



# Safeguarding Policy

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## 1. Statement of Intent

This policy is intended to demonstrate that Shenfield Operatic Society (the 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, the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 (*in Scotland change to Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003*) and the Children (Performance and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014. Many of the safeguarding principles in these guidelines also apply to 'vulnerable adults' or 'adults at risk' (Care Act 2014), but the statutory procedures to be followed in the case of a concern are different.

Who counts as a child? For the purposes of this policy, the Society defines a child as a person under the age of 18.

What is a Vulnerable Person or Adult at Risk? An adult at risk of abuse or neglect is defined as someone who has needs for care and support, who is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and as a result of their care needs - is unable to protect themselves.

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/adults from harm. All members of the society accept and recognize their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children and adults harm.

The Society believes that:

- The welfare of the child or adult at risk person is paramount.
- All adults and 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 of the society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The Society will ensure that:

- Everyone, including children and adults will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children and adults at risk will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the child or adult at risk 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 other adult members of the society will 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 and adults at risk.
- 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.

The Society will designate a Child Safeguarding Officer for each event where children are included. This person will be in charge of ensuring that the safeguarding policy and procedures are adhered to. For adults at risk, the Chair and Vice-Chair will take responsibility in liaison with relevant carers.

## **Grooming**

Grooming is when someone develops a relationship with a child over a period of time to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. Children and vulnerable people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. For more information on possible signs of grooming, see <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/grooming/> Sometimes the perpetrator grooms the entire family, building a relationship with the child's parents/carers so that they are allowed more access to the child than would normally be the case.

Similar behaviour could be used to radicalise young people and recruit them to a religious or political cause. This is unlikely to happen in an operatic setting, but under the government's 'Prevent' strategy those working with young people are receiving training on recognising the warning signs.

## **2. Safeguarding Procedures**

### **2.1 Responsibilities of the Society**

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

- Apply for a child licence to perform where appropriate
- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for safeguarding.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children or adults at risk, including appropriate vetting in consultation with the local education 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 a concern.

### **2.2 Parents/carers**

The Society believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents/carers and the society. Parents and carers are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the Society and to share responsibility for the care of children and vulnerable adults.



All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances; this is not the responsibility of the Society. All children must be signed in and out of rehearsals and performances and a note made of the adult collecting them.

### **2.3 Unsupervised Contact**

The Society will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children or adults at risk.

If possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children or adults at risk.

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.

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.

### **2.4 Physical Contact**

All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children or adults at risk.

Adults will only touch children or adults at risk when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity.

Adults will seek the consent of the child adult at risk prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

### **2.5 Managing sensitive information**

Permission will be sought from the parents or carer for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children or adults at risk.

Permission will be sought from the parents or carers for use of photographic material featuring children or adults at risk for promotional or other purposes.

The society's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.

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 criminal record disclosures.



## 3. Abuse

### 3.1 Suspicion of abuse

If anyone sees or suspects abuse of a child or adult at risk while in the care of the Society, they should make it known to the designated person with responsibility for safeguarding.

If it is suspected that the person with responsibility for safeguarding is the source of the problem, these concerns should be made known to the Chairman (or, if the Chairman is suspected, the Vice-Chair).

Anyone who suspects abuse of a child or adult at risk should make a note for their own records of what they witnessed, as well as their response, in case there is follow-up in which they are involved.

If a serious allegation is made against any member of the society, 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.

### 3.2 Disclosure of abuse

If a child or adult at risk confides that abuse has taken place, the person confided in should:

- Remain calm and in control but not delay in taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child/adult at risk to tell their story at their own pace. Ask questions for clarification only; questions should not be asked that suggest a particular answer.
- Not promise to keep it a secret.
- Make it clear to the child/adult at risk the need to share this information with others. Make it clear that only the people who need to know and who should be able to help will be told.
- Use the first opportunity to share the information with the person with responsibility for safeguarding.
- Reassure the child/adult at risk that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
- Tell the child/adult at risk what will happen next.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for safeguarding. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's/person's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who the information was given to. Make sure the record is signed and dated.

### 3.3 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 safeguarding 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 eg. 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.

### 3.4 Rights & Confidentiality

If a complaint is made against a member of the Society, he or she will be made aware of his or her rights.

**All information must be treated as confidential and only shared with those who need to know.** Both the alleged abuser and the child/adult at risk who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. It should be remembered 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.

## 4. 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 and adults will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a child or adult is injured while in the care of the Society, first aid will be administered and the injury will be recorded in the society’s accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for safeguarding.
- If a child or adult at risk 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 safeguarding. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child/adult at risk did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

## 5. Criminal Background Checks and DBS certification

When the society needs to obtain DBS checks for chaperones or other personnel, it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures.



An Enhanced disclosure will be required for anyone applying for a Chaperone Licence.

