



## Safeguarding Policy

### Introduction

- Box Clever produces contemporary theatre with and for young people, particularly between the ages of 5 and 18. (Note that A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989))
- Working with young people and performing to young people is both inspiring and rewarding. The collaboration of artist and young person is essential in making our work challenging, new and relevant.
- The Company recognises that it has a duty of care to safeguard young people involved with our work as participants and audience, and to create a positive and safe environment for them.
- The Company is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means following procedures to protect children and reporting any concerns about their welfare to the appropriate authorities.
- The aim of the Policy is to promote good practice, and to provide children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst they are participating in the Box Clever programmes.

### Policy Statement

- All young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse<sup>1</sup>.
- It is the responsibility of all individual Company members to follow guidelines and procedures and promote this Safeguarding Policy.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately, and all staff, freelancers and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the Artistic Director or Trustees.
- All reasonable steps are taken within the recruitment process to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with young people, including enhanced police checks to ensure that no one has a conviction for criminal offences against children.
- All employees, freelancers and volunteers will have clearly established roles for their work with young people and will receive induction and training accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> Child abuse is defined as any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

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- The GOLD Sub Committee will monitor, review and update the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures annually or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

### **Good Practice**

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage open communication with no secrets).
- Treat all young people equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always put the welfare of each young person first.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance from participants.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empower children to share in the decision-making process.
- Make theatre fun, enjoyable and promote fair play.
- Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of young people – avoid excessive competition and do not push them against their will.
- Unless the situation is an emergency, there should not be any physical contact between the adult and a young person.
- Touring company members are **never** expected to act *in loco parentis*<sup>2</sup> (r). They will identify in advance who is undertaking this role (usually the teacher) particularly if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Touring company members working with young people within a school environment under the supervision of a teacher should never lose their temper or discipline the young people. The responsibility for crowd control and discipline is with the teachers. Teachers must be informed of dangerous, disruptive or abusive behaviour shown by young people.
- It is always the case that staff and/or freelancers will not be in sole charge during an out-of-school project.
- After all workshops, projects and school visits, evaluation forms are completed by teachers, and debriefs take place with staff and freelancers to ensure that any problems are aired and are addressed in the future.
- Prior to tours and as part of the induction and rehearsal process, company members will receive specific training on strategies on how best to deal with young people and promote this good practice.

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<sup>2</sup> being legally responsible for a child in the absence of the child's parent or regular care

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## **Practices To Be Avoided**

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies (such as when a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital immediately or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session). If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the teacher, or Box Clever's Artistic Director or Trustees, or the child's parents:

- Never spend time alone with young people away from others
- Never transport a young person to or from an event
- Never initiate or respond to any communication with or from young people, with particular reference to social media. If a young person persists in trying to make contact with a company member, the company member must report this to the company HQ.

## **Practices That Should Never Be Sanctioned**

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Share a room with a young person
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow physical contact to take place in secret or out of sight of others
- Allow young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- Reduce a young person to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults.
- Use discipline impulsively to gain power, or to embarrass or humiliate a young person.

## **Incidents That Must Be Reported/Recorded**

If any of the following occur, you should report this immediately to the company manager, to the school and to record the incident.

- If you accidentally hurt a participant.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

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## **Responding To Allegations Or Suspicions**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for Box Clever, 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.

Box Clever will assure all staff 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.

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.

### **Action if there are concerns**

#### **1. Concerns about poor practice**

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Artistic Director, supported by the GOLD subcommittee, will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the Artistic Director, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Trustees who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

#### **2. Concerns about suspected abuse**

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer, or elsewhere (such as if a child confides in a member of staff), should be reported to the teacher in charge, and/or the Artistic Director supported by the GOLD Subcommittee, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk, which may include referring the allegation to the Social Services department

If the Artistic Director is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Trustees who will take necessary steps.

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## **Confidentiality**

Every effort will 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 includes the following people:

- The Artistic Director
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation.
- Social services/police.
- The Trustees
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

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

## **Internal Enquiries and Suspension**

- The Artistic Director 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 inquiries, the GOLD Sub Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the GOLD Subcommittee must reach a decision based upon the available information which may confirm that on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. In either case the Subcommittee will put its decisions and reasons in writing. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

## **Allegations of previous abuse**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, Box Clever will follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to Social Services or the police. This is because other children may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

## **Action if bullying is suspected**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to allegations or suspicions' above. Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:

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- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns . Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the school (wherever the bullying is occurring) and the Artistic Director.