



Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

Whitchurch Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (WAODS) is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for all members, volunteers, and participants, particularly children, young people, and vulnerable adults. This policy acknowledges the WAODS Committee responsibilities relating to the Children Act (1989 and 2004), the Care Act, Mental Capacity Act, 'Working Together to Safeguarding Children' (DfE 2020), the published procedures of the "Whitchurch Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society" (WAODS) and the 'Charity Commission's registration standards.'

Policy Statement

This safeguarding policy outlines our commitment to promoting the welfare and protection of all individuals involved in our activities.

WAODS acknowledges its duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults and is committed to ensuring all reasonable steps are taken to prevent harm to individuals and protect them from abuse, neglect, or exploitation. We recognize that everyone has a responsibility to report any concerns or suspicions of abuse.

We also acknowledge our responsibilities in respect of adult participants, volunteers or visitors who might be deemed to be 'at risk' because they are 'vulnerable'. (A Vulnerable Adult is defined in accordance with The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 2002 as a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type:

- a substantial learning or physical disability;
- a physical or mental illness or mental disorder, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or
- a significant reduction in physical or mental capacity.

Key Principles

- **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility:** All members and volunteers have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- **Respect and Dignity:** WAODS is committed to treating all individuals with respect, dignity, and sensitivity.
- **Prevention:** We aim to prevent abuse by promoting safe practices and creating an environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and free from harm.
- **Empowerment:** We empower individuals to speak up if they have concerns or suspicions of abuse and ensure they are listened to and taken seriously.

- Confidentiality: All concerns regarding safeguarding will be treated confidentially and shared only with those who need to know.

Our Procedures:

Election of members and Training

- All members/volunteers, including those who are elected to serve on the committee, and/or those working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults will undergo appropriate checks (where necessary)
- For new members, this may include another full member(s) providing a verbal reference of their character or seeking supporting statements; and could include a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks where applicable.
- For all committee members, they will have been a member of the society for a minimum of one full year prior. They will also receive safeguarding training and regular updates where applicable. All committee members should also take their own responsibility to update and be aware of the safeguarding procedures.

Code of Conduct

- WAODS has a code of conduct, called “House Rules” in place that outlines expected behaviours and boundaries for all members and volunteers.

Reporting Concerns:

- Any concerns or suspicions of abuse or neglect should be reported immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a member of the committee. If the concern involves the DSL, it should be reported to another member of the committee or directly to the appropriate authorities.

Responding to Concerns:

- All concerns will be taken seriously and responded to promptly and appropriately. The “chairperson” and “vice chairperson” of WAODS have designated responsibility for ensuring all concerns are responded to.

Record Keeping:

Accurate records will be kept of all safeguarding concerns, including actions taken and decisions made. These will be recorded in line with WAODS privacy statement.

The “committee” of WAODS will therefore:

- Ensure that members/ volunteers understand their legal and moral obligations to protect children and young people and adults at risk from harm, abuse and exploitation
- Ensure that members/ volunteers understand their responsibility to work to the standards detailed in this WAODS’s Safeguarding Procedures.
- Ensure that members/ volunteers understand their obligations to report care or protection concerns about a child, young person or adult at risk, including a members/ volunteers conduct towards a child, young person or adult at risk, to WAODS’s designated person for safeguarding.
- Ensure that all procedures relating to the conduct of members/volunteers are implemented in a consistent and equitable manner and referenced to our code of conduct.
- Ensure that the designated safeguarding person understands his/her responsibility to refer any safeguarding concerns to the statutory safeguarding agencies (i.e. police and/or children’s social care)
- Provide opportunities for members/volunteers to develop their skills and knowledge particularly in relation to the care and protection of children, young people and adults at risk.
- Ensure that children, young people and adults at risk are enabled to express their ideas and views on a wide range of issues in connection with WAODS.
- Facilitate involvement of parents or carers in the activities of WAODS and make safeguarding procedures available to them. This will be added to the WAODS notice board in the rehearsal space(s)
- Ensure that written permission is received from parents/carers for their children to engage in theatre activities (including social media/ publicity posts) and that specific information is provided in relation to the specific needs of children (eg medical need, allergies, special educational needs)
- Endeavour to keep up-to-date with national developments relating to the safeguarding of children young people and adults at risk.
- Take seriously any allegation or suspicion of abuse towards a child with whom WAODS is in contact with and recognise that any child can be subject to abuse and that any matter arising from this will be dealt with appropriately following a clear set of procedures as set out in this policy.
- Ensure that members/volunteers who are in positions of trust in respect of children and young people, are aware of the law relating to sexual activity with under 18’s.

