

ASHWELL THEATRE CLUB

CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Ashwell Theatre Club (ATC) recognizes its duty of care for safeguarding children.

The ATC believes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious Beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All members and employees of the ATC should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The ATC will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision-making process.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members of the club provide a positive role model for dealing with other people
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- It will keep up-to-date with health & safety legislation.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with the ATC and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

The Club has a dedicated Child Protection Officer, who is in charge of ensuring the child protection/safeguarding policy and procedures are adhered to.

That person's name is **Paula Merrell** and she can be contacted on ashwelltheatre@gmail.com.

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Committee of the ATC and will be subject to annual review.

Date: April 2022

Responsibilities of ATC

At the outset of any production involving children the club will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection.
- Engage in effective engagement of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.

Parents/Guardians

- The club believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents/guardians and the ATC. Parents/guardians are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the club and to share responsibility for the care of children.
- All parents/guardians will be asked to access a copy the club's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy and procedures via the website. Or if they prefer a hard copy to ask for one.
- In order for a child to take part in a performance parents/guardian must complete the Parental/Guardians Consent Form.
- Any child taking part in a performance must be a paid-up member of the ATC.
- Parents/guardians should inform the ATC of any medical conditions affecting the child that the ATC should be aware of. ATC cannot take responsibility for administering any medication to the child.
- All parents/guardians have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the ATC to take children home.

Unsupervised Contact

- The club will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- If possible, there will always be two adults in the room when working with children
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimize risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.
- The club will ensure that any adult who is likely to have unsupervised contact with children i.e. costume fitting will have been DBS checked which will be renewed every 3 years.

Physical Contact

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.
- Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Managing sensitive information

- The ATC has a policy and procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children.

- Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- The ATC web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- The ATC will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information.

Suspicion of abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the club, please make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection. If you suspect that the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Committee Chairperson.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the ATC, chaperone, venue staff etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production.

Disclosure of abuse

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with responsibility for child protection. Make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant persons.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

Recording

- In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded.
- An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken.
- The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

Rights & Confidentiality

- If a complaint is made against a member of the ATC, he or she will be made aware of his rights under the club's disciplinary procedures.
- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the production that will be undertaken.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the club, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the club's accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection.
- If a major accident takes place the chaperone and Production Director will be responsible for telephoning the appropriate emergency service and the child's parent/guardian and recording the event and action taken in the accident book which they will both sign.
- If a child joins the production with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by the ATC for the care of children during the production process. By law the chaperone is acting in loco parentis and should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the ATC's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the producer and not allow the child to continue.
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms unless accompanied by a chaperone.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that all accidents are reported to and recorded by the club.
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child until arrangements are made to take them home.