

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

Bounce Theatre works with children in education and community settings. We work with child performers as well as additional professional companies and youth clubs. We are committed to safeguarding the wellbeing and safety of every child and vulnerable adult we work with, and this policy outlines the principles we work to.

Bounce Theatre will review the policy annually. This policy and guidelines should be read in conjunction with any relevant Project Risk Assessment, please ensure these are read and fully understood for in-person and/or online interactions.

### **SECTION A: SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

#### **1. Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is a relatively new term which is broader than ‘child protection’ as it also includes prevention. For the purposes of this guide the definition of safeguarding is as follows: ‘Safeguarding children is the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm – it is everyone’s responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.’

Safeguarding is:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

We have defined safeguarding as:

- When working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults we take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to their welfare are minimised.
- When there are concerns about children and young people’s welfare, we will take appropriate actions to address those concerns, working to agreed local policies and procedures, in partnership with other local agencies.

#### **2. Our Principles**

In all our work with children we adhere to the following principles:

- The well-being and safety of each child is our primary concern.
- We respect the rights and dignity of every child we work with.
- We respect the right of children to express their views and have them listened to.
- Children are treated equitably and sensitively, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, cultural background, sexual orientation, or religion, in line with our Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Relationships between our staff and artists and the children they work with are based on mutual trust and respect.
- Bounce Theatre staff and artists seek to achieve a balance between artistic outcomes and the social, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of the children we work with.

- All our staff and artists who work with children have a responsibility to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse or harm of any child with whom they come into contact. Any suspicions or allegations of abuse or harm are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Staff recruitment and selection processes will include enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.
- All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by Executive Directors, staff, artists, and volunteers are responded to appropriately.

### **3. Who does this include?**

- The policy applies to all Executive Directors, staff, artists and volunteers who work with children during their employment at Bounce Theatre.
- This policy is endorsed and approved by the Executive Director.
- Bounce Theatre also runs community programmes that can involve adults who are vulnerable. This policy and the principles outlined in it apply equally to our work with vulnerable adults.
- Children and parents will be informed of the policy and its principles as and when appropriate.
- The Policy and Good Practice Guidelines apply to all staff and artists who work for the company whether on permanent, temporary, or freelance contracts, or working as volunteers. Organisations and individuals who wish to hire Bounce Theatre and are working with children must have their own child protection policy in place.

### **4. Legal Context**

- Bounce Theatre uses the word 'child' to refer to anyone under the age of 18 as defined by the Children Act 1989.
- Bounce Theatre uses the word 'harm' to refer to ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and non-physical forms of ill-treatment) or the impairment of health (physical or mental) or development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural) as defined by the Children Act 1989.
- The safety of the children we work with is our priority. Although not legally required to do so, we take every reasonable step to ensure a level of care that is comparable to the requirements of the Protection of Children Act 1999.
- Our reporting procedures are in line with current legislative framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and also follow the procedures set by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.
- Bounce Theatre recognises that the Every Child Matters framework is largely meant for formal education institutions; it places values on its outcomes and will endeavour to incorporate them into its work.
- Although the European Human Rights Act 1998 does not specifically mention children, they are still covered by this legislation by the fact that they are considered 'persons' in the eyes of the law, just as adults are.

### **5. Procedures**

Bounce Theatre has a Designated Safeguarding Lead, Louise Pendry who undertakes regular training. We have a member of staff who will act as the Designated Safeguarding Lead in Louise Pendry's absence.

We will ensure that all Bounce Theatre members of staff and volunteers will:

- Develop their understanding of the signs of abuse and indicators of abuse.

- Know how to respond to a child who discloses abuse.
- Ensure that all parents/carers are made aware of the responsibilities of staff members and volunteers with regard to child protection procedures.
- Our procedures will be reviewed annually and updated where necessary.
- All new members of staff and new volunteers will be given a copy of our safeguarding policy and good practice guidelines as part of their induction.

