

Chepstow Musical Youth Theatre



Child Welfare Policy

1. Policy Statement

“CMYT aims to safeguard the welfare of children and young people participating in all workshops, rehearsals and performances run and co-ordinated by the company. CMYT and all paid and voluntary staff commit to a code of good practice, and take all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from neglect and physical, sexual or emotional harm, taking into account and complying with current legislation and best practice.”

2. Code of Practice in support of the Protection of Children and Young People’s Policy

In working with children and young people, CMYT commits to:

1. DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) check all staff who have occasion to work with children on a one to one basis.
2. Maintaining an awareness of Health and Safety issues relating to young people and identifying potential risks or hazards as part of the ongoing risk assessment procedure of the company.
3. Appointing staff who are responsible or who are in direct contact with children and young people through a rigorous selection process, compatible with responsibilities under the Children Act 1989. Where appropriate Police vetting procedures will be applied.
4. Seek permission from parents / guardians in the use of images and film footage of their child(ren).
5. Ensuring that all staff are kept aware of changing legislation and available guidance.
6. Ensuring that all staff have received and read this policy and agree to follow the guidelines laid out herein.
7. The monitoring and regular review of relevant procedures with the Management Team.

3. Working with Children and Young People

The activities of CMYT include the active participation of children and young people in regular workshops, rehearsals and performances run or co-ordinated by the company. There are numerous ways in which paid or voluntary members of staff working at CMYT may come into contact with young people in the course of their work:

1. The definition of a ‘child’ or ‘young person’ is someone under the age of 18. Our commitment to the welfare and safety of young people does not stop at the age of 18. It is a continual policy in place for all members of staff, volunteers and participants.
2. We work with young people as a significant part of our audience, both in the auditoria and elsewhere in the building (e.g. on backstage tours).

3. Individual adult workers may be involved in workshop sessions with our Youth Theatre members, or with other projects.
4. Adult actors and technicians on CMYT productions will often be working in close proximity to young people (e.g. the shows).
5. We also accommodate a large number of school and college students on work placement each year.

4. Guidelines for staff working with children and young people

1. Persons responsible for young people in any given work situation should make themselves fully aware of any legal obligations in respect of their work.
2. All children and young people's records must be kept in a locked cabinet to which the Session Leaders and the Committee representative have access.
3. Persons working with young people should be aware of the implications of physical contact, however minimal, and ensure that contact is kept to an appropriate level. What that level is in relation to a specific piece of work needs to be discussed by the adults concerned in advance of carrying out the work.
4. In the creative process, it may be appropriate to ask a young person, particularly an adolescent, whether s/he minds physical contact. This should be done as tactfully as possible.
5. Persons responsible for working with children and young people must not discriminate against any child or young person as set out in the Equal Opportunities Policy.
6. Paid staff or volunteers must never physically restrain a child or young person except in response to an immediate, serious threat.
7. Abuse is broadly defined into 4 categories; neglect, physical, emotional or sexual. Children may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any time. Abuse can include physical contact (penetrative or non-penetrative) and non-physical contact (encouraging children / young people to look at pornographic materials). These are examples only, the list is not exhaustive.
8. Staff are not responsible for determining whether abuse has taken place, but for reporting concerns.
9. Possible signs of abuse include:
 - Being constantly dirty, or in an unkempt or unwashed state;
 - Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised;
 - Injuries on any part of the body which cannot be explained;
 - Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips from slapping or pinching;
 - Depression, withdrawn behaviour;
 - Sudden speech disorders;
 - Reluctance to have their parents or carers contacted or approached regarding their behaviour;

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- Sexual knowledge, drawings or language that are beyond the child or young person's age or developmental level;
- Substance abuse (alcohol and drugs)

This list is not definitive. If you suspect abuse with no allegations being made, or see evidence of abuse without their being any satisfactory explanation inform the Session Leader as soon as possible.

10. All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously whether they are against another child or young person, a member of staff, volunteer or a third party. When responding directly to a child or young person about allegations of abuse:

- Stay calm and approachable. Do not let your shock show.
- Listen carefully to the child without interrupting.
- Explain that information being given by the child or young person will need to be passed onto others – but only those who need to know. You cannot keep their secret.
- Make it clear that you take the child or young person seriously and allow them time to speak.
- Reassure the child or young person that they have done the right thing by telling someone.
- Do not ask questions that suggest particular answers. It is not your job to ask for details.
- Let the child or young person know what will happen next, who you will report the information to and what will happen when it has been reported.
- Record all the details of what was said. Use the child or young person's wording, not your interpretation. Record details such as names mentioned, dates, times, who the information went to and what action was taken next.

11. There is no legal obligation to stop two young people who are engaged in a sexual relationship. However, the matter needs to be reported if either of the children is under the age of 13 or where the child is aged 13 – 16 and the relationship is with a much older partner, or is deemed to be in an exploitative relationship.

12. The process for reporting child protection concerns:

You have a suspicion or concern about possible abuse occurring, or abuse has been disclosed to you:



The Child Protection Officer must be informed.



All facts and information must be considered and initial investigations made. If the allegation is made against a member of staff then the staff member or volunteer will be suspended on full pay (if applicable) while an initial investigation is carried out.



If suspicions or concerns are dispelled then all records must be kept and no further action taken. Staff member to be reinstated.



Suspicions or concerns are ongoing: Child Welfare Officer to contact social services and / or police, and parents if appropriate.



Statutory bodies will make an initial assessment. Child protection investigations will begin and an assessment of need will be made.

13. Avoid any situation or behaviour that may be misconstrued or appear inappropriate either to the young person(s) involved or to any other bystander.
14. Ensure that, in the case of performances, all necessary licences are held with the correct supporting information and records as required by the Children's (Performances) Regulations 1968.
15. Any member of staff found in breach of these guidelines will be subject to the Disciplinary and Appeals procedure.
16. It is not intended that these guidelines should make adults feel uncomfortable about working with young people. It is intended to encourage adults to identify situations that may be misconstrued so that action may be taken to avoid them. If in doubt, consult with colleagues or an appropriate contact at Social Services.

Child Welfare Officer: Susan Riordan

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