

The Total Theatre School Directors will refer the allegation to Social Services Dept. who may involve the Police, or go directly to the Police if out-of-hours.

The parents/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Social Services Dept.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made by Total Theatre School to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information will be handled and disseminated on a “need to know basis” only. This includes the following people:

- Total Theatre School Directors.
- The parents/carer of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The person making the allegation.
- Social Services/Police.
- The alleged abuser.
- * Social Service advice to be sought on whom should approach the abuser.

All information is to stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with the data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

The Total Theatre School Directors will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further Police and Social Services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the Social Services or Police inquiries, the Total Theatre School Directors will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. In such cases the Total Theatre School Directors will reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children will always remain paramount.

Action If Bullying Is Suspected

The same procedure is to be followed as set out in the section relating to responding to suspicions or allegations, if bullying is suspected.

Action to Help the Victim and Prevent Bullying

Take all signs of bullying seriously.

Investigate all allegations and take appropriate action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.

Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help him/her although you cannot promise to tell no one else.

Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom and when).

Report any concerns to the Total Theatre School Directors.

Action Towards Bully(ies):

Speak to the school Directors immediately for advice & guidance

Inform the school Directors of the situation and action(s) taken.

Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of his/her behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).

The Directors may inform the bully(ies) parents

Impose sanctions as necessary.

Encourage and support the bully (ies) to change behaviour.

Keep a written record of all action(s) taken.



Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and activity environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. Total Theatre School contracted employees and or/freelance workers have regular contact with young people and could be an important link to identifying cases where a young person needs protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

Policy Statement

Total Theatre School has a duty of care to safeguard all children from harm whilst participating in prepared activity. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others that may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. Total Theatre School will ensure the safety and protection of all children through adherence to the child protection guidelines adopted.

Total Theatre School, as an organisation, make provisions for children and young people; Total Theatre School must ensure that:

- The welfare of the children 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 will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- All contracted employees and or/freelance workers (paid/unpaid) working with children have a responsibility to report their concerns to the Total Theatre School Directors.

Good Practice Guidelines

Total Theatre School contracted employees and or/freelance workers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within good practice:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations).
- Treating all young people/disabled equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Making activity participation fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual support is required during participation in activities provided by Total Theatre School, it is provided openly. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be considered.
- Keeping up to date with appropriate technical skills, qualifications of which involve child interaction.

Involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g. for the responsibility of children changing clothing).

Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking/poor conduct in the school or around young people.

- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback during and after activities rather than negative criticism.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

Practices never to be sanctioned:

- Engage in rough, physical games, including horseplay.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged by a Total Theatre School contracted employee.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon by a Total Theatre School contracted employee and or/freelance worker.

- Do things of a personal nature for disabled children that they can do for themselves.
- Make contact with pupils on personal issues where the possibility of allegations may arise.

NB. It may sometimes be necessary for Total Theatre School contracted employees and or/freelance worker to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions if a person is fully dependant on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

If any of the following situations occur, you should report this immediately to the Total Theatre School Directors and record the incident.

If you accidentally hurt a participant involved in any activity provided by Total Theatre School.

If he/she seems distressed in any manner.

If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Recruitment and Selecting Employees

Total Theatre School recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. When undertaking pre-selection checks Total Theatre School will include:

- All candidates to complete an application form. The application form will elect information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent to be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau if required.
- Two confidential references to be taken up and confirmed prior to employment.

Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo).

Responding to Suspicions or Allegations

It is not the responsibility of any Total Theatre School contracted employee and or/freelance worker in paid/unpaid capacity to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities by a selected body of the Total Theatre School if abuse is suspected.

Total Theatre School will assure all employees and or/freelance workers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there will be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation.
- A child protection investigation.
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action if there are concerns – Poor Practice

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the Total Theatre School Directors will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

Suspected Abuse

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by a Total Theatre School contracted employee and or/freelance worker should be reported to the Total Theatre School Directors who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.