Swan Theatre Chaperoning Policy (Revised October 2026)

Adopted date:
Review undertaken by: Designated Safeguarding Lead
Policy Review Period: Two years
Next review date: October 2028

Introduction

It is a legal requirement that children engaged in public performances or entertainment under a licence issued by the local authority must be supervised by a chaperone approved by a Local Authority, unless they are in the care of either their parent or agreed tutor. The regulations are designed wholly to protect the child's welfare and to prevent any child being exploited.

The Swan Theatre Chaperoning Policy comes into effect in the event of a production being staged which involves a young person, in a backstage supporting role, or on-stage, who is under the age of 16 at the time of first involvement. The specific legal requirement of the upper age limit is defined below.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the **Swan Theatre Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Arrangements** which should also be observed and followed.

These two policies also detail the requirements and responsibilities for Directors where there are young people under the age of 18 in their production, whether a license, or Chaperones are required or not.

The requirement for a License

Directors or producers intending to produce a play which involves a young person need to check if they need to apply for a license, and if so will need to ensure there are licensed chaperones for the young person. Key points in determining the requirement for a license:

- The upper age limit of a child for the purposes of these requirements is until they cease to be of compulsory school age (the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16).
- This need for a license applies where performances are at a licensed premise, or in connection with which a charge is made.
- However, a license is not required if a child does not perform on more than four days in any period of six month (providing no absence of school is required)
- There is a limit to 6 performances per 7 days. A performance refers to any directed activity which includes rehearsals.
- In applying for a license, a Production Assistant will need to be appointed and will arrange for Chaperones to be present at rehearsals or productions.

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The requirement for Chaperones

Chaperones need to be licensed by the local authority which will require an enhanced DBS check, appropriate level of training (provided as part of the licensing arrangement), and be familiar with the Swan Theatre Safeguarding policy and procedures and the Children in Entertainment Guidance from Somerset County Council.

Chaperones need to apply for a licence from the local authority where they are resident. In Somerset the chaperone licence needs to be renewed after 2 years and a new DBS check will be required (arranged by Somerset County Council). Full details are available at: https://www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/chaperones This also includes relevant forms for Chaperones to record their involvement.

A child or young person's parent can act as a chaperone for their own child if the parent is present with the child at all times (except when on stage). This does not extend to siblings or grandparents who might see themselves as "carers".

The role and responsibilities of the Director, Functional Leads (for crew), and Production Assistant

After making the application for the Performance Certificate the Director/Production Assistant should liaise with the young person's parents to inform that the theatre requires and has applied for a Performance Certificate and is also required to make chaperoning arrangements for the young person.

If the parents are able to be present during rehearsals, and or the performance, this will satisfy the chaperoning requirement, provided they are not involved in any other activities in the theatre at the time.

If the parents are not available the Theatre will need to arrange chaperones for the young person for rehearsals and performances.

Once chaperones have been identified for the rehearsals and performances the basis of chaperoning will need to be discussed with the young person, (see below) to establish their agreement to the minimum requirements for chaperoning. The young person's failure to co-operate with the chaperoning arrangements will mean they will not be able to participate in the production.

The Production Assistant will then send a briefing to all chaperones for the detailed arrangements for the chaperoning.

The Director as part of their briefing for the cast will:

- Make them aware that there is a young person in the production who will be chaperoned by their parents or a licenced chaperone as a requirement of their participation in the production

- Ask all the cast and production staff to be aware of and co-operate with the chaperone in carrying out their role and help support the chaperone in observing the young person at all times.

The Functional Lead will similarly brief the crew.

The role and responsibilities of the Chaperone

- A chaperone's first duty is to look after the children in their care. They are in loco parentis and are required to exercise the care that a good parent might reasonably be expected to give a child.
- The nature of a chaperone's role is that s/he is in a position of trust regarding those children. Abuse of a position of trust in respect of young persons under the age of 18 is considered an offence.
- The law says that the maximum number of children an individual chaperone may supervise is twelve. However, the local authority may consider that due to the demands of the performance, the ages, gender of the children, or a combination of both, that the chaperone would only be able to effectively supervise a smaller number.
- Chaperones must remain with the children all of the time. It is only when they are on stage or performing that chaperones are not required to be by their side.
- Chaperones should possess firm negotiating skills. Occasionally production companies may try to exploit a child in order to facilitate their schedule. Chaperones have the power to withdraw a child from a performance if they have good reason and should have the confidence to do so when it is in the interest of the child.
- The chaperone must keep daily records of the children at the place of performance. They should have emergency contact numbers available.
- Chaperones must record any significant incident or accident. The parent and the local authority must be informed at the earliest opportunity. The records must be available for examination on request.
- A child should not be allowed to perform when unwell. The chaperone must put the needs of the child first. They have the responsibility to refuse to accept a sick child who arrives for a performance.
- Qualified first-aiders should be on hand in all entertainment establishments. Chaperones should establish where the first-aid kit and accident book are located.
- The chaperone should make themselves familiar with the procedures for evacuating the building in case of fire and the escape routes from whatever rooms the children are using.
- A chaperone is required to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are in place for each child under their control. They are also required to ensure that the person previously agreed collects the child.
- Chaperones and producers must ensure that suitable changing facilities are available. Boys and girls from the age of 5 must have separate changing rooms.
- Chaperones are required to undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (previously Criminal Records Bureau) as part of the approval process.
- All chaperones should be familiar with the Swan Theatre Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Arrangements.

- The requirement for chaperoning during changing can be accomplished by the chaperone standing outside the disabled toilet while the young person changes inside, (the chaperone having checked that the toilet is unoccupied). However within the theatre chaperones have agree that young people can change in the appropriate changing rooms with other members of the cast provided:
    - The young person has been asked (at each rehearsal and performance) if they are comfortable to do this and they have confirmed that this is their preference.
    - The young person is aware that if they become uncomfortable about anything which happens in the changing room they must inform the chaperone.
    - The young person will only stay in the changing room while changing and not use it as a place to wait or socialise. (Members of the cast are also asked to avoid creating a situation where the changing room is used to socialise and wait by the young person).
    - The chaperone will wait outside the door of the changing room.
    - If the young person is in the changing room for more than 10 minutes at a time the chaperone will knock on the door and enter to observe.

The Role and Responsibility of Local Authority Education Attendance Officers

Local Authority Education Attendance Officers are empowered to enter any premises where a performance or entertainment is being performed by children, without prior notice, to establish that the children are being properly supervised and cared for. They have the authority to withdraw the children from the performance, to rescind the chaperone's approval, or both.

Review Date

This policy will be reviewed regularly, at intervals of not more than two years, to ensure key information is updated and is in line with developments in Safeguarding Children guidance and meets the needs of the Swan Theatre.

Next Review Date:

Chairperson signature:

Name: …….. Date: …….

Designated Safeguarding Lead signature:

Name: …….. Date: …….

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