



**COLCHESTER OPERATIC SOCIETY**  
**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY and PROCEDURES**

**April 2021**

## Child Protection Policy

*Colchester Operatic Society / Colchester Operatic Society – Second Edition* (referred to jointly herein as COS) recognises its duty of care under the Children Act 1989 and 2004, Working together to Safeguard Children 2015 and The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014.

COS 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 recognize their responsibilities to develop an 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.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All members and employees of the society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The society will ensure that

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers 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 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 which will be available in case of emergencies.
- This child protection policy and the accompanying procedures will be published on our website and made available to parents/carers of children involved in any COS productions and anyone working with those children as part of COS

The society has child protection procedures which accompanies this policy.

COS has a dedicated Youth Liaison Officer and a Deputy, who are in charge of ensuring the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to.

The Designated COS Youth Liaison Officers for child protection and safeguarding:

**CHARLOTTE BUTCHER**

Vice Chairperson CO2 and Safeguarding Lead (level 3 trained)

Contact details: [safeguarding@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk)

**PAUL KUSEL-BAUM**

Membership secretary and Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Contact details: [co2theatre@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk](mailto:co2theatre@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk)

## Child Protection Procedures

## **Responsibilities of the Society**

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

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (DBS check).
- 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.

## **Parents**

- COS believes that it is important to maintain a positive partnership between parents and the society. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the society but may still be expected to go through the appropriate vetting procedures.
- All parents will be given access to a copy of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures which will be available on the COS website.
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the society to take children home.

## **Unsupervised Contact**

- The society 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.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable work will be carried out in a public area or a room with the door open.

## **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 e.g. providing support when attempting a dance move or demonstrating a move.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

## **Managing sensitive information**

- Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- The society's web-based and social media material and activity will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- See the Privacy Policy for the most up to date information regarding how information is used by COS.

## **Suspicion of abuse**

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of COS please make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection. 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 Chairperson.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.
- REMEMBER IT IS NOT YOUR JOB TO INVESTIGATE. Please pass your concerns on to the designated person immediately.

## **Disclosure of abuse**

If a child makes a disclosure to you:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what had been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Do not ask 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 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. It is that person’s responsibility to consider the next steps and liaise with the relevant authorities if needed, 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.

## **Recording**

- In all situations, including those in which the cause for 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.

## **Rights and Confidentiality**

- If a complaint is made against a member of the society, he or she will be made aware of his rights under the society’s disciplinary procedures.
- 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 GDPR 2018. 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.

## **Accidents**

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of “house rules” regarding health and safety.
- Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- 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 countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection.
- Any accidents that have occurred whilst the young person was in the care of the society shall be reported to the parents of the child.
- If a child joins the production process 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 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.

## **Disclosure and Barring Service**



- If the society believes it is in its best interest to obtain criminal record disclosures (DBS) for chaperones or other personnel it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required.

## **Chaperones**

- Chaperones will be appointed by the society for the care of children during the production process. By law the chaperone is acting in loco parentis and should exercise the care which a good parent

might be reasonably expected to give to a child.

- Potential chaperones will need to complete the relevant paperwork provided by Essex County Council to become a licensed chaperone as well as complete a DBS.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Youth Liaison Officers as named in the Child Protection Policy. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily the Youth Liaison Officer (also licensed chaperones) should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue they should speak to a Youth Liaison Officer who will make the decision as to whether to allow the child to continue or not. In all circumstances decisions will be made in the best interests of the child as the child's welfare is paramount.
- Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb.
- During performances, children will be shown how to enter the building and where to sign in.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Chaperones will be allocated to specific dressing rooms/children and also to communal areas.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company (or with the agreement of parents e.g. between a matinee and evening performance) of their parents.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets, no adults will be alone in the toilets with a child, the chaperone will make sure there are no adults already in the toilet and then wait outside.
- Children will not be allowed to enter adult dressing rooms.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety and first aid procedures in the venue and will be proactive to ensure children in their care do not place themselves or others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported and recorded by the society.
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for the collection of children after performances.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and the chaperone should ensure that they reach the person who is collecting them.
- The chaperone should stay with a child until they have been collected.

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Date: 06/04/2021	Date: 06/04/2021
Katie Cutmore, Chairperson of COS	Ann Taylor, Chairperson of CO2