

APPENDIX A1

OCTOPUS DRAMA GROUP, THORNBURY SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

To be read by:

- ⇒ Directors
- ⇒ Parents/Carers
- ⇒ Stage Managers/FOH
- ⇒ All Members

Octopus Drama Group 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

A 'child', in the context of this policy, refers to any person under the age of 18 years old.

The prevalence of child abuse is unknown due to many people not reporting the crime but what is known is that an overwhelming majority of cases are perpetrated by adults that are known to the child in question. With this in mind, it is vital that Octopus Drama Group take the protection of the children in their performances seriously. Octopus Drama Group recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, radicalisation, or the consequences of the misuse of personal data.

Child Protection Policy

The purpose of the Octopus Drama Group Child Protection Policy Statement is:

- to provide children with appropriate safety and protection from harm whilst in the care of the Octopus Drama Group.
- to provide members, as well as children and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.
- to allow all members to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues

Octopus Drama Group believes that:

- The welfare of children is paramount and that safety and welfare come first in all instances.
- 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 and/or bullying should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All members Of Octopus Drama Group have a responsibility to report concerns to the groups Child Protection Officer.
- All members of the Company should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

What Is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined in the Children Act 1989 and 2004 as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

What is Abuse?

Abuse is **'The violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.** This can take place in any setting, public or private and can be perpetrated by anyone. It also encompasses neglect, sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

What is Bullying?

- Insulting someone by word or behaviour
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone - picking on them
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position

- Touching, standing too close, physically intimidating the victim to make them feel uncomfortable
- Deliberately undermining constant criticism
- Using abusive language, swearing with numerous expletives to intimidate the other person
- Emails criticising what the person has done especially when copied into others
- Use of sarcasm to intimidate
- Bullying on social media

Responsibilities of Octopus Drama Group

Octopus Drama Group 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.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with the Company and will retain a contact name and number close at hand, in case of emergencies.
- Whenever there is a show with children in it, the policy will be circulated to all cast and children's parents
- An initial meeting will take place with the Production Director of each production and the Child Protection Team before rehearsals begin.
- A member of The Child Protection Team will be at the 1st meeting of all productions (with consent letters and Child Protection Policy - see **APPENDICES A1/2**).
- The production director is aware it is their responsibility to inform the Child Protection Team of any young person under the age of 18 taking part in any production and any changes to the cast or new people joining in any role, if the person is under 18.
- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection and provide contact details for that person.
- A copy of the policy will be made available to all existing members which they will be required to read. Thereafter, updates will be notified annually.
- All adult members of the company provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It will undertake relevant development and training.
- It is the Director or Producer or members' responsibility to ensure every child's safety and will not leave children alone to wait for collection.
- Children are supervised at all times. There will always be at least two adults on site with any group of one or more children and no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimize risk and the Child Protection Lead Officer informed. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in decision making processes.
- Action is taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.

Good Practice Guidelines for all Adults

- Ensure you are not left alone with a child.
- Do not take a child or young person alone backstage or to any other part of the theatre such as sound or lighting box.
- Never invite a child or young person to your home or to any other place.
- Never text or email a child or young person direct unless with parental permission.
- Do not contact a child on Social Media.
- Never give a lift to a child or young person when alone.
- All activities involving children should be risk assessed and approved by the Designated Safeguarding Officer or the Health and Safety Officer.
- Children may not see the physical danger associated with activities and theatre equipment that an adult would recognise. Therefore, ensure that equipment is safely stored and used, that children are warned of any danger and that any horseplay which could lead to injury is immediately stopped.
- Be aware that someone might misinterpret our actions even if well intentioned.
- Be aware of how your speech, tone of voice and body language may be perceived.

- Supervise the children carefully and do not permit bullying or ridiculing.
- Control and maintain discipline without any physical punishment.
- Respect a child's right to privacy.
- Do not touch a child inappropriately or intrusively. This includes any physical touching which could be easily misinterpreted.
- 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. If touching is required during the play as part of the action, be aware of the feelings of the child and do not make the child uncomfortable. The script may need to be revised if it does make the child uncomfortable.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear eg applying make-up or as part of the performance
- Do not show favouritism to any one child and do not allow children to involve you in excessive attention-seeking. If you are aware of a child doing so, then report it immediately to protect yourself as an adult.
- Ensure that all material (i.e. scripts /scene content) is age appropriate and never makes a child feel uncomfortable or concerned.
- Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children during rehearsals or performances.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Report to the nominated officer if any child is taken ill or injured during rehearsals or performances.
- Be aware that children should only be using mobile phones during rehearsals/performances for entertainment and emergency purposes. Adults should also only use their phones for entertainment, emergency purposes, music or authorised photography.
- Never allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Never reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Never do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.
- Never allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

Parents/Guardians

- Octopus Drama Group believes it is important that there is a partnership between parents/guardians and the group. Parents/guardians are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the group and to share responsibility for the care of children.
- All parents will be given a copy the group's Child Protection Policy and Procedures and a Consent Form (**APPENDICES A1/A2**) and asked to sign them to say that they agree to follow them, before their child is cast in a production.
- All parents/carers have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of Octopus Drama Group to take children home.
- If, at any time, a child is unable to attend a scheduled rehearsal/performance, it is the parents/carers responsibility to notify the director asap.
- In making a membership application, the parent or guardian's contact details will be taken. It is these details that should be used to contact the child through their parent, until such time as the parent authorises Octopus Drama Group to contact the child directly. This data will either be destroyed at the end of the Production or held securely by the Safeguarding Officer in line with our data protection guidelines.

