

1) INTRODUCTION

1.1 There are numerous ways in which professional adults in Sherman Theatre may come into contact with young people or vulnerable adults in the course of their work. We have a Young People's Policy as a core part of our brief; we work with young people as a significant part of our audience, both in the auditoria and elsewhere in the building (on backstage tours, for example). Individual adult workers may be involved in workshop sessions with our 200+ Youth Theatre members, or with other projects. Adult actors and technicians on Sherman productions will often be working in close proximity to young people (e.g. the Youth Theatre teams in our Christmas productions). We also accommodate school and college students on Work Placement each year.

1.2 Legally speaking, this is an extremely sensitive area; we consider it appropriate to ask all professional and non-professional adults working in the building to give some time to think about their situation, and to become aware of and to be clear about their responsibilities.

1.3 Equity notes that "there have already been occasions where [trade union] members have faced disciplinary proceedings, suspensions and dismissal as a result of complaints made by young people. A complaint of this nature can have a devastating effect on an individual or a company, even if it proves to be unfounded." Clearly, it is in all our interests to work toward avoiding any such situations.

1.4 These notes are not meant as a substitute for, but as an aid to, discussion on this area within the company, and with the other adults who use the building. The principles of 'risk assessment' (familiar from our Health and Safety policy) can be applied to this area of work; by identifying areas of risk and discussing these with colleagues, the likelihood of a situation getting out of hand will decrease.

2) PREPARATION

2.1 Persons in a position of authority (whether that is the company administration or the individual adult worker) should check on their legal obligations in respect of work with young people, individually or collectively. Workers should be aware of the times when they assume legal responsibility for the health and safety of young people on the premises.

2.2 We are generally responsible for ensuring that all adults who are on the premises at any time, including visitors and non-professionals, are acting in a safe and responsible manner towards any young people who also happen to be in the building.

2.3 It will be helpful to ensure that people who join our workforce (permanently or temporarily) are made aware that they may often be working alongside or in close proximity to young people as a part of their induction.

3) THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Adult workers should be careful at all times to be clear about who is responsible for young people on the premises, particularly when the responsibility for a young individual (or a group) is shared between workers in different departments.

3.2 Adults should encourage safe and authorised use of Sherman rooms and corridors, and should lead by example in this respect. Unsafe or inappropriate use of the Sherman rooms and corridors should be actively discouraged.

3.3 Smoking may only take place outside the building

3.4 Illegal drugs may not be brought into Sherman building; also they may not be locked in a vehicle in the car park.

3.5 Prescribed drugs should be hidden out of sight and reach, preferably in a locked vehicle, room or cupboard.

4) PHYSICAL CONTACT

4.1 This is the most problematic area and the one most open to misconstruction. Often our creative work in the rehearsal rooms will bring adults and young people into direct physical contact. Younger children (especially between the ages of 4 and 8) who form some of our audiences will show a genuine desire to express gratitude and appreciation in a physical way e.g. with a hug.

4.2 Keep physical contact with young people to an appropriate level. What that level is in relation to a specific piece of work needs to be discussed by the adults concerned in advance of carrying out the work.

4.3 In the creative process, it may be appropriate to ask a young person, particularly an adolescent, whether s/he minds physical contact; this should be done as tactfully as possible.

4.4 Encourage young children to sit at the side and not on the knee. If a child does want a hug, offer a hand to be shaken, or kneel at their level to ensure that the hug is seen to be a hug.

4.5 Not all contact need be physical. A young person may take an adult (worker) into their confidence - e.g. by whispering "I'm being bullied" into their ear during a workshop or after a show. A process of dealing with that confidence needs to be agreed with the young person; e.g. suggesting, if they are a member of a school group, "Shall we both go to your teacher and talk it over with him/her?"

5) SUMMARY

5.1 It is not the intention of these notes to make any adult feel uncomfortable about working with young people. It is the intention to encourage people to identify situations which may be misconstrued so that action can be taken to avoid them before they arise.

5.2 If in doubt, consult with colleagues.

If still in doubt, consult with the appropriate Sherman line manager.

