

Winterslow Drama Group

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Winterslow Drama Group recognises its duty of care under the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Amateur theatre needs children both for specific productions and, more importantly, because they often form the cast, crew and audience of the future. However, children need to feel safe and respected; their parents need to be confident about their children's welfare and members of the group need to feel able to exercise their responsibilities.

A child is defined as anyone up to the age of 18 years.

The Group is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All members of the Group accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The Group 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 Group should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The Group 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 Group 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 Group and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

The Group has child protection procedures which accompany this policy.

The Group 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 Penny and she can be contacted on childprotection@winterslowdrama.co.uk

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

Date 18 March 2022

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Responsibilities of the Group

At the outset of any production involving children the Group will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection.
- 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 Group believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the Group. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the Group and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents will have access to a copy of the Group'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 Group to take children home.

Unsupervised Contact

- The Group 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 Group's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- The Group 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 Group, please make this known to the Child Protection Officer (CPO). If you suspect that the CPO is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the Chairman.
- 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 Group, that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the performance venue 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.
- 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 CPO. 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, supervisors 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 Group, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the Group's accident book. 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 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.

Specific issues of supervision

In the case of Winterslow Drama Group supervisors will normally be a parent or a member of the group not currently acting.

- Supervisors will be appointed by the Group for the care of children during the production process and they should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child.
- Children will be kept together and/or supervisors will be aware of where they are at all times
- A separated changing area will be provided for children during productions. This will be within the main changing area occupied by adult members of the group but will be shielded from view. Separate single sex areas will be provided. We will address issues of gender identity should they arise, through discussion with the individual themselves and the parent/guardian/responsible adult.
- Supervisors should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue and ensure children do not place themselves in danger.
- Children will be passed into the care of parents or other designated adult when leaving the venue. If parents have agreed that their child may walk home unaccompanied, written confirmation will be required, but the group reserves the right to expect that all children under the age of 12 will be collected (i.e. under secondary school age).