



## **Child Protection Policy**

**This policy should be read and considered in conjunction with our Working with Children Policy and Taking, Using and Storing of Images Policy**

Axminster Drama Club (“the organisation”) recognizes its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, The Protection of Children Act 1999, the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 and subsequent legislation and that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. Axminster Drama is committed to practice which protects children from harm and all members accept and recognize their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

### **The organisation 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 quickly and appropriately.
- All members and any employees or contractors of the organisation should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

### **The organisation 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 children to share in decision making processes.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members of the organisation 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 itself informed on changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It will undertake relevant development and training as and when appropriate
- It will hold a register of every child involved with the organisation during productions and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

The organisation has child protection procedures which accompany this policy and has a dedicated Child Protection Officer, who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to. That person's name is:

- **Sara Leat and she can be contacted on 01297 35187**

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Committee of the organisation and will be subject to annual review.

## **Child Protection Procedures**

### **Performances**

At the outset of any production involving children the organisation will

- Undertake a Risk Assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (if necessary in consultation with the local authority).
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times
- Know how to get in touch with relevant local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

### **Parents**

The organisation believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the organisation. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the organisation and to share responsibility for the care of children. A copy of the organisations Child Protection Policy and Procedures and other relevant policies will be publically available at all times. All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT, and never will be, the responsibility of the organisation to take children home.

### **Unsupervised Contact**

The organisation will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children. If possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children. If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimize risk, for example work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with the door open. If it is

predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, he or she may be required to obtain a criminal record disclosure, or similar check, before doing so.

### **Physical Conduct**

All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from Children. Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity. Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear to them.

### **Managing sensitive information**

Permission will be sought from the parents for the use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes. The organisations web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use. The organisation 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 care of the organisation, 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 Chairman or any other member of the committee. 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 organisation, chaperone, venue staff etc, that individual will be suspended as appropriate (inc membership being suspended of the organisation) immediately until investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the venue, rehearsal space etc and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production during investigation process and following proving of any allegation.

### **Disclosure of abuse**

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place, remain calm and in control and 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. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with responsibility for child protection. 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. 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 person with responsibility for child protection. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police. 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 involved or mentioned, and who gave the information to you. Make sure you sign and date your record.

## **Recording**

In all situations, including those in which the cause of the concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded, 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, 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.

## **Rights and Confidentiality**

If a complaint is made against a member of the club, he or she will be made aware of his rights. 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, and subsequent legislation. 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.

## **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/performance that will be undertaken. If a child is injured while in the care of the organisation, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the organisations accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection.

If a child joins a production with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the organisations accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection, 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 whilst participating in the production.

## **Criminal Record Disclosures**

If the organisation believes it is in its best interests to obtain criminal record disclosures for chaperones or other personnel it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required. An Enhanced Disclosure will be required for anyone with the likely hood of unsupervised access at any time. The organisation will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

## Chaperones

Chaperones will be appointed by the club 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 a chaperone's care shall not exceed 12. Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity (eg. passport, driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless they are already well known to the organisation.

Chaperones will be made aware of the organisations Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care. If unsupervised access is unavoidable, or if this is a requirement of the local authority, a criminal record disclosure will be sought.

Where Chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for their children, they should bring this to the attention of the Child Protection Officer. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily the Chaperone should consider not allowing the child, or children, to continue. Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which will endanger life or limb. This could include working on wire or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell the Producer of the production to cease using children in this way and should contact the local authority without delay.

During performances, Chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building. Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms. Chaperones must be aware of where the children are at all times. Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by Chaperones unless in the company of their parents or guardians. Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms.

Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures for the venue, and 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 organisation. Chaperones should examine accident books each day. If an accident has occurred, the Producer shall not be allowed to use that child until a medically qualified opinion has been obtained (not just the word of the parent or guardian or the child themselves).

Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangement. Children should be signed out when leaving. If a parent or guardian has not collected the child, it is the duty of the Chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to take care for them until necessary arrangements for collection can be made.

Signed .....

Dated .....

March 2018