

NEATH LITTLE THEATRE CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Introduction

Neath Little Theatre has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for children, all chaperones, parents/legal guardians and volunteers accept their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to ensure that everyone follow procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

There are three elements to our policy:

- **Prevention** through awareness of each individual child's needs
- **Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect**
- **Procedures** for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of Neath Little Theatre and to allow members and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

The policy references the Welsh Government document, 'Keeping Young Performers Safe' Guidance document no: 192/2015 Date of issue: October 2015. Page numbers refer to this document.

https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-08/keeping-young-performerssafe-guidance-to-accompany-the-2015-child-performance_0.pdf

This can be found at:

<https://gov.wales/keeping-young-performers-safe-performance-licences-children>

along with other useful accompanying documents.

This document was reviewed on 26th November 2024 and adopted by General Committee on 6th January 2025. It is due to be reviewed in November 2025.

Prevention

We recognise that the "entertainment industry" can be a very "adult" environment and we expect that all members, chaperones, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and anyone else who comes into contact with children behave in an appropriate manner at all times and remember that "The Welfare of the Child is Paramount".

Neath Little Theatre will therefore:

- Act within the Children's Act 1989 & 2004
- Act within The Children (Performances and Activities) (Wales) Regulations 2015

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel welcome and familiar with their environment and are informed of personal arrangements (toilets, dressing rooms etc) and emergency arrangements (fire exits, meeting points etc) and any Health and Safety Procedures (Dangerous equipment, First aid etc). Children are not allowed in the kitchen.
- Some members of Neath Little Theatre will receive first aid training, and these will be identifiable to all members, chaperones, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and children by lists displayed throughout the theatre.
- All accidents must be recorded by a responsible adult in Neath Little Theatre's accident book. (Kept in the Committee Room.) The accident book needs to be filled in by the person who administered first aid and witnessed by another DBS checked person. The incident must be reported and what has been recorded read to parents, who should sign the accident book.

Workshops

- Inform each child and/or parents/ legal guardians who the appropriate person or persons who to speak to if they have any questions, problems or concerns. (Listed at the bottom of this document.)
- Ensure that all children are treated with respect and dignity and are treated as individuals and offered equality of opportunities.
- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations) and involve/allow parents/ legal guardians /chaperones wherever possible, to take responsibility for the child/children they are responsible for (parents must only have responsibility for their own child).
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with children and always ask permission for reasonable physical contact to be made.
- Recognising the individual needs of the child, e.g. recognising when a child may be tired and may need a break. (Pages 14-15). Snacks may be provided and information regarding allergies gathered from the registration forms.
- Ensure that children are supervised appropriately, following the ratio 1:8 for primary age children and 1:12 for secondary age children. In any case, no number of children should be supervised by one person alone.
- As a matter of good practice, when there are only two supervising adults, these should not be closely related (e.g. spouse, child, sibling).

Productions

- Ensure that all chaperones are registered with the local authority, following appropriate training, in which they reside and have an enhanced DBS check.

- Ensure that any members coming into close contact with a child (e.g. Youth Leaders; Directors of productions using Young People; etc) are DBS checked. DBS and Chaperone requests must be approved by General Committee.
- Ensure that all members and crew who don't necessarily have close contact with children but who are assisting in the production are aware of their conduct around children.
- No child under the age of 14 should be allowed to sell items (exchanging items for money) to the public.
- During public performances, all children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. The accompanying adult must sit in the immediate vicinity to the child.
- Where it is deemed appropriate by General Committee due to content, General Committee will offer age-appropriate recommendations to allow parents to make an informed choice.

Photography

Members need to be aware of the sensitivities around photographing children.

- No photographs should be taken of children outside public areas (rehearsals, performances, events, etc). This means no photos of children should be taken in dressing rooms for example.
- Parental permission needs to be given to allow photographs of individual children to be taken and displayed on social media / theatre website. These parental permissions must be sought on an annual basis.
- Youth Leaders are to make members aware of any children where permission for photographs (either generally or for social media use) has not been granted.
- Only designated members are authorised to take photos (within the terms of this document). The rules on photographs apply to the young people themselves who may have use of mobile phone cameras, etc.

