

Burnley Light Opera Society Child Protection Policy 2024/25

Burnley Light Opera Society (BLOS) is committed to practices which protect children from harm. We accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause harm.

*A child is defined as under 18 in *The Children Act 1989*.

BLOS believes that:

All children have a right to be protected from harm regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity. The protection of children is paramount.

LGBTQ+ children and young people face the same risks as all children and young people, but they are at greater risk of some types of abuse. For example, they might experience homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or hate crime. They might also be more vulnerable to or at greater risk of sexual abuse, online abuse or sexual exploitation.

The aims of BLOS's Child Protection Policy are:

To ensure the protection of all children who perform with BLOS and to enable them to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. In so doing:

1. Adhere to Good Practice principles.
2. Carry out child protection procedures when concerns are raised.
3. Define the Chaperone's responsibilities.
4. Ensure Good Practice in Safe Recruitment.

This policy relates to all staff who are employed with BLOS. All chaperones, committee and production team will be in receipt of this policy.

BLOS will therefore:

- Act within the Children's Act 1989 & 2004.
- Act within The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014.
- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel welcome and familiar with their environment and are informed of personal (toilets, dressing rooms etc.) and emergency arrangements (fire exits, meeting points etc.) and any Health and Safety Procedures (Dangerous equipment, First aid etc.)

BLOS is committed to reviewing this policy and good practice regularly.

1. Good Practice Principles

BLOS will endeavour to safeguard children by adhering to the following good-practice principles:

- **Risk Assessment** - should be part of planning any project or series of rehearsals and should take into account what might go wrong, their likelihood and impact. Identify measures to reduce risk including allocating roles to monitor and manage child protection as well as what to do if things do go wrong.
- To always put the welfare of children first.
- To treat all children equally, with respect and dignity.
- To ensure the use of appropriate language and conversation towards all children.
- To always work in an open environment (eg avoiding private or unobserved situations - particularly one to one, and to encourage openness).
- To maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children (eg it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child or for 18 years old and over to share a changing room with them).
- To ensure that dance/performing is fun, enjoyable and to promote healthy safe practice.
- To maintain up to date insurance policies and to ensure that guidelines are followed.
- To be an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- To give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- To be aware of the developmental needs and capacity of children.
- To ensure separate changing areas for boys and girls.
- To ensure separate changing areas are available (after discussions with parents) for those whom are part of the LGBTQ+ Community.
- To obtain consent from parents or carer for the use of still or moving images of children. Once obtained to only archive material for 6 years unless further consent is obtained.
- Full call sheets must be available on request to comply with insurance.
- No child should be left on their own with an adult whom is not a licensed chaperone unless it is their parent.
- If any child wants to leave the Mechanics in between shows they must be picked up and signed out by their parent/guardian or a named person with written consent from their parent/guardian.
- Mobile phones or devices that can take pictures are not allowed to be used in any children's dressing/changing rooms.
- No children should go into adult dressing rooms.

- Always ensure that any form of manual/physical touch is appropriate and is provided openly and only with a licensed chaperone. Children should always be consulted, and their agreement gained. Always introduce what you intend to do before any contact and encourage a 'no' response if anyone feels uncomfortable.

If groups must be supervised to change, ensure that adults supervise in pairs at least one being a chaperone.

Practice never to be sanctioned

You should never:

- be alone with a child.
- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child even in fun.
- reduce a child to tears as a form of *control*.
- allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

Responsibilities of the Society

At the outset of any production involving children the society will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (if necessary in consultation with the local education authority). Chaperones are registered with LCC or another local authority.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.
- Ensure all crew and staff coming into close contact with a child are DBS checked.
- Ensure that all staff and crew who do not necessarily have close contact with children, but who are assisting in the production, are aware of their conduct around children.

2. Protection of Children Procedures

Responsibility

Everyone has a 'duty of care' towards all children under 18. It is your responsibility to Recognise, Respond, Record and Report if you suspect abuse.

However, it is not the responsibility of anyone working at or for BLOS to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Recognising Abuse

Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse and Neglect are all forms of abuse that we need to look out for. Refer to the 'Types of Abuse' page. These will help you identify the visible and behavioural signs of abuse.

Responding to Possible Abuse and to Disclosure

Remain calm, listen carefully, do not ask leading questions, do not promise to keep a secret, say you must share the information with people who can help, reassure the person concerned and tell them what you are going to do next.

Recording Concerns

You should keep a confidential record of any concern, disclosure, referral and responses you make. You may well be called upon at a later stage. The more detail the record the greater likelihood of uncovering the truth in any investigation. You will be asked by BLOS to complete the Accident/Communication book when Reporting Concerns and/or Accidents. The record should be counter-signed and dated by the person with legal responsibility.

Reporting Concerns

Suspicions should be reported to the Child Protection Officer of BLOS at the earliest opportunity, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the person concerned and any other child or vulnerable adult who may be at risk. The CPO is Susan Hardwick.

If the legally responsible person is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, seek a consultation with the Social Services Duty Team 0300 123 6720 or phone the local police in an emergency (999).

Confidentiality

Whilst working for BLOS, there may be occasions when group members disclose personal details. Within the group setting this is to be expected, however we are obliged to breach confidence if any of the following apply:

1. The risk of harm to an individual is apparent.
2. The degree of harm is judged to be serious.
3. Breach of confidentiality may serve to avoid harm.

Mobile phones/cameras

No phones should be used in the children's changing rooms at any time to take any photos/videos.

Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds.
- Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the society, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the society's accident book.
- This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection.
- If a child joins the production with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for child protection. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

3. Chaperone's Responsibilities

- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the producer. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the producer and not allow the child to continue.
- During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms and only authorised adults will enter the children's dressing room.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by the society.
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child, make arrangements to take them home or contact Social Services.

4. Recruitment

BLOS recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. When undertaking pre-selection checks the following will be included by LCC Child licensing department:

- All chaperones should complete an application form. The application form will seek information about applicants past and require self-disclosure about any criminal record. This does not contravene the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 as it relates to recruitment for positions of trust.
- Consent must be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed.

CHECK LIST

1. I have read a copy of BLOS's Policy for the Protection of Children.
2. I recognise that '**the welfare of the child is paramount**' regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity and that everyone has the right to protection from abuse.
3. I know what the 4 different types of abuse are:
Physical, Sexual, Emotional, Neglect
4. I understand my responsibilities in relation to abuse:
Recognising, Responding, Recording and Referring
5. I understand that:
I have a responsibility to be fully aware of issues of protection of children and must take appropriate action to protect all those involved for dance projects/activities run by BLOS. This is also a requirement of Arts Council and Local Authority funded activity (and is soon to expand to cover all funding organisations).
6. I commit to being more vigilant in my sessions for BLOS
7. I know I must contact the BLOS Child Protection Officer if I suspect abuse during or surrounding a BLOS activity.
8. I know who to contact with any query.

Types of Abuse

Sexual Abuse

Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of it happening. The activities may involve physical contact, penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sex acts, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter, and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects upon the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.