

- A**ttendance (statutory)
- C**hild employment and entertainment
- E**lective home education and children missing education

Safeguarding and child protection

Information and advice for chaperones

Safeguarding children involved in public performances and entertainment

- Everyone can help to provide a safe environment for children and young people
- Safeguarding not only includes child protection, but also covers health and safety, bullying and other issues such as medical needs, security, drugs and substance misuse
- Safeguarding arrangements at venues should include measures to minimise risks and ensure concerns are addressed

The Children Act 1989 - provides the main legislative foundation for the care and protection of children. Its overriding consideration is that the child's welfare is paramount and delay is likely to prejudice a child's welfare.

This leaflet provides

- Brief definitions of abuse
- Some signs and symptoms to look out for
- What to do if you have concerns about a child's welfare
- Some things to consider when working with children and young people

Why are chaperones important?

Chaperones have a responsibility to ensure children and young people are properly looked after when involved in public performances and entertainment under a licence issued by the Local Authority.

Many children are 'chaperoned' by their own parent and some chaperones may have concerns about a child's welfare that is not directly related to their participation in a production - the details of any concern will be different so always seek advice if you have a worry.

Whether a chaperone is a parent or not, all chaperones need to be alert to possible indicators of abuse (e.g. bruises, signs of neglect and distress), know what action to take, and know who to share their concerns with.

What is abuse and neglect?

A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children and young people may be abused in a family, institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

- **Physical abuse** means causing physical harm to a child
- **Emotional abuse** means making a child always feel they are worthless, unloved or inadequate or always having inappropriate expectations of them
- **Sexual abuse** means making a child or young person take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact or allowing them to see pornographic material, or inappropriate discussions about sex
- **Neglect** means failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

Some signs and symptoms to look out for - possible indicators of abuse

The following is a list of warning signs which could come to your attention and **may** be an indicator that a child is being, or has been abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse. Everyone working with children needs to be aware of warning signs, but should be careful not to assume that abuse is the reason. Some signs can

be present in children who are not abused or at risk at all.

- Unexplained or inconsistently explained physical injuries
- Repeat bruising; bruising of different colours; burn injuries
- Reluctance to talk about an injury
- Worrying changes in behaviour e.g. introverted, lacks confidence, aggressive, bullying
- Peer relationship problems
- Emotional dependence on adults other than parents
- Self harming
- Eating disorders
- Poor hygiene; dirty clothing
- Attention seeking beyond the norm for age
- Sexualised play or sexualised language beyond the norm for age
- Appears frightened of, or is abnormally attached to, parent/s or carer/s

Some things to consider when working with children and young people

(Remember some chaperones are parents so some of these will not apply to them!)

- Maintain professional boundaries
- It may sometimes be useful to provide a mobile telephone number to parent(s) of the child you are chaperoning but do not share your address, home phone number or email address
- Any gifts to individual children should be of insignificant value
- If a child touches you inappropriately, it may be innocent, but could indicate a problem that needs to be explored
- Avoid clothing which could give the wrong messages
- Physical contact should be necessary and appropriate. Avoid conduct which could be misinterpreted e.g. horseplay, tickling or fun fights
- Do not do anything personal for a child that they can do for themselves
- Report incidents involving a child, including injuries

- Do not make, or encourage others to make, comments which are inappropriate, demeaning or insensitive, or humiliating, or might be interpreted as such
- Do not take photographs of children as there is the potential for misinterpretation
- Do not socialise with children or take them to your home
- Report any concerns about a colleague's behaviour and/or attitude toward children

What to do if you have concerns about a child's welfare that you believe may be a child protection issue

- Treat the concern seriously and take all reasonable steps to protect the child
- Call an ambulance if urgent medical attention is needed
- Avoid leading questions
- Reassure the child
- Report your concerns immediately:
Hammersmith & Fulham
020 8753 6600

**REMEMBER -
Be aware, share concerns and
act quickly**