



Child Protection Policy

If Something Isn't Right

You should speak with the Safeguarding Officer. If they are unavailable, or the concern is about them, then you should speak with a committee officer that you trust. You should also read our **[grievance policy](#)** and **[whistleblowing policy](#)**.

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Introduction

All members of the society accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

The society 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.

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 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 Safeguarding Officer

The society has a dedicated Safeguarding Officer who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and related procedures are adhered to.

They can be contacted by email – safeguarding@bishopaucklandtheatresociety.co.uk – their name and other appropriate contact information, or that of a suitable deputy, will be provided in writing to every child performer and their legal guardian before the first day of rehearsal.

Information will also be provided on who to contact should the concern be with the safeguarding officer or the management of the society as a whole.

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) – this can include DBS checks.
- 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.

Responsibilities of the Parents or Legal Guardian

The society believes it to be important that there is a partnership between legal guardians and the society. Legal guardians are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the society and to share responsibility for the care of children. All legal guardians will be given a copy of the society's Child Protection Policy and procedures.

All legal guardians 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.

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 and 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 a committee officer that you trust. 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, 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.

Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing harm to a child/young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent/carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child/young person whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described as factitious, fabricated or induced illness in children/young people or “Munchausen syndrome by proxy”. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child/young person.

Physical abuse, as well as being the result of a deliberate act, can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child/young person, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's/young person's emotional development. It may involve making a child/young person feel or believe that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of the other person. It may feature expectations being imposed on a child/young person that are inappropriate for their age or stage of development. It may also involve causing a child/young person to feel frequently frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child/young person. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child/young person, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child/young person is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, anal or oral sex, or nonpenetrative acts such as fondling. Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children/young people in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children/young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Boys and girls can be sexually abused by both males and females, whether adults or other children/young people.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's/young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, that is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's/young person's health or development. It may involve a parent or a carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, leaving a child/young person at home alone or failing to ensure that a child/young person gets appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's/young person's basic emotional needs.

It is accepted that, in all forms of abuse, there are elements of emotional abuse and that some children/young people are subjected to more than one form of abuse at any time.

KICSIE

These four definitions above do not minimise other forms of maltreatment. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KICSIE 20108) refers to specific safeguarding concerns within the four main categories of abuse.

Domestic Abuse

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

Forced marriage, honour-based violence

Coercive/controlling behaviour includes forced marriage and honour-based violence. Forced Marriage Act 2007. A forced marriage is one that is carried out without the full consent and approval of both parties and duress is involved, including physical and psychological. It is different from an arranged marriage where both parties agree with the marriage. Forced marriage is against the law as it is a violation of a person's human rights and cannot be justified on religious or cultural grounds.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the removal of all or part of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-medical reasons. It is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

It is typically performed on girls aged 4-13 years old but has been performed on newborn infants and young women before marriage or pregnancy. FGM is against the law.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The sexual exploitation of children and young people takes different forms. It ranges from them being given accommodation in return for sexual activities through to being exploited through more 'formal' exploitation. It is often difficult for these children to accept that they are being exploited but they are always coerced in some way into such a lifestyle by others. For example, it is common for a girl to think that the man who controls every aspect of her life is her boyfriend and she will remain loyal to him even when he coerces her into having sex with others and in some cases resorts to violence to ensure compliance. Similarly, boys abused through prostitution rarely see themselves as victims of abusive sexual behaviour.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Key to identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes, when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs and a referral to the National Referral Mechanism should be considered.

Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, county lines exploitation can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years; can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual; can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence; can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults; and is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

The Prevent Duty requires organisations to have due regard to prevent young people being drawn in to radicalisation and violent extremism. Protecting young people from radicalisation and extremism is just the same as protecting them from any other safeguarding issue.

“Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism”. (UK Prevent Strategy 2011)

“Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.” (Counter-Extremism Strategy, 2015)

Disclosure of abuse

1. If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:
2. Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
6. Tell the child what you are going to do next.
7. 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.
8. 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 Alleged Situations

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 (eg. 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 has 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

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 director, stage manager, or safeguarding officer. 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 and 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 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 and contact the Police for guidance.