



Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

1. Introduction

The Ashton Group Theatre's commitment to the principals and practices of child, young person and vulnerable adult (CYPVA) protection sits within the Organisation's mission:

Developing Children and Young People through the medium of Theatre

This policy has been devised primarily within the context of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. It also takes guidance from the United Nations' Convention of the Rights of the Child and relevant government, NSPCC and Safe Network guidance.

When working in partnership, The Ashton Group Theatre will default to the policies and procedures of the partner organisations and will where appropriate, observe these (including reporting procedures) alongside those laid out in this document. In situations where multiple partners are working together, the policy belonging to the organisation that has most direct responsibility for the CYPVA will always take precedence, eg a school or youth organisation. Where The Ashton Group Theatre is the lead partner, it will be specified whose policy will take precedence.

2. Policy Statement & Definitions

Who this policy is for:

The Ashton Group Theatre has a duty of care to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults by recognising the possible risks within the organisation and its practices and by raising awareness of the issues which cause harm.

In order to achieve this objective, the principles within this document are intended for all individuals working for or on behalf of The Ashton Group Theatre including (but not limited to) employees, freelancers, volunteers, contractors and trustees (from here on in referred to as 'staff').

What this policy covers:

The purpose of this document is ultimately to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults (referred to in this document as CYPVA) from harm and it also seeks to protect The Ashton Group Theatre and its staff. It does this through a set of principles which can be embedded within the everyday ethos and practices of the organisation and allow staff to make informed and confident responses to safeguarding concerns.

3. Principles of Preventing Harm

Harm can be caused through the actions, or failure to act, of a person whether or not they intended to cause harm. Often referred to as abuse, it can occur within many situations including the home, school, institution and creative environments.

Whilst it is important that staff are aware of the types of abuse (as laid out in Appendix 1) they should not isolate their safeguarding responsibility to the identification of those specific signs and indicators. Alternatively, all staff should ensure that the health, safety and well-being of participants, colleagues and The Ashton Group Theatre as an organisation is at the core of their work.

In order to do this, individuals should:

- Demonstrate exemplary behaviour and be an excellent role model
- Maintain professionalism, including in your relationships with colleagues, contractors, participants and particularly with CYPVA
- Always work in a transparent way and in an open environment
- Treat others equally, with respect and dignity
- Build mutual trust and empower participants to contribute to decision making
- Be enthusiastic, positive and committed to making activities fun and enjoyable

Individuals should not:

- Carry out tasks for which they are not suitably trained e.g. first aid
- Engage in or encourage rough or sexually provocative games
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching (see guidelines on physical contact)
- Let inappropriate language and behaviour go unchallenged
- Make or accept personal connections or contact with CYPVA
- Fail to report any incidents or concerns regarding the welfare and safety of CYPVA

By acting in a transparent, professional manner, staff are ensuring participants have a positive and engaging experience and that the reputation of The Ashton Group Theatre and its staff is not put in jeopardy.

4. Reporting Incidents and Concerns

4.1 Designated Officer

The Ashton Group has several Designated Officers whose names and contact details are in Appendix 2.

The role of the Designated Officers is:

- To receive and record concerns which are reported to them (this could be from staff, participants, partners or parents/carers)
- To assess information and seek clarification if needed
- If necessary, to consult with or refer concerns internally (e.g. line managers or the Senior Management Team) or externally (statutory agencies such as the DBS, local Safeguarding Children's Board or police)
- To support and protect staff who in good faith raise concerns
- To keep up to date with relevant safeguarding legislation and practice

4.2 Making a Report

All staff have a responsibility to act on any incidents or concerns arising whilst working for The Ashton Group Theatre.

If during any activity or event delivered on behalf of Curious Minds, you have a concern you should speak to one of The Ashton Group Theatre's Designated Officers as soon as possible.

