

ARTFORM

Piece by piece, only way to make a work of art.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The following document has been created to set out clearly and concisely Artform's safeguarding procedures for children when involved in an Artform activity.

Artform recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, the Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014, the Protection of Children Act 1993, the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 and The Children's Act 2004.

Safeguarding is the action and process taken to promote the welfare of all members of Artform and protect any children working with Artform from harm. Child protection is part of this process and focuses on protecting children from physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, grooming or online abuse.

Amateur theatre can often require children for specific productions and, more importantly, because they often form the cast, crew and audience of the future. However uncomfortable and unpleasant it may be we have to recognise that abuse does exist within theatres, and we must do our best to ensure that children engaged in, or visiting, Artform are protected from the small minority of those who would wish them harm. Children need to feel safe and respected, and their parents need to be confident about their child's welfare. Those working for or with Artform also need guidelines in order to fulfil their responsibilities.

Definition of a child

- ↯ A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years;
- ↯ However, regulations relating to children in theatrical performances apply only up to the age of 16;
- ↯ A child requires a performance licence until the last Friday in June following their 16th birthday;
- ↯ Young people between the ages of 16-18 need to be treated differently from children under 16.

Definition of a child abuse

‘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 (This means children at risk through either something a person has done to them OR something a person is failing to do for them) 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.’

Safeguarding Policy Statement

Everyone within Artform has a responsibility to the safeguarding of children and must be aware of and adhere to the policy and procedures in force. Artform is committed to a practice which protects children from harm and accepts and recognises their responsibility to be, and make others aware, of types of abuse which cause children harm.

Artform believes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount;
- All children, whatever 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;
- Artform and those involved in an Artform should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

Artform will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally, with respect and dignity. Constructive feedback rather than negative criticism will be given;
- There is a balanced relationship, based on mutual trust, which empowers children to share in decision making processes;
- Bullying is not accepted or condoned;
- All adults involved with or in Artform provide a positive role model for dealing with other people;

- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour;
- It keeps up to date with Health & Safety legislation;
- It is informed about changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children;
- It undertakes relevant development and training where necessary;
- It holds a register of every child involved with Artform and retains a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies (with due regard for data protection issues);
- All adults with substantial access to children have been appropriately vetted and cleared.

Responsibilities of the Child Safeguarding Officer

- Know how to contact the local authority social services, in case a concern needs to be reported – See Appendix A below;
- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process – See Appendix B below;
- 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 the *Child Safeguarding Policy* is distributed to all cast and crew of a production involving children;
- Ensure that children are always supervised throughout the production process;
- Ensure the *Child Safeguarding Policy* is reviewed annually and clearly displayed or published.

Parents

- Artform believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and Artform. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of Artform and to share responsibility for the care of their child;
- All parents will be given a copy of the *Child Safeguarding Policy*;
- Artform will communicate directly with parents; children will not be asked to convey verbal messages;

- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their child after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of Artform to take children home.

Working with children - Good Practice Guidelines

- Respect all children, as befits their age and their right to privacy;
- Be aware of speech, tone of voice and body language;
- Ensure the child has a nominated person with whom they can speak in confidence;
- Do not bully, scapegoat or ridicule a child;
- Avoid showing favouritism to any one child;
- Avoid inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour e.g. sexually suggestive comments or physical or sexually provocative activities;
- Be aware that someone might misinterpret our actions even if they are well-intentioned;
- Do not allow children to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature;
- Never give a lift to child when alone. When this is unavoidable, ask the child to sit in the back of the car. Do not invite a young person to your home;
- Do not share sleeping accommodation with young people (e.g. touring productions);
- Do not allow unknown adults access to children.

Unsupervised Contact

Protecting the child and the adult

- All cast and crew of a production involving children will be sent a copy of the *Child Safeguarding Policy* and advised on its contents, which they must read and respond to that they have read and understood it;
- Artform and the Production Team 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 the risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or a designated room with the door open;
- ↯ If it is predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, they will be required to obtain a criminal record disclosure (DBS check). The relevant DBS Referral Form and guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

- ↯ Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary, i.e. in relation to the particular activity/role in a production;
- ↯ The Director will make clear to the child and to the adult actors the purpose of any physical contact and will ensure the child understands and consents prior to the rehearsal.

