



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
And Procedure Including
Reporting concerns and whistle-blowing

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Younger Generation Theatre Group

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedure including reporting concerns and whistleblowing

YG's Designated Safeguarding Officer is Carol Oseman
Contact Telephone Number is 07754965707
Email: carol.oseman@icloud.com

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Statement

Younger Generation Theatre Group (YG) is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people by taking all reasonable steps to protect them from neglect, physical, sexual or emotional harm. Safeguarding children and young people is at the centre of YG's activities and beliefs and is the responsibility of everyone. YG aims to keep safe all children and young people who use YG's services as well as the volunteers who volunteer for YG.

YG aims to provide safe, positive and empowering environments for all young people who engage in shows and events organised directly by it. YG's work with young people aims to be fun, informative and inspirational. This can only be achieved in an atmosphere of trust and respect. YG recognises that there are a variety of approaches required to ensure an effective prevention of harm strategy (see what constitutes abuse page 9). These include: creating the right environment, developing practice standards, empowering young people, sharing information and developing a monitoring role.

YG volunteers must, at all times, show respect for and understanding of the rights, safety and welfare of our users and conduct themselves in a way that reflects this.

YG takes any concerns or suspicions seriously. Full support will be given to any individuals who raise concerns.

Compliance with YG's policies and procedures should achieve the above.

This policy is linked to the following policies and procedures:

Health and Safety policy and risk assessment

Diversity and Equality

Data Protection

Facebook Etiquette and Rules

Management committee and production team and Volunteers' Code of Conduct Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure

Forms

YG Incident/Disclosure Form – Confidential

Consent Form under 18

Consent Form over 18

Dissemination

All volunteers will be made aware of this policy and procedure as part of their induction. They have a responsibility to adhere to it. It will be made freely available to all YG users via our website.

Review date

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed every 2 years by the Management Committee, to ensure that the operation of this procedure is satisfactory. This document was created in June 2023 Next review date June 2025. YG will review any incidents during the year and take the appropriate action to resolve them, adapting policies and procedures immediately if so required.

YG Definitions

Young people/person – All safeguarding and child protection legislation and guidance recognises a child or young person as anyone up to the age of 18.

YG works with young volunteers up to the age of 25. Some aspects of this policy, such as the Volunteers' Code of Conduct are in place to protect all young people, regardless of age.

Vulnerable adult – Someone over the age of 18, who is considered 'vulnerable' for one reason or another and unable to protect themselves, eg someone with a physical, sensory or mental impairment.

YG paid volunteers – This includes all volunteers which includes freelance contracted management committee and production team, Sector Development Associates and Trustees.

Legislation to protect children and young people

Human Rights Act 1998 and The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children Act 2004, 1989

Protection of Children Act 1999

Police Act 1997 Part V

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Data Protection Act 1984 and 1998

Sexual Offences Act

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act

Guidance to protect children and young people

YG has used "Keeping it Safe" in the drawing up of its policies and definitions - a NCVYS publication and believes in the principles of "Every Child Matters."

Designated Safeguarding Officer

The designated worker takes responsibility for disseminating and implementing safeguarding procedures within the organisation at all times. In particular, they will:

- Be specifically trained to carry out this role
- Be familiar with and have an understanding of all legislation and guidance relating to safeguarding and child protection
- Receive information from paid management committee and production team, volunteers, children and young people, parents and carers about child protection concerns
- Assess this information promptly and take appropriate action
- Maintain secure, confidential records of any child protection or other safeguarding concerns raised, action taken and follow-up required
- Provide support during and after incidents involving child protection
- Know how to contact and establish links with the Local Safeguarding Children Boards and the relevant departments within Local Authorities and police and be familiar with local referral procedures
- Assess the safeguarding and child protection learning and development needs of all management committee and production team and volunteers and coordinate the training
- Promote safeguarding across the organisation and keep all management committee and production team and volunteers informed on good practice and new legislation and guidance
- Monitor the overall trend of safeguarding concerns, keep records of their disposal and feed back to the organisation on the quality of their safeguarding work

Code of conduct

YG believes that all Management committee, Production team and Volunteers have a clear understanding of the responsibilities and powers their positions of trust carry. The Management committee, Production team and Volunteers' Code of Conduct clearly outlines what is acceptable behaviour and what is not and how to behave appropriately when working with young people and as such ensuring that the 'position of trust' is not abused. This not only protects those in the positions of trust, but also safeguards those being cared for. Please refer to Management committee, Production team and Volunteers Code of Conduct. Failure to comply with the Code may be deemed a disciplinary matter.

