

Information for Chaperones

The following information is provided by Wolverhampton LA, to assist chaperones/matrons in dealing with children in their charge appearing in performances etc. It is designed to answer some basic questions. For more information you can contact Child Employment Section as noted on page 6.

INTRODUCTION

The holder of the licence (e.g. BBC, IBA, Stage School or Theatre) is responsible for ensuring that, throughout the whole period covered by the licence, the child shall be in the charge of a responsible adult.

A licensing authority must approve a person to be a chaperone to have care and control of the child and to safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of the child, unless the child is being cared for by a parent or teacher who would ordinarily provide the child's education.

CHAPERONING SKILLS

- Children often work in an adult environment. Take into account the child's age and experience, concentration span, and exposure to adult conversation and expectations.
- Consider health and safety issues on stage and on set. For example, be fully aware of evacuation procedures in case of emergencies such as fire.
- Take action when a child is tired or unwell. Do not ignore the signs in order to meet the production schedule.
- Different skills will be required when chaperoning in a theatre as opposed to a film set or on location. There is more "hanging about" time during filming and the weather may lead to the children being confined to a caravan for long periods – remember their energy level is far higher than ours and they may require more individual attention.
- Good communication and negotiating skills are needed be they with the child or the variety of adults involved in a production.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Children (Performance & Activities)(England) Regulations 2014 lay down the Regulations for chaperones, which include the following: -

- The chaperone shall be in charge of the child (ren) at all times except when a child is in the charge of his parent or an approved tutor. For example, escorting the child(ren) from the performance area to the dressing room.
- The Local Authority (LA) must be satisfied that the chaperone can exercise proper care and control of the child (ren), including their health, comfort, kind treatment and moral welfare.
- A chaperone will not be prevented from carrying out his/her duties as a chaperone by other duties.
- The chaperone must be satisfied with the arrangements of the dressing rooms, toilets and any other facilities that the child(ren) make use of.
- The law states that the maximum number of children in a chaperones care should not exceed 12. In some instances 12 may be far too high, for example with very young children or if the children are living away from home. Consider these when deciding on the number of children you agree to chaperone.
- When it is proposed that the private teacher (tutor) shall undertake the combined duties of a teacher and chaperone, then such an arrangement shall not be approved if his/her duties as matron require her to be in charge of more than 3 children.
- At no time should a child perform when unwell. If a child falls ill or is injured while in the chaperones charge, medical assistance must be gained, and the parent and licensing authority informed immediately. In the event of a child being too ill to perform, the chaperone must make arrangements for the child to be sent home under proper escort. In cases of serious illness/accident the child should be sent to hospital and the child's parents and the LA should be informed immediately.
- By law records must be made available to a visiting officer of the LA by producers. Chaperones are often designated to keep these in respect of the child. Records should include: -
 - ❖ Times and date the child is at the place of the performance/ rehearsal
 - ❖ Times of departure from the place of performance/ rehearsal
 - ❖ Times of each period during which the child took part in a performance or rehearsal
 - ❖ Times the child had breaks and meals
 - ❖ Times the child was waiting between performances, *i.e.* re-scheduling
 - ❖ The duration of education by a private tutor
 - ❖ Details of any injuries at a place of performance/ rehearsal

- The chaperone must safeguard the child(ren)'s welfare, and not do anything that could jeopardise the child(ren) welfare, or cause them any harm. For example protection from stress, strain, bad weather. The child(ren) must be guarded against exposure to possible harm, including abuse or discrimination.
- The chaperone must ensure that the child(ren) has suitable opportunities for recreation, and the right breaks for rest and meals. Any special diets requirements for medical reasons, or on moral or religious grounds, must be provided.
- The arrangements for the journey from and the return to home must be satisfactory for the child(ren)'s safety.

Chaperone Discretion (Reg 29)

The chaperone may allow a child to take part in a performance for a period not exceeding one hour immediately following the latest time specified in regulation 21 provided that the total number of hours during which the child takes part in a performance or rehearsal, including the period not exceeding one hour, does not exceed the maximum number of hours permitted under regulation 22.

Children on tour

If the child(ren) is living away from home the chaperone is responsible for them throughout the currency of the licence. This includes seeing that their lodgings are satisfactory and that they are properly occupied during any spare time. In general a chaperone needs to exercise a greater amount of supervision than if the child(ren) were living at home during the period of the licence.

