



## Child Protection Policy

Octopus Thornbury recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Protection of Children Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

Octopus Thornbury recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. Octopus Thornbury is committed to practice which protects children from harm. ALL members of Octopus Thornbury accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause harm.

Octopus Thornbury 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 and employees of the group should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

Octopus Thornbury 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 group provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.
- Action will be taken to stop any appropriate 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 group and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.



## Child Protection Procedures

The NSPCC has noted the following characteristics as being common in organisations where abuse is most likely to exist.

- Minimal supervision of children.
- Inadequate guidelines or procedures for dealing with concerns about children.
- Lack of specialist skills or knowledge about child protection.
- Minimal staff support.
- Children left to their own devices.
- Discouragement of parental/guardian involvement (e.g. as observers or accompanying adults).
- Lack of resources.
- Gaps between policy and practice.
- Poor co-ordination and lack of consistency in supervision.

The prevalence of child abuse is unknown due to many people never reporting the crime but what is known is that the overwhelming majority of cases are perpetrated by adults who are known to the child in question. With this in mind it is vital that Octopus Thornbury takes the protection of the children in their performances seriously.

### **Responsibilities of the group**

At the outset of any production involving children the group will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection. This will probably be the director in conjunction with the Child Welfare Officer.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones (see definition below) and other individuals with responsibility for the supervision of children during performance week, including any appropriate vetting.
- 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.

### **Parents/Guardians**

- Octopus Thornbury believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents/guardians and the group. Parents/guardians are expected to be involved in the activities of the group and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents/guardians will be given a copy of the group's Child Protection Policy and procedures and asked to sign them to say they agree to follow them before their child is cast in a production.



- All parents/guardians have the responsibility to supervise (or arrange for someone to supervise) their children during rehearsals.

## **Unsupervised Contact**

- The group will ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- 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 the door open.

## **Physical Contact**

- Adults should only have physical contact with children when it is necessary in relation to the performance activity or as part of their chaperoning duties.
- Adults will ask the child before any physical contact is made, and if the child is happy with it. The purpose of the contact shall be made clear. For example to apply make-up or as part of the performance.

## **Managing sensitive information**

- Octopus Thornbury has a policy and procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children.
- Permission will be sought from the parents/guardians for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional and other purposes.
- Octopus Thornbury's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- Octopus Thornbury 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 Octopus Thornbury, 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 the Chair. If either of these is felt to be inappropriate please refer to the Addendum for the contact details of the appropriate authorities.
- 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 group, chaperone, venue staff etc. then appropriate action will be taken. If you would like to know more then please contact the Child Welfare Officer.



## Disclosure of abuse

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- 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.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret.
- Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that "they did the right thing" in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- Speak immediately to the Child Welfare Officer.
- 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 mentioned or involved. Make sure you sign and date your record.
- Octopus Thornbury will then refer to the 'Child Safe' guidelines and take appropriate action. If you would like to know more then please contact the Child Welfare Officer.

## Rights and Confidentiality

- Octopus Thornbury will refer to the 'Child Safe' guidelines and the Data Protection Act 1998. If you would like to know more then please contact the Child Welfare Officer.

## Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be provided with the group's Health and Safety for Children policy.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the group, the injury will be recorded in the group's accident book.
- If a child joins the production with an obvious injury, a record will be made in the accident book.
- Parents/guardians will be responsible for filling in a form stating any allergies or medical conditions prior to performance in order to ensure the safety of all children. Medications will be signed into and out of the dressing rooms each night where they will be stored in a safe place with instructions for use e.g. Epi-pens or inhalers.

## Chaperones

- Throughout this document 'chaperone' refers to a parent/guardian of children participating in Octopus Thornbury performances.



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- Parents/guardians will be expected to supervise their own children during rehearsals and to supervise their own and other children in the dressing rooms during production week.
- A rota will be drawn up for production week and every parent/guardian of children in a performance will be expected to sign up. There will always be at least 2 chaperones supervising in the dressing room.
- Chaperones should exercise the care which a good parent/guardian might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in one chaperone's care during rehearsal/performance week shall not exceed 12.
- Chaperones will have read, understood and signed Octopus Thornbury'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 stage manager.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the director and not allow the child to continue.
- During performance week which will include technical and dress rehearsals, chaperones sign children into the building and will be informed of which adult will be collecting them. At the end of the evening they will also be responsible for ensuring children are signed out of the building by the person collecting them and a note made of that person. It is not the responsibility of the group to return children to their homes.
- Children will be kept together at all times except when moving to/from the stage or using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones and children are not allowed to use phones/tablets or any other technology capable of capturing images or video footage within the changing areas while children are changing. For Octopus Thornbury this will include the girls dressing room, and the parlour while the boys are changing behind the screen. Chaperones should try to ensure children are not using these devices during dressing times.
- Chaperones will be aware of where children are at all times.
- Children are not allowed to leave the building unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents/guardians.
- Children are not allowed to use the public toilets as these are used by people also accessing the bar in the evenings. Children will only use the toilet by the kitchen both during rehearsals and the performance week.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms and adults other than chaperones will not be allowed to enter the children's dressing areas while the children are changing.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedure in the venue, and will ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by the group.



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- Chaperones should not let a child leave with an unexpected person if they come to collect them until they have contacted the child's parent/guardian and received permission and confirmation that this is correct.
- In the unlikely event of a parent/guardian not arriving to collect a child the chaperones will stay with the child or make arrangements for them to be taken home. No child will be taken home alone with an adult other than their parent/guardian. The chaperones will use the contact details provided to contact a member of the child's family to arrange for the child to be collected by an adult specified by the child's parent/guardian.

### Addendum

Contacting the authorities regarding an allegation of abuse.

The Child Welfare Officer on being informed of a suspicion of abuse from outside the group will (if it is considered appropriate rather than gathering evidence) contact the Access and Response Team at South Gloucestershire County Council on 01454 866000 Monday –Thursday 9:00am – 4:30pm and Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm or 01454 615165 out of hours or at the weekend. If the child is in immediate danger phone 999 for police assistance.

If it is suspected the abuse is taking place within the group (and the decision is taken to take direct action rather than gather evidence) then the correct procedure is to contact the L.A.D.O. in accordance with advice on 'Whistleblowing' on 08000 724725.