

## **The Cotswold Youth Theatre Complaints Procedure**

At The Cotswold Youth Theatre, we are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and positive environment for all participants. We value feedback from our members, parents, and staff, and aim to resolve any concerns or complaints in a fair and transparent manner. This complaints procedure outlines the steps to be followed if an issue arises.

### **Step 1: Informal Resolution**

If you have a concern or complaint, we encourage you to address it informally in the first instance. You may:

- Speak directly to the staff member involved, or
- Contact an alternative member of staff (Sarah, Polly or Ella) to discuss the issue.

We aim to resolve informal complaints quickly and effectively. Many issues can be settled at this stage through open communication.

### **Step 2: Formal Complaint**

If the issue cannot be resolved informally or if you feel the matter is too serious, you can make a formal complaint. To do this, please:

1. Submit your complaint in writing (by email or letter) to the Artistic Director [sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk](mailto:sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk)
2. Include details of the complaint, relevant dates, and any steps already taken to address the issue.

You will receive an acknowledgment of your complaint within five working days. The Artistic Director will investigate the issue and may arrange a meeting to discuss it further.

### **Step 3: Investigation and Resolution**

The Artistic Director or designated staff will thoroughly investigate the complaint. This may involve:

- Speaking with relevant parties (staff, participants, parents).
- Reviewing any supporting documentation or evidence.

You will receive a formal response to your complaint within 15 working days. The response will outline the findings of the investigation and any actions taken to resolve the issue.

### **Step 4: Appeal**

If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, you may appeal the decision. To do this:

- Submit an appeal in writing within 10 working days of receiving the formal response.

The appeal will be reviewed by the Board, who may conduct a further investigation if necessary. You will receive a final written decision within 20 working days of submitting the appeal. This decision will be binding.

### **Confidentiality**

All complaints will be handled confidentially. Information will only be shared with individuals directly involved in the investigation or resolution of the complaint.

### **Safeguarding Concerns**

If your complaint involves safeguarding or child protection issues, please raise it immediately with our Safeguarding Officer (Sarah Dowie). These complaints will be handled in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

For any questions or further guidance, please contact the Artistic Director. We are here to ensure all members of The Cotswold Youth Theatre have a positive and safe experience.

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

#### **Introduction**

The Cotswold Youth Theatre is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability. This Conflict of Interest Policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and participants. It ensures that any potential conflicts of interest are identified and managed responsibly to protect the integrity of our work.

#### **Definition of Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal, professional, or financial interests have the potential to influence or appear to influence their decisions or actions related to Cotswold Youth Theatre. Conflicts can arise when individuals:

- Have a financial interest in any business or organisation working with the youth theatre.
- Are related to or have close relationships with someone involved in a decision-making process.
- Could benefit personally from decisions made on behalf of the theatre.

#### **Identifying Conflicts**

It is the responsibility of all staff, volunteers, and participants to:

1. Disclose any personal, financial, or professional interests that may influence their role at the youth theatre.
2. Be aware of situations where their personal relationships or external affiliations may lead to potential conflicts.

## Disclosure and Management of Conflicts

If a conflict of interest arises, individuals must:

1. **Disclose the conflict in writing** to the Artistic Director, Sarah Dowie, or to the Board of Trustees at the earliest opportunity.
2. **Withdraw from any discussions or decision-making** processes where their impartiality may be compromised.

The Artistic Director will review disclosures and decide whether further action is required to manage the conflict. Actions may include:

- Recusal from decision-making.
- Reassigning responsibilities.
- Declining certain business or partnership opportunities.

## Confidentiality

All conflict of interest disclosures will be handled confidentially. However, where necessary, information will be shared with staff to ensure transparency and protect the theatre's interests.

## Compliance

Failure to disclose conflicts of interest may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from staff, or volunteer position.

## Contact

For questions, concerns, or to make a disclosure, please contact: **Sarah Dowie**

Artistic Director

**Email:** [sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk](mailto:sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk)

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This policy is designed to ensure that all decisions made at Cotswold Youth Theatre are fair, transparent, and in the best interests of the organisation and its community

## Enquiry About Results or Appeals Policy

### Introduction

The Cotswold Youth Theatre is committed to ensuring a fair and transparent process for all participants in assessments, auditions, and performance results. This policy outlines the procedure for making an enquiry about results or lodging an appeal if a participant feels that a decision has been unfair or incorrect.