The Society will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

## 6. Child licences

All children who perform on stage or in television, such as in films and commercials, or who work in paid or professional sport or modelling must have a licence. If children are to take part in any of the above activities, the legislation requires them to be licensed by the local authority (LA) in which they live. This includes babies and children up to the compulsory school age (currently this is 16, even though young adults must stay in education until the age of 18). An application for a licence must be on a standard application form obtained from the Missing Education and Child Employment Service, Essex County Council.

It is a legal requirement that the licence applicant is the person responsible for the production in which the child is to take part. This does not include those who provide children for a production, such as the proprietor of a drama, dance school or an agent.

A child **does not** need a licence **if**:

- they perform for only four days in any six-month period and they do not need time off from school to undertake the performance. (In either instance they will need to be covered by a body of persons approval or issued with an exemption by the local authority.
- they take part in their full-time school performance (this is the educational school not a school of dance)

## 7. Chaperones

All children must be supervised when performing. This can be undertaken by their own parent(s) or alternatively the Society will provide a registered chaperone.

Chaperones are licensed by the LA in which they live. Their role is to ensure that the welfare of the child is paramount when on location and to supervise the child at all times.

By law, a 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, which includes the Chaperone's own children.

Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity (eg. passport, driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless already well known to the society. They will also be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.



All chaperones will be required to obtain a criminal record disclosure (DBS).

It is the responsibility of the Society to keep accurate records on the child. These include times of arrival and departure to the place of performance, time performing, breaks, meals, medical conditions/medications, contact details, emergency contacts and any assessments carried out together with the licence. This responsibility is often given to the chaperone to undertake on the Society's behalf.

Chaperones will be made aware of the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures and of the responsibilities expected of them (see below).

### 7.1 Chaperone Responsibilities

The following responsibilities are stipulated by Essex County Council and endorsed by the Society:

- The prime duty of the chaperone is to the children in their care. The chaperone is acting in loco parentis and must exercise the same care as might reasonably be expected of a good parent. They must, for instance, escort the child from the performance area to the dressing rooms and must always remain with the child when they are performing or receiving tuition.
- The chaperone must safeguard the child's welfare and not do anything that may jeopardise the child's welfare or cause them any harm. Corporal punishment must not be used under any circumstances. They must guard the child against exposure to possible harm, including abuse or discrimination
- The chaperone must be aware of local child protection procedures which should be made available by the Society and be informed regarding the company's child protection policy and designated persons.
- If a child performance licence is in operation, the chaperone should be thoroughly familiar with the terms of the performance licence (a copy of which should be provided by the Society) and ensure that the conditions are properly fulfilled. Any breach of the conditions that cannot be rectified by the chaperone must be reported to the local authority. The chaperone must also be in receipt of a copy of the performance schedule.
- The chaperone must be in charge of the child at all times, except when the child is in the charge of his/her parent or an approved tutor. Under no other circumstances should the chaperone hand the child over to any other person, other than a doctor in an emergency, except where the parent's prior consent has been obtained
- The chaperone must ensure there is a complete register of the children, with emergency contact numbers available at all times. Personal information on the children in their care must not be disclosed to unauthorised personnel.



- The chaperone must be responsible for the proper care and control of the child, including their health, comfort, kind treatment and moral welfare and ensure that adequate provision is made for meals, rest and recreation. Any special diets on moral, religious or medical grounds must be catered for. The child should be provided with nutritional food and not have any takeaway snacks.
- The chaperone must ensure the child has suitable opportunities for recreation and is protected from stress, strain, bad weather and any conditions likely to cause harm.
- Chaperones must not allow a child to perform if unwell. If a child becomes ill or is injured, whilst in the care of the chaperone, the parents must be informed, a doctor called and the local authority notified.
- The chaperone should have a basic understanding of emergency first aid and ensure that the licence holder has made adequate provision under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations. The chaperone should acquaint themselves with the following:-
  1. Names of the appointed first aiders
  2. The location of the first aid equipment on the premises
  3. The location in the building of the first aiders
- The chaperone must be satisfied with the dressing room arrangements and toilet facilities and know the procedures for the evacuation of the building in the case of fire and emergencies.
- Chaperones must ensure the child is not discriminated against on the grounds of race, gender, age, colour, nationality, ethnicity or national origin.
- A chaperone may use their discretion and allow a child to perform for up to an hour later than the latest permitted time, in exceptional circumstances only.
- The child must not perform when unwell and in the event of the child being too ill to perform, the chaperone must make arrangements for the child to be sent home under proper escort. In the case of serious illness/accident the child should be sent/taken to hospital and the child's parent(s) informed immediately. The authority that issued the licence should also be informed as soon as practicably possible.

