

ABBAY THEATRE TRUST (ST ALBANS) LTD

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Scope

This policy applies to The Abbey Theatre Trust (St Albans) Ltd, including its resident theatre companies: the Company of Ten, Company of Teens, St Albans Youth Music Theatre ("SAYMT") and any other theatrical companies established from time to time, collectively known as "ATT" or "the Trust".

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of ATT, including the Theatre Manager, the Board of Trustees/Management Committee, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

Purpose

The ATT charitable objectives include the promotion, improvement and education in and appreciation of the arts. This is achieved through, amongst other things, the production of plays and encouragement of the dramatic arts generally. The ATT is committed to enabling individuals to access the arts, whatever their age and has established two youth theatrical companies.

The ATT recognises they have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that when given responsibility for children, all Trustees, Trust members, volunteers and staff, together with chaperones and parents/legal guardians, accept their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse.

Everyone has a responsibility to follow procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to the appropriate authorities.

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- to protect children and young people who take part in activities within the ATT from harm. This includes the children of adults who use the ATT's services.
- to provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide the ATT's approach to child protection.
- to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst taking part in activities under the auspices of the ATT.
- to allow members and staff of the Trust to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/england>. This includes:

- Children and Young Persons Act 1933
- Children Acts 1989 and 2004
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017

Supporting documents

This policy and procedure document should be read alongside other ATT policies, procedures and guidance, and other related documents including:

- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Company of Ten Directors' Handbook

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

It is important that anyone involved with the ATT is aware of and can recognise the signs of possible abuse or neglect.

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

- *Physical Abuse* - May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child they are looking after.
- *Sexual Abuse* - Forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. This may involve: (a) physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; (b) non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities; or (c) encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- *Neglect* - Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- *Emotional Abuse* - The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age and developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, for example witnessing domestic abuse within the home or being bullied, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of

emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

The ATT recognises that:

- the welfare of children is paramount in all the work it does and in all the decisions it takes.
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- extra safeguards may be needed to keep children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse.

Prevention

The ATT recognises that the "entertainment industry" can be a very "adult" environment and it expects that all volunteers, members, staff, chaperones, parents/legal guardians and anyone else who comes into contact with children always behave in an appropriate manner. All individuals should remember that "The Welfare of the Child is Paramount".

The ATT will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- establishing and maintaining an ethos where children and young people feel welcome and familiar with their environment. It will do this by ensuring that all children and young people are informed of personal (toilets, dressing rooms etc.) and emergency arrangements (fire exits, meeting points etc.) and any Health and Safety Procedures (Dangerous equipment, First aid etc.).
- ensuring that it provides a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- informing each child or young person, of the name of the appropriate person or people to speak to if they have any questions, problems or concerns.
- ensuring that all children are treated with respect and dignity and they are treated as individuals and offered equality of opportunities.
- ensuring that all children and young people are valued, listened to and respected.
- always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and unnecessary physical contact with children).
- wherever possible involving and allowing parent chaperones to take responsibility for the child/children they are responsible for. At all times noting

that a parent who is not a licensed chaperone can only ever have responsibility for their own child.

- recognising the individual needs of the child, e.g. recognising when a child may be tired and may need a break during rehearsals.
- ensuring that children are supervised appropriately.
- ensuring that all chaperones are registered with the Local Authority in which they reside and have an enhanced DBS check. A list of authorised chaperones is maintained by the Safeguarding Lead and Theatre Manager and is reviewed on an annual basis.
- ensuring all members, volunteers and staff who regularly coming into close contact with one or more children are DBS checked, and they are provided with effective support.
- ensuring that all members, volunteers and staff who don't necessarily have close contact with children but who are involved in a production that involves children are aware of their conduct around children.
- making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern.
- creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment. The ATT is in the process of creating a separate policy and procedure to help deal effectively with any bullying that does arise.
- ensuring that it has an effective complaints policy in place and it is working towards creating separate whistleblowing measures.
- using procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately.
- appointing a Designated Individual to take the lead in all matters relating to Child Protection. They will act as the principal link between the Trust and the Local Authority and will receive and act upon any reports of suspected abuse.
- building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

Child Protection Procedures

Introduction

Often it can be very hard for children and young people to speak out about abuse. They may fear that there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone what is happening to them.

Even if a child doesn't tell someone verbally about what's happening to them, there may be other indicators that something is wrong. People who work with children and young people need to be able to recognise the signs and know how to respond appropriately.

These procedures should be followed by all ATT members, volunteers and staff.

Recognising and responding to abuse

Suspicion of and spotting the signs of abuse

Children and young people who have been abused may want to tell someone but not have the exact words to do so. They may attempt to disclose abuse by giving adults clues through their actions and by using indirect words.

Adults need to be able to notice the signs that a child or young person might be distressed and ask them appropriate questions about what might have caused this.

If you see or suspect abuse of a child, immediately make this known to the Designated Individual responsible for Child Protection. You **should never wait** until a child or young person tells you directly that they are being abused before taking action. Instead, ask the child if everything is OK or discuss your concerns with the ATT designated Safeguarding Lead.

Disclosure

This is the process by which children and young people start to share their experiences of abuse with others. This may start directly or indirectly, and they may start sharing the details of abuse before they are ready to share their thoughts and feelings. It takes extraordinary courage for a child to go through the journey of disclosing abuse.

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

- Always stop and listen straight away, showing that you take their allegations seriously.
- Encourage the child to talk, but do not ask leading questions (i.e. ones that don't prompt a simple yes/no answer), interrupt or ask the child to repeat itself.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling someone.
- Tell them it's not their fault. Abuse is **never the victim's fault**, and they need to know this.
- Never promise that you will keep what is said confidential or secret – explain that if you are told something of concern you will need to let someone know but that you will only tell the people who need to know and can help.

