



Registered Charity No. 701555

Safeguarding Children Policy

1. Introduction

This policy demonstrates the group's commitment to protecting children, giving clear signals that the group takes safeguarding children seriously in all aspects of its activities. It also demonstrates shared responsibility for safeguarding children.

We aim to safeguard the welfare of children participating in Horncastle Theatre Company activities. In order to give children protection from potential and actual abuse it is important that all concerned have a basic understanding of the issues involved and that procedures are in place that are understandable and easy to implement by anyone providing a service to children at Horncastle Theatre Company within Young, and Up Stagers.

Horncastle Theatre Company **is** committed to creating an environment that enables children to learn, develop and express themselves in a safe, understanding and encouraging environment. Parents trust us to look after their children, to care for them, to give encouragement and to keep them safe. We need to ensure that we honour their trust.

Horncastle Theatre Company's Safeguarding Children's Policy arises from the following principles:

- ❑ The child's welfare is first consideration
- ❑ All children, regardless of age, disability, gender or ethnic origin have a right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation

We also follow the expectations of the Charity Commission set out below:

- To provide a **safe and trusted environment**. Safeguarding involves a duty of care to everyone who comes into contact with your charity, not just vulnerable beneficiaries like children and young people.
- Set an **organisational culture that prioritises safeguarding**, so it is safe for people to report incidents and concerns in the knowledge they will be dealt with appropriately.
- Have adequate safeguarding **policies, procedures and measures** to protect people and make sure these are made public, reviewed regularly and kept up to date.
- Handle incidents as they arise. **Report them to the relevant authorities** including the police and The Charity Commission. Learn from these mistakes and put in place the relevant mechanisms to stop them happening again.

2. Background

Child abuse is a difficult issue and presents challenges to all that provide services for children, and many people feel uncomfortable with the subject. It is not easily recognisable and individuals often fear reading too much into a situation. Many children experience minor accidents causing injuries, but there may be occasions where you are concerned over the nature and frequency of injury. This document contains information on some of the signs that may give cause for concern. This document is based on the principle that:

“It is not your responsibility as members of Horncastle Theatre Company to decide whether or not child abuse is occurring, but it is your responsibility to act on those concerns and do something about it.”

3. What Is Child Abuse?

Do not ever think that you could never be placed in the position of reporting child abuse.

The generic term ‘child abuse’ is used to describe various ways in which children are harmed or mistreated. There are many different ways in which children can be harmed, all with a common factor that the child feels undervalued and worthless.

Abuse can happen anywhere, but research indicates that the perpetrators of such abuse are likely to be known and trusted by the child.

4. Types of Abuse

❑ **Physical Abuse**

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent fabricates the symptoms or deliberately induces illness in a child.

❑ **Sexual Abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non penetrative acts. They may include non contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

❑ **Emotional Abuse**

The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve:

- Telling a child they are worthless, unloved or inadequate
- Valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on a child
- Overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning
- A child seeing or hearing the ill treatment
- of another
- Serious bullying
- Causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger
- Exploitation or corruption of a child
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❑ **Neglect**

Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development. Neglect may occur:

- During pregnancy as a result of substance abuse
- Failure to provide adequate food and clothing
- Failing to provide shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment
- Failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger
- Failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- Failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

❑ **Discriminatory Abuse**

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Discriminatory Abuse includes racist, religious and sexist abuse, plus abuse based on a person's disability.

5. EFFECTS AND INDICATIONS OF ABUSE

The effects of child abuse can be devastating, especially if children are left unprotected or do not have the support to cope with that abuse.

Indications that a child may be being abused include:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if 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 or her
- Someone else (child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child
- Unexplained changes in behaviour or emotions such as becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexual explicit behaviour, sexually explicit talk inappropriate to the child's age
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Difficulty in making friends
- Uncharacteristic eating disorders, depression and suicide attempts
- The child may become withdrawn, introverted and depressed and have low self esteem and lack of confidence

6. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE IS TAKING PLACE?

If any member of Horncastle Theatre Company is concerned that abuse may occur or has occurred they must refer the matter immediately to the Safeguarding Children Champion who will decide whether or not to report the matter further. If it is felt that further investigation is necessary in order to protect the child, the matter must be referred to appropriate professional within Children's Services. . Professionals can contact Children's Services for advice re concerns without giving personal details. In the event of referral to Children's Services, copies of all relevant correspondence, notes of dialogue, diagrams of any injury witnessed must be passed to the coordinator for filing. It is very important that any concerns on a child's safety are logged. A sample of the log to be used if there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare is included, which can be used if any doubt over a child's welfare exists. All reports relating to Safeguarding Children should be completed in black ink and stored securely.

