



BURGESS HILL THEATRE CLUB

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

July 2023

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1. Introduction

The responsibility of child protection belongs to everyone. Children have the right to protection from abuse and neglect. All Club members have a responsibility for the protection of our junior members and for reporting any concerns about a child's welfare or safety.

The Children and Young Person Act prescribes how the health and safety needs of child performers are met through regulation of the number of hours they rehearse and perform.

Burgess Hill Theatre Club is committed to providing safe and enjoyable activities for young people.

The purpose of this policy is to help protect children in our care, and in turn, protect members of Burgess Hill Theatre Club.

2. Policy Statement and Aims

Policy Statement

Burgess Hill Theatre Club recognises its duty of care under the Children & Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999. Burgess Hill Theatre Club has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in the Club from harm. All children have a right to protection and Burgess Hill Theatre Club will ensure the safety and protection of these children. A child is defined as a person under the age of 17 and in full time education.

Aims

The aims of the Burgess Hill Theatre Club Protection Policy is to promote good practice by:

- providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in our care
- allowing members to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues
- to ensure that members looking after or working with children are well informed, protected and supported

3. Promoting good practice

All members should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations.

Good practice means:

- treating all young people equally and with respect and dignity
- putting the welfare of each young person first
- ensuring no children share a dressing room with adults and no child over the age of 5 years shares a dressing room with a child of the opposite sex
- ensuring no child performs if unwell and that a record of any illnesses or injuries are kept
- ensuring that the regulations set down by the licensing authority (in order to perform) are adhered to
- ensuring that licenced chaperones are supervising the welfare of children whilst performing
- always being publicly open when working with children. Avoiding situations where a member and individual child are completely unobserved
- never leaving children unattended. It is the Club's responsibility to ensure that the child has been released into the care of an appropriate adult and collected from the premises.
- The licensee (or person in charge) should know the whereabouts of all children at all times
- Ensuring that we hold a register of every child involved and retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergency

4. Photography and Promotion

- Permission must be sought for the taking of photographs or filming, not only from the director but also from the committee
- Consent from the parent/carer should be sought prior to taking any photos/film
- All photos/film should be taken by authorised people only (as agreed by the Club)
- Photos should be used for individual purposes only and not passed on to any third parties
- The use of children's names (first name or surname) should be avoided in photograph captions as well as any other personal information
- Photos should only be posted on authorised sites e.g Burgess Hill Theatre Club website
- The taking of photos on mobile phones should be discouraged
- The Club's web based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use
- The Club's social media sites will be password protected and monitored by a designated Club member
- Any inappropriate posts on the website or social media sites will be removed

5. Recognising abuse

The following are examples of what to look for but the indicators below are not proof that abuse is actually taking place.

a) Physical abuse

- injuries to any part of the body
- injuries that are not typical of bumps associated with children's activities
- furtive, secretive behaviour and/or uncharacteristic aggression or withdrawn behaviour

b) Emotional abuse

- emotional indicators such as low esteem, unhappiness, fear, distress, anxiety
- behavioural indicators such as attention seeking
- dysfunctional family relationships including domestic violence

c) Sexual abuse

- awkwardness in walking or sitting down
- stomach pains
- extreme variations in behaviour

d) Neglect

- underweight or obesity
- hunger
- recurrent infections
- indiscriminate friendliness
- poor relationships
- poor concentration
- low self esteem

e) Other

- Bullying and cyber-bullying will not be accepted or condoned
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour

6. Responding to allegations / suspicion

It is not the responsibility of individual members to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. However, there is a responsibility to protect children in order that the appropriate agencies can make enquiries and take any necessary action.

Where there is a complaint against any member of Burgess Hill Theatre Club there may be 3 types of investigation:

- criminal investigation
- child protection investigation
- disciplinary or misconduct investigation

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled on a need to know basis only. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access, in line with data protection laws.

All concerns should be reported to the Club's Child Protection Officer (if available) or an officer of the Club (Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer) who should then contact social services or the police if necessary. The Child Protection Officer is currently Nicola Collins.

If a serious allegation is made against a member of the Club, they will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms etc. whilst any investigation is conducted.

Advice can also be sought from West Sussex County Council. For Child and Employment issues please call 0330 2228384 and for Child Protection issues please call West Sussex Safeguarding Board on 0330 2225296 or MASH 01403 229900 / 0330 2226664 Out of Hours