



PONTELAND
REPERTORY SOCIETY
YOUR LOCAL THEATRE COMPANY

Ponteland Repertory Society Child Safeguarding Policy

(Ponteland Repertory Society)
(21 November 2024)



Ponteland Repertory Society

Child Safeguarding Policy

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Section 1: Child Safeguarding Policy



Introduction

Ponteland Repertory Society has been in existence for 90 years and has, perhaps because of its position in this village community, always enjoyed the loyalty of local people, some as performers and others as audience members. We are very lucky to have plenty of local support for our traditional pantomimes, musicals and plays and we are all incredibly proud of our heritage. Our vision for the future is to continue to be an inclusive organisation, to continue to be an integral part of our community whilst continually responding to the changing market that surrounds local, amateur theatre.

Ponteland Repertory Society (PRS) recognises its duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to safeguarding children in line with national legislation and relevant national and local guidelines.

We will safeguard children by ensuring that our activities are delivered in a way which keeps all children safe.

PRS is committed to creating a culture of zero-tolerance of harm to children which necessitates: the recognition of children who may be at risk and the circumstances which may increase risk; knowing how child abuse, exploitation or neglect manifests itself; and being willing to report safeguarding concerns.

This extends to recognising and reporting harm experienced anywhere, including within our activities, within other organised community or voluntary activities, in the community, in the child's own home and in any care setting.



Policy Statement

PRS believes everyone has the right to live free from abuse or neglect regardless of age, ability or disability, sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital or gender status.

We are committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment and an open, listening culture where people feel able to share concerns without fear of retribution so that all children:

- Have a positive and enjoyable experience of theatre within PRS in a safe and child centred environment
- Are protected from abuse whilst participating in theatre at PRS or outside of it.

We acknowledge that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we are committed to ensure each member of PRS is clear on our individual and collective responsibilities.

PRS recognises some children, including disabled children or those from ethnic minority communities can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

PRS understands that there is a legal framework within which our organisation needs to work to safeguard children and will act in accordance with the relevant safeguarding legislation and with local statutory safeguarding procedures.

Actions taken by PRS will be consistent with the principles of child safeguarding ensuring that any action taken is prompt, proportionate and that it includes and respects the voice of the child concerned.



Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that everyone involved in PRS is aware of:

- The legislation, policy and procedures for safeguarding children
- Their role and responsibility for safeguarding children.
- What to do or who to speak to if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of a child within the organisation.

Scope

This safeguarding adult policy and associated procedures apply to all individuals involved in PRS including (but not limited to) actors, directors, chaperones, backstage crew, PRS Committee and Trustees.

Commitments

In order to implement this policy PRS will ensure that:

- We promote and prioritise the safety and well-being of children and young people
- We will listen to, value and respect the children and young people within our organisation
- Develop robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in place.
- Everyone involved with PRS is aware of the child safeguarding procedures and knows what to do and who to contact if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of any child
- Any concern that a child is not safe is taken seriously, responded to promptly, and followed up in line with this policy.
- The well-being of those at risk of harm will be put first and the child actively supported to communicate their views and, within a balanced relationship of trust, the outcomes they want to achieve. Those views and wishes will be respected and supported unless there are overriding reasons not to do so.
- Any actions taken will respect the rights and dignity of all those involved and be proportionate to the risk of harm. Confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored in line with our Data Protection Policy.
- PRS acts in accordance with NODA best practice.



- PRS will cooperate with the Police and the relevant Local Authorities in taking action to safeguard an child. All members understand their role and responsibility for safeguarding adults and are familiar with this policy and the PRS Code of Conduct.
- PRS continually assesses the suitability of volunteers to prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals in this organisation.
- PRS shares information about anyone found to be a risk to adults with the appropriate bodies. For example: Disclosure and Barring Service, Services, Police, Local Authority/Social Services. When planning activities and events PRS includes an assessment of, and risk to, the safety of all adults from abuse and neglect and designates a person who will be in attendance as a safeguarding lead for that event.
- This policy is reviewed on an annual basis by the Committee and whenever there are changes in relevant legislation and/or government guidance as required NODA.

Implementation

PRS is committed to developing and maintaining its capability to implement this policy. In order to do so the following will be in place:

- A Safeguarding Lead/ Welfare Officer
- Codes of conduct for all members that specify zero tolerance of abuse in any form.
- Specific Safeguarding arrangements and procedures for safeguarding of children
- Risk assessments specifically for the safeguarding of children

Role of Safeguarding Officer

It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer to:

- Ensure that all members of the PRS Committee have an up-to-date DBS check in place
- Ensure that all events run by PRS (e.g. socials, rehearsals, performances) have members with DBS present and in the correct ratios of adult: child as required by NODA and Northumberland County Council guidelines.
- To annually review and refresh the Code of Conduct and Safeguarding policies annually to ensure that they are still correct and relevant for latest guidelines and legislation.