**HORNCASTLE THEATRE COMPANY
CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD'S SAFETY AND WELFARE LOG**

Name of Child	Date of Birth
Date Form Completed	Time Form Completed
Your Name (Please Print) and Your Position within the Organisation	Signature
Reasons for Recording Incident	Please Record the Following as Factual as Possible
Who?	What?
Where?	When?
Offer an opinion where relevant (how and why this may have happened)	Substantiate the opinion. Please note the action taken, including the names of anyone to whom information was passed.

All reports relating to Safeguarding Children should be completed in black ink and stored securely.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PROCEDURE

1. There will be two named people for safeguarding children who will be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the safeguarding of children. These people are currently Sheena Liversidge (Chairman Young Stagers) and Nancy Shackleton (Safeguarding Champion).
2. All youth group leaders and members will be carefully selected and vetted to try to ensure they do not pose a risk to children. Those youth group leaders and members having contact with children will be checked through the Disclosures and Barring Service (DBS) at the appropriate level.
3. All youth group leaders and members will receive information and training in safe conduct if appropriate together with what to do if they have concerns about a child. This will include information on recognising where there are concerns about a child, where to get advice and what to do if none seems to have taken their concerns seriously.
4. We will endeavour to make this organisation a safe and caring place for children to be by having a code of conduct for all youth group leaders and members. This will be given to all staff, volunteers and users and they will be expected to comply with it.
5. Any information given to users about activities of the organisation will include information about the Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure. Parents and carers of any children using supervised activities for children will be given specific information about the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN CHAMPION

1. This organisation will have two dedicated people to take responsibility for safeguarding children matters. These people will be Sheena Liversidge (Chairman Young Stagers) and Nancy Shackleton (Safeguarding Champion).
2. They will be selected by Horncastle Theatre Company's committee and be decided at the first committee meeting after the Annual General Meeting.
3. Because of their key role in keeping children safe enhanced level DBS checks will be undertaken and 2 references taken up.
4. Their role is to:
 - Ensure the organisation's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures are followed.
 - Ensure they know how to make contact with social care and police staff
 - responsible for dealing with safeguarding children concerns both during and after office hours.
 - Report any concerns to social care or the police. (N.B. Urgent concerns should be reported immediately by those aware of them even if the designated person is not available, and it is the role of the Safeguarding Champion to ensure all staff and volunteers know how to do this.)
 - Act as a source of advice on all safeguarding children matters.
 - Ensure that a record is kept of any concerns about a child or adult and of any conversation or referrals to statutory agencies.

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- Ensure that any such record is kept safely and securely.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Always remember that while you are caring for other people's children you are in a position of trust and your responsibilities to them and the organisation must be uppermost in your mind at all times.

Do Not:

- Use any kind of physical punishment or chastisement such as smacking or hitting
- Use non prescribed drugs or be under the influence of alcohol
- Behave in a way that frightens or demeans any child
- Use any racist, sexist, discriminatory or offensive language
- Invite a child to your home or arrange to see them outside the set activity times
- Engage in any sexual activity (this would include using sexualized language) with a child you meet through your duties or start a personal relationship with them, this would be an abuse of trust
- Engage in rough or physical games, including horseplay
- Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Rely upon good nature to protect you or believe "it could never happen to me"
- Give children presents or personal items
(Exceptions to this could be a custom such as: buying children a small birthday token or leaving present, help to a family in need such as equipment to enable them to participate in an activity. Both types of gift should come from the organisation and from a professional capacity and be agreed with the named person for safeguarding children and the child's parent/carer. Similarly do not accept gifts yourself other than small tokens for appropriate celebrations, which you should mention to the activity leader.)

Do:

- Exercise caution about being alone with a child. In situations where this is unavoidable, ensure another worker or volunteer knows what you are doing and where you are.
- Ensure that any physical contact is open and initiated by the child's needs, e.g. for a hug when upset or help with toileting. Always prompt children to carry out personal care themselves and if they cannot manage ask if they would like help
- Talk explicitly to children about their right to be kept safe from harm
- Listen to children and take every opportunity to raise their self esteem
- Work as a team with your coworkers/ volunteers. Agree with them what behaviour you expect from children and be consistent in enforcing it
- Remember if you have to speak to a child about their behaviour you are challenging 'what they did', not 'who they are'
- Make sure you have read the Safeguarding Children Procedure and Policy and that you feel confident that you know how to recognise when a child may be suffering harm, how to handle any disclosure and how to report any concerns
- Seek advice and support from your colleagues and your designated champion for safeguarding children
- Be clear with anyone disclosing any matter that could concern the safety and well being of a child that you cannot guarantee to keep this information to yourself
- Seek opportunities for training
- Where possible encourage parents to take responsibility for their own children
- Work within parameters of any national or local guidelines referring to Covid-19.

Amended: 17/04/2026

Next Review Date: April 2027