



Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Ensuring the Safety and Well-being of All Participants

Introduction

Safeguarding is a fundamental aspect of any organization, particularly those involving vulnerable groups such as children and young people. Haslemere Players must implement a robust safeguarding policy and procedures to create a safe and supportive environment for all participants.

Purpose

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to outline the measures and actions taken to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults from harm. It aims to ensure that all members, volunteers, and trustees are aware of their responsibilities and the procedures to follow if there are concerns about the welfare of any participant/member.

Scope

This policy applies to all members, volunteers, trustees, and affiliates of Haslemere Players. It covers all activities, rehearsals, performances, workshops, and events organized by the group.

Definitions

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm.

For the protection of children, this includes:

- Protecting children from abuse and maltreatment
- Preventing harm to children's health or development
- Ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes

Child Protection

Child protection is part of the safeguarding process and focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This includes child protection procedures which detail how to respond to concerns about a child.



Identifying Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is defined as a person aged 18 or over who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation due to various factors. These factors can include, but are not limited to:

- *Physical or Mental Disabilities*: Individuals with physical or mental disabilities may have difficulty performing daily activities or making decisions that ensure their safety and well-being.
- *Age-Related Conditions*: Elderly individuals may experience age-related conditions such as dementia or frailty, making them more susceptible to harm or exploitation.
- *Health Issues*: Chronic illnesses or severe health conditions can impair an individual's ability to care for themselves or seek help when needed.
- *Social Isolation*: Individuals who are socially isolated or lack a support network may be more vulnerable to abuse or neglect.
- *Substance Abuse*: Those struggling with substance abuse may be at higher risk of harm due to impaired judgment and decision-making abilities.
- *Economic Hardship*: Financial difficulties can lead to situations where individuals are exploited or unable to access necessary resources and support.

It is crucial to recognise these factors and understand that vulnerability can vary greatly among individuals. By identifying vulnerable adults, Haslemere Players can take appropriate measures to ensure their safety and provide the necessary support and protection.

Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

Every group must appoint a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) responsible for:

- Implementing and promoting the safeguarding policy
- Ensuring all members, volunteers, and trustees are aware of the policy and procedures
- Receiving and responding to concerns about a child's or vulnerable adult's safety or welfare
- Ensuring appropriate action is taken in cases of suspected abuse

Group Members and Volunteers

All group members and volunteers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the safeguarding policy and procedures
- Reporting any concerns about a child's or vulnerable adult's welfare to the DSO
- Participating in safeguarding training as required



Procedures

Society Responsibilities

At the outset of any production involving children and/or vulnerable adults, the following procedures will apply:

- To undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process;
- To identify at the outset the person(s) who are the Designated Safeguarding Officers' and/or Child Protection Officers;
- Appropriate engagement in effective recruitment of chaperones and other responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting in consultation with the local authority;
- To ensure that children are supervised at all times;
- To know how to get in touch with child services, in case it needs to report a concern.

Procedures specific to Children

Parents

It is important that there is a partnership between parents and the members of Haslemere Players.

Parents will be given a copy of Haslemere Players' Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document, which is also available via the website

All parents are responsible for dropping off and collecting (or arranging the collection of) their child/children at rehearsals and performances. This includes signing in and signing out the child/children with the chaperones. Relevant documentation will be requested and managed under GDPR regulations.

All parents must provide confirmation in writing of any nominated persons to collect their child/children in lieu of themselves.

Unsupervised contact

Haslemere Players will aim to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children by having appropriate measures in place.

If possible, there will always be two adults in the room when working with children, who will have been through the criminal record disclosure process.

If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area or in a designated room with a door open.

Physical Contact

All adults must maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.

Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity.



Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Managing sensitive information

The society has a policy and procedures under the GDPR regulations to ensure the appropriateness of taking, using and storing photographs or images of children.

Written permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other marketing purposes.

Web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use. Haslemere Players will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as criminal record disclosures.

Suspicion of abuse

It is the responsibility of each member of Haslemere Players to report any suspicions or concerns of the abuse of a child while in the care of the society. Please make sure to report to the person with responsibility for child protection. If you suspect that the person with responsibility is the source of the concern, you should raise the issue with the Chair of Haslemere Players.

To assist with any investigations, please make a note for your own records of what has been witnessed as well as your response.

