

Wivenhoe Musical Theatre Group

SAFEGUARDING POLICY – September 2024

Introduction

Wivenhoe Musical Theatre Group (WMTG) are keen to encourage young people to become active in community theatre. We welcome members from the age of 16, and will at times cast younger children for a production. We have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for children, all volunteers, chaperones, parents and carers accept their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to ensure that everyone follows procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities. We also have similar responsibilities with regards to vulnerable adults and aim to promote an inclusive, safe and respectful environment for all members of the group.

There are three elements to our safeguarding policy with regard to child protection:-

- **Prevention** through awareness of each individual child's needs.
- **Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect**
- **Procedures** for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases, of abuse.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of Wivenhoe Musical Theatre Group and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Prevention

We are a community based organisation and we expect that all volunteers, chaperones, parents, carers and anyone else who comes into contact with children behave in an appropriate manner at all times, and remember that "The Welfare of the Child is Paramount". WMTG recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect, including via online platforms. We are committed to practice which protects children and adults at risk from harm. All members of WMTG accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop an awareness of the issues which cause harm.

Wivenhoe Musical Theatre Group will therefore:-

- Act within:
 - The Children's Act 1989 & 2004
 - The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
- Ensure that all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse, are treated with respect and dignity and are treated as individuals and offered equality of opportunities.

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel welcome and familiar with their environment and are informed of:
 - personal (toilets, dressing rooms etc)
 - emergency (fire exits, meeting points etc) and
 - 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 members are aware that the Safeguarding policy applies also to the use of online platforms, such as the WMTG Facebook page or other social media and/or messaging groups that may be set up.
- Rehearse and perform in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations and unnecessary physical contact with children. If there is ever any time that an individual feels uncomfortable, we encourage them to speak up and if they need any support to make the safeguarding leads aware.
- Recognise the individual needs of the child. eg recognising when a child may be tired and may need a break.
- Ensure that children are supervised appropriately and involve/allow parents/chaperones wherever possible, to take responsibility for the child/children they are responsible for. Parents must only have responsibility for their own child.
- Ensure that all Volunteers who are assisting in the production are aware of their conduct around children.
- Provide Chaperones during show week, for all children up to the end of Year 11, regardless of when they attained their 16th birthday
- Ensure that all Chaperones are registered with the local authority in which they reside and have an enhanced DBS check.
 - 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. During performances, children will be shown how to enter the building and where to sign in and out.
 - Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
 - Children are not to leave the theatre or performance/rehearsal venue unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of (or with the prior agreement of) their parents.
 - Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets, no adults will be alone in the toilets with a child, the chaperone will make sure there are no adults already in the toilet and then wait outside.
 - Due to limited space backstage, children and adults all need to use the same dressing rooms. A private area will be allocated for children within the main dressing room, and adults will not change whilst children are in the main area of the room.

- Chaperones should be aware of the safety and first aid procedures in the venue and will be proactive to ensure children in their care do not place themselves or others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported and recorded.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the Group's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Safeguarding Lead(s) named in the Safeguarding Policy. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, Safeguarding Lead(s) and/or the chaperone(s) should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, they should speak to a Safeguarding Lead who will make the decision not to allow the child to continue. If the Safeguarding Leads are not available at the time, the chaperone is able to make this decision in their place.
- Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb.

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 insofar as they meet the needs of another person. 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.

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Wivenhoe Musical Theatre Group 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
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Procedures

Suspicion of Abuse

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

Disclosure of Abuse

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 itself.
- 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 any one else was present and of the child's demeanour.
- Ensure that your concerns are reported immediately to the designated individual.
- Do not confront the alleged abuser.

Handling Allegations

- If a child makes an allegation against a member of the company it must be reported as a matter of urgency to the designated individual for child protection who will refer to Essex County Council's Children's Services department. If the allegation is against the designated individual, then the information should be reported to the Production Director who will refer it to Children's Services.
- The alleged perpetrator should not be made aware of the allegation at this point.

