

## **Personal Statement – Elise Harris**

I have been attending the Fringe as a participant since 2006 and have had shows in a number of genres and with many different organisations, so I would be bringing a great deal of experience from different perspectives to the board.

Since 2012 I have programmed children's and theatre shows for PBH's Free Fringe and witnessed the changing face of the festival over the last decade with all its fresh challenges.

I'm especially committed towards making the Fringe as accessible as possible to a wide variety of participants and audience. The fringe has become increasingly expensive and if it is to thrive in the future we all need to explore ways to encourage and attract people from all backgrounds and demographics.

The relationship between the people who attend the Fringe and the citizens of Edinburgh also needs to be addressed so that everybody is well-served. I believe the Fringe Society can do more to foster this relationship on a grass roots level, listening directly to the needs of local small businesses and residents, performers and attendees.

We also need to address exploitation of vulnerable participants to try and ensure that nobody is taken advantage of with empty promises of future opportunities. While recognising the progress that has been made here with the introduction of Best Practice Guides for venues for instance, there is more to be done such as closing the gap in communication, particularly when production companies or venues "gatekeep" participants from direct contact with the Society.

The Fringe should be an enjoyable experience as well as a place to develop careers and make contacts and most importantly to keep the spirit of the fringe alive and try to encourage experimentation.

I would fully support any efforts by The Fringe Society to co-ordinate and plan more with the other festivals and events taking part in Edinburgh during August and throughout the rest of the year. With the advent of the visitor levy, a reasonable proportion of that money should be allocated to towards the people who make the fringe happen, especially those shows that benefit Edinburgh residents and economy)

Finally, I hope if elected that I can help address the wider issues surrounding participation and accommodation costs and, as someone who has been involved as audience, performer and programmer, I can provide a broad overview of the joys and pitfalls of being at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

**Participant Statement – Elise Harris**

This year I am in the theatre section, with a show that is part theatre, part spoken word and part comedy but I have been involved in shows in most of the possible genres.

I have taken part in other people's shows and had several one-person shows. I know how lonely and isolating it can be for performers who are not part of a larger show.

For solo performers in particular it can be difficult to work out how to promote your show, how to network and how to take care of your own mental and physical health.

The Fringe can be a fun and exhilarating experience but it can also feel like the end of the world when things go wrong.

I would love to be an advocate for all participants and help to ensure that everybody feels and knows it to be a safe and worthwhile endeavour.