



Cambridge Operatic Society

Safeguarding Policy

February 2024

Version history

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Table of Contents

Version history	2
Policy statement	3
Code of conduct for working with young people	4
Risk Assessment and assessing contact with children and young people	6
Reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse	6
Company's designated person	7
The employment of children and young people	7
Recognising child abuse	8
Physical Abuse.....	8
Emotional Abuse.....	8
Sexual Abuse.....	8
Neglect.....	9
Responsibilities of Designated Person	9

Policy statement

Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS) is committed to practice which protects children and young people from physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Company Members accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children and young people harm.

For the purpose of this policy and attached procedures, the term 'Company Members' includes any performers, committee members, volunteers; and, any contractors employed by us.

We will endeavour to safeguard children and young people by:

Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of conduct for employees and volunteers in contact with children and young people.

- Following carefully the procedures for the recruitment and selection of employees and volunteers working with children and young people
- Providing effective management of Committee Members through supervision, support and training
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies that need to know and involving parents and children and young people appropriately

For the purposes of this policy and the attached procedures, the following definitions apply. The term 'child' is anyone under the age of 18. The term 'young person' refers to the upper age ranges of the official definition of a child i.e. 16 & 17 year old.

Code of conduct for working with young people

We expect all persons in any capacity who are working with children and young people to conform to the following code of conduct to ensure that children and young people are listened to, valued and respected as individuals and involved in decision making as appropriate.

In particular, that Company Members recognise the particular duty of care they have in relation to children and young people. Following the code of conduct also ensures Company Members are protected from false allegations.

1. Company Members should always behave appropriately around children and young people using appropriate language and never making sexually suggestive comments in front of, about, or to, a child even in fun.
2. Company Members should always encourage children and young people to behave with respect towards each other.
3. Company Members are generally not allowed to photograph or film any children or young people. Where photography or filming is required for auditions, publicity etc. written consent to take photographs, to film or video will be sought in advance from the school or parent. Photography will only be carried out by a nominated person or professional photographer / filmmaker. The Company undertakes to store any non-published material securely and to use any material responsibly.
4. Company Members must record and refer all allegations made by children and young people and any suspicions of abuse they have in line with the Child Protection Policy on Reporting Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse – see section 4. The Company will provide support and protection for any Company Member expressing concerns about a colleague and for any Company Member who has an accusation made against them.
5. Company Members (except licensed chaperones) should not under any circumstances spend any time alone with children and young people. No meetings with a child should take place without a chaperone present at all times.
6. Company Members will be aware that physical contact may be misinterpreted and should not have unnecessary physical contact with children and young people. There may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable or positively desirable or necessary for example to provide reassurance to a distressed child or if directed to do so in a performance. Physical contact should only take place with the consent of the child and the purpose of the contact should be clear.
7. Children and young people should not be taken alone on car journeys, under any circumstance. Only in an emergency, when a chaperone is indisposed and this entirely unavoidable, the full knowledge and consent of the parents, carers and a senior manager in the organisation should be sought. In seeking consent, chaperones should state the purpose of the journey and the anticipated length. They should also check insurance liability.

8. It is absolutely forbidden that Company Members should meet with children and young people outside organised activities. Neither should they invite or allow a child to stay with them at their home unsupervised.
9. Company Members should never do things of a personal nature for children and young people that they can do for themselves. Company Members should always avoid sexually provocative or informal rough physical games. However, it is recognised that physical games and sexual language may sometimes be part of a structured rehearsals / performances, but must be considered as to whether appropriate for the young person and carefully explained.
10. Any accidents on site involving children and young people must be recorded in the Company's accident book. Any accidents occurring off site must be recorded in the appropriate accident book with a copy for the Company's records.
11. Company Members should avoid smoking, even in permitted areas, in the presence of children and young people.
12. The children will have their own toilets at the rehearsal room and at the theatre - these must not be used by adult Company Members as this is a legal requirement.
13. Company Members are not permitted to make contact with the children by phone, email or via social networking websites such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

This is our Company policy and as such any disregard to the code of conduct outlined here may result in disciplinary action against a Company Member.

Risk assessment and assessing contact with children and young people

1. All areas of the Company where children and young people may be employed, or visiting, will be subject to a risk assessment, primarily to consider the physical environment. Risk assessments will also be carried out for project or youth work off site.
2. Whilst the Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS) Child Protection Policy applies to all Company Members, the procedures are most relevant for employees with significant or sole responsibility for children and young people. Company members in these positions will be subject to additional pre – employment checks.

Reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse

1. At all times Company Members must remember that the priority is to safeguard the welfare of the child and young people. In all situations where a Company Member has a suspicion of abuse, an incident arises or a disclosure is made, she/he must pass the details onto one of the Company's Designated Person.
2. Some guidelines for recognising abuse are attached (Appendix 6); however, it is not the Company Members responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has taken place or to investigate the allegations or suspicions themselves.
3. A Company Member should not promise confidentiality to any child or young people the information received may have to be acted upon by other authorities.
4. A Company Member should not contact the subject of the allegation or concern; neither should they discuss the matter with parents or carers.
5. It is important that in cases where a child or young person talks about abuse, the conversation is recorded as soon as possible afterwards. The record should reflect the conversation as accurately as possible using the child's words. The record should be signed and dated noting the time and location when it took place and anyone else present should be included. This record should be stored securely, passed onto one of the Company's Designated Person and only shared with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.
6. Employees should be aware that *Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS)* encourages 'whistle – blowing' for the sake of the child or young people and that whilst it is often difficult to express concerns about colleagues it is important to do so to the Designated Person. Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS) will provide support and protection for 'whistle blowers' and equally support for any member of staff who has an accusation made against them.
7. If an allegation of abuse or a declaration is made against an employee or volunteer of the Company, the Designated Person will decide if the matter should be referred to the local authority - Child Protection Team. They will take the appropriate action.

