



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY – 2022**

1. Introduction In all that we do Macclesfield Majestic Theatre Group ( MMTG) has a legal duty to ensure that the children and young people we engage with, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse – an obligation we take very seriously.

2. Roles and Responsibilities As stated in the introduction all staff working for MMTG, either as a permanent member of staff, contractor or freelancer and regardless of seniority or role, have a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children. Although MMTG is not a statutory body it has a responsibility towards any child it interacts with whether as a performer or visitor. MMTG has a strict Code of Conduct that all adults working with children, in whatever capacity, must adhere to. The importance of this Code is that it makes explicit the behaviour that is expected when working within any environment that includes children and therefore makes any deviation from the Code of Conduct easily identifiable. It is not meant to inhibit normal interactions with children but to support respectful relationships between MMTG staff and children. This document is focused on child protection across MMTG when directly interacting with a child (and their family or chaperone) in any capacity and location.

### 3. Legal context

3.1 The UK is governed by a range of legislation that seeks to protect the child and these have an impact on how MMTG functions in respect of its relationship with children.

3.2 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) says that every child has:

The right to a childhood including protection from all forms of violence (Article 6, 19, 34, 36)

The right to have their best interests at the heart of all we do (Article 3)

The right to be educated (Article 28, 29, 32). The right to be healthy (Article 6, 31)

The right to be treated fairly (Article 4) Example of a Production Company's Child Protection Policy 1

The right to privacy (Article 16) T

The right to be heard including considering children's views (Article 12, 13, 14, 15, 23) Access to information from the media in a form they can understand (Article 13, 17)

3.3 In England the current child protection system is built around the Children Act 1989 (amended under the Adoption and Children Act 2002) which introduced the principle of the best interests of the child being paramount, parental responsibility and significant harm (the threshold at which compulsory intervention into family life by Local Authorities is possible).

3.4 A further document of significance for England is the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (Department for Education, 2013). Wales has its own guidance known as Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006).

3.5 The Disclosure & Barring Service is responsible for undertaking criminal records checks on individuals who apply to work with children in a regulated activity. For Scotland this role is undertaken by Disclosure Scotland under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVGS).

Even for those roles that do require a DBS/PVGS check it is important to remember that this check, of itself, does not protect a child. It is therefore incumbent on all who work within MMTG (or have a contractual obligation) to be sensitive to what is adult appropriate behaviour towards children, and to share concerns where they believe an adult, who works with children, may pose a risk to a child.

4. What is Safeguarding? Safeguarding can be described as the process of maintaining a focus on the well-being of a child to promote their welfare and protect them from harm during their direct involvement with MMTG. Such areas are covered within the Child Performance Regulations.

5. What is Child Protection?

5.1 Child protection is the activity that is concerned with the protection of a child from significant harm through abuse.

5.2 Abuse is categorised into four main headings

1 : **Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

**Emotional abuse** involves the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development . It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or Example of a Production Company's Child Protection Policy 2 valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

**Sexual abuse** Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve penetrative and non-penetrative sexual contact with a child as well as non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

**Neglect** may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

6. Vulnerability When working with children it is important to recognise that some children and young people may be more vulnerable to abuse by virtue of having a disability, parental and child mental health issues, experiencing bullying, parental or child substance misuse (drugs or alcohol), behavioural issues including exclusion from education, social isolation etc., It is important that we ensure that the adults in the environment within which children engage with are knowledgeable and confident to report any concerns they may have for a child or have about the behaviour of an adult or other young person, towards a child. Some adults will try to groom children over a period of time while others may act opportunistically. It is therefore up to all who work within XXXXX to assist in creating an environment where the potential to perpetrate abuse is prevented.

6.1. What do I do if I am concerned about a child? You may be concerned about the welfare of a child for a number of reasons. You may, for example, have observed an injury, witnessed or heard an interaction between children or between an adult and a child, you may be concerned regarding bullying or inappropriate use of mobile phones, you may know of someone who has been or is accessing or sharing child sex abuse images, a child may exhibit inappropriately sexualised behaviour or awareness, or look neglected or withdrawn in their behaviour or a they may have made a disclosure to you of abuse to themselves, or abuse of another, including domestic abuse.

6.2 Specifically if a child suggests they want to tell you a 'secret' or discloses information that may suggest they are at risk of, or have been abused, it is important that you tell them that you are unable to keep secrets and that, dependent upon what they tell you, you may have to tell someone else in order to keep them safe. In the majority of cases the child will disclose to you anyway as it is often the case that the child will have prepared themselves to make a disclosure.

