Children in Entertainment
Chaperone Guidance Notes

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Dear Volunteer,

Please use these guidance notes as a first reference point for any queries you may have whilst performing your duties as a licensed chaperone. If you have any questions after you training session, please do contact us.

Warm Regards

Child Employment & Entertainment Team
East Sussex County Council

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</tr>
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Why are you here?

East Sussex County Council has a statutory responsibility to:

- Issue Child Performance Licences for children who live in East Sussex
- Licence Chaperones who live in East Sussex

To ensure the safety, well-being and appropriate treatment of all children engaged in a performance or activity.

To ensure that all children are properly supervised at all times by a Chaperone who understands his/her role.

When does a child need a licence?

A child must have an entertainment licence if he/she:

- Performs for more than 4 days in a 6 month period
- Is required to miss any school
- Receives payment

If a child has a licence, the chaperone must let the authority know if the child:

- Is performing or rehearsing elsewhere during the licensed period
- Is undertaking any other paid work

When is a Chaperone needed?

This includes all amateur or professional work and covers dance school shows and pantomimes (including local village production).
Who is a Chaperone?

An adult (male or female) who can take responsibility of school age children whilst at the place of performance/activity

Should be the same gender as the child/ren in their care

Act in “loco parentis”

Role of a Chaperone

Precise duties will vary according to the nature of the performance/activity

"Main duties will be to ensure that when a child is not performing, including in the break between two performances on the same day, the child is properly supervised and has adequate meals, rest and recreation"

Role of a Chaperone - Duties

Be in charge of no more than 12 children, of the same gender at ALL times

Make sure changing rooms are occupied by children only – split ages and male/female (children over 5 must be split boys & girls)

Assist with dressing/costume changes/fitting microphones

Ensure the child’s comfort
i.e. Occupied when not on stage/breaks/appropriate food and drink/changing room temperature

Ensure the child is protected from stress, bad weather and other conditions likely to harm him

Escort your charges everywhere
Role of a Chaperone – Knowledge

Be aware of medical conditions and alert the First Aider if necessary

- Recognise if a child is ill or upset
- Know when breaks are needed
- Understand the regulations and challenge the director if necessary

Role of a Chaperone – when a child is away from home

When film/television work requires children to live away from home, the chaperone is responsible for him/her throughout the currency of the licence.

- Satisfactory lodgings
- Properly occupied during spare time
- Greater amount of supervision than if at home!

Record Keeping

Licence holder is responsible for keeping records of when the children arrive and leave the theatre, but responsibility usually passed to chaperones!!

- Parent must sign children in/out
- If not the parent, you must have full details of the person collecting the child, in writing, in advance – this person then signs for child (see letter)

**Even if the child is 15/16 years and still at school!**

- Must have contact details/numbers on file
Be aware of performance times

Broadcast or Recording

Age 0 to 4 yrs - 5 hours
Age 5 to 8 yrs – 7.5 hours
Age 9 and over - 9.5 hours

Breaks, meals & tuition vary according to age

Be aware of performance times

Stage performances

Not longer than 6 hours between 10am & 10.30pm
Production not longer than 3.5hrs
Child’s part not longer than 2.5hrs

First Aid

Designated First Aider – in date certificate

Make sure you have asked parents of any relevant medical history prior to the child being left in your care.

Inform parent without delay if first aid has been given

RECORD accurately exactly what happened/action taken/by whom and keep with daily recording sheets
Health and Safety

YOU are responsible for the health & welfare of the child in your care

Be aware of Health & Safety issues on stage or set – e.g. electrical cables, cameras, scenery, uneven steps in old theatres, spillages

Ensure children don’t “fool around”!

Know the Fire Escape procedure and meeting points outside and make children aware

All groups with children should have a child protection policy detailing:

Who you should be speaking to within your organisation if you have concerns.

How to keep yourself safe

Child Protection

• The child is working in a very adult environment – needs to be remembered that they are children NOT “little adults”

• Ensure the child understands what’s expected of them taking into account their age, experience & aptitude

• EVERYONE needs to be mindful of their conduct – language, physical contact and general behaviour

• Direct physical contact required for dressing should be, wherever possible, only taken in the presence of others

• Special relationships and favouritism avoided
Recognising abuse

Recognising abuse is not a precise science. Potential indicators are:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse and neglect
- Sexual abuse

Please refer to pages 7 – 12 of the publication “Recognising child abuse”. Page 9 outlines a referral checklist.