Company's designated person

In the first instance Company Members should report any concerns to the Company Manager. The Company Manager will report this onwards to the Children's Administrator who is deemed the 'Designated Person'.

For reference, the contact details are below:

Sam Fuller

Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS) - Children's Administrator
07912 528298

If a Company Member remains unsatisfied they should report their concerns to our designated Child Protection Officer:

Ash Smith

Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS) – Designated Child Protection Officer

The employment of children and young people

1. All children and young people employed by *Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS)* as singers or actors require a license from their local education authority. As part of the licensing procedure the Company has to demonstrate how a licensed chaperone or one of their parents will care for the child/ children during their employment.
2. Licensed chaperones are vetted by their licensing Authority. Disclosure information and references are taken up as part of the licensing procedure. Therefore, section 2 on employment does not apply to chaperones.
3. The role of the chaperone is to accompany their child/children at all times, to keep records of rehearsal, performance, waiting, and tuition times as well as meal and break times, and to stay with the children in hotels and traveling to and from the theatre. These records will be kept by the Children's Administrator. This information should be available for LEA inspection for up to 6 months if required.
4. Chaperones would be expected to report allegations or suspected abuse in line with the Company policy or through their own social services contacts, keeping the Designated Person informed.
5. *Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS)* will only use licensed chaperones. The Local Authority will inform the company if for any reason a chaperone's licence is revoked.

Our Child Protection Policy shall be reviewed annually following our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in June.

Recognising child abuse

Recognising child abuse is not easy and it is **not** your responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place or if a child or young person is at significant risk. You do however have a responsibility to act if you have a concern.

The following information will help you be more alert to the signs of possible abuse:

Physical Abuse

Most children will collect cuts and bruises in their daily life. These are likely to be in places where there are bony parts of their body, like elbows, knees and shins. Some Children, however, will have bruising which can almost only have been caused non-accidentally. An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury, or when it appears on parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely e.g. cheeks and thighs. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern.

Bruising may be more or less noticeable on children with different skin tones or from different racial groups.

The physical signs of abuse may include;

- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- Cigarette burns
- Bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, and often children who appear well cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix / play with other children.

Sexual Abuse

Adults, who use children and young people to meet their own sexual needs, abuse both girls and boys of all ages including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behaviour which may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is therefore important that they are listened to and taken seriously.

As well as physical signs of sexual abuse which may not to be seen in the context of their association with *Cambridge Operatic Society (CaOS)*, changes in behaviour can also indicate sexual abuse including;

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn

- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or development level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults

Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexual ways.

Neglect

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children.

The physical and behavioural signs of neglect may include;

- Constant hunger sometimes stealing food from other children
- Constantly dirty or 'smelly'
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions
- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Having few friends
- Mentioning their being left alone or unsupervised

The above list is not meant to be definitive but as a guide to assist you. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death or the birth of a new baby in their family, relationship problems between their parents/carers etc.

Responsibilities of Designated Person

The Designated Person will collect details of the child (name, age, sex, address names of parents or guardians) and details of the allegation or disclosure.

With the exception of trivial or obviously malicious reports, the Designated Person will in most instances, telephone the child's Local Authority to refer the matter. The Allegation or disclosure should then be followed up in writing within 48 hours.

Social services should acknowledge the written referral within one working day of receiving it. It is the Designated Person's responsibility to follow up the matter if nothing has been heard within 3 working days.

The Designated Person together with the individual making the allegation or referring the disclosure will agree whether any of the information needs to be shared with others in the Company or parents.

If the disclosure or allegation relates to an employee or volunteer he/she will be suspended in all cases for an initial period no longer than 10 working days. The suspension is to allow social services to carry out an investigation and is not a disciplinary sanction. The Designated Person is responsible for keeping the employee or volunteer informed of the investigation and ensuring Company support is available if required.

Social services will usually complete an initial investigation within 7 working days and will report their findings to the Designated Person.

If Social Services decide that no further child protection action is required the member of staff / volunteer will be informed in writing and immediately reinstated.

If Social Services are unable to reach a conclusion after their initial investigation, further investigation is required and the suspension will continue to be reviewed every 10 working days. The Designated Person is responsible for keeping the employee or volunteer informed of the investigation and ensuring Company support is available if required.

In some cases, it may be appropriate for the individual to return to work in a different area pending the outcome of the investigation. However, the priority must always be the security of children and young people and a decision to temporarily reinstate will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

If, after the initial investigation, the social workers decide to lead a core assessment under Section 47 of the Children's Act; no reinstatement will be considered until the outcome of the core assessment is known.

If at any stage the Company has a reasonable suspicion that there has been a serious breach of contract in an employee's behaviour the Company will instigate a full investigation under the disciplinary procedure independent of any social services investigation or police prosecution.