This includes:

- Observations which lead you to have concerns about a CYPVA
- A CYPVA disclosing information to you which leads you to be concerned for them
- Observing unsafe practice, including of partner organisations/staff
- Accidents involving a CYPVA that also need to be considered from a Safeguarding perspective
- If a CYPVA seems upset or distressed
- If a CYPVA appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a CYPVA misunderstands or misinterprets something you have said/done
- If a CYPVA tries to contact you outside of the project

This list is not exhaustive and staff should trust their instincts. Even if you are not sure if it is a safeguarding concern, speak to the Designated Officer for advice and clarification. The Designated Officer may ask you to write your concerns down or fill in an Incident Report Form.

If A CYPVA tells you something which raises a Safeguarding concern, you should:

- Listen carefully and let them tell you what happened at their own pace.
- Remain calm and caring
- Only ask questions if you need clarification of what they meant.
- Do not cross-question, or ask leading questions.
- Do not conduct an inquiry into what has happened.

- Do not promise to keep it a secret. You must tell the person that you will need to share the information with others. Make it clear you will only share information with people who need to know and can help.
- Reassure the person they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Make a note of what was said as soon as possible on a Safeguarding Incident Report Form. Use the actual words that were said as far as you can remember, and sign and date your record.
- Speak immediately to a designated officer.

4.3 Working in Partnership

Where a concern occurs whilst working within a partner venue or project, you should adhere to the partner organisation's safeguarding policy and procedures alongside this document. Concerns reported to a partner organisation's Designated Officer should also be reported to The Ashton Group Theatre's Designated Officer.

4.4 Reports Involving Poor Practice and/or a Member of Staff

If an allegation is made against a member of staff, the Designated Officer will take steps to ensure the welfare and safety of The Ashton Group Theatre's staff, participants and any other persons who may be at risk. This may include:

- Making an immediate decision about suspension of the staff member pending further investigation in line with our Disciplinary Procedures
- Referring allegations to the relevant agencies / authorities
- Where appropriate, initiating investigations

There may be three types of investigation:

- A disciplinary investigation
- A child/adult protection investigation
- A criminal investigation

All available information will be considered and The Ashton Group Theatre's disciplinary procedure will be followed as appropriate. The results of any police and child/adult protection investigation may influence and inform any disciplinary investigation.

4.5 Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information will be handled and shared on a need to know basis. Information (including records kept by the Designated Person) will be accurate, relevant, regularly updated and stored in a secure place in line with data protection laws.

5. The Prevent Duty

The Ashton Group Theatre has due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism in accordance with the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. Staff should consider their role in protecting CYPVA from radicalisation and extremism as a core part of their safeguarding duties. Concerns about someone being at risk of being drawn into terrorism, including support for extremist views should be discussed with the Designated Officer.

6. Photography and Filming

6.1 General

Where an Ashton Group Theatre activity or event involves filming or photography, participants / audience members who may be recorded should be made aware of this and appropriate permissions sought and agreed in advance.

If The Ashton Group Theatre would like to use an image/film (for instance in promotional material), they will endeavour to inform the subject(s) thereof.

All subjects should be appropriately dressed in order to reduce the risk of images / film being used inappropriately.

6.2 Under 18s: Images

The taking and recording of images of anyone under the age of 18 is allowed only when the child and parents/carers have given written consent. This includes filming and images taken as part of a workshop as well as by professionals and should include information about how they will be stored and what they may be used for.

The Ashton Group Theatre recognises that some partner organisations (e.g. schools) may already have consent from parents, in which case written confirmation of this will suffice.

Children's names will not be published alongside their images unless there is a specific need to do so and express permission has been given.

7. Social Networking and Communication

The Ashton Group Theatre recognises the value of social media, blogs, etc. and respects individuals' online social networking and personal Internet use. However, staff should be mindful to protect themselves, The Ashton Group Theatre and project participants and use electronic media, even in personal time, responsibly and respectfully. During online activities designed in response to Covid 19 and Social Distancing the same principles apply but some thought must be given to the fact that any disclosures or abusive or anti-social behaviour will be witnessed

simultaneously by all the participants. Behavioural guides may be given at the start of sessions and specific risk assessment will be developed as the company gains experience in the field.