Safe practice when working with young people at YG events

Information to parents and carers

Parents and carers must be provided with event information for any YG activity involving a person under the age of 18 years. The information provided must include – date, times, location, travel arrangements, refreshments, money, clothing or equipment needed and contact information should a parent or carer wish to contact the member of Management committee or Production team in charge of the activity.

Consent of parent or carer

Consent must be obtained from a child's parent or carer for any YG activity involving a person under the age of 18 years or a vulnerable young person up to the age of 25. The YG consent form will be used for this purpose. For young people aged 18 and over they will be asked to complete consent from providing emergency contact, health and medical information.

During activities, copies of consent forms will be available to relevant Management committee present, in case of an emergency and the need to contact a parent or carer.

Forms will be kept in a place which is only accessible to management committee and the location of the forms must be known to all Management committee, Production team and Volunteers participating in the event. On conclusion of the event, forms will either be destroyed or stored securely.

Original copies of consent forms will be filed in a locked cabinet, accessible only to those who need to fulfil their duties.

Management Committee and Production Team to participant ratio and risk assessment

The Children's Legal Centre recommends The Management Committee and Production Team levels of the following:

- One adult to 10-15 children aged eight to 11 and one adult for 15 to 20 children aged 11 to 12 for lower risk activities
- One adult to 10 children for residential trips, trips abroad or for water or adventure sports
- One adult to six children where there are children under the age of eight in the group

These ratios will be considered in the risk assessment for each activity or event.

YG believes it good practice to have at least two members of Management Committee and Production Team or volunteers present throughout the duration of any trip or activity, preferably of both genders. It is recognised that some children and young people with special needs may require one to one or even two to one care. Each situation is risk assessed and judged accordingly.

Risk assessments are completed before any activity or event and risk assessing is ongoing throughout the event/activity.

YG uses the Health and Safety Executive Five Steps to Risk Assessment as a basis for risk assessing.

When carrying out risk assessments the following are considered:

- The type of activity and level of difficulty at which it is being undertaken
- Appropriate separate sleeping and washing arrangements
- The location of the activity
- Weather conditions, if the activity takes place outdoors
- The competence, qualifications and experience of Management Committee and Production Team and volunteers and any on-site staff if the activity is taking place in a different location
- The age, competence, fitness and experience of the participants
- What will happen if one of the leaders gets hurt or becomes ill, has to take a child/young person to the hospital, has to take a child or young person home
- Visa requirements
- Vaccinations
- Driving regulations
- Cultural and religious differences
- Language
- Appropriate transport arrangements eg use of a minibus ensuring it is correctly licensed, taxed and insured and driven by a suitably qualified individual, seatbelts are worn, first aid kit, etc.

Use of Internet, mobile telephone and social networks

Management Committee and Production Team and volunteers must be aware of and act in accordance with the YG's IT Security Policy, Data Retention Policy and Data Protection Policy.

It is recommended that YG Management Committee and Production Team follow the basic tips on keeping young people safe whilst using the internet:

- Know what young people are doing online – have some reasonable level of supervision of young people while they are using the internet
- Encourage young people not to use real names in chat rooms, but to choose a nickname and use common sense, eg not choosing a provocative name
- Help them understand it is not safe to give out personal information like mobile phone number, address, school details in chat rooms or emails or to share pictures or videos of themselves
- Discourage them from ever going alone to meet someone they met online. If they must, however, ensure they let their parents, friends or YG Management Committee and Production team know where they are going and when, who they are arranging to meet and when you can expect them to return. Even better, encourage them to keep online mates online and remember that not everyone they meet there is genuine
- Encourage them to get rid of or not open emails that are not familiar to them or seem strange. Emails that contain attachments that are offensive can be blocked and deleted. They may contain not only pornographic or hate materials, but also viruses which can damage the computer
- Help them understand that if they are being asked strange or personal questions that they are not comfortable with they should tell someone about it
- Refer to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre's thinkyouknow.co.uk
- Discuss which sites are appropriate for young people to visit
- Ensure there is a worker with enough IT knowledge to teach young people how to block someone online and report them if they feel uncomfortable
- Get the young people to teach Management Committee and production team and volunteers how to use any applications they are not familiar with

- Ensure that lines of communication are open for young people to discuss anything they feel uncomfortable with and empower them to report any forms of abuse
- Ensure firewalls are activated to block offensive materials on any computers young people have access to. It is acceptable to use email, text and internet based social networks to communicate with children and young people however the following safe working practice should be applied –
- Parents or carers must be informed about how YG Management committee and production team communicates with young people and give their consent
- Parents or carers must be given the opportunity to be 'copied in' to communications with their child if they so wish
- Management committee and production team and volunteers must only use YG email or mobile telephone to text message. If social network websites are used there must be a separate YG identity or profile established and any such site subject to regular monitoring by a line manager or the Designated Safeguarding Officer. Such sites must be moderated to ensure the continued safe use and security of young people using the site
- Management committee and production team must never use personal email, mobile telephones or internet based social networks to communicate with children or young people
- All electronic communications from YG to a young person must be recorded.

