

**LEXINGTON COUNTY ARTS ASSOCIATION
VILLAGE SQUARE THEATRE**

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

DEFINITION

'Child' in the context of this policy refers to any individual under the age of 18; however, the policy is also applicable to other young people and vulnerable adults who use Village Square Theatre and its educational resources and facilities. Whenever the word 'child' is referred to it also refers to young people and vulnerable adults.

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of Lexington County Arts Association/Village Square Theatre that the welfare of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is paramount regardless of age, culture, disability, ethnic origin, gender, language, race, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity and that everyone who may use or visit the theatre, has a right to protection from emotional, physical, sexual and verbal abuse.

PRINCIPLES:

- Lexington County Arts Association/Village Square Theatre will promote the welfare of all children who use Village Square Theatre or associated venues for whatever purpose, by ensuring that all employees and volunteers are clear of their responsibilities in respect of child protection.
- Lexington County Arts Association/Village Square Theatre's staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report any concerns of child abuse to Lexington County Arts Association's President (or other officer) without delay.
- Lexington County Arts Association/Village Square Theatre respects the rights, wishes and feelings of the young people with whom we are working.
- Lexington County Arts Association/Village Square Theatre takes all reasonable, practicable steps to protect children from emotional physical, sexual and verbal abuse while they are under our concern.
- Lexington County Arts Association/Village Square Theatre promotes the welfare of children and their protection within a relationship of trust.
- Lexington County Arts Association/Village Square Theatre takes seriously any allegation or suspicion of abuse towards a child with whom we are in contact with and recognises 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.

RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. All employees and volunteers are responsible for the operation of the Child Protection Policy and that they should act upon any concern no matter how small or trivial it may seem.
2. All employees and volunteers recognise the position of trust in which they have been placed.
3. In every respect, employees and volunteers ensure that the relationships they form with young people are appropriate.
4. Employees of Village Square Theatre/Lexington County Arts Association will always be satisfied that they appoint fit and proper persons to carry out the tasks and that all employees, sub-contractors, and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities under this Child Protection policy. They ensure that staff working with young or vulnerable people, have a criminal background check and uphold the Code of Behaviour below. They will also use good supervision as a means of protecting children, taking and creating opportunities to observe staff while they are working with children.

All employees and directors/musical directors will be subject to a yearly criminal background check that will be held by the theatre in the strictest of confidence.

5. In cases where there is an allegation or suspicion of child abuse, the President (or other executive officer) of the Lexington County Arts Association will take steps immediately to ensure that no child or adult is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.
6. Neither the President, nor any member of LCAA will attempt to conduct an investigation of the alleged sexual misconduct or make a determination of whether or not the accuser's allegations have any merit or basis. It is more appropriate that professionally trained law enforcement personnel perform any necessary investigation.
7. Where urgent issues of child protection are involved, employees of Lexington County Arts Association have the authority to suspend staff and volunteers. The suspending employee will inform the President (or other executive officer) of the Lexington County Arts Association immediately.
8. Lexington County Arts Association/Village Square Theatre is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with, or who regularly come into contact with, children, and to providing appropriate supervision.
9. Lexington County Arts Association/Village Square Theatre is committed to reviewing our policy and good practice at regular intervals.

CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

- ~We value and respect each child as an individual.
- ~We listen to and take seriously any child who shows signs of, or informs someone of, their concerns of abuse.
- ~We encourage young people to talk about their concerns.
- ~We plan activities for young people which involve more than one person present.
- ~We respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- ~We encourage staff and volunteers to keep everything public.
- ~We avoid any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children.
- ~We do not permit abusive peer activities such as ridiculing and bullying by children or those in charge of children.
- ~We do not show favouritism to any individual child.
- ~We do not rely on the good name of Village Square Theatre to protect us.
- ~We do not allow ourselves to be drawn into attention seeking behaviour from children such as tantrums or crushes.
- ~We do not make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.
- ~We do not let suspicion, disclosure or allegation of abuse go unrecorded or unreported.
- ~Ensure that another adult is present when you are in the company of young people (ideally mixed genders) including situations when a young person is waiting to be collected and particularly during performances when members may be changing costumes.

~If one-to-one contact is unavoidable:

- Make sure it is for as short a time as possible.
- Ensure you remain accessible to others-never behind closed doors.
- Tell someone where you are going, what you are doing and why.
- Try to move with the young person to areas where there are more people.
- Obtain permission from the young person before any physical contact is made, for instance if you need to administer first aid.
- Try to avoid unnecessary physical contact especially if it may be misconstrued by the child or other people.
- Avoid where possible giving young people a lift alone, however short the journey.

When this is unavoidable, it is advisable to get consent from the young person's parents or guardian. You must also ensure the young person sits in the back of the car. Leaders and volunteers should also take insurance coverage into account when considering giving lifts to young people, as LCAA insurance does not cover this.