

Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy



Samantha Wood Theatre Academy
Effective Date: 16.09.2018
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Introduction

Samantha Wood Theatre Academy (from hereon in, known as *SWTA*) has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that when given responsibility for children, all staff, chaperones, parents/legal guardians and volunteers accept their responsibilities to safeguard them from harm and abuse. This means that *SWTA* must make every practicable effort to ensure that everyone follows procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to the appropriate authorities.

SWTA recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. We are committed to a practice which protects children from harm. The aim of the policy is to promote good practice; providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of *SWTA* and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

All members of *SWTA* accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

SWTA 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 will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All members and employees of *SWTA* must be clear on how to respond appropriately.

SWTA will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The welfare of each child 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 never be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members 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 appropriate health and safety legislation.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It will undertake relevant development and training.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with *SWTA* and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

Our Policy

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Samantha Wood Theatre Academy will adhere to the relevant legislation when working with children and young people under the age of 18 years as outlined in the following:

- Children Act 1989.
- Children Act 2004.
- Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004.

There are three elements to our policy:

- Prevention through awareness of each individual child's needs.
- Definitions of 'Child Abuse' and 'Neglect'.
- Procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases of abuse.

Prevention

SWTA recognises that the entertainment industry can be a very "adult" environment and we expect that all staff, chaperones, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and anyone else who should come into contact with children, behave in an appropriate manner at all times and remember that the welfare of our students is paramount in all that we do.

SWTA will therefore:

- Act within the Children's Act 1989 & 2004.
- Act within The Children's (Performance) Regulations 1968 (and amendments).
- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel welcome and familiar with their environment and are informed of personal (toilets, dressing rooms etc.) and emergency arrangements (fire exits, meeting points etc.) and any Health and Safety procedures (first aid, dangerous equipment, etc.).
- Inform each child of the appropriate person, or people, to speak to if they have any questions, problems or concerns.
- Ensure that all children are treated with respect and dignity, are treated as individuals, and are offered equal opportunities.
- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations*1 and unnecessary physical contact with children) and involve/allow parents/chaperones, wherever possible, to take responsibility for the child/children they are accountable for (parents must only have responsibility for their own child).
- Recognise the individual needs of the child, e.g. recognising when a child may be tired and may need a break.
- Ensure that children are supervised appropriately.
- Ensure that all Chaperones are registered with the local authority in which they reside and have an enhanced CRB check.
- Ensure all crew and staff coming into close contact with a child are CRB checked.
- Ensure that all staff and crew who don't necessarily have close contact with children, but who are assisting in the production are aware of their conduct around children.

NOTE: (*1 with the exception of private dance/singing tuition classes, which by their very nature are one-to-one in format).

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

Because it takes many forms, abuse can be broken down into the following subtypes, all of which are prohibited within the scope of this policy.

- Physical abuse – Injury inflicted on a child or youth.
- Sexual abuse – Contact or activity of a sexual nature between an adult and a child or youth.
- Emotional abuse – Mental or emotional injury inflicted on a child or youth by the actions of an adult.

- Neglect – Failure to provide adequate care for a child or youth.
- Economic abuse – Deliberate misuse of the money or belongings of a child or youth.
- Child/Youth – is defined as anyone under 18 years of age.

A child is abused or neglected when somebody inflicts harm or fails to act to prevent harm. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection.

Physical Abuse - May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating; or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent, or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after.

Indicators of physical abuse:

- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body.
- Multiple bruises- in clusters, often on the upper arm, outside of the thigh.
- Cigarette burns.
- Human bite marks.
- Broken bones.
- Scalds, with upward splash marks.
- Multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge.

Changes in behaviour that can also indicate physical abuse:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation.
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts.
- Flinching when approached or touched.
- Reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather.
- Depression.
- Withdrawn behaviour.
- Running away from home.

Sexual Abuse - Forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities whether, or not they are aware of what is happening. This may involve: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities; or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Indicators of Sexual Abuse:

- Pain or itching in the genital area.
- Bruising or bleeding near genital area.
- Sexually transmitted disease.
- Vaginal discharge or infection.
- Stomach pains.
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down.
- Pregnancy.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- Sudden, or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn.
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people.
- Having nightmares.
- Running away from home.
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level.
- Sexual drawings or language.
- Bedwetting.

- Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia.
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts.
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about.
- Substance or drug abuse.
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money.
- Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence).
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults.

Neglect - The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Indicators of Neglect:

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children.
- Constantly dirty or 'smelly'.
- Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight.
- Inappropriate clothing for the conditions.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include:

- Complaining of being tired all the time.
- Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments.
- Having few friends.
- Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.

Emotional Abuse - The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age and developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, for example witnessing domestic abuse within the home or being bullied, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Indicators of Emotional Abuse:

- Neurotic behaviour e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking.
- Being unable to play.
- Fear of making mistakes.
- Sudden speech disorders.
- Self-harm.
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour.
- Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress.

Procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases of abuse.

Suspicion of Abuse

- If we see or suspect abuse of a child, we will immediately make this known to the designated individual/manager responsible for child protection.

Disclosure of Abuse

If a child tells us that they, or another child or young person is being abused, we will:

- Always stop and listen straight away and show that we take their allegations seriously.
- Encourage the child to talk, but not ask leading questions, interrupt or ask the child to repeat itself.
- Never promise that we will keep what is said confidential or secret and explain that if we are told something of concern, we will need to let someone know, but that we will only tell the people who need to know and can help.
- Record what we have been told accurately and as soon as possible. Use the child's own words. Make a note of the time, location, whether anyone else is present and of the child's demeanour.
- Ensure that our concerns are reported immediately to the designated individual/manager.
- Not confront the alleged abuser.

Handling Allegations

- If a child makes an allegation against a member of staff it must be reported as a matter of urgency to the designated manager/individual for child protection, who will refer to the Social Services department for Children's Services. If the allegation is against the designated person then the information should be reported to another senior manager or directly to the Social Services department for Children's Services. (This would generally be referred to the authority in which the alleged incident took place).
- The alleged perpetrator should not be made aware of the allegation at this point.

Recording

- In all situations the details of allegation or reported incident must be recorded. Make accurate notes of time, dates, incident or disclosure, people involved, what was said and done and by whom, action taken to investigate, further action taken, e.g. suspension of individual and if relevant: reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, name of person reporting and to whom it was reported
- The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know.

WE DO NOT worry that we might be mistaken; we have a responsibility to pass on our concerns following a disclosure. We never think abuse is impossible, or that an accusation about a person we know well, and trust, is bound to be wrong.

****IT IS OUR DUTY TO REFER CONCERNS ON, NOT TO INVESTIGATE****

Declaration

Samantha Wood Theatre Academy has a dedicated individual responsible for child protection and safeguarding, and for ensuring that the safeguarding policy and procedures are adhered to:

Samantha Wood - Academy Owner and Principal

Email: admin@swtheatreacademy.co.uk

Telephone: 07785 787771

This policy will be regularly monitored by Samantha Wood Theatre Academy officials and will be subject to annual review.