

Georgian Theatre Royal

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Georgian Theatre Royal (GTR) works with children in theatre, education and community settings. The Board of Trustees and the Staff are committed to the well-being and safety of every child we work with, and this Policy outlines the principles we work to. It is supported by a series of Good Practice Guidelines and The Policy and Good Practice Guidelines apply to all staff, volunteers and artists who work for, and with, The Georgian Theatre Royal.

Principles

In all our work with children we adhere to the following principles:

- The well-being and safety of each child is our primary concern.
- We respect the rights and dignity of every child with whom we work.
- Children are treated equitably and sensitively, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, cultural background, sexual orientation or religion, in line with The GTR's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Relationships between GTR staff, volunteers and artists and the children with whom they work and might be in contact with are based on mutual trust and respect.
- GTR staff, volunteers and artists seek to achieve a balance between artistic outcomes and the social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs of the children with whom we work or meet.
- The feelings and concerns of any child or their parent/carer are listened to and acted upon.
- All GTR staff, volunteers and artists who work or have contact with children have a responsibility to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of any child with whom they come into contact. Any suspicions or allegations of abuse are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Training in child safeguarding will be offered to staff and volunteers whose jobs involve working closely with children.
- Staff recruitment and selection processes will include DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks where appropriate.

Legal context

GTR uses the word 'child' to refer to anyone under the age of 18, as defined by the Children Act 1989. Our priority is the safety of the children with whom we work. Although not legally required to do so, we take every reasonable step to ensure a level of care that is comparable to the requirements of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.

Designated Person

The Board of Trustees of The GTR have overall responsibility for Child Safeguarding. The Chief Executive of The GTR is the first person to be contacted if an allegation of abuse is made.

Recruitment

The GTR recruits a diverse range of creative and administrative staff and theatre volunteers. Recruitment procedures for these posts vary to reflect the nature of the appointment being sought. However, when making an appointment, procedures should include the following:

- Adherence to the company's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- All shortlisted candidates will be interviewed
- Two members of staff and/or GTR Board of Directors will conduct interviews.
- The same questions will be asked of all interviewed candidates.
- Notes will be kept of interviews.
- Interviewed candidates will be asked to provide two referees and all references will be taken up.
- Volunteers will be asked to acknowledge that they have read this policy document.

Whistle Blowing

The GTR's Whistle Blowing Policy intends to create the right conditions for staff, volunteers or children working with The GTR to air concerns or allegations relating to child abuse.

Community work

The GTR's work also involves adults who are vulnerable, e.g. adults with learning difficulties, and a significantly ageing volunteer force. The Principles outlined above apply equally to our work with vulnerable adults.

Child Safeguarding Procedures

Recognising child abuse is not easy – however it is not up to individuals to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. If you have any anxieties at all it is **essential** that you report them **as soon as possible**.

The designated person responsible for matters of Child Safeguarding is the Chief Executive of the GTR.

The Chief Executive's contact details are on the sheet at the end of this document. You can either report directly to the designated person, or to your line manager or staff volunteer contact who will then refer the matter to the designated person. Appropriate action can then be taken and the appropriate bodies allowed to investigate. This applies regardless of whether your concern relates to the behaviour of another GTR employee, volunteer or the possibility that a child might be a victim of abuse at home or elsewhere. These procedures apply to anyone working for GTR, whether as a member of staff, a freelance drama worker or as a volunteer.

Definitions of abuse: It is generally accepted that there are 4 main forms of abuse:

- Physical abuse* – including hitting, shaking, throwing and burning. Failure to act to protect a child is also considered to be physical abuse.
- Emotional abuse* – the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child, which can include making a child feel worthless, unloved or inadequate.
- Sexual abuse* – which includes activities involving physical contact, or non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at pornographic material. Sexual activities with a child are abusive regardless of whether or not the child is perceived to consent.
- Neglect* – the persistent failure to meet a child's needs.

