



Resources For Youth Theatres

About: Use of New Technologies

We are all aware of the huge changes in communications that has happened in the past decade. These developments have meant that youth theatres have more options for communicating with members, publicising their work, recording and disseminating their work and for attracting new members etc. However, many of these new platforms bring with them issues that youth theatres need to consider and it is recommended that they develop guidelines for members and staff/volunteers on the use of these technologies in relation to the youth theatre. As with all aspects of the safeguarding and protection of children, there is an emphasis on the shared responsibility across society, for ensuring our children and young people are kept safe.

Mobile phones

The proliferation of mobile phones has meant that it is in general it is easier to contact people and this has made communication with youth theatre members easier. A group text is a quick and easy way of providing information to members. Another benefit is that sending group text messages on-line is often free.

There are down sides too. Mobile phones have been used to bully and harass young people and in extreme cases, contact initiated by mobile phone has led to serious sexual abuse or child abduction. Of course the vast majority of use is safe and acceptable but youth theatres need to be mindful of how they use mobile phones as they conduct their business especially in relation to contact with young people.

In relation to child protection, leaders need to be aware that mobile phones can be used by an abuser and if they have concerns, they should follow the youth theatre's child protection procedures in the same way as they would if they suspected any other form or method of abuse. There are serious criminal consequences should a case of abuse be found. For example under the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998, it is illegal for anyone to produce, forward, publish, send, show or possess any child pornography in Ireland.

See NAYD's Welfare/Child Protection Guidelines for advice on child protection policies and procedures.

Mobile phones and sexual abuse

Mobile phones can be used by persons to:

- Target
- Be-friend
- Grooming – this is the process whereby an adult purposely and persistently seeks to befriend a child/young person so that they build to a point where physical contact can take place. Grooming can take place via mobile phone, chat room or social networking site. The individual may buy a phone for a young person or pay for phone credit and will usually emphasise a need for secrecy.
- Arrange to meet in person with young people with the intent of sexually abusing them.

Bullying by mobile phone

Mobile phones have offered new ways for those who perpetrate bullying to harass and target their victims. This may seem easier and less personal than bullying committed through direct contact with a victim and they may think that they are less like to get caught. It should be taken every bit as seriously as any other form of bullying. Bullying via mobile phone can take the following forms:

- Offensive or nuisance calls
- Offensive texts/photos to a victim or about a victim

It should be made clear to youth theatre members that bullying via mobile phones is as unacceptable as any other form of bullying. The legal position is that the sending offensive or indecent material by mobile phone is treated very seriously and can lead to imprisonment

See NAYD's Welfare and Child Protection Guidelines for Youth Theatres for more information.

Good Practice for use of mobile phones communications in youth theatre:

- Ideally a youth theatre have a mobile that is the 'official' mobile phone rather than being dependent on leaders' own personal mobile phones
- Do not provide youth theatre members' contact details to any third party. If you feel that it is appropriate to do so (e.g. a local newspaper wants to interview a young person involved in the youth theatre) you should get explicit permission to do so. If under 18, this should come from the parents.
- Ensure access to members' mobile and other contact details are controlled.
- Try to stick to sending group texts rather than texting individual members on a regular basis
- It is advised that leaders should not take photos of young people on their own personal mobile phones if possible
- Youth theatres should ensure they have parental permission for the taking and use of photos and that they follow good practice guidelines on the distribution and use of such photos.
- Never send any communication that could be interpreted as offensive or indecent
- Strongly emphasise the seriousness of mobile phone bullying to members
- As with any child protection concern, have clear guidelines for dealing with any instance of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Encourage members to voice any concerns they have in relation to mobile phone use, particularly use associated with the youth theatre
- Increase awareness of the safe use of mobile phones by members. For example:
 - never give out personal details that could be used to identify them
 - do not respond to texts/voice messages from strangers
 - let a parent/trusted adult know if they are receiving calls from strangers

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- always inform an adult they trust if they receive a message that makes them feel uncomfortable
- Make them aware that they should never trust a person is who they say they are. In particular make it clear to members who the adults are in the youth theatre, who will be in contact with them and inform them that they should not communicate with any one else unless informed otherwise.
- Make sure the Gardai/ mobile phone service provider are contacted if you have concerns. Consult the youth theatre's Designated Person and follow the youth theatres guidelines.
- Inform parents/primary carers of your concerns, unless you think that in doing so you will place the young person in any risk.

