

THE LONDON BUS THEATRE COMPANY

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Child Protection Officer

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Definition of abuse:

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse may consist of single or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal, psychological or sexual, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act.

Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

It may be caused by anyone who has power over the person. The person responsible for the abuse is very often well known to the person being abused and could be; a spouse; partner; son; daughter; relative; friend; carer or neighbour; a paid carer or volunteer; a health worker; social care or other worker; another resident or service user; an occasional visitor or someone who is providing a service. It can be caused by a person deliberately intending to harm, failing to take the right action or through their ignorance. It can involve one or a number of people.

The London Bus Theatre Company will ensure that:

the welfare of the child is paramount

all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.

all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

all staff have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

The London Bus Theatre Company has a duty of care to safeguard all children on all projects from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The London Bus Theatre Company will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in all its projects through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by The London Bus Theatre Company.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

The aim of The London Bus Theatre Company Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of The London Bus Theatre Company and allow all staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made.

The London Bus Theatre Company will:

always work in an open environment ensuring our policy and procedures will be publicly available and proactively promoted to enable the children at risk and/or their carers/guardians to give

constructive feedback and report any concerns or incidents to staff.

treat all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.

always put the welfare of each young person first.

maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children

build balanced relationships on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision making process.

make drama fun, enjoyable and promote respect.

be an excellent role model - including appropriate language and not smoking or drinking in the company of young people.

give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.

recognise the needs of and capacity of young people and disabled adults.

secure parental consent in writing or by telephone to act in loco parentis, if a child needs emergency first aid or other medical treatment.

The London Bus Theatre Company staff and volunteers avoid spending time alone with children away from others and avoid taking or dropping off a child to a project.

The following would never be sanctioned:

allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.

make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.

fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child.

If bullying is suspected, this will be referred to the Child Protection Officer and they will investigate all allegations and ensure the victim is safe and inform the bully's parents.

The London Bus Theatre Company recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Preselection checks include the following:

all staff and volunteers complete an application form.

all staff are DBS checked or provide us with a copy of a current DBS check less than two years old. Maldon CVS carry out our DBS checks.

Sessional workers that are employed on a regular basis are DBS checked and complete an application form. Sessional workers that are employed for a one off event and parents or teachers are present then a DBS is not a legal requirement.

All staff and volunteers undergo an interview with The London Bus Theatre Company which:

ensures the application form and DBS check is complete.

any qualifications are substantiated

job requirements and responsibilities are clarified.

child protection procedures are explained and safeguarding training needs identified.

all staff and volunteers are provided with a copy of The London Bus Theatre Child Protection Policy.

ensures that all third parties appointed by The London Bus Theatre Company to perform any part of the grant activity where working with children at risk have their own appropriate safeguarding and protection policies and procedures in place.

Once the DBS checks have been carried out then:

All staff and volunteers complete Safeguarding Level One with Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

All staff and volunteers undertake refresher Safeguarding Level One training every three years.

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to The London Bus Theatre Company Child Protection Officer, who will take steps necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

This includes protecting whistle blowers and others who may raise concerns by ensuring only senior management be privy to the issues raised by those individuals with unequivocal guarantees of confidentiality as a basic tenet for disclosure.

The London Bus Theatre Company will refer the allegation to social services department who may involve the police within 24 hours.

The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.

Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

The London Bus Theatre Company Child Protection Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquires The London Bus Theatre Company Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated. The welfare of the child will remain of paramount importance throughout.

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event. Where such allegations are made The London Bus Theatre Company will follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police and the Essex Safeguarding Children Board Room C228 County Hall Chelmsford CM1 1QH escb@essex.gov.uk . This is because other children may be at risk from this person.

Information about suspected abuse will be provided to police or social services and include the following:

the child's name, DOB, 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. Including, dates, times and any other relevant information.

a clear distinction between fact, opinion or hearsay.

a description of any visible bruising or injury. Any behavioural changes.

details of witnesses to the incidents.

If possible, the child's account.

who has been contacted and consulted.

if anyone has been alleged to be the abuser.

Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral recorded.

Guidance for staff and volunteers on hearing a disclosure

Receive:

Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.

Accept what is said and react calmly so as not to frighten the child/young person.

Make a note of what has been said as soon as possible.

Reassure:

Reassure the child/young person that they have done the right thing by telling you.

Tell the child/young person they are not to blame and that it was right to tell; I am glad you came to me.

It is important that you do not promise to keep it a secret as your professional responsibilities may require you to report the matter. If you make this promise to a child/young person and then break it, you confirm to the child/young person yet again that adults are not to be trusted.

React:

Take what the child/young person says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child/young person who has a speech disability and/or differences in language;

Do not ask 'leading' questions, for example 'what did they do next?' (This assumes they did!). Such questions may invalidate your evidence (and that of the child/young person) in any later prosecution in court.

Explain what you have to do next and whom you have to talk to.

Record:

Make some brief notes at the time on any paper which comes to hand.

Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by a court.

Record the date, time, place, persons present and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour.

Be specific when noting the words used by the child/young person.

Remember:

To share your concerns with the Designated London Bus Theatre Company Safeguarding Officer.