Responsibilities within this policy

- All members/ volunteers are responsible for the operation of the Safeguarding Policy and they should act upon any concern no matter how small or trivial it may seem.
- All committee members recognise the position of trust in which they have been placed.

- In every respect, members/ volunteers ensure that the relationships they form with children and young people are appropriate, professional and in accordance with our code of conduct.
- The Committee of WAODS ensures that members/ volunteers working directly with children and young people have a current Disclosure and Barring Service certificate at the appropriate level.
- Volunteers requiring DBS disclosures are:
 - WAODS leaders (Chair/ Deputy Chair)
 - Chaperones on specific productions in which children perform
 - Directors of productions in which children are involved (under 18)
 - The Designated and Deputy Designated persons
- In cases where there is an allegation or suspicion of child abuse, the Designated Person(s) will take steps immediately to ensure that no child or adult is placed in a position which could further compromise the safety of the child or adult concerned.
- Any allegation or suspicion of child abuse is reported to the appropriate authorities. The first port of call for advice and /or a referral to Children’s Social Care is by calling Shropshire COMPASS on 0345 678 9021 or the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for the local authority area in which the child lives or the Local Authority’s Designated Officer (LADO). Where the Designated Safeguarding Lead is the subject of the complaint or allegation, the Deputy Safeguarding Lead will contact the local authority. Both the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead must be members of WAODS Committee.
- Where urgent issues of child protection are involved, the committee has the authority to suspend volunteers from working in the theatre.
- WAODS will work with the appropriate local agencies, in particular Shropshire Children’s Services and the local Police, to ensure that children are safeguarded through the effective operation of WAODS’s safeguarding procedures.

Required Actions if abuse is suspected:

All members and users of WAODS are required to report instances of actual or suspected child abuse to the Designated Person(s) with responsibility for safeguarding.

**The Designated Safeguarding Person is:
Jason Wainwright**



The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Person is: Christine Hughes



Process for referral:

- Concerns about the welfare of a child, young person or an adult should be reported directly to the DSL/ DDSL. If they are not available, a member of the committee can also be approached.
- **Should there be an immediate concern for the welfare of a child, young person or adult you should contact the police on 999.**
- If you think a child or young person is being harmed or at risk of being harmed you must contact the First Point of Contact (FPOC), Children's Services and tell them your concerns.
- If you are worried about a vulnerable adult, you can also contact the First Point of Contact (FPOC) or report your concern on line.

Please report your concerns to Shropshire First Point Of Contact on:

- 0345 678 9021
- If you need to report concerns out of office hours then please contact the Emergency Social Work Team on 0345 678 9040 selecting option 1

The DSL/ DDSL may need to complete a Multi-agency Referral Form (MARF) to ensure all information has been shared accurately.

Alternatively, you can report your concerns online to the NSPCC via the 'NSPCC website'.

You can also speak to:

- Protecting Vulnerable People (West Mercia Police): 0300 333 3000
- NSPCC: 0800 800 5000
- Childline: 0800 1111

Vulnerable children

Particular vigilance will be exercised in respect of children and young people who could be vulnerable by virtue of disability, special educational needs, homelessness, refugee/asylum seeker status, the effects of substance abuse within the family, those who are young carers and those who are 'looked after' or 'in the care' of a Local Authority. In addition, we acknowledge that children who are affected by abuse or neglect may demonstrate their needs and distress through their words, actions, behaviour, demeanour or other children. We will work hard to promote a strong positive ethos through our theatre activities and will have high expectations of the behaviour expected of all participants.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the WAODS committee to ensure it remains up-to-date and effective. Any changes will be communicated to all members/ volunteers.

Summary

WAODS is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment where all individuals can participate in our activities free from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and by working together, we can promote the welfare and protection of all those involved in our society.

All parents/ carers of children involved in theatre activities will be informed of our safeguarding responsibilities and the existence of this policy. In situations where children or young people sustain injury or are otherwise affected by an accident or incident whilst they are the responsibility of the theatre, parents will be notified of this as soon as possible.