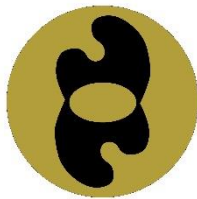


The Worthy Players Amateur Dramatic Society



Safeguarding Policy

For all questions and concerns please contact our Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):

Sarah Kesterson enquiries@theworthyplayers.co.uk

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) child protection helpline (24/7 service):

0808 800 5000 help@nspcc.org.uk

Victims of abuse can seek support from the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC):

0808 801 0331

It is widely accepted that it is the responsibility of every adult to safeguard the wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. Abuse can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation and it is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Abuse and poor practice can occur within many situations. Some individuals will actively seek opportunities to come into contact with children or vulnerable adults in order to harm them. Everyone has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and promoting good practice.

The Worthy Players recognise that they have a responsibility to:

Safeguard and promote the interests and well-being of children and vulnerable adults within the group.

Take all reasonable practical steps to protect them from harm, discrimination, or degrading treatment

Respect their rights, wishes and feelings.

Child and vulnerable adults protection procedures can offer safeguards to all individuals within our group. We recognise that any procedure is only as effective as the ability and skill of those who operate it.

We are committed to:

The provision of support and appropriate training as necessary

Clear processes for recognition and responding to concerns

Working together with parents/carers and other organisations to ensure that the needs and the welfare of all remains paramount.

1. Principles

The child's welfare is paramount, as is that of the vulnerable adult

All participants whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse

All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously; and responded to swiftly and appropriately

Anyone aged 18 years or under should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document.

Working in partnership with children and their parents/carers is essential for the protection of the children.

The Worthy Players recognise the statutory responsibility of the social services department to ensure the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and is committed to working together with the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH).

2. Recognition of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. The Worthy Players acknowledge that their members are not experts at such recognition. It therefore expects them to report any concern they may have about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

It is the responsibility of these people to ensure that appropriate advice is obtained from the MASH or the NSPCC. If the DSO is not available, or the concern is about the DSO, the person in receipt of the information will contact the social services directly.

3. Indications That a Child or Vulnerable Adult is Being Abused

- 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 the explanation seems inconsistent
- The child or vulnerable adult describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- Someone else—a child or adult, expresses concern about the welfare of another child
- Unexplained changes in behaviour—e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engages in sexually explicit behaviour in games
- Is distrustful of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship will normally be expected
- Has difficulty in making friends
- Is prevented from socialising with other children
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite
- Loses weight for no apparent reason
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is not the responsibility of those in the group to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

4. Forms of Abuse

In December 2017, the NSPCC updated its definitions and signs of abuse, and the full information can be found here: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse>

5. The Effects of Abuse

Abuse in all its forms can affect a child or vulnerable adult at any age. The effects can be so damaging, that if not treated, they may follow an individual into adulthood. For example, an adult who has been abused as a child may find it difficult, or impossible, to maintain a stable, trusting relationship; may become involved with drugs or prostitution; may attempt suicide, or may abuse a child in the future and find successful parenting difficult.

There have been a number of studies which suggest children with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation, and a powerlessness to protect themselves, or to adequately communicate that abuse has occurred. Children from ethnic minorities, who may also be experiencing racial discrimination, may be doubly powerless.

6. Listening to the Child or Vulnerable Adult

If a child says or indicates that they being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is being abused, the person receiving this information should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child or Vulnerable Adult
- Tell them they are not to blame and that it was right to tell someone
- Take what they say seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who is very young, has a speech disability and/or differences in language
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said
- Reassure them, but do not make promises of confidentiality which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments
- Make a full record of what had been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.

7. Responding to Suspicions or Allegations of Child Abuse

It is not the responsibility of a member of the group to take responsibility or to decide whether or not abuse is taking place. There is however, a responsibility to report concerns so that appropriate agencies can then make inquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child.