## **6. Safer Recruitment**

Bounce Theatre has a written recruitment and selection policy statement and procedures that detail all aspects of the process and links to the organisation's safeguarding policy.

## **7. Confidentiality**

- We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will disclose any information about a child to other members of staff on a need-to-know basis.
- All staff and volunteers must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.
- All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets.

## **8. Staff Training and Support**

- The Artistic Director and all other staff and volunteers who work with children will undertake appropriate child protection awareness training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities for child protection effectively. There will be compulsory half day training on child protection awareness for all new staff and volunteers. There will be a refresher course for all staff and volunteers once a year held internally at Bounce Theatre.
- Bounce Theatre will ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Lead undertakes refresher or other Local Safeguarding Children Board recognised training at two yearly intervals to keep knowledge and skills up to date.
- We recognise that staff and volunteers working for Bounce Theatre who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm may find the situation stressful and upsetting. We will provide support to such staff and volunteers by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and to seek further support as appropriate.

## **9. Whistleblowing**

Whistle blowing is when someone reports suspected wrongdoing at work, including health and safety issues, damage to the environment, a crime, misuse of public funds and where the welfare of children is being negatively affected, and the cover up of any of these.

- We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.
- All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the attitudes or actions of colleagues.
- Any individual who has reasonable suspicion of staff malpractice or concerns about a child's welfare within a setting should inform the designated safeguarding and child protection person immediately who will follow the setting's procedure.

- If you suspect the designated person may be related to the issue you should contact Single Point of Access or Ofsted directly. You are advised to set out the background and history of your concerns, giving names, dates and places, where possible, and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.
- All reports will be investigated and dealt with in confidence, including staff on a need to know basis. Individuals should raise any concerns about a child to their own employer in the first instance.
- However, if there are concerns about how child protection issues are being handled by the setting or by another organisation, such as a concern the setting will cover it up, the complainant is concerned they will be treated unfairly or the concern hasn't been dealt with appropriately, staff can contact the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline. The helpline is staffed by a range of professionals who can give expert advice and the issue will be dealt with in confidence with the individual's anonymity protected if the complaint is taken further.

## **10. Application and Review of Policy**

- This policy applies to all staff and volunteers and visitors to Bounce Theatre. We recognise that child protection is the responsibility of all staff within Bounce Theatre.
- We will ensure that all parents/carers and other working partners are aware of our child protection policy.

**Date Reviewed: November 2023**

**Next Review Date: November 2024**

## SECTION B: SAFEGUARDING GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

These guidelines have been developed to help all staff and artists who work for Bounce Theatre to ensure the safety of all the children we work with. They are also designed to help protect staff. We know that false allegations of abuse are occasionally made by children and - although this is a rare occurrence – it is important that staff do not put themselves in situations where they are vulnerable.

Section B: Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines are general Guidelines, which should be read in conjunction with Section A: Safeguarding Policy above.

Our policy and guidelines apply to all staff, whether on permanent, temporary, or freelance contracts or working as volunteers.

This document covers:

- Who your Designated Safeguarding Lead is
- Working with children – a child centred approach
- Contact with children
- Relationships
- Children in employment
- General guidelines about unacceptable behaviour of a child
- If you have any worries
- Definitions of abuse
- Things to look for and think about
- Bullying

### 1. Your Designated Safeguarding Lead

In all instances of concern, you should report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead: **Louise Pendry** on [louise@bouncetheatre.com](mailto:louise@bouncetheatre.com) or phone 07980 210705. If this is not appropriate, you should direct your concern to **Kirsten Hutton** on [kirsten@bouncetheatre.com](mailto:kirsten@bouncetheatre.com).

If you require any advice on behaviour strategies, workshop delivery, dealing with parents or any other issues regarding your work with children you should also see Louise Pendry, the Artistic Director.

Please see Section C: Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Concerns or Allegations of Abuse for more information on reporting procedures.