It is important that you:

- Remain calm and do not show shock or disbelief
- Listen carefully to what is being said
- Don't ask detailed, probing or leading questions
- Tell them that you take what they are saying seriously
- Tell them what you are going to do next and that you will only tell people on 'a need to know' basis
- Tell them that when you have spoken to someone they will be told what is going to happen next.

In most situations the child is unlikely to be in immediate danger but if they are you must contact the police on 999 and once you have done that refer to your Child Protection Adviser/Line Manager as soon as possible. If the parent is not aware of the disclosure, or they are the alleged abuser, it is better to wait until you've sought advice from your Child Protection Adviser/Line Manager before saying anything as this situation would need to be handled sensitively. In general it is better to wait for guidance from the police or Social Services who will be able to make the decision as to how much information should be shared

6.3 Whatever your concern, whether you have been told something by the child or another person or you've seen or heard something that has made you uncomfortable you must share it. This responsibility exists regardless of whether the concern is for a child involved in production or whether the concerns are for children external to MMTG. Do not ignore it and do nothing. You are not expected to decide what is significant or whether abuse has happened but you are expected to share information. Contact your Child Protection Adviser/Line Manager immediately and share your concern for the child with them. They will be able to advise you on the next step. If you are unable to contact the Child Protection Adviser / Line Manager it is important not to delay taking whatever action is necessary to safeguard the child.

6.4 Dependent on the seriousness of your concern it may not be possible to maintain your anonymity. However, the reasons why will be discussed with you and you will be offered support throughout. Social workers will always consider how best to protect the referrer but ultimately such decisions have to be made in the best interests of the child and it is always possible that perpetrators can guess who made the referral.

6.5 When deciding what to do there are a number of things that need to be considered. The following is not exhaustive. Is the child in immediate danger? If yes, dial 999 and ask for the Police and then inform your Child Protection Adviser/ Line Manager. Is the child in need of urgent medical intervention? If yes, dial 999 and ask for an ambulance and then inform your Child Protection Adviser/ Line Manager. **If the level of urgency is not reflective of any of the above but you have concerns for a child or believe they may be at risk of harm you must contact your Child Protection Adviser/ Line Manager. Child Protection Adviser/ Line Manager on shoot: Name: Dawn Dale – 07939567904.** Dependent on the severity of the concern, agreed outcomes and actions may vary. If the concern is not thought sufficiently serious enough to warrant a referral to the NSPCC consideration should be given as to whether the nature of the concern should be shared externally

with professionals who may know the child and family better than you do i.e., Social Services, the child's GP, Health Visitor or School Nurse, the child's teacher or probation. The information you hold may be important in building a bigger picture and help to safeguard the child. Child Performance Licenses A child or young people contributing to MMTG content as an actor or performer may need a Child Performance License. These are granted by the Local Authority for the area where the child lives.

Child performance licensing and activities legislation sets out the arrangements that must be made to safeguard children when they take part in certain types of performances, paid sport or paid modelling England The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014 has superseded the Children (Performances) Regulations 1968 and came into force on 6th February 2015. Scotland - The relevant primary legislation is Part II of the Children & Young Persons Act 1963 (1963 Act) which provides for the current licensing system for child performances and other activities. Also, section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (1933 Act) makes provision for licenses to perform or take part in activities abroad. The relevant secondary legislation is the Children (Performances and Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 (2014 Regulations) which came into force on 20 February 2015. Also relevant is section 94 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which was commenced on 1 August 2014. Chaperones The contribution of children and young people to our content is much valued by MMTG and we want to make sure that they enjoy the experience. Therefore, chaperones are employed in a professional capacity to act in loco parentis and to ensure the wellbeing of any child or young person whilst working on a production or visiting MMTG as a contributor. The role of a chaperone is to support us in ensuring that the best interests of the child is at the heart of everything we do. The chaperone must ensure no-one; cast, crew, directors, other children or tutors as well as the child themselves, does anything detrimental to their wellbeing, while remaining focused on the task at hand. Where possible the child's parent will be required to act as the child's chaperone. If this is not possible a professional chaperone would be used. If a parent is licensed by their Local Authority as a chaperone, they may be employed to chaperone other children. You can find out about the chaperone service for child actors from your local council. When employed by MMTG on any production it is important that the chaperone understands the MMTG Child Protection Policy and their responsibilities. Child Protection Policy Review The MMTG Child Protection Policy will be reviewed annually.