What to do if your concerned

If you have any concerns regarding a child’s behaviour, physical appearance or comments made by the child regarding anyone, report these to:

- Senior chaperone, if available, who has responsibility for making a referral to Children’s Services Duty and Assessment Team or Youth Support Team if necessary.

- A production company may have a nominated ‘Child Protection’ person.

- If you are on your own, or still concerned, make a referral direct to Children’s Services Duty and Assessment Team or Youth Support Team.

- Always contact the Child Employment Officer

What to do if you are concerned (continued)

- May be about anybody – parents/teacher/family/friend/actor etc.

- Who is the complaint about?
  - Is it safe for the child to go home?
  - It will be necessary to suspend the member of staff immediately until the investigation is concluded

THE WELFARE OF THE CHILD IS PARAMOUNT
When a child speaks

RECEIVE – listen carefully to what is being said by the child and do not show emotions.

REASSURE – reassure the child, but only so far as is honest & truthful. Do not promise confidentiality, you have a duty to refer. Keep discussions with others to what is relevant to protect the child.

RECORD – Make notes at the time including direct speech – let the child know why you are doing this. All records must be dated and signed as they provide evidence for any investigations.

• Differentiate between facts, opinion and judgement.
• Do not ask the child questions.

Does anyone inspect the venue?

Yes! To check regulations adhered to.

It’s difficult to be everywhere at once during busy times of the year.

As a chaperone YOU have a responsibility to contact the Child Employment Officer if you have concerns, however minor, and a visit will be arranged.
I am concerned making a complaint will make it awkward for me

All complaints/concerns are kept confidential and no names are given.

The welfare of the children MUST come first.

We are relying on you to pass the on information!

And finally …

Children taking part in performances and other licensed activities is viewed as an educational and enriching experience.

Children should enjoy being part of a show, and the chaperones are a key part in making this happen.
Training Exercises – Questions & Answers

Exercise 1

1) You arrive at the theatre and are met by the Production Manager. She gives you a list of sixteen licensed children (all girls) for you to supervise in the same dressing room. There is plenty of space, but it is cold. Are there any issues?

- **Number of children:** The law states that the maximum child per each registered chaperone is 12:1. This number may be less depending on the specific needs of the show and aptitude/experience of the children taking part. For example if the children are coming off stage from both sides you will require one chaperone in the wings on each side of the stage. What about if a child needs taking to the toilet or is taken ill – who will look after the other eleven?

There are a number of ways you can overcome the problem of being left 16:1 children. Can another registered chaperone be found at short notice to help? Can any of the parents stay to supervise their own child? In this instance you would need four parents as the children are all licensed and can only be looked after by a registered chaperone or their parent.

If the children were unlicensed, you could use a parent helper to assist the registered chaperone, but they should not be left in sole charge of the children.

- **Number in dressing room:** Not an issue sixteen children of the same gender being in the same dressing room, provided they are of a similar age, sufficient space and chaperones.

- **Dressing room is cold:** Turn the heaters on/radiators up if able to. May need to ask the theatre manager for heating to be turned up or provide a suitable safe portable heater to be put in place. Remember that dressing rooms can soon warm up with the volume of children and can get too hot quickly! If facilities permit, ask to be moved to a more suitable dressing room.

2) You are in charge of eight 15 year old girls who share a dressing room with a 17 year old girl, who is the elder sister of one of the younger girls. Are there any problems with this?

- **Separate changing:** The legislation states that children of compulsory school age must have a separate dressing room to adult members of the cast.

3) You are working with another chaperone looking after thirty 8 – 10 year old girls in a very large dressing room, which is plenty big enough for them. Three of the girls say they want to go to the toilet. On the way you notice the fire door is obstructed by some props and a rail of costumes in the corridor. What would you do?

- **Ratio of chaperones:** Thirty girls should have three registered chaperones i.e. 1:12 children.

- **Fire door obstructed:** There is a serious Health & Safety issue which must be notified to the Stage Manager and obstruction moved. Contact ESCC Child Employment Officer if the situation isn’t rectified.
4) You are at Shepperton Studios when the Production Manager says she needs to keep the children there for just over an hour. These are two 7 year old girls who have been at the studio since 9am. The time is now 4.30pm. Is it alright for these children to carry on filming?