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

A child is abused or neglected when somebody inflicts harm or fails to act to prevent harm. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection.

Types of abuse and particular procedures followed

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by harming them, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused within a family, institution, or community setting by those known to them or more rarely a stranger. This could be an adult or adults, another child or children.

The signs and indicators listed below may not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused but will help us to recognise that something may be wrong, especially if a child shows a number of these symptoms or any of them to a marked degree.

Indicators of child abuse

- Failure to thrive and meet developmental milestones
- Fearful or withdrawn tendencies
- Unexplained injuries to a child or conflicting reports from parents or member
- Repeated injuries
- Unaddressed illnesses or injuries
- Significant changes to behaviour patterns.

Softer signs of abuse as defined by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) include:

Emotional states:

- Low self-esteem
- Fearful
- Withdrawn

Behaviour:

- Aggressive
- Oppositional habitual body rocking.

Interpersonal behaviours:

- Indiscriminate contact or affection seeking
- Over-friendliness towards strangers including healthcare professionals
- Excessive clinginess, persistently resorting to gaining attention.
- Demonstrating excessively 'good' behaviour to prevent parental or carer disapproval
- Failing to seek or accept appropriate comfort or affection from an appropriate person when significantly distressed
- Coercive controlling behaviour towards parents or carers
- Lack of ability to understand and recognise emotions
- Very young children showing excessive comforting behaviours when witnessing parental or carer distress.

Peer to peer abuse

We are aware that peer-on-peer abuse does take place, so we include children in our policies when we talk about potential abusers. This may take the form of bullying, physically hurting another child, emotional abuse or sexual abuse. We will report this in the same way as we do for adults abusing children and will take advice from the appropriate bodies on this area, to support for both the victim and the perpetrator as they could also be a victim of abuse too. We know that children who develop harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced abuse and neglect themselves.

Neglect

Working together to safeguard people defines neglect as the failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional or psychological needs, likely to result in the impairment of the child's health or development.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- a. Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- b. Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- c. Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- d. ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Signs may include a child persistently arriving at the theatre unwashed or unkempt, wearing clothes that are too small (especially shoes that may restrict the child's growth or hurt them); A child may also be persistently hungry if a parent is withholding food or not providing enough for a child's needs.

Neglect may also be shown through emotional signs, e.g. a child may not be receiving the attention they need at home and may crave love and support at the theatre. They may be clingy and emotional.

Action should be taken under this heading if the member has reason to believe that there has been any type of neglect of a child.

Physical harm

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after.

Action needs to be taken if members have reason to believe that there has been physical abuse to a child, which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. These symptoms may include bruising or injuries in an area that is not usual for a child, e.g. fleshy parts of the arms and legs, back, wrists, ankles and face. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. This is known as fabricated or induced illness or FII.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child, or young person, to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Action must be taken if a member witnesses an occasion(s) where a child indicates sexual activity through words, play, drawing, has an excessive preoccupation with sexual matters or has an inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour or

language for their developmental age. This may include acting out sexual activity on props with their peers, drawing pictures that are inappropriate for a child, talking about sexual activities or using sexual language, or words.

If a child is being sexually abused members may observe both emotional and physical symptoms.

Emotional signs:

- Being overly affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way inappropriate to the child's age
- Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clingy
- Regressing to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking or bringing out discarded cuddly toys
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Being isolated or withdrawn
- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well, such as not wanting to be alone with a carer
- Becoming worried about clothing being removed
- Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures or acting out actions inappropriate for their age
- Using sexually explicit language.

Physical Signs:

- Bruises
- Bleeding, discharge, pains or soreness in their genital or anal area
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy.

Emotional /psychological abuse

Working Together to Safeguard People defines emotional/psychological abuse as threats of harm or abandonment, coercive control, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks and witnessing the abuse of others. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Signs that children are being emotionally abused may include shying away from an adult who is abusing them, becoming withdrawn, aggressive, or clingy in order to

receive their love and attention, not having a close bond with their parent/carer, seem unconfident or anxious or being aggressive towards others.

