

Policy

Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults



Policy Statement

The Seagull Theatre is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults. It recognises its responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse and exploitation.

Employees and volunteers will endeavour to work together to encourage the development of an ethos which embraces difference and diversity and respects the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

This policy relates to children and young people up to the age of 18 years and vulnerable adults¹.

The key principles underpinning this policy are:

- The interests and safety of the child, young person or vulnerable adult are paramount
- All children, young people and vulnerable adults should be treated fairly and with respect
- All children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation
- All children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to express their views on matters that affect them.

A. Good Practice Code of Conduct

All staff and volunteers at the Seagull Theatre are encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Seagull Theatre requires all staff and volunteers with substantial access to children and/or vulnerable adults to be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau or any system that supersedes it. Our aim is to strive towards creating a positive culture and climate by adhering to the following guidelines:

YOU SHOULD

- Help to develop an ethos which promotes difference and diversity, where all people are treated equally and with dignity and respect.
- Always put the care, welfare and safety needs of a child, young person or vulnerable adult first.
- Actively encourage children, young people and vulnerable adults to be involved in making choices and decisions which directly affect them.

¹ A vulnerable adult is a person over the age of 18 years who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of learning or physical disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

- Respect a child's [young person's or vulnerable adult's] right to privacy, personal space and be sensitive to their feelings about participating in events.
- Speak to another member of staff immediately if you suspect that a child is experiencing bullying or harassment.
- Listen carefully to any child who 'tells you' (sometimes through drawings and behaviour as well as words) that they are being harmed and report what you have heard immediately to the Theatre Manager or a Director. **In an emergency situation you should contact the Police or Social Services directly.**
- Only restrain a child, young person or vulnerable adult who is at risk of inflicting harm to themselves or others.

YOU SHOULD NOT

- Exaggerate, trivialise or ignore another member of staff or volunteer's concerns about a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- Discuss personal issues about a child [young person or vulnerable adult] or their family with other people except with the Theatre Manager or a Director when you are concerned about the child's [young person's or vulnerable adult's] well being.
- Make derogatory remarks, gestures or make suggestive comments in front of children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Allow a child, young person or vulnerable adult to be bullied or harmed by either a member of the organisation or by one of their peers.
- Allow children to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged.
- Engage in rough or physical contact unless it is permitted within the rules of a game or performance or conforms to the guidance on appropriate physical restraint.
- Form inappropriate emotional or physical relationships with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

B. Child Protection and Visiting Companies and groups

Visiting companies and groups who are rehearsing/performing at the Seagull Theatre are required to have their own Child Protection Policy and procedures in place where members of the company are children, young people or vulnerable adults or where the visiting company plan to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults as part of an ancillary education package. We reserve the right to ask for copies of all child protection documentation on request and ensure that all permissions and arrangements for supervision are in place.

The Seagull Repertory Company must also comply with this policy together with local authority regulations when using children and vulnerable adults in productions. This includes applying for appropriate licences, appointing chaperones and following guidelines given.

C. Health and Safety in the Theatre

An assessment to identify risks will be carried out prior to every new class, workshop or production involving children, young people and vulnerable adults at The Seagull. This will ensure that risks are minimised in the studios, theatre spaces, dressing rooms and back stage areas for workshops and/or rehearsals. The following things

will be checked prior to a group of children, young people or vulnerable adults using a space:

- Is the room temperature suitable?
- Is the room light enough?
- Are the exits clearly identified and free from obstruction
- Is the floor area free from obstruction?
- Are there any potential trip, slip or other hazards?
- Are the fire extinguishers clearly visible and unobstructed?

The member of staff/volunteer leading the session/rehearsal, must be made aware of fire evacuation procedure from the space they are using.

D. General definition of abuse

Children, young people and/or vulnerable adults may be in need of protection where their basic needs are not being met, in a manner appropriate to their stage of development, and they will be at risk from avoidable acts or omissions on the part of their parent(s), sibling(s), other relative(s) or carer(s).

To define an act or omission as abusive and/or presenting future risk for the purpose of registration a number of elements must be taken into account. These include demonstrable or predictable harm to the child, young person or vulnerable adult as a result of action or inaction by the parent or other carer. Abuse can include: **physical injury, physical neglect, sexual abuse, non-organic failure to thrive** (e.g. children who significantly fail to reach normal growth/developmental milestones where physical and genetic reasons have been medically eliminated) and **emotional abuse**.

