



Policy for the Development and Protection of Young People
within the Stage One Theatre Group

FOREWORD

Stage One welcomes young people and encourages them to take part in the Group's dramatic productions and other events. While young people shall enjoy all the rights of membership, when they are in the theatre (or at a Stage One organized event) the Group owes them a special duty of care. There are two main elements to consider;

- a) the development of drama related skills, concepts and knowledge
- b) child protection.

Safe from harm (Smith and Home Office, 1993) recommends that all voluntary organizations involved in working with children adopt a policy statement on *safeguarding the welfare of children.

The Children Act 1989 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 identify a child as being under the age of 18 years.

**Safeguarding Children* (Social Services Inspectorate et al 2002) have taken the term safeguarding to mean;

- i.) all agencies working with children, young people and their families take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children's welfare are minimised; and
- ii) where there are concerns about children and young people's welfare all agencies take all appropriate measures to address those concerns working to agreed policies.

Safe From Harm sets out 13 key recommendations for all organisations working with children and young people;

1. Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding and the welfare of children.
2. Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children can occur.
3. Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent adult.
4. Apply procedures for protecting children to all staff and volunteers.
5. Give all staff and volunteers clear roles.
6. Use supervision as a means of protecting children.
7. Treat all would be staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children.
8. Gain at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicants paid work or volunteering with children.

9. Explore all applicants' experience of contact or working with children in an interview before appointment.
10. Find out whether an applicant has any convictions for criminal offences against children.
11. Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.
12. Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse.
13. Train staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.

The guidelines are intended for use by all government agencies working with children. *The Protection of children Act 1999* advises all voluntary organisations to follow these guidelines where possible and applicable. Some are not relevant to or practicable for the Group to follow but where possible they have been followed in the development of this policy.

This policy document aims to clearly set out procedures and responsibilities which will, as far as possible, ensure the development, safety and well being of all young people in Stage One Theatre Group.

1. THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is responsible, through directors and event organisers, for ensuring the development and safeguarding the welfare of young people taking part in Stage One's activities. They must plan/organise the work of theatre group to facilitate this.

They will:

- 1.1 appoint a committee member with special responsibility for young members. (Youth Liaison Officer) This person will have previous experience of working with young people. The role and responsibilities of this post are set out in appendix 1.
- 1.2 appoint suitable chaperones following the vetting procedures set out in appendix 2.
- 1.3 review this policy statement and appendices at regular intervals and at least once a year.
- 1.4 where possible arrange and/or facilitate activities and events to enable the development of dramatic skills, etc.
- 1.5 where necessary make final decisions on the suitability of roles and/or activities for young members.
- 1.6 raise awareness among all Stage One members of the issues relating to the safeguarding of young people within the Group.

2. THE YOUNG MEMBER

Any young member who wishes to attend or take part in any Stage One Theatre Group activity will accept the authority of the organiser and/or chaperone and will comply with their requests. They will:

- 2.1 inform the chaperone when they arrive at or leave the theatre.
- 2.2 not leave the theatre premises without permission from the chaperone
- 2.3 inform the chaperone and/or organiser **immediately** of any concerns they may have.

3. THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

The parent/guardian retains ultimate responsibility for their child. To help ensure their safety they will:

- 3.1 where applicable read the script before auditions take place
- 3.2 meet with the Director to confirm that they are happy with the script or to discuss any concerns they may have
- 3.3 arrange the arrival and collection of their child with the appointed chaperone
- 3.4 report any concerns **immediately** to the appointed chaperone.

4. THE DIRECTOR

The Director is responsible for safeguarding any young people s/he chooses to involve in a production. S/he will:

- 4.1 consult with the Youth Liaison Officer on the age related suitability of particular roles **before** auditions take place. In the event of any conflict of opinion the final decision will be made by the committee.
- 4.2 discuss with parents/guardians the role or position that the young person is taking and any issues that arise from this.
- 4.3 discuss with parents/guardians suitable supervision arrangements especially with regard to drop off and collection times and procedures.
- 4.4 select chaperones from the approved list and ensure that they attend every rehearsal where young people are present. A chaperone may supervise a maximum of ten young people.

5. CHAPERONES

Chaperones are essential to ensure the safety of young people in the theatre during rehearsals, performances and other Stage One activities. The Chaperone is responsible for the young people in his/her charge for the duration of any Group activity in which they are involved. Guidelines on supervision are set out in appendix 3. The following are absolute requirements:

The Chaperone will:

- 5.1 be vetted by the committee following agreed procedures.
- 5.2 read and follow any guidelines provided by the committee
- 5.3 attend any training provided by the committee.
- 5.4 make arrangements for the arrival and departure of the young person.
- 5.5 ensure that each young person reports to them when they arrive at the theatre
- 5.6 provide suitable supervision for the young person until they are collected at the end of the activity.
- 5.7 deal with any problems that occur during supervision. Follow procedures (appendix 3) where this is not possible.

6. GROUP MEMBERS

All adult Stage One members have a duty of care towards the younger members in the Group. They have a responsibility to take cognisance of the issues raised in this document.

- 6.1 Should any Stage One member be organising an event or activity involving young people they take on the responsibilities of the Director with regard to the protection of young people. They may appoint a dedicated chaperone or choose to be the chaperone themselves. One chaperone may supervise up to 10 young people.
- 6.2 When necessary, guidance on the involvement of young people in any of Stage One's activities should be sought from the Committee.
- 6.3 Should any member have a concern about an incident or situation during a Group activity involving a young person they should not investigate it themselves but should notify the Youth Liaison Officer on the committee (or the Chairman if s/he is not available).
- 6.5 Should a young person make a disclosure to you of unacceptable behaviour on the part of another person report this immediately to the Youth Liaison Officer or the Chairman.

