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Child protection Policy

Clacton Musical Theatre Society

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Introduction

This document is the Child Protection Policy for Clacton Musical Theatre Society (hereinafter called the Society) which will be followed by all members of the Society and promoted by those in the position of leadership within the Society.

The purpose of the Society is to promote and perform musical theatre in safe environment for all members and everybody involved in our rehearsals and productions.

The Society recognises that a Chaperone is responsible for the proper care, control, health, comfort, kind treatment and morale welfare of children and young people.

The Society has a 'Child Registration Form' that we require Parents to complete for each show.

On rare occasions the Society records the whole or part of its productions, if this takes place the welfare of any children or young people involved will be paramount

The Society undertakes activities involving children and young people largely in the absence of their parents/carers.

Parents/carers remain responsible for their children's and young person's welfare until they are handed over into the care of the Society.

Parents/carers are responsible for the safe transport to and from the venue prior to handover to the society of their children or young people even this involves them sanctioning transport by others.

The Society recognises that all children and young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.

The Society realise that being a child or young person makes them vulnerable to abuse by adults.

The Society will ensure that all suspicions or allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

The purpose of this policy is to make sure that the actions of any adult in the context of the activities carried out by the Society are transparent and safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people.

If any parent or young person/child has any concerns about the conduct of any member of the Society, this should be raised in the first instance with the Chairman of the Society or a member of the management committee.

This document is written in accordance with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' produced by the Department of Health in 1999.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Society has a duty of care to safeguard all children and young people involved with the Society from harm. All children and young people have a right to protection. The needs of disabled children or young people who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The Society will ensure the safety and protection of all children and young people involved with the Society through adherence to the Child Protection Policy adopted by the Society.

For the purposes of this document a child or young person is under the age of 16 years &/or in compulsory education in year 11 or below as defined in the latest version of The Children Act.

PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH THIS CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IS BASED

- The welfare of a child or young person will always be paramount.
- The welfare of families will be promoted.
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families will be respected and listened to.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the Society will work in accordance with the interests of children and young people and will follow the policy outlined below.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the Society will ensure that the same opportunities are available to everyone and that all differences between individuals will be treated with respect.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- i) Always work in an open environment i.e. avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage open communication with no secrets.
- ii) Always put the welfare of a child or young person first before achieving other goals.
- iii) Treat all children and young people equally, with respect and dignity.
- iv) Maintain a safe and appropriate distance for the activity being undertaken.
- v) Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children or young people to share appropriately in the decision making process.
- vi) Make the activity fun and enjoyable.
- vii) Remember that same gender abuse can occur.
- viii) Be an excellent role model this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol to excess in the company of children or young people.
- ix) Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback to children or young people rather than negative criticism.
- x) Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children or young people and do not push them against their will.
- xi) Do not allow children or young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- xii) Do not make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person, even in fun.
- xiii) Do not reduce a child to tears as a form of control.

DETAILS OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Chaperones

The following section covers some important guidance for chaperones

The Children (Performance) Regulations 1968 lay down the regulations for Matrons (who can be male or female) hereinafter called Chaperones. A Chaperone is a person who is licensed by a local authority (in our case by Essex County Council) to exercise proper care and control of a child or young person. Duties as a Chaperone must not be interfered with by other duties. Any contravention of a Chaperones License or any incident affecting the well-being of a child or young person must be notified to the local authority at the earliest possible opportunity.

- A Chaperone must not be in charge of more than 12 (twelve) children or young people at any one time in a ration of 2 adults to 12 children.
- Do not allow a child or young person to perform if they are unwell and make arrangements for them to be safely escorted home or be given medical attention as necessary.
- Secure parental/carers consent in writing to act "*in loco parentis*" if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/ or other medical treatment.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Chaperones must keep a written record of the times a child or young person are taking part in the activity and that they are allowed to take the required breaks for rests and meals. Any meals supplied by the Society must be nutritional (i.e. not take-away snacks), any special diets required for medical, moral or religious grounds must be catered for.
- Chaperones must be satisfied that the arrangements for dressing rooms and toilets etc. are satisfactory and have knowledge of procedure of evacuation of the building in case of fire.
- Ensure that if any form of manual/physical support is required that it is provided openly and appropriately. Care is needed as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when a child or young person is constantly moving. Children, young people and their parents/carers should be consulted and their agreement gained if this is appropriate.
- Involve parents/carers when this is possible to avoid singular contact with a child or young person, work in pairs if at all possible.
- A Chaperone may allow a child or young person to perform 30 minutes beyond the latest permitted hour or to have a 30 minute shorter break as long as the total number of hours (including the 30 minutes) does not exceed the maximum number of permitted hours. This is only on the basis that the Chaperone does not think that the welfare of a child or young person will suffer.
- Chaperones will be responsible for escorting children to and from the stage and observing them whilst on stage.

