



St. Mary's Players

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

St. Mary's Players (SMP) may work with children, young people and vulnerable adults in rehearsal and performance of theatre productions. This policy applies to all members of the club and is provided for:

- the protection of the children, young people and vulnerable adults participating
- guidance on procedures that should be adopted by the committee and other members in positions of responsibility

SMP are committed to procedures that safeguard the children, young people* and vulnerable adults we work with. We will ensure they are kept safe, and have a positive and enjoyable experience with us.

*A person is legally classed as a child until the age of 18 (Children's act 1989). We recognise that despite the legal definition of child, many teenagers and older children find that the word 'child' does not fit with their identity and so we use both the terms 'child' and 'young person' to describe persons under the age of 18.

Statement of Intent

We recognise that

- The welfare of a child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount
- All, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

SMP acknowledges that they have a responsibility for the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults undertaking rehearsals or performances under their temporary care.

Rehearsals will generally be held at Page Community Association, Staple Hill. Performances will take place at Page Community Association and The Redgrave Theatre, Clifton, Bristol.

Our commitments

1. We will safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults by ensuring that everyone is committed to:
 - Treating children and young people and vulnerable adults with respect, dignity and using appropriate language
 - Always listening to what a child or young person is saying
 - Valuing and respecting each child and young person
 - Recognising the unique contribution each individual can make
 - Challenging any inappropriate language used by a young person or child or an adult working with children, young people or vulnerable adults
 - Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
 - Ensuring a copy of this Safeguarding Policy is made available to all new members
2. During performances children will always be supervised by a licensed chaperone. There will always be a DBS checked adult present when working directly with children and young people in rehearsals and performances.
3. As rehearsals and performance may involve unsupervised access to, or contact with children, SMP is required to:
 - recognise and accept their responsibilities
 - develop awareness of the issues which can cause children harm;
 - report concerns of a child to the local Social Services Authorities/Child Protection Agency.
4. SMP is also committed to reviewing this Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Code of Practice at regular intervals.
5. Young people under the supervision of SMP will not leave the building without prior consent from their parent/guardian (accept in the case of fire). SMP will endeavour to ensure that young people are safely dropped off and collected by a parent/guardian at the end of each session; and are signed in and out of the building.
6. SMP will never use inappropriate or damaging material when working with young people under their supervision. This includes any scripts, songs, music, poetry, stories or other stimulus.
7. SMP will not make inappropriate contact with any young people under their supervision. This includes phone calls, text messages, email, and any form of social media. Contact will always be made through a parent/guardian.
8. SMP will keep a list of contacts for each young person at all times in case of emergencies.

Types of abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect another person by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Individuals may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or several, or another child.

There are four main categories of abuse:

Physical abuse

Physical abuse includes hitting, kicking, punching, shaking, poisoning, burning and other ways of inflicting pain or injury. It also includes giving a child or young person harmful drugs or alcohol. It may be caused by another child, young person or adult. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

This is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development and wellbeing. Emotional abuse includes conveying to children or young people that they are worthless or unloved or constantly threatening or humiliating them. Sarcasm, 'making fun', degrading punishments and ignoring a child or young person are all examples of emotional abuse as is holding and asserting inappropriate age or developmental expectation of a child. Limitation of exploration and learning and denying normal social interactions are also forms of emotional abuse and undermine a child's confidence and sense of self-worth.

Emotional abuse can also involve the seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another person, it may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying) which causes a child or young person to frequently feel frightened or in danger.

Emotional abuse is the severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. It may be caused by a child, young person or adult.

Neglect

Neglect is when a child or young person's basic need for love, food, warmth, safety, education and medical attention are persistently not met by parents or carers. Neglect is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur in pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including use of adequate care-givers)
- ensuring access to appropriate medical care or treatment

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

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse includes forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, not necessarily including a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is taking place. The activities may involve physical contact including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as kissing, rubbing, touching outside of clothing. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children looking at or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities or encouraging young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation of abuse (including via the internet). Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse as can other children.

Other definitions of abuse

Bullying, racism, FGM, Child sexual exploitation, eating disorders, self-abuse and radicalisation are also forms of abuse. Like other kinds of abuse they can cause physical or emotional harm (or both).

