

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Purpose of the Policy

The County Operatic & Dramatic Society (Lincoln) recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

The society recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. The society is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All members of the society accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The society believes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All members and employees of the society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The society will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision-making process.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members of the society provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- It will keep up-to-date with health & safety legislation.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It will undertake relevant development and training.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with the society and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

The Society will endeavour to safeguard children and young people by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of conduct for volunteers and third parties in contact with children.
- Following carefully the procedures for the recruitment and selection of volunteers working with children and young people.
- Providing effective management of volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies that need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.

The society has child protection procedures which accompany this policy. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the society's Equal Opportunities Policy and Health & Safety Policy.

The society has a dedicated Child Protection Officer, who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to. That person's name is Linda Hawbrook and she can be contacted by phone on: 07867 528466 and email: prodsec@caods.co.uk.

The society has a lead chaperone, who is in charge of managing and supporting all chaperones during any performance or production. The lead chaperone also supports the Child Protection Officer in carrying out their duties in relation to this policy.

The lead chaperone's name is Linda Hawbrook and she can be contacted by phone on: 07867 528466 and email: prodsec@caods.co.uk.

The society has a registered first aider and that person's name is Eira Hammond and she can be contacted by phone: 07841 940 278 and email: info@caods.co.uk.

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Management Committee of the society and will be subject to annual review.

Date: 30th April 2019.

This is our society policy and as such any disregard to the code of conduct outlined here may result in disciplinary action against a society Member.

Child Protection Procedures

Responsibilities of the Society

At the outset of any production involving children the society will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (if necessary in consultation with the local education authority).
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

Parents

- The society believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the society. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the society and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents will be given a copy the society's Child Protection Policy and procedures.
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is **not** the responsibility of the society to take children home.

Unsupervised Contact

- The society will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- If possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.
- If it is predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, he or she may be required to obtain a criminal record disclosure.
- Children and young people should not be taken alone on car journeys, under any circumstance. Only in an emergency, when a chaperone is indisposed and this entirely unavoidable, the full knowledge and consent of the parents, carers and a senior manager in the organisation should be sought. In seeking consent, chaperones should state the purpose of the journey and the anticipated length. They should also check insurance liability.
- It is absolutely forbidden that society members should meet with children and young people outside organised activities. Neither should they invite or allow a child to stay with them at their home unsupervised.
- Society members should never do things of a personal nature for children and young people that they can do for themselves. Society members should always avoid sexually provocative or informal rough physical games. However, it is recognised that physical games and sexual language may sometimes be part of a structured rehearsals / performances, but must be considered as to whether appropriate for the young person and carefully explained.

Physical Contact

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.
- Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Managing sensitive information

- The society has a policy and procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children.
- Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- The society's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- The society will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as criminal record disclosures.

Suspicion of abuse

- At all times society members must remember that the priority is to safeguard the welfare of the child and young people. In all situations where a society member has a suspicion of abuse, an incident arises or a disclosure is made, she/he must pass the details onto one of the Society's Designated Person.
- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the society, please make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection. If you suspect that the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Chairman.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the society, chaperone, venue staff etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production.

Disclosure of abuse

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with responsibility for child protection. Make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police.

As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

Recording

- In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.
- An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken e.g. suspension of an individual, where relevant the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, and the name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported.
- The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

Rights & Confidentiality

- If a complaint is made against a member of the society, he or she will be made aware of his rights under the society's disciplinary procedures.
- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.
- In criminal law the Crown, or other prosecuting authority, has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the society, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the society's accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection.
- If a child joins the production with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

Criminal Record Disclosures

- If the society believes it is in its best interests to obtain criminal record disclosures for chaperones or other personnel, it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required. A Standard disclosure will apply for anyone with supervised access to children. An Enhanced disclosure will be required for anyone with unsupervised access.
- The society will have a written code of practice for the handling of disclosure information.
- The society will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by the society for the care of children during the production process. By law the chaperone is acting in loco parentis and should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.
- Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity (eg. passport, driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless already well known to the society. They will also be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care. If unsupervised access is unavoidable, or if this is a requirement of the local authority, a criminal record disclosure will be sought.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the producer. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the producer and not allow the child to continue.
- Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell the producer to cease using children in this way and should contact the local authority.
- During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms.

