RATS – Safeguarding Children Policy

Introduction

Ribchester Amateur Theatrical Society (RATs) has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that when given responsibility for children, all members, chaperones, parents/legal guardians and volunteers accept their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to ensure that everyone follows procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

This Safeguarding Policy sits alongside the Child Protection Policy. The Safeguarding Policy sets out the overall society commitment to ensuring the safety and welfare of children, and the Child Protection Policy sets out specific expectations during performances, and how as a society we will respond in the event of concerns.

There are four elements to our policy:-

1) **Prevention** through awareness of each individual child's needs
2) **How we will keep children and young people safe –** how we create a supportive and safe environment and culture
3) **Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect**
4) **Procedures** for identifying and reporting cases of disclosed abuse

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of RATs and to allow all members and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child safeguarding issues.

PREVENTION

We recognise that the entertainment industry can be a very adult environment, and we expect that all RATs members, chaperones, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and anyone else who comes into contact with children behave in an appropriate manner at all times and remember that the welfare and safety of all children engaged with RATs is paramount.

RATs 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.).
- Inform each child of the appropriate person or people to speak to if they have any questions, problems, or concerns.
- Ensure that all children are treated with respect and dignity and are treated as individuals and offered equality of opportunities.
- Always work in an open environment (e.g., avoiding private or unobserved situations and unnecessary physical contact with children) and involve/allow parents/chaperones wherever possible, to take responsibility for the child/children they are responsible for. (Parents must only have responsibility for their own child).
- Recognising the individual needs of the child, e.g. recognising when a child may be tired and may need a break.
- Ensure that children are supervised appropriately.

- Ensure that all Chaperones are registered with the local authority in which they reside and have an enhanced DBS check.
- Ensure that all members and crew who don't necessarily have close contact with children but who are assisting in the production are aware of expectations of conduct around children and understand the Safeguarding Policy for RATs.
- Ensure that we have robust systems for collating, reviewing and assuring ourselves of our compliance with safeguarding responsibilities.

HOW WE WILL KEEP CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

- Appoint a designated safeguarding lead for children and young people.
- Adopt best practices and a commitment to learning, through our policies, procedures, and actions.
- Ensure all members, volunteers and anyone working with RATs is aware of our Safeguarding Children Policy and how it impacts them.
- Ensure that individuals who have responsibility for events involving children and young people have appropriate training.
- Share information about safeguarding with children and their families, through our newsletters, leaflets and posters.
- Use our Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Policy regularly.
- Build a culture of safeguarding where members, volunteers, children, young people and their families have confidence in RATs ability to adequately safeguard all children and young people and promote their welfare.
- We will conduct an annual audit and assurance exercise to ensure that the Safeguarding Policy has been followed.

DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

A child is abused or neglected when somebody inflicts harm or fails to act to prevent harm. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection.

- **Physical Abuse -** May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning or suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.
  Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after.

- **Sexual Abuse -** Forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. This may involve: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; non-contact activities, such as involving children in viewing abusive or inappropriate images, or in the production of abusive or inappropriate material or viewing or observing sexual activities; 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 a parent or carer 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 appropriate care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- **Emotional Abuse** - The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age and developmentally

inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, for example witnessing domestic abuse within the home or being bullied, 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.

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

RATs will adhere to the relevant legislation when working with children and young people under the age of 18 years as outlined in the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Suspicion of Abuse

If you see or suspect abuse of a child, immediately make this known to the designated individual responsible for safeguarding children, the second in line committee member, or any other committee member.

Disclosure of Abuse

If a child tells you that, they or another child or young person is being abused the following steps must always be followed:

- Always stop and listen straight away, show that you take their allegations seriously.
- Encourage the child to talk, but do not ask leading questions, interrupt or ask the child to repeat itself.

Lancashire County Council – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

0300 123 6720
or 0300 123 6722 if out of hours.

DO NOT worry that you might be mistaken; you have a responsibility to pass on your concerns following a disclosure. Never think abuse is impossible, or that an accusation about a person you know well and trust is bound to be wrong.

- Never promise that you will keep what is said confidential or secret – explain that if you are told something of concern that you will need to let someone know but that you will only tell the people who need to know and can help.
- Record what you have been told accurately and as soon as possible. Use the child's own words. Make a note of the time, location, whether anyone else present and of the child's demeanour.

- Ensure that your concerns are reported immediately to the designated individual, the second in line named committee member, or any other committee member. Do not confront the alleged abuser.

https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/recognising-and-responding-to-abuse#skip-to-content

Handling Allegations

If a child makes an allegation against a member of the society, a volunteer, or anyone else connected with RATs it must be reported as a matter of urgency to the designated individual for child safeguarding who will refer to Lancashire County Council Children's Safeguarding Team. If the allegation is against the designated person, then the information should be reported to the second in line named committee member, or any other committee member, as well as to Lancashire County Council Children's Safeguarding Team.

- The alleged perpetrator should not be made aware of the allegation at this point.
- In all situations, the details of an allegation or reported incident must be recorded. Make accurate notes of time, dates, incident or disclosure, people involved, what was said and done and by whom, action taken to investigate, further action taken e.g. suspension of individual, reporting to police and if relevant, reasons why the matter was / was not referred to a statutory agency, name of person reporting and to whom it was reported.
- The record must be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know.

The Designated Person for Safeguarding is:	
Assigned Lead Member	Viki Mason
Mobile Telephone	07976 836 359
Email address	viki.mason@hotmail.com

Second in line for Safeguarding is:	
Committee Chair	Rebecca Soper
Mobile Telephone	07860 921 463
Email address	rebecca.soper@btopenworld.com