### Enquiry Process

If a participant or parent wishes to enquire about an assessment, audition result, or performance decision, they should:

1. **Contact the Artistic Director**, Sarah Dowie, at [sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk](mailto:sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk) within **7 days** of the result being communicated.
2. Include relevant details in the enquiry, such as the date of the audition/assessment, the result, and the reason for the enquiry.

The Artistic Director will review the enquiry and provide a response within **10 working days**.

### Appeals Process

If, after receiving a response to the enquiry, the participant or parent remains unsatisfied, they may appeal the decision by:

1. **Submitting a formal appeal** in writing to the Artistic Director at [sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk](mailto:sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk) within **10 days** of receiving the enquiry response.
2. Clearly state the grounds for the appeal, including any additional information or evidence to support the claim.

The Artistic Director, in consultation with staff if necessary, will review the appeal and respond within **15 working days**. The decision of the appeal will be final.

### Confidentiality

All enquiries and appeals will be handled with confidentiality and impartiality, and no participant will be penalised for raising concerns.

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For further information or clarification, please contact Sarah Dowie at [sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk](mailto:sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk).

## **Malpractice or Maladministration Policy**

### **Introduction**

The Cotswold Youth Theatre is dedicated to upholding the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in all its activities. This Malpractice or Maladministration Policy outlines the procedures to be followed in the event of suspected or proven malpractice (intentional wrongdoing) or maladministration (poor management or misapplication of processes) by staff, volunteers, or participants.

### **Definition of Malpractice and Maladministration**

**Malpractice** refers to any improper conduct or activity that breaches the standards of The Cotswold Youth Theatre. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Cheating, plagiarism, or falsification of work during auditions, assessments, or performances.
- Discrimination, harassment, or bullying.
- Misrepresentation of qualifications or experience.

**Maladministration** refers to improper, ineffective, or negligent management practices. This includes:

- Failure to follow proper procedures for assessments, auditions, or result allocations.
- Miscommunication of essential information affecting performances or decisions.
- Breaches of safeguarding or health and safety policies.

### **Reporting Malpractice or Maladministration**

If a participant, parent, staff member, or volunteer suspects malpractice or maladministration, they should report it immediately. Reports can be made confidentially by:

1. **Contacting the Artistic Director**, Sarah Dowie, at [sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk](mailto:sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk).
2. Submitting a detailed written statement outlining the nature of the issue, including any relevant dates, individuals involved, and supporting evidence.

All reports will be acknowledged within **5 working days**.

### **Investigation Procedure**

Upon receiving a report of suspected malpractice or maladministration:

1. The Artistic Director or a designated senior staff member will conduct a **thorough investigation**, which may include interviewing relevant individuals and reviewing evidence.
2. If required, an independent investigator may be appointed, particularly for serious allegations or conflicts of interest.
3. The investigation will be completed within **15 working days**, and the individual who reported the issue will be informed of the outcome.

### **Outcomes and Actions**

If malpractice or maladministration is confirmed, The Cotswold Youth Theatre will take appropriate action, which may include:

- **For Staff or Volunteers:** Disciplinary measures, up to and including dismissal.
- **For Participants:** Disqualification from performances, auditions, or assessments, or other appropriate sanctions.
- **For Parents or Third Parties:** Restricted access to the Youth theatre's activities or legal action in severe cases.

In cases where no malpractice or maladministration is found, the Artistic Director will provide a clear explanation to all parties involved.

### **Appeals Process**

If the individual responsible for the complaint or the party subject to disciplinary action is unsatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal the decision by:

1. **Submitting an appeal in writing** to the Artistic Director within **10 working days** of receiving the investigation outcome.
2. The appeal will be reviewed by staff and a final decision will be communicated within **20 working days**.

### **Confidentiality and Whistleblowing Protection**

All reports and investigations will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. No individual will suffer any form of retaliation or disadvantage for raising a concern in good faith.

### **Prevention of Malpractice and Maladministration**

The Cotswold Youth Theatre promotes transparency, fairness, and adherence to all policies. Regular training and reviews of procedures will be conducted to minimise the risk of malpractice or maladministration.