Use of photographs or recorded images of children and young people

YG may want to take photographs or record the activities undertaken by the young people. YG commits to ensure that all publications and media represent participants appropriately and with due respect.

A photograph or image of a child or young person will not be published without consent. Personal information about the individual will not accompany the image. YG receives a blanket permission to record our events through film and photography. This permission restricts use for YG's own promotional use, eg publications and website. Individuals and organisations commissioned by us or working in partnership with us cannot use film and photography without the consent of the participating groups. Where possible and appropriate YG gets explicit consent when people register for an event directly. Where a youth theatre leader books for an event on behalf of a young people, YG gets the leader to sign to say they are responsible for getting explicit, individual consent. YG states at events "YG will be taking photographs and video shots of activities and performances for use within YG's photographic library, printed YG publications, publicity and on the YG website, to support and promote the work of the Company. If you or your parents have any objections to this please let us know so that we can identify anyone who does not wish us to use their image. Otherwise it will be assumed that consent has been given."

YG websites will be carefully monitored to eliminate the use of inappropriate images or improper text.

Confidentiality

Whilst YG Management committee and production team will ensure that young people's rights to privacy and confidence is respected, there may be times when this confidence needs to be breached. If a young person discloses information about him/herself or another young person, which raises safeguarding concerns about the safety of that young person or others, then these concerns will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer in line with YG reporting concerns procedure which is included in this policy. YG will ensure that the young person is involved, consulted and kept informed about what action, if any, is to be taken and during each step of the reporting procedure.

Any personal information gathered about a young person regarding a child protection concern will be stored in a secured and confidential place. Only appropriate Management committee and production team will have access to this information (eg paid management committee and production team member or volunteer involved, Designated Safeguarding Officer). It may be necessary to pass this information on to the relevant Local Authority and police. When doing so, YG will ensure that the young person is involved and gives consent in making that decision where possible. The only situation when a referral can and will be made without the consent of the young person will be if that young person is at risk of serious harm.

YG management committee and production team will ensure that any information gained or given will be treated with the strictest of confidence. Young people will be consulted and involved in the decision making process.

What constitutes child abuse

Child abuse occurs when a child or young person has suffered from, or is at significant risk of suffering from, ill-treatment or impairment of development, by any person who knowingly colludes with or fails to prevent the ill-treatment of the child or young person by not ensuring reasonable standards of care and protection.

All paid management committee and production team and volunteers should be aware that abusers are not just strangers. They can include parents, carers, family members, friends, people in positions of trust and authority, other children or young people, or anyone who has contact with children and young people. Children and young people who are abused are often abused by an adult they know and trust.

Disabled children and young people are more vulnerable to abuse; they are more dependent on intimate care and occasionally they may be less able to tell or escape from abusive situations.

Misunderstandings and misinterpretations of different cultural and religious beliefs and practices often mean that children and young people from these communities and families may be more vulnerable to abuse going undetected and often statutory services fail to meet the needs or deliver appropriate services to the children and young people

It is important to remember that, although many abusers are men, women also abuse, and that abusers come from all social and ethnic backgrounds, races, classes and professions.

Definitions of abuse

Four categories of abuse have been defined and are generally accepted, although it is important to remember that abuse will often fall into more than one category at any one time

Neglect – the persistent or severe neglect and failure to meet the child's or young person's basic physical and or psychological needs, ie food, warmth, shelter, clothing, care and protection

Physical – any form of non-accidental injury or failure to protect against injury to a child or young person. This may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, throwing, suffocating, burning and scalding. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer puts on the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child or young person under their care.

Emotional – severe or persistent rejection or emotional ill-treatment of the child or young person which would negatively affect the emotional or behavioural development of the child or young person.

Sexual – the actual, or likely, sexual exploitation of the child or young person by any person, whether or not that child or young person is aware of what is happening. This would include physical contact (penetrative or nonpenetrative) and non-physical contact (looking at pornographic materials, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children/young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways).

It is also recognised that there are other sources of stress for children and young people and their families, for example social exclusion, domestic violence, mental illness or drug and alcohol misuse.