### **Other conditions**

- The number of children in the care of a chaperone must not exceed 12 at any one time. This includes the chaperone's own children
- Whilst working a chaperone should carry/display their photo ID licence badge at all times and always keep this in a safe place
- Transport of children: if the chaperone is responsible for and must ensure that they are transporting children in line with the duties of a chaperone. The following must be in place:-



Full comprehensive motor insurance, including business use  
Written permission from the parents/carers to transport their child

- In the event of any contravention of the licence, or incident affecting the wellbeing of the child, the chaperone must inform Essex County Council's Missing Education and Child Employment Service as a matter of priority.

### **Child not collected after a performance**

Uncollected children must always remain in the chaperone's care and the following is a guide on the process that should be followed:-

- Do not transport the child yourself
- Do not dial 999
- Contact the parent/carer in the first instance – failing this
- Contact the emergency numbers provided by the parent/carer – if you do not make contact with the parent
- Dial the 101 non-emergency police number, ask for the control room and explain the situation

An abandoned child will always be dealt with as an emergency

### **Safeguarding**

It is important to understand that the chaperone's overall responsibility is to the child and not to the director, theatre or the Society.

Chaperones must have a general knowledge of the society's child protection policy and an understanding of the practice issues involved in implementing that policy. You should ensure you read this and make yourself aware of the content. If you are concerned about a child or a disclosure is made to you then the child protection procedures must be followed...

To make a referral to Social Care in Essex or ask advice

- Telephone 0845 603 7627 – this goes to a call centre to you will need to ask for Family Operation Hub
- Email: FOH@essex.gcsx.gov.uk
- Post: Family Operations Hub, Essex House, 200 The Crescent, Colchester, CO4 9YQ
- Out of hours: 08456061212

Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Chairman. 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 Chairman 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 Society to cease using children in this way and should contact the local authority.

During performances, chaperones will be responsible for:

- Meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.
- Keeping children together at all times. When using separate dressing rooms, chaperone(s) will be assigned to each room
- Being aware of where children are at all times.
- Not allowing children to leave the theatre unsupervised unless in the company of their parents.
- Adequately supervise children while going to and from the toilets.
- Not allow children to enter the adult dressing rooms.
- Being aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and ensuring that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- Ensuring that any accidents are reported to and recorded by the Society.
- Examining accident books each day. If an accident has occurred, the Society is not allowed to use that child until a medically qualified opinion has been obtained (not just the word of the parent or child).
- Having written 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.
- Ensuring children are signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting.
- If a parent has not collected the child, the chaperone must stay with that child and follow the procedures outlined above.

## 8. Handling the Media

If there is an incident involving the society which attracts media interest, or if you are contacted by the media with an allegation concerning one of our members or associates, do not give any response but refer them to the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the society.

## 9. Policy Review

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Executive Committee of the Society and will be subject to annual review. Members of the Society will be sent an up to date version with AGM literature and an expectation to be aware of its content made explicit.



**Important telephone numbers:**

**Non-emergency number for police: 101**

**To make a referral to Social Care in Essex or ask advice:**

- **Telephone 0845 603 7627 – this goes to a call centre to you will need to ask for Family Operation Hub**
- **Email: FOH@essex.gcsx.gov.uk**
- **Post: Family Operations Hub, Essex House, 200 The Crescent, Colchester, CO4 9YQ**
- **Out of hours: 08456061212**



## Appendix 1: Time Tables – Restrictions to all performances

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Age 0 to 4</b>	<b>Age 5 to 8</b>	<b>Age 9 and over</b>
Maximum number of hours at place of performance or rehearsal (Reg.22)	5 Hours	8 Hours	9.5 Hours
Earliest and latest permitted times at place of performance or rehearsal (Reg.21)	7am to 10pm	7am to 11pm	7am to 11pm
Maximum period of continuous performance or rehearsal (Reg.22)	30 Minutes	2.5 Hours	2.5 Hours
Maximum total hours of performance or rehearsal (Reg.22)	2 Hours	3 Hours	5 Hours
Minimum intervals for meals and rest (Reg.23)	Any breaks must be for a minimum of 15 minutes. If at the place of performance or rehearsal for more than 4 hours, breaks must include at least one 45 minute meal break.	If present at the place of performance or rehearsal for more than 4 hours but less than 8 hours, they must have one meal break of 45 minutes and at least one break of 15 minutes	If present at the place of performance or rehearsal for more than 4 hours but less than 8 hours, they must have one meal break of 45 minutes and at least one break of 15 minutes
Education (Reg.13)	N/A	3 hours per day (maximum of 5 hours per day). 15 hours per week, taught only on school days. Minimum of 6 hours in a week if aggregating over 4 week period or less.	3 hours per day (maximum of 5 hours per day). 15 hours per week, taught only on school days. Minimum of 6 hours in a week if aggregating over 4 week period or less.
Minimum break between performances (Reg.23)	1 hour 30 minutes	1 hour 30 minutes	1 hour 30 minutes
Maximum consecutive days to take part in performance or rehearsal (Reg.26)	6 Days	6 Days	6 Days