

LOUGHTON AMATEUR DRAMA SOCIETY

Child Protection Policy September 2009



LADS and children

For the purposes of Child Protection Legislation a child is defined as any person under the age of 18.

LADS, as a society, encourages membership to those aged 18 and over. However, from time to time, LADS may have members under the age of 18, or require, for a certain production, a child actor or actors to take part(s). In those circumstances, all members must be aware of what the current child legislation requires us to do and how we should all behave.

LADS believes that:

- Children need to feel safe and respected at all times
- Parents need to be confident about their children's welfare
- Members need to be able to exercise their responsibilities.

Legislation

There are laws limiting the involvement of children in amateur productions. These rules vary depending on the age of a child. If a child is under 16 a licence must be obtained from the Local Education Authority. No licence is required however if there is no payment to any member of the society (other than the reimbursing of expenses) and/or the child performs on no more than 4 days in any 6 months. With these criteria, providing the child or children were in only one show within 6 months, LADS would not need to seek a licence.

However a child's participation is restricted, whether a licence needs to be granted or not. In the event of a production being planned, which included a child or children under the age of 16, these restrictions must be considered and prepared for before we obtain the amateur rights to perform the show. In reality these will first be addressed by the Play Selection Committee.

Regardless of whether children are involved in future productions or not, all members should familiarise themselves with the LADS Child Protection Policy.

Please find below the LADS Child Protection Policy. This follows the guidelines offered by NODA, the National Operatic and Dramatic Association.

Policy

The Loughton Amateur Dramatic Society recognizes its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

The society recognizes that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. The society is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All members of the society accept and recognize their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The society believes that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
- all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse;
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- all members and employees of the society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The society will ensure that:

- all children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity;
- the duty of care to children will always be put first;
- a balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision-making process;
- enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism;
- bullying will not be accepted or condoned;
- all adult members of the society provide a positive role model for dealing with other people;
- action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour;
- it will keep up-to-date with health & safety legislation;
- it will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children;
- it will undertake relevant development and training;
- it will hold a register of every child involved with the society and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

The society has child protection procedures which accompany this policy. However because LADS does not regularly use children in productions these will be adapted dependent on the differing circumstances for each production but will never be less than the minimum standard required and will always aspire to Best Practice.

The society will have a dedicated Child Protection Officer, who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to for each separate production involving children. In the meantime questions on Child Protection should be addressed to the Chairman.

The requirements under law are changing with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. This law has resulted in the setting up of the Independent Safeguarding Authority. In coming years people wishing to work with children will need to be cleared so to do by the Vetting and Barring Scheme run by the ISA, even unpaid volunteers, as we all are.

When the time comes, we will seek guidance as appropriate to our particular circumstances and will need to act accordingly.

This policy will be regularly monitored by the General Committee of the society and will be subject to annual review.

Date: 19th September 2009