YG recommends the approach taken by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service in framing their thinking within the 5Rs ie Recognise, Respond, Report, Record and Refer (Document attached to this policy).

How to recognise abuse

The following is a guide to help Management committee and production team and volunteers to become more alert to and aware of the signs of possible abuse. These lists are not definitive. Please bear in mind that there may also be other factors within the family that may be the reason for sudden changes in behaviour, for example death, the birth of a new sibling, etc

Recognising possible abuse is a complex and complicated procedure. It is not your responsibility to decide whether a young person has been abused or is at significant risk. Investigation of child abuse is a specialised professional task which should only be undertaken by the designated agencies, ie the Local Authority Children's Services, police, Local Safeguarding Children's Board or the NSPCC. However, you do have a responsibility to act on any concerns and report them in accordance with the reporting procedure.

The one thing a management committee and production team member must not do is NOTHING!

Neglect – this can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise and yet it can have some of the most lasting and damaging effects

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate neglect may include:

- Constantly hungry, perhaps stealing food from others
- Constantly dirty or in an unkempt, unwashed state
- Inappropriately dressed for the weather conditions
- A loss of weight or being constantly underweight
- Being tired all the time
- Failure to attend medical appointments or not requesting them • Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised

Physical abuse – It is quite normal for children and young people to get cuts and bruises as part of their daily life. However, some children and young people will have bruising or cuts that could only have been caused non accidentally.

Important indicators are where on the body the bruises or injuries occur, whether any explanation given, or the lack of explanation, fits the injury and also whether there was a delay in seeking medical treatment when treatment may be quite necessary.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate physical abuse may include:

- Injuries on any part of the body that cannot be explained
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips from slapping or pinching
- Cigarette burns, bite marks, broken bones, scalds
- A fear of approaching parents for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when touched or approached
- Depression, withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home
- Reluctance to get changed

Emotional abuse – again this is can be very difficult to identify; often those who appear well cared for may be emotionally abused by being put down or belittled. Also, some children and young people may be receiving little or no love, affection and/or attention from their parents or carers. Those not allowed to mix and play with others may also be experiencing emotional abuse.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate emotional abuse may include:

- A failure to thrive or glow
- Sudden speech disorders
- Delayed development, either physically or emotionally
- Exhibiting neurotic behaviour such as hair twisting or rocking
- Reluctance to have their parents or carers contacted or approached regarding their behaviour
- Exhibiting a lack of confidence or the need for approval or attention
- Fear of making mistakes
- Exhibiting self-harming behaviour

Sexual abuse – adults who exploit their power and use children or young people to gratify their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, cultures and abilities, including babies, toddlers and young people. More often than not, the child's or young person's behaviour will cause you to become concerned; however, there are physical signs that highlight concerns. In all cases, children and young people who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. Therefore, it is vitally important that they are listened to and taken seriously.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate sexual abuse may include:

- Stomach pains, discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Bruising or injuries to parts of the body that are not normally seen
- Pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections
- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour and/or mood ie becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Nervousness or fear of being left with specific persons or groups
- Acting in a sexually inappropriate way with peers and or adults
- Sexual knowledge, drawings and language that are beyond the child or young person's age or developmental level
- Running away
- Self-harm and mutilation, suicide attempts
- Eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia
- Indicating that they have secrets that cannot be told to anyone
- Bedwetting
- Substance abuse (drug and alcohol)

NB These are some typical signs and indicators for each type of abuse, but all could indicate a different type of abuse or another concern. Management committee and production team will be trained in recognising abuse.

Respond

The appropriate response is vital. No disclosure about possible abuse or neglect should ever be ignored. In order to determine the most appropriate response, ascertain what you are dealing with. See also section below If a child or young person confides in you, you must do the following:

Reporting concerns, suspicions and allegations

What to do if you have a concern, suspect or have a disclosure about abuse

Report any safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Officer or their Deputy as soon as possible. Once you have reported concerns about abuse to the Designated Safeguarding Officer the responsibility for taking action lies with them.

Any concern being reported will be taken seriously. YG will support children, young people, paid management committee and production team and volunteers in raising any concern or suspicions which will continue whilst concerns are being investigated.

YG recognises that it is important to create an environment where paid management committee and production team and volunteers trust each other and the organisation and can honestly discuss things in confidence which concern them.

Whistle blowing – revelation of wrongdoing, abuse or unethical behaviour by Management committee and production team or volunteer that pushes boundaries beyond acceptable limits within an organisation to those in positions of authority. This should happen where someone feels there has been a breach of the Management committee and production team and Volunteers' Code of Conduct, other policies and procedures or other behaviour.

