You do not have to know a someone personally to offer support to them during a moment of distress. A better world is one where everyone looks out for the wellbeing of everyone else.</p> <p>A person can be in distress for many reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have fallen ill or have been in an accident. • They are experiencing mental or emotional distress. • They have been the target of any of the abovementioned behaviours. • They have been the target of a theft or other anti-social or violent event. • They are lost and/or frightened. <p>If you notice somebody is visibly upset, distressed, ill, in pain or injured, you can ask them if they are alright or if there is anything you can do to help. They may be lost, the target of a crime, or in need of the emergency services. Sometimes, all they might need is a kind word.</p> <p>If you notice somebody has been the victim of a crime or is seriously ill, you can offer to find help, call emergency services and/or offer to stay with them until help arrives.</p>
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Being an Active Bystander	Being Safe; Being Kind; Being Effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise the importance of being supportive when challenging someone’s inappropriate behaviour in your active bystander training and Code of Conduct. • Emphasise the importance of being assessing danger and risk when challenging someone’s inappropriate behaviour in your active bystander training and Code of Conduct. 	<p>Before stepping in to call out or challenge inappropriate behaviour, it is important that you assess the situation to ensure you are able to use a proportionate and appropriate strategy.</p> <p>Different situations call for different responses: if your friend has said something unintentionally ignorant calling them out should be an unjudgmental conversation about appropriateness and harm, but if you witness an active act of violence intervening directly may put you at risk and so you should consider calling 999 or otherwise getting help.</p> <p>It is important that you know how to be kind and how to be safe when challenging inappropriate behaviour. Calling out a misguided but well-meaning person in an aggressive way will not change their behaviour. Intervening in a violent altercation risks causing you harm. When you are unsure of how to respond, find a member of school staff (if you are a student) or a colleague (if you are a member of staff).</p>
	How to be an Active Bystander (The 4 Ds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer students and staff the School active bystander guidance below. • Refer students and staff to MIT’s useful guide of Active Bystander Strategies 	<p>The 4 Ds are a useful set of strategies to follow when deciding to be an active bystander in a confrontational situation. The 4 Ds are: Direct Action; Distraction; Delegation and Delay.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Action: If it is safe to do so, challenge someone’s behaviour directly and immediately. To do this, try to remain calm, name the behaviour and why you believe it to be inappropriate. ‘I’ statements can help in direct action as they focus on your feelings about an event rather than directly attacking action. For example, ‘I felt that this [action, statement, behaviour] is inappropriate because [a reason such as it perpetuates racist/sexist stereotypes].’ You may also wish to ask them to directly reflect on their behaviour: ‘Do you think that is acceptable?’

<p>Being an Active Bystander</p>	<p>How to be an Active Bystander</p> <p>(The 4 Ds)</p>		<p>If you do not know the person behaving negatively, you may wish to intervene within a group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distraction: This can also be understood as indirect intervention and include distraction tactics such as interruption or changing of the subject. This can be a useful strategy when a more direct approach might be harmful either to yourself or the target of any inappropriate behaviour. A good example is speaking to a person being harassed as a friend and leading them away from a situation or alternatively getting the attention of the perpetrator (such as by asking an unrelated question) so that the target can extract themselves from the situation. • Delegation: Inform someone with more social or institutional power. This could be a friend if you do not feel safe to intervene yourself (for example if you are female, asking a male friend to intervene if the perpetrator is also a man), a tutor, member of school staff, security staff or, when there is urgent need, the police. • Delay: Wait for the situation to pass and then approach the individual when you have had time to reflect. If the event has had both a perpetrator and a target, it is important to seek to both parties albeit separately. This is so you can support the target or any inappropriate behaviour and, if it safe to do so, address the perpetrators behaviour directly in a less tense environment. If the incident was severe report it- to the schools or to the police if required.
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Being an Active Bystander	How to be an Active Bystander (The 4 Ds)		<p>It is important to bear in mind that regardless how tactful you are, some people will respond negatively to challenges to their behaviour. People do not generally like to be criticised and will likely be defensive. It is therefore important to be calm when directly calling out behaviour and to move on from the situation if possible.</p>
Valuing Continuous Improvement	Being Called Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include in your Code of Conducts and active bystander training an expectation of self-reflection and openness to critique. 	<p>As people, we are not perfect, and we will often get things wrong. We have all been socialised in the society built on multiple structures of inequality and oppression that are continually reinforced in our institutions, relationships, and mainstream media.</p> <p>Because of this your words, actions of behaviours may be called out. This does not make you a bad person – this makes you human. Being called out is an opportunity to reflect on your behaviour and become a more inclusive person. You cannot be blamed for a completely unintentional behaviour; you can, however, be blamed for refusing to reflect on this behaviour and the impact it has had on others.</p>
	Responding to Being Called Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include in your Active Bystander training a section dedicated to responding to being called out. • Display the School's 'So You've Been Called Out' Posters prominently and highlight them to staff and students. 	<p>When someone addresses your inappropriate behaviour think of it as a positive opportunity to reflect on your actions. The following strategy may help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First and foremost: Do not get defensive. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whether or not you meant to cause harm, what you did was harmful. The impact of an action matters more than the intention of the action. By getting defensive you are signalling that you believe your reputation to be more important than they pain caused. This is not about you – it is about a behaviour that is harmful, demeaning or both.