### 2. Working with Children – A Child Centred Approach

Bounce Theatre considers it essential that the children we work with are valued and respected as individuals and that we listen to their views and concerns. It is very important to maintain an open and positive relationship with children, which largely contributes to the success of any work undertaken. Children who come to Bounce Theatre either for participation in projects, performances or those participating in outreach work, must always feel that staff are providing a safe environment for them to learn and express themselves. Staff must adhere to the following principles when working with children:

- Treat children with respect.
- Offer encouragement and praise.
- Take time to listen to children's views.

- Where possible take children's views on board in any relevant decision- making process.
- Maintain a balance between friendship and professionalism, ensuring that children are supported by the relationships that are developed.

### **3. Contact with Children**

Children can work with Bounce Theatre in several different ways; as a member of one of the youth theatres or as a participant in Bounce Theatre's schools or community projects. Bounce Theatre require parents and children to agree to a code of conduct. The following is a list of guidelines that anyone working for Bounce Theatre must adhere to in these situations:

- Work in schools should always take place in the presence of a teacher.
- As far as possible, work with children in other education contexts should take place in the presence of a teacher or chaperone.
- There should always be at least two adults present in the building during any activities with children.
- Whatsapp Groups and Zoom workshops should always have at least two adults present who can monitor and moderate any content where needed.

The following is a list of generic guidelines for appropriate contact with children:

- Avoid being left alone with a child – if it is unavoidable, make sure that you are within sight and hearing of others. Always keep doors to rooms open.
- Do not have any unnecessary physical contact with children. If it is unavoidable or desirable, for example if a child is distressed about something, the purpose of the contact must be made clear and it should only take place with the child's consent. Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, however well intentioned.
- Respect a young person's right to privacy.
- Do not do anything of a personal nature for a child if they can do it themselves.
- Adults and children should not share changing and toilet facilities.
- When working in schools Bounce Theatre staff must ensure they use the staff toilets and not the students'.
- It is not good practice to take children alone on car journeys, however short.
- With the advent of internet social networking sites, it is important to maintain professionalism on that score. As it would not be appropriate to socialise with children outside a Bounce Theatre work context, it would be inappropriate to engage with children on a social networking site. Exceptions are applicable, such as if a site has been set up to encourage the social networking of student groups and children and is administered by Bounce Theatre staff.
- Photographs and images taken during projects and performances must be processed in accordance with permissions granted on parental/guardian consent forms. Photographs taken where consent for use is not granted should be deleted. For photographs which feature multiple individuals with varying degrees of consent - identities must be removed (i.e. faces covered) for individuals where consent is not given.
- Risk assessments must be carried out for all trips carried out.
- Parental/guardian consent forms must be completed and taken on all Bounce Theatre trips.
- Emergency contact/allergies forms must be completed for each child.
- It is inappropriate for Bounce Theatre staff to give their personal mobile number to children.
- In some rehearsals and drama workshops physical contact is essential and more detail is given about that in the education and rehearsal/performance guidelines.

### **4. Relationships**

During the course of their work, some staff at Bounce Theatre will develop relationships with children. For example, this might be with facilitators leading youth workshops on a continued basis. This contact can lead to a 'relationship of trust' – this is defined as:

'A relationship that exists between an adult and a young person aged 18 years or under, where the adult has power or influence over that young person due to the nature of their role within the organisation.'

It is essential that such power is not abused in any way by anyone working for Bounce Theatre.

Some legalities that need to be considered when working with children are:

- Young people aged 16 to 18 years can legally consent to some types of sexual activity. However, in law they are still classified as children. A young person's age does not necessarily reflect maturity and emotional development, and young adults may still be vulnerable to abuse. The law states that it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to have sexual intercourse or engage in any other sexual activity with a person under that age, if the older person is in a position of trust in relation to the younger person.
- It is essential that Bounce Theatre staff recognise their responsibility towards children and young people they are working with, and that their position of trust is not abused. This includes socialising outside work.
- Particular care must be taken in the instance where previous members of the youth theatre become employed members of staff at Bounce Theatre. They must be made aware that in their new position they are in a position of trust and that relationships with students may need to change so as not to breach that trust. This will be stressed to them in their child protection training.