Guidance for staff and volunteers if they suspect a child/young person is being abused

It is not the responsibility of anyone working at The London Bus Theatre Company to decide whether or not a child/young person is being abused or might be abused. However, there is a responsibility to act on concerns to protect children and young people in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child/person.

If you become aware of any issue or complaint relating to the welfare or wellbeing of children and

young people then you should raise these with the Designated Safeguarding Officer. All concerns will be considered and a decision reached as to whether the concern should be referred to Social Services.

Online safety issues

Two London Bus staff have completed CEOP training and have completed Level One Safeguarding training with Essex Safeguarding Board. All staff are required to:

Set rules and agree boundaries with online safety issues

Make sure any online work is age appropriate

Use controls to filter, restrict, monitor or report content

Check young people know how to use privacy settings and reporting tools

Any online abuse to be reported to CEOP and local Police Force.

When staff are visiting schools they take the original copy of their DBS check and photo ID and adhere to the schools Child Protection Policy.

Risk assessments on activities out of school are carried out to ensure children are kept safe.

All policy and procedures will be quarterly reviewed and revised according to contemporary developments.

The London Bus Theatre Company

The London Bus Theatre Company is a registered CIC that works throughout the UK and has a nationally recognised track record in working with marginalised young people, addressing inequality and instigating social change through the arts. We provide Councils, NHS Trusts, Essex Police, youth organisations, schools and colleges with drama workshops, plays and online short films on issues such as bullying, drugs, alcohol, knife crime, antisocial behaviour and job interview techniques. We have received sponsorship from Starbucks, The Co-op, C2C, Tesco, Umbro and KeyMed and sold our award winning anti-bullying play "Nutter" to The National Theatre. We are the only TIE group in Essex that has received Arts Council funding for long term projects. The BBC has shown documentaries about our ground breaking work with young offenders including "Bad Boys". Essex Community Foundation under the Fair Share Big Lottery programme awarded us the largest grant in Essex, £250,000, over three years to provide a range of drama and film making activities for three hundred young people from the deprived Craylands and Fryerns East estates, Basildon and Queens Park estate, Billericay. The activities were drama workshops in schools, arts award qualifications, employment and volunteering opportunities and a new feature film on bullying called "Angels vs Bullies". The film was signed by Cineworld, sold out numerous screens and featured on the ITV London and BBC Look East news. The National Lottery Community Fund and The Arts Council are currently funding a long term drama and film project in Jaywick.

Safeguarding children

Children are vulnerable and require special protection due to their developmental stage, limited capacity for self-advocacy, and dependence on adults for care and safety.

Vulnerability: Children are inherently vulnerable due to their age and developmental stage, making them susceptible to harm and exploitation.

Limited Self-Advocacy: Children may not have the maturity or experience to fully understand or protect themselves from harm, requiring adults to act on their behalf.

Dependence on Adults: Children are reliant on adults for their basic needs, care, and safety, making them particularly vulnerable to abuse or neglect from those who are supposed to protect them.

Developmental Differences: Children's physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities are still developing, which can make them more susceptible to certain types of harm and less able to understand or report abuse.

Need for Protection: Due to their vulnerability and developmental stage, children require specific safeguards and interventions to ensure their safety and well-being.

Importance of Early Intervention: Recognising the unique needs of children and intervening early to address potential risks is crucial for safeguarding their well-being.

Children are not mini-adults: They need to be treated with respect and their needs and perspectives should be taken into account, but they are not the same as adults and should not be treated as such.

All children are different: While children share certain characteristics, each child is unique with their own needs, experiences, and strengths.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: Everyone at The London Bus Theatre Company who works with or around children has a responsibility to safeguard their well-being and report any concerns.

The purpose of this policy is:

. to protect children and young people who receive The London Bus Theatre Company services from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services

- to provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of The London Bus Theatre Company, including directors, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from nspcc.org.uk/childprotection

Supporting documents

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies, procedures, risk assessments, guidance and other related documents:

- role description for the designated safeguarding officer
- dealing with disclosures and concerns about a child or young person
- managing allegations against staff and volunteers
- recording concerns and information sharing
- child protection records retention and storage
- code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- behaviour codes for children and young people
- photography and sharing images guidance
- safer recruitment
- online safety
- anti-bullying
- managing complaints
- health and safety
- induction, training, supervision and support
- adult to child supervision ratios (9 - 12 years - one adult to eight children. 13 - 18 years - one adult to ten children.)

We believe that:

- children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

the welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do and in all the

- decisions we take
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and

- other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous
- experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- extra safeguards may be needed to keep children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- valuing, listening to and respecting them
- appointing a nominated child protection lead for children and young people
- adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently.
- recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made (Enhanced DBS and updated every 3 years) and gain references on new staff and volunteers.
- recording and storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance [more information about this is available from the Information Commissioner's Office: ico.org.uk/fororganisations]
- sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and their families via posters, group work and one-to-one discussions
- making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern
- using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately
- using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
- creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise
- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- 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
- building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concern

Contact details

Nominated child protection lead

Katherine Austen

01208 814514 / 07831 514811

Reporting to: Essex Safeguarding Children Board Room C228 County Hall, Chelmsford CM1 1QH
escb@essex.gov.uk

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was reviewed on: 11th October 2024.

Next review date: 12th October 2025