



ECHO YOUTH THEATRE

ENGAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS AND VETTING POLICY

Purpose

This policy outlines Echo Youth Theatre's approach to ensuring that all appropriate volunteers (broadly defined as those with direct, unsupervised contact with young people) are checked for previous convictions, cautions or investigations that may reflect upon their suitability to work with young people.

Scope

Echo Youth Theatre uses the Disclosure Services of the Disclosure and Barring Service to check the criminal records of all volunteers engaged in roles defined within the DBS's definition of Regulated Activity for Adults and Children.

Such volunteers must not be unsupervised, until Disclosure information has been received and evaluated. All relevant engagements of volunteers are subject to a satisfactory Disclosure being received.

Echo Youth Theatre complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice regarding the fair use and handling of Disclosure information. It also complies fully with its obligations under the Data Protection Act and other relevant legislation in respect of the safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosure information.

Where Echo Youth Theatre engages contractors, the contractors will be required to supply staff who have satisfactory Enhanced Disclosures. Arrangements for obtaining Disclosures must be made by the contractors, as Echo Youth Theatre may not lawfully apply for Disclosures for anyone other than directly engaged volunteers.

Definitions

A Disclosure is the report received from the DBS, detailing any previous convictions, caution or investigations, if applicable.

Duties, Responsibilities and Reporting

Echo Youth Theatre is committed to ensuring that Directors, Management Team and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and to ensuring adherence to the DBS Code of Practice for Registered Persons and Other Recipients of Disclosure Information, under Section 122, Part V of the Police Act 1997.

Echo Youth Theatre Company Secretary has overall responsibility for overseeing and monitoring the DBS Policy and Procedure.

The Company Secretary responsible for:

- Maintaining an online DBS Check account in the name of the Company
- Checking all application documentation for compliance
- Maintaining a data base of permissible information, including logging the serial number and date of the application
- Holding all documentation, Disclosures and other information secure
- Shredding all Disclosures and any other documentation after six months

The Company Secretary is responsible for ensuring that a Disclosure is obtained for all volunteers in regulated activity as part of the engagement process, where required.

All Management Team members who are involved in the Disclosure application process are responsible for maintaining complete confidentiality and security at all times, and for being aware that no-one other than the Management Team may have access to any information about the applicant's potential criminal record.

DBS Process

Echo Youth Theatre will use an online DBS checking process via an umbrella body "uCheck". Volunteers engaged in regulated activity will be required to comply with the requirement to produce documents as requested and complete their part of the application process online in a timely manner.

Volunteers will have access to the Policy Statement on the Engagement of Ex-Offenders (Annex A) when they initially volunteer and can access the Policy Statement on the Secure Storage, Handling, Use, Retention and Disposal of DBS Disclosures and Disclosure Information (Annex B) by contacting the Company Secretary.

Disclosures are only valid at the date of issue. Disclosures issued for another role or employment will not be accepted for our volunteers in regulated activity, unless the volunteer is registered with the DBS update service.

If a volunteer produces an original DBS Certificate and is registered with the update service, Echo Youth Theatre will not need to apply for a new DBS certificate unless the level of disclosure required has changed. The Company Secretary will check the DBS certificate with the update service.

A Disclosure is not in itself proof of identity and must not be accepted as such.

If a positive Disclosure is received (i.e. one which reveals convictions), or the Disclosure information contradicts that provided by the applicant, this will be reviewed by the Directors.

Consideration must be given to:

- Our obligations under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and any other relevant legislation
- The seriousness of the offence and its relevance to the safety of our young people
- The length of time since the offence occurred

- Any relevant information offered by the applicant about the circumstances which led to the offence being committed
- Whether the offence was a one-off, or part of a history of offending
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offence was committed, making re-offending less likely
- The country in which the offence was committed. Some activities are offences in Scotland and not in England and Wales, and vice versa
- Whether the offence has since been decriminalised by Parliament
- The degree of remorse, or otherwise, expressed by the applicant and their motivation to change

Any decision to refuse an offer of voluntary service from an applicant due to a positive disclosure, will be made by Board of Directors and is final.

Volunteers will continue to have responsibility for informing Echo Youth Theatre if they incur any convictions, cautions or investigations that would appear on a Disclosure while they are volunteering for Echo Youth Theatre.

Any offences declared by an employee will be considered by the Board of Directors and any decision will then be made on the basis of a risk assessment.

Monitoring

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Directors annually.

Annex A

Policy Statement on the Engagement of Ex-Offenders

This policy on the engagement of ex-offenders will be made available to all volunteers at the outset of the volunteering process, where a DBS disclosure is required for the role.

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, Echo Youth Theatre complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. The Trust undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a disclosure on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

Echo Youth Theatre is committed to the fair treatment of its volunteers and members, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic or national origins, domestic circumstances, social and employment status, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability or on other grounds which cannot be justified

Voluntary roles requiring disclosure of spent convictions and either a standard or an enhanced DBS check have been determined by reference to DBS guidance and taking into consideration exemptions to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This ensures that a disclosure and DBS check is only requested where it is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned and is permitted under that Act. For those positions where a disclosure and DBS check is required, applicants will be made aware of this at the outset.

We ensure that the Directors have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

Echo Youth Theatre will always put the safety of our young people first when making decisions on the engagement of volunteers and the decision of the Board of Directors is final.

Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the role will result in the volunteer being instantly removed from the role.

Appendix B

Policy Statement on the Secure Storage, Handling, Use, Retention and Disposal of DBS Disclosures and Disclosure Information

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to help assess the suitability of volunteers where they will carry out regulated activity with children, Echo Youth Theatre fully complies with the DBS Code of Practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information. It also complies fully with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant legislation pertaining of the safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of disclosure information.

The Board of Directors only has access to Disclosures and Disclosure information. The Company Secretary will ensure that such information is kept securely in locked files, with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties.

In accordance with section 124 of the Police Act 1997, disclosure information is only passed to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties. It is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.

Disclosure information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.

Once a decision has been made, Echo Youth Theatre does not keep disclosure information for any longer than is necessary. This is generally for a period of up to six months, to allow for the consideration and resolution of any disputes or complaints. If, in very exceptional circumstances, it is considered necessary to keep disclosure information for longer, we will consult the DBS about this and will give full consideration to the data protection and human rights of the individual before doing so.

Disposal

Once the retention period has elapsed, we will ensure that any disclosure information is immediately destroyed by secure means. We will not keep any photocopy or other image of the disclosure or any copy or representation of the contents of a disclosure. However, notwithstanding the above, we will keep a record of the date of issue of a disclosure, the name of the subject, the type of disclosure requested, the position for which the disclosure was requested, the unique reference number of the disclosure and the details of the decision taken. This information will be held for each volunteer in regulated activity.