Addressing child safeguarding issues

It is SMP's policy that:

- they will accept responsibility for the welfare of children who come into contact with them and that they will report any concerns about a child or somebody else's behaviour, using the procedures laid down.
- SMP knows how to make appropriate referrals to statutory child protection agencies.
- All children and members of the company are aware of the steps laid down when dealing with a disclosure

Contact

- Members should try to always be visible to others in their contact with children.
- In the unlikely event of having to meet with an individual child or young person alone make every effort to keep this meeting as open as possible e.g by leaving the door open
- If privacy is needed, ensure that other people are informed of the meeting, the reason for it, and its whereabouts.
- Be aware that children and young people's behaviour can lead to individuals finding themselves in a vulnerable situation (for example having to intervene with aggressive behaviour), if you are concerned, please seek advice from the Designated Lead.

Handling disclosures

1. Avoid denial. Respect the child/young person by listening to what they have to say and taking what they say seriously. Believe what they are telling you.
2. Avoid communicating with shock, horror, or fear about anything said as the child/young person may interpret your reaction as your being shocked and horrified by him or her and shut down. The child needs you to be confident and supportive.
3. Reassure the child/ young person that they have done nothing wrong and that coming to you was the right thing to do, let them know that you believe them.
4. Listen and do not make assumptions. Avoid advice giving or problem solving. Do not put words in the child's mouth - let the child or young person use language they are comfortable with.
5. Do not interrogate. Do not ask the child a lot of questions and never leading questions. Limit questioning to the following:
What happened?
When did it happen?
Where did it happen?
Who did it?
How do you know them? (If the relationship of the abuser is unclear)
Was this the first time this has happened?
6. Make no promises. Explain what you have to do and whom you have to tell.
7. Document exact quotes as accurately as possible. It will be helpful to write down exact quotes of what the child has said in case of the involvement of other parties, such as school or child protective services. Do not translate into your own words or use paraphrasing. Keep the documentation transparent and do not narrate it with assumptions
8. Be supportive, not judgmental. Do not talk negatively. Even though the child may be disclosing terrible things that may have happened at the hands of a family member or friend, the child may still love that person and may only just be beginning to recognise that he/she was being abused.

What to record

- Name of child or young person
- Details of parent/guardian
- Address
- Relevant phone numbers
- What is said to have happened or what was seen
- When it occurred and who was there
- What was said by those involved
- Whether there is any evidence
- Who has been told
- Who was concerned
- Was the child or young person able to say what happened
- Whether parents/guardians have been advised

Procedure for reporting concerns

The first point of contact for dealing with disclosures is **Jane Priddes** or, if the disclosure involves Jane Priddes the disclosure should be reported to **Becky Broadbear**.

The Children Act 1989 states that the “welfare of the child is paramount”. This means that considerations of confidentiality which might apply to other situations should not be allowed to over-ride the right of children to be protected from harm. However, every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned when an allegation has been made and is being investigated.

A culture of mutual respect between children and SMP will be encouraged.

- Suspicion or concern could be raised in a number of ways, the most likely of which are:
 - a child “disclosing” abuse;
 - bruising or evidence of physical hurt; which may or may not be accompanied by;
 - unusual behaviour by a child.
- If concern is regarding immediate risk of death, extremist radicalisation or serious harm, contact the police. If not contact the designated lead.
- Record of concern logged and reviewed.
- If there are no further concerns, record is kept for future reference. If there are still concerns the designated lead will make appropriate contact with parent/care giver or to authorities.
- Concerns to authorities should be made within 24 hours. Delay could prejudice the welfare of a child.

Code of practice

- SMP are aware that it is important not to have unnecessary physical contact with children and this should be avoided. In the practise of the dramatic arts, it is occasionally useful to indicate appropriate areas of the body, physicality, facial expression or have forms of physical contact. This will only ever be done with the child's permission if simply indicating is not sufficient.
- SMP will not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.
- SMP are aware that it is important not to deter children from making a 'disclosure' of abuse through fear of not being believed, and to listen to what they have to say. If this gives rise to a child protection concern it is important to follow the procedure for reporting such concerns. Attempts to investigate the concerns by an individual alone would not be made.
- SMP are aware that those who abuse children can be of any age (even other children), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.
- SMP are aware that good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals, and the adult modelling of appropriate conduct - which will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism or sexism.

Further Information

For further information and advice on child welfare and safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults you can visit:

- <http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/>
- <http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/index.html>
- <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/childrenand-young-people/child-welfare>
- Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT): 0117 945 4320
- NSPCC 24 hour Helpline: 0800 800 5000
- ChildLine: 0800 1111
- Off the Record Free advice and counselling for young people aged 11-25 0808 808 9120 confidential@otrbristol.org.uk Text on: 07896 880 011
- Bristol Drugs Project: 0117 987 6000