



WINCANTON YOUTH THEATRE

Child Safety in Wincanton Youth Theatre

Wincanton Youth Theatre (hereafter, the 'theatre') recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

The theatre and its management team recognise that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. The theatre is committed to practice which protects children and young people from harm. All members of the theatre accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children and young people harm.

The theatre and its management team believe that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All managers, members and employees of the theatre should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The theatre and its management team will ensure that:

- All children are treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children is always put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust exists which empowers the children to share in the decision making process.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback is given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying is not accepted nor condoned.
- All adult members of the theatre provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.

- Action is taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- It keeps up-to-date with health & safety legislation.
- It keeps informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It undertakes relevant development and training.
- It holds a register of every child involved with the society and retains a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

The theatre has a dedicated Child Protection Officer, who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to. That person's name is SARAH ADAMS.

This policy is reviewed annually by the management team of Wincanton Youth Theatre (WYT).

Child Protection Procedures

Responsibilities of the Theatre:

At the outset of any production involving children the theatre will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

Parents:

- The theatre believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the theatre. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the theatre and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents should download a copy the theatre's Child Protection Policy and procedures from the theatre website.
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the theatre to take children home.
- WYT must receive written parental permission to enable their child to leave rehearsal/performance spaces unaccompanied during the course of a rehearsal/performance; for example, during a break.
- Parents must inform WYT whether their child can make their own way home after a performance or whether they will be collected by a named adult.
- It is the parents' responsibility to inform WYT of any change of address or telephone number to ensure that the theatre has up to date information should we require it in the event of an emergency.

Unsupervised Contact:

- The theatre will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- If possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.
- If it is predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, he or she may be required to obtain a criminal record disclosure.

Physical Contact:

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.

- Adults will only have physical contact with children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Managing sensitive information:

- The theatre has a policy and procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children.
- Permission will be sought when children join the theatre from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- The organisation's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- The organisation will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as criminal record disclosures.

Suspicion of abuse:

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the theatre, please make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection. If you suspect that the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the General Manager, Andrew Warren.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the theatre or venue staff etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production.

Disclosure of abuse:

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer. Don't ask the child why this happened. Try to keep questions neutral e.g. 'what happened next?' as opposed to 'what did he/she do next?'
- Don't promise to keep it a secret. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with responsibility for child protection. Make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone. Do not say that 'everything will be alright.'
- Tell the child what you are going to do next and reassure them that you want to help.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Ensure that you do not make the child have to repeat themselves. If you cannot remember exact details and wording, ensure that you do not make it up to get the general idea across. Make sure you sign and date your record.

- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection and provide them with a copy of your written record. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police.

Recording:

- In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.
- An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken e.g. suspension of an individual, where relevant the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, and the name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported.
- The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation. The organisation is under no obligation to share this with parents.

Rights & Confidentiality:

- If a complaint is made against a member of the organisation, he or she will be made aware of his/her rights under the organisation's disciplinary procedures.
- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.
- In criminal law the Crown, or other prosecuting authority, has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Accidents:

- To avoid accidents, children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the organisation, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the organisation's accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection.
- If a child joins the production with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

Criminal Record Disclosures:

- If the theatre believes it is in its best interests to obtain criminal record disclosures for personnel, it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required. A Standard disclosure will apply for anyone with supervised access to children. An Enhanced disclosure will be required for anyone with unsupervised access.
- The theatre will have a written code of practice for the handling of disclosure information.
- The theatre will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.