



Children in entertainment – Recognising child abuse

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

The Children and Young Person Acts 1933 and 1963 The Children (Performances and Activities)
(England) Regulations 2014



Children's Services, Education Entitlement Team,
Walton Street Offices, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 1UZ

Telephone: 01296 383 512/2056 **Email:** childemployment@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Website: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/children-in-employment-and-entertainment



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 safeguarding children responsibilities, and safe practice.

It provides guidance about safer working practices and child protection issues including recognising and referring suspected child abuse. Dealing with suspected abuse can be stressful.

Chaperones and others working with children in entertainment need to know how to recognise the signs and indicators of abuse and what action they should take to help protect children and where to access support. It is for this reason that we provide safeguarding training as part of the process to be registered as a chaperone.

Context Safe Practice

Children have the right to protection from neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Safeguarding children is everyone’s responsibility. Legislation and statutory guidance establishes the framework within which children are safeguarded.

- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014 prescribes how the health and safety needs of child performers should be met and regulates the number of hours they rehearse and perform, the activities they can undertake and the standard of the facilities and conditions in which they may perform.
- The production company have a responsibility to promote and safeguard the welfare of the children in their care.
- The local authority, in licensing children and chaperones, also has a duty under the Children and Young Persons Acts 1933 and 1963 and the Children Act 2004 to promote and safeguard the welfare of children.
- The Welfare Principle is also enshrined in the Children Act 1989, from which most child protection legislation, policy and procedure emanates.
- The role of the chaperone is a safeguarding one. The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014 requires that chaperones safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of the child.

Context

All organisations working with children should have child protection procedures in place and have a senior member of staff responsible for seeing that the local safeguarding children board’s child protection procedures are followed.

All production company staff, cast, crew and in particular chaperones and others involved in direct 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.

It is crucial that in all circumstances adults should only touch children in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities.

Intimate relationships between children and the adults who work with them will be regarded as a grave breach of trust and possibly illegal.

Contact or meetings with individual children should not be undertaken alone. Special relationships gifts, rewards and favouritism should be avoided, as they are divisive and might be construed as being part of a grooming process and as such will give rise to concerns about the adult’s behaviour.

June 2021



With the increase in use of social media it is important to avoid any direct contact with the children in your care using internet and social networking sites. Do not accept any child as a 'friend' on these sites as this can, and has, been misconstrued. Contact with children should always be done through their parents.

E-safety – keeping children safe

Organisations should consider adopting phone and camera policies which control the taking of photographs particularly in the dressing rooms. Be aware of children using social media and texting each other. Bullying in different forms does occur even amongst children taking part in entertainment and chaperones need to be aware, proactive, and react immediately.

Allegations against production staff or chaperones

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 the child employment manager as indicated at the back of this booklet, and referred on to social care.

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. It may be necessary to suspend the member of staff immediately until the investigation is concluded.

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 that person to continue to be involved with the performance.

Recognition- what to look for

Recognising abuse can be difficult; however the welfare of the child is paramount. The following paragraphs outline some of the possible indicators that a child or young person is being or has been abused.

Physical abuse could be indicated where injuries occur which are not typical of the bumps and scrapes associated with children's activities.

The recognition of emotional abuse and neglect is usually based on observations of relationships between parent/carer and the child. For example, this may be seen in the context of unreal expectations or excessive demands on the child in relation to theatrical performance and failure to meet the child's basic needs.

The following indicators may be signs that a child is or has been sexually abused: sexually explicit behaviour, knowledge or play which is incompatible with the child's age and understanding, drawings and or written work which are sexually explicit.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, drugs, alcohol, accommodation or gifts as a result of them performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can also occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example, being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet or mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship.



Child sexual exploitation is a hidden crime. Young people often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening.

Children who work in entertainment may be sexually exploited in return for offers of TV, film or modelling/photographic work and roles in professional stage productions. Young people who are being sexually exploited may:

- Be involved in abusive relationships, intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- Hang out with groups of older people, or antisocial groups, or with other vulnerable peers
- Associate with other young people involved in sexual exploitation
- Get involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- Have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Spend time at places of concern, such as hotels or known brothels.

Listening to children

Direct disclosure: it is important to recognise that children have neither the experience nor the understanding to be able to make up stories, particularly about sexual abuse.

If a child makes a disclosure:

- Do not offer or agree to keep it a secret, you must never promise confidentiality. You should discuss this with the child employment manager who will, if appropriate, pass it 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. You may also be concerned when observing or talking to the child.
- Note down as soon as possible your specific concerns.
- Always describe in detail the specific behaviour that you are concerned about.

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 child employment manager. If you are unable to contact them you should contact Buckinghamshire Council Children's Services. The telephone number is shown on the 'useful contacts' page at the back of this booklet'.

Where you make such a referral, please advise the child employment office at the earliest opportunity. We can offer you the appropriate support and advice where required.

Response to your referral 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 15 working days.



Recording

Keeping notes of significant events or conversations will help 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 should be dated. Records such as this can be an essential source of evidence for enquiries and investigations.

Dealing with parents

The wellbeing of the child is the paramount consideration. 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. 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.

The Children Act 1989 states that where ever 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 will 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.

Referral checklist

Concerns or incident identified and recorded.

- Contact the child employment manager or child employment office with details of your concern.
- Remember to have information to hand about the child including date of birth, address, names and address of parents or carers if known.
- Note the time and date you passed the information to the child employment manager and ensure you are clear of what and if any action is requested of you by them.

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. Physical harm may be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is 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 children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far 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 include interactions that are beyond the 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 cyberbullying) 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, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images or watching sexual activities or 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

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

Contact details

Child Employment Office	01296 383 512/2056
Child Employment Officers	Moira Dealey or Kim Prior
FIRST RESPONSE (Safeguarding contact)	01296 383 962
Children's Services emergency duty team (out of hours)	0800 999 7677