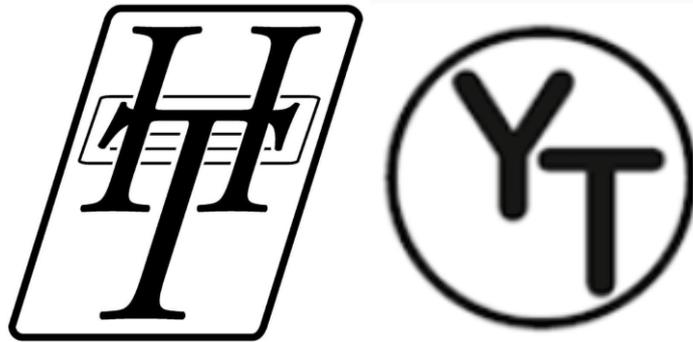


HITCHIN THESPIANS AND YOUNG THESPIANS



Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

To be read by:

- Stage managers
- Creative teams
- Members
- Parents
- Public

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Revision History

Initial Document	January 2012
1 st Revision	October 2016
2 nd Revision	September 2018
3 rd Revision	July 2021

General Guidelines

Hitchin Thespians and Young Thespians 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).

- Hitchin Thespians will be the owner of the policy
- Policy document will be reviewed annually
- A copy of the policy will be made available to all existing members which they will be encouraged to read. Thereafter, updates will be notified annually.
- Whenever there is a show with minors or young people in it, the policy will be made available to all cast and minors' parents

In recognition of Charities Commission concerns we will be:

- Providing a safe and trusted environment which safeguards anyone, including beneficiaries, staff and volunteers
- Setting an organisational culture that prioritises safeguarding, so that it is safe for those affected to come forward and report incidents and concerns with the assurance they will be handled sensitively and properly
- Having adequate safeguarding policies, procedures and measures to protect people
- Providing clarity as to how incidents and allegations will be handled should they arise, including reporting to the relevant authorities, such as the Commission.

Recognising that safeguarding goes beyond preventing physical abuse, and includes protecting people from harm generally, including neglect, emotional abuse, exploitation, radicalisation, and the consequences of the misuse of personal data.

Introduction

Hitchin Thespians and Young Thespians fully recognises the duty to protect all children and vulnerable adults within the Theatre environment and during its activities. The aim of this policy is to show how we safeguard and promote our children / vulnerable adults' welfare by fostering an honest, open, caring and supportive climate.

The current Designated Safeguarding Officer is

Claire Bailes

07402 337681

youngthespians@hitchinthespians.org.uk

Legal frameworks

- There is a wealth of legislation and statutory guidance pertinent to this topic, listed in Appendix A.
- This policy applies to all volunteers and visiting performers to the Theatre.
- Where HT and YT provide services or activities directly under the supervision / management of theatre, HT and YTs arrangements for child protection will apply.
- Where services or activities are provided separately by another body, HT and YT will seek assurance that the body concerned has appropriate policies and procedures in place to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults.
- It is the duty of HT and YT to ensure the policy is reviewed annually and any deficiencies within the policy are addressed immediately.
- For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as anyone up to the age of 18.

What Is Safeguarding?

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined in the Children Act 1989 and 2004 as:
- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Undertaking that role to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

What is abuse?

Abuse is '**The violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.**' This can take place in any setting, public or private and can be perpetrated by anyone. It also encompasses neglect, sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

Bullying - adults or children

- Insulting someone by word or behaviour
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone - picking on them
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- Touching, standing too close, physically intimidating the victim to make them feel uncomfortable
- Deliberately undermining constant criticism
- Using abusive language, swearing with numerous expletives to intimidate the other person
Emails criticising what the person has done especially when copied into others
- Use of sarcasm to intimidate
- Bullying on social media

