

THE BURTON MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY
(The Burton Musical Theatre Company)

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Agreed: Reviewed:.....Signed:.....

1 Child Protection Policy

1.1 Introduction

Everyone who participates in The Burton Musical Theatre Company is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. The Burton Musical Theatre Company have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, members and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

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

A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989)

1.1 Policy Statement

The Burton Musical Theatre Company is committed to the following:

- the welfare of the child
- all children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in The Burton Musical Theatre Company in a fun and safe environment
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of unacceptable practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- a member of The Burton Musical Theatre Company Committee having training on the appropriate guidance in good practice and child protection procedures
- working in partnership with parents and children is essential for the protection of children
- that production team members of the Company have been suitably checked to ensure that there is an appropriate adult to work with children

1.2 Monitor and Review the Policy and Procedures

The implementation of procedures should be regularly monitored and reviewed. The Child Protection Officer should regularly report to the Committee.

The Policy should be reviewed every year or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

2 Promoting Good Practice

2.1 Introduction

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities in Musical Theatre everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework.

It is the responsibility of all members of Burton Musical Theatre Company to respond, in accordance with the child protection policy, if they suspect any unacceptable practice or possible abuse and therefore have concerns about the welfare of the child, as explained in section 4.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good practice and unacceptable practice.

2.2 Good Practice

All members should adhere to the following principles and action:

- always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- make the experience of Musical Theatre fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, team building and an anti bullying ethos
- treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity
- always put the welfare of the young person first
- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with players
- The nature of musical theatre requires a certain level of physical contact. However, avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given
- Involve parents/cares wherever possible, e.g. where young people need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents and volunteers work in pairs
- request written parental consent if members of the Company are required to transport young people in their cars

- always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- recognise the developmental needs and capacity of the young person
- secure written parental consent for the Company to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given
- recognise that there may be times when communal changing occurs (E.g. costume collection/during show week) and therefore show respect between all parties at all times

2.3 Unacceptable Practice

The following are regarded as unacceptable practice and should be avoided by all members:

- unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- taking young people alone in a car on journeys
- taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- making sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- do things of a personal nature that the young person can do for themselves
- the encouragement of behaviours which are not deemed to be in the best interest of the child or of an illegal nature E.g. Under-aged drinking, use of substances

When a case arises where it is impractical/impossible to avoid a certain situation e.g. transporting a young person in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/care and the young person involved.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a young person, the young person seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have

done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

3 Defining Child Abuse

3.1 Introduction

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm, it commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. The abuser may be a family member, someone the young person encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a young person directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the young person.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a young person at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood

Young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

3.2 Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse.

This category of abuse can also include when a parent/carer reports non-existent symptoms or illness deliberately causes ill health in a young person they are looking after.

In a sports situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's immature and growing body

- **Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless, unloved, and inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of young people that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a young person to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in sport may occur when the young person is constant criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying.

- **Bullying** may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying.

It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In sport bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the young person too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour.

- **Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Refusal to give love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the young person safe, or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing young people pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.
- In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

3.3 Indicators of Abuse

Indications that a child is potentially being abused may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- the young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person

- unexplained changes in a young person's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- inappropriate sexual awareness
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- distrust of adult's, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- difficulty in making friends
- being prevented from socialising with others
- displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite
- losing weight for no apparent reason
- becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Signs of bullying include:

- behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or competitions
- an unexplained drop off in performance
- physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- a shortage of money or frequents loss of possessions

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is **NOT** the responsibility of members of The Burton Musical Theatre Company to decide that child abuse is occurring. It **IS** their responsibility to act on any concerns.

3.4 Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Theatre Events

Photographs and videos are taken for the purpose of media advertising and for Company and personal memorabilia. It is also acknowledged that members may have profile pages on social networking sites.

The Committee should be vigilant in responding to any concerns that are reported to the Child Protection Officer.

All parents and performers should be made aware that photographs and videos are taken and should inform the Child Protection Officer if they do not wish the young persons image to be taken or shared in a public domain.

4 Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

4.1 Introduction

It is the responsibility of all members of The Burton Musical Theatre Company, to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within The Burton Musical Theatre Company and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspicions.

4.2 Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in section 3 of this document, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the young person
- **reassure** the child that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **listen** to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify
- **Keep questions open** so not to lead the young person down a particular route of conversation
- **inform** the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- **safety of the child** is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue
- **record** all information
- **report** the incident to the Child Protection Officer, who will then report to the Management Committee

In all cases if you are not sure what to do you can gain help from ChildLine help line (24hrs line). Tel No: 0800 1111

4.3 Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions. Information should include the following:

- the child's name, age and date of birth
- the child's home address and telephone number
- whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incidents
- the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened
- have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
- has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail

4.4 Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations MUST be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

The Burton Musical Theatre Company expects its members to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the Child Protection Officer and subsequently check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the nominated Child Protection Officer is not available, you should approach a Committee member, who should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline or ChildLine, the duty officer at your local Social Services department or the police. Telephone numbers can be found in your local directory.

Where there is a complaint against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation.

- **Criminal** in which case the police are immediately involved
- **Child protection** in which case the Social Services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- **Disciplinary or misconduct** in which case The Burton Musical Theatre Company will be involved

Social Services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by a member or volunteer should be reported to The Burton Musical Theatre Company's Child Protection Office who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- The Burton Musical Theatre Company will refer the matter to Social Services department
- the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Social Services Department
- the Chairperson of your organisation should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- if the Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the appropriate manager who will refer the matter to Social Services

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to Social Services. This is because other children in the sport or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

4.5 Concerns outside the Company (e.g. a parent or carer)

- Report your concerns to the Child Protection officer
- If the Child Protection Officer is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local Social Services department or the police immediately
- Social Services and the Child Protection Officer will decide how to inform the parents/carers
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis

4.6 Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The Company's Child Protection Officer
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/Police
- The members of the Company involved in the allegation in any way
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Seek Social Services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

4.7 Internal Inquiries and Suspension

- The Child Protection Officer and the Committee will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further Police and Social Services inquiries

- Irrespective of the findings of the Social Services or police inquiries, the Company's Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases the Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Personnel Working with Children

5.1 Introduction

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to paid staff and volunteers, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children, the following steps should be taken:

5.2 Controlling Access to Children

- All production team members working with young adults should provide the relevant detail on their Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) form.

5.3 Company Requirements

The Burton Musical Theatre Company requires:

- All production team members and volunteers to have an understanding of Child Protection and a working knowledge of the policy
- Analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child
- Work safely and effectively with children

Declaration

On behalf of **The Burton Musical Theatre Company** we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

Signed:

(n.b. One of the signatories should be the Child Protection Officer)

Name:

Karen Hambleton

Name:

Angela Wynne

Position within The Burton Musical Theatre Company:

Child Protection Officer

Position within The Burton Musical Theatre Company:

Chairperson

Date:

Date: