

INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES FOR MATRONS AND TUTORS

Children and young people of compulsory school age who take part in entertainment and modelling are safeguarded by legislation which aims to secure their health, proper treatment and education.

This is achieved, in certain circumstances, by the legal requirement for the person or company who wishes to engage the child to apply for and obtain an Entertainment Licence from the child's Local Authority (Education) (L.A.) The L.A. may endorse the licence with the requirement that the applicant must employ a Matron (chaperone) and/or Tutor to look after, and/or teach the child, during the term of the licence. It is the responsibility of the applicant to find a suitable Matron and/or Tutor but in each case the Matron and the Tutor must be approved by the child's L.A.

THE MATRON

The Matron, who may be a man or a woman, is the KEY PERSON who protects and supports the child and is responsible for the child's welfare. He/she shall be in charge of the child at all times, including when the child is filming, recording or on stage, except while the child is in the charge of their parent or Tutor. The Matron is acting *in loco parentis* and her/his first duty is to the children in his/her care.

He/she must not therefore be involved in any other activity, (i.e. dresser) which will interfere with his/her duties and responsibilities as a Matron.

The child's continued well being overrides the needs of the producer or company and the Matron is the person who, even though he/she may at times be under pressure from other quarters, must ensure the child's well being.

The maximum number of children that a Matron can care for is 12 but this may be too many if, for example, the children are living away from home or they are very young.

The Matron is responsible for ensuring the child gets proper medical treatment due to illness or injury, and for the child's parents to be informed. They must also inform the child's L.A. of such an incident and of any concerns about the well being or treatment of the child.

A basic knowledge of Health and Safety issues at the place of the performance or rehearsal is required of the Matron. He/she must have an understanding of the regulations as it is him/her, (together with the licence holder), who ensures the Regulations (and any additional requirements issued by the child's L.A.) are upheld at all times. Help and advice can always be obtained from the child's L.A, your L.A. or the L.A. in whose area the performance is taking place.

Arrangements for handing over responsibility, e.g. between parent and Matron, or Matron and Tutor, will vary according to the circumstances; it is important to ensure that there is never a time at which it is unclear who is responsible for the child.

The precise duties while the child is at the place of performance will vary according to the nature and location of the performance. This will depend on whether the performance is in a theatre, in a film or television studio, or outdoors, or, if the child is required to live away from home.

In a theatre the times when the child is rehearsing or performing are known in advance and the Matrons routine is fairly straightforward. Whilst recording for a film or television the child may be in the studio or outdoors for much of the day and during this time is in the charge of the Matron, except when having lessons with a tutor, and it is the duty of the Matron to accompany the child to and from the dressing room, school room, or set, as well as remaining on set while the child is there.

The Matron must keep a record of the times the child is on set, being taught, and resting to ensure the Regulations are complied with and the child gets not less than the required number of breaks for meals and rest. He/she must make sure that the child has suitable opportunities for recreational activities, and is protected from stress, strain, bad weather and any other conditions likely to harm the child.

If the child is living away from home, the Matron is responsible for the child throughout. This includes seeing that the lodgings are satisfactory in every way and that the child is occupied during any spare time. The Matron will need to exercise a greater amount of supervision than if the child was living at home.

THE TUTOR

The child's L.A. must ensure that the child's education will not suffer by reason of the child taking part in entertainment

Any Tutor employed to teach the child must be suitably qualified to teach children of the age and standard in question. The maximum number of children that may be taught by the Tutor at any one time is twelve, if they are of the same standard, or, six, if they are of different standards.

The amount of tuition the child must receive is given in the Regulations. The schoolroom must be approved by the child's L.A.

GENERAL

The licensing authority is the Local Authority (Education) and all applications for the approval of a matron or tutor must be made to them.

In order to evaluate the applicant's suitability to work with children the application process includes:-

- obtaining references
- ascertaining the applicant's physical wellbeing
- a check with the Criminal Record Bureau
- a check with Social Service records
- a check on teaching qualifications (if necessary).

A training workshop is provided for successful applicants.

The approval will be for a period of three years, after which time a renewal application must be made.

Should the Matron or Tutor prove unsuitable the Licensing Authority may withdraw their approval.

Applicants must be at least 21 years old.

If you would like more information or wish to apply to be authorised as a Matron or Tutor, in the first instance please contact the Local Authority in whose area you live.