

WEST END OPERATIC SOCIETY LTD

Safeguarding Policy

Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL) – Sharon Jones

The society follows the advice given in the publications 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', 'Children in the Theatre' and 'Children in Theatrical Performances'. It also adheres to the safeguarding standards of the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board.

This policy has three annexes:

1. WEOS Safeguarding Code of Conduct
2. WEOS Photography Policy
3. Advice for gender neutral areas if required

The following separate policies are also relevant to our safeguarding procedures:

- WEOS Recruitment Policy
- WEOS Complaints and Concerns Policy
- WEOS Accident Reporting/First Aid Policy
- Safeguarding policy of the Tyne Theatre where the show is performed

Introduction

West End Operatic Society fully recognises the contribution it makes to safeguarding and the welfare of the young people in its care and its duty to be sensitive to, and act on, concerns regarding child protection. The society recognises its duty of care to its members aged under 18 and recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. The society is committed to practices which protect children from harm. All members of the Society accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The society believes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children, 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 and employees of the society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

In summary, the society will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity
- The welfare of each child 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 and 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.

In Rehearsal and Performance: Ensuring the Safety of Children

Responsibilities of the Society

- Identify the person with responsibility for Child Protection and Health and Safety
- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout rehearsals and production
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children
- Undertake appropriate vetting of adults
- Ensure children are appropriately supervised at all times
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern
- Apply for and obtain all necessary performance licences

Licences

- A child may need a licence if they're under school leaving age and taking part in films, plays, concerts or other public performances that the audience pays to see, or that take place on licenced premises
- The society will apply for licences and parents will be informed in good time by the Society of any information they need to provide as part of the relevant licence applications
- Rather than individual licences, the Society may sometimes apply for a Body or Persons licence to cover all children involved in the performance

Parents

- The Society believes it is important that there is a partnership between themselves and the parents. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the society, to become licensed chaperones and thus share responsibility for the care of children
- Parents will be given a copy of the Society's Safeguarding Policy
- All parents have the responsibility to promptly collect (or make alternative arrangements for) their children after rehearsals of performances. It is not the responsibility of the society to get children home
- Parents must provide contact details so that the Society can contact them at any time in case of an emergency

Unsupervised Contact

- The Society will attempt to ensure that no person has unsupervised contact with children
- Good practice will be followed with two adults in the room when working with children
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk
- If it is predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, he or she may be required to obtain a DBS check

Managing Sensitive Information

- The Society has a protocol for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children
- Permission will be sought from parents for the taking of photographic material featuring children for promotional and other purposes in connection with the production
- The Society's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored as far as is possible 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

Accidents

- To avoid accidents the Child Protection Lead or delegate will advise chaperones/matrons and/or parents and children of 'house rules' regarding health and safety
- The Society will advise children and all members of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work 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 accident book and the parent will be informed
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to advise the society of any injury/medical condition which may affect participation
- If a child joins the production with an obvious injury or has been notified by the parent or guardian of any condition, a record will be made of this in the accident book

Chaperones/Matrons

- Chaperones/Matrons may 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 that specified by the LEA.
- All chaperones need to be approved by the LEA in which they live
- All chaperones will be made aware of the Society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Where Chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Chairman and/or DSL

During Rehearsals/Performances, it is expected that the Chaperones take responsibility for the following areas:

- If a Chaperone considers a child too unwell or tired to perform, they must inform the board
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to take them home. This should only be done in exceptional circumstances and follow the Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- If someone other than a parent is collecting the child, this shall be arranged in writing
- During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building
- Chaperones will be aware of where children are at all times
- No child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. Any such obligation imposed upon a child shall be stopped by the chaperone and the LEA informed
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents
- Once a child has left with their parent, they are no longer the responsibility of the society
- Where appropriate children will be adequately supervised while going to the toilet
- Children will not be allowed to enter adult dressing rooms without the consent of the chaperone
- Chaperones and/or parents 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 child should not participate in a performance until consent from the parent has been given for the child to continue

Safeguarding and Abuse: Being Vigilant, Reporting and Recording

Definitions of safeguarding and abuse

The society has a duty to safeguard all its young members from harm.

A child is being abused if they are suffering some form of sexual, physical, emotional harm or neglect as a result of the actions of another person. You should remember that the perpetrator may be well known and trusted by the child, by yourself or be another student. When dealing with allegations of abuse it is important that you remain as objective as possible, starting with an assumption that the child is telling the truth and that you remember that within these broad definitions abuse can come in many forms, for example:

Bullying and cyberbullying
Domestic Violence
Drugs
Fabricated or induced illness
Faith abuse
Gender-based violence
Mental health
Private fostering
Sexting
Sexual exploitation
Teenage relationship abuse
Female Genital Mutilation
Radicalisation

Concerns about a child – what do I do?

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child either inside or outside the society then you must pass that concern on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Remember that no concern is too small – it may be that there are other issues of which you are unaware and that your concern may be a vital piece of information.

If your concern is about possible sexual, physical, emotional abuse or neglect, then it should be passed as a matter of urgency to the DSL who will ascertain the facts, listen to the views of the child and may take informal advice from safeguarding leads in agencies outside of the society before making a referral to the relevant Children's Social Care department.

If a child begins to disclose/ make allegations of sexual, physical, emotional abuse or neglect your response should be as follows:

Don't promise confidentiality (although you can reassure them that you will only tell the people you **must** tell)

Don't use leading questions: let the child talk and prompt only with open questions.

If possible keep a note of what the child says: it doesn't matter if these are rough. Direct quotes from the child may be useful at a later stage.

Get help as soon as you can. Tell the child what you are doing and how long you will be. It is fine to let a friend sit with the child if they want this.

Do not touch the child (even if they are very upset) – remember that the nature of their abuse may be such that a comforting touch has threatening overtones. Show your concern through gestures such as giving them a tissue or offering to get them a drink.

A child should never be returned to an environment where further harm is possible. If a child is not safe to leave rehearsal, then an immediate referral must be made.

All disclosures must be treated as a matter of urgency. The Society recognises that it is not its job to investigate a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, but just to report it verbally followed up by a written referral within 24 hours if requested. If you do not think that a referral has been made or you are not happy that a child is safe then you can make the referral yourself. The numbers for Children's Social Care are below:

Newcastle: 0191 277 2500

Sunderland: 0191 566 1500

North Tyneside: 0191 643 7979

South Tyneside: 0191 424 5010

Gateshead: 0191 433 2653

Durham: 0845 850 5010

Northumberland is divided into locality teams:

Alnwick: 01665 626830

Ashington: 01670 815060

Bedlington: 01670 536800

Berwick: 01289 334000

Blyth: 01670 354316

Cramlington: 01670 712925

Hexham: 01434 603582

Morpeth: 01670 516131

16+ team: 01670 714925

Safe Recruitment

Safe recruitment of volunteers is an essential tool to prevent abuse.

The Society will not allow anyone to carry out regulated activity without an enhanced DBS and Barred List Check.

Staff and volunteers who will have regular contact with children and may be unsupervised at times will be required to undertake an enhanced DBS certificate with barred list check or have their DBS number checked through the update service.

Safeguarding Code of Conduct

All members of the society are required to abide by Appendix 1 - The Safeguarding Code of Conduct which protects students from harm and staff from false allegations. All members are encouraged to re-visit the code of conduct regularly and use it as a guide when they think that an adult may be acting inappropriately.

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