OV WORK EXPERIENCE AT THE OLD VIC



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EVALUATION 2025–2026

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EDUCATION & COMMUNITY AT THE OLD VIC

Our renowned education and community projects inspire learning and connection. Each year we work with over 9,000 people of all ages, from five to 100+, in London and beyond, as well as a further 25,000 through our online learning platform, The Hub. We reach people at all stages of life to support skills development, employment prospects and wellbeing.

Our programmes build community cohesion, open up access to the arts and develop the emerging theatre professionals of tomorrow. We do this through a range of initiatives, including free theatre tickets, workshops delivered at The Old Vic, in schools, in the community and online, and through innovative employability and training programmes.

Our programmes are free to access and focus on engaging with communities who are underrepresented in the theatre industry, or who have limited access to it.



OV WORK EXPERIENCE

This year The Old Vic offered a one-week work experience programme for up to 20 participants aged 14–18 (OV Work Experience).

Aims of the project:

— Develop key transferable employability skills in communication, presentation, teamwork and problem solving
— Find out about a range of careers in the arts and how to access them
— Gain first-hand insight into the workings of a professional and busy working theatre
— Participants to run their own event, gaining an insight into the elements required, from programming and producing, to marketing and operations.

For one week, participants took part in a series of workshops led by different departments at The Old Vic, such as Production, Marketing and Technical. These workshops explored a side of theatre making that most young people had not encountered before and opened up a range of future career opportunities. Participants also had a playwriting masterclass from an invited professional and were led by an Old Vic facilitator, who is an active theatre maker. At the end of the week, participants collaborated to curate, produce and deliver their own event, showcasing all the knowledge they had gained throughout the programme.

OV Work Experience fully immerses the participants in a producing theatre, offering invaluable careers advice and supporting the next generation of theatre workers.

‘The workshops were extremely insightful and provided really useful knowledge about the theatre’
Work Experience Participant

RECRUITMENT AND CRITERIA

The programme ran from 06–10 Jul 2026 in person in the Clore Learning Centre at The Old Vic. The programme was offered to students who had participated in Schools Club or Take the Lead.

Applications opened in Mar 2026. The invitation to apply was shared with teachers, who then passed it on to their students. The opportunity was promoted to students in the final workshops for Schools Club and Take the Lead. In total, we received **112 applications**.

20 people were chosen to take part in the programme and were selected using the following criteria:

— Understands the project
— Interested in a range of roles within the arts
— Demonstrates passion for theatre
— Has no or limited access to opportunities in the arts.

We invited **50 applicants** to attend two in-person selection workshops delivered by the Education Managers, Becky Rathkey and Alice Watson. Invited applicants, who were unable to attend the in-person selection workshops, were offered a virtual interview. **20 young people** were offered a place on the programme of which **19 accepted**.

Participants were drawn from a range of London boroughs:

Brent, Camden, Croydon, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Hounslow, Islington, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge, Southwark and Tower Hamlets.

‘This experience has made me even more certain that I want to pursue a career in the theatre, and I’m incredibly grateful for everything I was able to learn’
Work Experience Participant

DELIVERY

Participants were supported throughout the programme by Old Vic facilitator Marshall Stay alongside the Education & Community team. Each day started with a check-in and a warm-up to ensure participants felt comfortable and prepared for the day ahead. The day concluded with a check-out to review each participant’s experience. Workshops were led by relevant Old Vic staff members or by external artists. Breaks were factored in throughout the day alongside wellbeing check-ins with participants. We were also joined each day by access support workers for two students to support them throughout the week with any access requirements.

Participants were offered a ticket to attend *CARE* at the Young Vic. This was an opportunity to spend the evening with other participants and to make further connections. Dinner was provided for each participant before the performance.

At the end of the week, participants shared what they had learned throughout the programme. The sharing was called *Shaping The Old Vic — What is The Future of Theatre?*. The sharing was attended by colleagues from across The Old Vic, as well as family and friends of the participants.

‘I think The Old Vic’s focus on mental wellbeing is really amazing. The constant reassurance that you can take time if needed was really helpful as someone who gets overwhelmed sometimes in situations out my comfort zone’
Work Experience Participant

PROGRAMME

SCHEDULE

Monday:
— Participants spent the morning getting to know each other and the building
— Participants had a Q&A with Executive Director, Laura Stevenson
— Participants had an afternoon with the Technical team
— Participants took part in a reflection session with Marshall Stay.

