

Safeguarding Policy August 2026

Elstead Village Theatre (“the Society”) recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

Definitions for the purposes of this policy. Child: Any person aged 17 years or under. Vulnerable Adult: Section 2 of the The Police Act 1997 (Enhanced Criminal Record Certificates) (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) Regulations 2002 provides a legal definition. For the purposes of this policy the term is paraphrased as being any person over 18 years who is in need of care and support as they are at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect as they cannot protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

The Society recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. The Society is committed to protecting children from harm. All members of the Society accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The Society believes that:

- The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount.
- Everyone, 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 and vulnerable adults will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children and vulnerable adults will always be put first. A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers children and vulnerable adults 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. This may take the form of in-person or online bullying, and may include physical or verbal bullying based on appearance, race, religion or sexual orientation.
- All 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.

- The Society will keep up-to-date with health & safety legislation.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- It will undertake relevant development and training for those members working with children or vulnerable adults.
- For the length of a production or activity that involves children, the Society will hold a register of every child involved, any allergies or medical conditions and associated medication and will retain two contact names and numbers in case of emergencies.

The Society has child protection procedures which are appended to this policy. The Society has a Designated Safeguarding Lead, who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to. That person's name is Melanie Duke. She can be contacted on duke-m@outlook.com.

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Committee of the Society and will be subject to annual review.

APPENDIX Child Protection Procedures Responsibilities of the Society

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

- Apply for a performing license when required, ensuring all guidance from council is up to date and adhered to.
- Consider and monitor the risks throughout the production process.
- Identify the person with designated responsibility for child protection for the production (this would usually be the director or parent if part of the cast).
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones (where required) including appropriate vetting.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in the event that it needs to report a concern. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) can be contacted on: 0300 123 1650, 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
- Follow its responsibilities as under the society's Children's Privacy Policy.

Parents/Guardians

- The Society believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents/guardians and the Society. Parents/guardians are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the Society and to share responsibility for the care of children. All

parents/guardians will be told where to find the Society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

- All parents/guardians 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, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.
- If it is predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, he or she may be required to obtain a disclosure and barring service clearance.

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.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Suspicion of abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the Society, 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 a member of the committee other than the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- 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. This should not include personal opinions, assumptions or hearsay.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the Society, chaperone, venue staff etc., that individual will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production.

Disclosure of abuse

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Don't 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.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police. However, if the DSL is not immediately available and you believe the child to be in immediate danger, it is up to you to call 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 of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident must 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 & Confidentiality

- If a complaint is made against a member of the Society, they will be made aware of their rights under the Society's constitution.
- 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 the General Data Protection Regulations 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 and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the Society a chaperone will ensure appropriate first aid is provided. It must be reported to the Management Committee of the venue in which the accident took place and recorded in their accident book.
- If a child attends a rehearsal/performance/activity with an obvious physical injury the person responsible for that rehearsal/performance/activity will make a note of the injury. This record will be countersigned by a member of the society and the child's parent/guardian. 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/rehearsal/activity.

Disclosure and barring service clearances

- If the Society believes it is in its best interests to obtain disclosure and barring service clearances for chaperones or other personnel, it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required. A Standard disclosure will apply for anyone with supervised access to children. An Enhanced disclosure will be required for anyone with unsupervised access.
- The Society will have a written code of practice for the handling of disclosure information.
- The Society will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by the Society for the care of children during the production process, when required. 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.

- The maximum number of children in any one chaperone's care shall not exceed 12. •
- Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity (eg. passport, driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless already well known to the Society. All chaperones will also be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the Society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care. If unsupervised access is unavoidable, or if this is a requirement of the local authority, a disclosure and barring service clearance will be sought.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the director. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the director and not allow the child to continue.
- Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell the director to cease using children in this way and should notify the society's Child Protection Officer.
- During performances chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents/guardians.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by the Society, and reported to the management committee of the venue.

- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting.
- If an adult cast member is responsible for collecting a child that child cannot be signed back to the adult until that adult is ready to leave the building. i.e. they may not wait for the adult in the adult's dressing room.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child until suitable arrangements are made.