



The cooperation of parents is important to the success of a youth theatre. Even if a group decides not to involve parents directly in the running of the group, parents need to be supportive of their son/daughter's participation and realise the commitment involved. Parents need to be reassured that their young person's wellbeing will be safeguarded and consent should be sought for their young person's participation. NAYD have created a sample **Parental Consent Form** available in the Advice Centre of its website:

http://www.nayd.ie/resources/show/advice_centre

What information should be provided to parents/primary carers?

1. General Information on the Youth Theatre.

- This is an opportunity to introduce the youth theatre to parents. You could include the youth theatre's mission statement and/or its aims and objectives. You can also explain its ethos e.g. the youth theatre has a young-person centred approach.

- Give some information about the structure/funding of the youth theatre. An example:

_____ Youth Theatre is run by a voluntary board. It has a part-time artistic director who facilitates workshops and directs productions. We receive funding from _____. (You could also name any local/national organisations with which the group has links).

- You can include information on equality/inclusion such as a sentence to explain your approach. For example _____ Youth Theatre has an open recruitment policy. We welcome young people from all backgrounds and abilities.

- State the group's approach to youth participation. For example: The youth theatre values the contribution of youth theatre members and actively seeks their opinions and ideas through our youth committee/representation on the board/ active participation in drawing up Group Contract etc.

- Provide details of the workshop time and venue. e.g. weekly workshops take place on Mondays at 6pm in the School Hall. You will be informed in advance should any extra workshops/rehearsals be scheduled

2. Welfare/ Child Protection

- Include your child protection statement. See **NAYD's Welfare and Child**

Protection Guidelines for more.

- Explain that the welfare/child protection policy is available and how they get a copy of it.

- Explain the role of the Designated Person and give details of the current DP. For example: As recommended by Children First (2010), _____ youth theatre has appointed a Designated Person who will take the lead on all child protection issues and welfare concerns. It is their role to ensure national guidelines are followed for the reporting of child protection concerns to the HSE and/or An Gardaí Síochána. Our current DP is _____ and they can be contacted by _____.

Please contact, should you have any questions or concerns.

- State other ways in which the youth theatre safeguards the well-being of members:

For Example: _____ Youth Theatre has put the following procedures and policies in place to ensure your son/daughter's welfare is safeguarded and that they have the best possible experience during their time in the youth theatre:

- A code of behaviour for staff and volunteer
- Adhere to best practice for recruitment/selection of staff and volunteers including Garda Vetting
- A confidentiality policy
- A Health and Safety policy
- Adequate insurance cover
- An anti-bullying policy
- Complaints procedures
- Procedures for reporting incidents and accidents
- Guidelines for the safe use of the youth theatre website

To access any of this information, please contact _____

Feedback/Complaints

_____ Youth Theatre welcomes feedback from both members and their parents. If you are unhappy with any aspect of the youth theatre, please contact _____ and if applicable, they will take you through our complaints procedure.

3. Group Contract

- If you have already developed a group contract, you should attach a copy. If you intend to develop a contract with the incoming group, you should state that you will forward a copy to all parents.

- Explain what the Group Contract is:

A group contract was drafted in collaboration between leaders and members. It states the rights of members, their responsibilities and also defines the group rules. We ask that you read it as it gives an outline of what your son/daughter can expect during their time in the youth theatre. Among the areas it outlines are the importance of attending workshops and rehearsals and also outlines disciplinary measures for violation of the agreed rules.

For a **Sample Group Contract** see NAYD's Advice Centre go to:

http://www.nayd.ie/resources/show/advice_centre

4. Updating/Informing parents

State what the youth theatre's policy is around keeping parents up to date and the kinds of things they can expect to be informed about.

For Example:

_____ Youth Theatre is committed to informing parents of any issues or concerns relating to their son/daughter. For example:

- Should their son/daughter suffer an injury or illness during a youth theatre activity
- Should their son/daughter be the victim or alleged perpetrator of bullying
- Should their son/daughter be subject to disciplinary action
- As stated already, we are committed to complying with Children First: National Guidelines for Child Protection and Welfare (2010) which makes it clear that parents should be informed if an organisation decides to make a child protection report relating to their son/daughter unless doing so will endanger the child/young person.

Updates on activities:

Parents and families are also valuable audience members and supporters of group activities such as fundraising so it is important to let them know what is coming up. There can be pressure on members to withdraw from youth theatre activities going into exam years and if the parents have experience of the youth theatre's work and witness the benefits of youth theatre for their son/daughter, the group may have more success in retaining members. You could develop communications such as. You could include something along the lines of:

- We will send a quarterly newsletter to parents, which will keep you put to date with upcoming productions and other events.

- We will notify parents of extra rehearsals or workshops in advance in writing.

(Whether you do this will depend on the age of your group but in general it is a good idea to keep parents informed about the commitment involved in rehearsing a production for instance.

What we ask from parents:

This is your chance to let parents know how they can do their bit to help the youth theatre. As indicated above, some youth theatres involve parents in the running of the group and others don't. The kind of thing you include will depend on the age group with which you work but below are some suggestions:

- Please ensure that you bring and collect your son and daughter on time. The youth theatre is not responsible for members outside of youth theatre hours

- Complete a Parental Consent Form and provide us with all relevant information relating to your child i.e. any medical requirements or details of any condition that may affect their participation in the youth theatre. We also ask that you give us permission to use images of your son/daughter. We will use these images for promoting the youth theatre and for archival purposes. We take every precaution to ensure that images are not taken or used in ways that would put the wellbeing of your son/daughter in jeopardy.

- Regular attendance at youth theatre is essential especially at times coming up to a production. We ask that you inform us/ ensure your child informs us in advance if they have to miss a workshop/rehearsal for any reason.

- From time to time we organise fundraising activities and we ask your cooperation and participation in these.

Confidentiality and Data Protection Statement

_____ Youth Theatre stores all personal information securely and restricts access to those who have a direct need to view this information. We abide by Data Protection regulations. You have the right to access and amend any information held by us in relation to your son/daughter at any time.

Thank you for your time. Please complete the attached Parental Consent Form. Please contact us should you have any questions or wish to talk to us at any time.

Source:

This information has been adapted from the Arts Council's **Child Protection Policy and Procedures Sample Information for Parents/Guardians**

To download a copy go to:

http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/publications/standards_and_guidelines.aspx. For a **Sample**

Parental Consent Form: See NAYD's *Welfare and Child Protection Guidelines for Youth Theatres*.