Chaperones (Cont.)

- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by the society.
- Chaperones should examine accident books each day. If an accident has occurred, the producer is not allowed to use that child until a medically qualified opinion has been obtained (not just the word of the parent or child).
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to take them home.

Recognising Child Abuse

Recognising child abuse is not easy and it is **not** the responsibility of the society to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place or if a child is at significant risk. The society does however have a responsibility to act if any member or volunteer associated with the society has a concern.

The following information will help you be more alert to the signs of possible abuse.

Physical Abuse

Most children will collect cuts and bruises in their daily life. These are likely to be in places where there are bony parts of their body, like elbows, knees and shins. Some Children, however, will have bruising which can almost only have been caused non-accidentally. An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury, or when it appears on parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely e.g. cheeks and thighs. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern.

Bruising may be more or less noticeable on children with different skin tones or from different racial groups.

The physical signs of abuse may include:

- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- Cigarette burns
- Bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, and often children who appear well cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix / play with other children.

Sexual Abuse

Adults, who use children and young people to meet their own sexual needs, abuse both girls and boys of all ages including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behaviour which may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is therefore important that they are listened to and taken seriously.

As well as physical signs of sexual abuse which may not to be seen in the context of their association with the society, changes in behaviour can also indicate sexual abuse including:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or development level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults

Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexual ways.

Neglect

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children.

The physical and behavioural signs of neglect may include:

- Constant hunger sometimes stealing food from other children
- Constantly dirty or 'smelly'
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions
- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Having few friends
- Mentioning their being left alone or unsupervised

The above list is not meant to be definitive but as a guide to assist you. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death or the birth of a new baby in their family, relationship problems between their parents/carers etc.

Responsibilities of the Designated Person

- The Designated Person will collect details of the child (name, age, sex, address names of parents or guardians) and details of the allegation or disclosure.
- With the exception of trivial or obviously malicious reports, the Designated Person will in most instances, telephone the child's Local Authority to refer the matter. The Allegation or disclosure should then be followed up in writing within 48 hours.
- Social services should acknowledge the written referral within one working day of receiving it. It is the Designated Person's responsibility to follow up the matter if nothing has been heard within 3 working days.
- The Designated Person together with the individual making the allegation or referring the disclosure will agree whether any of the information needs to be shared with others in the society or parents.
- If the disclosure or allegation relates to a volunteer he/she will be suspended in all cases for an initial period no longer than 10 working days. The suspension is to allow social services to carry out an investigation and is not a disciplinary sanction. The Designated Person is responsible for keeping the volunteer informed of the investigation and ensuring society support is available if required.
- Social services will usually complete an initial investigation within 7 working days and will report their findings to the Designated Person.
- If Social Services decide that no further child protection action is required the member of staff /volunteer will be informed in writing and immediately reinstated.
- If Social Services are unable to reach a conclusion after their initial investigation, further investigation is required and the suspension will continue to be reviewed every 10 working days. The Designated Person is responsible for keeping the employee or volunteer informed of the investigation and ensuring society support is available if required.
- In some cases, it may be appropriate for the individual to return to the society in a different area pending the outcome of the investigation. However, the priority must always be the security of children and young people and a decision to temporarily reinstate will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- If after the initial investigation, the social workers decide to lead a core assessment under Section 47 of the Children's Act; no reinstatement will be considered until the outcome of the core assessment is known.
- If at any stage the society has a reasonable suspicion that there has been a serious breach of contract in an employee's behaviour the society will instigate a full investigation under the disciplinary procedure independent of any social services investigation or police prosecution.

Further Details

Further information on the relevant legislation governing child protection and children in entertainment, can be obtained from Lincolnshire County Council.

The Child Employment Team can be contacted by telephone on: 01522 782 030
Or by email on: cee@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

Children's Social Care at Lincolnshire County Council can also be contacted by telephone on: 01522 782 111.

Out of Hours Contact

Children's Social Care can be contacted Monday to Thursday from 5pm to 8:45am and on Fridays from 4:45pm all the way through to 8:45 am on Mondays with a 24-hour service on Bank Holidays. Please call 01522 782 333.

CAODS Points of Contact

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