## **5. General Guidelines about Children's Behaviour**

- It is important that unacceptable behaviour is challenged (If you are unsure how to challenge unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour please refer to the Artistic Director). However, sanctions or reprimands which are in any way humiliating, or make a child look or feel foolish in front of others, are not acceptable. Humiliating behaviour is equally unacceptable from an adult or another child.
- Occasionally, children may exhibit inappropriate behaviour. It is very important that this behaviour is dealt with quickly as the behaviour may be an indicator of other issues affecting the child. It is essential that Bounce Theatre staff report any suspicions or allegations of abuse or bullying, whether by an adult or another child.
- It is essential that Bounce Theatre staff report any suspicions that arise from the inappropriate behaviour of a child (see Section C: Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Concerns or Allegations of Abuse).

## **6. If You Have Any Worries**

Recognising child abuse is not easy. However, it is not up to individuals to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. This applies regardless of whether your concern relates to the behaviour of another Bounce Theatre employee, or the possibility that a child might be a victim of abuse at home or elsewhere.

## **7. Definitions of Abuse**

Outlined are some of the main forms of abuse:

- 7.1 Physical Abuse** includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of illness in a child, or deliberately causes illness.
- 7.2 Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child, which can cause severe adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It can take many forms, for example it can involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, or imposing expectations that are not appropriate for a child's age. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of children, but it can also occur alone.
- 7.3 Sexual Abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, or non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material.
- 7.4 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):** Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a young person is manipulated, or forced, into taking part in a sexual act. This could be part of a seemingly consensual relationship or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay.
- 7.5 Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development. Neglect may also occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once the child is born, it can include a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food or clothing for example, or a lack of response to a child's basic emotional needs.
- 7.6 Bullying** may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Bullying is not acceptable to Bounce Theatre and we have in place rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies, whether adult to adult, adult to child, or child to child, often referred to as child-on-child abuse (see Anti-Bullying policy for further details).
- 7.7 Sexual Harassment:** When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/college. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive, or sexualised environment.
- 7.8 Harmful Sexual Behaviour:** Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive, and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviour" (HSB). The term has been widely adopted in child protection and is used in this advice. HSB can occur online and/or face-to-face and can also occur simultaneously.
- 7.9 Domestic Violence and Abuse:** The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.'
- 7.10 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** 'includes all procedures which involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons whether for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons' (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, 1997). FGM constitutes child abuse and causes physical, psychological and sexual harm which can be severely disabling.

For further definitions of abuse and neglect please refer to local authority guidelines or the NSPCC.



## 8. Things to Look for and Think About – Signs of Abuse

**8.1 Physical:** Most children acquire cuts and bruises during their normal daily life, but the location of bruises can be indicators of abuse – for example, a bruise on a part of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely can be a worrying sign. Bruises which reflect hand marks, cigarette burns, multiple bruises in clusters or injuries where the explanation does not make sense, are other causes for concern, as are unexplained changes in behaviour, such as fear of parents being approached, aggressive behaviour, temper outbursts, flinching when approached, depression, reluctance to get changed (e.g. in hot weather), withdrawal behaviour.

**8.2 Emotional Abuse** can be difficult to measure, but signs can include neurotic behaviour (e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking), developmental delay, fear of making mistakes, self-harm, or a fear of their parent being approached regarding their behaviour.