Good Practice Guidelines for all adults

- Be aware that someone might misinterpret our actions even if well intentioned.
- Respect all children as befits their age.
- Be aware of how your speech, tone of voice and body language may be perceived. Never scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child.
- Children may not see the physical danger associated with activities and theatre equipment that an adult would recognise. Therefore, ensure that equipment is safely stored and used, that children are warned of any danger and that any horseplay which could lead to injury is immediately stopped.
- All activities involving children should be risk assessed and approved by the Designated Safeguarding Officer or the Health and Safety Officer.
- Supervise the children carefully and do not permit bullying or ridiculing.
- Control and maintain discipline without any physical punishment: there must be no smacking or other physical chastisement. There should be no hitting, spitting, pushing, dragging, licking, or pinching.
- Respect a child's right to privacy; in particular, do not invade a child's privacy whilst washing or toileting. The children should be encouraged to use the dressing room mirrors or have their own mirror in their changing room. Using the toilets for children's makeup is not appropriate.
- Do not touch a child inappropriately or intrusively. This includes any physical touching which could be easily misinterpreted. If touching is required during the play as part of the action be aware of the feelings of the child and do not make the child uncomfortable. The script may need to be revised if it does make the child uncomfortable.
- Do not show favouritism to any one child and do not allow children to involve you in excessive attention-seeking. If you are aware of a child doing so, then report it immediately to protect yourself as an adult.

Ensure you are not left alone with a child, in particular:

- never give a lift to a child or young person when alone.
- do not take a child or young person alone backstage or to any other part of the theatre such as sound or lighting box.
- never invite a child or young person to your home or to any other place.
- never text or email a child or young person direct unless with parental permission.
- do not contact on social media.

Responsibilities

Hitchin Thespians' Committee

- To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Officer, who must be trained and equipped for that role.
- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are listened to
- Ensure a safe physical environment
- Ensure every effort is made to establish effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from other agencies
- To ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on any adult working with the children, chaperones including Disclosure and Barring Service checks.
- To display relevant Childline posters so if they feel they can't speak to us they can speak to somebody.

Members and Visiting Companies

- To be familiar with the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and follow guidelines and procedures.
- To act in line with the policy by reporting suspicions to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- To declare any existing or subsequent convictions. Disclosure Volunteers who disclose that they have been convicted of any offence relating to children and or young people, will not be permitted to work on any event which involves contact with young people or vulnerable adults.

Photographing and Videoing

- Productions may be recorded by video and photographs only by persons authorised by either HT and YT or the director but always in full view of all attending.
- Permission needs to be obtained from parents before any videoing, photography or streaming can take place. Anyone who does not wish their child to be videoed or photographed has the right to withdraw their child from Committee/Health, Safety & rehearsals while they are being taken. With the event of live streaming, permission will need to be extended to cover all aspects of recording whether for putting on DVD or for streaming via the internet.
- No unauthorised photographs or videos by members of the theatre company will be published and posted on Facebook, YouTube, or any other social media.
- Letters are sent out for each production where children are involved to ensure parent/carer permission is given for all use of photos, DVDs, or streaming.

Mobile Phones

- If rehearsing dances to help the children learn them, the choreographer, director or one of the children can video the dance to share with them afterwards. This must not be posted on any social media. Parents will have signed a permission form at the beginning of rehearsals for the use of video or photographs.
- Any individual bringing a personal device into the theatre must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.
- Photographs or videos will not be taken of children or members during rehearsals.

Whistle Blowing

- If members ever have any concerns about people working in the theatre, paid or unpaid, they have a duty to inform HT or YT accordingly. This can be done in writing or verbally, but members should be able to discuss issues in the confidence that any such matter will be dealt with sensitively and with the necessary degree of confidentiality.
- If they feel unable to do so, then details of Childline (a service provided by the NSPCC) are displayed in the backstage corridor and on the back of each backstage toilet door.

Suspicion of Abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of HT or YT, please make this known to the Safeguarding Officer. If you suspect that the Safeguarding Officer is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Chairman or if they are the same person then speak to the vice-chairman.
- 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 on the same day.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the company, chaperone or third party etc., that individual will be suspended from that show immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the production venue, rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production. Serious can be defined as meriting great concern or pertaining to important not trivial acts, in other words has caused or is likely to cause harm to a child.

Suspicion of Bullying

- If you see or suspect bullying either of a child by another child, or a child by an adult or an adult by another adult while in the care of HT or YT, please make this known to the Safeguarding Officer. If you suspect that the Safeguarding Officer is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Chairman or if they are the same person then speak to the vice-chairman.
- 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 on the same day.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the company, chaperone or third party etc., that individual will be suspended from that show immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the production venue, rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production. Serious can be defined as meriting great concern or pertaining to important not trivial acts, in other words has caused or is likely to cause harm to a child.
- Bullying should also not be allowed by one adult to another. We must always treat each other with respect.