- Protect yourself - review privacy settings, keep personal information private, do not make connections (e.g. become 'friends' on Facebook) with participants from a personal account. Any attempts to make online connection with a staff member should be reported to the Designated Officer.
- Protect children, young people and vulnerable adults - do not use any identifiable information (including images without appropriate permissions), avoid linking the setting with any individuals and only use first names. For example, announcing in advance where young people will be may place them at risk.
- Protect The Ashton Group Theatre ñ do not post or repost anything that may harm the goodwill or reputation of The Ashton Group Theatre or any disparaging information about The Ashton Group Theatre including its staff, partners, participants and funders.

8. Recruitment and Training of The Ashton Group Theatre Employees

The Ashton Group Theatre recognises that anyone may have the potential to cause harm to others and is committed to ensuring that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with CYPVA.

8.1 Recruitment Advertising

All advertisements will make clear The Ashton Group Theatre's commitment to safeguarding.

8.2 Application

Upon applying for a post with The Ashton Group Theatre, all staff will be required to provide:

- Their full name, address and National Insurance number
- Relevant experience, qualifications and training
- Details of previous employment
- An explanation of any gaps in education and/or employment
- Names of two people (not relatives) willing to provide references
- Consent to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check prior to employment wherever possible, in order to allow ample time for the application to be processed.

8.3 Interview and Induction

All staff will be required to undergo an appropriate and proportionate interview and induction process. This is an opportunity for The Ashton Group Theatre to interrogate the information supplied in the application and further assess the suitability of the candidate for the post.

During this process

- Evidence of identity will be required
- Job requirements and responsibilities will be clarified
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are explained and relevant documents made available
- Any training needs will be identified

8.4 Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

All members of staff must undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

8.5 Training and Supervision

The Ashton Group requires all staff to complete Level 1 and Level 2 safeguarding training. Training should enable individuals to recognise their responsibilities with regard to their own practice including how to raise concerns.

Effective management practices will provide staff with supervision and support. All staff will be given regular opportunities to give and receive feedback, to identify training needs and to set new goals.

9. Dissemination

The Ashton Group Theatre will make the Safeguarding Policy available to all staff and failure to conform to it will result in disciplinary proceedings which may lead to dismissal.

The policy is a public document and is available on our website. A copy can be sent to any of The Ashton Group Theatre's stakeholders including parents/carers, participants and partner organisations upon request.

Appendix 1 - Types and Signs of Abuse

1. Types of Abuse

Below are the different types of abuse that children, young people and vulnerable adults may suffer as defined by the NSPCC and the NHS. People will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives.

Abuse often happens over a period of time, rather than being a one-off event and it can increasingly happen online.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is deliberately causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts. It includes violence such as being hit, kicked, poisoned, burned, slapped or throwing objects at someone. It also includes withholding or misuse of medications and fabricated or induced illness.

Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet someone's basic needs. They may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care. They may be put in danger or not protected from physical or emotional harm and may not get the love, care and attention they need.

Sexual Abuse

Someone is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact and it can happen online. Sometimes the person won't understand that what's happening to them is abuse. They may not even understand that it's wrong. Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status.

Emotional or Psychological Abuse

This includes emotional abuse threats of harm or abandonment, preventing someone from socialising and humiliation, blame, controlling behaviour, intimidation or harassment. It also includes verbal abuse, cyber bullying and isolation, or an unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or support networks.

Online Abuse or Cyber Bullying

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. Online abuse may be part of abuse that is taking place in the real world or it may be that the abuse only happens online.

Domestic Abuse

This is typically an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, bullying or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse by someone who is, or has been, an intimate partner or family member. Domestic abuse includes emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological abuse.

