

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Effective from: September 2017

Date of next review: August 2018

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The People's Theatre Company's (PTC) Child Protection Procedures set out how to put its policy into practice.
- 1.2 They are specifically written for how the society engages with children.
- 1.3 The procedures include:
 - Risk assessment and risk management.
 - Recruitment practices.
 - Training provision.
 - Project planning and implementation.
 - What to do if there is a problem.

2 Responsibilities of the Society

- 2.1 At the outset of any production involving children PTC will:
 - Identify at the outset the person/people with designated responsibility for child protection.
 - Ensure the only people to work with children are those who have a DBS check by PTC (Competent Adults) and/or are a licensed chaperone (Chaperone).
 - Ensure that children are properly supervised at all times.
 - 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).
 - Where possible request a rehearsal schedule so it is known which rehearsals a DBS checked adult or licensed chaperone are needed.
 - Request the Stage Manager/Director and Child Protection Officer to undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
 - Inform the Stage Manager/Director of the First Aid box location(s) and accident reporting procedures.
 - Be aware of how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case a concern needs reporting.

3 Supervision and care of children

- 3.1 PTC will appoint or identify appropriate adults to be present during rehearsals and performances for its productions
- 3.2 Appropriate adults are either Licensed Chaperones or Competent Adults that have a DBS completed by PTC. It is highly recommended that all volunteers become licensed chaperones.
- 3.3 Only Licensed Chaperones will be able to chaperone children who hold performance licenses.
- 3.4 In this document, Licensed Chaperones and Competent Adults will be referred to collectively as Chaperones unless there is a specific requirement for a Licensed

Chaperone.

4 Criminal Record Disclosures

- 4.1 If PTC 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. A Standard disclosure will apply for anyone with supervised access to children. An Enhanced disclosure will be required for anyone with unsupervised access.
- 4.2 PTC has a written policy for the handling of disclosure information.
- 4.3 PTC will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

5 Parents

- 5.1 The society 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 PTC and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents will be given a copy the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- 5.2 All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances **from a designated location**. It is NOT the responsibility of PTC or the hired venue to take children home.
- 5.3 **Parents will not be allowed to collect their children directly from dressing rooms.**

6 Unsupervised Contact

- 6.1 If possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children.
- 6.2 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 a door open.
- 6.3 The society will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- 6.4 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.

7 Physical Contact

- 7.1 All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.
- 7.2 Adults will only make physical contact with children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity, part of the performance, assisting a child as a dresser or to administer first aid.
- 7.3 Adults will seek the consent (verbal) of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

8 Conduct of auditions, rehearsals and performances

- 8.1 **Before rehearsal commences the Director must supply a list of all adults working with the children. The PTC Child Protection Officer will then confirm the adults are suitable to chaperone.**
- 8.2 During auditions and rehearsals the Director or Production Manager will:
 - 8.2.1 Ensure that the relevant number of Competent Adults and Licensed Chaperones are in attendance where children are present.
 - 8.2.2 Keep a register at rehearsals with times of entry to the rehearsal venue, breaks

and time of exit of the rehearsal venue.

8.2.3 Compile a folder which contains personal records including emergency contacts, known allergies/illnesses etc of the children is available at all times.

8.2.4 Ensure a first aider is available and that PTC's accident reporting procedures are followed should an accident or injury occur.

8.3 Appointment of Chaperones

8.3.1 Licensed Chaperones will be appointed by PTC 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 the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.

8.3.2 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 already well 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.

8.3.3 Chaperones will be made aware of the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

8.4 Conduct during rehearsals and performances

8.4.1 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.

8.4.2 Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.

8.4.3 During performances, Chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.

8.4.4 Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.

8.4.5 Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.

8.4.6 Chaperones must ensure children do not enter the adult dressing rooms at any time.

8.4.7 The Director must work out the timing of each child's entrance to the performance so that there are enough Chaperones in all areas of the theatre at all times. Chaperones should escort more than one child at a time, even if they do not all go on stage together at the same time.

8.4.8 Children are not to leave the theatre or rehearsal venue unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents or a letter of consent has been given allowing the child to leave without supervision. Children must be signed in and out, each time they leave or enter the hired venue.

8.4.9 Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting. No chaperones are to leave the building until all children have left.

8.4.10 Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after rehearsals and performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.

8.4.11 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.

8.5 Safety and Accidents

8.5.1 Under the Dangerous Performances 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 Production Manager and/or Director to cease using children in this way and should contact the local authority.

8.5.2 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.

8.5.3 Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by PTC.

8.5.4 Chaperones should examine accident books each day. For performers who have had minor accidents, chaperones should ensure the child is fit and that parental permission has been granted for the child to perform. For more serious accidents do not allow that child to perform unless deemed fit by a medically qualified opinion. Do not rely purely on the parent's word.

8.6 Raising concerns

8.6.1 Where Chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Production Manager or Director. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.

8.6.2 If a Chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the Chaperone must inform the Production Manager or Director and not allow the child to continue.

9 Accidents

9.1 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.

9.2 Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the rehearsal or performance.

9.3 If a child is injured while in the care of PTC, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the accident books of the hired venue and PTC. This record will be countersigned by PTC's Child Protection Officer or the First Aider should they not be available.

9.4 The Child Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring there is sufficient First Aid Cover at rehearsals and performances and that there are fully stocked First Aid Kits available.

9.5 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 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 while participating in the production.

10 Suspicion of abuse

10.1 If anyone witnesses or suspects abuse of a child while in the care of PTC, it should be

made known to **The Child Protection Officer (Vernon Lloyd, 07916 302 374)**. If the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem, concerns should be made known to the **PTC Chairperson (Chris Collins, 07873 566 141)**.

- 10.2 A note of the concerns should be made by the person who witnessed the incident, including a summary of the response and action taken, in case there is follow-up.
- 10.3 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.

11 Disclosure of abuse

- 11.1 If a child confides 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.
 - Do not promise to keep it a secret. 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.
 - Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the Child Protection Officer. It is the Child Protection Officer'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.

12 Recording a disclosure

- 12.1 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 a statutory child protection agency.
- 12.2 An accurate note shall be made of the following:
- 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 referred to a statutory agency
 - The name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported
- 12.3 The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

13 Rights & Confidentiality

- 13.1 If a complaint is made against a member of PTC he or she will be made aware of their rights under the PTC's Complaints and Disciplinary procedures. Should any "Disclosures" be made the Chairperson and the Child Protection Officer together will tell the person named
- 13.2 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.
- 13.3 In criminal law the Crown, or other prosecuting authority, has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

14 Managing sensitive information

- 14.1 PTC's Child Protection Policy includes the conduct of taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children. The Child Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring the policy is updated every year or when there is a change in legislation.
- 14.2 Permission and written consent will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes. Usually, this will be sought as part of the audition and/or membership application process. The written consent will be securely stored by the PTC secretary destroyed when the child's membership expires.
- 14.3 PTC's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use. PTC makes use of a public facing website, Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter for publicity, advertising and communicating relevant information to the cast members. PTC will not at any time use the images inappropriately, such as chat rooms.
- 14.4 PTC will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive and personally identifiable information, including membership application forms, DBS checks. These will be typically be handled solely by the PTC Membership Secretary and/or Secretary.