**Hinckley Concordia pledges to strengthen child safeguarding measures**

Issued on 21/3/14 at 9:00 a.m. – Leicestershire Police

<http://www.leics.police.uk/news-appeals/news/2014/03/21/hinckley-concordia-pledges-to-strengthen-child-safeguarding-measures#.U1kHxPRDvSh> as below

Hinckley’s Concordia Association, which runs the town’s theatre, has agreed to strengthen the protection it [offers](http://www.leics.police.uk/news-appeals/news/2014/03/21/hinckley-concordia-pledges-to-strengthen-child-safeguarding-measures) to child performers and volunteers.

The move follows the intervention of Leicestershire Police and Leicestershire County Council and will also see the theatre change key individuals who oversee safeguarding.

The improved regime has been ratified in an amendment to the association’s premises licence – which allows the theatre to put on public entertainment and sell alcohol. As a result, Leicestershire Police has agreed not to pursue a review of the licence at this time.

Detective Inspector Rich Hiom, from Leicestershire Police, said: “The theatre association has made significant progress in recent weeks to meet concerns we shared with Leicestershire County Council.

“If this continues we will be happy that it returns to its place as a vibrant and much-loved part of the Hinckley community.

“We were concerned that a number of individuals with a sexual interest in children were taking an active part in the theatre. When we first raised this with the theatre’s management, we did not get the level of co-operation we could have expected.

“That is why we initiated the review. Since we started the process, the theatre has gone a long way to meet our concerns and we expect that progress to continue.

“The measures will reduce the chances that children will come to harm while at the theatre. However, it is important that parents and other adults remain vigilant for signs of grooming or abuse at any club or organisation including Hinckley Concordia Theatre.”

The new conditions include:

* The adoption of a new comprehensive safeguarding policy, to be approved by police and Leicestershire County Council, to be in place by May 2, 2014;A system of vetting trustees, performers and volunteers;The use of enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks (previously known as [Criminal Records](http://www.leics.police.uk/news-appeals/news/2014/03/21/hinckley-concordia-pledges-to-strengthen-child-safeguarding-measures)Bureau checks) where appropriate;
* The appointment of a new safeguarding committee;Improvements to the theatre’s [CCTV system](http://www.leics.police.uk/news-appeals/news/2014/03/21/hinckley-concordia-pledges-to-strengthen-child-safeguarding-measures), continuing to make recordings available to police upon[request](http://www.leics.police.uk/news-appeals/news/2014/03/21/hinckley-concordia-pledges-to-strengthen-child-safeguarding-measures).

The conditions were devised following an investigation into safeguarding at the theatre. Compliance will be monitored by Leicestershire Police and Leicestershire County Council, who will consider requesting a further review if the conditions are not met.

Leicestershire County Council will not resume issuing child performance licences until the approved safeguarding policy comes into effect and is assured that this is being properly implemented by the Association.

Lesley Hagger, Director for Children and Family Services at Leicestershire County Council, said: “We’re pleased that the Concordia has agreed to bring in a much more rigorous approach to child protection and that the theatre is working with us to resolve the situation.

"Keeping young people safe remains our priority and we will work with the police to carefully monitor the revised conditions being adopted.

"Acting, singing and dancing clearly have a positive impact on young people’s wellbeing and when we're satisfied that the new procedures are in place, we will end our freeze on performance licences and exemptions."

A spokesman from the Hinckley Concordia Theatre said: “We have worked very closely with all of the relevant stakeholders – including Leicestershire Police and Leicestershire County Council – to put in place a much more robust set of child protection measures, in line with their advice and guidance.

“We are pleased that the authorities have recognised the work we have undertaken and we will continue to liaise closely with them to ensure that the Concordia Theatre remains a safe environment for all.”