

Child protection, Care of children & Youth policy

Policy:	Child Protection Policy
Organisation:	New Plymouth Operatic Society
Last Update:	December 2021
Review Date:	December 2023

Background

New Plymouth Operatic Societies (NPOS) core activity is staging musical theatre productions, which utilise volunteers to bring these productions to the stage. Most shows have volunteers under the age of 18 involved in each show, either on or offstage.

This policy has to set out the requirements for children and young persons involved in a production and how they should be managed accordingly.

Part of NPOS Strategic Plan (Future State) includes:

Training & Education

- Have a junior theatre performing arts sub section employing a full-time arts manager
- Having identified future talent, supporting them into training initiatives with ETNZ:
 - i.e. Stage management, set building, costume construction, mechanist work

Productions

- Introduction of Junior Theatre Musical to engage with our younger members

Community Support

- NPOS would continue to support various arts programmes, including:
- Stage Centre or similar acting and drama school to support youth development^[1]_[SEP]
- Warbeloo or similar singing school to support youth development

In addition to this, NPOS is committed to:

- Providing education and entertainment for NPOS and the Taranaki community members by producing musical and dramatic entertainment.
- Youth under 18 years of age in our productions is a core part of achieving these goals.

Application

This policy applies to all NPOS members, Board members, Heads of Department, Independent Contractors, and participating volunteers involved in our productions and Society operations, herewith referred to as **NPOS personnel**.

This policy applies to all children involved in an NPOS production, workshop or event.

- A child is defined as individuals aged 0-15 years

This policy does not apply to young persons involved in a production, workshop or event:

- Young persons are defined as those aged 16 – 18 years of age.
- In the case of those 16 years of age and over, a designated support person will be put in place.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Guide members and volunteers concerning Child Protection and the Care of Children involved with NPOS.
- Set out the accountabilities and responsibilities of NPOS personnel concerning the involvement of volunteers under 18 years of age in our productions.
- Set a clear protocol of action and a framework for our responsibilities and legal duties concerning each child's vulnerability and protection.
- Ensure a consistent and effective response in the event of any concern for the welfare of a person under 18 years and involved in our productions or events and support any child or young person.
- Guidance for attendance and supervision of children at Social events, workshops or other events.

Policy Statement

NPOS is committed to providing support, care and protection to any children involved in our productions.

NPOS believes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Whether their age, culture, disability, gender, language, ethnicity, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, all children have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and abuse allegations should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All personnel of NPOS should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

Age Limits

- To be cast as part of the adult ensemble of an NPOS show, an individual must be 16 years of age by/on the date of the opening night performance of the season
- To be part of one of the backstage teams an NPOS show, an individual must be 16 years of age by/on the date of the opening night performance of the season
- Some shows have a script requirement for children to be included in the onstage cast. Each role's 'stage age' will be as prescribed by the show's script.

Our Responsibility

NPOS takes responsibility for the well-being and protection of children involved in its production by ensuring the organisation has the information, tools, and support to be able to:

- Ensure the safety and well-being of children is at the forefront of all we do and provide;
- Have workable and robust child protection policy and procedures;

Create opportunities for volunteers, members and independent contractors to:

- be informed and gain understanding;
- increase knowledge, skills and confidence to implement procedures;
- create opportunities for personnel to become trusted child safety contacts.

The Society will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will empower 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.
- All adult members of the Society provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- It will keep up to date with health & safety legislation.
- It will keep you informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with the Society in each production, workshop, training or social event and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

Risk

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 responsible for children, including appropriate vetting (if necessary in consultation with the local police authority).
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services if it needs to report a concern.
- Ensure children are allocated their dressing room and do not share dressing rooms with adults.
- Ensure male and female children do not share dressing rooms.
- If children or young people identify as non-binary, give the individual a choice of which dressing room and bathroom facilities they wish to utilise.

Designated Person (DP) for Child Protection

The Board of Management of NPOS holds the overall responsibility for child protection. The Production Manager and/or Company Manager of a Production or Event is responsible for ensuring that the organisation policies are followed.

