

The MATA Regal Theatre Co Ltd

Child Protection Policy 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The MATA Regal Theatre Co Ltd (the Company) is committed to providing a safe environment for children at the Regal Theatre and in rehearsals and other theatre activities wherever they may be held. The company recognizes 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 Company recognizes that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. The Company is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All members of the Company and all Member Societies must accept and recognize their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The Company 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 of the Company should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

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

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMPANY AND MEMBER SOCIETIES

At the outset of any production involving children the Company or member society will:

- undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process; This process should be carried out in conjunction with the Company's Health and Safety Committee.
- identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection for that production;
- engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children (see below);
- 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. (See below)
- Be aware of the correct reporting procedures if concerned about a child's/vulnerable adults welfare

3. PARENTS

- The Company believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the society. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the society and to share responsibility for the care of children.
- Copies of the Company's Child Protection Policy and procedures will be available on request.

- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the Company or Member Society to take children home.
- Parents are not allowed in the backstage area unless they are appointed chaperones.

4. UNSUPERVISED CONTACT

- The Company 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.

5. 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.

6. PHOTOGRAPHS

- The Company has a policy and procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children that must be adhered to by all Member Societies and Visiting Groups.
- Any person taking photographs of any sort may only use them for personal use. They may not be distributed or published in any form unless written permission as described below has been obtained for their publication. –This includes any social media use.
- Member Societies and Visiting Groups may make videos or take photographs for their own rehearsal purposes, but they must take into account parents' wishes before copying and distributing such videos to other members of the company and/or social media.
- Written permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes. A form is available for this purpose.

7. SUSPICION OF ABUSE

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the Company, Member Society or Visiting Group please make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection, then it must be reported to the DSO. 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 Chairman.
- A note must be made for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved. This must be done as soon as possible.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member, 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.
- The Health and Safety sub-committee will have the responsibility of investigating reports, and they will nominate three people including the person designated responsible for Child Protection for this task in order to ensure confidentiality.

8. 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 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.
- Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection. They in turn should liaise with the Company's designated person responsible for Child Protection and it is his 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 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.

9. 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.

10. RIGHTS & CONFIDENTIALITY

- If a complaint is made against a member he or she will be made aware of his rights.
- 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.

11. 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. Ideally this should be undertaken by the stage Manager or member of technical crew.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the society, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the society'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.
- Qualified first aiders should be on hand in all entertainment establishments

12. CHAPERONES

- A chaperone's first duty is to look after the children in their care and they must not undertake any activity that would interfere with the performance of this duty. Except when a child is in the care of a tutor, a chaperone is 'in loco parentis' and is required to exercise the care that a good parent might reasonably be expected to give a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.
- By law, children engaged in public performances or entertainment under a licence issued by the local authority are supervised by an approved chaperone, unless they are in the care of either their parent or an agreed tutor.
- Chaperones are required to undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check as part of the approval process.
- People who want to work as a chaperone for children involved in entertainment must be approved by the local authority. Licences are issued on a 2 year basis.
- Chaperones have the responsibility of care for children in entertainment and the nature of a chaperone's role is that s/he is in a position of trust regarding those children. Abuse of a position of trust in respect of young persons under the age of 18 is considered an offence, and under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 would include sexual activity with or in the presence of a child, causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity or watch a sexual act.
- The law says that the maximum number of children an individual chaperone may supervise is twelve. However, the local authority may consider that due to the demands of the performance, the ages, gender of the children, or a combination of both, that the chaperone would only be able to effectively supervise a smaller number.
- Boys and girls from the age of 5 must be in separate changing rooms. There would have to be at least two chaperones on duty. Chaperones must remain with the children all of the time. It

is only when they are on stage or performing that chaperones are not required to be by their side.

- Chaperones should possess firm negotiating skills. Occasionally production companies may try to exploit a child in order to facilitate their schedule. Chaperones have the power to withdraw a child from a performance if they have good reason and should have the confidence to do so when it is in the interest of the child.
- The chaperone must keep daily records of the children at the place of performance. There should be emergency contact numbers available.
- A child should not be allowed to perform when unwell. The chaperone must put the needs of the child first. They have the responsibility to refuse to accept a sick child who arrives for a performance.
- 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.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms. Children must change in separate gender changing rooms.
- Qualified first-aiders should be on hand in all entertainment establishments. Chaperones should establish where the first-aid kit and accident book are located.
- The chaperone should become familiar with the procedures for evacuating the building in case of fire and the escape routes from whatever rooms the children are using.
- The local authority officers are empowered to enter any premises where a performance or entertainment is being performed by children, without prior notice, to establish that the children are being properly supervised and cared for. They have the authority to withdraw the children from the performance, to rescind the chaperone's approval, or both.

13. RESPONSIBILITY

- The Company will appoint a person to be responsible for implementing and enforcing child protection procedures. The current person with that responsibility is Lorraine Ahern
- The Health and Safety sub-committee will nominate two people to assist the person named above.
- Each Member Society that works with children will appoint a person responsible for child protection. That person must be at all events including rehearsals, at which children will be present. If he is unable to be present then he may arrange for another suitable person to be deputise. All such appointed persons will be scrutinized as for chaperones. The nominated person will report to the Company's nominated person.
- For Visiting Groups responsibility only starts when they come to the theatre, so their rehearsals and other activities are not subject to these rules. Whilst in the theatre they must appoint their own nominated person to directly liaise with the MATA safeguarding lead.

15. FORMS

- For each rehearsal, performance, or other organized event at which children are present a log sheet will be kept by either the chaperone, or the designated person. Completed log sheets must be handed to the MATA designated person (DSO)
- For each child involved in a performance a registration form must be completed by parent or guardian, which details the child's name, address, age, any relevant medical information and contact details of a responsible person. The form should also list people who are permitted to collect the child after the performance. These forms will be collected and stored securely by the designated person appointed by MATA, but extracts of the relevant information will be retained by chaperones in order for them to fulfil their responsibilities.
- An accident book is available at the box office and must be completed for all accidents. If the accident occurs away from the theatre the details should be noted, dated and signed and given to the DSO as soon as possible.

16. AUTHORITIES

- Children's Social Care on 0300 123 2224
- by email at childrens@somerset.gov.uk
- or the police

You can contact the police directly by dialling 101 and they will discuss with Children's Social Care what action should be taken. **In an emergency always contact the police by dialling 999.**

17. REVIEW

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Executive Committee of the society and will be subject to annual review. The next review will be in January 2021

Name of Member Society/Visiting Group.....

Designated Responsible Person.....

Signature.....

Date: