

# Phoenix Theatre Group

## Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

### Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy Statement

Phoenix Theatre Group has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in the group's activities from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable will be considered.

Phoenix Theatre Group will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in the group's activities through adherence to the Safeguarding & Child Protection guidelines.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act, 1989).

Phoenix Theatre Group is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and vulnerable young people. We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote best practice and to protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation.

### Policy aims

**The aim of this Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice and to detail our commitment to Safeguarding & Child Protection within Phoenix Theatre Group. This will be achieved through procedures and best practice for all members, volunteers and partners.**

### Phoenix Theatre Group management committee Safeguarding & Child Protection responsibilities.

- To ensure all members, volunteers and partners working with children understand their legal and moral obligations to protect children and young people from harm.
- To ensure that all members, volunteers and partners understand their responsibility to work to the standards detailed in this policy.
- To ensure that all members, volunteers and partners understand their obligations to report care or protection concerns regarding any child or young person or the conduct of any member or volunteer towards a child or young person to the theatre groups designated Safeguarding Officers.
- Ensure that the designated Safeguarding Officers understand their responsibilities to refer any child protection concerns to the statutory child protection agencies (i.e. Police and or children's social care)
- To ensure that written permission is received from parents / carers for their child to engage in theatre activities and that specific information is provided in relation to the individual needs of the child (e.g., medical needs, allergies etc).
- Endeavour to keep up to date with national developments relating to care and protection of children and young people.
- Follow up on **ANY** allegation or suspicion of abuse towards any child within Phoenix Theatre Group and ensure that it is dealt with appropriately.
- If allegations or suspicion of child abuse is deemed to be serious then this must be reported to the local authorities immediately. First port of call for advice and / or referral is Worcestershire Children First 01905822666 – 01905768020
- Where serious issues of child protection are deemed and concern the involvement of other members or volunteers within Phoenix Theatre Group then the committee will reserve the right to suspend that member or volunteer from involvement within the group until investigations are complete where upon the appropriate action will be taken.

- To ensure that all members and volunteers who are in a position of trust in respect of children and young people are aware of the law relating to this position and good practice when interacting with children and young people.

## **Promoting good practice**

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and other environments. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child enters the group having been subjected to child abuse outside this environment, theatre can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances the group must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

## **Good practice guidelines**

All members, volunteers and partners of Phoenix Theatre Group should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

### **Good practice means:**

- Recognise your responsibilities for Protection and Safeguarding and act upon any concerns no matter how small or trivial.
- Understand your position of trust.
- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with members (eg it is not appropriate for members or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room solely with them, other than a dressing room that is adequately occupied in sufficient numbers).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making.
- Making theatre fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by an Education Programme. If it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving, young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure members, parents, teachers or officials work in pairs.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive rehearsals or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if members are required to transport young people in their cars.

## Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (eg the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the group or the child's parents.

### Otherwise, **avoid**:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking or dropping off a child to an event (*Unless specific parental consent is obtained*).

## Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should **never**:

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative inappropriate games, including horseplay.
- Make contact or accept contact from a child member outside of rehearsals / performances either personally or through social media unless the child is part of your family social circle.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive or inappropriate comments to a child.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

**NB** It may sometimes be necessary for members or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the members involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

## Incidents that must be reported/recorded

**All incidents of a safeguarding nature, concern or allegation must be reported to a Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer to record the incident. If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to a Safeguarding Officer, if they are not available then to another member or volunteer and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:**

- if you accidentally hurt a child
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- if a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

## **Rehearsal / Promotional photography**

Phoenix Theatre Group recognises that video or photography can be required as a coaching aid and a necessity for promotional purposes therefore there is no intention to prevent authorised members using video or photography equipment as a legitimate promotional aid. However, all members should be made aware that this is part of the groups programme and as such any films or photographs should be stored safely and securely and used solely for the purpose it was intended. To this end the following guidelines must be adhered to:

- Parental / guardian consent for photography or videos must be obtained by means of a membership form.
- Any photography or videos taken for the above purpose on any device will need to be transferred to a secure storage device or laptop owned by Phoenix Theatre Group and its memory cleared of all such images.
- Any professional or amateur photographers engaged by Phoenix Theatre Group with the intention of taking pictures will need to hold an enhanced DBS or be supervised at all times by a Chaperone or Safeguarding Officer and will be subject to the same rules as above concerning the storage of any such pictures.
- Any such attempts to take pictures or video by other members, especially children, either at rehearsals or shows must be dissuaded and enforced by means of regular reminders.

## **Use of photographic/filming equipment at events**

There is evidence that some people have used events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled people in vulnerable positions. Announcements are made at every performance that photographic or video equipment is not permitted during the performance. All members should be vigilant at events and any concerns should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer.