Performing hours: The law states children aged 5 to 8 years can only be at the place of performance for 7.5hrs between 9am and 4.30pm, with a maximum performing time of 3 hours. You have the discretion to allow a child to perform half an hour after the permitted time providing the circumstances are outside the control of the licence holder. You cannot allow the children to continue filming for another hour and must ensure that they go home. You should also advise the ESCC Child Employment Officer.

5) You’re a chaperone at the Sussex Theatres annual pantomime, Snow White. There are two teams of seven children taking part. One of the children is taken ill, running a very high temperature and has been physically sick. The producer says he must have seven children in the show for every performance. What would you do?

Illness: The ill child MUST be sent home. You can swap a child from the other team, but make sure no child performs for more than six days in any seven. It may be you need to swap a different child in each day! The Producer should contact the licensing authority for permission and they will amend the licences for extra performing days.
Exercise 2

1) You are at the Eastbourne Playhouse with sixteen girls and four boys aged 11 – 14yrs. They have just finished the matinee performance. Three of the boys and nine of the girls have not brought a packed lunch to eat before they are due to perform in the evening. They want to go to McDonalds and all have sufficient money. Would you agree to this? If “yes”, how would you organise the trip? If no, state the reasons why you would not agree.

Meals and leaving the venue: The children will need some food! You must have a parent’s written permission to take children out of the theatre. How safe is it to take all of the children to McDonalds? Consider crossing roads etc.

You could ring the parents and get them to bring packed lunch to the theatre, if this was the advice. Alternatively, you could take the children’s orders and get someone to collect the food and bring it to the venue, provided there are still sufficient chaperones left to care for the children.

2) The performance at the Hastings Showhouse finished at 10.15pm. You have been chaperone for this show and you have two 13 year old girls who have not been collected by their parents. You are already taking your two children and a friend home and are mindful of the time as they have school the next morning. All the other chaperones have left the theatre. What would you do?

Children not collected: The other chaperones shouldn’t have left you alone with the children. Contact the parents or emergency contact number ASAP.

Is your car insured for business to carry other people's children? You will need to contact your insurance company to check this. If you already have children in your car, it is likely there wouldn’t be room in your car anyway!

If no one comes to collect the children contact the Child Protection team.

3) You are helping with the All Stars Amateur Theatre Group Show. You have been told that an extra rehearsal has been added to the schedule which would mean the children would have to miss an afternoon off school. Is this allowable?

School absence: No, if a child misses any school in connection with taking part in a performance, an entertainment licence is necessary and must be applied for well in advance of the show.
Exercise 2: Continued

4) You are a member of Playtown Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society. The group is using the local village hall for its production, which only has two rooms backstage. One of these rooms is used by the adults and the other is to be used by the children. You have been asked to look after the children and find there are five children (four girls and one boy). What do you do?

- Limited Facilities: Boys and Girls over 5 years must have separate changing room and would therefore require two chaperones. Children cannot be in the same changing room as the adults.

- You could section off/screen part of the area used by the children, then the boys and girls are split up. Once they are changed, they can all be in one space together. Alternatively, is there a large toilet area the boy could get changed into his costume in?

- If the children had no other changes, they could arrive dressed in their costumes.

5) You are a member of the Downs Drama Club and have been asked to help supervise the children. You are concerned that one of the popular adult members of the club is always with the children and often gives a specific child sweets and an occasional gift. How would you deal with this situation?

- Follow the group’s Child Protection Policy and contact the appropriate person to let them know what is happening. Do not let this person be left alone with the children, even when they are rehearsing/performing on stage. Request all cast members to be mindful of their behaviour and explain sweets/gifts are only acceptable when given to everyone – watch for an individual child being ‘singled out’.

- Inform the Child Employment Officers without delay, so that the necessary ‘check’s can be made.
It is legal requirement that whenever children of compulsory school age are engaged in public performances or entertainment under a licence issued by the Local Authority (LA), they must be supervised at all times by a registered chaperone, unless they are under the direct supervision of either their parent or an agreed tutor.

