

## **Safeguarding Policy**

### **Introduction**

The Shrewsbury Musical Theatre Company recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963. The Company recognises 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 accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

### ***This Policy***

- This policy applies to all committee members, members, volunteers and anyone working on behalf of SMTC.
- The purpose of this policy is to outline SMTC' measures which are in place to protect children and young people who are involved in SMTC activities.
- SMTC is committed to creating and maintaining a safe environment for children and young people involved in any of its rehearsals, productions and activities.

### ***The Company believes that:***

- We have a responsibility to protect all those who take part in our activities;
- The welfare of the children and young people is paramount;
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- All children and young people have the right to feel safe and happy when taking part in SMTC's activities;
- Parents and carers have a right to expect that SMTC is a safe organisation for them to be involved with;
- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity;
- Bullying should not be accepted or condoned;
- Everyone involved in our activities should be clear on how to respond appropriately to any allegations of bullying or abuse;

- All suspicions or allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately by SMTC's Executive Committee.

**SMTC will do this by:**

- Ensuring that SMTC's activities involving children and young people are adequately supervised;
- The company will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children; if unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, the designated room to have the door open;
- If possible, there will always be two adults in the room when working with children;
- Providing director(s) and other adults running auditions and rehearsals with practical safeguarding guidance and training if required in relation to children and young people to include *inter alia* the keeping of attendance registers and the delivery and collection of children and young people;
- Provide safeguarding guidelines for committee members, members and voluntary helpers;
- Ensuring SMTC obtain DBS checks for directors, chaperones or other personnel, that it informs the individual of the necessary procedures and of the level of disclosure required;
- Encouraging parents and carers to become involved in SMTC's activities, for example acting as chaperones and providing general help;
- Ensuring that licenced chaperones are in place for the duration of the run of each production in order to supervise children under compulsory school leaving age, during dress rehearsals and performances;
- Ensuring that licenced chaperones are either parents or carers of junior members or other adults already known to SMTC;
- Providing clear instructions to all chaperones to ensure that they fully understand their role and duties in relation to those children under their supervision;
- Undertaking a risk assessment in regards to the performance stage performance
- Providing clear and transparent contact information for the Executive Committee on the SMTC website whereby any member is readily able to contact SMTC with any concerns regarding children and young people involved in SMTC's activities;
- Additionally, having named people for dealing with concerns\*
- Ensuring that this safeguarding policy is clearly communicated to all those involved in SMTC activities by displaying it prominently on the SMTC website;
- Ensuring that parents and carers of all children and young people involved in SMTC's activities complete a membership form containing contact details of the child or young person;

- Ensuring that parental or carer consent is obtained, via the membership form for the publication of photographs, pictures, images, videos and DVD's featuring the child or young person for the purposes of record, promotion or fundraising;
- Encouraging and establishing a protective culture;
- 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 to take children home.
- All personal information regarding the children and their parents/carers will be securely stored for the duration of the performance after which it will be destroyed.

### **Policy Review**

This policy review will be regularly monitored by the Executive Committee of the Company and will be subject to annual review to ensure it continues to promote the safeguarding of children and young people involved in its activities.

\*For the production of School of Rock in November 2023, the named person(s) and their contact details are:

Company Director/Chair: Scott Sutherland – 07832111665 – [smtcproductions@gmail.com](mailto:smtcproductions@gmail.com)

Company Director/Vice Chair: Jayne Garner

Company Director: Joanne Young

Hon Company Secretary: Sylvia Harrison – [secsmtc@gmail.com](mailto:secsmtc@gmail.com)

Version 1.0 May 2023

## General guidance for members/parents/carers

### Recognising signs of abuse and behaviours of concern

Abuse can take a number of forms:

- **Physical:** causing physical harm to a child or vulnerable adult by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or some other method. Physical harm can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness in a child or vulnerable adult.
- **Sexual:** forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not that person is aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse includes both physical contact and non-contact activities.
- **Emotional:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult in a way likely to cause severe and persistent negative effects on that person's emotional development.
- **Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child or vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of that person's health and/or development.
- **Financial:** being denied access to funds, having funds misappropriated or misused by others, being pressured or manipulated into giving money away or using it in a way the vulnerable person does not wish.
- **Institutional:** the mistreatment, abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult by a regime or individuals.

It is important to recognise the multitude of abusive situations that overlap within these definitions. Children and vulnerable adults may be at risk of abuse through such varied issues as bullying (including cyberbullying), substance misuse, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, breast ironing, forced marriage, radicalisation and extremist behaviour, abuse related to protected characteristics e.g. racism/sexism/homophobia, domestic abuse, gang violence, sexting and others.

It is also important to recognise that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via peer-on-peer abuse. This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to, bullying (including cyberbullying), child criminal and/or sexual exploitation, gender-based violence/sexual assaults and sexting. All members must remain alert to the possibility of peer-on-peer abuse

and take appropriate action to safeguard those involved, in line with the procedures outlined in this policy.

