

Child Protection Policy



1 – The Bluntisham and Colne Stage Group (BaCStage) 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.

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

3 – BaCStage 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 BaCStage members should be clear on how to respond appropriately.**

4 – BaCStage 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 the 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 BaCStage 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 BaCStage and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

5 – BaCStage has child protection procedures and a health and safety policy.

6 – BaCStage has a dedicated Child Protection Officer, who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to. That person's name and contact details are available on request.

7 – BaCStage believes that it is important to work in partnership with parents (NB: all references to parents include guardians).

8 – This policy will be regularly monitored and will be subject to annual review.

Date: May 2012

Reviewed: 4 July 2013

Reviewed: 3 July 2014

Reviewed and updated (following change of Child Protection Officer): September 2014

Reviewed: 16 July 2015

Reviewed: 8 July 2016

Reviewed: 11 July 2019

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Responsibilities:

BaCStage

At the outset of any production involving children BaCStage 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 (if necessary in consultation with the local education authority).

Ensure that children are supervised at all times.

Report any concerns to the person with designated responsibility for child protection.

Parents

BaCStage believes that it is important to work in partnership with parents (NB: all references to parents include guardians). To that end:

A copy of BaCStage's Child Protection Policy is available to all parents on request.

Parents will be encouraged to be involved in the activities of BaCStage and to share responsibility for the care of children.

All parents are responsible for meeting/collecting (or arranging collection of) their child after rehearsals or performances, and must let both the child and BaCStage know who will meet/collect the child. Parents must also let BaCStage know if the child has permission to travel independently to and from BaCStage. It is NOT the responsibility of BaCStage to take children home.

Unsupervised Contact

BaCStage will try to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.

If possible there will always be at least 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 the door open.

Physical Contact

You are reminded that your actions can be misinterpreted. Therefore, all adults will:

maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children

only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to a particular activity

seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact will 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.

BaCStage will actively discourage children from using their mobile phones to take photographs at rehearsals and performances.

BaCStage's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.

BaCStage will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as criminal record disclosures.

Suspicion of abuse

If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the BaCStage, 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 Chairman.

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.

The individual against whom the allegation is made will be excluded from any premises rented or hired by BaCStage and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production. See **Rights and Confidentiality** below.

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. **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 liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police, and with parents.

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 will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.

An accurate note will 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, eg exclusion 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 serious complaint of abuse is made against any member of BaCStage, chaperone, other volunteer (eg set builders, front of house staff at productions) etc, this will be investigated by the relevant authorities.

Both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have a right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. It must also be borne in mind 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. 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 BaCStage first aid will be given, parents will be informed as soon as possible, and the injury will be recorded in BaCStage's **accident book**.

If a child joins the production with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. 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.

Chaperones

Chaperones will be appointed by BaCStage for the care of children during the production process. Chaperones will normally be a BaCStage member or other volunteer who is well known to BaCStage. The chaperone should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care will not exceed 12.

Unless already well known to BaCStage, 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. They 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 BaCStage's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care.

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.

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 BaCStage.

If a parent has not collected a child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child until arrangements have been made for the child to be taken home.