

## Groombridge Amateur Dramatic Society

### Child Protection Procedures

#### **Responsibilities for the Society**

At the outset of any productions 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 by **East Sussex Child Employment and Entertainment, Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service. St Marks House, 14 Upperton Road Eastbourne East Sussex BN12 1EP 01273 481967 ( Child Employment Officer 01323 747447)**
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times
- Know how to get in touch with East Sussex Social Services if there is cause for concern (**East Sussex Safeguarding Services 01323 466606**).

#### **Parents**

- The Society believes that it is important that there is a partnership between itself and parents. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the Society and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents should be given a copy of the Society's Child Protection Policy.
- 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**

- 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 or 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 or other persons involved, that individual will be suspended from duties and excluded until the investigation is concluded and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production.

#### **What is child abuse?**

- There are 4 different categories of child abuse: physical abuse; emotional abuse; sexual abuse and neglect. (Further information is available from "Recognising Child Abuse- a Handbook for those Working with Children and Young People who Perform". Available from East Sussex County Council Education Welfare Service.
- There could be one, none or several signs of abuse such as inconsistent explanations for injuries or changes in a child's normal behaviour.
- You need to be clear what is fact and what is opinion.
- You need to ensure that the actions of members of the Society are not exposing children to harm or failing to protect them.

### **Practices to Avoid by members of the Society**

- Spending excessive time alone with children away from others.
- Taking or dropping children off at an event
- Engaging in horseplay with children
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching
- Allow children and adults to share changing facilities
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a child not to be followed up
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves
- Invite or allow a child to stay/visit you home unsupervised

### **Disclosure of Abuse**

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place

- Remain calm and in control but take action immediately
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell it, at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Do not ask leading questions that suggest an answer or make unnecessary value judgements.
- Do not promise to keep it a secret, make it clear that you will share this information with the person in charge of Child Protection and/ or the Chairman.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next and reassure them that they have “done the right thing.”
- Speak immediately to the Child Protection Officer or if not available the Chairman of the Society. It is their responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually Social Service Safeguarding Service ( see above) or the Police.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child’s words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Sign and date your record. Do not discuss any of this with any other individuals.

### **Recording**

- In all situations the details of all allegation or reported incident must be recorded regardless of whether they have been shared with East Sussex Safeguarding Team.
- A note should be made of the date and time of the disclosure or incident, what was said or done and by whom and any actions taken, including the reason why the incident was not referred to the Safeguarding Service if that is the case.
- The record should be stored securely and only shared with those who need to know.

### **Rights and Confidentiality**

- If a complaint is made against a member of the Society, he or she should be made aware of his rights according to the Rules and Constitution of the Society.
- Both alleged abuser and the child have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. The release of any inappropriate information could compromise a possible criminal investigation.
- In criminal law the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

## **Accidents**

- To avoid accidents chaperones and children will be advised of “house rules” and will be notified of places that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the appropriate clothing and footwear to wear.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the Society, a designated first aider or other responsible member of the society will administer First Aid and record the incident in the Accident Book. This record will be countersigned by the Child Protection Office for the Society.
- If a child joins the production with an obvious physical injury this should also be noted in the Accident Book and countersigned by the Child Protection Office. This will avoid any subsequent allegations that the injury was sustained during the production.

## **Criminal Records Disclosures**

- All persons acting as chaperones for the Society will be expected to be trained and Disclosure and Barring Services checked by the East Sussex County Council Chaperone Training Scheme before being licensed.
- The Secretary of the Society will take responsibility for the safe storage of any disclosure information.

## **Chaperones**

- Chaperones will be appointed by the Society for the care of children during the production process. They will be trained and vetted by East Sussex County Council Chaperone Training Scheme. By law the Chaperone acts in loco parentis and should act as a good parent. They are only required for the performances, dress and technical rehearsals. The maximum number of children in a Chaperone’s care should not exceed 12 of the same sex. Women may chaperone boys but men cannot chaperone girls. For these purposes the age range for children is 3 to Year 11. 15/16 year olds may be chaperoned together with their parents’ permission.
- Potential Chaperones are required to provide photographic proof of identity ( Passport/ driving licence) and 2 references.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the Society’s Child Protection Policy.
- If Chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children they should bring this to the attention of the Producer and consider not allowing the child to continue if necessary.
- If a Chaperone considers that a child is unwell they 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 that would endanger life of limb.
- During performances Chaperones are responsible for meeting children and signing them into the building or production area.
- Children should be kept together at all times except when changing when boys and girls should change separately.
- Chaperones should be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Children should be adequately supervised when going to and from the toilet.
- Children and adults should have separate changing facilities using screening if necessary,
- Children should not be allowed to enter adult dressing areas.

- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures during the production. They should ensure that any accidents are reported and written in the Accident Book. The Producer is not allowed to use a child who has had an accident unless medical opinion has been sought.
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is collecting a child, a telephone call should be made 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 a child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with the child or make arrangements to take them home.

### **Pre Production Planning**

Prior to a production that involves children the Producer, Director and other members of the production team must put plans in place to meet the needs of the children and fulfil their legal obligations to provide adequate child protection. They must satisfy the Committee of the Society that they have completed the following tasks and are fully aware of the Society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures, Health and Safety Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy

- Several months in advance the production team must ensure that a Body of Persons Exemption Licence is obtained from East Sussex Child and Entertainment Officer. (01323 747434 [wendy.smith@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:wendy.smith@eastsussex.gov.uk).) These need to be applied for annually.
- A review of available qualified Chaperones must be made and if necessary more recruited and training by East Sussex Chaperone Training Service. This takes some months to complete so should be set up well in advance. Registered Chaperones hold a current Enhanced Disclosure Form ( valid for 3 years)
- Depending on the number of children involved there should be at least 2 but preferably 4 qualified Chaperones.
- Unqualified parents can only chaperone their own child.
- Children aged 5-8 are only permitted to perform or rehearse between 7.am -11pm for 3 hours at a time with breaks. Children aged 9 or over can perform between 7am -11pm for 5 hours at a time with breaks.
- A Risk Assessment of the production venue either Village Hall or outdoor space must be made to ensure that there are adequate backstage facilities to meet the needs of children. This may involve setting up separate changing areas, using screens and setting up "house rules" for where children may be dropped off, collected and congregate, their access to toilets, out of bounds areas etc
- A person within the production team should be appointed as responsible for First Aid, having access to the First Aid Box and Accident Book.

Sally Howell

Secretary Groombridge Amateur Dramatic Society  
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With acknowledgments to East Sussex County Council Children's Services and the National Operatic and Dramatic Association