E. Dealing with Concerns of Abuse

The following action should be taken if you suspect a child or vulnerable adult may be suffering abuse in some way:

- Do not attempt to investigate
- Privately voice your concerns to the supervising teacher/youth worker/carer
- If you continue to feel concerned speak immediately to the Theatre Manager who will contact the relevant authorities
- As soon as possible after becoming aware of possible abuse, make notes about your concerns.
- Pass on your written record to the Theatre Manager. Do not discuss the incident with anyone else
- Ask for support for yourself if you feel you need it

F. Dealing with Disclosures

The following action should be taken if a child or vulnerable adult who has suffered abuse confides in you:

- Listen attentively to what the child, young person or vulnerable adult is saying
- Do not promise confidentiality. The child, young person, vulnerable adult must understand that you will have to pass on information and why it is important
- Ask open non-leading questions which help to clarify what the child is say but not lead into an investigative situation. Intrusive questioning could contaminate a subsequent child protection investigation.

- Reassure the child, young person vulnerable adult that s/he has been courageous in speaking to you about this.
- Do not make judgements about what is disclosed or about the alleged abuser.
- Explain the next step, the child should know that they will be kept informed and supported as appropriate
- Treat the allegation seriously and report it immediately to the Theatre Manager.
- Write down exactly what was said using the pro-forma attached to this policy (Pro-forma for recording concerns/allegations of abuse)
- On no account should you speak to the parent or carer about what has been alleged until the Theatre Manager has investigated the matter and discussed concerns with the Police or Social Worker if appropriate.
- Ask for support for yourself if you feel you need it

G. Dealing with disclosures against a staff member

- Good practise in both the recruitment and supervision of staff and volunteers should be designed in such a way that the risk of abuse is reduced and staff can protect themselves from false allegations. However, the possibility of abuse cannot be eliminated and constant vigilance is necessary.
- If a user tells you that someone in the organisation has caused them harm, this should be treated in the same way as any other disclosure a child may make.
- The information should be passed on to the Theatre Manager and handled in the same manner.

Please note that in managing concerns/disclosures it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. You must abide by these guidelines if you are concerned about the welfare of a user.

H. Defamation

“Concerned adults are sometimes reluctant to report suspicions of abuse for fear that the person suspected will sue them for defamation if the allegation turns out to be unfounded. To be defamatory, a statement must first of all be untrue. Even if subsequently shown to be untrue, the statement will be protected by ‘qualified privilege’ if it is made to the appropriate authority ‘in response to a duty, whether legal, moral, social or in the protection of an interest’. Unjustified repetition of the allegations to other persons will not be protected by privilege.

The qualification on privilege refers to statements motivated by malice. If a statement, even to the appropriate authority, can be shown to be not only untrue, but motivated by malice, then an act of defamation could be successful.”

(Guidelines on Child Protection prepared for the independent schools in Scotland by Kathleen Marshall)

If you are still concerned about defamation you are advised to seek legal advice.

I. Storing of and access to confidential child protection data

The Seagull Theatre abides by the **Data Protection Act 1998**. This act sets out provisions for the regulations of processing of information relating to individuals,

including obtaining, holding, use or disclosure of such information. Children are entitled to the same duty of confidence as adults, provided they have the ability to understand the choices and their consequences relating to the proposed lines of action. Where consent had not been obtained the law permits disclosure of confidential information necessary to safe guard a child where s/he is considered to be at risk. All child protection information will be stored securely and will only be shared with authorised personnel and appropriate authorities.

J. Managing Information from the Criminal Records Bureau

The Seagull Theatre is committed to the development of best practice in relation to the children, young people and vulnerable adults and will ensure the following practice:

- Disclosures will only be requested when necessary and relevant to a particular post/role and the information provided on a Disclosure certificate will only be used for these purposes.
- Disclosure information will only be shared with the Theatre Manager and Directors who are authorised to see it in the course of their duties
- Where additional disclosure information is provided to The Seagull Theatre this be discussed with the individual should the Disclosure information have an impact on the outcome on the employment/ continued volunteering of the individual.

Des Reynolds

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Note: With thanks to Traverse Theatre for providing a model policy.



Pro-forma for recording concerns/allegations of abuse

Name of Child:
Age:
Address and telephone number:
Name of parents/carers:
Name of other siblings (if known):
Any special circumstances relating to the child (e.g. special needs, health and welfare issues):
What is the nature of your concern (e.g. allegation by a child, young person or vulnerable adult or a suspicion of abuse by a concerned adult)
If a child has alleged abuse, give the name of the person they spoke to and the time and place when this allegation was made
If a user has alleged abuse, record as quickly as possible what was said. This should be as accurate as possible and in the child's own words

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If another adult has expressed concern about the safety of a user record their concerns and ask them to confirm that the details are correct
Have any possible signs or indicators of abuse been identified? By whom?
If known record the name(s) of the person(s) implicated in the abuse
Record when the referral to social work, police or reporter was made and the name of the person who received your call and advice given
What advice was given about liaising with the user's parent(s)/carer(s)?

Signed (Theatre Manager) _____

Date _____

Signed (Director) _____

Date _____