

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY (Reviewed September 2025)

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The policy describes how Octopus Drama Group will ensure the safeguarding and wellbeing of children taking part in Octopus productions - both during rehearsals and performances.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all children and young people, up to the age of 18, who are involved in The Octopus Drama Group in any capacity. The regulations regarding child chaperoning for performances apply to children and young people up to school leaver age (to end of school year 11).

This policy is based on the following legislation, regulations and guidance.

Working together to Safeguard Children 2018 (DfE)

The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulation 2014

DfE advice on Child Performance and activity licencing legislation Feb 2015

Children and Social Work Act 2017

Consultation on Child Performance Hours & Breaks 2014

POLICY STATEMENT

We believe that everyone involved in Octopus Drama Group has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We recognise that some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of discrimination, previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues and we will support these children to fully engage in the activities of Octopus Drama Group.

KEY OBJECTIVES

Octopus Drama Group key objectives with regards to child safeguarding are:

- To keep children safe
- To respond to any child protection concerns
- To protect children from any kind of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual and neglect) whilst engaging in any activity with The Octopus Theatre Group
- To comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) tailored by the Data Protection Act 2018.

We will meet our commitment by:

- Appointing a child protection lead and a member of the Committee who takes lead responsibility for safeguarding
- Ensuring children, young people and their families know about the organisation's safeguarding and child protection policies and what to do if they have a concern by publishing the safeguarding and child protection policy on our website.
- Making sure anyone involved in Octopus Drama Group understands and follows the safeguarding and child protection procedures
- Building a safeguarding culture where anyone involved in Octopus Drama Group knows how they are expected to behave and feels comfortable about sharing concerns.
- Listening to children and respecting them
- Making sure all children are treated equally and with respect and dignity
- Ensuring the welfare of the child will be put first, a balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the child/children to share in the decision-making process
- Promoting enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism
- taking every opportunity to build the child's/children confidence to bring out their full potential on and off stage
- Not accepting or condoning any form of bullying.
- Expecting all adult members of the group to provide a positive role model when dealing with other people
- Taking action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour
- Informing members of any changes in legislation and updates to the policies for the protection of the children.
- By keeping up-to-date with health and safety and Coronavirus rules and legalisation

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES FOR PRODUCTIONS INVOLVING CHILDREN**OCTOPUS DRAMA GROUP RESPONSIBILITIES****At the beginning of any production involving children the group will:**

- Obtain written consent forms from parents/carers for any child/children who is/are involved in the production, whether it is on or off stage, retaining contact numbers and numbers for use in an emergency. These details are kept in a secure place in line with UK GDPR.
- Undertake a risk assessment which will be monitored throughout the rehearsal and production process by the director and stage manager.
- Obtain formal agreements from parents/carers that any child under school leaving age (eg Year 11 or under) will be chaperoned during all rehearsals and performances by either a parent/carer or a nominated named Enhanced DBS checked member of the group. (This latter option is at the discretion of the Child Protection Lead and Director and must be agreed, in writing, in advance of the first rehearsal).
- Ensure all adults who are acting in a nominated chaperone capacity, other than parents and carers, undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS)

- Ensure that children and parents/carers know the name and contact details of the safeguarding lead and understand the complaints procedure.
- Ensure that the children are supervised at all times.
- Ensure that the designated safeguarding lead knows who to contact within the social services in case of the need to report a concern
- Octopus Drama Group will comply with the latest government rules and associated guidance with respect to Covid-19. This will include, but is not limited to, rules and guidance relating to face masks, track and trace, social distancing, cleaning and ventilation for example.

PARENT/CARERS RESPONSIBILITIES

- The group believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the group. Parents/Carers are encouraged to be involved in the activities of Octopus Drama Group and to share responsibility for the care of their child/ren. The group's Child Protection Policy and Procedures will be accessible to all parents/Carers on the Octopus Drama Group website.
- All parents/Carers have the responsibility to either personally chaperone their own child/children during rehearsals and each performance. Alternatively, they can formally nominate, in writing, a named Enhanced DBS checked member of the group to Chaperone their child. This is to be agreed at the discretion of the Lead Child Protection Officer and Director.
- All parents/Carers have the responsibility to collect their child/children after rehearsals or performances or formally nominate, in writing, a named Enhanced DBS checked member of the group, at the discretion of the Lead Child Protection Officer and Director.

PARENT/CARER OR NOMINATED DBS CHAPERONES RESPONSIBILITIES

- All adults acting in a chaperone capacity will be aware of the Child Protection and Procedures of the group
- Adults acting in a chaperone capacity will escalate any concerns regarding the children to the safeguarding lead and/or a member of the production team
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times
- During the performance week, the chaperones will be responsible for ensuring that each child is signed in/out at the 'stage door'
- Chaperones must not leave the children on their own, except when going to the toilet, then the chaperone should escort the child/children to the toilet and stand outside.
- All chaperones must record any accidents/incidents in the Accident Book which is located with the First Aid Box
- All chaperones must be aware of arrangements for the collection of children after the performances
- After a rehearsal/performance, if a child has not been collected by a parent/carer or their nominee, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to telephone the parent/carer to arrange for the child to be collected.
- All Chaperones will be aware of relevant up to date information relating to the Coronavirus pandemic

PHYSICAL CONTACT

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from the children
- Adults will only have physical contact with children when it is a necessary part of the production. An adult acting in a chaperone capacity will also be present during this activity.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact, and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

MANAGING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

- The group has procedures in place for taking photographs and storage of images of the children
- Permission will be sought from the parents/carers for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes
- The committee will ensure that The Octopus Theatre Group web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use
- The Octopus Drama Group will ensure that all members' sensitive information regarding their Disclosure and Barring Service Records are safely stored and are confidential.

ACCIDENTS & FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURES

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of 'house rules' and fire evacuation rules.
- Appropriate clothing and footwear will be worn around the dressing rooms/rehearsal rooms
- All members will know who the Octopus Drama Group First Aid Officer is and the location of where the first aid box is kept.
- A record of regular equipment checks will be kept inside the first aid box to ensure it is complete and all items are within date
- Any accidents will be recorded and kept confidentially in a secure location.

SUSPICION OF ABUSE

- If any abuse of a child is seen or suspected, then the designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed, or the Chairman, if the source of the suspicion is with the Safeguarding Lead
- All information regarding allegations must be documented stating date, time, place and who and stored securely
- If a serious allegation is made against a chaperone or another member of the group, then that individual will be suspended with immediate effect while an investigation is being carried out.
- That person will be excluded from the rehearsal/production areas while the investigation is taking place.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If a parent/carer wishes to make a formal complaint about the way an incident affecting their child/children has been dealt with by Octopus Drama Group, they should, in the first instance put the complaint in writing to the Octopus Drama Group Safeguarding Lead. If the subsequent response is regarded as unsatisfactory, they can then refer to the Chairman of Octopus Drama Group for further investigation. The matter will be dealt with swiftly and in confidence.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Safeguarding Lead: Abi McManus

Email: abimac1@hotmail.co.uk

Telephone number: 07815117832

Octopus Chairman: Alison Bagnall

Email: alison.bagnall@blueyonder.co.uk

Telephone number: 07772455708