- It is a special responsibility of the chaperone to see that adequate, comfortable and clean lodgings are found for the child(ren). These lodgings have to be approved by the local authority in whose area they are, but if for any reason she/he thinks them unsatisfactory, they should insist on a change of accommodation.
- The chaperone must arrange to sleep in the accommodation in which the child(ren) sleeps, near to the rooms occupied by the child(ren).
- The chaperone must see that there are suitable arrangements for meals. Food should normally be provided at the lodgings. The child(ren) must be in the constant charge of the chaperone, who must accompany them at all times.
- The chaperone must see that, if necessary, there is transport to and from the place of entertainment. No child should normally have more than three hours journey. The child(ren) should have plenty of exercise.

Dangerous Performances

No child under the age of 16 may take part in dangerous performances. Children aged 12 and over may be trained to take part in dangerous performances only under a licence. Chaperones are expected to maintain extra vigilance throughout.

Night Work

- LA's may allow working beyond the latest permitted time if outside scenes are essential or after midnight ONLY if they are satisfied that it is impracticable to complete the work before then. Any performing, which takes place after midnight, counts as part of the performing time allowed on the previous day.
- The child MUST have a break of at least 16 hours before he/she returns to the place of performance after night work. If a child does night work on 2 consecutive nights he/she CANNOT do any further night work for AT LEAST another week (7 days).
- Night work MUST be agreed in advance and the LA is NOT BOUND to allow night work even if they are satisfied that the child's appearance is necessary if it may cause any harm to the child.

INSPECTION

It is Wolverhampton City Council practice that regular inspection without prior notice take place at places of entertainment in Wolverhampton. Most local authorities have similar policies. Child Employment Officers normally undertake inspections, but inspectors could include a Fire Officer or Health and Safety Inspector. The Officer would make him/herself known to the chaperone on arrival, and will carry a proper identity card.

EDUCATION (aggregated hours)

Educational hours may be aggregated during each complete period of 4 weeks (or performance periods exceeding 1 week) as long as the child does not receive less than 6 hours tuition per week and not for more than 5 hours per day during the permitted time allowed for the child to be present at a place of performance.

Children should not be allowed to lose educational hours due to long productions and heavy scheduling. Tuition days may include non-school days only under these exceptions.

REGISTRATION

Chaperones are approved for three years and are issued identification cards confirming their registration with Wolverhampton City Council. Any approval is subject to certain conditions; any breach of these conditions could lead to the Approval being withdrawn.

Applications for a chaperone licence should be made in the area where you live. Wolverhampton LA requires:

- A completed application form together with two passport-sized photographs
- The name of two referees (who we will contact for references)
- A successful Enhanced DBS check (confidential)

Following an informal interview and training session relevant checks are made. If satisfactory you will be added to our Approved Chaperone List. We maintain an Office Copy .. All Approved Chaperones will be given the choice of having their name added to the Public copy, which is made available to companies wishing to hire Chaperones on request.

Note- as several checks have to be made, the time span between the LA receiving an application and approval being granted can take up to two months.

When approved, chaperones are required to notify Wolverhampton City Council in writing within seven days of:

- Any arrest for any offence, or of any conviction in a Court of Law whether in the United Kingdom or not
- Any serious or noticeable illness or debility
- Any change of address or telephone number

Wolverhampton City Council does not find employment for chaperones. Chaperones names and contact details will be added to our approved list, which will be available to employers.

Chaperones hired for work will be sent copies of the licences and should study the conditions to ensure that they are complied with.

GENERAL

- The chaperone should be thoroughly familiar with the terms of the licence granted by the LA and see that, as far as it lies within his/her power, the conditions are properly fulfilled. The chaperone should also be familiar with first aid, and the basics of health and safety legislation.
- Additionally, Wolverhampton City Council requires that any authorised chaperones ensure that no child is discriminated against on the grounds of race, gender, age, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin.
- Wolverhampton City Council will not approve a chaperone unless satisfied that he/she can exercise proper care and control of the child(ren), and that he/she will not be prevented from carrying out any duties by other activities.

Chaperones should under no circumstances hand a child over to another person or let any other person examine the child. The only exceptions to this are with the prior approval of the child's parent, or in an emergency, and then under the supervision of a doctor, police officer in uniform, or other suitable person.

If you feel pressured to accommodate a production schedule and you are unsure of the legalities of what they may be asking of the child – STOP! THINK! and CHECK the regulations before agreeing to anything. Failing a satisfactory conclusion, phone the LA for advice or support.

Enquires to: -

**Children in Entertainment
Safeguarding Children Service
Priory Green Office
Whitburn Close
Wolverhampton
WV9 5NJ**

Tel: 01902 555233

Fax: 01902 553048

E-mail: childemployment@wolverhampton.gov.uk