The Production Manager and/or Company Manager, as the designated person(s) (DP), the Production Manager and/or Company Manager takes responsibility for ensuring child protection is a key focus and that appropriate protocols and procedures, such as child protection policy implementation, staff training, and support, are in place. This role is not a 'job' within itself but usually sits as a function of an established role.

Responsibilities include:

- Being a source of advice, guidance and support for staff who may have child protection concerns;
- Ensuring the Child Protection Policy is reviewed regularly and that all NPOS personnel are informed;
- Ensuring required volunteers have received regular child protection training and that this is recorded;
- Ensuring practices and procedures within the organisation have a child protection lens applied;
- Overseeing the maintenance and confidentiality of child protection records and documentation.
- Ensuring a child Chaperone(s) is appointed for the production and that the job description is provided to that person(s)

Chaperones

- NPOS will appoint chaperones to care for children during the production process. By law, the chaperone is acting in loco parentis (in place of a parent) and should exercise the care, which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 10.
- Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity (e.g. 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 Society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care.
- If unsupervised access is unavoidable or a requirement of the local authority, a criminal record disclosure will be sought.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the DP. 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 DP and not allow the child to continue.
- Chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building during performances.
- 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 or designated caregiver.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms unless it is under the circumstances understood and approved by the chaperone.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue and 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 NPOS.
- 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 of the person collecting.
- If a parent has not collected the child, the chaperone must stay with that child or communicate arrangements with the DP to get them safely home.

Parents

- The Society believes it essential to have a partnership between parents and NPOS. Parents are encouraged to be involved in NPOS activities and share responsibility for the care of children. All parents will be given a copy of the Society's Child Protection Policy and procedures.
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. However, it is NOT the responsibility of NPOS to take children home.
- Rehearsals are closed, so parents must wait in the NPOS rooms foyer or outside the venue to collect children.

Unsupervised Contact

- NPOS will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- A child chaperone(s) will be appointed for a production to which children are involved, specifically tasked with the care and supervision of children under the age of 16.
- The child chaperone(s) will supervise children from when they are dropped off at the theatre/rehearsal by their parents to when they are collected from the theatre/rehearsal by their parents.
- If possible, there will always be two adults in the room when working with children.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area or a designated room with a door open.

- If it is predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, they may be required to obtain a criminal record disclosure.
- At no time is any adult permitted to be alone in a dressing room with a child with the door closed.
- Adults will only touch children when necessary concerning the particular stage or rehearsal activity.
- Adults will seek the child's consent before any physical contact, and the purpose of that contact shall be made clear.

Managing sensitive information

- The Society has a policy and procedures for taking, using and storing photographs or images of children.
- Permission will be sought from the parents to use photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes (as part of the casting acceptance form).
- Management will carefully monitor the Society's web-based materials and activities for inappropriate use by NPOS personnel.
- The Society will ensure confidentiality 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

- All individuals involved in the production are responsible for reporting disclosures and any provision of care concerns and contributing to eliminating organisational child protection procedure flaws to enable reporting.
- Suppose you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the Society, please make this known to the DP. If you suspect that the person responsible for child protection is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to the NPOS President.
- Please make a note for your records of what you witnessed and your response if there is a follow-up in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any NPOS personnel, venue staff etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the production.

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. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the DP. Make it clear to the child that you must share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should 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 DP. That person's responsibility is to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social 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, names involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas outside of bounds. In addition, children will be informed of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work 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.
- The person will countersign this record with responsibility for child protection.
- If a child joins the production with an apparent physical injury, this will be recorded in the accident book. The DP will countersign this record.

This record can be helpful 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.

