

Wilburton Theatre Group Child Protection Policy

Wilburton Theatre Group (WTG) recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

WTG recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect and is committed to practices which protect children from harm. All members of WTG accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

Wilburton Theatre Group 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 WTG should be clear on how to respond appropriately.
- WTG 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 WTG will 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 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 WTG and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

WTG has a dedicated Child Protection Officer who is responsible for ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are followed.

That person's name is Gillian Liebenberg and she can be contacted on:

07918 157810 or gillianlargertha@gmail.com

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Wilburton Theatre Group committee and will be subject to annual review.

Responsibilities of Wilburton Theatre Group

At the outset of any production involving children the Group 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 recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting in consultation with the local authority.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services in case a concern needs to be reported.

Parents

- Wilburton Theatre Group believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and Wilburton Theatre Group. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of WTG and to share responsibility for the care of children.
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of WTG to take children home.
- WTG 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 minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.

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

- WTG 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.
- WTG's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- WTG will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as criminal record disclosures.

Suspicion of abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of WTG, 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 then you should make your concerns known to the Chairman.
- 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 WTG, the chaperones, venue staff, etc. then 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 authorities, usually social services or the police.
- 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 to

whom you gave the information. Make sure you sign and date your record. Where relevant, record the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, and the name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported.

- 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 WTG, he or she will be made aware of his or her rights under WTG'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. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.

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 activities that will be undertaken.
- If a child is injured while in the care of WTG, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in WTG's accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection.
- 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.

Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by WTG 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 any chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.
- Potential chaperones will be required to undergo a DBS check and suitable training by the local authority before a chaperone certificate specific for activities to Wilburton Theatre Group can be approved.
- Chaperones will be made aware of WTG's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Director. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- 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.
- During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children and signing them into the building.
- Children will always be kept together except when using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones will always be aware of where the children are.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of a parent or guardian, as appropriate.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing areas.
- 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 or others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by WTG.
- Chaperones should examine accident books each day. If an accident has occurred, the producer is not allowed to use that child until a medically qualified opinion has been obtained (not just the word of the parent or child).

- 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.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to take them home.

Document:

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Next review due March 2027