For their own protection and that of the young people involved all Group members should take steps to ensure that they are not placed in compromising situations with regard to young members of the Group. If in the presence of one young person take care to ensure that there is another adult in the room with you– particularly in the dressing room. Should any member of Stage One Theatre Group have concerns about the safety of a young person they should approach the adult responsible for organizing the event. If this is not possible they should contact the Youth Liaison Officer or the Chairman.

*The Joint Chief Inspectors Report, *Safeguarding children* (Social Services Inspectorate et al, 2002 UK), states that 'safeguarding' as a concept has evolved from an initial concern about children and young people in public care to include the protection from harm of all children and young people and to cover all agencies and organizations working with children and their families. The joint inspectors have taken the term to mean that:

- a) all agencies working with children/young people take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children's welfare are minimised:
- b) where there are concerns about children and young people's welfare, all agencies take all appropriate action to address those concerns, working to agreed local policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies.

STAGE ONE THEATRE YOUTH POLICY

APPENDIX ONE – YOUTH LIAISON OFFICER

The Youth Liaison Officer will have committee responsibility for all Stage One activities involving young people. They will:

- i ensure that all members have access to the Group's policy statement concerning young members of Stage One Theatre
- ii ensure that all members involved in organising plays, workshops or events are in compliance with the requirements of that policy
- iii be actively involved, along with other qualified and/or experienced adults in the recruitment, selection and vetting of chaperones
- iv deal with any questions or problems that arise and if necessary bring them to the attention of the committee.
- v regularly update the policy and appendices of the policy document (at least once a year).

1 PRODUCTIONS

The Youth Liaison Officer will:

- 1.1 read every play before auditions take place to determine, in conjunction with the Director, the suitability of any role or the play itself for a young member of the Group. Should there be any disagreement The Youth Liaison Officer will bring this to the committee for a final decision.
- 1.2 be available to talk with any young member who may have a problem or concern.
- 1.3 deal with any problems or concerns brought to them by young members, parents/guardians, chaperones, Directors or any Stage One member.
- 1.4 report serious incidents or concerns to the committee.

2 WORKSHOPS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Youth Liaison Officer will:

- 2.1 be aware of the nature and content of all activities involving young members
- 2.2 discuss any concerns with the organiser/s and if necessary bring any outstanding problems to the committee
- 2.2 ensure that all adults involved comply with the requirements of the policy document
- 2.3 be available to talk with any young member who may have a problem or concern

The Youth Liaison officer should have experience of working with young people and be approachable and easily accessible to them. They will be required to advise adult and young members, report to the committee and ensure that all members and the committee comply with the requirements of the policy document.

STAGE ONE THEATRE YOUTH POLICY

APPENDIX TWO - APPOINTMENT AND VETTING OF A CHAPERONE

The role of chaperone is essential in ensuring as far as is possible the safety of young people within Stage One Theatre. It is therefore worth taking time and care in choosing chaperones. It is also important not to make the process so arduous or threatening, that volunteers do not come forward. It is not possible for Stage One to carry out the kind of vetting procedures now required in the UK for all persons working with children. It is debatable that Stage One would wish to follow those procedures even if they were available - especially as they have been shown on a number of occasions not to work. There are simple measures that can be taken by Stage One within the context of what is possible and desirable. Knowledge of and about the individual applying to become a chaperone is key.

This should be acquired through the following process;

1 APPLICATION

All potential chaperones should complete the application form accompanying this document.

2 INTERVIEW

This does not need to be a formal procedure. A structured conversation between the applicant and the Youth Liaison Officer and/or Chairman about the following aspects should provide sufficient information to determine the individual's suitability to be a chaperone;

- i) any previous experience with young people
- ii) other relevant experience
- iii) attitudes to young people
- iv) willingness to enforce rules
- v) understanding of the importance of the role of the chaperone
- vi) general character

3 REFERENCE

Should the Youth Liaison Officer, the Chairman or the Committee feel that the interview has not provided sufficient information they may decide to ask the applicant for the name of a referee - someone who can give information about their experience with young people or to vouch for their character. The reference does not have to be written. It is preferable for one individual, the Youth Liaison Officer, or the Chairman - to speak to the referee about the applicants experience and character. It is important to make it clear to the referee what role the chaperone will have.

4 REVIEW

Once an individual has been placed on the list of approved chaperones it is important that their performance as chaperone is monitored. Again this should not be an arduous process - talking to the Director or event organiser and one or two of the young members involved should provide sufficient information.

STAGE ONE THEATRE YOUTH POLICY

APPENDIX THREE – PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH A PROBLEM

TO BE COMPLETED



CHAPERONE REGISTRATION

Stage One Theatre Group is responsible for the acceptance of all members working with children and young people within the Group. Please complete this form and return it to the Youth Liaison Officer or the Chairman.

Name: _____

Telephone No: _____ email: _____

Occupation: _____

Please outline any experience of looking after or working with young people:

Please outline any relevant qualification or appropriate training:

Are you prepared to undertake appropriate training as a chaperone?

I understand the nature of the work I will be asked to undertake as a chaperone. I have read the Group's Youth Policy.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Children Act 1989

Working together to safeguard children Dept of Health 1995

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Every Child Matters The \treasury 2003

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Safeguarding Children Social Services Inspectorate 2002

The Convention on the Rights of the Child UN 1989

The Scottish Federation for Coarse Angling 2001

Inform NSPCC 2003

Bureau of democracy, Human Rights and Labour 2008

Social Edge Skoll Foundation 2008