It is clear that a chaperone holds a key role ensuring that the experience a child gains whilst engaging in such performances or entertainment is one that they enjoy and find beneficial. The LA believes that this gives such children the opportunity to grow as individuals. It helps them gain confidence and promotes self esteem whilst enabling them to appreciate the needs of others and develop ‘team’ skills. The LA believes that this kind of experience is part of their education for life.

Consequently the LA is committed to outlining the role of a chaperone and explaining how important we believe the role is to the individual and to the children under their supervision. The difficulty we have experienced has been to demonstrate the vast contrast in the type of performances a chaperone could be asked to supervise.

Many chaperones first register with the LA because their child is performing in either their annual dancing school performance, with little or no intention to be involved in any other productions. Whilst it is only right these chaperones need to be properly advised on the requirements of their role, they also need to be aware that government only permits one standard of registration.

Registered chaperones have the authority to supervise children at the local amateur dramatic performance and at a West End show or indeed on a film set or on location on the other side of the world. It is therefore paramount that chaperones understand their role, the responsibility and obligation they have and how they use these powers effectively and for the benefit of the children in their care.

It is only when they are on stage or performing that chaperones are not required to be by their side.

It is inevitable that chaperones may feel that they are in the way, and to some extent not giving the child or children sufficient freedom. However, the chaperone is the representative of the LA and their sole concern must be to protect the health, safety, moral welfare and education, whilst ensuring kind treatment of each and every child in their care.

The regulations are designed wholly to prevent a child being exploited by working too many hours during a given period of time that it may inevitably result in the child’s general well-being or education suffering in the long term. A chaperone has the responsibility to ensure that this cannot happen.

There may well be occasions where a producer will want a child to continue working beyond the hours permitted. It is vital that the chaperone is strong enough to advise this person that the performance cannot be allowed to continue.

Child Protection issues are difficult matters to deal with; we need to be sure that everything possible is done to protect the children in the care of a chaperone from harm of this nature.

Wendy Smith & Fiona Osborne
Child Employment & Entertainment Officers
Here is a check list that every chaperone should always bare in mind whilst performing their chaperone duties:

☐ **Number of Children** under your charge no more than 1:12

☐ **Changing Rooms**
  - Clean?
  - Safe?
  - Too Warm/Too Cold?
  - Enough Room?

☐ **Toilets**
  - Clean?
  - Separate to adults (were possible)?
  - Do you have a Chaperone to Escort to and from?

☐ **Sign In/Out**
  - Is there a Sign In/Out Sheet at the Stage Door?
  - Who is responsible for this?

☐ **Around the Venue**
  - Are the Hallways, Landings, Stairs free from obstructions and safe?
  - If not, what can be done? (move the items, change your route etc.)
  - Do you need to remind the children of any hazards?
  - Who is the First Aider?
  - Where is the First Aid Box Located?
  - Where are the children’s emergency contact numbers held?

☐ **Child Protection**
  - Always ask yourself – Are the children safe, happy, well?

[As Every Child Matters]

If NO to any of the above, seek action, rectify and if a solution cannot be found call the Child Employment Officer.
1. During rehearsals and performance please wait in (name the waiting area) to collect your child. The children will come out to meet you from the auditorium.

2. The only parents/authorised collection person allowed backstage including dressing rooms) are those who are Licensed Chaperones for that particular day unless you are a parent/guardian helper. Note: if you are a parent helper you can only be in sole charge of your own child (siblings and other relatives cannot chaperone children who perform unlicensed).

3. Children must arrive 1 hour (whatever time limit you wish to give) prior to performance time.

4. If you have been asked to supply: - packed lunches, makeup, costumes etc. Please check that your children have these with them prior to and on arrival.

5. Please ensure that your child knows that he/she must inform a License Chaperone that they have arrived or are leaving the theatre. Note: make sure you and the child know who the person is.

6. Once your child is ‘handed over’ to a Licensed Chaperone they must not leave the building unaccompanied for any reason until/unless collected by their parent/authorised collection person. NOTE: If the production has made arrangements for your child to go outside the theatre i.e. between matinee and evening performances to buy food, authorisation slips giving your permission for your child to leave the building should have been submitted to (named person) and signed by you prior to any performances. Children leaving the premises (for whatever reason) are still in the care of, and are the responsibility of, the Licensed Chaperone at all times.