Use of Email

Most of the information and advice provided in relation to mobile phone use also applies to the use of email. Here are a few extra points to consider:

- Leaders should use the youth theatre email account rather than their own personal email.
- Don't pass on circular emails or 'joke' emails to members even if they seem innocuous. Try and keep the email account strictly for youth theatre business
- Email communications can also be used to groom and target young people for abuse. If a leader serious concern with regard to an email, they should follow the youth theatre's procedures for reporting welfare and child protection concerns.

The Internet and Social Networking

Young People and Internet Use

Webwise carried out a survey in 2009, which revealed increased internet use among children and young people. It was among the aspects of internet use that are seen as 'riskier' such as Instant Messaging(IM) and platforms that required disclosing of

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personal information, that the greatest increase was seen. It also revealed that more 'real life' meetings were happening as a result of contact over the internet.

This change in use patterns, however, was seen to be accompanied by significant increases in the knowledge and understanding of parents as well as greater communication between parents and children with regard to internet use. Children and young people also appear to be aware of the risks of Internet use and how to deal with these risks in an appropriate way. The majority of those in the survey were not prepared to provide information such as their email address or to publish a photograph of themselves on-line.

Recent research in the US shows that the 12-17 age group use the internet are the top users of the internet. The same research found that 73% of young people use social networking sites.

Social Networking

It is impossible to ignore social networking. It has permeated all aspects of society from social and cultural life to the commercial world. There are a lot of advantages to be gained as a youth theatre from setting up a social networking. Although there are a number of alternatives such as Bebo and MySpace, the vast majority of social networkers are using Facebook, which has over 500 million active users

Some advantages of social networking for youth theatres:

- A good way of keeping members up to date on youth theatre news and activities.
- Can be used to attract new members
- Gives a sense of shared identity to members of your youth theatre. Social networking can be a way of getting back in touch with former members.
- Provides the youth theatre with a sense that it is part of a bigger community e.g. can link up with other youth theatres, professional theatre companies, practitioners etc.
- Can be used to promote productions and other events to the general public.
- Can be used as a platform for members' views and opinions through blogging etc.

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Potential disadvantages of social networking for youth theatres:

- As with any information you put on the world wide web, you do lose control of it to a large extent once it is out there. Users can copy your photographs for example. Though in theory copyright and stipulations around permission should apply, you have very little to fall back on enforcement of the law doesn't seem to have caught up with the internet.
- In order to set up a Facebook page or group, you must have your own facebook profile. It can be difficult to keep your own personal profile page separate from the youth theatre page and users of the group page will often request to be a friend on your own personal profile page. This may not be to everyone's liking!!
- It can be quite difficult to work out what the best and safest settings are on social networking site.
- If you want to use your site for discussion and interactive communication, you need to monitor it carefully as users can easily add content that might not reflect well on the youth theatre.
- Because other sites/pages can be linked to the youth theatre's page/site, it can mean that the youth theatre can become associated with unsuitable or inappropriate content.
- The administrators of a social networking site may change how their site works e.g. change privacy options etc.
- The internet is changing so quickly that sites can easily become yesterday's news and you may find that after all the work you have put in, the youth theatre's friends/group members have migrated to another social networking site!!
- The risks of using social networking are particularly applicable to young people. These risks include cyber-bullying , harassment and the possibility that young people will be targeted by unscrupulous individuals who intend them harm.

The Youth Theatre's Website

A number of youth theatres have their own website. Even more have a page on the website of their parent organisation such as a local authority or a theatre company. Having a user friendly, professional and up to date site is important as often it is the first point of contact for those interested in the youth theatre hence the first impression the potential member, funder, supporter will get.

More and more websites encourage interactive communication through the use of blogs etc. Organisation/group websites frequently link to outside sites such as YouTube, photo hosting sites such as Flickr or social networking sites like Facebook. Once you put content on the internet, you can never be sure where it will end up and how far removed it will be from its original context. This is as true for your own site as for any third party sites you may use.

How to help ensure safe use of websites social networking sites/use of images online.

The youth theatre should make clear statement of its commitment to the safe use of its own website and any social network sites associated with it. Details of the steps it takes to realise this commitment should be provided. This could be included in your welfare/child protection policy. Ensure it is in a format that can be accessed by members, parents and other users of your on-line platforms. For instance it should be downloadable from your website or you could provide a link from any social networking sites used by the youth theatre.