Process

- Any concerns must be raised with the management committee and production team member's or volunteer's Safeguarding Designated Officer, immediately. If the concern is regarding one of these people then it should be raised with the Chair of the board

- All management committee and production team and volunteers have the right to report any concerns or suspicions they may have in good faith about another member of management committee and production team or volunteer in confidence without harassment, being treated unfairly or being penalised. See above. Their identity will be kept anonymous wherever possible. YG will think carefully about what confidential information it shares and what support should be given by whom
- Where an allegation has been made about a member of management committee and production team or a volunteer they will receive support throughout the process and thereafter as necessary, as agreed with their line manager
- It is hoped that relatively minor concerns will be resolved via a discussion or with further training, but if it is a major incident it is recognised that it could result in a criminal investigation and or a disciplinary or misconduct investigation and action. All procedures will adhere to YG's disciplinary policy, support mechanisms put in place must not jeopardise any investigation or put young people at risk which may result in a management committee and production team member or volunteer being suspended from duty until all investigation has been completed.
- Stay calm and approachable. Do not let your shock show
- Listen very carefully to what is being said using empathic listening skills without interrupting
- Explain at an appropriate time as early as possible that the information being given by the child or young person will need to be shared and passed on to others –but stress only to those who need to know. Do not in any circumstances promise to keep it a secret
- Make it clear that you are taking the child or young person seriously and acknowledge how difficult this must be. Reassure them that they have done the right thing
- Allow the child or young person to speak at their own pace
- Reassure the child or young person that they are doing the right thing in telling you
- If you need to ask questions, then only ask questions for clarification, avoid asking questions that suggest particular answers, avoid asking probing questions – you do not need to know all the details, that is the job of the experts. Keep your questions open
- Let the child or young person know what will happen next, who you will report the information to, what will happen once it's been reported
- Record all the details of what was said immediately after on the YG Incident/Disclosure Form - CONFIDENTIAL. Use the child or young person's exact wording – do not try to interpret any of the information yourself unless necessary and if you do, identify which part is your interpretation. Record details such as names mentioned, dates, times, who the information went to and what action was taken next. Don't forget to sign and date the form. Share this information with the designated person and/or line manager as soon as practical.
- Act immediately – do not delay

Action to be taken by the Designated Safeguarding Officer

- Act immediately – do not delay
- Consider whether the child or young person is in immediate danger. If they are, contact the police, Local Authority, Local Safeguarding Children's Board or parents or carers (if appropriate)
- If the child/young person is not in immediate danger and you are with the young person, listen to what they want to share with you about the incident. Do not ask leading or interrogating questions, just questions for clarification only
- If allegations have been made about a member of management committee and production team or a volunteer, report the matter to someone higher within the organisation. The organisation's disciplinary procedure should be followed
- Contact your local services team and discuss any future action with them eg if an allegation against a member of management committee and production team or a volunteer contact the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Local Authority Designated Officer, if regarding a young person contact Children's Services and if regarding a vulnerable adult contact Adult Services, etc

- Agree with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board team ongoing support for the child or young person. When considering and taking any action, the child or young person's welfare must be paramount.

Information for Local Safeguarding Children's Board or the Police about suspected abuse

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a clear, accurate and detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern (or within 24 hours) on the YG Incident/Disclosure Form - CONFIDENTIAL. This should include details of the young person's:

- Name, age, date of birth, home address and telephone number
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as unusual or distinctive behaviour
- Details of witnesses to the incidents
- The young person's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- If the parents have been contacted and if so what has been said?
- If anyone else has been consulted? If so record details
- If the young person was not the person who reported the incident, has the young person been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details

Where possible referral to the Police or appropriate Local Authority Services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded. Referral is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Officer. The Designated Safeguarding Officer should include on the YG Incident/Disclosure Form – CONFIDENTIAL Form what action they have taken and any feedback as a result of the referral.

Process for reporting child protection concerns

Management committee and production team and volunteers have a suspicion or concern about possible abuse occurring, or abuse has been disclosed to them:

- About a child or young person;
- About the behaviour of management committee and production team, volunteer or parents and carers, or others.



The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) must be informed



All facts and information must be considered and initial investigations made



If suspicions or concerns dispelled:

- All records must be kept
- No further action will need to be taken
- If not serious enough for referral, support may be offered and the situation monitored internally

Suspensions or concerns ongoing:

- DSO to contact Local Authority Departments, Local Safeguarding Children's Board and/or police, and parents as appropriate



Statutory bodies will make an initial assessment:

- Child protection investigations will begin
- Assessment of need will be made.
- Feedback should be given to the referrer i.e. DSO