

Debbie Thompson

at Sheringham Little Theatre



Investing in Leaders in Business

Debbie Thompson leads a diverse and multi-skilled team, delivering excellence through her collaborative and inclusive approach



Debbie Thompson, Theatre Director, has demonstrated outstanding business leadership over 24 years by transforming Sheringham Little Theatre into a lively centre for culture and a key element of the community. Her bond with the theatre runs deep—her first acting experience took place there as a child, and she met her husband there too. Although Debbie initially had reservations about her suitability to manage the theatre following her experience as a youth worker, she recognised that effective theatre management centres on fostering an inclusive environment and ensuring all feel welcome. Driven by this understanding, her leadership developed naturally, cultivating a collaborative atmosphere that supports strong teamwork.

Debbie distinguishes herself as an exemplary business leader through her strategic understanding that the theatre's value extends well beyond ticket sales. During the Covid pandemic, the closure of the venue's café, The Hub, had a marked impact on the Sheringham community, particularly for residents who relied on daily visits for social interaction. Recognising both the social responsibility and business implications, Debbie leveraged the theatre's role as a community resource to strengthen its commercial foundation. Her leadership emphasises identifying and cultivating individual strengths, which fosters loyalty and reduces staff turnover. Furthermore, she demonstrates a strong commitment to nurturing emerging talent by actively participating in apprenticeships and work placement initiatives. Numerous current professional actors at the theatre began their careers under Debbie's mentorship, building relationships that enhance both the theatre's artistic reputation and its business success.

Debbie's leadership is evident across all levels of the organisation. Staff consistently recognise her inclusive and consultative approach. Her strategic direction prioritises both participation and community engagement, delivering events and programmes that reinforce the theatre's financial sustainability. She addresses challenges proactively, adapting during periods such as Covid by introducing outdoor performances and headphone theatre. With the endorsement of president Suranne Jones, Debbie has established a resilient business model that aligns artistic integrity with commercial viability, exemplifying how a values-driven leadership approach can maintain a cultural enterprise and benefit the wider community.

“Sheringham Little Theatre does take over my life, but I love coming in every day because you never know what you're going to be doing.”

Debbie Thompson,
Theatre Director

Sheringham Little Theatre, Sheringham, Norfolk



For further details please scan the QR code or visit invest.north-norfolk.gov.uk/debbie-thompson-sheringham-little-theatre