## **Recruitment and training of members and volunteers**

Phoenix Theatre Group recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

### **Pre-selection checks must include the following:**

- All volunteers/members should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau If necessary.
- Evidence of identity should be provided (eg passport or driving licence with photo) should the person not be known by the committee.
- Although there is no requirement at present for all adult members to hold a DBS certificate. The vast majority of Phoenix Theatre Group members are Worcestershire Children First approved performance chaperones who have undergone relevant safeguarding training and Disclosure and Barring Service checks
- Phoenix Theatre Group Safeguarding Officers must ensure that copies of this policy are provided to adult members and volunteers of each show who do not have a DBS to ensure they understand their position and safeguarding responsibilities. A signed confirmation sheet of receipt will be kept securely on record.

## Communication with children and young people

- Under no circumstances should adult members or volunteers make or receive calls or texts to or from children and young people using your personal mobile phone. Contact from parents is understandable.
- Adult members, particularly those producing or directing shows will on occasion be required to email children and young people using their personal email address. In all cases you should use formal language to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of the recipient and should be carbon copied to the leading Safeguarding Officer.
- A Phoenix Theatre Group email service (e.g. [musical@phoenixtheatregroup.co.uk](mailto:musical@phoenixtheatregroup.co.uk)) is provided to all production teams to safeguard data and provide safe communication from members.
- Members who have concerns regarding content of an email they send or receive from a child or young person should consult the designated Safeguarding Officers for guidance.

## Social Media

Phoenix Theatre Group takes seriously its obligations regarding social media and the use of actual names, images, including photographs and recordings. There will be a necessity for the use of such images and names with regards to publicity and show programmes however we will limit our use of such images including photographs and recordings solely for the purpose for which it was meant.

Phoenix Theatre Group will:

- Use names and images of children, young people or vulnerable adults which are respectful and not expose them to further vulnerability.
- Reproduce images and use names of children only where we have the written permission of their parents, guardians using a consent form (Membership Form).
- Reproduce images and use names of young people and vulnerable adults only where we have their written permission or that of their parents, guardians, whichever is the most suitable (Membership Form).
- Make clear to vulnerable people and their families that agreement to providing information or images is not a condition of involvement in Phoenix Theatre Group activities and programmes.
- Inform members, volunteers and partners in relation to the forbidden use of any form of technology, other than that authorised by Phoenix Theatre Group and understand that they must not use this technology for the purpose of accessing, producing or distributing any
- Phoenix Theatre Group recognises that social media can be a legitimate and effective way to communicate with all members. Current social media applications frequently used by members include Twitter, Facebook, Tik Tok, What's app and Instagram. Contact with children and young people through such media should only take place through organisational accounts that are restricted to members only.
- Phoenix Theatre Group members must not send or accept any friends' requests from children or young people members of Phoenix Theatre Group on Facebook or other social media platforms unless the person is known within your family circle.

## Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone within Phoenix Theatre Group, members or volunteers, to decide whether child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate Safeguarding Officer.

Phoenix Theatre Group will assure all members and volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

**Where there is a complaint against a member the designated Safeguarding Officer will seek advice from the relevant authorities. There may be three types of investigation:**

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection and safeguarding investigation
- a misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the misconduct investigation, but not necessarily.

## **Action**

### **1. Concerns about poor practice:**

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Safeguarding Officers will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Safeguarding Officers, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the committee who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate removal proceedings.

### **2. Concerns about suspected abuse:**

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member or a volunteer should be reported to the Safeguarding Officers, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Safeguarding Officers will refer the allegation to the social services department which may involve the police or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- The Safeguarding Officers should also notify the committee who in turn will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the Safeguarding Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Head of committee or in his/her absence another member of the committee who will refer the allegation to social services.

## **Confidentiality**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

### **This includes the following people:**

- the Safeguarding Officer
- the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- social services/police
- the committee
- the alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (eg that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

### **Internal enquiries and suspension**

- The Safeguarding Officers will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information, which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

### **Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse**

- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of staff may need. Use of help lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, Email: [bac@bacp.co.uk](mailto:bac@bacp.co.uk), Internet: [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

### **Allegations of previous abuse**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (eg by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, Phoenix Theatre Group will follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside the group, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act, 1999.

### **Action if bullying is suspected**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

### **Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:**

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the Safeguarding Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

### **Action towards the bully(ies):**

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully(ies)'s parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

### **3. Concerns outside the immediate environment (eg a parent or carer):**

- Report your concerns to the Safeguarding Officers, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- See 4. below for the information social services or the police will need.
- If the Safeguarding Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.
- Social services and the Safeguarding Officers will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- Maintain confidentiality on a need-to-know basis only.
- See 4. below regarding information needed for social services.

### **4. Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse:**

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also, any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct, or the **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline** on **0808 800 5000**, or **Childline** on **0800 1111**.

**Declaration**

On behalf of Phoenix Theatre Group, we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

**(Safeguarding Officer)**

Name:

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Position within Phoenix Theatre Group:

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Date:

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**(Safeguarding Officer)**

Name:

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Position within Phoenix Theatre Group:

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Date:

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