

Safeguarding

First Act Arts 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 (in Scotland change to Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003). We recognise that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect and we, as a company, are committed to sustaining practice which protects children from harm.

Our Responsibility

As a company, we believe that the welfare of children is paramount and that 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 with every tutor clear on how to respond appropriately.

We will ensure that all children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity and the duty of care to children will always be put first, above and beyond performance. 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 from students or staff members.

The First Act Senior Leadership Team will keep up to date with health & safety legislation, keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children, and will undertake relevant development and training, as well as passing this information onto our staff through monthly CPD focuses.

At the outset of any production, class, trip or other event, First Act will undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process. We hold a register of every child involved within First Act and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

Christopher Phillips is identified within First Act as the person with designated responsibility for child protection.

Parents

First Act believes in the importance of a partnership between parents and the society. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of First Act and to share responsibility for the care of children. As part of the induction process, all parents will be given a copy of this Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of First Act to take children home. If a child is not collected and the parents have *not notified* us that they will be delayed, we will follow the procedure set out below.

Up to 10 minutes late

- When the parent or carer arrives, they will be reminded that they must call the club to notify us if they are delayed.

Over 10 minutes late

- The tutor on duty will notify a manager who will attempt to contact the parents. If they cannot be reached a message will be left on their voicemail.
- The manager will then attempt to ring the Emergency contacts listed on the child's registration form who will be asked to collect the child.
- When the parent or carer arrives, they will be reminded that they must call the setting to notify the club that they are delayed.
- A full session late fee will be added to the child's bill (£6.50)

Over 30 minutes late

- If the manager has been unable to contact the child's parents or emergency contacts are unavailable or unable to collect the child, the manager will contact the local social care team for advice.
- The child will remain in the care of staff and within the club's premises, until the child is collected or placed in the care of the social care team.
- A £25 late fee will be added to the child's account.

Managing Persistent Lateness

The manager will record incidents of late collections and will discuss them with the child's parent or carers. Parents and carers will be reminded that if they persistently collect their child late, they may lose their place at First Act.

External Company Lateness

Where lateness of collection has occurred at an external site (e.g a school club), then the staff members representing First Act will make an attempt to find staff of the partnership site. From there, responsibility of waiting with the child shall be passed back to the external site to avoid any late fees being added.

Should no staff be found, then the above process will come into play.

However, as external visits usually happen within the day, should the lateness impact upon another booking (e.g tutors are unable to get to the next class they are teaching on time), then an additional fee will be added on top of the late fee to cover any lost costs.

This will be charged to either the parent directly or the site provider (depending on whom First Act Arts holds as the invoicing contact).

Unsupervised Contact

We will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children using additional tutors and adult chaperones at all First Act events. If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimize risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.

All tutors of First Act Arts will be required to hold an up-to-date DBS certificate in case they are left on an unsupervised basis with students. For specific 1:1 teaching sessions, arrangements must be made directly with the parents or guardians of the student. No sessions should be arranged without the knowledge of the student's carers. A 1:1 session should happen where possible at a time when other adults and students are in the other parts of the studio.

Physical Contact

All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children during sessions, only touching children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity. Tutors will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

In terms of restraining a child, please refer to our 'Behaviour Protocol Policy'. All contact used during the restraining should be minimum and proportionate.

Managing Sensitive Information

Permission will be sought from the parents for the use of photographic material featuring their children for promotional or other purposes. First Act's online marketing materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use and First Act 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 any party within First Act Arts sees or suspects abuse of a child while in our care or from another source, please make this known to the DSL (Christopher Phillips) or one of the SLT team (Craig Gaffney or Ceris Shadwell). If you suspect that the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem, you should follow the procedure outlined within the 'Whistleblowing Policy'.

It is vital that notes are made to record what was witnessed as well as the response in case there is follow-up in which you are involved. Staff should use the 'Incident Report Form'.

If a serious allegation is made against any member of First Act, student, tutor, chaperone, venue staff etc., 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 a member of staff at First Act that abuse has taken place it is vital that they remain calm and in control but do not delay acting:

- They will listen carefully to what has been said.
- Don't act surprised, shocked or horrified, this may lead the child to believe they are in the wrong.

- 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 DSL.
- 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 who you gave the information to.

Recording

In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.

An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken eg. suspension of an individual, where relevant 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 and Confidentiality

If a complaint is made against a member or tutor of First Act Arts, he or she will be made aware of this and suspended pending investigation, in line with this policy. 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. In criminal law, the Crown, or other prosecuting authority, must prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Suspensions and Dismissals

If any student, parent, or tutor is in breach of any safeguarding regulations or does not adhere to the 'Code of Conduct' or 'Teaching Staff Agreement', then First Act Arts will implement a measured and sufficient sanction.

Suspensions and dismissals of membership and freelance contracts can be done immediately and at any given time if safeguarding or Code of Conduct breaches occur. It is within First Act's right to judge what is deemed 'severe' enough to warrant these actions.

Accidents

To avoid accidents, students, parents, and tutors are provided with their relevant 'Code of Conduct' as well as our 'Health and Safety Policy'. Our 'Uniform Policy' will also assure that avoidable accidents are kept to a minimum.

If a child is injured while in the care of First Act, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the accident book. First Aider regulations are outlined within the 'Health and Safety Policy'.

If a child comes to class with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made on the online incident report form. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

Criminal Record Disclosures

All tutors at First Act Arts will need to be in possession of a DBS certificate to teach. If it is believed to be in the best interests to obtain criminal record disclosures for chaperones or other personnel, First Act will inform the individuals of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required.

First Act will use an external umbrella company in order to obtain DBS certificates for members of the company.

Chaperones

Chaperones will be selected by First Act to 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 the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.

Potential chaperones will need to apply, with the assistance of First Act, for a Warrington Borough Council Chaperone's License. This will require them to supply photographic proof of identity (eg. passport, driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children. They will also be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.

All chaperones will be made aware of this Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and as well as any other relevant documentation relating to their role.

Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care. If unsupervised access is unavoidable, it is the responsibility of First Act Arts that correct measures are put in place and recorded for inspection.

Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the DSL. 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 Helen and not allow the child to continue. Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell Helen or a member of the production team to cease, and should it not do so, contact the relevant lines of authority. Please see our 'Whistle Blowing Policy' for more information on all of the above.

During performances:

- Chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms.
- 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 and others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by the society.
- 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 get them home.