**Members may become aware of abuse in a number of ways, including:**

- Disclosure by a student
- Disclosure or remarks made by another party (e.g. carer, another member, member of the public)
- Discovery of non-typical bruising or marks on a student's body
- Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- Evidence of disturbance or explicit detail in drawing, writing or play
- Evidence of neglect in terms of cleanliness, personal hygiene, failure to thrive or apparent exposure to unnecessary risks
- Persistent lateness, poor or irregular attendance or persistent absence from rehearsals

It is important to remember that abuse may not always become apparent through direct disclosure or 'obvious' indicators, but through an accumulation of small incidents or concerns that form a pattern. It is therefore essential that any and all concerns, including low level concerns, are reported to the contacts as specified on the policy so that they can be recorded and acted upon as necessary.

**Team SMTC Responsibilities**

Prior to and/or at the beginning of every production involving children (on or off stage) the Team SMTC will:

- Undertake a risk assessment & monitor risk throughout the production process
- Identify the person with designated responsibility for safeguarding & child protection and communicate this to all members involved in the production
- The secretary will draw up a list of every child involved in the production. This list must include the name and 1 x contact numbers of their next of kin in case of emergency. This list must be held by the secretary and be available at every rehearsal and performance.
- Ensure that the dates and expected finish times of rehearsals and performances are communicated by the director, in advance, to all members involved in the production

### **Rehearsals and Productions – Safeguarding Leads**

- Must remain at the rehearsal/performance until all junior members have left and have a register of attendance/absence of all members for each rehearsal/performance. They must not allow any under-18 members to wait outside the hall building to be collected, unless they are accompanied by themselves. They must be the last to leave the rehearsal/performance space and lock up securely to ensure no re-entry.

### **Photography and Video Recording – All members' responsibilities**

- Photography and/or video recording of members under 18 is not permitted without the consent of parent/guardian and the young person. No personal information, such as age or school, will be included alongside any advertised photographs.
- SMTC takes all steps to ensure the publication of all still and moving images are used for off and online advertisement purposes only through direct links to SMTC, including social media and website.
- Photographs & personal information will not be shared with a third party without parental permission
- Personal photography by cast and crew is permitted as long as no under-18 members are included in any over-18 member's photographs
- Photography by any member, in any juniors dressing room, is NOT permitted
- Audience photography and video recording is NOT permitted – this is communicated both verbally at the start of each performance and in print in the production programme and foyer posters

### **Travel Arrangements for Under-18 members**

- All parent/guardians of members under the age of 18 are expected to make arrangements for their child to be accompanied by an adult to and from all rehearsals. If the parent/guardian is not the person accompanying their child home, SMTC must receive written notice of the named adult that will accompany them home, this named adult has sole responsibility for the care of this child during the travelling to and from rehearsals, not SMTC. This notice can be emailed directly to the Secretary. Please note, it is not the responsibility of SMTC to take any under-18 member home.
- Parents/guardians are most welcome to sit in the hall foyer whilst waiting for the end of a rehearsal.

- A member of Team SMTC and/or the director will remain in the hall until all members have left.

### **Dressing Rooms**

- All people under the age of 18 shall have a dressing room of same sex only which will be monitored by a licenced chaperone.

### **Unsupervised Contact**

- Unsupervised contact means when only one adult is present with one or more children.
- Most activities will be in groups of various sizes. However, if unsupervised contact is unavoidable (e.g. rehearsing a solo song), care will be taken to avoid risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area or in a designated room with windowed doors/doors open.

### **Appropriate Physical Contact**

- All adults will maintain an appropriate distance from children
- Should any child initiate inappropriate physical touch with an adult, the adult should remove themselves from the situation and inform the person responsible for safeguarding
- If/when physical contact is absolutely necessary in relation to a particular dramatic activity, all members will be sensitive to the feelings of others, particularly children and verbal consent sought for this. If consent is not given, an alternative re-direction must be made by the director. Rehearsals of these moments must only take place with other members present in a public area.

### **Suspicion of abuse**

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the society, please make this known to the person with responsibility for safeguarding & child protection. If you suspect that the person with responsibility for safeguarding & child protection is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the one of the Company Directors.

- Please make a factual written note of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved. This record should be passed to the safeguarding & child protection officer or chairperson.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the society, venue staff etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from all rehearsals and performances until the investigation is concluded.

## **Disclosures**

*If a child discloses an experience of concern to you:*

- DO remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- DO listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask open (What? Where? Who? When?) questions only for clarification. DO NOT ask potentially leading questions that suggest a particular answer.
- DO NOT promise to keep it a secret. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with responsibility for safeguarding & child protection either in person or by telephone. 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.
- DO reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
- DO tell the child what you are going to do next.
- DO speak immediately to the person with responsibility for safeguarding & child protection. It is that person's responsibility to inform the Chairman and liaise with the relevant authorities, if necessary, usually social services or the police.
- DO as soon as possible after the child made their disclosure to you, make a factual written 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. This record must be given to the person in responsible for safeguarding & Child Protection. DO NOT keep a record for yourself.

## **Recording of concerns/disclosures**

- 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.

#### **Criminal Record Disclosure / Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS)**

- SMTC will ensure where under 18's are involved in its productions that all staff that work directly with the children at a ratio of 1:12 obtain an enhanced DBS certificate, this shall be renewed every 3 years.