**8.3** In cases of **Sexual Abuse** it is usually the child's behaviour which causes people to become concerned. In all cases, children who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that any child who talks to you about this is taken seriously. Behavioural changes which can indicate sexual abuse include fear of being left alone with a specific person/group, saying they have secrets they can't tell anyone about, acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults, not allowed friends, unexplained sources of money, sexual drawing or language, nightmares, sexual knowledge which is beyond a child's age or development, eating problems, self-harm, drugs misuse.

**8.4 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):** Signs that may suggest sexual abuse:

- vaginal discharge or infection;
- stomach pains;
- changes in behaviour;
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people;
- sexual knowledge beyond their developmental level;
- sexual drawings or language;
- eating problems;
- self-harm;
- acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults.

**8.5 Neglect** can be difficult to recognise, but physical signs can include constant hunger, loss of weight or constantly underweight, inappropriate dress for the conditions, poor hygiene, constantly dirty or smelly, stealing food from others. Children may also complain of being tired all the time, and talk about being left alone or unsupervised and of having few friends.

**8.6 Bullying** is not easy to recognise as it takes a number of forms. A child may encounter bullying attacks that are physical (pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc.), verbal (name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing), emotional (excluding, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliation) which can result in depression, low self-esteem, shyness, isolation, threatened or attempted suicide), or online (harassment or humiliation via social media or messaging apps). Signs to be aware of are unexplained cuts and bruises, torn clothes, losing money, being moody and bad tempered, anxiety, being quiet and withdrawn.

**8.7 Sexual Harassment** can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, and calling someone sexualised names;
- sexual "jokes" or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes. Practitioners should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence – it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim;
- displaying pictures, photos, or drawings of a sexual nature
- upskirting (this is a criminal offence); and

- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:
  - consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. Taking and sharing nude photographs of U18s is a criminal offence;
  - sharing of unwanted explicit content;
  - sexualised online bullying;
  - unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;
  - sexual exploitation; coercion and threats; and
  - coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they're not comfortable with online.

Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates a culture that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

**8.8 Harmful Sexual Behaviour:** When considering HSB, both ages and the stages of development of the children are critical factors. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature.

**8.9 Domestic Violence and Abuse** can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional. Signs that may suggest children are exposed to domestic abuse:

- aggressive behaviour;
- displaying anti-social behaviour;
- acting out their experiences;
- suffering from depression or anxiety;
- not achieving potential due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from refuges.

**8.10 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):** In the case of suspected FGM providers must not contact parents before seeking advice from SPA or mediate between the children and their parents.

Signs that may suggest FGM:

- a child may talk about a special procedure or ceremony that is going to take place;
- prolonged absence from the setting;
- change in behaviour on return;
- damage to the genital area and/or adjacent tissues;
- pain or difficulty in sitting;
- bleeding or infection;
- urine retention;
- fracture or dislocation as a result of restraint;
- psychological damage (including depression, anxiety, and sexual dysfunction).

There is a mandatory duty requiring regulated health and social care professionals and teachers to report known cases of FGM in under-18s. More information regarding FGM can be found on the London Safeguarding Children Board website.

It should be noted that being absent, as well as missing, from education can be warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or child criminal exploitation.

## 9. A Special Note on Online Abuse

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable and ever evolving, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example:

pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism.

- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.
- **conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and nonconsensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying, and
- **commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel your pupils, students or staff are at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

**Date Reviewed: November 2023**

**Next Review Date: November 2024**

## SECTION C: PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

While the principles in the Policy and Good Practice Guidelines apply to work with children and young people in any location, the Reporting Procedures were drawn up with the legislative framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and may vary outside these jurisdictions.