Criminal Record Disclosures

- NPOS believes it is in its best interests to obtain criminal record disclosures for relevant production personnel. Therefore, it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required.
- Individuals in the following roles, which have close involvement with children involved in a production, shall be required as part of their roles to obtain a copy of their criminal record and provide this to NPOS before the commencement of involvement in the production:
 - Child Chaperone(s)
 - Director
 - Musical Director
 - Choreographer
 - Production Manager
 - Company Manager
 - Stage Manager
 - Sales and Marketing Manager
 - Makeup artists allocated to children
 - Adult actors who have significant time with and whom are required to have physical contact with any child due to their role in the production
- NPOS will have a written code of practice for handling disclosure information, which will be given to them by Management.
- The Society will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

Social Events

- At times there are social events held in conjunction with an NPOS production
- Children are permitted to attend show related social events.
- Children must be accompanied to any/all show social events by a parent or guardian.
- The supervision of the child and transportation home at those social events is the parent or guardian's responsibility, not NPOS or any personnel, including the child Chaperone.
- Some social events are held in licensed facilities. Children and their parents and guardians must also comply with the terms of the Sale of Liquor License while on licensed premises
- No child shall be permitted to purchase, consume or be provided alcohol at any time while involved in an NPOS production, including but not limited to social events.

Definitions

- Child/tamariki

Individuals aged 0-15 years

- Young person/rangatahi

Individuals aged 16 – 18 years

- Bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else – such as name-calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period and can hurt a child/young person physically and emotionally.

- Child abuse and neglect

The harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person.

- Physical abuse

It is any behaviour or action which inflicts physical harm to a child or young person, which can include unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions, unexplained fractures and dislocations, burns, fabricated illnesses such as Munchausen by proxy.

- Sexual abuse

It is an act where an adult or a more powerful person uses a child or young person for a sexual purpose. This can be direct contact or exposing children to adult materials.

- Emotional Abuse

Any act or omission which results in an impaired psychological, social, intellectual and or emotional functioning and development of a child or young person.

- Neglect

Any act or omission that results in impaired physical/emotional functioning, injury, and/or development of a child or young person and can include:

- a) Physical neglect – not providing the necessities of life.
- b. Neglectful supervision – leaving children alone or without someone safe looking after them.
- c. Emotional neglect – not providing the comfort, love and attention the child needs.
- d. Medical neglect – the failure to ensure their health needs are met.

- Child protection

The activities carried out to ensure the safety of a child/tamariki and young person/rangatahi, in cases of abuse or neglect.

Complaints

- Complaints about any aspects of auditions or the casting process should, in the first instance, be addressed formally to NPOS in writing to npos@xtra.co.nz and not to any individual of the audition team or board.
- NPOS undertakes to treat all complaints confidentially and with respect.
- An acknowledgement of receipt will be made to the complainant immediately on receipt of the complaint.
- NPOS endeavours to investigate any complaints objectively and promptly and reply formally in writing and confidentially to the complainant within two weeks of receiving the complaint.
- If a complaint is made against a member of the Society, they will be made aware of their rights under the Society's disciplinary procedures.
- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality.
- Any reckless or willful violation of this policy or negligent behaviour, corrective or disciplinary action may be appropriate through an informal or formal process.

Who should read this policy

The following persons or groups must read and understand this policy to effectively discharge their duties to NPOS:

- All members and Board members of NPOS.
- All volunteers associated with the NPOS and its productions.
- NPOS staff.
- Directors, Musical Directors, Choreographers and Production Managers for any NPOS show.
- All parents, guardians and caregivers of children involved in an NPOS production.

Key Contact Agencies

Police

- Emergency: Ph 111
- Non-Emergency: Ph 105
- Online reporting: [105.police.govt.NZ](https://www.police.govt.nz)

Oranga Tamariki

- Report of Concern: Ph 0508 326 459
- Email: contact@ot.govt.nz

Youthline

- Ph: 0800 37 66 33
- Email: talk@youthline.co.nz
- Text: Free text 234

Other Reference Policies –

[Child Protection Policy for the Ministry of Education – Education in New Zealand](#)

[Microsoft Word - CHILD PROTECTION POLICY.docx \(Educare.co.nz\)](#)

[Child Protection Policy | WHAM Theatre Schools](#)

[CHILD PROTECTION POLICY | theatre box \(theatreboxepsom.com\)](#)