Some guidelines for safe use of the internet and social networking:

- Make a clear statement of the kinds of behaviour that are not acceptable by users of your own website. These should include:
 - Bullying or harassment of any other user
 - Adding content that can be interpreted as offensive or inappropriate
 - Use of inappropriate language

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- Creating links with content from other sites that is inappropriate and/or offensive and does not comply with the ethos of the youth theatre
- The misuse of taking out of context of any content on the site including images or video footage.

For other sites you may use, familiarise yourself with terms and conditions of use and refer your members to them too. They will cover much the same guidelines as above. *See below for a section from Facebook's terms of use.

- Monitor the site(s) you are using on a regular basis. It would make sense for one person or a small group of people be responsible for this. Ensure quick removal of any inappropriate content.
- Make sure that whoever is responsible for the site familiarises themselves with the various settings and privacy options. Below are the sort of questions you need to answer:
 - Can anyone view the content of the page or is it restricted to members/friends only?
 - Can anyone post content or comments or is it just the administrators?
 - Is it easy to remove/edit content?
 - Can anyone view photos and/or tag people in photos. Tagging is inserting the names of people in a photo and linking this to the social networking profile of the people in question.
 - Is there an age restriction on who can sign up? Can we set our own age restrictions?
 - Can we restrict you uses the site in any other ways?
 - Can we accept/decline members/friends?
 - Is it possible to remove a user/friend/member?

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- Once somebody in the youth theatre has familiarised themselves with how the site works, they should advise members on the safest way to use the site e.g. keep your profile settings at private.
- Inform parents if you use social networking. It is a good idea to get permission from parents for those under 18 who wish to sign up to a site. You could request this permission on the general youth theatre Parental Consent Form.
- As already alluded to, it can be difficult to separate your own personal presence on a social networking site such as Facebook from that of the youth theatre. You could set up an identity that you use just for administering the youth theatre's page. Always be mindful that as a leader who works with young people, you need to be careful about how you appear in the public domain.
- If you are using a third party site, you can use the 'Report Abuse' function to inform those who run the site of any inappropriate content or let them know if you feel a user is up to no good.
- Aim to increase awareness among members and leaders of the risks involved in internet use and social networking. These risks are not solely to do with the threat of abuse but also include identity theft, fraud. Often young people are targeted by advertisers online.
- It is important to emphasize that just because a user seems to be part of a restricted network or shared interest group, a young person still needs to be wary. It is easy to create a fake identity and lie about your age when using social networking sites.
- Inform members of how they can practice safe use of the internet and social networking. **(See the section below on Tips for Young People By Young People below)**
- Have discussion around cyber-bullying. Members should be made aware of the effects of such behaviour on the victim but also the potential consequences for those who carry out bullying. This topic should be included in any general discussion around bullying. It is recommended that bullying be discussed during the drafting of a Group Contract. (NAYD

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has developed an advice sheet on Group Contracts – See Welfare and Child Protection Guidelines for Youth Theatres for more)

- Make it clear that comments that are in any way hurtful, derogatory, unpleasant about any young person or leader will not be tolerated.
- Encourage open communication with youth theatre members. Encourage them to voice any concerns they have about their use of the internet
- Don't reveal any of the personal details of members and encourage your members to do the same. For example, don't name young people in photographs.
- When using images/video footage of young people, be mindful of how they could be used inappropriately. Try to not upload images that contain one young person only.
- Images/video's should focus on the activity rather than the young people themselves.
- Seek permission from parents/primary carers for use of images/video footage and make it clear how they will be used. The youth theatre needs to stick to this. You should request permission on the youth theatre's Parental Consent form.
- Ensure any outside photographers, filmmakers etc. are aware of your guidelines for capturing/use of images and footage.
- Take any complaints made seriously and use the youth theatre's complaints procedures. **(See NAYD's Welfare and Child Protection Guidelines for Youth Theatres for more information on handling complaints.)**
- Youth theatres can add a disclaimer to their site(s) to make it clear that they are only responsible for the content on their own site and not for any other site or page that may be linked from it. State that you will endeavour to remove links to material that is inappropriate or offensive as soon as you become aware of it.
- You can also stipulate that permission must be gained to reproduce any material from your site. As stated earlier this can be difficult to police. You

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could add text to photographs making it clear who they belong to e.g. the youth theatre or the photographer. Be aware though that photos can be edited and such text removed easily enough.