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For more information or to report malpractice or maladministration, please contact Sarah Dowie at [sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk](mailto:sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk).

## Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

### Introduction

The Cotswold Youth Theatre is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults involved in its activities. We recognize our duty of care and are dedicated to creating a safe, supportive environment where participants can thrive. This policy is in line with UK safeguarding laws and guidelines, including the Children Act 1989 and 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022).

### Purpose

This policy outlines our procedures for preventing and responding to safeguarding concerns, ensuring that all staff, volunteers, participants, and parents understand their responsibilities.

### Safeguarding Principles

- **Best Interests of the Child:** The safety and wellbeing of the child are always our primary concern.
- **Zero Tolerance for Abuse:** We do not tolerate any form of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- **Confidentiality:** Information related to safeguarding concerns is treated confidentially, shared only with individuals necessary to investigate or manage the concern.

### Roles and Responsibilities

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Sarah Dowie, the Artistic Director, is the primary contact for safeguarding concerns. She can be reached at [sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk](mailto:sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk).
- **Deputy DSL:** In Sarah Dowie's absence, a trained deputy will manage safeguarding concerns.
- **All Staff and Volunteers:** Every staff member and volunteer must follow this policy, report concerns, and attend regular safeguarding training.

### Preventing Safeguarding Concerns

We take proactive steps to prevent safeguarding risks by:

1. **Safer Recruitment:** All staff and volunteers undergo an enhanced DBS check and provide professional references before working with children.
2. **Training:** Staff and volunteers receive regular safeguarding training to recognise signs of abuse and follow procedures.

3. **Code of Conduct:** All staff and volunteers are expected to act professionally and maintain appropriate boundaries with children and young people.
4. **Supervision and Ratios:** Adequate adult-to-child ratios are maintained for all activities, and children are never left unsupervised with a single adult.
5. **Safe Environment:** The theatre's premises and activities are regularly assessed to ensure they are safe and meet health and safety regulations.

### Types of Abuse

Abuse can take many forms, including:

- **Physical Abuse:** Causing physical harm.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Causing emotional distress through bullying or rejection.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Inappropriate sexual contact or behaviour.
- **Neglect:** Failing to meet a child's basic needs.

### Reporting and Investigating Concerns

All concerns about the welfare of a child or young person must be reported immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL. Concerns may arise from:

- A child's disclosure of abuse.
- Signs of physical or emotional harm.
- Concerning behaviour by a staff member, volunteer, or parent.

### Procedure for Reporting a Concern:

1. **Report:** Any staff member, volunteer, or participant who has a concern must report it to the DSL immediately.
2. **Record:** The person reporting the concern should complete a written record of the incident or concern, noting key details (date, time, individuals involved, and what was said or observed).
3. **DSL Action:** The DSL will assess the concern and decide on the appropriate action. This may include:
  - Consulting with external agencies such as Children's Social Care or the Police.
  - Contacting the child's parents (unless doing so puts the child at further risk).
  - Keeping a written record of all decisions and actions taken.

### Responding to Disclosures of Abuse

If a child discloses abuse, staff and volunteers should:

- **Listen calmly** and reassure the child that they are being taken seriously.
- **Do not ask leading questions** or make promises they cannot keep (such as keeping the disclosure a secret).
- **Report the disclosure** to the DSL immediately.

### Managing Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

If a safeguarding concern involves a staff member or volunteer:

1. The concern must be reported to the DSL, who will immediately inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
2. The accused individual may be suspended pending investigation to protect the child and ensure a fair process.
3. Investigations will be handled in line with UK safeguarding laws and Cotswold Youth Theatre's disciplinary policies.

### Confidentiality and Information Sharing

All safeguarding records are kept confidential and only shared with individuals involved in managing the case. We will only share information with external agencies (such as social services or the police) when necessary to protect a child or young person.

### Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if needed, to ensure compliance with the latest safeguarding laws and best practices.

For more information or to report a concern, please contact Sarah Dowie at [sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk](mailto:sarah@cotswoldyouththeatre.co.uk).

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This policy ensures that Cotswold Youth Theatre adheres to its safeguarding duties and creates a safe, nurturing environment for all participants.