

## Wells Little Theatre – Child Protection Procedures

### Responsibilities of the Society

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

- Identify the person with designated responsibility for child protection issues
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children
- Liaise with the Local Authority to register chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children
- Ensure children are appropriately supervised
- Know how to get in touch with the Local Authority Social Services in the event of the need to report a concern
- Be aware of any risks or hazards and monitor these throughout rehearsals and in production
- Work in partnership with parents and share the child protection policy and procedures with them

### Parental Responsibilities

Parents will:

- Collect or arrange collection of their children after rehearsals or performances

### 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 appropriate clothing and footwear for the activity
- 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 will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection. This is good practice in the event of a formal allegation being made later and will be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production

## Unsupervised Contact

- The society will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children and if possible will ensure two adults in the room when working with children
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk e.g. work will be carried out in a public area or in a designated room with the 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

## 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 will be made clear

## Managing Sensitive Information

- The society has procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs and images of children
- Permission will be sought from parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes
- The society's web-based material 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

- Anyone seeing or suspecting abuse of a child while in the care of the society should make it known immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection – if this person is the one under suspicion then concerns should be addressed to the Chairman of the society
- Written records should be kept of what was witnessed and any actions taken as this may be needed during any follow-up
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the society, chaperone, venue staff etc then that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The person 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 act immediately
- Listen carefully to what has been said.
- Allow the child to tell you at its own pace and ask questions only for clarification.
- Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Don't promise to keep it secret – make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others but only those who need to know and who can help.
- Reassure the child they did the right thing in sharing the information
- Tell the child what will happen next.
- Make a note of what was said using the child's own words. Note the time, date, any names mentioned and sign and date the record.
- Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with responsibility for child protection.
- This person has the responsibility of liaising with the relevant authorities, usually Social Services or the Police

#### Record Keeping

- In all situations 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, what was said or done and by whom, any actions taken to investigate the matter and any further actions such as suspension of an individual. Where relevant the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency should be recorded and the name or the persons reporting and to whom it was reported

#### Rights and 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
- The alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998
- Any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released
- A defendant is always presumed innocent until proven guilty

#### Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by the society for the care of the children during the production process. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care should not exceed 12
- Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children unless already well known to the society

- They will be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they should be considered unsuitable to work with children
- Chaperones will be aware of the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures, Safety and First Aid procedures
- The society will give regard to Local Authority guidelines and follow procedures set down by that body
- Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to the 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
- Chaperones will meet children at the stage door and sign them into the building
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances
- Chaperones should sign children out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting
- If the parent has not collected the child it is the responsibility of the chaperone to stay with that child until the child is collected
- Chaperones will be aware of where children are at all times
- Chaperones will ensure that children do not leave the theatre at any time
- Chaperones will ensure any accidents are reported to and recorded by the society
- Children will be adequately supervised when going to and from the toilets
- Children will not be permitted to enter the adult dressing room
- Children are not permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb
- If a child becomes ill during the performance or is not fit to perform then this will be reported to the relevant person e.g. director or producer
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms

#### Criminal Record Disclosures ----NODA STRESS THIS IS NOT MANDATORY BUT ADVISABLE

- 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

