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Guidance for Organisations applying to Blackpool Council for a body of persons approval

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What is a body of persons (BOPA)?

A body of persons exemption approves an organisation to put on performances involving children without requiring those children to be individually licensed by their home local authority, thereby reducing the administrative burden on the organisation. It is issued by the local authority where the performance is taking place and covers all children irrespective of which local authority area they reside in. It is particularly useful for organisations putting on shows, competitions, festivals etc. involving large numbers of children.

A BOPA may be issued for a specific production or, for organisations that involve children in a number of different productions each year, may be approved for a specified period of time, providing they satisfy Blackpool Council's criteria.

Who can apply?

Any type of organisation can apply, whether amateur or professional as long as no payment (other than expenses) is made for the children to take part.

Note that a BOPA does not authorise absence from school for any child involved in the performance(s). The organisation responsible for putting on the performance, and for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the children taking part, is responsible for making the application.

Blackpool Council's criteria for BOPA applications

The organisation must demonstrate to Blackpool Council that it has clear, robust and well embedded policies for safeguarding children, together with a good understanding of The Children (Performances & Activities) (England) Regulations 2014. It must also have the following in place within the organisation:

- A regularly updated (every 18 months) safeguarding or child protection policy and procedures
- A dedicated Child Welfare (Safeguarding) officer
- Detailed and complete records of children involved with the group, including emergency contact details and details of any medical or additional needs
- An ongoing (updated) list of registered chaperones that meet the requirements of the numbers of children likely to be engaged in their productions

How to apply to Blackpool Council for a BOPA

- If this is the first time the organisation has applied to Blackpool Council for a BOPA, it would be beneficial to have a discussion with the child employment officer prior to submission of the application form
- Complete the application form and contract of agreement and submit these, together with a copy of the organisation's child protection policy and procedures and any other supporting safeguarding information, to the child employment team for consideration. Alternatively, contact the child employment team to request an application form
- For one-off productions, the organisation should submit details of the number of children involved and names and issuing authority of registered chaperones and the children taking part either with the application form, or at a later date, prior to the performance(s), agreed by Blackpool Council. Please contact the child employment team for the relevant performance

notification form

- For group dance competitions - the organisation should submit a participant information form to each participant group. The purpose of this form is to make clear to the dance schools their safeguarding responsibilities, and to provide Blackpool Council with information about participant groups. If organisations have similar procedures already in place, contact the child employment team.
- For BOPAs issued for a specified term, the organisation must submit details of each performance under the BOPA, together with the names and issuing authority of the registered chaperones, and numbers of children taking part, at least two weeks prior to each performance using the notification form which will be sent with the approval certificate.

Festivals

Organisers of festivals (dance, drama or music) may be approved for the period of the festival providing they satisfy the above criteria, sign the 'Contract of Agreement' and provide the necessary details of the festival programme, numbers of children taking part and the arrangements in place to safeguard and supervise the children.

Supervision of Children / Chaperones

To be approved as a BOPA, the organisation must have well embedded policies and procedures for safeguarding children. Blackpool Council considers this is best demonstrated when the organisation employs local authority registered chaperones to care for and supervise the children at its performances/events.

Some types of events stipulate that each child is looked after and chaperoned by their own parent for the duration of the performance, in which case registered chaperones would not be required. However, the organisation is responsible for ensuring this is complied with bearing in mind that children must be supervised at all times, either by their parent or a registered chaperone.

With this mind, it may be advisable for the organisation to employ a number of chaperones to oversee the safeguarding arrangements. Please contact the child employment team for any advice.

What happens if the BOPA application is refused?

If the approval is refused, the organisation will be informed at the earliest possible opportunity in writing, with full details of the reasons for rejection. The organisation shall then be asked to apply for licences in the usual way.

Organisations should consider this prior to submitting an application and ensure there is enough time to apply for licences to the relevant local authorities. If the organisation is dissatisfied with this decision they should contact the pupil welfare service team leader.

Once an application for a BOPA has been granted the organisation must:

- Display prominently at each and every venue it uses for the purpose of rehearsal or performance, the BOPA certificate, together with a statement of the organisation's commitment to protecting children
- Allow any authorised officer of the local authority to have unrestricted access whilst any rehearsal or performance is taking place at any venue that the company uses
- Ensure all chaperones have their licences available in the event of an inspection

Contact details

Child employment officer

Pupil welfare service, PO Box 4, Town Hall, Blackpool, FY1 1NA

Telephone 01253 476578

Email childemployment@blackpool.gov.uk

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Blackpool Council

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