



# **Child Safeguarding Policy.**

## **Guidance and Best Practice**

### **for LTG theatres.**

**Grey Paper no 29**  
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Several Theatres have asked the National Committee for assistance and advice on Child Safeguarding matters. This Grey paper is designed to give guidance and use of best practice currently in use by member theatres.

The involvement of children in our theatres and theatre activities be it as part of a Youth Group, assisting with, being involved in, the artistic or technical areas should be facilitated and encouraged by all LTG Theatres; they are our current and future lifeblood.

Many of our members have well established Youth Groups and produce plays and pantomimes where the use of children is the norm. This grey paper is aimed at those groups and those considering involving children as part of their activities for the first time.

This grey paper should be read in conjunction with Grey paper no {list grey papers}

#### **The basics:**

- A child is defined as a young person under the age of 18.
- A Child requires a performance licence whilst he/she remains of compulsory school age: That is until the last Friday in June *following* their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Each Theatre should have a clear written policy, approved by its committee of management, on child Safeguarding for whenever children are involved in theatre activities and not under the direct supervision of his or her parent or guardian.
- The policy is designed to both protect the youngster and adults involved in any capacity with children in our theatres.
- Children should not be left in a 'one-to-one' situation with any adult unless this cannot be avoided. This theatre should have policies in place to take account of

occasions when this might occur and make appropriate provision.

- Theatres should have one 'nominated person' responsible to the committee of management for child Safeguarding matters. (Some County Councils require a named 'Child Safeguarding Officer' before they will issue licences for children in performance).
- Collection of children from the theatre activity is the responsibility of the parent and it is also their responsibility to ensure they get home safely.

#### **What should a 'Child Safeguarding Policy' contain?**

- A child Safeguarding policy statement.
- A definition of a child
- A definition of child abuse
- A recognition that child abuse exists
- A recognition that children have a right to be protected from abuse and harm whilst in the care of a theatre and the ability to express their views on any issues or decisions affecting them.
- References to the policies and procedures adopted to protect children.
- A reference to the legal requirement that adults with regular access to children must be Criminal Records Bureau checked.
- The role of the 'nominated person' dealing with Child Safeguarding matters.
- Local Social services and Police contact details.

#### **Definition of Child abuse:**

The formal definition of child abuse is

***"Children may be in need of protection where their basic needs are not being met, in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development, and they will be at risk through avoidable acts of commission or omission<sup>1</sup> on the part of their parent(s), sibling(s) or other relative(s), or a carer ( i.e. the person(s) while not a parent who has actual custody of the child."***

<sup>1</sup> This means children at risk through either something a person has done to them OR something a person is failing to do for them.

For those working in child Safeguarding areas this definition is broken down further in order to recognise the types of abuse.

- Physical injury
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical neglect
- [Non-organic Failure to Thrive]

### **What should a 'Child Safeguarding Policy Statement' contain?**

This is a matter for each individual theatre, but some general guidance is given below on items that have been included in theatre policy statements.

- A clear statement that everyone within the Company/society has a responsibility to the Safeguarding of Children. They must be aware of and adhere to the policy and procedures in force.
- That a register is held of all children involved in the theatre company/society/youth group or activity with contact name and number and kept readily to hand for emergencies. (With due regard for data protection issues).
- Everyone is treated with respect.
- Recognition that some issues are confidential
- To be aware that someone might misinterpret our actions even if they are well-intentioned.
- Respect a child's right to privacy
- Provide time for children to talk to adults
- Encourage children to respect and care for others
- Act to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour
- Have a clear procedure in relation to taking Photographs and images of children, in particular to prevent the use of mobile phones, cameras or any other means of taking photographs within Children's changing rooms or backstage.
- Have a clear policy for Electronic Safety (E-safety) of children by not initiating any messages via phone or email but communicating directly with parents.
- Have a policy that involves parents in the formulation of Child Safeguarding policies.
- Have a clear policy for the collection of children after the activity or meetings have finished.
- Have a clear policy and procedure for Referring (not investigating) any suspicions or allegations about abuse.
- Acknowledge that the theatre company or society has a legal obligation to check that all adults with substantial access to children have been appropriately vetted and cleared.
- Contain a clear statement that any adults working with children must be trained and

advised on the contents of the policy and given advice and 'good practice' guidelines on appropriate behaviour when working with children.