If a serious allegation is received against any member of the society or a chaperone, that individual will be removed from contact with any children involved in the production until the investigation is concluded.

Disclosure of abuse

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret. Make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for child protection. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually child protection services or the police.



- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

[Appendix A provides more information on the role of the Chaperones.]

Criminal Record Disclosure

If the Trustees of Haslemere Players believe it is in the society's best interests to obtain criminal record disclosures for production personnel, it will inform the individual(s) of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required.

- A Standard disclosure will apply for anyone with supervised access to children.
- An Enhanced disclosure will be required for anyone with unsupervised access.

Haslemere Players have a written code of practice for the handling of disclosure information and will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

Recruitment and Training

All new trustees, volunteers, and members working with children, young people and vulnerable adults must undergo a thorough recruitment process, including:

- Application and interview
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks
- References from previous employers or organizations

Regular safeguarding training must be provided to ensure that all staff, volunteers, and members understand their roles and responsibilities.

Reporting Concerns

Any concerns about a child's or vulnerable adult's safety or welfare should be reported immediately to the DSO. Concerns may include:

- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Neglect or inadequate care
- Bullying or harassment

The DSO will assess the concern and take appropriate action, which may include contacting external agencies such as social services or the police.

Rights & Confidentiality

All safeguarding concerns and reports must be handled with strict confidentiality. Information should only be shared with individuals directly involved in the safeguarding process, such as the DSO and relevant authorities.

If a complaint is made against a member of Haslemere Players, they will be made aware of the accusation.



Regardless of opinion regarding the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused, have the right to confidentiality under the General Data Protection Regulations. It is important to remember that any possible criminal investigation may be compromised through the divulgence of critical information.

Consideration should also be given regarding concerns arising between a member of the society and vulnerable adults.

In criminal law, the Crown or other prosecuting authority has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Code of Conduct

A code of conduct must be established to provide clear guidelines for acceptable behaviour. It should include:

- Respecting the rights and dignity of all participants
- Maintaining professional boundaries
- Avoiding inappropriate physical or verbal interactions

Any breaches of the code of conduct should be reported to the DSO.

Assurances

Haslemere Players has made the following assurances in the protection of children and vulnerable adults:

- All children and vulnerable adults will be treated equally and with respect and dignity;
- The welfare of each child and vulnerable adult will always be put first;
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision-making process;
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism;
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned;
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour;
- Training and relevant development will be undertaken.

Support for Victims

It is crucial to provide appropriate support for victims of abuse or harassment. This may include:

- Offering a safe space to discuss their concerns
- Providing information about external support services
- Ensuring they are not placed in situations where they could experience further harm



Review and Monitoring

The safeguarding policy and procedures must be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective and up-to-date. This includes:

- Annual reviews of the policy and procedures
- Regular feedback from members, volunteers, and trustees
- Implementing changes based on feedback and new guidelines

The DSO is responsible for ensuring that the policy is reviewed and updated as needed.

Recording

In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.

Conclusion

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and it is crucial for all members, volunteers, and staff of charitable amateur dramatics and musical theatre groups to be vigilant and proactive in protecting the welfare of children and young people. By implementing and adhering to this safeguarding policy and procedures, we can create a safe and supportive environment for everyone involved.

Published 19 April 2026

APPENDIX A

CHAPERONES

- Chaperones will be appointed by Haslemere Players for the care of children during the production process. By law the chaperone is acting in *loco-parentis* and should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child.
- Chaperones will be licensed by the county council where they reside.
- The society will ensure that proof of a current disclosure license is obtained from all chaperones.
- The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.
- Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity (eg. Passport, driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless already well known to the society. They will also be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Child Protection Officer and/or the Production Manager. 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 production manager and not allow the child to continue.
- Under the Dangerous Performance Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Haslemere Players undertake to ensure that no child is put at risk in this regard.
- During final rehearsals and performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door to sign them into the building and will sign them out, handing them back to the parents/nominated adult.
- 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 signed out by 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.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements of 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 Haslemere Players.

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- Chaperones should examine the accident book each day. If an accident has occurred, the Production Manager should ensure that child is not allowed to participate until a medically qualified opinion has been obtained (not just the word of the parent or child).
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child and contact the parent as soon as possible, or make arrangements to take them home.