

# WEST END OPERATIC SOCIETY LTD

## Safeguarding Policy – Appendix 1 Code of Conduct

### Good Practice - for the safety of adults and children

#### **Always working in an open environment.**

We should always encourage open communication with no secrets and try to avoid private or unobserved situations.

#### **Never allowing ourselves to be left alone with a young person.**

We will occasionally encounter occasions when a one-to-one conversation is necessary. In such circumstances, try to ensure this takes place in a room with an open door or visual access. Where this is not possible, always ensure that there is another adult nearby.

#### **Avoiding touching young people unless absolutely necessary.**

We must always be aware of the potential for misunderstanding when touching children. The government advises that when consoling a child who is upset we should do no more than put a gentle hand on their arm. Administering first aid or supporting a participant in an activity is acceptable and necessary contact.

If it is an accepted part of an activity (e.g. demonstrating in a rehearsal what the child should do), touching should be appropriate to the situation, of limited duration and appropriate to the child's age. In such cases, or when administering first aid, minimise any risk of misunderstanding of your actions by asking the child if it is all right to touch them and explain exactly what they are going to do and why.

#### **Never using physical force against a young person.**

If it is necessary to restrain a child - because they are an immediate danger to themselves or others or to property - the minimum amount of force should be used for the shortest amount of time.

#### **Reporting/recording any incidents between us and a child.**

If we find ourselves in a situation like those listed above where there might be any scope for misunderstanding, we need to be prepared to share and discuss the circumstances that informed our action, or our proposed action, with an official member of the society board. This will help to ensure that the safest practices are employed and reduce the risk of actions being misinterpreted.

Always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with a senior person – such as the chairman, vice-chairman or child protection officer. Always (briefly) record your discussions and the actions you took, with reasons.

#### **Treating information given to us with integrity and confidentiality.**

We are expected to treat information we receive about children and young people in a discreet and confidential manner. We may not use our position to gain access to information for our own advantage and/or a child's or family's detriment.

### **Treating young people with dignity and respect.**

We must never use our power and position to intimidate, threaten, coerce or, undermine the children in our productions - nor to form or promote sexual relationships with young people in our charge.

Don't behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question your suitability to work with children or act as a role model. Never make sexual remarks to a young person (including email, text messages, phone or letter), nor discuss your own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, students. Don't make (or allow others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate, or might be interpreted as such.

### **Our position as a role model observed by young people.**

We should wear clothing which promotes a positive image, is appropriate to our role, is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative and does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding.

Remember that it's not uncommon for young people to be strongly attracted to adults or develop infatuations. All situations should be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of all concerned. Such circumstances always carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against the adult. If you become aware that a young person may be infatuated with you or observe it happening with a colleague, discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior colleague so that appropriate action can be taken. In this way, steps can be taken to avoid hurt and distress for all concerned.

### **Communication.**

We shouldn't give our personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home or personal email address to young people unless the need to do so is agreed with the board. Any involvement with young people through social media must be discussed with a member of the board immediately.

Social media such as Facebook groups may be a good way to disseminate information. A member of the board should always be informed about such communication or the establishment of groups and should be a member of them. Where possible they should be "closed" or "private" groups.

Ensure that personal social networking sites are set private and young people are never listed as approved contacts or "friends". Never use or access the social networking sites of young people. Text messaging should only be used as part of a previously agreed protocol e.g. fixtures and when other forms of communication are not possible. Don't use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a young person.

### **Taking children alone in a car on journeys, however short.**

If it's necessary to transport a child in your car, plan and agree arrangements with all parties in advance, responding sensitively and flexibly to disagreements and remembering that you may not be insured for such use.

If you really must transport a young person in your car, ensure that you are alone with a lone child for the minimum time possible. Remember that the safety and welfare of the child are entirely your responsibility until he/she is safely passed over in person to a parent/carer. Where practicable, inform a board member of the nature of the journey: the route; timings; all arrangements in place to ensure the safety of vehicle, passenger and driver.

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