Procedures

When a child attends rehearsal

- It is the responsibility of the production manager to keep a register of all children involved in any production or event within the theatre, with a contact name and number to be kept readily to hand in case of emergency.
- It is the creative team's, production manager's and members' responsibility to ensure every child's safety and only allow collection by adults known to them after the activity; production manager will not leave children alone to wait for collection.
- There should always be at least two adults on site with any group of one or more children.
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour towards a child, whether by adults or other children in the group.

When a child auditions

- This will often be the first occasion that the show's director will collect personal contact information of the auditionees. In the case of children, where possible and unless deemed unnecessary by the parent, the contact details of the child's parent will be collected instead.
- The form designed by the company containing our GDPR clauses must be used. This form must either be destroyed at the end of the Production or held securely by the Safeguarding Officer in line with our GDPR requirements.

When a child performs

- The latter stages of rehearsals such as dress rehearsals and the actual performances, can often necessitate costume changes. These should be undertaken in an approved place such as the dressing room where possible and under the supervision of two adults.
- Where a costume change needs to take place in the wings, every effort will be made to shield the child, whether by screen or just the physical presence of the adults.

A child's data

- In making a membership application, the parent or guardian's contact details should be taken. It is these details that should be used to contact the child through their parent, until such time as the parent authorises HT and YT to contact the child directly.
- HT will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Officer to whom any suspicions or allegations of abuse must immediately be reported. It is the responsibility of the nominated person to investigate the allegations and after discussing the issue with the child's parents/guardians they may escalate to the appropriate agency. Any person against whom allegations have been made will be stopped from working with children unless and until the above agencies have agreed they may continue such work.
- Disclosure might be about home and in that instance should be referred to Social Care or HCSS (see Appendix B)

If a child asks for advice

The following are guidelines for adults who may be taken into a child's confidence about abuse suffered or allegations involving abuse:

- Remain calm and listen carefully.
- Never trivialise or exaggerate the issues.
- Allow the child time to speak and do not interrupt or make suggestions that could imply you are making an investigation.
- Do not interrogate or question, other than to clarify your understanding. (If the matter is to be investigated further, this will be done 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 they have told you 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 who can help.
- As soon as is practical, write down everything the child told you and notify the nominated person. What has been written down must be totally confidential between you and the Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- Unless the parents are the subject of the complaint, they should be advised on collecting the child of what the child has said. If it is the parent who is the subject of the complaint, then contact HCSS (see Appendix B)

Accidents and pre-existing Injuries

- 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.
- In the event of an injury a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the company's accident book. The parent or guardian will be notified of any such accident and the action taken.
- If a child joins the production with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. An entry in the accident book that relates to a child will be brought to the attention of the person responsible for child protection.

Chaperones

- Chaperones must be DBS checked or parents of the children. Dependent on the number of minors involved there will be two for each Dress Rehearsal and Performance where possible. One will be agreed to be the minimum allowed for the performance to continue.
- Chaperones will need to be always aware of where all the children in their care during the performance. They will supervise their behaviour and ensure that no adults from the cast or FOH enter the changing room while they are changing.
- Children under 16 must not leave the venue unsupervised at any point unless with their parents. Any parent wishing to allow their child to leave the building between shows must write a letter to the Director stating that it is the case and that they give their permission. Chaperones will have copies of those letters.
- Chaperones need to be made aware of where the accident book is and the First Aid box and to report the incident at the time to the Stage Manager who will decide what action needs to be taken in a serious situation. That could include stopping the show. The default position in our venue is that an ambulance should be called for any injury unless the parent requests not.

At the start of the rehearsal period of a HT or YT show, the director will be asked to ensure that they and their team are aware of and abide by, both this policy and the Code of Conduct always.

Copies of both documents are available on the public area of the website. They will be notified at the start of the rehearsal period who their allocated Safeguarding Officer will be.

Anyone who suspects that a member is not abiding by these rules must report this to the current designated Safeguarding Officer or to the Safeguarding person assigned to their show.

Signed

Dated

Appendix A - Relevant Legislation

- Children And Young Persons Act 1963
- Child (Performances) Regulations 1968
- The Children Act 1989
- Protection Of Children Act 1999
- Criminal Justice And Court Services Act 2000
- Education Act 2002
- Children Act 2004
- Children (Performances And Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Working together to safeguard children 2015
- Keeping children safe in education 2015

Appendix B – Emergency Contacts

- HT Safeguarding Officer, Claire Bailes **07402 337 681**
- Hertfordshire Children’s Social Services **0300 123 4043**