



What it's like to work at Zoo Co

Last Update: July 2025

Separate from a Company handbook, we wanted to outline to new staff and prospective candidates what it's like to work for Zoo Co. We understand that culture and habits shift over time, so we plan to update this every 6 months.

Working Patterns

The headlines of our Flexible Working Hours and Hybrid Working Policy are:

- The ratio of office to home working is about 60/40 as standard. So a full-time employee can work 2 days a week from home as standard. If it suits you to work in the office more, you're of course welcome to.
- An 8 hour day can be worked any time between 8am and 7pm.
- TOIL (Time Off In Lieu) for occasional evening and weekend work.
- Time off for medical appointments is fine; try and make up the time in the same working week.

The headlines of our Lateness Policy are:

- Lateness and desire to work / professionalism are not the same thing.
- Let your colleagues know you're running late, and make up the time when you can.

Training

The headlines of our Training and Professional Development Policy are:

- Safeguarding training, Level 1 British Sign Language classes, and Carbon Literacy Training are part of our standard offer.
- £300 individual training budget per full-time employee in 24/25; up to £50 of this can be spent on theatre tickets. A pro rata for part-time freelance staff is in effect.
- 1 day off a year for civic / volunteer work, or shadowing at another organisation, additional to Annual Leave allowance.
- 2 hours a month paid time for mentoring / being mentored.

Each Zoo Co staff member is assigned a buddy on our Board of Trustees - different pairings work in different ways, but something like a monthly meeting lasting an hour or so is common.

Holiday and Christmas office closure

We offer 20 days of annual leave a year, plus the statutory Bank Holidays (usually 8). This is pro-rata'd if you're part-time.



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We close the Zoo Co office and stop working between Christmas and New Year (you don't take holiday for this, and your salary is unaffected - this is additional time off). When possible, we extend this office closure by a further 5 days in December or January. So this year we will close the office on Friday 19 December 2025, and reopen on Monday 5 January 2026.

Pay

Salaries are tightly banded at Zoo Co. In 25/26, Full-Time Equivalent, no-one on salary is paid less than £31K, and no-one is paid more than £41K.

We review salaries each year, with any percentage changes occurring in April. If our financial circumstances allow, we aim for a small percentage increase in all salaries each year - between 1% and 5%.

We generally aim to keep freelancer pay inline with salaries here, based on the calculation:

- A comparable annual salary divided by 220 (freelancer working days in a year, including downtime) = X
- X + 30% (the percentage that reflects the benefits freelancers do not receive: Company Sick Pay, paid holiday etc) = freelancer day rate.

You can read more about the rationale behind freelancer rates on websites like this:

<https://www.vmagroup.com/interim-day-rate-calculator?source=google.com>

Daily schedule and feel

At the moment, most people start work between 9am and 10am, and finish between 5pm and 6pm. With flexible working, between 2 - 7 people tend to be in the office on any given day - we keep our calendars updated with our working location.

You can see who we are and what we look like here: <https://www.wearezooco.co.uk/about-us>

People use a mixture of Desktops and laptops, including their personal laptops; we talk to each new starter about what equipment they need.

We have a 20 mins check-in at 10.15am every morning (Zoom / in-person). Each person says:

- What they plan to do that day
- Any blocks they have (could be work, personal, health-related)
- We might talk about what is 'alive' in us, or any dreams/ ideas we have if there is time



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Each person should have a regular weekly one-to-one with their line manager lasting between half an hour and 1 hour, where they go through their plan of work and discuss any concerns.

We all take a lunch break between 1pm and 2pm. Meetings aren't scheduled over this hour. We tend to eat lunch together, outside in the Yard in the summer. People also nap, take a walk, or run errands in their lunch break. Expect a gentle nudge from your colleagues if you're still working at 1.10pm!

In show periods (including pre-rehearsal and rehearsal) the office is busier, with more meetings and more people. Creative team hotdesk with us as needed. 20 - 30 people are involved in each of our productions.

Two of the group are trainers in Neurodiversity Awareness, and the team have undertaken this training. The full team had Visual Impairment Awareness Training in March 2024, with some guiding training.

Two of us sign to about BSL Level 3, and two more of us have our BSL Level 1; none of us is deaf.

Office layout

Our office is on the Ground Floor of Stanley Arts, with level access to the street. It's about 10 square metres. There are 6 desks, a sofa for naps and relaxing, and a meeting room table. There are 3 big sash windows looking out over a frontage, and a busy street.