Immediate Action to Ensure Safety

Immediate action may be necessary at any stage involving children and families.

IN ALL CASES THE SOCIETY **WILL** TAKE WHATEVER ACTION IS NEEDED TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE i.e.

- If emergency medical attention is required this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999) or by taking a child or young person to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.
- If a child or young person is in immediate danger the police should be contacted (dial 999) as they alone have the power to remove a child or young person immediately if protection is necessary, via a Police Protection Order.

Recognition of Abuse or Neglect

Abuse or neglect of a child or a young person is caused by inflicting harm or by failing to prevent harm. Children or young people may be abused within a family, an institution or a community setting: by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger.

The abuse of a child or young person; particularly sexual abuse; can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not to react inappropriately.

Some individuals will actively seek to be involved in an activity involving children or young people in order to harm them, all suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms,

of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child or young person whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as, fabricated illness by proxy or Munchausen Syndrome by proxy.

Mental and Emotional Abuse

Mental and Emotional abuse is the persistent ill treatment of a child or young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's or young person's emotional or mental development. It may involve conveying to children or young people that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or young people. It may involve causing children or young people to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or by the exploitation or corruption of children or young people. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child or a young person, although it may occur alone.

Cyber Abuse

Cyber abuse involves the use of the internet or mobile phone technology such as to cause unwarranted abuse as described in this document. It may well be from an anonymous source. If the cyber abuse is persistent it is not correct to tell a child or young person to just ignore it; as in its own way its affects can be just as damaging as other types of abuse. This includes members other than the designated membership secretary or officers of the society texting, phoning, emailing or social networking children or young people. First point of contact should be the parent or guardian where possible.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child or the young person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children or young people in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children or young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's or young person's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child or young person 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 or young person's basic emotional needs.

Individuals within the Society need to be alert to the potential abuse of children or young people both within their families and also from other sources including abuse by members of the Society.

The Society should know how to recognise and act upon indicators of abuse or potential abuse involving children or young people. There is an expected responsibility for all members of the Society to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child or a young person in accordance with these procedures.

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns. If concerns are to be raised with a parent or guardian this should only be done by a member of the management committee: However, no one must discuss their concerns with parents/carers in the following circumstances:

- Where sexual abuse is suspected
- Where organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- Where fictitious illness by proxy (also known as Munchausen Syndrome by proxy) is suspected
- Where contacting parents/carers would place a child, a young person, yourself or others at immediate risk.

What to do if a Child or Young Person Talks About Abuse or Neglect

It is recognised that a child or a young person may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect, or talk spontaneously individually or in groups when you are present. In these situations you must:

- Listen carefully to the child or young person. DO NOT directly question the child.
- Give the child or young person your time and attention.
- Allow the child or young person to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a child or a young person who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given; taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the child's or young person's presentation as well as what was said. Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence.
- Use the child's or young person's own words where possible.
- Explain that you cannot promise NOT to speak to others about the information they have shared.
- Reassure the child or young person that: you are glad that they have told you, that they have done nothing wrong and what you are going to do next.
- Explain that you will need to get help to keep the child or young person safe.
- Do NOT ask the child or young person to repeat his or her account of events to anyone.
- Immediately inform a member of the committee

Consulting About Your Concern

The purpose of consultation is to discuss your concerns in relation to a child or a young person and to decide what action is necessary.

You may become concerned about a child or a young person who has not spoken to you, because of your observations of, or information about that child or young person.

It is good practice to ask a child or young person why they are upset or how a cut or bruise was caused, or respond to a child wanting to talk to you. This can help clarify vague concerns and result in appropriate action.

