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Title: **Child Protection Policy**

Reviewed by: Sharon Bowditch
Designated Child Protection and Safeguarding Lead
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Approved by: Yeovil Youth Theatre Committee
September 2018

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Associated documents: Code of Conduct
Equal Opportunities
E-safety and Acceptable Use of Technology

External documents:

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018
Children Act 1989 and 2004

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1 Duty of care

As a Theatre Company, Yeovil Youth Theatre (Also known as YYT) recognises that it has a duty of care towards children who access its services. Many young people today are victims of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse or peer on peer abuse and the welfare of every child in our care is of the utmost importance.

2 Aim of policy

The aim of this policy is to help those volunteers in responsible positions in YYT to adopt safe working practices with children and respond appropriately when abuse is disclosed or discovered. YYT's nominated Child Protection and Safeguarding Lead is **Sharon Bowditch**. This person has responsibility for referring all cases of alleged abuse and any allegations must be discussed only with this person.

3 Confidentiality and children

Absolute confidentiality cannot be upheld when a child states that they or someone they know, such as another child, may be at risk of serious harm. In these circumstances, it may be necessary to share concerns with another professional agency such as Social Services. The child would need to be informed of this intention and be told the content of what would be communicated. The limits of confidentiality should be explained to children as early as possible.

4 Working with children (under the age of 18 years)

YYT recognises that approaches to children need to reflect that there are differences between adults and children in regard to the following: legal competence, age appropriateness, parental responsibility, confidentiality and exposure to, as well as protection from, significant harm. YYT recognises that the overall welfare of the child is of paramount importance.

YYT recognises that it is important that a child's views are listened to and given due respect in line with the child's age and maturity.

YYT recognises that for every child, there will be a person who has parental responsibility. We uphold the principle that the involvement of the parents, guardians or carers may be beneficial to working with children.

YYT recognises that local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate services are provided for children who are 'in need' and to



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protect children or investigate situations where a child is suffering or at risk of significant harm.

YYT recognises the need for volunteers to be competent in working with children and their families.

5 Procedure for dealing with a disclosure of abuse

A child who is the victim of any form of abuse may feel the need to talk to a YYT adult volunteer because they feel they can trust that person, thereby making a disclosure. By this time, the child should already be aware of the limits of the confidentiality policy.

- Do not take control away from the child
- Do not try and sort it out quickly
- Gain the child's confidence and gather valuable information
- Encourage the child to talk without feeling the need to identify the perpetrator
- Have a respectful attitude and remember how vulnerable the child is
- Once the facts are known, encourage the child to give details, being careful not to ask leading questions or put words into the child's mouth
- Do not try to cover up the facts to protect the alleged abuser, the family of YYT or anyone else
- Emphasise the child is not to blame for the abuse
- Remind the child that the authorities are there to protect children. Explain why it might be important for what they have experienced to be investigated
- Speak to the YYT Child Protection and Safeguarding Lead confidentially for advice on the appropriate action. Even if in doubt, it is advisable to mention concern rather than keep silent.

6 If action is required

Do not encourage the child to talk to parents or any other family members except where this is advised. Protect from further harm as far as possible.

The YYT Child Protection and Safeguarding Lead and the Safeguarding Sub-committee must decide whether 'an expression of concern' needs to be made to the Social Services Department and/or ensure that the Police and/or Social Services are informed either by the child, accompanied by you, or by you. It is recognised that the Social Services Department then has a duty to



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investigate the possibility of abuse. Make sure the child is clear about what you will be communicating to that agency.

Make an accurate record (use appendix 1) within one hour of each conversation, including your comments and the child's responses, carefully dated and signed by the trained advisor.

7 Safe working practices

YYT volunteer adults are required to be protected against false allegations being made against them and the possibility of this happening needs to be minimized.

- When working with a child, encourage them to have an adult present with them
- Keep written records of any allegation made against you
- Get another adult to witness the allegation if possible
- Do not go into a toilet alone with a child. Leave doors ajar and always tell another member of staff where you are going with a child and why
- Be careful how you touch children
- Do not enter into any communication with a child outside of YYT activities whether in person or online

8 Selection of YYT volunteers

All YYT volunteers, who may come into contact with children in YYT, must allow YYT to process an application for an enhanced check obtained via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). In addition the following is required:

- Full name
- Current and recent address
- Date of birth
- Previous experience of work with young people
- If necessary, permission to contact another person who has knowledge of their previous work
- Details of any convictions for criminal offences against children including 'spent' convictions
- Agreement for a check via the DBS to be carried out

9 How to recognise abuse

It is important to know how to recognise abuse, and the following definitions will help:



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Possible Signs of Physical Abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given
- Injuries, which occur to the body in places, which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries, which have not received medical attention
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in physical activity
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures, etc, which do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbance, with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations

Possible Signs of Abuse by Neglect

- Under nourishment, failure to grow
- Constant hunger, stealing or gorging food
- Untreated illnesses
- Inadequate care

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying



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It is also important to note that abuse can take many forms and can be perpetrated by anyone, including **peer on peer abuse**. To that end volunteers should remain vigilant during all youth theatre events to the possibility of this form of abuse. If such abuse is observed, suspected or reported then the same reporting procedures must be followed.

Peer on Peer Abuse

Peer on peer abuse occurs when a young person is exploited, bullied and/or harmed by their peers, who are the same or similar age; everyone directly involved in peer on peer abuse is under the age of 18 and crucially the behaviour in question is harmful to the child perpetrator as well as the victim. Signs of peer on peer abuse include all the signs noted in the above four sections, but the perpetrator will be under the age of 18 and may be a family member, a boyfriend/ girlfriend, a school/ social peer or someone within the company.



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Appendix 1
FORM FOR RESPONDING TO A CONCERN OR DISCLOSURE

Name of Organisation_____

Name of child_____

Address_____

Date of birth_____

Name of person reporting event_____

Name of person reported to_____

Date_____ Time_____

Sequence of events/actual words used/observations:

Action taken_____

Name of person contacted_____

Additional notes_____

Confidential
Please pass to the child Protection and Safeguarding Lead