Tuesday:
— Participants took part in a producing session with the Associate General Managers, Maggie Dorling and Rupert Henderson
— Participants started planning their event
— Participants were taken to see *CARE* at the Young Vic.

Wednesday:
— Participants took part in a marketing workshop with Marketing Manager, Issy Abdul-Rahim and Senior Communications and Content Manager, Ed Bankes
— Participants spent some time working on their event
— Participants had a stage management workshop with stage manager, EJ Saunders.

Thursday:
— Participants took part in a playwriting session with playwright, Jahvel Hall
— Participants took part in a networking session with departments from across the organisation
— Participants spent the afternoon preparing for their event.

Friday:
— Participants spent the morning preparing for their event
— Participants delivered their in-person event.

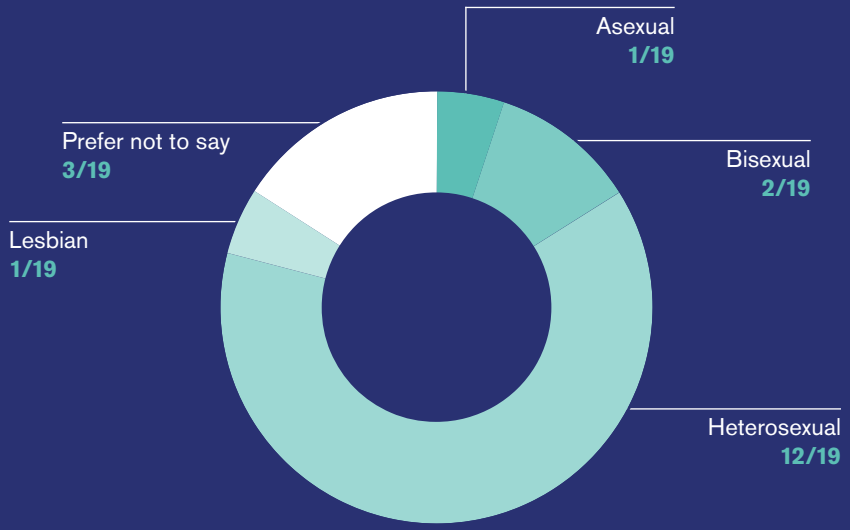
‘I found out I had a passion for script writing’
Work Experience Participant



AGE



SEXUAL ORIENTATION



‘This experience has given me a sense of community and a sense of belonging’
Work Experience Participant

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

GENDER

14/19 Female

5/19 Male

IDENTITY

Do you identify as trans?

0/19 Yes

19/19 No

ETHNICITY

1/19 Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi

1/19 Asian or Asian British: Other

1/19 Asian or Asian British: Pakistani

6/19 Black or Black British: African

1/19 Black or Black British: Caribbean

1/19 Black or Black British: Other

1/19 Latin American

1/19 Mixed: Black Caribbean and White

2/19 White: British, English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish

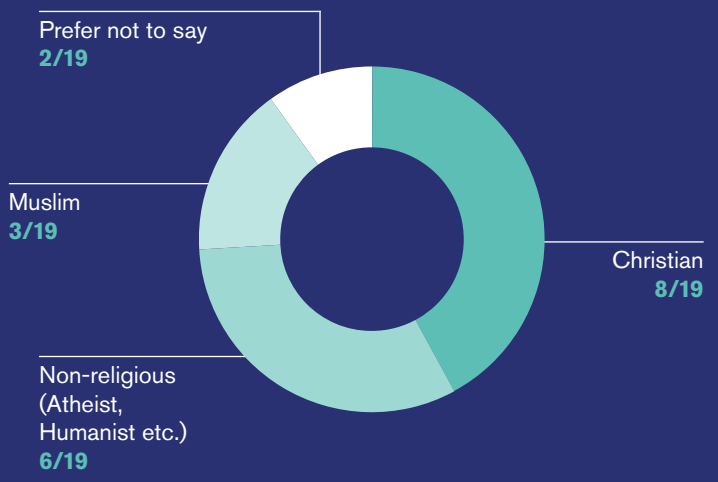
4/19 White: Other

Other (Participants specified: African and Caribbean, German, Polish, Spanish, Vietnamese)



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

RELIGION AND BELIEF



DISABILITY

5/19 Yes

14/19 No

Of the participants who selected yes:
(able to select more than one response)

1/5 Hearing (e.g. deafness or partial hearing)

1/5 Learning, concentrating or remembering (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia)

2/5 Mental health (e.g. anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder)

1/5 Social or behavioural (e.g. autism, attention deficit disorder)

'I felt welcomed and part of the community'
Work Experience Participant

18 out of the 19 participants filled in the final evaluation survey

ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Before the programme:

17/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt comfortable and welcome at The Old Vic

9/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt connected to The Old Vic.

