



Further information

For child performance and chaperone licence application forms and further information, contact:

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If you would like this information in another language or format such as Braille, large print or audio, please ask us.



EAST RIDING
OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Children in Entertainment



**Education Welfare Service:
Safeguarding Guidance for those
working with children and young
people who perform**



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Introduction

Protecting Children – everybody's business

This booklet has been designed specifically for adults working with children in entertainment and is intended as a guide to enable better awareness of child protection responsibilities, safe practice and professional conduct. In addition it provides guidance about safeguarding issues including, recognising and referring suspected or actual child abuse. It is hoped that, as a resource, it will contribute towards the development of child protection observation skills.

Context

Children have a right to protection from neglect, physical, emotional and sexual harm. The community as a whole has a responsibility for the protection of children and for reporting concerns about a child's welfare or safety. In particular organisations, companies and individuals working with children and young people have an important role because of their concern for the welfare and development of those children and young people.

The Children and Young Person Act 1963 prescribes how the health and safety needs of child performers are met through regulation of the number of hours they rehearse and perform, the activities they can and cannot undertake, and the standard of the facilities and conditions in which they may work. This means that the production company, and in particular chaperones, have a responsibility to promote and safeguard the welfare of the children in their care.

The role of the chaperone is essentially a child protection role in the broadest sense. Not only does the Children & Young Persons Act 1963 require that chaperones ensure that the child is not at risk of exploitation; implicitly, it requires that the welfare of the child is paramount.

It is helpful for the production company staff to have a nominated person with child protection training or experience as a point of reference for chaperones and who can assist in making a child protection referral.

Dealing with suspected or actual child abuse is always stressful and upsetting. Chaperones and others working with children in entertainment need to know how to recognise the indications of abuse and what action they should take to help protect children and where to access support.

Safe Practice

All production company staff, cast, crew, others involved in direct physical contact with child performers (such as dressers and make-up artists) and in particular chaperones should be mindful of their conduct. This includes use of language, touch and general behaviour.

Any unnecessary physical contact should be avoided as it could be misconstrued either by the young person themselves, or by others. Direct physical contact necessary for dressing and make up should, wherever possible, only be undertaken in the presence of other adults and should not involve intimate touching.

Contacts or meetings with individual children should not be undertaken alone. Special relationships and favouritism should be avoided as they are both divisive and liable to misinterpretation. Any unusual or disturbing behaviour or comments by a child or young person regarding an adult member of the production or a peer should be reported to a senior member of the production company and, where appropriate, a child protection referral made.

Allegations against production staff, chaperones or their families

If an allegation is made against a member of the production team, chaperone, cast or helper, full co-operation will be sought from those in charge, the individual member of staff and the licensing authority. In the case of serious allegations it will be necessary to suspend the member of staff immediately until the investigation is concluded.

If the allegation concerns a friend or family member of the production company including cast, crew or a chaperone, they will be advised of the nature of the allegation and their full co-operation sought with any investigation. It may be necessary to exclude from the theatre/rehearsal rooms the person against whom the allegation has been made or ensure that they do not have unsupervised contact with children.

After an investigation has been completed, the licensing authority, in consultation with the police and child care services, will then consider whether it is safe for the person concerned to remain involved with the production/performance.



Personal support networks

Child protection referrals and investigations are often distressing and professionally demanding situations, and consideration should be given to what support may be necessary for any production company staff involved in the process.

It is helpful for production company staff to have a nominated person with child protection training or experience as a point of contact who can offer support and advice to chaperones or others in dealing with the emotional component of child protection related issues. Wherever possible the production company should establish who within their organisation can fulfil this role.

Recognition – What to look for

Recognising abuse is not a precise science and sometimes even professionals get it wrong. However, the welfare of the child is, and must be, paramount.

The following paragraphs outline some of the potential indicators that a child or young person is being, or has been, abused.

Physical abuse is perhaps easiest to recognise. For example in injuries which are not typical of the bumps and scrapes associated with children's activities; the regular occurrence of unexplained injuries, or the child who is frequently injured where there are conflicting explanations of how the injuries were sustained. Furtive, secretive behaviour; uncharacteristic aggression or withdrawn behaviour can also be an indicator as can changes such as a child who suddenly becomes ill co-ordinated, or finds it difficult to stay awake.

The recognition of both emotional abuse and neglect is based on observations over time of the quality of relationships between parent/carer and the child. For example, inappropriate or inconsistent developmental expectations of the child (this may be seen in the context of unreal expectations or excessive demands on the child in relation to theatrical performance and professional success) and the level of care given to the child's basic needs.

There may be no recognisable signs of sexual abuse but the following indicators may be signs that a child is, or has been, sexually abused: Sexually provocative behaviour or knowledge that is incompatible with the child's age and understanding, drawing and/or written work which are sexually explicit (indirect disclosure). Direct disclosure – it is important to recognise that children have neither the experience nor the understanding to be able to make up stories about sexual assault so must be listened to if they talk to you about being abused.