<p>Valuing Continuous Improvement</p>	<p>Responding to Being Called Out</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologise if you have the opportunity to do so. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This should not be a backhanded apology such as ‘I am sorry <i>if</i> you were offended’ but rather a genuine apology: ‘I am sorry that my behaviour was inappropriate/offensive/harmful.’ • If you do not understand what you did wrong, invite the person who has called you out to explain - but under no circumstances demand that they do. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is particularly important if they person who has called you out is also the person harmed by your actions. It is simply not fair to demand an injured party to justify their pain. Try: ‘I would be grateful if could explain why my behaviour was inappropriate, but I understand if you do not want to.’ • Process and reflect on your behaviour and feelings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acknowledge your feelings of hurt, worry, or even anger and try to understand why you feel this way. Are these feelings helpful and what do they ultimately protect? Being called out can trigger fragilities in people that only act to enforce and perpetrate the structures of oppression that led to the offensive behaviour. • Take responsibility, do some research, and correct your behaviour. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you do not understand why your behaviour was inappropriate or wish gain greater understanding of what types of behaviour are inappropriate, take the time to do your own research. You should not ask others to bear the burden of your education.
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<p>Valuing Continuous Improvement</p>	<p>Responding to Being Called Out</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit the incident with the offended party or the person that called you out (these are not always the same person!), if appropriate and in particular if they are a colleague, friend or loved one. But be prepared for this request to be rejected. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If they accept your request, own up to your poor behaviour- name it and make it clear that you understand why this was inappropriate. Make it clear you will endeavour to behave better in the future and that you would be open to hearing suggestions for how you can improve – but that you do not expect this emotional labour. ‘Thank you for speaking with me about [the incident]. I have reflected on my actions and I understand that [the explicit behaviour] was [ableist, homophobic, racist, sexist, transphobic, discriminatory] because [the reason]. I will do my best to improve my behaviour in future and would gratefully listen to any suggestions or feedback you may have – although I do not expect you to give either.’ • Move on and be better. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Move forward armed now with a better understanding of how your words and actions may impact others.
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Bristol Old Vic Theatre School Guidance: How to be an Active Bystander

Everyone is a Bystander at some time. You may hear comments that you feel are inappropriate or you may see another person being harassed in any number of situations. The School encourages all members of its community to be Active Bystanders who intervene to provide help in such scenarios, where it is safe and appropriate. This is important because it indicates to both the offending person and the person being offended where the larger community stands. Ignoring offense and unacceptable behaviour often only reinforces the perceived acceptability of such behaviours.

There are several ways that one can intervene from the subtle (distraction and interruption of an event) to the direct (direct challenge). You must decide what is appropriate in the context you find yourself in. Below, we have set out a range of scenarios and examples of how you might intervene. These should be read in conjunction with the School's Inclusivity Policy and Protocol: Allyship and Bystander Intervention.

The Scenario	A classmate says something that may reveal an implicit bias.	A loved one behaves ignorantly but not maliciously.	Someone is frequently and unapologetically inappropriate,	A stranger behaves in a biased fashion.	Verbal abuse in an unsafe environment.	A violent altercation
Example	They say: 'Oh I wouldn't live there- it's too dangerous' about an ethnically diverse area.	They make an offensive comment about bisexual people being 'undecided' or 'greedy'.	They repeatedly excuse their offensive behaviour as a 'joke' or 'banter'.	A security guard checks the shopping bag of a person of colour but not of a white person.	A person on public transport is harassing a person wearing religious dress.	A person is threatening a same sex couple with violence in a public place.
Strategy	Direct action: Call the person in by interrogating what they meant and asking them to evaluate their biases	Direct action, Delay: Call out the behaviour as it happens; call in the person at an appropriate time	Direct action: Call out the behaviour and the person.	Direct action, after deciding it is safe: Draw attention to the inconsistency	Distract, after deciding it is safe: Draw attention away from the altercation.	Delegate: Find help. This is not a safe situation to directly intervene

Example	Ask: 'Why do you think the area is so dangerous?'	Say: 'That's not an acceptable thing to say. I would like to explain to you why that sort of comment is offensive and harmful.' Ask: 'Why do you think that?'	Say: 'That is unacceptable. Can you tell me why you think that is funny?' Say: 'Your behaviour is unacceptable, and I would like you to leave/I am going to leave this discussion'	Say: 'Excuse me, are you checking everyone's bags? Can you tell me why you checked that person but not that other person?'	Speak to the person being assaulted as though you know them while ignoring the abuser. 'Oh, hi there! I haven't seen you in ages.'	Inform the appropriate security services such as bouncers at a club or call the police.
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Additional Resources

Below is a list of useful resources to help develop your knowledge and understanding of racial inequality and anti-racism. Many have been referenced in this guide:

Online resources:

- [The Guide to Allyship](#)
- [Simmon's University's Resources for White Allyship](#)
- [Frances E. Kendall, *How to Be an Ally if you are a Person with Privilege* \(2003\)](#)
- [Hubspot's How to be an Ally: 23 Resources That Can Help](#)
- [MIT's useful guide of Active Bystander Strategies](#)
- [National Sexual Violence Resource Centre- Bystander Intervention Resources](#)
- [Hollaback! Bystander Intervention Resources](#)