- Say you will take them seriously. A victim could keep abuse secret in fear they won't be believed. They've told you because they want help and trust you'll be the person who will listen to and support them.
- Explain what you'll do next. If age appropriate, explain you'll need to report the abuse to someone who will be able to 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.
- Do not confront the alleged abuser. Confronting the alleged abuser about what the victim has told you could make the situation a lot worse for them.
- Report what you have seen or heard the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Fiona Davidson by calling 01727 861924 or 07834 826604 or by emailing fionad.d@btopenworld.com
- In an emergency, or if someone is at immediate risk, dial 999.

DO NOT worry that you might be mistaken. You have a responsibility to pass on your concerns following a disclosure. Never think 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

Handling Allegations

If a child makes an allegation against anyone, it **must** be reported as a matter of urgency to the Designated Individual for Child Protection who will refer to Social Services (Department for Children's Services) or the police.

If the allegation is against the Designated Individual, then the information should be reported to another senior member of the Trust or directly to Social Services (Department for Children's Services). 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.

If you raise a safeguarding concern or pass on an allegation, you have a duty to ensure your concern is received and taken seriously. If you remain concerned, you should escalate the matter to the Board of Trustees/Management Committee.

Managing allegations made against a child

There are different ways that a child or young person may be abusive towards others, and they might not realise they are doing so:

- bullying or cyberbullying
- emotional abuse
- online abuse
- physical abuse
- sexting

- sexual abuse

When a child abuses another child, it is sometimes called 'peer-on-peer' or 'child-on-child' abuse. Peer-on-peer abuse refers to abuse that takes place between children of a similar age, whereas child-on-child refers to abuse between children of any age. Sometimes children might also display abusive behaviour towards adults.

Identifying concerns

There are a range of ways concerns might be raised.

- A child or adult might make a direct allegation of abuse by a child or young person.
- A child or adult might tell you they're uncomfortable with a child or young person's behaviour. They may not realise the behaviour is abusive.
- A member of staff or volunteer might observe behaviour that gives cause for concern and make a report following your organisation's safeguarding procedures.
- Your organisation may be informed that a child or young person is the subject of an investigation.
- A child or young person might tell you they have harmed someone else or are at risk of doing so.

Responding

When responding to an allegation of abuse made against a child, it's important to consider the needs of everyone involved. **This should be handled differently to allegations or concerns raised regarding adults.**

Keeping records

It's important to keep accurate and detailed notes on any concerns you have about a child's behaviour. You should share this record with the person responsible for the supervision or pastoral care of the child and your nominated child protection lead.

Include:

- the child's details (name, age)
- the date and time of the incident
- what was happening before the incident took place
- what the child said or did that gave you cause for concern (write down their exact words if possible)
- whether the behaviour appeared spontaneous or premeditated
- the people involved
- name of person reporting and to whom it was reported
- actions taken to investigate and any further actions taken e.g. suspension of individual
- reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency

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

Photography and the Internet

There have been increasing concerns about the risks posed by the Internet to children and young people through the use of social media and photographs on websites. To reduce this risk we ensure:

- Photographs are not labelled with the actor's names – only the photographer is identified.
- Written parent/carer and personal consent is always obtained prior to use or publication of images.
- Where a play addresses **sensitive topics**:
 - Children are not included any galleries which are circulated for marketing purposes or to the case.
 - Any photographs of child actors are stored in individual online galleries and are marked "DO NOT USE FOR PUBLICITY - NOT FOR CIRCULATION - FOR CHILD PARENTS ONLY".
 - If individual photographs are to be used for the printed foyer photos, specific approval on the photographs to be used must be obtained from a parent or guardian.

For more information see our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

Child Performance Licences

A person must have a licence to perform up until the end of the academic year in which they turn 16 (normally Year 11) if they are cast in an ATT production.

For all non-youth-company ATT productions, the Director must promptly notify and liaise with the Safeguarding Lead if they intend to cast a person under the age of 16 in a Company of Ten production. This should be identified and managed at the **earliest opportunity** and the Safeguarding Lead should be informed as soon as the decision is made by the Director that they intend to involve children and certainly before any child is invited to audition.

The licence application should be completed in accordance with the current Local Authority guidance and deadlines and certainly before the first performance. It should be sent to the local authority in which the child or young person lives and will be undertaken by the Safeguarding Lead.

All chaperones must be licensed by the Local Authority, and a list of authorised chaperones is available from the Safeguarding Lead. One or more chaperones must be nominated on the application form and there must be sufficient chaperone cover for all performances. No chaperone may also be taking part in the production or involved in any other aspect of the performance, including Front of House or Backstage. A parent or carer who is not a licenced chaperone may, on occasion, supervise their own child, but they cannot supervise any other children.

Guidelines and application forms can be found on the local authority websites. The main authority is likely to be Hertfordshire County Council, but individuals should be aware that children may live outside of Hertfordshire:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/young-people-and-work/apply-for-a-childs-performance-licence/apply-for-a-childs-performance-licence.aspx>

Designated Individual

The current Designated Individual for Child Protection and Safeguarding for the ATT:

Name: Fiona Davidson

Position in company: Safeguarding Lead

Contact details: Email: fionad.d@btopenworld.com

Telephone: 01727 861924 or 07834 826604

Address: Abbey Theatre, Holywell Hill, St Albans, AL1 2DL

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 or help@nspcc.org.uk

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Record of Policy

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Associated Policies	Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Company of Ten Directors' Handbook Data Protection Policy DBS Policy EDI Policy

This policy was last reviewed on: 2 December 2025