

Child Protection

POLICY

October 2024



Corvus Amateur Drama Society (CADS) recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

The society recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it is physical, emotional, sexual or neglect. The society is committed to protecting all of its participants from harm. All members of the society accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause children harm.

The society believes that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
- all children, regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial heritage, religious beliefs and/or sexual orientation or identity have the right to protection from abuse or harm;
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- all members of the society should be aware of the society's child protection procedures.

The society will ensure that:

- all children will be treated with respect and dignity;
- the safety of each child will always be put first;
- a balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built;
- 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 hold a register of every child involved with the current production 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.

The responsibility of ensuring that our child protection policy and procedures are adhered to is the remit of the **Child Protection Officer** – a role given to the Vice Chair of the society or, in their absence, the society's committee as a whole. Contact can be made via cads.secretary@gmail.com.

A second CADS member can also be jointly tasked as **Child Protection Manager** for a production.

This policy will be regularly monitored by the society's committee and be subject to annual review.

Child Protection

PROCEDURES

October 2024



For the purposes for this document (and in accordance with the NHDC guidelines), a 'child' refers to anyone under the age of: 18

Responsibilities of the Society

For any production involving children, the society will:

- assess risks (and monitor risk throughout the production process).
- appoint a person designated responsibility for child protection (this may be extra to the Vice Chair).
- engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (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 concern.

Responsibilities of the Parents/carers

The society believes it important to have a partnership with parents. Therefore, parents/carers will:

- be involved in the activities of the society and share responsibility for the care of children. To this end a parent/carer of each child should be involved with chaperoning duties.
- read the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures and sign to say they have read this policy.
- collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the society to take children home.
- sign their children into the Register or arrange for another adult to drop off or collect their child when leaving them in the care of a Society member/Chaperone and provide confirmation of their collection arrangements.

Unsupervised Contact

- The society will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children, therefore when possible there should always be two adults in the room when working with children.
- Adults should consistently behave in ways that are unambiguous to an observer. If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area or in a designated room with a door open.

Physical Contact

- All adults should maintain an appropriate distance from children.
- Adults should only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity and should be sensitive to whether the child is comfortable - e.g. if adjusting a costume or applying makeup. The adult should stop if the child is clearly uncomfortable.

Managing sensitive information

- Permission for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes is implicit when a parent/carer allows their child to be involved in the Society's production.
- Adult members are encouraged to be sensible and cautious in the photographs that they take. They should not include any juniors in photographs, except in those taken for promotional purposes – and such imagery must avoid any potential for misuse. If a junior is included in a photograph or video in error, it should be deleted.
- 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 DBS checks.
- For the purposes of this document, WhatsApp is considered to be social media and is different from email and texting. Explicit consent should be sought from individuals before a WhatsApp group is set up. Email should be the main way that information about the show is shared with members of the company and parents/carers.
- Adults members should not make contact with juniors via social media. If a junior attempts to contact an adult member, the contact should be politely declined and the Child Protection Officer or Child Protection Manager informed via cadssafeguarding@gmail.com.
- Even after the person turns 18, the principle remains relevant, with adults expected to safeguard others - e.g. where there may be a power imbalance.
- If an adult and junior are in contact on social media for family reasons then this information can be shared with the Child Protection Officer or Child Protection Manager via cadssafeguarding@gmail.com.

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 person with responsibility for child protection (the Child Protection Officer or Child Protection Manager). If you suspect that the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Chair or the 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 or visitor to the society, 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 taking action.
- If the child is in immediate danger the police should be called; if medical attention is needed then an ambulance should be called.
- If the child cannot go home, phone social services; any adult can make this call.
- 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. The child might react by withholding further information, but despite that, you must be clear to the child that you will need to share the information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help. It is important that the adult says words similar to, 'I will have to share the information you give me with people who will help you. I cannot keep it secret.'

- Reassure the child that they've done 'the right thing' in telling someone.
- Speak immediately to the Child Protection Officer or Child Protection Manager.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words (even if the child has resisted saying much). Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record. Use a 'safeguarding reporting form' (there is one at the end of this document). Give the form to the Child Protection Officer or Child Protection Manager.
- Parents will be informed about disclosure that has been made, unless this would put the child in danger or interfere with a police investigation.

Confidentiality & Rights

- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, 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.
- It is NOT the role of the society to decide whether a child has been abused or not: that's the task of Social Services.
- Although you must inform the people in authority (listed above) who need to know, you must refrain from telling anybody else - even those closest to you.
- Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.
- In criminal law, the Crown or other prosecuting authority has to prove guilt, and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Records

- 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.
- These records will be kept for at least ten years.

Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised 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, first aid will be administered and the injury will be recorded. 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. 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.

DBS Checks

- Chaperones need to have a current DBS check. They should share the number with the society and the expiry date, unless it is registered with the Updates service.
- The society will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by the society for the care of children during the production process. They will be drawn from the parents of the children in the production. 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.
- Chaperones should complete a safeguarding course - ideally the NSPCC course, but one that they complete as part of their job (e.g. as a teacher) may be suitable. The course should be completed in the past three years. They should submit a copy of the certificate or other evidence they have completed the course to the Child Protection Manager.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures and will need to sign to say that they have read them.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the producer, director, or stage manager. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the producer and not allow the child to continue.
- 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 producer to cease using children in this way, and should contact the local authority.
- During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children on arrival and ensuring they are 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.
- 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.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by the society.
- Chaperones should have arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.
- Children should be signed out when leaving.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements for the parents to collect the children.

CADS website: www.cadsroyston.org.uk

Based on NODA Model Child Protection Policy 2005 and 2016