

SEWELL BARN THEATRE SOCIETY – POLICY PAPER 6

Front of House Policy and Procedures

General

Effective and efficient front of house (FoH) management is essential for the functioning of the Sewell Barn Theatre Society. The FoH team at each performance ensures that: ‘walk-up’ tickets can be obtained at the Box Office; audience members are provided with refreshments and looked after safely when in the theatre; and that the Society meets its legal obligations regarding licensable activities. Interactions between the FoH team and the public provide the Society’s two main sources of income (ticket sales and bar sales), whilst also helping to make the theatre-goer’s visit a safe and enjoyable experience.

The **FoH Manager** has overall responsibility for all FoH activities, and is a member of the Sewell Barn Theatre Management Committee. The FoH Manager may also be the **FoH Duty Manager** for specific performances, or may delegate that role to other competent individuals.

Issues relating to premises licensing are a shared responsibility between the FoH Manager and the Chair of the Management Committee. The Theatre is licensed by Norwich City Council for Live Music, Plays, Recorded Music, and Sale by Retail of Alcohol (Premises Licence No. 17/00576/PREM). A summary of the relevant documentation is kept on permanent display in the Theatre foyer.

Online advance ticket sales are managed by Ticket Source (www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn).. The Treasurer is formally the main point of contact with Ticket Source, providing them with information on productions at the start of each season, making edits to online information and keeping a check on advance sales. The FoH Manager also has access to booking lists, together with any special requests (e.g. for wheelchair access) and supplies a print-out of such information to FoH stewards before every performance. This task can also be delegated to the FoH Duty Manager.

The two main FoH activities considered here are stewarding and bar management. The FoH Manager has responsibility for arranging suitable volunteers for these activities, with the direct supervision of those volunteers carried out by the FoH Duty Manager. The FoH Manager will also put up production-specific ‘warning’ notices; e.g. with regard to strong language, flashing lights, smoking etc.

All **FoH stewards** and **bar volunteers** are required to present a ‘smart casual’ appearance as they are the public face of the Sewell Barn Theatre Society before and during a performance. It is important that they should not make any disparaging remarks to audience members about productions, even in a general way, since such comments can cause offence and be damaging to the Theatre’s reputation.

Stewarding

All FoH stewards are supported and trained in the Sewell Barn Theatre Society’s Health and Safety requirements to ensure the safety of the public. Stewards work with the FoH Duty Manager and the Stage Manager to ensure that the start, the interval (if there is one), and the end of each performance happen smoothly and on time.

At least two stewards are normally present for each performance. Wearing either name badges or other badges to indicate their role, FoH stewards are expected to:

- Arrive one hour before the start of a performance and remain on the premises until the public have left the auditorium after it
- Carry out an inspection of the theatre to ensure that all safety arrangements are in place, based on a signed checklist (details below)
- Welcome the audience, check bookings and/or sell tickets from the booking office, supervise programme 'sales', assist audience members entering the auditorium and on the stairs if necessary, and ensure that glasses and china are not taken into the auditorium nor removed from the building.
- Sit in the auditorium, with working torches, in designated seats during performances, being aware of any audience issues that may arise and responding as appropriate
- One steward to remain in the auditorium throughout the interval, being aware of any audience issues that may arise and responding as appropriate
- Second steward to assist with ice cream sales in the foyer during the interval
- Third steward (if available) to be 'on duty' in the foyer during the interval
- All stewards to respond as necessary to any illness of audience members or other emergencies, including the safe evacuation of the building in the event of fire and other actions that may be required by the Society's Health and Safety policy.

The stewards' checklist requires 40 specific issues to be checked (mostly yes/no) prior to each performance. It includes inspection of the following items:

- Accessibility and availability of main entrance/exit, four fire escape doors, and associated fire escape routes
- Illumination of four Emergency Exit signs
- Availability of 10 fire extinguishers.

By checking the status of the above, stewards familiarise themselves with the layout of the building and the different emergency evacuation routes. If there are checklist issues requiring attention, the FoH Duty Manager and/or the Stage Manager need to be informed. The checklist includes a record of the total number of people in the theatre (audience, actors, technical support, stewards and bar volunteers). The completed and signed checklist is kept with other performance-specific records for at least a year.

Bar management

A minimum of one, usually two, **bar volunteers** work behind the theatre's bar for each performance, serving alcoholic and soft drinks alongside a range of snacks and sweets. Bar volunteers work at the beginning, during the interval (if there is one), and the end of the performance and they prepare interval orders for the audience and for those involved in the production (non-alcoholic for the latter) during the first half of the performance.

Bar volunteers must be over 18 years of age to serve alcohol. Basic training in bar skills, hygiene and cash handling is provided to those with no previous experience. For the first occasion of volunteering, bar volunteers must read and sign the main implications of the 2003 Licensing Act relating to prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, prevention of public nuisance and protection of children from harm.

Formal responsibility for the retail sale of alcohol under the Licensing Act is held by the Sewell Barn Theatre Society's **Designated Premises Supervisor** (licensee), nominated by the Management Committee and approved by Trustees. It is a legal requirement that alcoholic drinks are not

directly or indirectly made available to anyone under the age of 18, and evidence of age must be requested if there is any doubt.

The ordering, stocking and pricing of bar drinks, ice cream, snacks etc are the responsibility of the FoH Manager, who also provides cash floats for each performance and is responsible for cash accounting. Relevant finance policy is covered in a separate Policy and Procedure document.

Other FoH duties and responsibilities

The FoH Manager has responsibility for management and supervision of the Theatre cleaners, and, working with the Management Committee and the Buildings Manager, the upkeep and appearance of the foyer, the toilets and other public areas of the theatre.

Policy review

The policy will be reviewed every three years by the Policies Subcommittee and any significant amendments will be referred to the Management Committee for ratification. It may also be reviewed in response to changes in relevant legislation, good practice, or in response to an identified failing in its effectiveness.

Policy initially drafted and adopted: August 2019

Policy last reviewed: October 2023

Next review due: Autumn 2026