7. If parents/authorised collection person cannot collect a child, notification in advance must be given to the (named person) prior to the performance.

8. In event of illness, accident or backstage dispute, please report immediately to (named person).

9. Licensed Chaperone’s responsibility ends 30 minutes after each show. In cases of collection difficulties or delays please let (name person) know ASAP of the delay and any emergency arrangements you have made for the collection of your child.

10. If your child cannot make a performance please contact either the child’s ‘opposite’ from another team or (named person) as soon as is practically possible.
Records to be kept by the Holder of the Licence:
Schedule 3 – Regulation 5

1. The Licence

2. The following particulars in respect of each day (or night) on which the child is present at the place of performance:-
   a) the date,
   b) the time of arrival at the place of performance,
   c) the time of departure from the place of performance,
   d) the times of each period during which the child took part in a performance or the rehearsal,
   e) the time of each rest interval,
   f) the time of each meal interval,
   g) the times of any night-work authorised by the local authority under Regulation 30 of the Children (Performances) Regulations 1968.

3. Where arrangements are made for the education of the child by a private teacher, the date and duration of each lesson and the subject taught.

4. Details of injuries and ill (if any) suffered by the child at the place of performance, including the dates on which such injuries occurred and stating whether such injuries or illness prevented the child from being present at the place of performance.

5. The date of medical examination (if any) of the child carried out under regulation 16 of Children (Performances) Regulations 1968.

6. The dates of all sums earned by reason of taking part in the performance and the names, address and description of the persons whom such sums were paid.

7. Where the licensing authority grant a licence subject to condition that sums earned by the child shall be dealt with in a manner in which they have dealt with.

The holder of the licence granted in respect of any activity shall keep the records specified in paragraphs 1, 2(a), 3 & 4 and 8 as if any reference in those paragraphs to a ‘performance’ were a reference to the activity for which the licence was granted.
## Broadcast Performance Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Age 0 to 4</th>
<th>Age 5 to 8</th>
<th>Age 9 &amp; Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Time at Place of Performance</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
<td>7.5 hours</td>
<td>9.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Times Present</td>
<td>Between 9.30 am – 4.30pm</td>
<td>Between 9am – 4.30pm</td>
<td>Between 7am – 7pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Performing Time</td>
<td>2 Hours</td>
<td>3 Hours</td>
<td>4 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum continuous time to take part without a rest</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
<td>1 Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum rest/meal times</td>
<td>All times when not taking part</td>
<td>Present 3.5 hours = 2 breaks including 1 hour meal &amp; 15 mins rest. Present 8 hours = 3 breaks including 2 x 1 hour meal &amp; 15 minutes rest.</td>
<td>Present 4 hours = 2 breaks including 1 hour meal &amp; 15 mins rest. Present 8 hours = 3 breaks including 2 x 1 hour meal &amp; 15 minutes rest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>3 hours per school day (see education for aggregated hours)</td>
<td>3 hours per school day (see education for aggregated hours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Broadcast Performance Table</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performances (same nature)</strong></td>
<td>2 per day</td>
<td>1 Performance &amp; 1 rehearsal OR 2 performances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performances per week</strong></td>
<td>Max. 6 days per 7 day week</td>
<td>Max. 8 consecutive weeks requires 2 week interval before performing again in ANY production</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Gap between performance days</strong></td>
<td>14 Hours must elapse between the end of the previous day's performance and the beginning of the following day's performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Times</strong></td>
<td>Max. 3 hrs 30 mins</td>
<td>Included breaks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appearance in Performance</strong></td>
<td>Max. 2 hrs 30 mins</td>
<td>Aggregated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervals</strong></td>
<td>1.5 hours minimum</td>
<td>Between 2 performances OR 1 performance &amp; 1 rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exception to Intervals (in any week)</strong></td>
<td>On not more than 2 days minimum of 45 minutes interval between performances and/or rehearsals. Maximum 6 hours at place of performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Day</strong></td>
<td>Attending school after the morning session</td>
<td>1 performance Or 1 rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Hours</strong></td>
<td>Age 12 &amp; Under</td>
<td>Age 13 and Over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Earliest arrival</strong></td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latest Departure</strong></td>
<td>10pm</td>
<td>10.30pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exception (1)</strong></td>
<td>10.30 pm</td>
<td>11.00 pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exception (2)</strong></td>
<td>Not late than 11 pm on not more than 3 evenings per week, provided that he is not so present on more than 8 evenings in a period of 4 consecutive weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical (1)</strong></td>
<td>YES (period longer than 1 week)</td>
<td>Performing over 6 consecutive days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical (2)</strong></td>
<td>No (period longer than 1 week)</td>
<td>Performing under 6 consecutive days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arrangements for getting home</strong></td>
<td>Applicant shall ensure that suitable arrangements (having regards to the child's age) are made for the child to get to his home or other destination after the last performance or rehearsal or the conclusion of any activity on any day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The above Record Sheet relates to the information the Licence Holder, Chaperone or Tutor is required to keep by law for each child performing. It is a requirement under Regulations that these records be kept and made available, together with each child’s licence, at every place of performance where a child is present for inspection by an office of the Local Authority in whose area the performance takes place. Upon completion of the production the Record Sheet(s) should be stored at the Licence Applicant’s main company address for a period of not less than six months after the final performance date for which these Licenses have been granted.
# Child’s Individual Record Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Full Name:</th>
<th>Date of Birth:</th>
</tr>
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<th>Parent/Guardian Name(s):</th>
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<th>Medical Conditions/Allergies (please detail):</th>
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<th>WORK</th>
<th>MOBILE</th>
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| Additional Information: | |
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# Injury/Illness Record Sheet

