

Making Theatre Gaining Skills C.I.C.

Child Protection policy

Principles

Making Theatre Gaining Skills C.I.C. is fully committed to safeguarding the health and welfare of all children and young people in their care by taking all reasonable steps to protect them from neglect, physical, sexual or emotional harm. Paid staff and all volunteers will, at all times, show respect and understanding for the rights of all participants and learners regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, race or nationality.

This policy establishes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children without exception have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All the company's staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns.
- As defined in the Children Act 1989, anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document.

Statement

To achieve these commitments, Making Theatre Gaining Skills C.I.C. will:

- Ensure that all staff and volunteers are carefully selected, monitored and cleared by the relevant authorities. They will be informed of and make themselves familiar with the Child Protection Policy.
- Conduct Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure checks of all staff and volunteers before commencing employment or immediately thereafter.
- Carry out risk assessments at rehearsal and performance venues.
- Inform parents and young people how complaints or concerns should be reported.

Definition of Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by people they know and trust and sometimes by other children. It refers to the damage done to a child's physical or mental health. Children can be abused within or outside their family, at school and in a sports or community environment. Child abuse can take many forms.

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 or induces illness, or deliberately causes ill health to a child in their care.

Sexual abuse.

Boys and girls are sexually abused when adults (male or female) or other young people use them to meet their own sexual needs. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. It may involve physical contact including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at child abuse, or involving them in the production of such images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child, which causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may, as in some cases of domestic violence, involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger and includes the exploitation or corruption of children. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of children, although it may occur alone.

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.

Bullying

Bullying may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. The bully may often be another young person. Although anyone can be a target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for reasons of physical appearance, race, beliefs, gender or sexuality.

Recognising Abuse

It is not always easy to identify when children have been abused even for the most experienced carers. However, some of the more typical symptoms, which should arouse suspicions may include:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries (elbows, small of the back, buttocks, behind the ears etc).
- Use of sexually explicit language or actions by a child maybe to an adult or another child.
- Sudden change in behaviour such as becoming quiet or withdrawn.
- A general distrust of adults especially with whom a close relationship would be expected.
- An unreasonable reaction to normal physical contact.

Self Protection advice to staff

- Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Do not take children alone in a car on journeys, however short.
- Do not take children to your home.
- Where any of these are unavoidable, ensure they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation or the child's parents.
- Only publish or reproduce photographs or video of young people where consent has been granted by the young person's parent or carer. Use a Making Theatre Gaining Skills C.I.C. Photo and Video release form for this purpose. Be sensitive to the risk that images could be misused by a third party. Do not publish information, in print or on a website, that might enable someone to contact the child.

You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.

- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded; always act.
- do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves.

Disclosure

Disclosure is a term used to describe the act of a child telling an adult or another child that something has happened and they want to talk about it or they may just come right out and tell you that they have been hurt, or indicate being sexually abused. It is when the child is away from an abuser that they may use that opportunity to tell. In cases of child abuse the main aim is to keep calm and provide a positive, friendly attitude to encourage the child to talk.

Remaining Calm

The complexity of child protection issues means that there can never be a set of prescriptive questions. The key is to allow the child to tell their story and tell them that you believe what they have told you. Do not badger the child into answering too many questions, especially leading or closed questions as the child may well be interviewed later by police on video. The adult listening should be relaxed and be as natural as possible throughout. Make notes if possible or at least at the earliest opportunity and ensure you inform the resident Child Protection Co-ordinator immediately.

Disclosure of home

If the child has told you about their parent or carer to whom they are returning after their participation in the workshop, more immediate action may have to be taken depending on the nature of the disclosure. You are not fully trained and it is NOT your responsibility to decide if it is abuse but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about identifying the situation. If you have any doubt then always contact the NSPCC 24hour helpline 0808 8005000, as it is not always going to be practicable to contact social services.

Any concerns should be communicated to the Director of Making Theatre Gaining Skills C.I.C. (Hilary Strong) and the relevant Child Protection Co-ordinator at the venue or college concerned.

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