



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Company of Four Musical 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. This Policy has been adapted from the NODA Model Child Protection Policy dated May 2005

The Cof4 recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it is physical, emotional, sexual or neglect. The Cof4 is committed to protect children from harm. All members of the Cof4 should accept and recognise their responsibilities and to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm. A Child is defined as a person aged from birth until the end of their compulsory schooling (the last Friday in June of School Year 11). This policy is also applicable to any vulnerable adults within the Company and also aims to provide protection to all members of the Company.

### **The Company of Four 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 (e.g musicians, sound engineers etc.) of the Cof4 should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

### **The Company of Four will ensure that:**

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity
- The welfare of each child 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 Cof4 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 Cof4 and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies

- Each child has a *Health Declaration for Children During Rehearsals & Performances* Form (see Appendix 1) completed by a Parent/Guardian and the Safeguarding Lead is fully aware of the health needs of each child (where disclosed) and will ensure Chaperones are aware as necessary

The Cof4 has a dedicated Safe Guarding Lead, who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to. That person is currently **Sarah Wheatley** and she can be contacted via the company email address **cof4secretary@gmail.com** She will be assisted by **Adam Kearney**. This policy will be regularly monitored by the Cof4 Committee and will be revised as appropriate.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMPANY OF FOUR**

At the outset of any production involving children the Cof4 Production Team 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)
- Ask all members of the Production Team to obtain a Chaperone Licence
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times
- Ensure that children during performances are supervised by licensed chaperones or that child's parent and no unsupervised contact between an adult and a child during rehearsals or performances
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern

## **PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

- The Cof4 believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the Company of Four. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the Cof4 and to share responsibility for the care of children
- A copy the Company of Four's Child Protection Policy will be made available to all parents and placed on the Cof4 Website
- A parent or nominated guardian is required to sign each child in & out at every rehearsal & performance
- Parents are required to ensure that adequate Chaperones & parent helpers are available at each rehearsal. If not, then they will be required to stay
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances, in particular between matinees & evening performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the Cof4 to take children home.
- All parents have the responsibility to make sure they report any child protection issues to the company's Safeguarding lead in a timely manner, unless they feel that the Safe Guarding lead is the source of the problem, they should then make their concerns know to the company Chairperson or an appropriate member of the Company's Committee.

## **CHAPERONES**

- Chaperones will be licensed by the Local Education Authority Child Employment Office and be appointed by the Cof4 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

- Chaperones will be made aware of this Policy and the Company's *Child Photographic & Video Image Policy*
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Safeguarding Lead. 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 checking that all children have been signed in by a parent or guardian
- 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 or nominated guardian
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets
- 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 Company of Four
- Chaperones to ensure that Children are signed in & out at every rehearsal & performance
- 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

## **MEMBERS**

- All members have the responsibility to make sure they report any child protection issues to the Company's Safeguarding lead in a timely manner
- Members should not:
  - Be alone with the child in a changing/dressing room
  - Treat a child for an injury alone and away from others
  - Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
  - Let allegations a child makes go unreported and/or unrecorded
- As a general rule it is not sensible for members to:
  - Spend time alone with children away from others.
  - To take children alone on a car journey, however short
  - Take children to their own home

Where such occasions arise and when it is unavoidable, they should occur with the full knowledge and consent of the child's parent/guardian.

## **SAFE GUARDING (CHILD PROTECTION) LEAD**

- The Safeguarding lead has the responsibility to deal with any child protection issues, in a fair and reasonable way, under the terms of the company's child protection policy and procedure

- The Safeguarding lead is responsible for liaising with the relevant authorities, which may include the social services, the police, the local safeguarding board, and the local authority child employment office
- In times when a disclosure of an allegation of abuse has been made, the Safeguarding lead is to ensure that the “discloser” is supported and kept informed about what will happen next, so they can be reassured about what to expect

### **UNSUPERVISED CONTACT**

- The Cof4 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

### **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children
- 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**

- Please refer to The Company of Four’s *Child Photographic & Video Image Policy* for guidance on the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children
- The Company of Four’s social media activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use
- The Cof4 will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information

### **SUSPICION OF ABUSE**

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the Company of Four, please make this known to the Safeguarding Lead. 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 Chairperson.
- 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 Company of Four, 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:
  1. Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action
  2. 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
  3. Do not 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

4. Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone
5. Tell the child what you are going to do next
6. Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services, or the police
7. 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 your record

## **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

## **RIGHTS & CONFIDENTIALITY**

- If a complaint is made against a member of the Cof4 he or she will be made aware of his rights under the Company of Four's disciplinary procedures
- 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. 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

## **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 Company of Four, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the Company of Four's accident book. This record will be counter-signed 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 in the accident book. This record will be counter-signed 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

# HEALTH DECLARATION FOR CHILDREN DURING REHEARSALS & PERFORMANCES

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

My child has the following MEDICAL CONDITIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*[Please put in writing overleaf, instructions with regard to any medication (including inhalers for asthma) that may need to be administered. If your child suffers from any allergy you must put in writing overleaf what action is to be taken in the event of an emergency]*

**Notwithstanding the condition(s) mentioned above I confirm that my child is medically fit to undertake the performances required and that the performances will not affect his/her health.**

**I authorise the Company of Four to provide or arrange any medical treatment that my child may need during any time that they are in the care of the Company and I am not present.**

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

~~~~~

## EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

Primary Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_