If you are concerned about a child or young person you must share your concerns with the society

Initially you should talk to one of the people designated as responsible for child protection within the Society. In the Society the main person responsible is the Chairman, or Membership Secretary if this person is implicated in your concerns you should discuss your concerns with a member of the committee or directly with the local Social Services Department if you go directly to the social services it is important that you let a member of the committee know that you have raised the issue with Social Services at the earliest opportunity

You should consult externally with the local Social Services Department in the following circumstances:

- When you remain unsure after an internal consultation as to whether child or young person protection concerns still exist
- When there is a disagreement as to whether child or young person protection concerns exist
- When you are unable to consult promptly or at all with your designated internal contact for child or young person protection

Consultation is not the same as making a referral but; should enable a decision to be made as to whether a referral to the local Social Services Department or the Police should progress.

Making a Referral

A referral involves giving the local Social Services Department or the Police information about your concerns relating to an individual or family in order that enquiries can be undertaken by the appropriate agency followed by any necessary action.

In certain cases the level of concern will lead straight to a referral without an internal consultation being necessary.

Parents/carers should be informed if a referral is being made except in the circumstances outlined above. As the society has responsibility for the child when the child is involved in society activities is important that In all cases when making a referral you must inform a member of the management committee of your actions

However; an inability to inform parents/carers for any reason should not prevent a referral being made. It would then become a joint decision with the local Social Services Department about how and when the parents/carers should be approached and by whom.

If your concern is about abuse or risk of abuse from someone not known to the child or child's family, you should make a telephone referral directly to the police and consult with the parents/carers and the society.

If your concern is about abuse or risk of abuse from a family member/carer or someone else known to the child or young person, you should make a telephone referral to your local Social Services Department. In this instance under no circumstances should family members be notified.

Information required

Be prepared to give as much of the following information as possible (in emergency situations all of this information may not be available). The non-availability of some information should not stop you making a referral.

- Your name, telephone number, position and request the same of the person to whom you are speaking.
- Full name, address, family telephone number and date of birth of the child or young person.
- Gender, ethnicity, first language and any special needs of the child or young person.
- Names, dates of birth and relationship of household members and any significant others.
- The names of professionals' known to be involved with the child or young person or their family i.e. GP, Health Visitor and School.
- The nature of your concern and the foundation for them, make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- An opinion as to whether the child or young person may need urgent action to make them safe.
- Your view of what appears to be the needs of the child or young person and their family.
- Whether the consent of a parent/carer with responsibility has been given for the referral being made.

Action to be taken following the referral

- Ensure that you keep an accurate record of your concern(s) made at the time.
- Put your concerns in writing to the local Social Services Department following the referral (within 48 hours).
- Accurately record the action agreed or that no further action is to be taken and the reasons for this decision.

Alternatively referrals can be made to

NSPCC is a registered charity established to prevent cruelty to children. They provide a range of services for children and their families. They also provide a child protection helpline and there4me.com which is an online service for children. Childline, a helpline service for children is now also part of the NSPCC. NSPCC Consultancy Services have a number of publications (also available in Welsh/English) to help organisations develop child protection policy and procedures.

The charity offers a consultancy service which provides advice and guidance to organisations on the implementation of safeguards to prevent abuse; training services are also available.

Tel: 0844 892 1026 Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

To report or discuss concerns about a child’s welfare:

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline (24 hours): To report or discuss concerns about a child’s welfare, Tel: 0808 800 5000 or textphone 0800 056 0566 or e.mail: help@nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC Cymru/Wales Child Protection Helpline Tel: 0808 100 2524 (Mon-Fri 10am-6pm)

NSPCC Asian Child Protection Helpline.. Tel : 0800 096 7719

Childline Tel: 0800 1111

Confidentiality

The Society will ensure that any records made in relation to a referral are kept confidentially and in a secure place.

Information in relation to child protection concerns should be shared on a “NEED TO KNOW” basis.

However; the sharing of information is vital to child protection and therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a child’s need for protection.

REMEMBER: IF IN DOUBT ASK!

This document should be agreed by the Management Committee at the first management committee meeting after the AGM.

Sam McCarthy (Chair)

(Secretary)

Jackie West (Treasurer)

Andrea Apps (Membership Secretary)

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