Two level-access toilets are available, one is in the café part of the building, one is in our part of the building, via a lift down one level.

There is a shared kitchen for Stanley staff and residents, with a fridge, toaster, microwave, kettle, coffee machine, sink, crockery and (some!) cutlery. Zoo Co provides tea and coffee for its staff (dairy milk and oat milk).



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This photo shows the layout of our office - Stella's presenting a modelbox so we've moved the seating around to watch.

Life at Stanley Arts

Stanley Arts is a large Grade II listed heritage building, undergoing refurbishment continuously. Temperature control can be difficult - layered clothing is essential in winter, especially if you're working in the rehearsal spaces, which are bigger and harder to heat.

There's a café / art gallery open to the public, where residents get a 20% discount on everything they sell (hot drinks, snacks, alcoholic drinks, soft drinks) - just introduce yourself and explain you work for Zoo Co. We often use the café for one-to-ones, or if we're on a Zoom and don't want to bother other folks working in our office.

Stanley Arts is another Arts Council NPO, with a staff team of 10 - 15 people. It has a Main Hall, and several rehearsal spaces, meeting rooms and office spaces. It has a big, sunny courtyard with flowers and herbs in planters.

Stanley Arts is home to a whole bunch of residents: Zoo Co, Boundless Theatre Company, Birdgang Dance, a reiki master, a furniture restoration company, a comic book artist, and a personal trainer called James.



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James runs a half hour class called Strength & Stretch, free to Stanley residents, every Wednesday morning 9.15am - 9.45am.

Zoo Co staff have access to a shower (it's in one of the Dressing Rooms, so usually, but not 100% of the time).

There are bike racks right outside our office, visible from the office and in an area of high footfall.

We often get ticket offers through for events at Stanley, and in turn we circulate offers on our shows to residents.



These photos show: the Main Hall at Stanley, with a vaulted ceiling. Two exterior photos of a red brick, two-storey, late Victorian public building. In one tall, multi-coloured tulips are blooming. In the other, large turquoise banners reading 'Stanley Arts' hang from the building, and a lamp-post.



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The neighbourhood

It's a 5 - 10 minute walk to Norwood Junction, a Zone 4 station on the Overground and National Rail. There is no lift access at Norwood Junction, though some dis/embarks are step-free.

Nearest free street parking is a 5 - 10 minute walk away on Southern Avenue. There is one Disabled Bay on Cumberlow Avenue, which runs alongside Stanley Arts.

For more transport information including bus routes, head here: <https://stanleyarts.org/your-visit/>

South Norwood / Norwood Junction is a usual South London neighbourhood, with a good range of cafés, shops and bars: Caribbean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Polish. There's a Post Office on the High Street, and a Tesco Express opposite Stanley Arts. There's a yoga studio.

We like:

[South Norwood Community Kitchen](#)

[Mamma Dough Pizza](#)

[Chicory](#)

[Sushi Handroll](#)

[Lesna Chata](#)

[241 Norwood](#)

[Four Boroughs](#)

[The Shelverdine Goathouse](#)

[Little Mouse Cheese](#)

Freddy's Smash Burgers

[Brown and Greens](#)

Beyond the office

When we're working on a show or a later-stage R&D, office staff are usually welcome to work on laptops in the rehearsal room / auditorium. You'd be expected to join for at least one company check-in (with the cast), and observe at least one rehearsal session (one morning or afternoon) - this helps keep us all connected to the work. We sometimes rehearse / perform at Stanley Arts, and sometimes elsewhere - we don't have a fixed model. Talk to your line manager about where you'd like to work from during rehearsal periods - there may be extra travel involved.



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Pub / drinking culture: Not all of us are drinkers, and pub trips aren't that frequent with the current mix of people - we'd usually go after a special event (eg. Away Day, Board meetings, last day before the Christmas break), or Fridays during rehearsal periods with the cast.

Some of us are old friends, some of us are new friends - different combinations of us meet to go to shows we're interested in. We sometimes arrange for a bigger group of us to go to see a mate's or colleague's show.

Whatsapp groups: we try to keep mental load out of our staff Whatsapp group, but we don't always succeed. The aim is it's used for quick fixes, and short alerts like if you're running late for something. We set up more Whatsapp groups during show periods (for cast and creatives) and, as these tend to be the best way to get messages out quickly, these can get very busy. Whatsapp can be a really useful tool for neurodivergent people, but it doesn't suit everyone - please talk to your line manager if you're finding our Whatsapp use stressful.