Guidelines for Chaperones - See APPENDIX B

Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a child is injured whilst in the care of Octopus Drama Group, and the injury will be recorded in the group's accident file (**APPENDIX D1**) This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified immediately of any such accident and the action taken. The Chair or Vice Chair of the Octopus Group Committee will also be informed.
- If a child joins the production with an obvious physical injury, a record of this will be made in the accident file (**APPENDIX D2**). This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection and the

child's parent/carer. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

- Parents/Guardians will be responsible for filling in a form stating any allergies or medical conditions prior to commencement of rehearsals and performances in order to ensure the safety of all children. Medication will be signed into and out of the rehearsal or dressing rooms for each session where they will be stored in a safe place with instructions for use eg epi-pens and inhaler (**APPENDICES F&E**). If training is required for use of specific equipment, this training will be undertaken and completion recorded, prior to commencement of production.

Photographing and Videoing

- Octopus Drama Group may record productions by video and photographs only by persons authorised by either Octopus or the director but always in full view of all attending.

Permission needs to be obtained from parents for each production before any videoing, photography or streaming can take place. Anyone who does not wish their child to be videoed or photographed has the right to withdraw their child from the performance or rehearsals while they are being taken. .

- Octopus Drama Group's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- No unauthorised photographs or videos by members of the theatre company will be published and posted on Facebook, YouTube or any other social media
- Octopus Drama Group will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information.
- The use of cameras or mobile phones with camera or video capability, in dressing rooms and other inappropriate environments should be expressly forbidden.
- Octopus Drama Group does not allow parents to take photo's of their children in shows, nor to make videos.

Mobile Phones

- If rehearsing dances to help the children learn them, the choreographer, director or one of the children can video the dance to share with them afterwards. This must not be posted on any social media. Parents will have

signed a permission form at the beginning of rehearsals for the use of video or photographs.

- We ask that all children only use mobile phones for entertainment or emergency purposes unless authorised by the Production Director or Child Protection Officer
- Any individual bringing a personal device into the theatre must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

Suspicion of abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse or bullying of a child while in the care of Octopus Drama Group, please make this known to the designated Lead Child Protection officer. This can be done in writing or verbally, but members should be able to discuss issues in the confidence that any such matter will be dealt with sensitively and with the necessary degree of confidentiality. 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 Chairman.

- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, just 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.

Disclosure and the recording of allegations of abuse

The following are guidelines for adults who may be taken into a child's confidence about abuse suffered or allegations involving abuse.

It is not the responsibility of any member to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

- Remain calm and listen carefully but do not delay taking action.
- Never trivialise or exaggerate the issues.
- 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 interrupt or suggest a particular answer or that might imply an investigation.
- Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.

- Be honest and make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- Do not interrogate or question, other than to clarify your understanding. (If the matter is to be investigated further, this will be done by professionals).
- Do not ask the child to repeat themselves over and over: they may think you do not believe them.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, write down everything the child told you using the child's own words and notify the nominated person. What has been written down must be totally confidential between you and the Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities.
- Unless the parents are the subject of the complaint, they should be advised on collecting the child of what the child has said.
- Octopus Drama Group will then refer to the 'Child Safe' guidelines and take appropriate action. If it is the parent who is the subject of the complaint or the disclosure is about home, then the Child Protection Officer will contact Social Services or the Police.
- If you would like to know more then please contact the Child Protection Officer.

Recording of Allegations

- In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded on an Octopus Drama Group Child Protection Incident Form (**APPENDIX C**) by the designated lead Child protection officer, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.
- An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken eg. suspension of an individual, where relevant the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency and the name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported.
- The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

Responding to suspicions or allegations

Group will fully support and protect any member, who in good faith reports his or her concern that there is or may be an allegation of abusing a child. When there is a complaint against a member, there may be two types of investigations:

- A criminal investigation.
- A child protection investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation.

Rights & Confidentiality

- If a complaint is made against a member of the group, he or she will be made aware of his rights under the society's disciplinary procedures.
- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.
- In criminal law, the Crown or other prosecuting authority has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Octopus Drama Group has a dedicated Child Protection Officer who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to and to act as a point of contact for any areas of concern. Any suspicions or allegations of abuse must immediately be reported to her and it is the responsibility of this officer to investigate the allegations. After discussing the issue with the child's parents/guardians they may escalate to the appropriate agency. Any person against whom allegations have been made will be stopped from working with children until any agencies involved in the investigation have agreed they may continue.

The current Designated Child Protection Officers for Octopus Drama Group, Thornbury, as of September 2023 are:

Nominated Child Protection lead :

Name: Abi McManus

Phone: 07815117832 **Email:** abimac1@hotmail.co.uk.

Deputy Child Protection lead:

Name: Abi Baskerville

Phone: 07939189580 **Email :** abi.ingham@yahoo.com

This policy has been written in accordance with NODA guidelines and we are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: 30/09/2023

Signed: Abi McManus – Lead Child Protection Officer

Date: 01/10/2023

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL APPENDICES MENTIONED IN THE ABOVE POLICY ARE OBTAINABLE FROM THE NOMINATED CHILD PROTECTION LEAD, AT ANY TIME.