

# SHEFFIELD TEACHERS' OPERATIC SOCIETY

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### Introduction

STOS recognises its duty of care to its members aged under 16. STOS is committed to practice that protects children from harm. All STOS members accept and recognize their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause children harm. STOS believes that the welfare of the child is paramount, and all children have the right to protection from abuse. All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

STOS Executive Committee will appoint a Child Protection Officer ("CPO") who will hold office during any period of preparation and performance involving a child. The CPO will liaise with the Health and Safety Officer and report back to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee reminds all adult members that they must exercise special care and attention when performing with children, and must respect their limits of their physical and mental powers.

STOS adopts the following Child Protection Procedures, based on NODA's model. The Executive Committee will monitor this policy and review it annually.

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Keith Arrowsmith, Chair 2008.

### STOS Responsibilities

At the outset of any production involving children STOS will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process;
- Appoint a CPO with designated responsibility for child protection;
- Apply (if relevant) for Child and Young Persons Act performance licenses from the local authority;
- 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 the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

### Parents

- STOS believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and STOS. Parents are encouraged to be involved in STOS activities and to share responsibility for the care of children;

- All parents will be given a copy of this document and STOS health and safety policy;
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT STOS's responsibility to take children home;
- Parents must provide contact details so that STOS can contact a parent at any time in case of emergency.

## **Contact**

- STOS will try to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children;
- If unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk, including requiring the supervisor to obtain a criminal record disclosure;
- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children, and will only touch children when necessary, after (if possible) explaining the need and purpose of the contact.

## **Managing Sensitive Information**

- Permission will be sought from parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional and archival or other purposes;
- STOS will handle, store and dispose of sensitive information with care;
- Persons involved with a complaint have a right to confidentiality.

## **Suspicion of Abuse**

- Any suspicion of abuse must be reported to the CPO. Any grounds to suspect the CPO must be reported to the chair;
- Any member, or chaperone will be suspended immediately if a serious allegation is made against them until the investigation is concluded. During that time that person will be excluded from STOS activities;
- If a child confides in a member, that member should remain calm, but not delay taking action. That member should listen carefully, and only ask questions for clarification (not leading questions). No promise of secrecy should be given, but make it clear that the information will be shared with others who will help. The child should be reassured, and told what will happen next. The member must speak as soon as possible with the CPO. The CPO will liaise with social services or the police;
- The reporting member should make a written note as soon as possible in case the report is followed up, including the date, time, and names mentioned;
- The CPO will keep a record of the allegation or reported incident, including action taken. That record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know.

## **Accidents**

- Chaperones and children will be made aware of STOS's health and safety policy;

- The CPO will countersign any entry in the STOS accident book involving children;
- If a child attends a rehearsal or performance with an obvious injury, a record will be made that the child did not sustain the injury whilst participating in STOS activities.

## **Criminal Record Disclosures**

- STOS believes it is best practice to obtain CRB enhanced disclosures for anyone with unsupervised access to children. It will normally ask for a new check rather than relying on an older disclosure issued to a third party. All members of the Executive Committee, Production Team and Chaperones will be required to provide a CRB enhanced disclosure.
- STOS will treat, store and destroy the information contained in the disclosure carefully so that it is not misused. It recognises that inappropriate disclosure may be a criminal offence. Reference will be made to NODA's Criminal Records & Disclosure Code of Practice (as amended from time to time);
- If the CRB Disclosure reveals any information, the Executive Committee will consider whether the matter revealed is relevant (taking into account the seriousness of the matter and other relevant factors). The Executive Committee will seek an opportunity to discuss the Disclosure with the individual concerned.

## **Chaperones**

- Chaperones will be appointed by STOS Executive Committee for the care of children during the production process. The Chaperone will act in loco parentis, exercising the care which a good parent might be reasonably be expected to give a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12;
- Potential chaperones must supply photographic proof of ID and two references (unless already well known to STOS). They must declare in writing that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children, and complete a CRB enhanced disclosure request;
- If a chaperone is not satisfied with any conditions for children, or they believe a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must not allow the child to continue, and must inform the chair, who will liaise with the director, the CPO and the Health and Safety Officer as required;
- Chaperones are responsible for meeting children at a venue's stage door or rehearsal venue and signing them in and out of the building;
- Children will be adequately supervised, especially when going to and from toilets. Children will not be allowed to enter adult dressing rooms;
- Children will not be allowed to leave a performance or rehearsal venue unless in the company of their parent (unless the parent has given written confirmation of other arrangements);
- If a parent has not collected the child, then the chaperone will stay with that child and liaise with the STOS chair to make arrangements for the child's care.