



Working With Children Policy

16th Avenue Theatre has a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children and young people engaged in a theatre production or drama classes at 16th Avenue Theatre and must ensure they are compliant with the relevant legislation and are aware of the obligations of involving children in a programme.

The guidance below is designed to provide information on the expectations of 16th Avenue Theatre when engaging a director or tutor to work with young people.

The format of the show or class and the child related aspects of a programme should be fully discussed with the committee before auditioning for a production or starting classes.

All members of the Production Team and 16th Avenue Theatre Committee should be familiar with the relevant and applicable laws when working with children. Note: the term 'children and young people' (shortened to just 'children') means anyone under the age of 18 years.

Child Protection Policy

This **Child Protection Policy** applies to all 16th Avenue Theatre endorsed productions and classes, and all independent tutors engaged on any commissioned production for the 16th Avenue Theatre involving children. It applies to all children up to 18 years of age. It is essential that all production crew members are familiar with the 16th Avenue Theatre Child Protection Policy and how to keep the welfare of the child central to their work.

Child Protection Code of Conduct

The **Child Protection Code of Conduct** consists of 12 golden rules to follow when interacting with children and young people in any capacity on behalf of 16th Avenue Theatre

- Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child at all times.

- Always act within professional boundaries - ensure all contact with children is essential to the programme / project / activity you are working on.
- You must always use 16th Avenue Theatre equipment when interacting with children and the use of personal phones or cameras is not permitted.
- Remember they are children first, and contributors or participants second.
- Never give out your personal contact details, do not 'friend' or 'follow' children you are working with on social networking sites.
- Do not assume sole responsibility for a child and only take on practical caring responsibilities such as taking a child to the toilet in an emergency. If a child needs care alert the parent or chaperone.
- Do not engage in One-on-One tutorials without consulting with the Director, the PLCM (Production Liaison Committee Member) and/or the President.
- Never lose sight of the fact that you are with children - behave appropriately and use appropriate language at all times.
- Listen to and respect children at all times, don't patronise them and avoid favouritism.
- Treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination.
- If you observe children engaging in bullying behaviour or other behaviour that may put them at risk, you must report it to your PLCM, and the President
- Ultimately, if you have any concerns about the welfare of a child or feel someone is behaving inappropriately around children, you have a duty to report your concern to the PLCM and the President.

Child Protection Safeguarding Framework

The **Child Protection Safeguarding Framework** has been developed to support safeguarding discussions between the committee and any independent tutor or director or crew member. It provides a guide to the minimum levels of safeguarding on any production involving children and enables the committee to consider the steps they need to take in order to fulfil these requirements.

- Safeguarding roles and responsibilities include a safeguarding lead person (in the first instance your PLCM)
- Reference to guidelines and need for consultation with the PLCM and President where there is a risk of harm to children, or where there is the potential for child safeguarding issues to arise.
- An understanding of what constitutes abuse, including grooming (see attached document on grooming)
- The process for dealing with online risks such as grooming or child abuse images. You are expected to refer concerns/incidents immediately to the PLCM, and the President.
- Reporting and escalation procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns or allegations related to a child's welfare.

- A description of robust safeguarding measures and procedures including training, criminal background checks, a process for managing production content, chaperones, children on set as guests etc.

Incident Report Form

If anyone's behaviour towards a child causes an individual involved in a production or class any concern it is important that they report it completing the **Incident Report Form** and giving it to the PLCM and the President.

Consent Form and covering letter.

Where children are contributors to programmes, as well as the child's own informed consent, productions will normally need to seek signed consent from the child's parent or legal guardian using the standard **Parental Consent Form**.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is a way of identifying and thinking about some of the issues faced when planning a production, event or project involving children. It is an important step in helping safeguard children.

Remember that children are generally:

- Less able to recognise danger.
- Likely to be in an environment which is unfamiliar to them.
- Inquisitive, which can mean they are more likely to take risks.
- Likely to be more prone to tiredness, anxiety and stress in response to pressure and long hours.

Staff checks

When planning a production, event, activity or project involving children Production Teams and individuals must take steps to ensure that everyone who will (or might) interact directly with children is suitable for this role.

It may be necessary to request a police background check. This needs to be discussed with the PLCM and the President.

Chaperones

The contribution of children and young people in our productions is much valued by 16th Avenue Theatre. It is our practice therefore to have chaperones (usually a committee member or a trusted parent) to act in loco parentis and to ensure the wellbeing of any child or young person under the age of 18 who is performing in, or taking part in, a production as a contributor.

In some circumstances where a child is very young or has particular medical or developmental needs, it may be beneficial to have a parent present while the child is working on the production. However, a chaperone should still be engaged.

Social media and online safety

It is particularly important to consider the role of social media and the internet in young people's lives when setting out to work with children and young people, especially as contributors.

Production Teams must make sure that young people understand the impact of appearing in 16th Avenue Theatre productions, and what the implications can be for anyone active on social media.

Production Teams should have a conversation with the young people about how to keep themselves safe and mitigate any risks and it's a good idea to have a chat with parents too.

Children also need to be given information about what to do if they experience difficulties online after the content is published or broadcast. This can include blocking and reporting to the social networking site but, in more serious cases they can also contact their chaperone, the PLCM or President

Production Teams and individuals should bear in mind that the lower age limit for the majority of social networking sites is 13 years of age and Production Teams must not set out to target children younger than this on social media.

Adult presenters and performers should also be briefed to ensure that their social media activity doesn't breach any safeguarding standards towards young audiences, particularly those who are working on productions likely to attract a family audience.

Referrals

If an individual or a member of the Production Team is concerned that a child's safety or wellbeing is at risk they must follow the 16th Avenue Child Safety Policy, including taking whatever action is necessary to safeguard the child. They must notify the Director, PLCM and President within 48 hours.

Individuals or Production Teams should not worry that they may make a situation worse or suffer any personal detriment by reporting concerns. Not only do individuals and Production Teams have a duty of care, but they are also required by 16th Avenue Theatre to raise any concerns they have and can therefore be confident that they will be listened to and supported as required.

If an individual or Production Team is sent something that they have reason to believe may be child abuse images or video it should be reported immediately to the president. NEVER open any attachments or click on any links that could be child abuse images and do not forward them to anyone unless asked to do so by the police.

If an individual or Production Team has reason to think a child is being groomed online (remember that the child may not realise it themselves) this is a mandatory referral and must be reported by the Production Team to the PLCM and president who will take the appropriate actions regarding reporting to the Police Child Protection Team.

Contacts

Contact the President - Phone 021 021 95 555 or therealheathergraham@gmail.com