This document will be broken down into the following categories:

- Reporting a disclosure
- Initial consideration of whether there is substance in an allegation
  - Where an allegation is made against a person not working for Bounce Theatre
  - Where an allegation is made against a person working for Bounce Theatre
- Investigations
  - Where a referral under the local child protection procedure is necessary
  - Where wholly satisfied that the child or children is/are not at risk of significant harm
  - Suspension, pending the outcome of an investigation
  - Outcome of the investigation
- Allegations found to be without substance
- Record keeping
- Flow chart for reporting a disclosure (See Appendix A)
- Safeguarding Report Form (See Appendix B)

### 1. Reporting a Disclosure

If a child lets you know, by whatever means, that they have been abused, or if you are told by anyone else that a child is being abused, or if you see something yourself which leads you to think a child may be being abused, you should:

- Listen to what they say, without making any suggestions yourself
- Do not ask any leading questions or make judgements
- Do not promise total confidentiality, but explain whom you must tell and why
- Pass the information on to Bounce Theatre's Designated Safeguarding Lead – **Louise Pendry** on [louise@bouncetheatre.com](mailto:louise@bouncetheatre.com) **07980210705**
- If the allegation is against the Artistic Director, pass the information on to Bounce Theatre's Executive Director, **Kirsten Hutton** on [kirsten@bouncetheatre.com](mailto:kirsten@bouncetheatre.com)
- Make a written, dated record of the allegations as soon as practicable (certainly within 24 hours). See Appendix B for a template.

### 2. Initial Consideration of Whether There is Substance in an Allegation

As soon as an allegation is made, as well as consulting the appropriate child protection agency, the designated person should obtain details of the allegation in writing (signed and dated by the person who receives the allegation), and record any information about times, dates, locations and names of potential witnesses. This information will be made available to the appropriate authorities, and a copy will be kept securely at Bounce Theatre.

#### 2.1 Where an allegation is made against a person not working for Bounce Theatre

This includes an allegation against another child, the designated person for Bounce Theatre will inform the appropriate authorities. All companies will have their own Designated Safeguarding Lead and, should they be unavailable, appropriate authorities can include the local police

station, local social services or NSPCC Childline on 0808 800 5000. Any further involvement from Bounce Theatre will be agreed between the designated person and the child protection agency, and will only take place if in the child's best interests.

## **2.2 Where an allegation is made against anyone working for Bounce Theatre**

The designated person will make an urgent initial consideration, in consultation with the appropriate child protection agencies, of whether or not there is sufficient substance in an allegation to warrant an investigation. The substantive decision on whether to investigate under local child protection procedures rests with the child protection agencies, who will advise if a further investigation is needed and, if so, by whom. Only if the allegation is trivial or demonstrably false, would a further investigation **not** be warranted. Any subsequent investigation of all the facts will be aimed at establishing whether the allegation can be substantiated.

There will be one of four possible decisions, following that consideration:

- that an immediate referral under the local child protection procedure is necessary;
- that there is reason to suppose abuse could have occurred and that referral under the local child protection procedure or under internal disciplinary procedures may be necessary;
- that the allegation was prompted by inappropriate behaviour which needs to be considered under internal disciplinary procedures; or
- that the allegation is apparently without foundation.

Unless there is an objection by the police or child protection agency concerned, the designated person will inform the parents of the child concerned, and the Executive Director will inform the employee against whom the allegation is made, of the outcome of the initial consideration and the procedures which will now be followed. Should an allegation be made when the Executive Director is not present, an alternative Executive Director or the most senior member of staff in the relevant department will inform the employee against whom the allegation is made.

## **3. Investigations**

### **3.1 Where a Referral Under the Local Child Protection Procedure is Necessary**

The allegations will need to be investigated under both the local child protection procedures and Bounce Theatre's disciplinary procedures. Any investigation by the police or child protection agencies will take priority over and internal investigation by Bounce Theatre. The employee will be informed of the instigation of the disciplinary proceedings, but the internal investigation will be held in abeyance pending the outcome of the external investigation.

The police should be fully assisted with their enquiries but confidentiality about the enquiries maintained in the employee's interests. When police are involved, it would not normally be expected that police interviews of Bounce Theatre staff would be undertaken on Bounce Theatre premises.