- Sometimes users can create an 'unofficial site'. For example youth theatre alumni could set up a Facebook page. It is worth considering what your approach to this would be. While you are not directly in control of it, content will still reflect on the youth theatre.

***Safety and Social Networking Sites**

Here is a section of Facebook's terms of use that relate to safety:

We do our best to keep Facebook safe, but we cannot guarantee it. We need your help to do that, which includes the following commitments:

1. You will not send or otherwise post unauthorized commercial communications (such as spam) on Facebook.
2. You will not collect users' content or information, or otherwise access Facebook, using automated means (such as harvesting bots, robots, spiders, or scrapers) without our permission.
3. You will not engage in unlawful multi-level marketing, such as a pyramid scheme, on Facebook.
4. You will not upload viruses or other malicious code.
5. You will not solicit login information or access an account belonging to someone else.
6. You will not bully, intimidate, or harass any user.
7. You will not post content that: is hateful, threatening, or pornographic; incites violence; or contains nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence.
8. You will not develop or operate a third-party application containing alcohol-related or other mature content (including advertisements) without appropriate age-based restrictions.
9. You will not offer any contest, giveaway, or sweepstakes ("promotion") on Facebook without our prior written consent. If we consent, you take full responsibility for the promotion, and will follow our [Promotions Guidelines](#) and all applicable laws.
10. You will not use Facebook to do anything unlawful, misleading, malicious, or discriminatory.

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11. You will not do anything that could disable, overburden, or impair the proper working of Facebook, such as a denial of service attack.
12. You will not facilitate or encourage any violations of this Statement.

Source: <http://www.facebook.com>

Tips from Young People for Young People:

The following is taken from Youth Work Ireland's Safe Social Networking and was developed by young people working in Waterford Regional Youth Service. They researched the safety information provided by Bebo, Facebook and Myspace and summarised it as follows:

Keep Your Personal Information To Yourself

Never divulge any personal information that could be used to find or identify you in real life in a public forum. Password protect this information. This information includes your real name, address, telephone number, mobile number or links to websites or other profiles that might give this information away. It also includes this kind of information about your friends and family. Your personal information could be easily abused and misused. Your password can often be guessed, your identity can be stolen, it can be used by people wanting to defraud you or groom a teen into an offline meeting, or used to cyberstalk or harass you or by cyberbullies. It's your personal information...PROTECT IT!

Protect Your Password!

Keep your password to yourself and don't pick one that's easy to guess. (Keeping it on a post-it note glued to your monitor may not be the best way of storing your password securely.)

Don't Forget That Your Profile Is A Public Space

Don't post anything you wouldn't want the world to know (e.g., your phone number, address, IM screens name, or specific whereabouts). Avoid posting anything that would make it easy for a stranger to find you, such as where you hang out every day after school.

Are You Really Willing To Let Your Boss or Parents Read Your Profile

Don't post anything in public that you don't want your parents, principal, boss, university president or boyfriend or girlfriend to see. These posts tend to last longer than any of us thought they could. They are passed around and discoverable by search engines. You are never truly private when online. Remember that. Password protect everything and guard your password.

People Aren't Always Who They Say They Are. Be Careful About Adding Strangers To Your Friends List.

It's fun to connect with new friends from all over the world, but avoid meeting people in person whom you do not fully know. If you must meet someone, do it in a public place and bring a friend or trusted adult. Think about keeping some control over the information you post. Consider restricting access to your page to a select group of people, for example, your friends from school, your club, your team, your community groups, or your family.

Make sure your screen name doesn't say too much about you. Don't use your name, your age, or your hometown. Even if you think your screen name makes you anonymous, it doesn't take a genius to combine clues to figure out who you are and where you can be found.

Consider not posting your photo. It can be altered and broadcast in ways you may not be happy about. If you do post one, ask yourself whether it's one your mum would display in the living room.

Be wary if a new online friend wants to meet you in person. Before you decide to meet someone, do your research: Ask whether any of your friends know the person, and see what background you can dig up through online search engines. If you decide to meet them, be smart about it: Meet in a public place, during the day, with friends you trust. Tell an adult or a responsible sibling where you're going, and when you expect to be back.

