

Wokingham Youth Theatre SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2022

Wokingham Youth 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 (*in Scotland change to Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003*).

Wokingham Youth Theatre recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. Wokingham Youth Theatre is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All members of Wokingham Youth Theatre accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

Wokingham Youth Theatre believes 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 members and employees of Wokingham Youth Theatre should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

Wokingham Youth Theatre will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision-making process.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members of Wokingham Youth Theatre will provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- It will keep up-to-date with health & safety legislation.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It will undertake relevant development and training.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with Wokingham Youth Theatre and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

Wokingham Youth 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 Diane Hogg and she can be contacted on DianeH@wokinghamtheatre.org.uk This policy will be regularly monitored by Wokingham Youth Theatre and will be subject to annual review.

Responsibilities of Wokingham Youth Theatre

At the outset of any production involving children Wokingham Youth 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.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (if necessary, in consultation with the local education authority).
- 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

- Wokingham Youth Theatre believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and Wokingham Youth Theatre. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of Wokingham Youth Theatre, and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents should read the Wokingham Youth Theatre's Safeguarding Policy (this document) which can be accessed from the Theatre's website.
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after classes, rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of any member of Wokingham Youth Theatre to take children home.

Unsupervised Contact

- Wokingham Youth 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 minimize 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 clean enhanced DBS certificate.

Physical Contact

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

- Wokingham Youth Theatre has a policy and procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children.
- Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes. On the Wokingham Youth Theatre registration form you can indicate if you are happy for your child to be photographed, or their image used for theatre purposes.
- Wokingham Youth Theatre's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.

- Wokingham Youth Theatre will ensure confidentiality to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as DBS certificates.

Photographs and images of children

- There are risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on web sites and in other publications such as theatre programmes. Photographs can be used as a means of identifying children when they are accompanied with personal information, for example, "this is X who goes to such-and-such a school and who likes playing football". This information can make a child vulnerable to an individual who may wish to start to 'groom' that child for abuse. Secondly the content of the photo can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. There is evidence of this adapted material finding its way on to child pornography sites.
- Wokingham Youth Theatre has a policy in relation to the use of images of children and young people on their web sites, programmes and other material. The potential risks to the child are assessed when making decisions about the type of images that are used and the way they are used. Wokingham Youth Theatre ensures that parents support the policy. Use of names of individuals in a photograph will be limited and the use of any additional information that might help locate the child is avoided. Only images of children in suitable dress will be used to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. Parental permission to use an image of a young person will be sought in advance.
- The use of cameras or mobile phones with camera or filming capability in performances, rehearsals, dressing rooms and other inappropriate environments is expressly forbidden unless permission has been sought by the individual, tutor or professional to the Youth Theatre Director. We will on occasion have professional photographers on site to photograph students in production or rehearsal.

E-Safety

- Most of our children will use mobile phones and computers. They are a source of fun, entertainment, communication and education. However, we know that some men, women and young people will use these technologies to harm children. The harm might range from sending hurtful or abusive texts and emails, to enticing children to engage in sexually harmful conversations, webcam photography or face-to-face meetings.
- Wokingham Youth Theatre's e-safety policy explains how we try to keep children safe by not communicating with children via their phone, but with their parents.
- Cyber-bullying by children, via texts and emails, will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying.

Suspicion of abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of Wokingham Youth 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 Chair of the Board of Wokingham Theatre.
- 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 Wokingham Youth Theatre, chaperone, 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 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.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police.
- 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. Make sure you sign and date your record.

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.

Rights & Confidentiality

- If a complaint is made against a member of Wokingham Youth Theatre, he or she will be made aware of his rights under Wokingham Youth Theatre'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 2018. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.

- In criminal law the Crown, or other prosecuting authority, must prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and 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 Wokingham Youth Theatre, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in Wokingham Theatre'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.

DBS Certificates

- If Wokingham Youth Theatre believes it is in its best interests to obtain clean DBS certificates for chaperones or other personnel, it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required. A Standard certificate will apply for anyone with supervised access to children. An Enhanced certificate will be required for anyone with unsupervised access.
- Wokingham Youth Theatre will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by Wokingham youth Theatre for the care of children during the production process. By law the chaperone is acting in loco parentis and should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12
- Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity (e.g. passport, driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless already well known to Wokingham Youth Theatre. They will also be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.
- Chaperones will be made aware of Wokingham Youth Theatre's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care. If unsupervised access is unavoidable, or if this is a requirement of the local authority, a DBS certificate will be sought.

Productions

- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the producer. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
 - If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the producer and not allow the child to continue.
 - Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell the producer to cease using children in this way and should contact the local authority.
 - During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.
 - Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.
 - Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
 - Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents.
 - Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.
 - Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms.
 - Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
 - Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by Wokingham youth theatre
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child arrangements must be given in writing before the collection.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting.
 - If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or contact social services should the child not be collected after half an hour has elapsed if no contact has been made by the parent(s).