- To ensure that all members complete the joiners form (on an annual basis) and have, therefore, reviewed and signed the policies and code of conduct at least annually.
- Report to the PRS Committee on a monthly basis any safeguarding concerns or actions, or disclosable events (within the bounds of confidentiality) for information or decision.
- To provide refresher training to the PRS Committee on an annual basis to ensure they are clear on our policies, processes and management responsibilities for reporting.
- To act as the liaison between the PRS Committee, any individual who has reported an incident and any relevant authorities.

Specific Arrangements and Procedures

- All PRS leaders (PRS Committee, Directors and Stage managers) will have completed a DBS check
- All PRs leaders are expected to act as positive role models in their behaviour towards others, and especially children, to other society members and ensure that bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- We will ensure that any activity held by PRS (events and rehearsals etc) have the correct number of adult: child ratios 1:8 for children between 3-7 and 1:10 for older children.
- Children taking part in theatrical performances will be supervised by a qualified chaperone at all times within the ratio of 1:10 advised by Northumberland County Council
- Children under the age of 8 must be supervised at all times
- Children must be signed in and out of all events, rehearsals and performances unless they are accompanied to the event with their carer (e.g. if the Director is a parent)
- We will hold a register in accordance with GDPR 2018 of all children involved with PRS and up to date contact information for emergencies

Reporting Procedure

- If any individual within PRS has any safeguarding concerns about the management of an event, suspects an incident of abuse or a safeguarding issue, or has an individual report abuse to them, they should raise their concerns to either the



Safeguarding Officer or to another PRS Committee member who will escalate the issue confidentially to the Safeguarding Officer for investigation and action – within the principles of Reporting and Information Sharing contained in Section 2: Supporting Information.

- Each reported concern will be investigated by the Safeguarding Officer and another 2 independent PRS Committee members and appropriate action taken – including taking additional advice from the Education Welfare Officer, Social Services and Northumbria Police (as identified in Section 2: Supporting Information)

Section 2: Supporting Information

Safeguarding Children Legislation

Safeguarding children in England is covered by:

- The Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- The Child (Performances) Regulations 1968
- The Protection of Children Act 1989
- The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000
- The Children's Act 2004 – particularly Section 11
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Care Act 2014

Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 specifically calls out that each organisation should have in place:

- **A clear line of accountability** for the provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- A designated **Safeguarding Officer** with the appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their obligations;
- A culture of **listening to children** and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services;
- Clear **whistleblowing procedures**,
- Clear **escalation policies** for staff to
- Safe **recruitment practices** and ongoing safe working practices for individuals whom the organisation or agency permit to work regularly with children, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record check;
- **Appropriate supervision** and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training;
- Creating a culture of safety, equality and protection within the services they provide.

Definition of a Child

A child or young adult is defined, for the purposes of safeguarding, as an individual under the age of 18.

Identification of Abuse and Neglect

A child at risk – is a child who:

- Is experiencing or is at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm.
- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs).

It is important to note that the use of the term 'at risk' means that actual abuse or neglect does not need to occur, rather that early interventions to protect a child at risk should be considered to prevent actual harm, abuse and neglect.

The two conditions necessary to demonstrate a child is at risk of abuse or neglect ensures that protection is provided to those with care and support needs who also require actions to secure their safety in the future. Risk of abuse or neglect may be the consequence of one concern or a result of cumulative factors.

Harm is defined as ill treatment; this includes sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and psychological abuse.

It also includes the impairment of physical or mental health (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment) and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment).

Types of harm include but are not limited to:

- Physical abuse – Hitting, slapping, over or misuse of medication, undue restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Emotional/psychological abuse** – Threats of harm or abandonment, coercive control, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks, witnessing abuse of others.
- Sexual abuse – Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, including: 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.
- **Financial abuse** – This category will be less prevalent for a child but indicators could be, for example, not meeting their needs for care and support which are provided through direct payments, or complaints that personal property is missing.
- **Neglect** – Failure to meet basic physical, emotional or psychological needs which is likely to result in impairment of health or development.