After the programme:

18/18

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt comfortable and welcome at The Old Vic

18/18

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt connected to The Old Vic.

WELLBEING

Before the programme:

14/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were generally confident in their own skills and abilities.

After the programme:

17/18

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were generally confident in their own skills and abilities.

‘I enjoyed meeting a wide range of people, I met so many amazing, interesting people and helpful for future potential careers’
Work Experience Participant

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

LIFE SKILLS

Before the programme:

15/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were a good team player

14/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good communication skills

15/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good problem-solving skills

9/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were good at networking

11/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident about applying for work.

After the programme:

16/18

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were a good team player

18/18

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good communication skills

15/18

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good problem-solving skills

17/18

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were good at networking

16/18

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident about applying for work.

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

INDUSTRY SKILLS

Before the programme:

16/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident working in a theatre environment.

After the programme:

18/18

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident working in a theatre environment.

QUALITY AND IMPACT

100%

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

Overall, this project was excellent

As a result of this project, they felt better connected to networks and knew how to access opportunities that could help them pursue a career in the creative and cultural industries

As a result of this project, their theatre knowledge and skills were developing

The workshop leaders were excellent at creating a welcoming and inclusive environment

The project had given them the skills and experience that will help with their next creative steps.

94%

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

As a result of this project, they feel more connected to a community

The workshop leaders adapted to their needs.

89%

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

As a result of this project, their confidence in themselves had improved

As a result of this project, their mental health and wellbeing had improved.

78%

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

During this project they did something they didn't know they were capable of.

SCALE

Participants were asked on a scale of 0–100, how likely they would recommend this project to a friend. The average score was:



Participants were asked on a scale of 0–100, to what extent they felt that The Old Vic is an inclusive environment. The average score was:



Joseph is a Year 11 student whose school was part of the Schools Club programme at The Old Vic. It was through this that he gained a place on OV Work Experience.

When asked how he would describe work experience to a friend, Joseph said, '*A fun and informative experience where you get to learn a lot about how theatre productions are made while also making a lot of very interesting connections with people in different areas of theatre*'.

When reflecting on whether he could have gained this experience elsewhere, Joseph explained that whilst other theatres might offer a work experience programme, it was the environment created that made work experience at The Old Vic unique. Joseph went on to explain that it was the combination of '*a nice comforting welcome*', '*really fun activities*' and being with '*people that actually care*'.

Joseph was clear that participating in OV Work Experience had improved his confidence. He explained that he can be shy and getting to speak to so many staff members from different departments helped him to communicate with confidence. Joseph also reflected that selecting a lead performing role in the final sharing at the end of the week helped to build his confidence.

'*Talking to the different people in different job areas because they're so warm and they're so caring in a way. It just made it easy to be honest with them.*'

Connections with the group was a core part of Joseph's experience and one of the most useful parts of the programme for him. Joseph reported that the group are still in touch and are looking forward to attending an Old Vic production together soon.



CASE STUDY JOSEPH

'*Everyone that was a part of the work experience group made connections.*'

Something else Joseph found useful about the project was getting a clearer idea of other roles in theatre and understanding more of what he would like to do in the future. Joseph spoke of the benefits of getting to speak to people from a wide range of departments and roles within theatre. Joseph explained that he wanted to be an actor but that this programme has opened his eyes to more options, such as playwriting. Joseph explained since work experience ended, he has done some playwriting at home.

Joseph said that the project had developed his theatre-making skills to a high extent. When considering these skills, Joseph said, '*it helped with everything creative*'. Joseph went on to explain that it has helped him with his creative process and also supported him to develop skills in new areas such as technical theatre. Experiencing the whole process from start to finish made Joseph appreciate it more and made him want to work on more creative projects.

When considering what makes projects at The Old Vic special, Joseph used the words '*community*', '*warm*' and '*closeness*'. Joseph talked about his experience watching *A Christmas Carol* with The Old Vic's Schools Club programme and '*everyone was humming along... it was really cool, really just really close. And it was nice at that time of year because winter is like my least favourite season*'. Joseph also explained that what was special was how Old Vic programmes '*highlighted the behind the scenes, the unseen heroes of theatre*'. Joseph explained that the effect of that was making '*the roles more special and more important in my mind than how it was before*'.