To be kept with daily record sheets

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<tr>
<th>Name of Production</th>
<th>Place of Performance</th>
<th>Production Contact Name</th>
<th>Certified First Aider</th>
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<th>Date Occurred</th>
<th>Details of Injury/Illness</th>
<th>Action Taken / First Aid Given By</th>
<th>Performed Yes/No</th>
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If you are a parent or carer needing support, Duty and Assessment (11 Years & Under) can offer you help and advice. You can also contact the Youth Support Team (12 years & over) if you are concerned that a child or young person is at significant risk of harm.

**If the child is 11 Years and under**

East of the County including Hastings & Rother District: 01424 724144

West of the County including Eastbourne & Hailsham District: 01323 747373

**If the child is 12 Years and over**

East of the County including Hastings & Rother District: 01424 724130

West of the County including Eastbourne & Hailsham District: 01323 747094

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**Emergency Contact Numbers**

| East of the County including Hastings & Rother District: 01424 724144 |
| West of the County including Eastbourne & Hailsham District: 01323 747373 |
| East of the County including Hastings & Rother District: 01424 724130 |
| West of the County including Eastbourne & Hailsham District: 01323 747094 |

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**Emergency Contact (Out of Office Hours)**

07699 391462

Available: Mon-Fri 5pm-8am, all weekends and bank holidays
Recognising Child Abuse

A handbook for those working with children and young people who perform

Updated April 2007


**Introduction**

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

**Context**

Children have the right to protection from neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The community as a whole has a responsibility for the protection of children and for reporting concerns about a child’s welfare or safety and 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 (CYPAct) 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 local authority in licensing children and chaperones, likewise has a duty under
the CYPA and Children Act 2004 to promote and safeguard the welfare of children

The role of the chaperone is essentially a child protection role in the broadest sense, not only does the C&YPA 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 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 referral to the relevant children’s social care department for the area. Wherever possible the production company should establish who within their organisation can fulfil this role.

The Welfare Principle is also enshrined in The Children Act 1989, from which most Child Protection legislation, policy and procedure emanates.

Dealing with suspected or actual child abuse is always stressful and upsetting. Chaperons 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 personal support.

**Safe Practice**

All production company staff, cast, crew and in particular chaperones and others involved in direct physical contact with child performers (such as dressers and makeup artists 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 be, wherever possible only
undertaken in the presence of other adults, and should not involve intimate touching.

Contact 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 referred on to social care.

**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 social care will then consider whether it is safe for the registration of that person to continue.
**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 advised that the production company have a nominated person who can act as a point of contact and who can arrange for support and advice to chaperones or others in dealing with the emotional component of child protection related issues.

**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 and/or 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 more difficult and is usually 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, drawings 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.