Things to look for and think about:

- Most children acquire cuts and bruises during their normal daily life, but the location of bruises can be indicators of abuse – for example a bruise on a part of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, such as the face, can be a worrying sign. Bruises which reflect hand marks or injuries where the explanation does not make sense are other causes for concern, as are unexplained changes in behaviour.
- Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, but signs can include developmental delay, fear of making mistakes, self harm, or a fear of their parent being approached regarding their behaviour.
- In cases of sexual abuse it is usually the child's behaviour which causes people to become concerned. In all cases, children who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that any child who talks to you about this is listened to and taken seriously. Behavioural changes which can indicate sexual abuse include nightmares, sexual knowledge which is beyond a child's age or development, eating problems, self harm and drugs misuse.
- Neglect can be difficult to recognise, but physical signs can include hunger, weight loss and inappropriate dress for the conditions. Children may also complain of being tired all the time, and talk about being left alone or unsupervised.

What to do if you suspect abuse might be taking place:

- As the person in direct contact with the children, it is your responsibility to report observations or suspicions as soon as is reasonably possible to your line manager or to the designated person responsible for Child Safeguarding.
- A written report should be made of observations and suspicions and this should be signed and dated by the line manager or designated person.
- The designated person will then refer the matter to the appropriate authorities.
- If you receive information regarding abuse via a third person, such as a volunteer or another child, you must take this seriously and follow the procedure outlined above.

What to do if a child discloses abuse:

- At the earliest opportunity you must tell the child that you will have to share this information with other people.
- NEVER promise to keep it a secret.
- LISTEN to what the child is telling you and ALWAYS take them seriously.
- Allow the child to continue at their own pace and only intervene to ask questions necessary for your own understanding and clarification. Avoid asking leading questions.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- Record in writing what was said, using the child's own words, as soon as possible. A note of dates, times and any names mentioned should be made, as well as a record of to whom the information was passed. This record should be signed and dated.

The information should be passed on to your line manager or the designated person responsible for Child Safeguarding as soon as is reasonably possible. The matter will then be referred to the appropriate authorities.

Remember that the information you are hearing may be shocking or distressing, but it is important that you do not respond by showing horror, distaste or anger, but that you remain calm and sympathetic throughout.

What to do if the situation is an emergency:

In the event of a situation requiring immediate attention that you feel unable to deal with – for instance, a child may be refusing to go home for fear of abuse – and the line manager and designated person are uncontactable, then you should telephone the Social Services Emergency Duty Team or the Police.

What to do if an allegation is made involving anyone working for The GTR:

Any allegation made by a child regarding abuse involving anyone working for The GTR must be taken seriously and reported immediately to the designated person responsible for Child Safeguarding. This is important for the protection of the child and the worker or volunteer involved.

The child should be informed of the seriousness of their allegation and that it will need to be discussed with other people, including the person against whom they have made the allegation. They should also be told that they will be kept informed of what is happening.

The designated person will discuss the allegation with the worker or volunteer involved and then refer the matter to the appropriate authority for investigation as appropriate.

A written record of proceedings should be made as soon as possible, signed and dated by the designated person.

Recording information:

Any information received regarding possible abuse should be recorded in writing as soon as possible and certainly within 24 hours.

The information should be recorded as near as possible in the words of the person who provided the information and should include details of dates, times and names. A note should also be made of to whom the information was referred.

DO NOT be tempted to record your own interpretation of what you have been told.

The information should be recorded by you as the person who received the information. If you are able to refer the matter to your line manager or the designated person responsible for child safeguarding within 24 hours, then the information may instead be recorded by them.

All written records should be signed and dated.

All written records should be treated as strictly confidential and the copies kept by the designated person.

Signed and dated records should be kept of subsequent meetings and telephone calls in order that they are available for any possible investigation.

Confidentiality

The legal principle that the 'welfare of the child is paramount' means that the considerations of confidentiality which might apply in other situations within The GTR will not be allowed to override the right of children to be protected from harm. However, every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned if an allegation is made and is being investigated.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES: WORKING WITH CHILDREN

These Guidelines have been developed to help all staff, volunteers and artists who work for The GTR to ensure the safety of all the children with whom we work. They are also designed to help protect staff and volunteers: We know that false allegations of abuse are occasionally made by children and – although this is a rare occurrence – it is important that staff and volunteers do not put themselves in situations where they might be vulnerable.

