

SOCS (Southminster Operatic and Choral Society)

Child protection policy

This policy shall cover all meetings rehearsals and performances of the society when young people aged 16 years or younger are present.

The society shall ensure the following:

- All young people aged 16 years old and younger shall be registered as junior members of the society.
- They shall be on the society's register of members with details of parents and carers and two contact telephone numbers.
- The society shall have the written consent of parents/carers for them to be members, attend rehearsals and take part in public performances.
- The society shall appoint one member (Zanny Lawrence) to be responsible for child protection issues.

During performances one unlicensed chaperone shall be backstage to look after the interests of junior members. If over 10 children there will be two licensed chaperones.

Members who have any concerns about the welfare of any of the junior members shall report to the child protection officer. If she is unable to deal with the matter it should be referred to a committee member.

All members of the society shall have a copy of the society's child protection policy and are advised to make sure that their conduct is discreet and appropriate when dealing with junior members.

SOCS has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for children all staff, chaperones, parents/legal guardians and volunteers accept their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to ensure that everyone follows procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

There are three elements to our policy:-

- ☐ **Prevention through awareness of each individual child's needs.**
- ☐ **Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect**
- ☐ **Procedures for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases, of abuse.**

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of SOCS and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Prevention

We recognise that the entertainment industry can be a very adult environment and we expect that all staff, chaperones, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and anyone else who comes into contact with children behave in an appropriate manner at all times, and remember that "The Welfare of the Child is Paramount".

SOCS will therefore:-

- ☐ Act within the Children's Act 1989 & 2004
- ☐ Act within The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- ☐ Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel welcome and familiar with their environment and are informed of personal (toilets, dressing rooms etc) and emergency arrangements (fire exits, meeting points etc) and any Health and Safety Procedures (Dangerous equipment, First aid etc)

- Inform each child who the appropriate person or people are to speak to if they have any questions, problems or concerns.
- Ensure that all children are treated with respect and dignity and are treated as individuals and offered equality of opportunities.
- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and unnecessary physical contact with children) and involve/allow parents/chaperones wherever possible, to take responsibility for the child/children they are responsible for. (parents must only have responsibility for their own child)
- Recognising the individual needs of the child. eg recognising when a child may be tired and may need a break.
- Ensure that children are supervised appropriately.
- Ensure that all Chaperones are registered with the local authority in which they reside and have an enhanced DBS check.
- Ensure all crew and staff coming into close contact with a child are DBS checked.
- Ensure that all staff and crew who don't necessarily have close contact with children but who are assisting in the production are aware of their conduct around children.

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

A child is abused or neglected when somebody inflicts harm, or fails to act to prevent harm. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection.

□ Physical Abuse - May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after.

□ Sexual Abuse - Forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening, may involve: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts;

non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities; or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

□ Neglect - Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

□ Emotional Abuse - The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age and developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, for example witnessing domestic abuse within the home or being bullied, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

SOCS will adhere to the relevant legislation when working with children and young people under the age of 18 years as outlined in the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015

Suspicion of Abuse

□ If you see or suspect abuse of a child, immediately make this known to the designated individual/manager responsible for child protection.

Disclosure of Abuse

If a child tells you that they or another child or young person is being abused:-

- Always stop and listen straight away, show that you take their allegations seriously.
- Encourage the child to talk, but do not ask leading questions, interrupt or ask the child to repeat itself.
- Never promise that you will keep what is said confidential or secret – explain that if you are told something of concern that you will need to let someone know but that you will only tell the people who need to know and can help.
- Record what you have been told accurately and as soon as possible. Use the child's own words. Make a note of the time, location, whether any one else present and of the Child's demeanour.
- Ensure that your concerns are reported immediately to the designated individual/manager
- Do not confront the alleged abuser.

Handling Allegations

• If a child makes an allegation against a member of staff it must be reported as a matter of urgency to the individual for child protection who will refer to Social Services department for Children's Services. If the allegation is against the designated person then the information should be reported to a committee member. The alleged perpetrator should not be made aware of the allegation at this point.

Recording

□ In all situations the details of allegation or reported incident must be recorded. Make accurate notes of time, dates, incident or disclosure, people involved, what was said and done and by whom, action taken to investigate, further action taken e.g. suspension of individual and if relevant: reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, name of person reporting and to whom it was reported

The record must be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know.

- Do not worry that you might be mistaken; you have a responsibility to pass on your concerns following a disclosure. Never think abuse is impossible, or that an accusation about a person you know well and trust is bound to be wrong.

IT IS YOUR DUTY TO REFER CONCERNS ON, NOT TO INVESTIGATE

The Designated Individual for child protection and safeguarding

Child Protection Officer:

Zanny Lawrence
Bramble Cottage
6, Vicarage Lane
Tillingham
Essex CM0 7TW
01621 779273

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