



Little Fish Theatre Company Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

Please read in conjunction with the following company's policies:

- *Anti-Bullying*
- *Code of Conduct*
- *Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)*
- *Equal Opportunities and Recruitment*
- *Health and Safety*
- *Social Media*

1. Little Fish Theatre Company Mission Statement

The Company has the following mission statement from which all informs all of our work:

Little Fish supports difficult to reach young people through the transformative power of theatre and community arts. Its work is designed to enable young people to question their aspirations and beliefs, empowering them to develop both their social and personal life skills. Participants are inspired to become cultural consumers or creators, actively shaping a new social & political landscape. As a theatre company and charity, Little Fish is ambitious in building progressive partnerships with emerging artists and local communities to deliver a wide range of applied theatre projects and new touring productions.

2. Introduction

As an organisation working with children and young people in a variety of settings we believe that:

- The welfare and safeguarding of the child and young person is paramount
- All children and young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and /or sexual identity have the right to protection from maltreatment & abuse
- All suspicions and allegations of maltreatment & abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly & appropriately
- Staff (paid and unpaid) should be trained on how to respond appropriately to child protection and safeguarding issues

Staff are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.

3. Policy Statement and definitions

Little Fish Theatre Company believes that all children and young people have a right to be protected from harm.

Little Fish Theatre company will take every reasonable step to ensure that any child/young person that comes into contact with the company is kept in a safe environment and protected from harm by our staff and volunteers.

If a complaint or criminal proceeding occurs between a member of staff and a third party as a result of Little Fish Theatre Company's direct or indirect involvement, Little Fish Theatre Company will treat the situation with the utmost urgency. Suha Al-Khayyat is the designated child protection and safeguarding officer for the company and is responsible for managing policy implementation on a day to day basis.

Child abuse falls into one or more of four categories: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child and young person. It may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates symptoms of, or induces illness in a child and young person.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child and young person emotional development, and may involve:

- Conveying to a child that s/he is worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as s/he meets the needs of another person
- Imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations e.g. interactions beyond the child's developmental capability, overprotection, limitation of exploration and learning, preventing the child from participation in normal social interaction
- Causing a child and young person to feel frightened or in danger e.g. witnessing domestic violence, seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another
- Exploitation or corruption of a child and young person. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in most types of ill treatment of children, though emotional abuse may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child and young person aged up to 16 years to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not s/he is aware of what is happening.

Activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. 'Penetrative acts' include 'rape' (forced penetration of vagina, anus or mouth with a penis) and 'assault by penetration' (sexual penetration of vagina or anus of a child with a part of the body or an object).

Sexual activities may also include non-contact activities, e.g. involving a child in looking at / production of abusive images, watching sexual activities or encouraging her/him to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. It may include use of photos, pictures, cartoons,

literature or sound recordings via internet, books, magazines, audio cassettes, tapes or CDs.

Sexual abuse or normal experimentation?

All children and young people develop an interest in their own sexuality from a young age, and seek to learn about sex from their peers. It is important not to label normal, healthy behaviour as deviant or abusive. It is equally important not to allow sexually abusive behaviour perpetrated by one child or young person towards another to go unchecked, as this is harmful both for the victim and the perpetrator. There are ways of assessing whether sexual behaviour between children and young people is abusive or not.

Indicators of abusive behaviour include:

- There is a significant difference in age, dominance or understanding between the children/young people
- The behaviour was accompanied by the use of threats or bribes
- The behaviour was carried out in secret.

For the purposes of this procedure however, it is enough to say that if there is any question that the behaviour could be abusive, the matter should be discussed with the local authority children's social care department or with the NSPCC Helpline (0808 800 5000).

This can initially take place without the names of the children or young people being disclosed, although such information will have to be provided if the view of the children's social care department or the NSPCC is that the behaviour may constitute significant harm and that an investigation is needed.

Neglect

Neglect involves the persistent failure to meet a child and young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once the child is born, neglect may involve failure to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing or shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Meet or respond to basic emotional needs
- Ensure adequate supervision including the use of adequate care-takers
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Ensure that her/his educational needs are met
- Ensure her / his opportunities for intellectual stimulation are met

4. Policy aims

The aim of the Little Fish Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst participating in Little Fish Theatre Company activities.
- Allowing all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to child protection issues.