Action should be taken under this heading if the member has reason to believe that there is an effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child caused by persistent or severe ill-treatment or rejection. Children may also experience emotional abuse through witnessing domestic abuse, alcohol or drug misuse by adults caring for them.

Financial abuse

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures note that this category will be less prevalent for a child but indicators could be; not meeting their needs for care and support which are provided through direct payments; or complaints that personal property is missing

Fabricated illness

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. The parent or carer may seek out unnecessary medical treatment or investigation, they may exaggerate a real illness and symptoms; or deliberately induce an illness through poisoning with medication or other substances, or they may interfere with medical treatments. Fabricated illness is a form of physical abuse, and any concerns will be reported following our safeguarding procedures

Many children will have cuts and grazes from normal childhood injuries – these should also be logged and discussed with the YW leader, Chaperone or Director.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a procedure where the female genital organs are injured or changed and there is no medical reason for this. This form of physical abuse is practised as a cultural ritual by some ethnic groups. When the procedure happens is dependent on the community and it may occur shortly after birth, during childhood, during adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman's first pregnancy. The practice can cause severe pain and there may be immediate and/or long-term health consequences, including mental health problems, urinary infection, septicaemia, incontinence, difficulties in childbirth, causing danger to the child and mother; and/or death.

Any concerns about a child or family, will be reported to the children's social care team in the same way as other types of physical abuse. We have a mandatory duty to report to police any case where an act of female genital mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18.

Breast ironing/flattening

Breast ironing also known as "breast flattening" is the process where young girls' breasts are ironed, massaged and/or pounded down through the use of hard or heated objects in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely. It is believed that by carrying out this act, young girls will be protected from harassment, rape, abduction and early forced marriage. Any concerns about a child or family will be reported to the children's social care team in the same way as other types of physical abuse.

Breast ironing/flattening is a form of physical abuse and can cause serious health issues such as:

- Abscesses
- Cysts
- Itching
- Tissue damage
- Infection
- Discharge of milk
- Dissymmetry of the breasts
- Severe fever.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

CSE is defined as a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when an individual, or group, takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child, or young person under the age of 18, into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

We will be aware of the possibility of CSE and the signs, and symptoms, this may manifest as. If we have concerns, we will follow the same procedures as for other concerns and we will record, and refer, as appropriate.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) can be described where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Children are criminally responsible from the age of 10 years in England and Wales, and children much younger than 10 years have been the victims of CEE. A swift response and reporting can prevent a child gaining a criminal record from a very early age, as well as preventing the abuse caused by being exploited by adults.

County lines

The National Crime Agency (NCA) describes county lines as a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs from big cities into smaller towns, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. Customers will live in a different area to where the dealers and networks are based, so drug runners are needed to transport the drugs and collect payment.

They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Signs that a child may be involved in county lines could be a change in behaviour, suddenly having more money or possessions, change in friendship group,

withdrawing from family life, sudden change in appearance, unexplained physical injuries, staying out late or a lack of interest in school and previous positive activities.

Cuckooing

Cuckooing is a form of county lines crime in which drug dealers take over the home of a vulnerable person in order to criminally exploit them as a base for drug dealing, often in multi-occupancy or social housing properties. Signs that this is happening to a family property may be an increase in people entering or leaving the property, an increase in cars or bikes outside the home; windows covered, or curtains closed for long periods, family not being seen for extended periods; signs of drug use or an increase in anti-social behaviour at the home.

If we recognise any of these signs, we will report our concerns as per our reporting process.

Contextual safeguarding

As young people grow and develop, they may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their family. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online.

As part of our safeguarding procedures, we will work in partnership with parents/carers and other agencies to work together to safeguard children and provide the support around contextual safeguarding concerns.

Domestic abuse/honour-based abuse/forced marriages

We look at these areas as a child protection concern, a child may disclose something that will need to be noted and reported.

Extremism – the prevent duty

Under the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 we have a duty to safeguard at risk or vulnerable children under the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism” and refer any concerns of extremism to the police (in prevent priority areas the local authority will have a prevent lead who can also provide support).