- Guidance on how to react and listen to a complaint.
- The role and duties of the 'nominated person'
- Cross references to other theatre policies and procedures e.g. DBS clearances, children in performance, data protection.

### **What are the 'good practice' guidelines?**

These should be generally available but should be issued to adults in regular contact with children e.g. Youth leaders, Directors, Others working alongside children.

Again, these are a matter for each individual theatre to adopt but the following can be used as a guide and are taken from the pastoral guidelines issued by the Anglican Church.

- Respect all children, as befits their age
- Do watch speech, tone of voice and body language
- Do control and maintain discipline WITHOUT physical punishment, i.e. NO Smacking
- Do make sure another adult is around during workshop or rehearsal sessions
- Do not invade a child's privacy whilst washing or toileting
- Every group should have a female helper
- Each child should be aware of a leader with whom they can speak, in confidence
- Do not play rough physical or sexually provocative games
- Do not be sexually suggestive about or to a young person even in fun
- Do not touch inappropriately or intrusively
- Do not scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child or young person
- Do not show favouritism to any one child
- Do not allow children to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature
- Never give a lift to a young person or child when alone. When this is not avoidable, ask the child to sit in the back of the car
- Do not share sleeping accommodation with young people
- Do not invite a young person back to your house, alone. Invite a group
- Supervise the children carefully, and do not permit bullying or ridiculing
- Do not allow unknown adults access to children

### **Reacting and Listening:**

The following is advice for adults working with children who may be taken into a child's confidence about abuse suffered or may include an allegation of abuse.

- Acknowledge the age of the child
- Never trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues
- Allow the child time to speak and do not interrupt nor make suggestions to them that could imply making an investigation
- Do not interrogate or question other than to clarify your understanding. (If the matter is to be investigated further it will be done so by professionals).
- Do not ask the child to repeat themselves over and over, they may think you do not believe them.
- Reassure the child that you are glad that he or she has told what has happened and that it was right to tell.
- Be honest and tell the child that you cannot keep it a secret; you must talk to someone else that can help.
- Remain calm, no matter how difficult it is to listen to the child – think of how hard it is for them to say it.
- You have been chosen because the child feels they can talk to you, try to remain neutral and not show emotion, (anger, disbelief, disgust), as the child may stop talking for fear of upsetting you further.
- Listen to the Child and re-assure them they have done the right thing.
- As soon as is practical write down everything the child told you but remember this is confidential and the only person you can discuss this with is the 'nominated person', or in his or her absence, the chairman.

### **The role of the nominated person:**

That person is responsible for ensuring:

- That the policy is up to date
- That it is clearly displayed or published.
- That those concerned are aware of the policy and have read and understood it.
- They are aware of who the Social Work contact is.
- They must hand the social work contact and police telephone numbers and contact details.
- Seek advice and guidance from these people and remember – you may not be the only person with concerns in respect of a child.
- Agree clear procedures with committee of management and social work **before hand** on how best to deal with allegations of impropriety or abuse by a child against a member of your organization.

Whilst no doubt we all passionately believe it could never happen to us it has to be recognised that abuse does exist within theatres, and within youth groups, thus we must do our best to ensure that youngsters engaged in, or visiting, our theatres are protected from the small minority of those who would wish them harm.

The LTG Safeguarding Officer is always available to provide guidance and assistance to member theatres.

For Further information contact:

Eddie Redfern  
LTG Safeguarding Officer  
[Safeguarding@Littletheatreguild.org](mailto:Safeguarding@Littletheatreguild.org)

This Grey Paper was updated by  
Eddie Redfern, May 2019.