Discriminatory Abuse

This includes some forms of harassment, slurs or similar unfair treatment relating to race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, or religion.

Financial Abuse

This includes stealing money or other valuables as well as appointed and trusted persons using someone else's money inappropriately or coercing them into

spending it in a way they are not happy with. Internet scams and doorstep crime are also common forms of financial abuse.

Current Trends

Diversification of society is reflected in the types of incident being reported. Some of the more recent types of abuse that are being reported include female genital mutilation (the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons) male circumcision carried out by unqualified persons, child trafficking, forced marriage and radicalisation.

2. Possible signs of abuse

The signs of abuse aren't always obvious and people might not tell anyone what is happening to them and may not want to talk about it. People might be scared that the abuser will find out, and worried that the abuse will get worse. Or they might think that there's no-one they can tell or that they won't be believed. Sometimes, people don't realise that what is happening is abuse.

Below are some indicators which may cause concern. This list is not exhaustive and should you have a concern, you should report it regardless of whether or not it appears below.

2.1 Signs of Abuse in Children and Young People

Children develop and mature at different rates. So what is worrying for a younger child, might be normal behaviour for an older child. If a child looks or acts a lot older or younger than their age, this could be a cause for concern. However, if a child develops more slowly than others of a similar age and there is not a cause such as physical or learning disabilities, it could be a sign they are being abused.

- A child talks of being left home alone or with strangers, is reluctant to go home or to have people visit.
- Poor bond or relationships between child and parent, parent shows little interest in child.
- A child acts out excessive violence with other children, lacks social skills or has few if any friends.
- A significantly underweight child but eats well when given food.
- A significant change in a child's behaviour, for example becomes secretive and reluctant to share information, or becomes withdrawn when previously outgoing.
- A child reaches developmental milestones late.
- A child speaks or acts in a way which is inappropriate for their age (i.e. drinking from an early age or uses inappropriate sexual awareness).
- A child is concerned for younger siblings without explaining why.
- A child talks of running away.

2.2 Behavioural Signs of Abuse in Adults

- Becoming quiet and withdrawn.
- Being aggressive or angry for no obvious reason.
- Looking unkempt, dirty or thinner than usual.
- Sudden changes in their normal character, such as appearing helpless, depressed or tearful.
- Physical signs of abuse, such as bruises, wounds, fractures and other untreated injuries.
- The same injuries happening more than once.
- Not wanting to be left on their own or alone with particular people.
- Being unusually light-hearted and insisting there's nothing wrong.
- Additionally, their home may lack heat, be unusually dirty or untidy, or you might notice things missing.

Other signs to watch out for include a sudden change in their finances, not having as much money as usual to pay for shopping or regular outings, or getting into debt. Watch out for any official or financial documents that seem unusual, and for documents relating to their finances that suddenly go missing.

2.2 If a Disclosure is Made

If A CYPVA tells you something which raises a Safeguarding concern, you should:

- Listen carefully and let them tell you what happened at their own pace.
- Remain calm and caring.
- Only ask questions if you need clarification of what they meant.
- Do not cross-question, or ask leading questions.
- Do not conduct an inquiry into what has happened.
- Do not promise to keep it a secret. You must tell the person that you will need to share the information with others. Make it clear you will only share information with people who need to know and can help.
- Reassure the person they have done the right thing in telling you
- Make a note of what was said as soon as possible on a Safeguarding Incident Report Form. Use the actual words that were said as far as you can remember, and sign and date your record.
- Speak immediately to a designated officer.

Appendix 2 - The Ashton Group Theatre Designated People for Safeguarding

Primary Designated Person:

Name: Rachel Ashton

Position: Artistic Director

Email Address:

rachel@theatrefactory.org

Office Number:
01229 430636

Mobile Number:
07899 882583

Designated Person 2:

Name: George Floyd

Position: Administrator

Email Address: info@theatrefactory.org

Office Number: 01229 430636

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