ThinkB4Uclick

Before posting something online, check and make sure it says what you wanted it to say, can't be misconstrued and is being posted at the right place or sent to the right person. Think about the person on the other side. Many cyberwars start with a careless message.

Take5!

If something upsets you online, put down the mouse and walk away from the computer...so no one will get hurt! Take five minutes to do something you enjoy doing for five minutes to help you calm down and reply with a clear head.

They are Just People You Meet Online, Not Real Friends

Remember that your online friends are not really your friends. You may like them, think they understand the real you and even connect. But, unless you know them offline, they are not real friends. They are just cyberfriends. People who are smarter than you have been tricked. Don't become a victim!

I'm Receiving Unwanted Messages. What should I do?

There are a few things you can do:

- You can anonymously report messages by clicking the "Report Messages" link under the name and picture of the sender when viewing a message.
- You can easily block any user on social networking sites from seeing or contacting you by entering their name in the "Block People" section on the Privacy page.
- You can limit the people who can find you in searches, which in turn limits who can message you. Or you can block users.

Don't Be An Easy Mark

If something seems too good to be true, it's not true. Period. No exceptions. Does it make sense to you that the brother-in-law of the former Nigerian president found you out of the 700 million other users online to entrust with their 500 million Euro?

Harassment, Hate Speech and Inappropriate Content Should Be Reported

If you feel someone's behaviour is inappropriate, react. Talk with a trusted adult, or report it to the website or the authorities.

Trust your gut feeling if you have suspicions. If you feel threatened by someone or uncomfortable because of something online, tell an adult you trust and report it to the police and the social networking site. You could end up preventing someone else from becoming a victim.

Tell a Trusted Adult and Report Cybercrime

If you are a minor (under 18 years of age), make sure that you tell your parents or another trusted adult if something goes wrong. Don't try and handle it yourself. If it involves dangerous or criminal activity, or someone you suspect is a predator or criminal, report it to your local law enforcement office.

Sources: www.facebook.com www.bebo.com www.youtube.com

Internet Use and the Law

The internet is not easy to regulate or to deal with in legislation. The fact internet sites originate in and cover multiple jurisdictions is just one issue. However is some legislation in Ireland that is of relevance.

The following is taken from Youth Work Ireland 's *Safe Social Networking: Guidelines for those working with young people*:

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2007

This Act introduced an offence of meeting a child or travelling to meet a child, having "groomed" the child on at least two previous occasions, for the purpose of doing anything that would constitute the sexual exploiting of the child. The maximum penalty on conviction on indictment is imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years

Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act (1997)

Stalking through electronic or physical means carries a penalty of up to seven years imprisonment in Ireland. Also, if an individual continually sends email to someone that is unwanted, explicit, etc. it can be regarded as a harassment offence under section 10 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act (1997).

Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998

This Act, which is amended by **Section 6 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2007**, deals with a number of offences involving children under the age of 17 which could be facilitated by use of the Internet. These include:

- Child trafficking and taking a child for sexual exploitation; the maximum penalty is life imprisonment.
- Meeting a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation; the maximum penalty is 14 years imprisonment.

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- Allowing a child to be used for child pornography; the maximum penalty is a fine of up to 31,000 euro and/or 14 years imprisonment.
- Producing, distributing, printing or publishing child pornography; the maximum penalty for a summary offence is 1,900 euro and/or a year's imprisonment; if charged on indictment, the maximum penalty is an unlimited fine and/or 14 years imprisonment.
- Possession of child pornography; the maximum penalty for a summary offence is 1,900 euro and/or a year's imprisonment; if charged on indictment, the maximum penalty is 6,350 euro and/or five years imprisonment.

Sources:

Safe Social Networking: Guidelines for those working with young people, published by Youth Work Ireland.

A very useful guide that takes you through the various social networking sites in detail. It is downloadable from <http://www.youthworkireland.ie>

Bui Bolg's Social Networking Policy

Bui Bolg have developed a social networking policy for their group that is both concise and clear on the responsibilities of the youth theatre leader/Designated person etc.

Useful Sites and Further Reading

Webwise: <http://www.webwise.ie>

Aimed at young people, parents, schools etc. webwise offers advice on the safe use of technologies from internet surfing to video games

http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/publications/standards_and_guidelines.aspxThe

Arts Council have developed a very useful resource on using images of young people. *Guidelines for taking and using images of children and young people in the arts sector* is downloadable from Arts Council's website.