Whilst The Worthy Players acknowledges the importance of the role of statutory agencies involved in children's welfare (social services, police, NSPCC), the importance of using the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) should not be underestimated. The MASH works with all the statutory agencies and can advise on the best course of action. If a child is immediate danger then the police should be contacted.

The Worthy Players appreciate that there may be some reluctance to report an incident or disclosure, especially if the person reporting is unclear as to whether abuse has occurred. As a result of this, we have a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), who can be contacted at the earliest possible time after the event or allegation. The DSO can advise on the best course of action.

The MASH may report the incident or disclosure to the social services department which has a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 to ensure the welfare of a child or Vulnerable Adult. When a child protection referral is made its staff have a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from other people who know the child. Inquiries may be carried out jointly with the police.

8. What to Do If There Are Concerns

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, they may have experienced bereavement in the family.

However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk where such concerns to be shared, e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately.

In these situations, or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation, or incident of abuse must be reported to the person in charge as soon as possible, and recorded.

It is the responsibility of the DSL to inform the MASH without delay. If the DSL is not available, the person discovering or being informed of the abuse should immediately contact the MASH, or the police if a child is in immediate danger. If you're not sure about what to do, you can contact the NSPCC's child protection helpline.

9. Recording and Information

Information passed to the social services department or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record. The information should contain the following:

- The nature of the allegation
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries
- The child's account, if he or she can give them, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- Any times, dates, or other relevant information
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion, or hearsay

Reporting the matter to the police or MASH should not however be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the MASH should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the MASH member of staff or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed.

10. Non-Recent Historic Abuse

Non-recent historic abuse refers to one of 3 situations:

An adult making an allegation of abuse when they were under 18 years of age, that occurred at least 1 year before it was reported

A child making an allegation of abuse that occurred at least 1 year before it was reported

Someone reports an allegation, on behalf of someone else, relating to an offence committed over a year ago.

Source: NSPCC (2018)

Such disclosures can occur after long periods of time as the complainant may now feel comfortable that they are no longer at risk, have the confidence to make an allegation that will be believed, become aware that there have been other reports, or feel they need closure to move on. Whatever the motive, and however long ago the allegation, action must be taken because:

The alleged may not have been an isolated incident

It may be part of a wider abuse situation

The person(s) may still be abusing individuals and/or working with children

There may be ongoing legal action

Source: NSPCC (2018)

Should an allegation or disclosure be made to a member of the group it is important to record and report such information as you would if it were a current situation. Please be reassured that all information is stored in line with current data protection and general data protection regulations.

Even though the abuse may have occurred many years ago, the impact may be significant and long lasting. Please reassure the individual that it is not their fault, and that the allegation is taken seriously.

If the individual concerned is confident enough, ask them to call the police non-urgent crimes number on 101 to report the abuse.

Support for the victims of abuse can seek support from the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC).

11. Good Practice in the Care of Children during Rehearsals and Productions

You can reduce situations for the abuse of children and Vulnerable Adults and help to protect members by promoting good practice. The following are more specific examples of care which should be taken:

- Always be publicly open when working with children. Avoid situations where a child or Vulnerable Adult is with a single member of the group completely unobserved.
- Where possible parents/guardians should take on the responsibility for their children in the dressing room.
- Do not take children alone in a car on journeys, however short.

And you should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child even in fun
- Let allegations a child makes go unrecorded, or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Take children to your home where they will be alone with you
- Take still or movie photographs of children without obtaining the guardians consent in writing.

It may be sometimes necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are children with disabilities. These tasks should only be carried out with a full understanding and written consent of parents and of the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a child's reactions and if a child is fully dependent upon you, talk with them about what you are doing and give them choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing, or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact of lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities.

If during your care of a child you accidentally hurt them, the child seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incident as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief written note of it. Parents or carers should be informed of the incident.

Signed: <u>Martin Pettigrew (Chair)</u>	<u>11-04-24</u>
<u>Janine Blackmore (Secretary)</u>	<u>11-04-24</u>
Review Date: <u>April 25</u>	