



WBOS Youtheatre Child Protection Policy and Procedure

WBOS_Youtheatre is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of all young people who enrol for its activities. All children have a right to protection and the needs of disabled children and others who are particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. WBOS Youtheatre will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved within its activities.

Policy Aims

- Provide children and young people with appropriate safety and protection while they are in the care of WBOS Youtheatre
- Create an environment where young people feel safe and secure, have their view points valued, are able to talk and also be listened too.
- Develop awareness in Volunteers of the need for child protection and their responsibility in identifying abuse.
- Allow Volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Safe Guarding is everyone's responsibility.

Child Protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm. As adults and / or Professionals or Volunteers, everyone has a responsibility to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Productions, Workshops and Rehearsals.

(The member refers to a member of WBOS Youtheatre or any young person taking part in a workshop or a production.)

At the outset of any production or series of rehearsals or workshops the committee of WBOS Youtheatre will:-

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor the risk throughout the production/workshop/rehearsal process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection;
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for members, including appropriate vetting.
- A register must be taken at the beginning of each production, workshop or rehearsal.
- Know how to get in touch with local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

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Definitions of abuse and neglect

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or failing to act to prevent harm.

Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. They may also include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

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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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Behaviour Statement

In order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made all adults demonstrates exemplary behaviour by;

- Treating all young people equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Avoiding private or unobserved interaction with young people and encouraging open communication secrets.
- Ensuring that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
- Recognizing that caution is required, particularly during sensitive moments, such as when discussing bereavement or abuse.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol excessively in the presence of young people.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be avoided in emergencies (for example, if child sustains an injury and needs to be taken to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to collect a child at the end of a rehearsal, production or workshop.) If cases arise where certain situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of WBOS Youth Theatre protection officer or the child's parent / guardian.

- Avoid spending time alone with a child
- Avoid taking or dropping off a child before or after a rehearsal, production or workshop.

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The following should never be sanctioned, you should never:

- Discriminate against, show preferential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of other children.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive or abusive, in the presence of a child.
- Invite or allow children to your home unsupervised.
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Condone smoking or the consumption of alcohol by young people under the legal age. You are obligated to report any sightings to the young person's parent /guardian.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate contact with young people.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child that they could do themselves.
- Allow young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged (e.g. swearing, racial/sexual taunting)
- Permit abusive behaviour or activities (e.g. bullying, ridiculing or initiation ceremonies).
- Make assumptions based on rumour or hearsay.
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child.

What you need to do if you have concerns about a child.

You may have concerns about a child because of something you have seen or heard, or a child may choose to disclose something to you. If a child discloses information to you, you :

- Do not promise confidentiality, you have a sense of duty to share this information and refer to Children's Social Care services.
- Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Accept what is said
- Reassure the child, but only as far as is honest, don't make promises you may not be able to keep e.g. 'Everything will be alright now', 'You'll never have to see that person again'.
- Do reassure and alleviate guilt, if the child refers to it. For some example, you could say, 'your not to blame'.
- Do not interrogate the child; it is not your responsibility to investigate.
- Do not ask leading questions (e.g. 'Did he/she touch your private parts?') or ask open questions such as 'anything else to tell me'.
- Do not ask the child to repeat the information for another member of staff.
- Explain what you have to do next and who you have to talk to.
- Take notes if possible or write up your conversation as soon as possible afterwards.

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- Record the date and time, and place any non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child (do not paraphrase)
- Record statements and observable things rather than interpretations or assumptions.

Whatever the nature of your person/concerns discuss them with your child protection officer. If you still have concerns you should refer to Children's Social Care Services for further advice.

Contact the Social Services for the Childs address wherever possible.

What information will you need when making the referral?:

You will be asked to provide as much information as possible. Such as the child's full name, date of birth, address, school, GP, languages spoken any disabilities the child may have, details of the parents. Do not be concerned if you do not have all of these details, you should still make the call.

You should also follow up the verbal referral in writing within 24hrs on the appropriate referral form.

Criminal Record Disclosures

Criminal record disclosures must be obtained for chaperones those working directly with the members. A standard disclosure will apply to anyone with supervised access to the members. WBOS Youth theatre will ensure that information obtained in the disclosure is not misused.

If abuse is seen or suspected of a member whilst in the care of WBOS Youth Theatre, this should be made known to the person with responsibility for child protection. If the person responsible for the child protection is suspected as the source of the problem then the WBOS Chair person must be informed.

If a serious allegation is made against any committee member, chaperone or helper etc, that individual must be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal, work shop and not be allowed any contact with the members.

All allegations of abuse of children by those who work with the children or care for them must be taken seriously. Each agency is required to have a named Child protection officer.

The procedure should be applied in all situations where it is alleged that a person who works with Children has:

- Behaved in a way, which has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way, which indicates that he/she is unsuitable to work with children.

The allegations may be related to a persons behaviour at work, at home or in another setting.

All allegations should be notified to the Child Protection officer for WBOS Youth Theatre, who will then follow the correct procedures for contacting Local authority designated officer within 24 hours.

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If you receive an allegation of child abuse by an adult:

- Contact the child protection officer. All information, however trivial it may appear, must be shared.
- Record the nature of the allegations in detail.
- Do not try to resolve the issue yourself; follow the reporting procedures and use the form provided.
- Staff or volunteers who hear an allegation of abuse against another representative of WBOS Youth theatre (e.g. staff, volunteers, trustees) or indeed themselves, should report the matter immediately to the Child Protection Officer.

WBOS Youth Theatre will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be abusing a child.

Reporting Procedures

- All incidents should be written up within one hour. Legally they must be recorded with 24hrs.
- All relevant material must be attached to the report sheets.
- Reports and records should be passed to the Child Protection Officer who will then be accountable for storage and processing of the information.
- The Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who then may report to the police.
- The Parent/Guardian of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services dept.
- If following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; Child Protection Officer will report it as a misconduct issue.
- The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform any discussions investigations into such misconduct, but all available information will be used to make a decision.

Responding to allegations or suspicions,

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in WBOS Youth theatre , in a paid or un-paid capacity to determine whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate authorities.

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If you suspect a young person is being abused:

- Always refer the case to the Child Protection Officer; do not investigate it yourself.
- Do not approach a suspected abuser yourself.
- Ensure that the young person is given the opportunity to talk to you or an independent person.
- Listen to the young person without interruption and do not ask leading questions.
- Write down the details as you know them, on the Child Protection Form.
- Accept what the young person says at face value.
- Do not pass judgment on what is said, but do try to alleviate any fears or guilt the young person has.
- Make it clear that you can offer support and that you must pass on this information.

Please follow the reporting procedures and utilize the report form provided.

On going Compulsory Child Protection training.

The WBOS Youtheatre are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of and comply with its Child Protection policy and best practice in this area. Therefore staff, particularly those directly responsible for work with young people, are required to attend WBOS Youtheatre Child Protection Training. This is part of any focused training and delivered yearly. All new employees must attend and existing staff encouraged to attend “top up” sessions in the same way that first aid training is offered.

Reporting Procedure

WBOS Youtheatre operates a reporting procedure in line within this document and outlines the process and the personnel involved.

Dated: November 2024

For an on behalf of
WBOS Youtheatre Child Protection Officer.

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