5. Child Protection Procedures

i. Good practice guidelines

Little Fish Theatre company has a code of conduct which is shared with all members of staff. This aims to minimise the opportunities for abuse and the opportunities for false allegations to be made. The following are examples of how to create a safe, positive culture and climate:

- Always work in an open environment, never alone, and, where relevant with an adult with legal responsibility for the child or young person (i.e. teacher) present.
- Treat all young people with respect and dignity.
- Maintain an appropriate distance from young people and follow guidelines for safe touch as outlined in the Company's Code of Conduct.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Carry out thorough risk assessment of performance or workshop spaces.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough or sexually provocative games.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person, even in fun.
- Allow allegations made by a parent/teacher/staff member/child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

More detailed guidelines for good practice, including guidelines for use of photographic/filming equipment and use of images, can be found in the Little Fish Theatre Company's Code of Conduct, given to all members of staff.

ii. Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers

Little Fish Theatre Company recognises the safe culture of an organisation providing services for children and young people depends to a great extent on the quality and integrity of its staff. Safe and sound recruitment and vetting is therefore of prime importance.

Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All volunteers/staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek an appropriate level of information from the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving license with photo).

Interview and Induction

All employees, sub-contractors and volunteers will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive formal or informal induction, during which:

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on appropriate DBS certificates and self-disclosures).
- Their qualifications should be substantiated.
- Suitable References received prior to role commencement
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- They are given the Little Fish Theatre Company's Code of Conduct.
- Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.

Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to:

- Analyze their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Recognize their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- Work safely and effectively with children.

E-safety and social media

This safeguarding process will include effective e-safety management;

- to protect children and young people who receive Little Fish Theatre's services and who make use of information technology (such as social media, mobile phones, games consoles and the Internet) as part of their involvement with us;
- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to social media and e-safety;
- to ensure that, as an organization, we operate in line with our values and within the law in terms of how we use social media and information technology.

We recognize that:

- the welfare of the children and young people who come into contact with our services is paramount and should govern our approach to the use and management of electronic communications technologies;
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare and in helping young people to be responsible in their approach to e-safety.
- the use of information technology is an essential part of all our lives; it is involved in how we as an organisation gather and store information, as well as how we communicate with each other. It is also an intrinsic part of the experience of our children and young people, and is greatly beneficial to all. However, it can present challenges in terms of how we use it responsibly and, if misused either by an adult or a young person, can be actually or potentially harmful to them.

We will seek to promote e-safety by:

- ensuring the appointed child protection officer for the company is also responsible for an e-safety coordination;
- providing clear and specific rules to staff and volunteers on the appropriate use of ICT;
- supporting and encouraging the young people using our service to use the opportunities offered by mobile phone technology and the internet in a way that keeps themselves safe and shows respect for others;
- supporting and encouraging parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online and when using their mobile phones and game consoles;
- incorporating statements about safe and appropriate ICT use into the codes of conduct both for staff and volunteers and for children and young people;
- completing an e-safety agreement with young people and their carers before using ICT equipment for a project hosted by Little Fish Theatre;
- use our procedures to deal firmly, fairly and decisively with any examples of inappropriate ICT use, complaints or allegations, whether by an adult or a child/young person (these may include breaches of filtering, illegal use, cyberbullying, or use of ICT to groom a child or to perpetrate abuse);
- informing parents and carers of incidents of concern as appropriate;
- reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly;
- providing adequate physical security for ICT equipment;
- ensuring that user names, logins and passwords are used effectively;
- using only official email accounts provided via the organisation, and monitoring these as necessary;
- ensuring that the personal information of staff, volunteers and service users (including service users' names) are not published on our website;
- ensuring that images of children, young people and families are used only after their written permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given;
- any social media tools used in the course of our work with children, young people and families must be risk assessed in advance by the member of staff wishing to use them;
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers on ICT issues, through supervision, support and training;
- examining and risk assessing any emerging new technologies before they are used within the organisation.

iii. Responding to allegations or suspicions**The Referral Process**

If a member of staff has any reason to suspect that a child is seriously neglected, is being either physically, emotionally or sexually abused or is likely to experience significant harm these steps must be followed:

- They are to consult their Little Fish line manager and the appointed child protection officer. Suha Al-Khayyat is the child protection officer for the company.
- Suha Al-Khayyat will assess the nature of the suspicions or the disclosure.

- If the Suha Al-Khayyat has concerns she will consult the relevant member of staff at the venue where the work has taken place (e.g., if the suspicions have occurred when working in a school the designated teacher will be contacted) or social services.
- If Suha Al-Khayyat is not available and the matter is particularly urgent the worker should, if at a school, consult the designated safeguarding teacher or the head teacher if the designated teacher is not available, as soon as possible.
- If when working at another venue & the Little Fish line manager and/or the appointed child protection officer is not available and the matter is one of extreme urgency the worker may contact social services directly.
- If a worker suspects the person with legal responsibility is the source of the problem they must make concerns known to the Little Fish line manager and/or the appointed child protection officer as soon as possible.

In a case where the line manager has suspicions or abuse is disclosed they must consult with the designated person or social services immediately.

