

Child Safeguarding Policy

Statement of Policy

This policy applies to all staff, including the General Manager and Board of Trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, members and anyone working on behalf of the Company.

The company maintains a Safeguarding Committee to oversee any issues raised. Because it is impractical to ensure that a committee member is present at all times, all staff members are trained to handle the initial issue, informing the committee as soon as possible. The staff will be reminded of this at the start of each term and further training given if necessary.

The purpose of this policy:

To protect children and young people who attend and take part in the activities/workshops of the Company.

To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection the Company believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind.

We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them. The company recognises its duty of care on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

Children Act 1989

United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991

Data Protection Act 1998

Human Rights Act 1998

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Children Act 2004

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Protection of Freedom Acts 2012

Children and Families Act 2014

Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 0-25 years

Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; HM Government 2014

Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers; HM Government 2015

Working Together to Safeguard Children; HM Government 2015

The Company recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect; we also recognise that some children and young people are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependence, communication needs or other issues. The Company is committed to practice that protects children from harm. All members of the Company accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The Company believes that:

The welfare of the child is paramount;

All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from harm or abuse;

All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;

All members and employees of the company should be clear on how to respond appropriately;

Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The Company will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

Ensuring that all children are valued, listened to and treated equally, and with respect and dignity.

Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for children and young people, a deputy and a lead board member for safeguarding.

Adopting child protection and safeguarding practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.

Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.

Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

Recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing information about safeguarding with children, their families, staff and volunteers.

Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately.

Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment; ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise.

Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.

Keeping informed on changes in legislation and policies/best practice for the protection of children. This Policy will be monitored and subject to regular review by the Trustees of the Company.

Child Protection Procedures

Disclosure and Barring Service checks

Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks are required for all adults working with or for our Company who carry out regulated activity.

In the case of a blemished record being disclosed among our members a stringent risk assessment must be made of the fitness of that person to continue to work with us, and all actions to mitigate risk must be taken.

Responsibilities of the Company

At the outset of any production/workshop involving children the Company will:

Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production/workshop process.

Identify to parents and staff at the outset the person with responsibility for child protection.

Speak to the children in an age-appropriate way about keeping safe and reporting any worries or concerns.

When working with a school, communicate with the appropriate staff member of a collaborating school to ascertain whether a staff member can be present at all rehearsals/performances, etc., and, if not, confirm that the school accepts the protection provided by the Company's policy.

Ensure the provision of any necessary additional supervision of the children by suitably vetted individuals.

Communicate with the appropriate staff member of a collaborating school to ascertain whether it is the school's or parents' responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) children after rehearsals or performances.

Know how to get in touch with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub in case it needs to report a concern and do this within 24 hours of the concern being raised.

Managing sensitive information

The Company will seek permission from schools or the parents of individuals for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.

The Company's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.

The Company 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.

Responsibilities of the Individual

Suspicion of abuse

If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the Company, please make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection.

Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.

Disclosure of abuse

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

Remain calm 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 person with responsibility for child protection. 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. (General Manager) It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police. In the event of an allegation being made against that person, speak to the Trustee with responsibility for Child Protection.

As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of that 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.

Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Officer when suspected abuse is reported:

Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow them to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer. Don't pass judgement.

Make a detailed note of what has been reported.

If there is an immediate concern for a child's safety, dial 999.

Whether or not the concern is judged to be serious, inform the Senior lead for Safeguarding what you are doing about it.

If the suspected victim and/or abuser has a primary carer or social worker that is known to Freewheelers, contact them to discuss your concerns.

If the primary carer / social worker is not known to Freewheelers, or is implicated in the accusations, contact the Single Point of Access (SPA).

Additional responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Officer in the case of allegations against Company Members:

If a serious allegation is made against any member of the Company, assisting volunteer, etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. This decision should be made in conjunction with a Trustee.

In all cases, listen carefully to what has been said, and make a detailed note of any conversation.

Whether or not the concern is judged to be serious, inform the Senior lead for Safeguarding what you are doing about it.

If necessary, put temporary measures in place, with reference to the Company Violence at Work Policy, to prevent any further instances occurring.

Seek advice from the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO), which has responsibility for managing allegations against individuals who work with children in Surrey. They must be contacted whenever an allegation of harm to a child is made, regardless of whether a complaint has been lodged. The LADO must be contacted within 24 hours of the concern being raised.

Follow the advice of the LADO, who will advise about all aspects of following up this allegation, including referrals to social care and/or police, managing conversations with company members and families, and what is expected of the organisation.

The above actions will be carried out by the Deputy DSO and Senior lead for Safeguarding in the case of an allegation being made against the DSO.

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.

An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken, e.g. suspension of an individual, where relevant the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, and the name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported.

The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

Rights and Confidentiality

If a complaint is made against a member of the Company he or she will be made aware of his rights under the Company'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 under the Data Protection Act 1998. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.

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

Accidents

To avoid accidents, children and those accompanying them will be advised of 'house rules' regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.

If a child is injured while in the care of the Company, first aid will be administered and the injury recorded. This record will be counter-signed by the person with responsibility for child protection.

If a child joins a production with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made. This record will be counter-signed by the person with responsibility for child protection. This record can be useful 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.

Contact Numbers

LADO Tel: 03002 001 006 - Select opt 4 Safeguarding Children Unit, Select opt 3
SPA Tel: 03004 709 100 - 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.
Tel: 01483 577 898 - Out of hours.

END OF POLICY

Next review Feb 2020