6) TOURING TO SCHOOLS AND OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE'S VENUES

As a company working on a day to day basis with children and young people, all company members have a particular responsibility to maintain the highest professional standards of

conduct at all times. When on school premises company members and young people on Work Experience are required to wear Sherman Theatre badges [note 1] with their own name at all times when not performing. A risk assessment should be produced for each and every touring production

6.1 When arriving at a school make sure that company members act as ‘outriders’, walking in front of, behind or to the side of the van from the moment of arrival at the school grounds.

- Drive very slowly on the premises and take particular care when reversing.
- When parking (even if temporarily) never obstruct fire exits. Once the van is unloaded park it in the car park as directed by the school/venue.
- Keep the van locked at all times on the school/venue premises.
- Never give a pupil a lift in the company vehicle.

6.2 One person should be sent into the school to liaise with the contact or school secretary.

That person should be prepared with a standard set of questions. Apart from the technical details for get-in purposes, these would include:

- Is there a visitors’ book? If so, it should be signed in and out by all personnel
- Where are the staff toilets? (Never use the children’s toilets)
- What are the arrangements for meal times?
- Inform the contact person of any expected visitors e.g. funding representatives, VIP’s, advisers, board members etc.
- Ask for details of fire procedure and identify fire exits

6.3 Performance and preparation space must be made ‘out of bounds’ until the show begins.

- Ask for a private changing area and, if possible, lockable changing area.
- Do not accept help from the children with the set or preparation. They should not be in the performance space.
- Once the performance space is set up carry out a health and safety check before allowing the children to be let in.
- Company members should stay in the performance and preparation area and avoid wandering around the school.

6.4 Conduct around the school/venue is very important. Stay in prescribed areas and avoid wandering round the venue. If a company member needs to go elsewhere in a school, make sure the school office is consulted and move around the school quietly – avoid shouting, loud laughter or any unnecessary noise

6.5 Never work or perform without the presence of teachers. When a guardian is present, make sure they have been fully briefed by the school.

6.6 Always keep the van locked while on school property.

¹ Managed by the relevant SMT.

- 6.7 Never leave the van blocking a get-in door. Park it elsewhere during the show.
- 6.8 Do not smoke anywhere on school premises (including the van) unless it is in a designated smoking area such as the staff room.
- 6.9 Do not take illegal drugs onto the venue premises that includes locking them in the van.
- 6.10 Prescribed drugs should be hidden and out of reach of the children, preferably in the locked van
- 6.11 Alcohol should not be taken onto school or venue premises under any circumstances and company members must not consume alcohol before arriving at the school. [see the Staff Handbook for Sherman Theatre Policy on Alcohol and Drugs].
- 6.12 Employ the same degree of care when leaving the venue as when arriving
- 6.13 Make sure language and conversation is appropriate.
- 6.14 Ensure your actions do not conflict with school rules.
- 6.15 You are an ambassador for the Company and a role model for the children: make sure everything about you reflects this.
- 6.16 Take responsibility for clearing up completely after the performance. Take any rubbish with you.
- 6.17 Report any accidents or breakages immediately.

ACCIDENT PROCEDURE

The person leading a rehearsal or workshop is responsible for the safety of the youth theatre members. Before the rehearsal starts ensure the space is clear of any hazards and do not leave the young people unsupervised.

If an accident occurs, it must be reported to reception immediately. Ensure the injured person is comfortable and not left alone.

If first aid is necessary please ensure a first aider is present. The staff list denotes which members of staff are trained first aiders – the reception staff will be able to locate someone for you.

First Aid Boxes are located:

FOH General Office

Kitchen by the Main Office

Technical Stage Management Office

All accidents must be recorded. Accident report forms can be obtained from reception and the main office and must be completed in full with copies distributed to the relevant members of staff – Executive Director and Head of Events and Operations.

If the accident is considered serious, the parent/s must be contacted and an ambulance called. If the parent/s cannot get to the Sherman immediately, the child will be put in the care of the paramedics. Reception must note which hospital the ambulance is going to and pass on all necessary information to the parents.

If a visit to A & E is necessary but an ambulance is not, a taxi can be arranged by stage door if the parent/s cannot get to the Sherman immediately. A member of Sherman Theatre staff must accompany the young person until the parent/s arrive at the hospital. Under no circumstances may a child travel in a taxi alone.

If no staff are available and parents can not be contacted an ambulance will have to be called.

Under no circumstances may a child travel in a car belonging to a member of staff.

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