Children can be exposed to different views and receive information from various sources. Some of these views may be considered radical or extreme. Radicalisation is the way a person comes to support or be involved in extremism and terrorism. It’s a gradual process so young people who are affected may not realise what’s happening.

Radicalisation is a form of harm. The process may involve:

- Being groomed online or in person
- Exploitation, including sexual exploitation
- Psychological manipulation
- Exposure to violent material and other inappropriate information
- The risk of physical harm or death through extremist acts.

We have a Prevent duty and radicalisation policy in place. Please refer to this for specific details.

Online safety

We take the safety of children very seriously and this includes their online safety. Mobile phones will be kept to a minimum during break/rest times.

Adult sexual exploitation

As part of our safeguarding procedures, we will also ensure that members are safeguarded from sexual exploitation, as well as all other possible forms of abuse.

Upskirting

Upskirting involves taking a picture of someone's genitals or buttocks under their clothing without them knowing, either for sexual gratification or in order to humiliate or distress the individual. This is a criminal offence, and any such action would be reported following our reporting procedures

Child abuse linked to faith or belief (CALFB)

Child abuse linked to faith or belief (CALFB) can happen in families when there is a concept of belief in:

- Witchcraft and spirit possession, demons or the devil acting through children or leading them astray (traditionally seen in some Christian beliefs)
- The evil eye or djinns (traditionally known in some Islamic faith contexts) and dakini (in the Hindu context)
- Ritual or multi murders where the killing of children is believed to bring supernatural benefits, or the use of their body parts is believed to produce potent magical remedies
- Use of belief in magic or witchcraft to create fear in children to make them more compliant when they are being trafficked for domestic slavery or sexual exploitation.

This is not an exhaustive list and there will be other examples where children have been harmed when adults think that their actions have brought bad fortune.

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Neath Little Theatre will adhere to the relevant legislation when working with children and young people under the age of 18 years as outlined in the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004 (WAG, 2006)
- All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008)
- Children (Performances and Activities) (Wales) Regulations 2015

Suspicion of Abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child, immediately make this known to the designated individual/manager responsible for child protection. (See designated roles at the end of the document.)

Disclosure of Abuse

If a child tells you that they or another child or young person is being abused: -

- Always stop and listen straight away, show that you take their allegations seriously.
- Encourage the child to talk, but do not ask leading questions, interrupt or ask the child to repeat itself.
- Never promise that you will keep what is said confidential or secret – explain that if you are told something of concern that you will need to let someone know but that you will only tell the people who need to know and can help.
- Record what you have been told accurately and as soon as possible. Use the child's own words. Make a note of the time, location, whether anyone else was present and of the child's demeanour.
- Ensure that your concerns are reported immediately to the designated individual/CPO.
- Do not confront the alleged abuser.

Handling Allegations

- If a child makes an allegation against a Neath Little Theatre member or volunteer it must be reported as a matter of urgency to the designated Child Protection Officer who will liaise with the School and Family Support Team at Neath Port Talbot CBC (01639 763979). If the allegation is against the designated person(s) then the information should be reported to a General Committee Trustee, or directly to School and Family Support Team. (This would generally be referred to the authority in which the alleged incident took place).
- The alleged perpetrator should not be made aware of the allegation at this point.

Recording

- In all situations the details of allegation or reported incident must be recorded. Make accurate notes of time, dates, incident or disclosure, people involved, what was said and done and by whom, action taken to investigate, further action taken e.g. suspension of individual and if relevant: reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, name of person reporting and to whom it was reported

The record must be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know.

- **DO NOT worry that you might be mistaken; you have a responsibility to pass on your concerns following a disclosure. Never assume abuse is impossible, or that an accusation about a person you know well, and trust is bound to be wrong.**

IT IS YOUR DUTY TO REFER CONCERNS ON, NOT TO INVESTIGATE

The Designated Individuals/Managers for Child Protection and Safeguarding at Neath Little Theatre are:

Name: Nicola Barker Position in Organisation: Trustee and Child Protection Officer

Contact details: 07795 144717 nicolahbarker@gmail.com

Name: Jamie Rees Position in Organisation: Trustee and Assistant Child Protection Officer

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