

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Kennet Amateur Theatrical Society or KATS, (the Society) recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 (in Scotland change to Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003).

Amateur theatre needs children both for specific productions and, more importantly, because they often form the cast, crew and audience of the future. The Government sees the amateur theatre as an integral part of its agenda to get more young people involved in the wider society. However, children need to feel safe and respected; their parents need to be confident about their children's welfare and members of the society need to feel able to exercise their responsibilities. This fact sheet addresses many of the issues that may arise when children are involved in the theatre's activities and performances.

A child is defined as anyone up to the age of 18 years. It should be borne in mind, however, that the regulations relating to children in theatrical performances apply up to the age of 16. Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 need to be treated differently from children under 16. The Society is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All members of the Society accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The Society believes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, 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 and employees of the Society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The Society will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision-making process.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members of the Society provide a positive role model 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 & safety legislation.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.

- It will undertake relevant development and training.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with the Society and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

The Society has child protection procedures which accompany this policy.

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Executive Committee of the Society and will be subject to annual review.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Responsibilities of the Society

At the outset of any production involving children the Society 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 the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

Parents

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 the Society and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents will be given a copy the Society'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

The Society 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 minimize risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in 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

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

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

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 of abuse

If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the Society, please make this known to the chaperone. If you suspect that the chaperone is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Chair of the Executive Committee.

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 in 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 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.

Recording

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.

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, and 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.

Accidents

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. 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 by the Society. This record will be countersigned 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 by the Society. 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.

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 to a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall be in accordance with the West Berkshire County Council rules but must not exceed 12 children in total. During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.

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

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 and/or make arrangements for them to get home.

Chaperones must wear their identification badge at all times when on duty and have their license available for inspection.

Kennet Amateur Theatrical Society Child Protection Policy, December 2019

Based on the Model Child Protection Policy produced by NODA

CHAIRMAN – John Hicks

CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER – Dave Marsh

The society has a dedicated Child Protection Officer, who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to. That person's name is David Marsh and he can be contacted on cpo@kats.org.uk.

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Committee of the society and will be subject to annual review. Date: December 2020