### **3.2 Where Wholly Satisfied that the Child or Children is/are Not at Risk of Significant Harm, and that a Reportable Criminal Offence Has Not Been Committed**

An internal investigation will be carried out to establish whether action in accordance with Bounce Theatre's disciplinary procedure is appropriate. The nature of the investigation must

take into account the need to minimise the stress to the person who may be wrongly accused of serious offences.

### **3.3 Suspension, Pending the Outcome of an Investigation**

Suspension from any element of an employee's work may be considered at any stage of an investigation, but will not be undertaken without good reason. Circumstances in which suspension properly occurs include:

- where that person presents a risk to a child or children;
- where the allegation are so serious that dismissal for gross misconduct is possible; or
- where a suspension is necessary to allow the conduct of the investigation to proceed unimpeded.

If it is considered that suspension is necessary along with a full investigation of the allegation, the employee should be advised that he or she is suspended from duty on full pay. This should be confirmed in writing, giving reasons for the suspension.

The Executive Directors will consider careful, and keep under review, decisions as to whom is informed of the suspension and investigation and to what extent confidentiality can or should be maintained, according to the circumstances of a particular case. In a situation where a matter becomes common knowledge or the subject of general gossip, it may be desirable to provide an accurate statement for general information.

The employee will be kept informed of the timetable of the investigation, and should feel able to contact those conducting the investigation. The employee will be offered counselling, or other support.

### **3.4 Outcome of the Investigation**

At the end of the investigation, a meeting should be arranged to inform the employee of the next steps. The employee may be accompanied or represented by a union representative or a colleague.

If the outcome is a disciplinary charge, further action will be in accordance with Bounce Theatre's disciplinary procedures, and will happen after the child protection enquiries are completed.

If the employee has been suspended and it is not intended to proceed with any form of disciplinary action or to dismiss, the suspension should be lifted immediately.

Other than in the event of dismissal, the Executive Directors will offer the opportunity for informal counselling. This could be used to give appropriate guidance, support and reassurance and to help rebuild, where necessary, an employee's confidence.

On the conclusion of any investigation and any related disciplinary proceedings, the child or children who made the allegations and their parents should be informed of the outcome of the proceedings, and appropriate support for them should be considered.

## **4. Allegations Found to be Without Substance**

Where, following the initial consideration, the allegation is found to be without foundation, the designated person will:

- consider in consultation with the child protection agencies whether the child might have been abused by someone else;
- consider, in consultation with the child protection agencies, appropriate counselling and support for the child or children who made the allegation(s);
- inform the parents of the child or children of the allegation and the outcome; and
- prepare a report, setting out in conclusion that the allegation is without foundation, with reasons.

The Executive Directors will:

- inform the employee of the allegation and the fact that no further action is to be taken under disciplinary or child protection procedures. The employee may be accompanied by a union representative or colleague; and
- consider whether counselling and/or informal professional advice to the employee is appropriate and the form either might take.

