

# **Trowbridge Amateur Operatic Society (TAOS)**

## **Child Protection Procedure**

**Purpose:** To detail how TAOS will complete its duty of care to its members under 18 years of age, in order to comply with the Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

### **Responsibilities of the Society**

At the outset of any production involving children, TAOS 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 Education Authority);
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times;
- Know how to get in touch with Local Authority Social Services, in case it needs to report a concern.

### **Parents**

TAOS 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 the children.

- All parents will be given a copy of the society's Child Protection Policy and made aware of the supporting Child Protection Procedure.
- 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**

- TAOS 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 minimise risk. For example – work will be carried out in a public area or is a designated room with a 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.

### **Physical Contact**

- 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.

### **Managing Sensitive Information**

- TAOS has a policy and procedure for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children.
- Permission will be sought from parents for the use of photographs or images.
- The society's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use,
- The society 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 on abuse**

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the society, 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.
- 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 society, chaperone, venue staff etc. that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the theatre; rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production.

### **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. 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 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 you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date the record.

### **Recording**

- In all situations, including those in which the cause for 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 e.g. 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 society, he or she will be made aware of his/her 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.

### **Accidents**

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of TAOS's 'house rules' on 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 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 joins the production with an obvious physical injury, a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be counter-signed by the person with the responsibility for child protection. This record can be used 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.

### **Criminal Record Disclosures**

- If the society 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. Though a Standard disclosure is adequate for anyone applying to supervise children, TAOS's preference is to request Enhanced disclosure.
- The society has a written code of practice for the handling of disclosure information.
- The society will ensure that information contained in the disclosure will not be misused.

### **Chaperones**

- Chaperones will be appointed by the society 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 a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.
- Potential chaperones will be required to supply or obtain Enhanced criminal record disclosure. Unless already well known to the society, they will also be asked to

supply photographic proof of identity (e.g. Passport, driving licence), two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children and to sign a declaration stating there is no reason why they should be considered unsuitable to work with children.

- Chaperones will be made aware of the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care. All chaperones will have criminal record disclosure, should unsupervised access be unavoidable.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the producer/director. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is too unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the producer/director and not allow the child to continue.
- Under the Dangerous Performance Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell the producer/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.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents.
- Children will be adequately supervised whilst going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and will 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 Society.
- Chaperones should examine the accident book each day. If an accident has occurred, the producer/director is not allowed to use that child until a medically qualified opinion has been obtained (not just the word of a parent or child).
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call to the parent should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to take them home.

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> June 2007.