Little Fish Theatre Company staff must not attempt to investigate or begin an assessment of the matter. This is the responsibility of social services and the police. Inappropriate investigation can lead to vital evidence being considered inadmissible in court.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Little Fish Theatre Company, in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

How to handle disclosure

If someone discloses to you -

- Remain calm and in control but don't delay acting
- Listen carefully to what is said. Allow the person to tell you at his or her 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 first opportunity to say that you will need to share the information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell people who need to know and should be able to help.
- Reassure the child or young person that they did the right thing in telling someone
- Tell the young person what you are going to do next
- Speak immediately to the Little Fish line manager who has the designated responsibility for the protection of young people. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with social services. If there is no designated person available the line manager may speak directly to social services
- As soon as possible make a note of what was said using the young person's own words.

What to say to a child or young person who says that he/she or another child is being abused by another child or young person?

- Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling someone about it.

- Tell him/her that you now have to do what you can to keep him/her (or the child who is the subject of the allegation) safe.
- Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next and who else needs to know about it.
- Let the child or young person tell his/her whole story. Don't try to investigate or quiz the child or young person, but make sure that you are clear as to what he/she is saying.
- If possible, explain to the child's or young person's parent/carer what has happened. Do this first without the child or young person there, and then summarize it again in front of the child or young person so that it is an open subject between parent/carer and child or young person. This may enable them to talk about it together more easily.
- Check out what the child or young person would like to happen as a result of what he/she has said, but don't make or infer promises you can't keep.
- Give the child or young person the ChildLine phone number (0800 1111).
- Make sure that the parent/carer has support too.

What to say to a child or young person who says that he/she has abused another child or young person?

- Reassure the child or young person that he/she has done the right thing by telling someone about it.
- Tell him/her that you now have to do what you can to keep him/her and the child or young person who has been abused safe.
- Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next and who else needs to know about it.
- Let the child or young person tell his/her whole story. Don't try to investigate or quiz the child, but make sure that you are clear as to what he/she is saying.
- If there is no risk to the child or young person from the child's parent/carer, then explain to the parent/carer what has happened. Do this firstly without the child or young person there, and then summarize it again in front of the child or young person so that it is an open subject between parent/carer and child or young person. This may enable them to talk about it together more easily.
- Check out what the child or young person expects to happen as a result of what he/she has said. Offer reassurance where appropriate but don't make or infer promises you can't keep.
- Reassure the child or young person that, with help, the problem can be sorted out and that what has happened does not make him/her an abuser for life.
- Give the child the ChildLine phone number.
- Remember that the child or young person who has behaved in this way is a child in need of support.
- Make sure that the parent/carer has support too.

Recording disclosure or concerns

Careful recording of disclosure or concerns is extremely important. Social services or the police require specific information about suspected abuse. To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child/young person's name, age and date of birth of the child.

- The child/young person's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also, any indirect signs, such as behavioral changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child/young person's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the child/young person was not the person who reported the incident, has the child/young person been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact that took the referral should be recorded.
- If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct, or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or Childline on 0800 1111.

Guidelines to responding to allegations of abuse about staff

Little Fish Theatre Company will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child. The company will also act swiftly if allegations are made by a child or young person regarding a member of staff.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily. Procedures for responding to allegations of abuse about staff can be found in the document '*Responding to allegations of abuse about staff.*'

iv. Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

This means that information concerning an initial concern or disclosure should be handled only by

- The person making the allegation
- The person hearing the allegations or with the concerns
- The Little Fish line manager and or appointed child protection officer
- The designated person at the venue
- Social services/police

At later stages of a referral process this will include

- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The alleged abuser (and the parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

v. Appointed Officer

Suha Al-Khayyat is the child protection officer for the company. Her contact details are as follows:

Email: suha@littlefishtheatre.co.uk - Tel 020 8269 1123 - Mob 07967101396

vi. Useful contact numbers.

In an emergency please dial 999 and talk to operator staff. The following numbers can also be useful:

Police 999 emergency line/101 non-emergency crime reporting

Duty Social Worker Teams:

Greenwich

Emergency Duty Team (out of office hours only): 020 8854 8888

Referral team: 020 8921 3172

Southwark

Emergency Duty Team (out of office hours only): 020 8854 8888

Referral team: 020 8921 3172

Bexley

Referral Team: 020 8303 7777

Wandsworth

Referral team: 020 8871 6000

Emergency Duty Team (out of office hours only) 020 8871 6000

viii. Audit and review

Little Fish Theatre Company recognizes the need to regularly review and update its policies to ensure that procedures still represent best practice. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed yearly or when the need arises due to changes in legislation or London Child Protection guidelines.

Signed:



Suha Al Khayyat

Dated: 27/03/23