Managing sensitive information

- ↯ Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes;
- ↯ Members of the cast/crew will not, at any time, take photographs on their mobile phones that include any pictures of children in the production;
- ↯ Artform's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use;
- ↯ Members of the cast/crew are strongly discouraged from exchanging personal details with children in the production;
- ↯ Artform 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 Artform, please make this known to the chaperone. If you suspect that the chaperone is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Child Safeguarding Officer and Artistic Director;
- ↯ Please make a note of what you witnessed, as well as your response, for your own records in case there is a follow-up investigation in which you are involved;

- If a serious allegation is made against anyone whilst they are involved with Artform, chaperone, venue staff etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. This individual will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms, etc. They will also 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. However difficult it is to listen to the child, think how hard it is for them to say it;
- Acknowledge the age of the child;
- Try to remain neutral and not show emotion, (anger, disbelief, disgust), as the child may stop talking for fear of upsetting you further. You have been chosen because the child feels they can talk to you;
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. If the matter is to be investigated further, it will be done so by professionals;
- Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer;
- Do not ask the child to repeat themselves over and over, they may think you do not believe them;
- Never trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues;
- Reassure the child that you are glad that they have told you what happened and that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone;
- Be honest and tell the child that you cannot promise to keep their disclosure a secret; you must talk to someone else that can help;
- Tell the child what you are going to do next; make it clear that you will need to share this information with others, but you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help;
- Immediately, or as soon as possible, contact and share the information with Artform's Child Safeguarding Officer and Artistic Director.

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;

- Everything the child discloses must be written down. This is confidential and should only be discussed with the Child Safeguarding Officer, or in their absence, the Artistic Director;
- 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.

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 Artform, a designated first-aider will administer first aid, and the injury will be recorded in Artform's accident book. This record will be countersigned by the Child Safeguarding Officer;
- 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 Child Safeguarding Officer. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will be also a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

Chaperones

- A set of guidelines for chaperones is available from the Theatre Manager or Child Safeguarding Officer;
- Local authorities, responsible for licencing chaperones, do not have consistent requirements and many chaperones do not receive training. They should be considered as crew and included in all briefings;
- Chaperones will be appointed by Artform for the care of the 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;

- During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building;
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times and adequately supervise them 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;
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents;
- Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements;
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to take them home.

Policy Review

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Artform Board and will be subject to annual review.

Based on the NODA Model Child Protection Policy and the LTG Best Practice Guidance

Written: June 2025

Reviewed by the Artform Board:

Next Review:

Appendix A: Contact details

Child Safeguarding Officer

Perhaps two names here and a specific email, safeguarding@...

Local Social Services – Child Safeguarding

Greenwich Social Services

Telephone: 020 8921 3172

Email: mash-referrals@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Lewisham Social Services:

Telephone: 020 8314 6660

Email: mashagency@lewisham.gov.uk

Bromley Social Services:

Telephone: 020 8461 7373 or 020 8461 7379 or 020 841 7026

Email: mash@bromley.gov.uk

Bexley Social Services:

Telephone: 020 3045 5440 or 020 8303 7777 or 020 8303 7171

Email: childrensmashteam@bexley.gov.uk

Police

- **Lewisham Police Station**, 43 Lewisham High Street, SE13 5JZ
- **Bromley Police Station**, 200 High Street, Bromley, BR1 1NX
- **Bexleyheath Police Station**, 2 Arnsberg Way, DA7 4QS
- **Plumstead Police Station**, 200 Plumstead High Street, SE18 1JY
- **Swanley Police Station**, London Road, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7AJ

101 (non-emergency) **999** (emergency helpline) 24 hours a day.

Appendix B: Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment

Is adapted for each production/performance/activity to best fit the unique and individual needs of in question.