

St Albans Musical Theatre Company



Child Protection Policy

St Albans Musical Theatre Company believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

We recognize that we have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that:

- All members, chaperones, parents/legal guardians and volunteers accept their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse.
- Everyone follows procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

Purpose and Scope

The Purpose of this Policy is:

- To promote good practice and provide safety and protection for children and young people who audition, rehearse and perform in our show productions and who participate in Company social and other activities.
- To provide Members and Friends and others who assist the Company with the principles and procedures to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

This Policy applies to all Members and Friends of St Albans Musical Theatre Company and others who assist the Company with our show productions and other activities.

Legal Framework

St Albans Musical Theatre Company will adhere to the relevant legislation when working with children and young people under the age of 18 years as outlined in the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015

Our Commitments

We will:

- Recognize that the 'entertainment industry' can be a very 'adult' environment and we expect all members, chaperones, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and anyone else who comes into contact with children and young people to behave in an appropriate manner at all times and remember that the 'Welfare of the Child is Paramount'.
- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel welcome and familiar with their environment and are informed of personal (toilets, dressing rooms, etc) and emergency arrangements (fire exits, meeting points, etc) and any Health and Safety Procedures (dangerous equipment, first aid, etc)
- Inform each child who the appropriate person or people are to speak to if they have any questions, problems or concerns

- Ensure that all children are treated with respect and dignity and are treated as individuals and offered equal opportunities
- Always work in an open environment (eg avoiding private or unobserved situations and unnecessary physical contact with children) and allow parents / chaperones wherever possible to take responsibility for the children they are responsible for.
- Recognise the individual needs of the child, eg when they may be tired or need a break
- Ensure children are supervised appropriately
- Ensure all chaperones are registered with the local authority in which they reside and have an enhanced DBS check
- Ensure that all members and others involved in a production or event are aware of their conduct around children.
- Keep a register of every child involved in our show productions and activities and a contact name and number for each child close at hand in case of emergencies
- Ensure adults provide a positive model for dealing with other people
- Provide encouraging and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Undertake relevant training and development

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

A child is abused or neglected when somebody inflicts harm, or fails to act to prevent harm. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection.

- **Physical Abuse** - May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening, may involve: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities; or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- **Neglect** - Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- **Emotional Abuse** - The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age and developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, for example witnessing domestic abuse within the home or being bullied, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone

Suspicion and Disclosure of Abuse

If you see or suspect abuse of a child, immediately make this known to the designated individual responsible for child protection.

If a child tells you that they or another child or young person is being abused:

- Always stop and listen straight away, show that you take their allegations seriously.

- Encourage the child to talk, but do not ask leading questions, interrupt or ask the child to repeat themselves.
- Never promise that you will keep what is said confidential or secret; explain that if you are told something of concern that you will need to let someone know but that you will only tell the people who need to know and can help.
- Record what you have been told accurately and as soon as possible. Use the child's own words. Make a note of the time, location, whether anyone else present and of the child's demeanour.
- Ensure that your concerns are reported immediately to the designated individual
- Do not confront the alleged abuser.

If a child makes an allegation against a member or other person involved in a production or event:

- It must be reported as a matter of urgency to the designated individual for child protection who will refer to the Social Services department for Children's Services.
- If the allegation is against the designated person then the information should be reported to another senior person or directly to Social Services department for Children's Services. (This would generally be referred to the authority in which the alleged incident took place).
- The alleged perpetrator should not be made aware of the allegation at this point.

In all situations the details of allegation or reported incident must be recorded.

- Make accurate notes of time, dates, incident or disclosure, people involved, what was said and done and by whom, action taken to investigate, further action taken eg suspension of individual and if relevant: reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, name of person reporting and to whom it was reported
- The record must be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know.

Do not worry that you might be mistaken; you have a responsibility to pass on your concerns following a disclosure. Never think abuse is impossible or that an accusation about a person you know and trust is bound to be wrong.

This Policy should also be read in conjunction with the Company's Constitution and Rules, Privacy Policy and Social Media Policy.

Responsibility for this Policy

The person responsible for the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures is the Company Secretary who can be contacted on secretarysamtc@gmail.com

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually through the Executive Committee of the Company.

This Policy was last reviewed on 20 October 2022

Signed



Date 20.10.2022

Chairman

St Albans Musical Theatre Company

St Albans Musical Theatre Company



Child Protection Procedures

These procedures apply to all Company show productions and other activities that involve children and young people under 16 years of age.

Responsibilities

The Executive Committee of the Company will

- identify and support a person with designated responsibility for child protection for each production and activity
- immediately suspend any individual and exclude them from activities if a serious allegation is made against them, until an investigation is concluded and the outcome known

The Person with designated responsibility for child protection will

- undertake a risk assessment for each production and activity and monitor risk throughout the process
- ensure effective recruitment of licensed chaperones and their deployment so that children are supervised at all times.
(The maximum number of children in the care one chaperone should not exceed 12 children)
- ensure all adults involved in each production and activity, chaperones, parents and guardians are made aware of the Company's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and know who is the person with designated responsibility for child protection
- respond quickly and appropriately to any suspicion, allegation or disclosure of abuse, taking advice from the Executive Committee and relevant authorities

Parents and Guardians will

- deliver and collect (or arrange delivery and collection of) their children to/from auditions, rehearsals, performances and other activities. It is not the responsibility of the Company to take children home
- report arrival and collection of the children to the chaperone on duty
- normally be expected to assist with the supervision of children as licensed chaperones (Parents and Guardians may not supervise children other than their own without a current chaperone licence)

Chaperones will

- hold a current chaperone licence
- by law be acting in loco parentis and should exercise the care which a good parent might reasonably expect to give a child
- be the key person the children look to for protection, clarification and support
- be with the children at all times
(including auditions, rehearsals, dressing rooms, to/from toilets, waiting areas, costume fitting, green room, in wings when children on stage)
- meet and sign in children on arrival and hand over and sign out children to the person

- authorized to collect them
- ensure children are aware of emergency procedures and other health and safety rules
- ensure appropriate arrangements for children with health and other special requirements
- raise any concerns promptly with the person with designated responsibility for child protection.
- report and record any accidents
- be fully familiar and comply with the Hertfordshire Guide to Chaperoning (www.hertsdirect.org/docs/pdf/c/chapgguide.pdf)

Conduct of Members, Friends and others who assist the Company

- Children will be participating in an adult environment. Be respectful at all times and act as appropriate role models
- Take account of the children's ages and experience in what is expected of them and ensure they are given clear guidance
- Do not put yourself in a vulnerable position. No adult should work alone or have unsupervised contact with children
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children
- Only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular show production and activity
- Explain the purpose of the physical contact and seek the consent of the children
- Do not capture or use any unauthorized photographs, video or images of children (The Company will seek permission from parents and guardians for the use of authorized visual material featuring children for promotional and other purposes)
- Record all accidents in the Accident Book and countersign your report
- If you are unsure about anything, always ask for advice from the licensed chaperone(s) on duty or from the person responsible for child protection

Suspicion and disclosure of abuse

If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the Company, you should report this to the person with responsibility for child protection, or to the Chairman if you suspect the cause to be the person with responsibility for child protection.

Keep a note for your own records of what you witnessed, when and where, as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm
- Listen carefully to what the child is saying. 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. Make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with 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
- Let the person with responsibility for child protection know immediately. It is their responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities
- Make a note of the child's name, what s/he said using the child's own words and including any names that were mentioned. Record the date, time and place, your name and contact details and sign and date your statement. This statement will be a confidential record used only by those who need to know.