'It helped me with my creative process and made me want to do more and put more work in for different creative projects because you see the final thing and it's just outstanding'
Work Experience Participant



SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND CAREER CONFIDENCE

'*What I found most useful was being exposed to the different departments, roles and people. It allowed me to gain new skills, even the ones I had thought I wouldn't be able to learn so quickly.*' Work Experience Participant

The key aims of the programme are to introduce participants to a wide range of careers in the arts and to develop skills in non-performance roles as well as build key employability skills. We aim to provide participants with workshops and masterclasses that will support them when creating their final event and also to expose them to roles that they may not have had the opportunity to explore before. This year we built on the success of previous years including workshops that participants had said were particularly useful, such as the technical insight and networking sessions. This year we also introduced a stage management masterclass.

Participants reported that the project had not only built on their knowledge of roles within theatre but also given them knowledge on how to access them. At the end of the programme 18 out of 18 participants said that a result of this project, they felt better connected to networks and know how to access opportunities that could help them pursue a career in the creative and cultural industries. 18 out of 18 participants also said at the end of the project, they felt comfortable working in a theatre environment, compared to 16 out of 18 at the beginning of the week. Participants also commented on how the project had made them less nervous about the world of work and that the project had equipped them with more knowledge on how to find jobs. The event at the end of the week helped with this and participants commented that it felt like a professional experience. At the start of the week 11 out of 19 participants said they felt confident applying for work which increased to 16 out of 18 by the end of the week.

'*In this day and age, work applications are difficult in the sense that the market is oversubscribed. The work experience defo made me less worried about my lack of experience.*' Work Experience Participant

'*If someone told me to run sound for a show I'd panic! Now I feel in working with other departments and trusting myself, it can be done.*' Work Experience Participant

Participants developed many skills over the week and by the end of the programme 18 out of 18 participants strongly agreed or agreed that as a result of the project, their theatre knowledge and skills had developed and the project had given them the skills and experience that will help with their next creative steps.

'*Work Experience has inspired me to confidently enter the industry.*' Work Experience Participant

One of the main skills that participants developed during the week was communication. There were many opportunities throughout the week to communicate with a wide range of Old Vic staff as well as freelance facilitators, masterclass leads and with one other. At the start of the week 14 out of 18 strongly agreed or agreed that they had good communication skills and by the end of the week this had gone up to 18 out of 18.



This year we began working on the event right at the start of the week, which was earlier than previous years. We held open discussions with the group encouraging them to express their ideas and opinions on the key question for the week '*How can theatres build and maintain new audiences*?'. This supported the participants to build on their communication skills so that towards the end of the week, when they were working together in different groups to plan the sharing, they were able to communicate with each other effectively and with confidence, culminating in the final event.

'*It has made me better at communicating with others.*'
Work Experience Participant

Networking was another key skill developed during the week. Rather than a formal session with staff, we invited staff from across the organisation to come and meet with the participants for informal networking. Following introductions, explaining what department each member of staff was from and what their role was, the participants were free to go and talk with the staff in the room and encouraged to ask questions that would help them with their event. Many participants reported that this was one of the most useful parts of the week. At the start of the week nine out of 19 participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were good at networking, which increased to 17 out of 18 by the end of the week.

'*What was most useful was knowledge about networking and the confidence gained to go to the workplace.*'
Work Experience Participant

'The workshops from the various departments provided insight about roles in the theatre I wasn't aware of prior to this experience'
Work Experience Participant



IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

TECHNICAL OPPORTUNITIES

This year, as with previous years, one of the highlights of the programme for participants was the afternoon with the Technical team. This year we were able to deliver an extended session with participants gaining insight into sound, lighting, wardrobe and stage, as well as an opportunity to ask general questions to the team. The participants all found this session extremely useful in building their knowledge of backstage roles.

When it came to working on the event, some participants who had gained some experience of sound and lighting prior to attending the programme were able to set up and operate the lighting and sound for the final sharing with support from members of the Technical team. This was the first time we had had both lighting and sound as part of the sharing and it elevated the experience both for the participants and the audience.

Participants expressed a desire to have more opportunities for hands-on technical experience as part of the week, so in the future we would look to offer more basic technical training for the whole group to enable them to showcase some of their new skills at the end.

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