

SOUTH LONDON THEATRE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



- It is the responsibility of every member of South London Theatre to provide children and young people with a safe environment in which to enjoy arts activities.
 - South London Theatre recognises its responsibility to safeguard all children and young people that take part in our workshops and shows. This means protecting them from physical, mental and emotional abuse of any kind.
 - South London Theatre recognises its responsibility to uphold its policy for child protection in all areas of its work and that any agents or subcontractors acting under South London Theatre Company shall abide by the policy and sign that they are doing so.
 - All children and young people regardless of race, gender, cultural heritage, ability or religious belief should be able to enjoy South London Theatre without fear of abuse of any kind.
-

South London Theatre realises it has a responsibility:

1. To safeguard and promote the interests and well-being of the children and young people with whom they are working
 2. To ensure that all adults working with children and young people are made aware of their role and responsibilities and are provided with appropriate training.
 3. To take all reasonable and practical steps to protect children and young people from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment
 4. To respect children and young people's rights, reasonable wishes and feelings
 5. To ensure that all South London Theatre members working directly with children are aware of all situations that may compromise their position of authority.
-

Procedures laid down in this policy will:

1. Offer safeguards to the children and young people with whom we work, our professionals, members of staff, freelance facilitators and other subsidiary roles.
2. To help maintain the professionalism and the safeguards of good practice which are associated with South London Theatre.

Legal Framework in which this policy is based:

1. The Children's Act 1989
 2. The protection of children act 1999
-

Recognising abuse

1. Abuse is a powerful and emotive term. It is a term used to describe how children and young people are harmed; usually by individuals and often by those they know and trust. South London Theatre members working with children and young people hold this trust and may be at risk of misusing their power over their group and participants.
2. In order to provide children and young people with the best possible experiences in drama it is essential that everybody operates within an ethical framework with exemplary behaviour and good codes of practice. This not only ensures that the arts helps to make a positive contribution to the personal development of children and young people but will also protect South London Theatre members from false allegations of abuse or poor practice.

3. It is not the responsibility of South London Theatre members to determine whether or not abuse is actually taking place unless physically witnessed. It is, however, imperative for them to identify poor practice and possible abuse and to act diligently if they have concern for the welfare for any child or young person under their supervision.
-

Emotional Abuse

1. This occurs when individuals fail to show children and young people due care, love and affection, a child or young person may be shouted at, taunted or threatened, or subjected to sarcasm. On the opposite side of the coin, over protection could be raising too high expectations in which a child or young person could lose confidence and self-esteem.
 2. In an arts workshop situation emotional abuse could happen when a facilitator:
 - a. Constantly gives negative feedback to an individual or group
 - b. Ignores children or young people that are making progress during workshop sessions
 - c. Forces children or young people into emotional or physical situations with which they are not comfortable.
-

Abuse by neglect

1. This occurs when a child or young person's essential needs fail to be met. Failing to provide love or affection could also be termed as neglect.
2. In an arts workshop situation abuse by neglect may occur when:
 - a. Participants are left alone without supervision of any kind
 - b. Participants are exposed to unacceptable risks of injury

Physical abuse

1. This occurs when individuals deliberately inflict physical injury onto another young person, or knowingly do nothing to prevent such injuries. This includes hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, squeezing or using excessive force. Giving young people drugs or alcohol could also be seen as physical abuse.
 2. In an arts workshop situation physical abuse may occur when:
 - a. Members / facilitators use extreme physical exercises that could harm those children and young people who are not physically developed enough to cope with the demands
 - b. Members / facilitators fail to recognise children or young people that are being physically over stretched or are fatigued
 - c. Members / facilitators man handle children or young people during an exercise without realising their strength or taking into account young peoples boundaries
-

Sexual Abuse

1. Children and Young People are abused by adults, both male and female, who use children and young people to meet their own sexual needs. Examples include forcing a child to have intercourse, oral sex or masturbation. Showing children pornographic materials or making suggestions that sexual favours can help (or refusal hinder) an acting career.
 2. In an arts workshop situation sexual abuse may occur when:
 - The close proximity of facilitators to children and young people provide opportunities for potential abusers to exploit their position of trust to sexual abuse
-

Bullying

Bullying could be an adult abusing a child or young person, but it is often at the hands of another young person to another. There are three main types of bullying:

- Physical, E.G kicking, hitting, poking and in some cases theft
 - Verbal, E.G racial or homophobic remarks
 - Emotional, E.G persistent negative feedback or neglect
-

Indicators of abuse outside of the drama workshop setting:

Physical abuse:

- Unexplained injuries
- Inappropriate excuses to explain injury
- Untreated injuries
- Fear of returning home
- Aggression towards others

Neglect:

- Constant hunger and tiredness
- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor state or inappropriate clothing
- Low self-esteem
- Poor peer relationships

Emotional abuse:

- Low self-esteem
- Decline in concentration levels
- Continual self-depreciation
- Emotional immaturity
- Extremes of behaviour

Sexual abuse:

- Unexplained changes in behaviour
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexual explicit behaviour
- Distrust of adults
- Inappropriate language

Changes in behaviour could be due to bereavement or change of environment. It is essential to discuss issues with parents concerning behavioural changes to understand the young person's circumstance.

Responding to disclosure, suspicions and allegations

In all cases of reported poor practise or abuse, the following principles must always be adopted:

Listen and reassure.

Do:

- Stay calm
- Reassure the child
- Listen sympathetically
- Keep questions to a minimum
- Ensure you clearly understand what the child has said
- Maintain confidentiality
- Inform the South London Theatre Training Director
- Ensure the safety of the young person

Don't:

- Panic
- Make promises you can't keep
- Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily
- Speculate or make assumptions
- Approach the alleged abuser
- Take sole responsibility

Recording an incident

1. Take full contact details and include race, date of birth and disability (If any)
2. Nature of the allegation
3. Any observations about the behaviour/state of the child or young person
4. Times, locations and dates
5. The child or young persons account in their own words as to what has happened
6. Actions that have taken place as a result of your concerns
7. Whether the person writing the report are writing as a genuine witness or a third party
8. Sign and date
9. Keep a copy
10. Keep name and numbers of any officials involved such as police or welfare worker

Bad practice from a South London Theatre member or facilitator

If any South London Theatre member or facilitator is reported for bad practice relating to the mental, physical or sexual abuse of a child or young person; the accused shall be given the opportunity to attend a hearing addressing the directors of South London Theatre.

A report will be made in the presence of a tape recorder and two other members of South London Theatre as witnesses. Following the hearing the decision will be made as to what steps are to be taken.

This may be:

- To contact the police to take the matter further
- To contact social services to investigate the matter further
- To suspend membership and withdraw facilitation work with immediate effect.

I acknowledge that I have read, understand and accept the terms of the policy set out above:

Name:..... (Please print)

Signed:..... Date:.....
