

Woking Amateur Operatic Society Child Protection Policy

Woking Amateur Operatic Society (WAOS) recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act of 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2003.

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

WAOS believes that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
- all children, whatever their age, gender, 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 of the society should be clear on how to respond appropriately if abuse is suspected.

WAOS will ensure that:

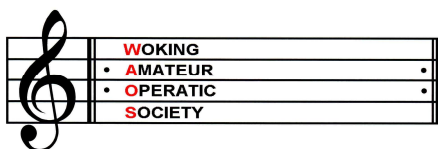
- all children are treated equally, with respect and dignity;
- the duty of care to children will always be put first;
- enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism;
- bullying will not be accepted or condoned;
- all adult members of the society will provide positive role models 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 informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children;
- it will hold a register of every child involved with a production and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

WAOS has child protection procedures that accompany this policy. (see pages 2-4 of this document.)

WAOS has a dedicated Child Protection Officer, who is in charge of ensuring that the Child Protection Policy and procedures are adhered to. That person is Gillian Freeman, and she can be contacted by phone on 07860 484386 or 01932 342411 or by e-mail at gfreem@ntlworld.com.

This policy and the accompanying procedures will be shared with all members of the cast and crew of WAOS shows which include children in the cast, and with the parents/carers of those children. The policy and procedures will be reviewed by the WAOS committee annually.

Date: 17th August 2010



Woking Amateur Operatic Society Child Protection Procedures

Responsibilities of the Society

At the outset of any production involving children, WAOS will:

- undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process;
- identify at the outset the person with responsibility for child protection;
- engage in recruitment of chaperones approved by Surrey County Council or ensure that parents understand their responsibilities in supervising their own children throughout rehearsals and performances;
- ensure that children are supervised at all times and made aware of their own responsibilities;
- know how to get in touch with Surrey's social services, in case it needs to report a concern.
- advise cast and crew members of special precautions to be taken when working with children;
- maintain a secure and semi-permanent record (6 months) of children's attendance.

Parents

WAOS believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the society. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the society and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents will be given a copy of WAOS's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the society to take children home.

Unsupervised contact

WAOS 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, work will be carried out in a public area or in a designated room with the door open.

Physical Contact

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

Photography and video

Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic or video material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.

Chaperones

Chaperones who have been approved and trained by Surrey County Council will be appointed by the society for the care of children during the production process wherever possible. By law, the chaperone is acting in loco parentis and should exercise the care that a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in the care of a chaperone shall not exceed 12.

Surrey County Council requires all registered chaperones to have received enhanced clearance from the CRB. Chaperones are therefore permitted unsupervised contact with the children in their care.

Chaperones will be made aware of the WAOS 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 director. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.

If a chaperone considers the child is too tired or unwell to continue, the chaperone must inform the director and not allow the child to continue.

Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything that may endanger life or limb. Chaperones should tell the director to cease using children in this way, and should contact the local authority.

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 will be aware of where the children are at all times, and will not allow children to leave the theatre unless in the company of their parents or their representatives. They will supervise the children while going to and from the toilets. Children will not be allowed in adult dressing rooms.

Chaperones should be aware of the first aid procedures in the venue. They are responsible for reporting any accidents to the society, and should ensure that a record is made.

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, unless the parent has previously notified the chaperone of this plan. Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting. If a child remains uncollected at the end of a rehearsal or performance, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with the child.

Accidents

To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised by the CPO of "house rules" regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. This includes any potential risk areas and risk behaviour onstage and backstage.

Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.

If a child is injured while in the care of the society, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the society's accident book. This record will be counter-signed by the person with responsibility for child protection.

If a child arrives at rehearsal or for a show with an obvious physical injury, a record of this should be made in the accident book and counter-signed by the person with responsibility for child protection. This record could 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.

Suspicion of abuse

If anyone sees or suspects abuse of a child while in the care of WAOS, they must make this known to the society's Child Protection Officer. If you suspect that the Child Protection Officer is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Chairman.

Please make a note 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 society, chaperone, crew member etc that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the rehearsal room or theatre and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production.

Disclosure of abuse - responsibilities of all adults

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 his/her own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Do not ask questions that suggest a particular answer. This is because leading questions may result in your information being judged as inadmissible in court should prosecution ensue.
- Do not promise to keep confidentiality. Make it clear that you will have to share this information with people who can help. Reassure the child that they did the right thing in telling someone.
- At the first available opportunity, share this with the person with responsibility for child protection. It is their responsibility to liaise with the appropriate authorities - usually the social services or the police.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, make a written note of what was said, using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

Recording of concerns - duties of person with responsibility for child protection

In all situations where a concern has been expressed, the details of the allegation or reported incident will be recorded by the CPO in the CP incident book, 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) and, if appropriate, the reason that the matter was not referred to a statutory agency. The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

Rights and confidentiality

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality. It is also important to remember that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.

In criminal law the prosecuting authority has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proved guilty.