

Denstone Players Amateur Dramatic Society Safeguarding Policy

- Children under the age of eight are not permitted to take part in performances, however, all children have the right to be protected from harm
- Protecting children is everybody's duty

Denstone Amateur Dramatic 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, The Children Acts 1989 and 2004.

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

The society 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

The concept of significant harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child. Significant harm is measured against the severity, extent, duration, frequency, extent of premeditation and the degree of threat and coercion involved. It also takes account of the effect on the child and the degree of difficulty in helping the child to overcome the adverse impact of ill treatment. The community and all individuals have a responsibility for the protection of children and for the reporting of concerns about an individual child's welfare or safety.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1989 lays down the health and safety needs of children and young people who perform. These needs are met through the regulation of the number of hours they can rehearse and perform as well as the activities they cannot undertake and the standard and conditions in which they may work. Therefore the production companies have a responsibility to promote and safeguard the welfare of the children and young people in their care.

Safe Guarding Procedure

This document has been specifically developed for adults working with children and young people in entertainment, and to simply create awareness of the expectations placed on society members working within Denstone Players.

It is also intended to provide guidance about recognising and referring suspected or actual child abuse, hoping that it will contribute towards the development of the individual's child protection observation skills.

Dealing with suspected or actual child abuse is always stressful worrying and upsetting. Chaperones and others working with children and young people in entertainment need to know how to recognise the possible signs of abuse and the action they should take to help protect children and young people, as well as gaining personal support.

Department of Health definitions of child abuse:

Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy or Factitious Illness by Proxy may also constitute a physical abuse whereby a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children 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 or developmentally inappropriate expectation being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, 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.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activity, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or a 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 the appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of a child's basic emotional needs.

What signs and symptoms to look for:

Recognising abuse is not a precise science and even the professionals get it wrong at times. The following sections outline some of the possible indicators that a child/young person has or is being abused.

Injuries that do not fit the explanation

Furtive, secretive behaviour and/or uncharacteristic aggression or withdrawn behaviour can also be an indicator as can changes such as a child who suddenly becomes uncoordinated, or finds it difficult to stay awake.

Physical abuse

This area of abuse is perhaps the easiest to spot and tell apart, for example in injuries, which are not typical of the bumps and scrapes associated with children's activities. The regular occurrence of unexplained injuries or the child who is frequently injured where there are conflicting explanations of how the injuries were sustained.

Emotional abuse and neglect

The recognition of both emotional abuse and neglect is based on observations over time of the quality of relationships between parent/carer and the child. For example inappropriate or inconsistent developmental expectations of the child (this may be seen in the context of unreal expectation or excessive demands on the child in relation to theatrical performance and success) and the level of care given to the child's basic needs.

Sexual abuse

It is possible that there may be no recognisable physical signs of sexual abuse with children/young people, but the following indicators may be signs that a child is or has been sexually abused:

- sexually provocative behaviour or knowledge that is incompatible with the child's age and understanding
- drawings and or written work which are sexually explicit (indirect disclosure)

It is important to recognise that children have neither the experience nor the understanding to be able to make up stories about sexual assault (direct disclosure).

What action to take – who to tell

- All Denstone Players members have a duty of care for the young people in our charge, therefore any concerns about the wellbeing of a child member must be reported to the appropriate professionals/agencies
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

- All members of the society must be clear on how to respond appropriately though promises to keep secrets must never be made

The society 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 society should 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 and 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 society and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies
- It will ensure that all adults in positions of authority over children eg. directors, will have enhanced DBS clearance

The society has a dedicated Safeguarding/ Child Protection Officer, who will ensure that the safeguarding policy and procedures are adhered to. Nomination for this role is offered at the AGM in May.

That person's details will be found on the registration documentation for each child.

This policy and procedure will be regularly monitored by the Committee of the Denstone Amateur Dramatic Society and will be subject to annual review.

Associated Policies still to be formulated:

- Appropriate and Safe use of social media
- Circumstances in which photographic material can be used
- Transport – giving lifts to children

Current Safeguarding Officer: Mrs Viv Edwards

Policy adopted- 2018 from previous Child Protection Policy statements dating back to 2014

Review This Safeguarding Policy is reviewed annually or before if necessary.

Last review May 2021