In addition to the above, harm can also include the following acts which are not included in the Care Act:

- **Cyber bullying** – This occurs when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person –online, or repeatedly picks on another person through emails or text messages. It can also involve using online forums with the intention of harming, damaging, humiliating, or isolating another person. It includes various different types of bullying, including racist bullying, homophobic bullying, or bullying related to special education needs and disabilities. The main difference is that, instead of the perpetrator carrying out the bullying face to face, they use technology as a means to do it.
- **Forced marriage** – This is a term used to describe a marriage in which one or both of the parties are married without their consent or against their will; in the case of children, a person is only able to give their consent if they are over the age of 18 years. A forced marriage differs from an arranged marriage, in which both parties consent to the assistance of a third party in identifying a spouse but this does not apply to the under 18s, unless they are in Scotland which is governed by a different legal system and those 16 years and over may give their consent. The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 make it a criminal offence to force someone to marry.
- **A “mate crime”** – Is when “vulnerable people and children are befriended by members of the community who go on to exploit and take advantage of them” (Safety Network Project, ARC). It may not be an illegal act, but it still has a negative effect on the individual. A mate crime is carried out by someone the young adult or child knows, and it often happens in private. In recent years there have been a number of Serious Care Reviews relating to young people and children with a learning disability who were seriously harmed, or even murdered, by people who purported to be their friend.
- **Radicalisation** – The aim of radicalisation is to inspire new recruits, embed extreme views and persuade vulnerable individuals to the legitimacy of a cause. This may be direct through a relationship, or through social media.

Signs and Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

A child may confide to another member of cast and/or crew that they are experiencing abuse inside or outside of the organisation's setting. Similarly, others may suspect that this is the case.

The following situations are examples of possible indicators that a child may be suffering abuse. A child may present more than one of these indicators:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if the injury is situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of a child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour, for example becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- A distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Appears to have difficulty making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other children and young people.
- Displays wide variations in eating patterns, including overeating and/or loss of appetite.
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.
- Overuses, or is reluctant to use electronic devices and/or social media portals.

If a child:

- is accidentally hurt;
- appears distressed, or
- appears to be sexually aroused by another person's actions

The matter must be reported immediately as set out previously and the matter recorded as below.



Recording and Information Sharing

PRS must comply with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Information about concerns of abuse includes personal data. It is therefore important to be clear as to the grounds for processing and sharing information about concerns of abuse.

Processing information includes record keeping. Records relating to safeguarding concerns must be accurate and relevant. They must be stored confidentially with access only to those with a need to know.

Sharing information, with the right people, is central to good practice in safeguarding adults. However, information sharing must only ever be with those with a 'need to know'. This does **NOT** automatically include the child's carers – although in most situations this will be the case. Conversely, there are times when consulting with the carer of a child is not advisable, for example if the consultation process is likely to place the child at even greater risk because the carer may be the abuser, or is unlikely to react to the disclosure in an appropriate manner. In such circumstances the Responsible Person who has received the disclosure should seek further guidance from the Safeguarding Officer.

The purpose of Data Protection legislation is not to prevent information sharing but to ensure personal information is only shared appropriately. Data protection legislation allows information sharing within an organisation. For example:

- Anyone who has a concern about harm can make a report to an appropriate person within the same organisation
- All information and actions pertaining to the disclosure must be recorded. PRS will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith reports a concern that an individual is or may be abusing a child.

If you are in doubt as to whether to share information seek advice e.g. seek legal advice and/or contact the Local Authority and explain the situation without giving personal details about the person at risk or the person causing harm.

Any decision to share or not to share information with an external person or



organisation must be recorded together with the reasons to share or not share information.

Multi-Agency Working

Child Safeguarding legislation gives the lead role for adult safeguarding to the Local Authority. However, it is recognised that safeguarding can involve a wide range of organisations.

PRS may need to cooperate with the Local Authority and the Police including to:

- Provide more information about the concern you have raised.
- Provide a safe venue for the child to meet with other professionals e.g. Police/Social Workers/Advocates.
- Attend safeguarding meetings.
- Coordinate how we might be able to accommodate internal investigations (e.g. complaints, disciplinary) with investigations by the police or other agencies.
- Share information about the outcomes of internal investigations.
- Provide a safe environment for the child to continue their role in the organisation.

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

1. The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
2. The child's home address and telephone number.
3. Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
4. The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
5. Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
6. A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
7. Details of witnesses to the incidents.
8. The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
9. Have the parents been contacted?
10. If so what has been said?



11. Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
12. If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said?
13. Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

The name of the person who took the referral should be recorded.

Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.

Section 3: Appendices



Appendix 1 – Sources of Information and Support

NSPCC

National charity dedicated to eradicating child abuse and supporting victims and families experiencing it.

Tel: 0800 800 5000

E mail: help@nspcc.or.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

Child Line

National telephone line dedicated to Under 18 suffering from abuse.

Tel: 0800 1111

Ponteland Repertory Society Safeguarding Officer: Alexander Finlayson-Heap 07526 000288

Education Welfare Officer, Northumberland County Council: Linda Stephenson 01670 622800

Social Services, Northumberland County Council: 01670 624 888

Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit, non urgent 101, urgent 999