TDC Stratford Youth Theatre CIC
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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Updated: December 2024

Introduction

TDC Stratford Youth Theatre CIC have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for children all staff, chaperones, parents/legal guardians and volunteers accept their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means it is essential to ensure that everyone follows procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

There are three elements to our policy:-

- **Prevention** through awareness of each individual child's needs.
- **Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect**
- **Procedures** for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases, of abuse.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of Stratford Youth Theatre CIC and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Prevention

We recognise that the "entertainment industry" can be a very "adult" environment and we expect that all staff, chaperones, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and anyone else who comes into contact with children behave in an appropriate manner at all times, and remembers that "The Welfare of the Child is Paramount" whatever their age, culture, ethnicity, disability, gender, language, religious belief or sexual identity, they have the right to protection from abuse.

TDC Stratford Youth Theatre CIC will therefore:-

- Act within the Children's Act 1989 & 2004
- Act within The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel welcome and familiar with their environment and are informed of personal (toilets, dressing rooms etc) and emergency arrangements (fire exits, meeting points etc) and any Health and Safety Procedures (Dangerous equipment, First aid etc)
- Inform each child who the appropriate person or people are to speak to if they have any questions, problems or concerns.
- Ensure that all children are treated with respect and dignity and are treated as individuals and offered equality of opportunities. SYT staff will listen and take account of Children's views.
- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and unnecessary physical contact with children) and involve/allow parents/chaperones wherever possible, to take responsibility for the child/children they are responsible for. (parents must only have responsibility for their own child)
- Recognising the individual needs of the child. eg recognising when a child may be tired and may need a break. Take concern about a child's welfare seriously.
- Ensure that children are supervised appropriately.
- Ensure that their relationships with children and young people are appropriate to their age and gender and take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes,

demeanour and language all require care and thought. The use of swear words in the presence of children, even if not directed at them, is never appropriate.

- Ensure that all Chaperones are registered with the local authority in which they reside and have an enhanced DBS check.
- Ensure all crew and staff coming into close contact with a child are DBS checked.
- Ensure that all staff and crew who don't necessarily have close contact with children but who are assisting in the production are aware of their conduct around children.
- Ensure that The SYT Safeguarding Statement is displayed at a performance space where possible and that supporting staff are aware of the specific show risk assessments.

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect
A child is abused or neglected when somebody inflicts harm, or fails to act to prevent harm. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection.

- **Physical Abuse -** May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

  Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after**.**

- **Sexual Abuse -** Forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening, may involve: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts;
  non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities; or
  encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Neglect -** Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

- **Emotional Abuse -** The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age and developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, for example witnessing domestic abuse within the home or being bullied, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

  Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone

Procedures

Legislation, Policy and Guidance
TDC Stratford Youth Theatre CIC will adhere to the relevant legislation when working
With children and young people under the age of 18 years as outlined in the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015

Suspicion of Abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child, immediately make this known to the designated individual/ manager responsible for child protection.

Disclosure of Abuse
If a child tells you that they or another child or young person is being abused:-

- Always stop and listen straight away, show that you take their allegations seriously.
- Encourage the child to talk, but do not ask leading questions, interrupt or ask the child to repeat itself.
- Never promise that you will keep what is said confidential or secret – explain that if you are told something of concern that you will need to let someone know but that you will only tell the people who need to know and can help.
- Record what you have been told accurately and as soon as possible. Use the child's own words. Make a note of the time, location, whether any one else present and of the Child's demeanour.
- Ensure that your concerns are reported immediately to the designated individual/manager
- Do not confront the alleged abuser.

Handling Allegations

- If a child makes an allegation against a member of staff it must be reported as a matter of urgency to the designated manager/individual for child protection who will refer to Social Services department for Children's Services. If the allegation is against the designated person then the information should be reported to another senior manager or directly to Social Services department for Children's Services. (This would generally be referred to the authority in which the alleged incident took place).
- The alleged perpetrator should not be made aware of the allegation at this point.

Recording

- In all situations the details of allegation or reported incident must be recorded. Make accurate notes of time, dates, incident or disclosure, people involved, what was said and done and by whom, action taken to investigate, further action taken e.g. suspension of individual and if relevant: reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, name of person reporting and to whom it was reported. The designated Safeguarding Lead will escalate an incident reported through the relevant local authority in necessary.

The record must be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know.

- **DO NOT worry that you might be mistaken; you have a responsibility to pass on your concerns following a disclosure. Never think abuse is impossible, or that an accusation about a person you know well and trust is bound to be wrong.**

IT IS YOUR DUTY TO REFER CONCERNS ON, NOT TO INVESTIGATE

Auditions
- Children do not have to be licensed to attend an audition.
- Children arriving for an audition must always be met by a member of SYT staff.
- At least one member of staff, present at the audition must be a registered chaperone, even if that is not their central role for the purpose of that audition.
- At an audition it is always best practice for there to be more than one adult present with a group of children.
- It is not permissible to have a single member of staff present with one child during an audition unless the adult is a registered chaperone.

Performance
- While on stage all children remain the responsibility of the chaperones and one chaperone must have them in view at all times. Chaperones/staff should check that it is safe and appropriate before bringing children onstage.
- Separate children's dressing rooms which are gender specific must be provided for children. If possible, these dressing rooms should have their own toilet facilities, and if this is not possible, toilets within the

theatre should be assigned for children's use only. It is recognised that facilities will differ across venues and that it may not be possible to follow this best practice guidance at all times.

- Where 'quick change' spaces are used, mixed-sex spaces are permitted if the child actors have an appropriate base layer of clothing (for example vest and cycling shorts). Risk assessments will be undertaken in these situations and advice sought from local authority safeguarding teams.

*DfE (2015) Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England The Children (Performance and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014 DfE et al (2015) Examples of best practice - child performance and activities licensing by local authorities in England

The Designated Individuals/Managers for child protection and safeguarding.

Name:	Sarah Plowright
Position in company:	Director & Chaperone
Contact details:	directors@stratfordyouththeatre.com 07804 848674

The Designated Individuals/Managers for child protection and safeguarding.

Name:	Aaron Bixley
Position in company:	Director & Safeguarding Lead
Contact details:	sytadmin@stratfordyouththeatre.com 07974 283187

The Designated Individuals/Managers for child protection and safeguarding.

Name:	Marie McDougall
Position in company:	Lead Chaperone
Contact details:	mariemcdougall73@gmail.com 07875 018282

For free 24-hour advice on safeguarding concerns call **NSPCC Helpline** 0808 800 5000

Police in Stratford upon Avon – child protection referrals 01962 415834

Disclosure and Barring Services 01325 953795

Warwickshire MASH: (non urgent: www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk) 01926 886992

For a child/young person to speak confidentially about their concerns and worries advise that they call **Childline** on 0800 1111 or childline.org.uk

For an urgent Safeguarding concern, call Front Door 01926 414144