Recording

- In all situations the details of the 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 e.g. suspension of the individual.

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 well and trust is bound to be wrong.**

Wivenhoe Musical Theatre Group also believes in protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. This part of the policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of WMTG in working together in promoting the adult's welfare and safeguarding them from abuse and neglect.

There are four elements to our safeguarding policy with regard to vulnerable adults (Adults at Risk of Abuse):-

- **Definitions of an Adult at Risk of Abuse**
- **Key Principles of Adult Safeguarding and Recognising the signs**
- **Recognising types of abuse**
- **Procedures** for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases, of abuse.

Failure to comply with the policy and related procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in exclusion from the organisation.

Care Act 2014 Definition of an Adult at Risk of Abuse:

The Care Act 2014 defines an adult at risk of abuse as someone where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that an adult in its area (whether or not ordinarily resident there)

- (a) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs),
- (b) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- (c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Key Principles of Adult Safeguarding:

In the safeguarding of adults, WMTG are guided by the six key principles set out in The Care Act 2014 and Making Safeguarding Personal. WMTG aims to demonstrate and promote these six principles:

- **Empowerment** – People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent
- **Prevention** – It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- **Proportionality** – The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- **Protection** – Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Partnership** – Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- **Accountability** – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

Recognising the signs of abuse:

WMTG members may become aware of a concern relating to a vulnerable adult: the adult may say or do things that let you know something is wrong. It may come in the form of a disclosure, complaint, or an expression of concern. Everyone within the organisation should understand what to do, and where to go to get help, support and advice.

Types of Abuse:

The Care Act 2014 defines the following ten areas of abuse. Self-neglect is also recognised as an additional category by WMTG. These are not exhaustive but are a guide to behaviour that may lead to a safeguarding enquiry. This includes:

- **Physical abuse** - Including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.
- **Domestic Violence/ Domestic Abuse** - Including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence.
- **Exploitation**- Including sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- **Sexual abuse** - Including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography. Witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.
- **Psychological abuse** - Including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or material abuse** - Including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Modern slavery** - Encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and those who coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
- **Discriminatory abuse** - Including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment because you are, or are perceived to be different due to race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
- **Organisational abuse** - Including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to long-term ill treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes or practices within an organisation.
- **Neglect and acts of omission** - Including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- **Self-neglect** - This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Radicalisation to Terrorism:

The Government through its PREVENT programme has highlighted how some adults may be vulnerable to exploitation and radicalisation and involvement in terrorism. Signs and indicators of radicalisation may include:

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters.
- Articulating support for violent extremist causes or leaders.
- Accessing violent extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element.
- Possessing violent extremist literature.
- Using extremist narratives to explain personal disadvantage.
- Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues.
- Joining extremist organisations.
- Significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour.

Procedures

The processes set out above with regards to children in relation to disclosures, handling allegations and recording apply equally for adults.

Any member of WMTG who becomes aware that an adult is at risk of, or is, being abused must raise the matter immediately with the organisation's designated safeguarding person, named at the end of this policy.

If the adult requires immediate protection from harm, contact the police and Adult Social Care by calling Essex County Council 24 hour protection line for children and vulnerable adults: 0345 603 7634

Early sharing of information is the key to providing an effective response where there are emerging concerns. To ensure effective safeguarding arrangements no one should assume that someone else will do it.

The Designated Individual for Safeguarding will undertake annual Safeguarding Training. The Safeguarding Policy will be shared with all members of WMTG annually and form their training. Any member who feels they require further training should contact the committee, who will arrange this.

POLICY TO BE REVIEWED APRIL 2025

IT IS YOUR DUTY TO REFER CONCERNS ON, NOT INVESTIGATE YOURSELF

The Designated Individual for child protection and safeguarding (adults and children)

Name Emily Baker

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The Designated Individual for child protection and safeguarding

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