These are general Guidelines which should be read in conjunction with The GTR's Child Safeguarding Policy. More detailed guidelines are available about specific areas of The GTR's work: education, youth theatre, children on work placement, and children and the media. Our policy and guidelines apply to all staff, whether on permanent, temporary or freelance contracts or working as volunteers.

A Child-centred approach

It is essential to The GTR that the children we work with are valued and respected as individuals, and that their views and concerns are listened to. Remember that having an open and positive relationship with children is

important, and contributes both to the success of the rehearsal and performance process, and to the outcomes in education work. Working with children in any context at The GTR, staff and volunteers must:

- treat children with respect
- offer encouragement and praise
- take time to listen to children's views
- where possible take children's views on board in any relevant decision-making process.

Contact with children

You must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Avoid being on your own with a child – if it *is* unavoidable, make sure that you are within sight or hearing of others.
- Do not have any unnecessary physical contact with children. If it is unavoidable or indeed desirable, for example if a child is distressed about something, the purpose of the contact must be made clear and it should only take place with the child's consent. Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, however well-intentioned. Clearly within drama classes, rehearsals and audience engagement, physical contact is often necessary and more detailed advice is given about that in the education guidelines.
- Respect a young person's right to privacy.
- Do not do anything of a personal nature for a child if they can do it themselves.
- Adults and children should not share changing and toilet facilities. Separate dressing rooms and toilets should be provided for children performing with the company; when working in schools, make sure you use the staff toilets not the children's.
- It is not good practice to take children alone on car journeys, however short. If it is essential it must be done with the parents'/carers' consent, and insurance liability needs to be checked.

Relationships

Many people at The GTR will develop relationships with children or young people through their work. This might be, for example, a drama worker working with children in a youth theatre activity or a member of administrative staff working with young people who are taking part in GTR media activities. This contact can lead to what is known as a "relationship of trust", i.e. a relationship that exists between an adult and a young person aged 18 years or under, where the adult has power or influence over that young person due to the nature of their role within an organisation. It is essential that such power is not abused in any way by anyone working for GTR. You should bear in mind:

- Young people aged 16 to 18 years can legally consent to some types of sexual activity. However, in law they are still classified as children (The Children Act 1989). A young person's age does not necessarily reflect maturity and emotional development and young adults may still be vulnerable to abuse. The law says that it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to have sexual intercourse or engage in any other sexual activity with a person under that age, if the older person is in a position of trust in relation to the younger person.
- It is essential that you recognise your responsibility towards the children and young people with whom The GTR works, and that you do not abuse your position of trust. Do not meet with children outside your work with them, whether that work is taking place at The GTR, in an educational institution, or elsewhere.

Children in employment

Occasionally young people of 16 or 17 are employed by The GTR. The GTR's relationship with any employee is governed by employment law, however where an employee is under the age of 18 we are mindful of the fact that they are still defined as a child in law. As far as is practically possible within their job role, the principles behind our Child Safeguarding Policy are adhered to.

In General

- It is important that you challenge unacceptable behaviour. Sanctions or reprimands which are in any way humiliating, or make a child look or feel foolish in front of others, are not acceptable. Humiliating behaviour is equally unacceptable from an adult or another child.
- You must report any suspicions or allegations of abuse or bullying, whether by an adult or another child. The section at the end of this document will tell you how to do this.

Bullying

Bullying is not acceptable to The GTR, whether adult to adult, adult to child, or child to child. Bullying can include:

- Physical actions such as hitting and kicking
- Name calling, humiliation, ignoring
- Racial insults and gestures
- Sexual comments and suggestions
- Unwanted physical contact

If a child tells you that they are being bullied, they must be taken seriously and given support. Similarly, the bully needs to be supported, as they may well be victims of bullying themselves. Any incident of bullying will be discussed with the victim's and bully's parents or teacher.

IF YOU HAVE ANY ANXIETIES AT ALL REGARDING ANY OF THE ABOVE IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU REPORT THEM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ABOVE PROCEDURE.

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