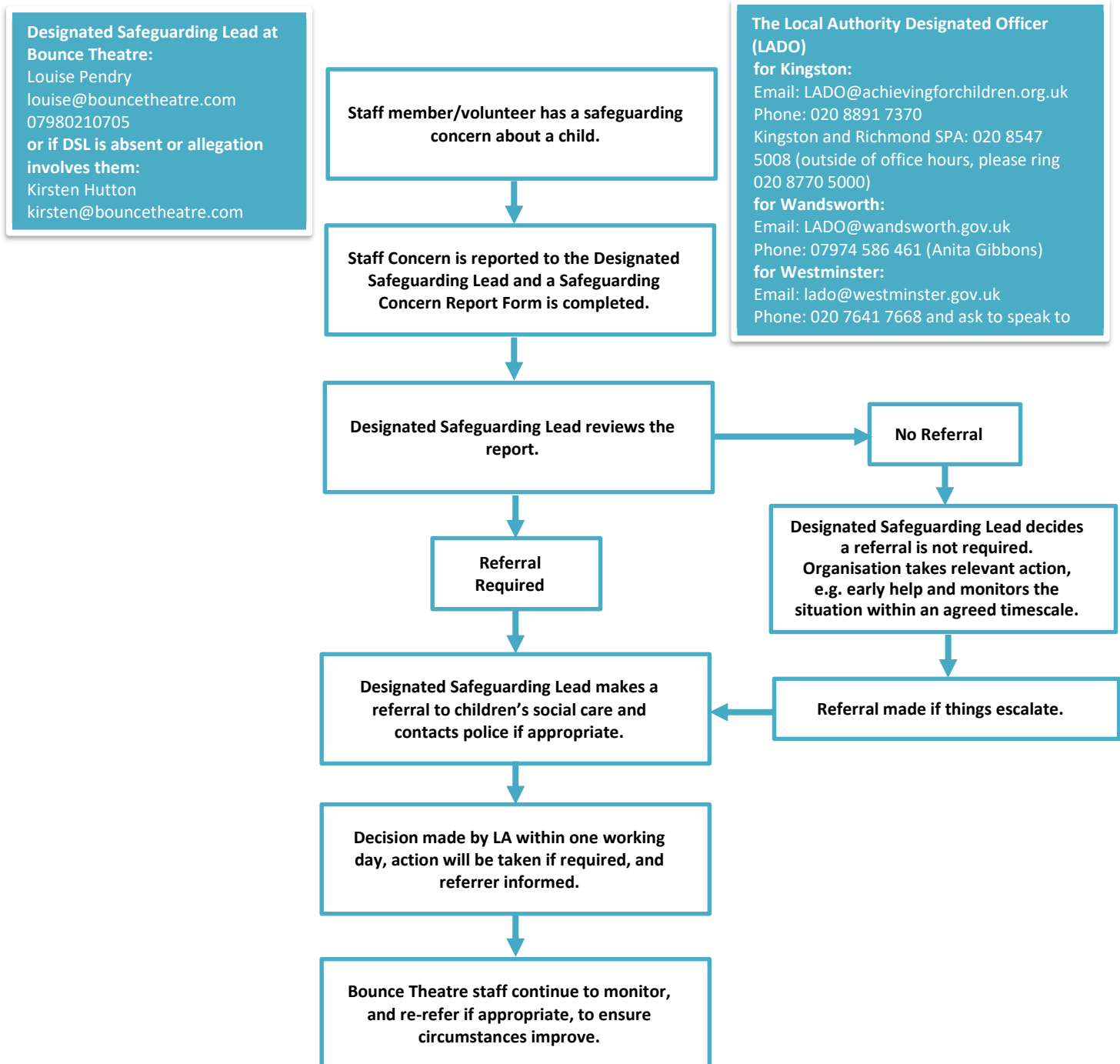
## **5. Record Keeping**

All paperwork relating to concerns or allegations of abuse will be stored securely in a fire-proof cabinet for 30 years.

**Date Reviewed: November 2023**

**Next Review Date: November 2024**

## APPENDIX A – FLOWCHART FOR REFERRALS



The child’s circumstances will be kept under review at all stages and a referral will be made again if it is appropriate for improving the child’s circumstances. The child’s best interests must always come first.



## APPENDIX B – SAFEGUARDING REPORT FORM

Referrer Details	
<b>Date of referral</b>	
<b>Name of referrer and role at Bounce Theatre</b>	
<b>Telephone number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	

Details of the child/young person			
<b>Name</b>	<b>DOB</b>	<b>School / College</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
<b>Main Carers (PR)</b>			
<b>Address (including postcode)</b>			
<b>Telephone Number</b>			
<b>Preferred Language</b>			
<b>Disability</b>	<b>YES/NO</b> - If yes, please give full details in the 'Persons Circumstances' section below.		

Record of Discussion/Observations (Reasons for referring)

