

Littlehampton Players Operatic Society
Safeguarding Policy (children and adults): August 2023

Littlehampton Players Operatic Society recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protections of Children Act 1999, the Criminal and Justice and Court Services Act 2000, Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Care Act 2014.

In developing safeguarding policy and procedures, guidance has been sought from the National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA), the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board, West the Sussex County Council Safeguarding Adults Board, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), and BROS Musical Productions.

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

Members of Littlehampton Players Operatic Society must be 16 years old and over; however, child safeguarding policies apply to anyone under 18 years old and some productions will involve younger children. When children participate in LPOS productions the policy and procedures detailed here apply. Chaperones will be appointed to manage the children during rehearsals and performances, and the use of chaperones is outlined below in the society's safeguarding procedures.

Definitions:

Within the law, children are defined as individuals under 18 years old, while the term 'young people' is the generally accepted term for those in their teens. Employment legislation which includes regulations concerning children in performances focuses on those of compulsory school age and below; a child is required to attend school unless he/she is over the age of 16 on 31 August on until the last Friday in June after his/her 16th birthday.

An adult at risk is any person aged 18 years or over who is vulnerable to abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and support (regardless of whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs). Everyone could be regarded at risk or vulnerable at certain times in their lives, for example when undergoing medical treatment or experiencing a period of mental ill health. Equally, not all people with a disability would identify themselves as being vulnerable or at risk at all times.

LPOS Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (children and vulnerable adults)

- The society recognises that the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.
- All children, young people and adults at risk, whatever their age, culture, disability, sex, language, racial origin, religious beliefs, sexual identity, and/or gender identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, adults at risk and their parents, carers, and other agencies is essential in promoting children's, young people's, and vulnerable adults' welfare.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All members and employees of the society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To provide protection for the children, young people, and adults at risk who receive LPOS services, including the children of adult members or participants.
- To provide all members with guidance on the procedures that they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child, young person, or adult may be experiencing, or at risk of, harm.
- This policy applies to all performing and non-performing members, volunteers, paid staff, and anyone working on behalf of LPOS.

The society will seek to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk by:

- Valuing them, listening to them, and treating them equally and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the duty of care to at-risk children and adults first.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Never accepting or condoning bullying.
- Taking decisive action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- Keeping up-to-date with health and safety legislation.
- Staying informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children and adults.
- Holding a register of every child and adult involved in the society and retaining a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

The society has safeguarding procedures which accompany this policy.

Contact Details

Nominated Safeguarding Lead

Katrina O'Neill (Treasurer)

treasurer@lpos.org

Chairperson

Simon Jones

chair@lpos.org

Vice Chairperson

David Upcraft

vicechair@lpos.org

This policy statement came into force on.....31/08/2023.....

The committee will review the policy and procedures annually.

Signed.....(Katrina O'Neill).....31/08/2023

NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000

West Sussex Adult Services Care Point: 01243 642121

Safeguarding Procedures

Responsibilities of the society

At the outset of any production the society will:

- Undertake a risk assessment, and subsequently monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify the person with designated responsibility for safeguarding at the outset.
- Engage in effective recruitments of chaperones (see p.7) and other individuals for safeguarding.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Produce a rehearsal schedule with clear dates and times and commit to notifying parents/carers of any changes to these.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services in case a concern must be reported.

Parents

- The society believes that it is important to maintain a partnership between parents/carers and the society. Parents/carers are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the society and to share responsibility for the care of children and/or vulnerable adults. All parents/carers will be given a copy of the society's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults procedures.
- All parents/carers have the responsibility to collect (or arrange the collection of) their children/vulnerable adults after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the society to take children/vulnerable adults home.

Unsupervised contact

- The society will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children during its events, rehearsals, or productions.
- 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 the risk: e.g. using a public area or a designated room with an open door.
- If it is predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, they will be required to obtain a criminal record disclosure (DBS check).

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 a particular activity.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact, and the purpose of the contact should be made clear beforehand.

Managing sensitive Information

- Permission will be sought from the parents for the use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- The society's web-based materials and activities (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) will be monitored for inappropriate use.
- The society will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members including the safer 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 or adult while they are in the care of the society, please make this known to the person with responsibility for safeguarding. If you suspect that the person with responsibility is the cause of concern, please contact the society's chairperson/vice chairperson.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed, as well as your response, in case there is a follow-up in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the society, chaperone, paid contractors, etc., then that individual will be suspended immediately until an investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the theatre dressing rooms etc., and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children/young people or at-risk adults in the production.

Disclosure of abuse

If a child/young person or adult confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and do not delay in taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the person to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Do not ask leading questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Do not promise to keep it a secret. Make it clear to the person who confided in you 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 should be able to help, and tell the person who has disclosed what you are going to do next.
- Use the first opportunity you have to speak to the person in the society with responsibility for safeguarding. 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 person'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 reported incidents

- 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, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with the statutory child protection agency.

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- An accurate note will 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; actions taken in response, e.g. suspension of an individual; where relevant, the reasons why the matter was not referred to the statutory agency; and the name/s of the person/people 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 the complaint is made against a member of the society, he or she will be made aware of their rights under the society's disciplinary procedures.
- Both the alleged abuser and the child who is alleged to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998, and it should be noted that any possible future criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.
- In UK 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 rules regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the appropriate clothing and footwear for any work that will be undertaken.
- If anyone 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 countersigned by an adult with responsibility for the child.
- If a child joins a production with an obvious pre-existing physical injury, a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be countersigned by the society's person with responsibility for child protection. The record can be useful if formal allegations relating to the injury's cause are made later, and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.
- If an adult participating in the production has a physical injury, it is their responsibility to manage their injury during the course of the production, rehearsal, and show period. The adult should not engage in any activity which might aggravate the injury and it is their responsibility to make decisions about what they are capable of undertaking.

Criminal record disclosures (DBS checks)

- Anyone who needs to have unsupervised contact with children as part of LPOS must undergo a criminal record disclosure (see p.4).
- If the society believes it is in its best interests to obtain further criminal record disclosures for chaperones or other personnel, it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required. In this event, a standard disclosure will apply for anyone with supervised access to children, while unsupervised access will require an enhanced disclosure.

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- The society will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is stored carefully and confidentially, that it is disposed of appropriately, and that it is not misused.

Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by the society for the care of children during the production process. By law, a 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 children in any one chaperone's care should not exceed 12.
- Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity (passport/driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless they are already known to the society. They will also be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.
- Chaperones will be given a copy of the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- If a chaperone has unsupervised access to children, a criminal record disclosure will be sought.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the production team. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue their involvement in the production or event.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, they must inform the production team and not allow the child to continue their participation.
- Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything that may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. If such an occasion should occur, chaperones should tell the production team to cease using the children in this way and should contact the local authority.

During performances

- Chaperones will be responsible for meeting participating 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 while going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult's 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 or others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to, and recorded by, the society.
- Chaperones should know of arrangements to collect children after performances. If someone different is to collect a child, a telephone call should be made to the child's parents to confirm this arrangement.
- Children should be signed out when leaving the theatre, and it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with a child until they have been collected.

Completed by Katrina O'Neill 16 July 2023; next review 23 August 2024

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