If a child makes a disclosure:

- Do not offer/agree to keep it a secret – you must pass the information on to social care or the police
- Do not interrupt the child – listen carefully and note down as soon as possible, what you have heard
- Always use the language the child used – do not “tidy it up” or apply adult language or interpretations to what was said
- Do not ask the child any questions
- Reassure the child
- Seek advice from social care or the police straight away

**What action to take, Who to tell and what to tell them**

If you have concerns about the wellbeing of a child in your care you have a duty to report it to the local Children’s Social Care duty and assessment Team. This can be done by ‘phone. Social Care need to have the following information 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 which may be contributing to the problem

If you do not have all the above information do not let this deter you from contacting Social care. 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.

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.

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 the duty to refer child protection concerns and to uphold the welfare of the child as the paramount consideration. (See additional guidance for parents at appendix 5)

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 social services and the police.

**Referral Checklist**

- Concerns or incident identified and recorded
- Contact Social Care with details of your concern
- Remember to have information to hand about the child including date of birth, address, names and address or 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 social services
- Contact your associated support group if necessary
- Remember, the welfare principal, above all else, must go on!
Appendix 1

What is child Abuse?

Definitions

• **Physical Abuse**
  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 in a child.

• **Emotional Abuse**
  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 feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. 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 abuse**
  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.
Appendix 2

**The concept 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 account of the effect on the child and the degree of difficulty in helping the child overcome the adverse impact of the ill treatment and includes hearing or seeing the abuse of another.

Appendix 3

**Child Protection Investigation**

Social Care 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.

Appendix 4

**Child Protection Conference**

This is a meeting convened by social services and involving the professionals who know the family, the parents, the investigators, and others who can contribute to the decision making. Depending on the age and understanding the child,
the child in question may be invited. 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 (called a child protection 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.
Appendix 5
Child protection; Guidance for parents

This leaflet is intended to help parents understand that schools, early years centres, after school clubs, theatre groups and others whether provided through the local authority or privately run have a duty in law to promote and safeguard the welfare of the children in their care. It explains through a series of questions and answers what happens if there is a concern that a child is being neglected or harmed.

Q. Why is the organisation providing the service to my child involved in child protection?

The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, make requirements upon everybody working with children. This includes a duty to report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, and to cooperate with any investigation. This means reporting any unexplained injuries or marks, and any unusual behaviour or worrying things said by or about the child. All organisations working with children should have child protection procedures in place and have a senior member of staff responsible for seeing that local safeguarding children board's child protection procedures are followed.

Q. What is the local safeguarding children board?

The local safeguarding children board or LSCB is a group of senior professionals who have the responsibility for agreeing locally how all the different services and professionals who work with children will cooperate to safeguard children from abuse and promote their welfare. It is made up from representatives from the main statutory and voluntary services and takes its authority from the Department of Health, the Home Office and the Department for Education and Skills. All local authority education and social work staff, health workers, police officers and others working with children are duty bound to follow the procedures.

Q. If anyone working with my child has a concern why don’t they talk to me as the parent first?

Wherever possible, parents will be told that a concern exists before a referral is considered, but sometimes the staff concerned will talk to
social care first in order to decide on what action might be appropriate or to agree who is the best person to talk to the parent or carer. In some situations it may be in the best interests of the child not to discuss the matter with the parent or carer in the first instance. In such situations or where it is not clear, staff should take advice from social care staff.

Q. If a referral is made, will my child be automatically removed from home?

The Children Act 1989 is clear that wherever possible, children and families should remain together, and that children should only be removed from home in cases where there is no other way of ensuring their safety. Children’s social care teams work with children and families and with other agencies such as schools and other local authority services to help overcome the identified risks and difficulties.

Q. What happens if social care do consider the referral is serious enough to suggest that my child is being abused or neglected?

If your child is thought to be at risk of harm, a child protection conference will be called and you will be invited to attend. The purpose of the meeting is to decide if there has been or is likely to be abuse or neglect, to listen to your views and the views of the others and if necessary to take steps to ensure the child is protected.

Q. What happens if the referral is made is a false alarm and the child has not been abused?

This will always be a very distressing experience for parents and carers, but it is important to remember that a referral in itself is not an accusation, nor does it mean that you are automatically guilty of abusing your child: it is the sharing of concerns or information which could indicate a problem. Where it is clear that the referral is a false alarm, social care will take no further action but will offer you any necessary support.

Written by Kaye Handman on Behalf of East Sussex County Council