What action to take – who to tell and what to tell them

If you have any concerns about the wellbeing of a child in your care you have the duty to make a child protection referral.

In the East Riding of Yorkshire this can be done by telephone to a customer service centre. You will need to have as much of the following information as possible when you make the referral:

- The child's name, date of birth, address, race, religion, language and any known special needs
- Parents/carers names, address
- The reason for your concern
- Any other factors within the family that may be contributing to the problem

If you do not have all the above information do not let this deter you from making a referral.

Customer service centres are located in Anlaby, Beverley, Bridlington, Cottingham, Driffield, Goole, Hedon, Hessle, Hornsea, Pocklington and Withernsea. Please telephone (01482) 393939.

Where the production company has a nominated Child Protection person, they should be informed of the concern and will make the referral. If in such circumstances, the company declines to refer the matter on, the individual chaperone should do so in accordance with the guidance above.

REMEMBER - THE WELFARE OF THE CHILD IS PARAMOUNT.

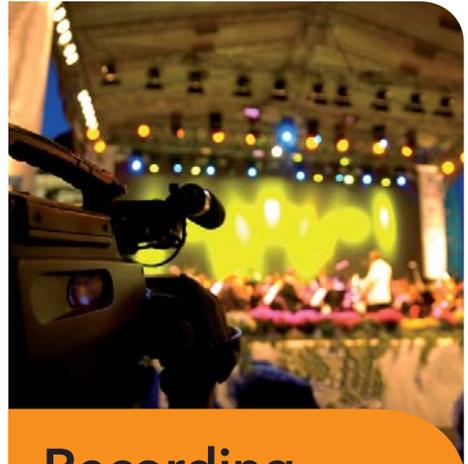


Dealing with parents

The well being of the child is the paramount consideration in all child protection work. In any conflict between the needs of the child and those of the parents/carers or staff working with the child, the needs of the child must be put first.

Production staff and chaperones in particular often experience anxiety about how to deal with parents where child abuse is suspected. This is a particularly sensitive issue for some chaperones who may know the family socially, or where in large productions parents are also assisting with chaperone responsibilities. It is helpful to issue all parents with some written guidance outlining the duty to refer child protection concerns and to uphold the welfare of the child as the paramount consideration.

This information can be given to parents when the child begins to attend rehearsals. Parents will be made aware of the source of referrals and generally will wish to co-operate with all parties. However, should a parent act in an intimidatory manner as a result of a referral being made, production company staff should seek advice from child care services and the police.



Recording

The maintenance of notes kept of significant events or conversations will assist with any referral and subsequent investigation. Such notes ensure that there is a documented account of the events and concerns, which have led to a referral being made. They should be written in plain English, and should always differentiate between facts, opinion or judgement and they should be dated. Records such as this can be an essential source of evidence for enquiries and investigations and a validation of the provider's decision to refer.

Referral Checklist

- Concerns or incident identified and recorded
- Contact customer service centre with details of your concern
- Remember to have as much information to hand as possible about the child, date of birth, address, names and addresses of parents or carers, race religion, language and any known special needs the child has
- Note the time and date of your referral and ensure you are clear what, if any, action is requested of you by child care services
- Contact your associated support group if necessary



Useful Information

What is Child Abuse?

Department of Health definitions:

Physical Harm

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy or Factitious Illness by Proxy, may also constitute a physical abuse whereby a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child.

Emotional Harm

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger; or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Harm

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or a carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger; or the failure to ensure access to the appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of a child's basic emotional needs.

The Concepts of Significant Harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of Significant Harm that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child. Significant harm is measured against the severity, extent, duration, frequency, extent of premeditation and the degree of threat and coercion involved. It also takes into account the effect on the child and the degree of difficulty in helping the child overcome the adverse impact of the ill treatment.

Child Protection Investigation

Child care services and the police are responsible for investigating referrals to establish the facts and to clarify the grounds for concern. The initial investigation seeks to identify the sources and levels of risk and to agree what protective action may be necessary. If the investigation finds sufficient cause for concern, a child protection conference will be called within fifteen working days.

Child Protection Conference

This is a meeting convened by child care services and involving professionals who know the family, the parents, the investigators, and others who can contribute to decision making. Depending on their age and understanding, the child in question may be invited. As the referer, you may be invited to attend a child protection conference and to share your knowledge of the family and the concerns about the child.

The purpose of the conference is to establish whether or not the child is suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm, and to agree an action plan to protect the child and support the family. It is important in dealing with allegations of child abuse for there to be the fullest co-operation possible between all concerned.

Body map

A body map should be used to assist workers in identifying potential non-accidental injury sites.

