

# FARINGDON DRAMATIC SOCIETY: 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
- ensure Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are current for the appropriate personnel
- identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection
- identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for signing the children in and out during rehearsals and performances.
- 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)
- provide chaperones with basic safeguarding training
- ensure that children are supervised at all times
- ensure that there are separate changing facilities for females and males, and ensure that the chaperone in each changing room is of the same gender as those changing where possible.
- the society acknowledges that there will be closer contact when measuring/fitting actors for costumes. The costume team guidelines will be followed
- 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 of the society's 'Child Protection' policy and the 'Child Protection' procedures.
- a parent or guardian **must** be present at all times for under 18's at an audition
- any parent/guardian who would like their child to be considered for a principal role **must** be available to be placed on a chaperoning rota for Thursday evening rehearsals. We will have a permanent chaperone for Mondays when most of the children will be rehearsing so you won't be required to attend those rehearsals. The requirements we have to meet to have children in shows are strict and your support in enabling us to offer these opportunities to perform are greatly appreciated
- 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. If children are not collected by a certain time after the finish time (once all efforts to contact parents have failed), the chaperone will contact social services.

### **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 minimize 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 will be required to obtain a DBS check.

### **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**

- 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 chair of the committee
- 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. Please sign and date your notes
- 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 their 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 Data Protection Act 1998. 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 - DBS**

- The society will 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
- if chaperones and other personnel hold a current DBS certificate in another role, they must produce a copy of the certificate before they become involved in a production. The society will not ask you to complete another DBS application
- DBS applications will be updated every 3 years
- 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**

- the society will appoint a licensed chaperone
- 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
- chaperones will complete an Enhanced DBS check. 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
- 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, 1879, 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. If this occurs, 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 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 familiarise themselves with fire evacuation procedures
- chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by the society
- chaperones should examine accident books each day of rehearsals and performances. 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 child and try to contact parents/guardians using emergency phone numbers. If they cannot be contacted the chaperone would contact the safeguarding lead and they would contact social services

## Child Protection

### Appendix

Everybody who works with children or works with parents and other adults in contact with children should be able to recognise and know how to act upon indicators that a child's welfare or safety may be at risk.

The abuse or harm to children may occur from:

- Parents;
- Others who have parental responsibility;
- Adults who are in a position of trust or who are temporarily entrusted with their care;
- People who, through not having parental responsibility, are known within a wider circle of the family or neighbourhood;
- A complete stranger
- Other adults
- Other children

It is vital for anyone working with children to consider the indicators of abuse, based on knowledge and observation of the child. The status of the person at the cause of the suspicion should in no way prejudice your responses to the situation. Research clearly demonstrates that professionals do abuse children, their professional standing and accreditation is not a guarantee of their intent.

The following definitions of abuse are given to assist professional staff and those providing services to children in assessing whether abuse may have occurred.

#### **Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. Non-organic failure to thrive may be a feature or a result of neglect.

#### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This is commonly described as "Munchausen syndrome by proxy". Any instances of female circumcision or infibulations will be regarded as physical abuse under the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1995.

#### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may 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 sexually inappropriate ways or failing to discourage them from such behaviour.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved or inadequate. It may cause children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### **Abuse of Trust**

A relationship of trust, for the purpose of this guidance, is one where a teacher, member of education staff or a volunteer is in a position of power to influence a child by virtue of the work or nature of the activity being undertaken. A relationship of trust must not be distorted by fear or favour and those in positions of trust must exercise responsibility as a consequence of the power they have over those they care for.

Where a relationship of trust exists, allowing a relationship to develop in a way that might lead to a sexual relationship is wrong. A sexual relationship will be intrinsically unequal within a relationship of trust and is therefore unacceptable. It is also inappropriate since the professional relationship of trust would be altered. This guidance should not be interpreted to mean that no genuine relationship can start between two people within a relationship of trust, but given the inequality at the heart of a relationship of trust should be ended before any sexual relationship develops.

### **Bullying**

You must always be aware of bullying as it can be very subtle. It may be easy to spot a physical fight or sideways kick, but it's not always quite so easy to spot the odd word, joke or text directed, albeit innocently, towards one particular child. This sort of behaviour should be 'nipped in the bud'.