**Safeguarding of Children and Young Persons Policy**

Leicester Theatre Group (LTG) believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by a commitment to practices which protects them.

We aim to provide safe places, events, people and creative opportunities for all the children and young people involved with LTG. In order to do this, we recognise that:

* The welfare of the child/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 equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
* Working in partnership with children and young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting their welfare.

The purpose of this policy is:

* To provide protection for the children and young people who receive services from the Leicester Theatre Group, including the children of adult members.
* To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contracted staff and anyone working on behalf of Leicester Theatre Group.

We will endeavour to safeguard children and young people by:

* Valuing them, listening to and respecting them
* Adopting child safeguarding guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
* Recruiting staff and volunteers safely ensuring all necessary checks are made
* Sharing information about safeguarding with children, parents, staff and volunteers
* Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, involving parents and children appropriately
* Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training

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**1. Safeguarding procedures**

**1.1 Definition of children and young people**

“Children and young people” means anyone up to the age of 18 years, those over 19 years who are receiving services as care leavers (young people who have been ‘looked after’ children), and those between 19 and 25 years with learning difficulties

**1.2 Statement of values and principles**

LTG believes

* We have a duty of care to children and young people who use our services or take part in our activities.
* All children and young people should be encouraged to fulfil their potential and inequalities should be challenged.
* We have a responsibility to support the care and protection of children.

**1.3 Designated persons**

Designated persons are those members of LTG who have specific responsibility for ensuring effective safeguarding and protection procedures.

These include:

Nikki Strickland Trustee and Safeguarding officer

Steve Ratcliffe Trustee

Emma Griffin Trustee

Alison Drewett Trustee

Designated persons shall;

* Receive and record information from staff, volunteers, children or parents/carers who have child protection concerns.
* Assess the information properly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate and consulting with senior colleagues if necessary.
* Consult initially with a statutory child protection agency to test out any doubts or concerns as soon as possible, and if necessary, make a formal referral.

**1.4 Code of conduct**

LTG staff and volunteers shall

* Treat all children and young people with respect.
* Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow.
* Ensure that whenever possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others.
* Respect a young person’s right to personal privacy/encourage young people to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
* Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
* Be aware that physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted.
* Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people.
* Be familiar with the Leicester Theatre Group’s anti-bullying policy.
* Operate within the Leicester Theatre Group’s specific procedures.
* Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse.

Staff and volunteers must not;

* Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
* Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour / make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of the children or young people
* Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts.
* Either exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
* Show favouritism to any individual.
* Rely on your good name or that of the organisation to protect you.
* Believe “it could never happen to me”.
* Take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach.

**1.5 Planning, supervision, risk assessment and risk management**

LTG recognises that making arrangements for the proper supervision of children and young people is one of the most effective ways of minimising opportunities for children and young people to suffer harm whilst in our care.

**1.5.1 Planning**

All activities will be planned so that children and young persons are adequately supervised at all times.

Parental consent to children and young people joining activities shall be obtained. The written permission to be involved with an activity, or payment for an activity shall be deemed to be such consent.

Parents should be given full information about an event or activity, including details of what is expected of the children and young people and the supervision arrangements.

**1.5.2 Supervision**

Leicester Theatre Group shall be satisfied that the staff and volunteers who work on events and activities are competent to do so and that appropriate checks have been made.

Children must be supervised at all times, preferably by two or more adults.

Children must not be left unsupervised at any venue, indoors or out.

Staff and volunteers responsible for the children and young people should know at all times where children are and what they are doing.

**1.5.3 Risk assessment in relation to child protection**

A risk assessment shall be made of every activity or event involving children and young people

Each risk assessment shall identify

* The hazards
* Measures to reduce the risk
* What to do if things go wrong
* The allocation of roles to monitor and manage child protection

Risk assessment templates and advice are available from Nikki Strickland.

**1.6 Photographic procedures**

Always use a parental permission form to obtain consent for a child or young person to be photographed or videoed.

Only use images for the specific purpose which has been agreed with the parents/carers and child. Additional use without specific permission is not acceptable.

All images of children are stored safely and securely on limited access computers or folders.

Images will not be taken or used of children and young persons in unsuitable dress, to avoid misuse.

The use of images of children on the organisation’s website and with agencies who use our photographs in publicity material, shall be controlled in line with our policy.

Personal information which could be used by an individual to learn more about a child, will not be published on the organisations website.

Written expectations shall be issued to any professional photographers or press who are invited to an event, making clear the organisation’s expectations of them in relation to child protection.

Photographers and press shall not be given unsupervised access to children or young people

**1.7 Staff and volunteer recruitment**

Staff and volunteer roles within LTG shall be clearly defined, and, where necessary, a suitable check shall be made with the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS).

DBS checks shall be no more than 3 years old.

A copy of this Safeguarding Policy will be given to all staff and volunteers.

**1.8 Training**

LTG will provide suitable training to all staff and volunteers in the organisation that is relevant to their particular role.

This will include:

* Induction Training which includes familiarisation with the Safeguarding Policy
* Particular skills training
* Safeguarding training available on request

**1.9 Whistle blowing and complaints**

LTG aims to promote a culture in which staff and volunteers may express any concerns they may have about a colleague’s behaviour in relation to child protection.

In order to achieve this, staff and volunteers are encouraged to share any such concerns with a designated person without delay; concerns will be treated seriously and in the strictest confidence.

LTG recognises that a culture in which people are made to feel anxious and vulnerable is undesirable and it will use the Child Safeguarding training course to manage this area sensitively on behalf of all members of staff.

**2. Response procedures**

LTG recognises the importance of having clear procedures to ensure staff and volunteers to enable staff and volunteers to handle situations where an appropriate response is needed to a child protection concern.

**2.1 Response to a child or young person disclosing abuse**

1. Stay calm
2. Listen carefully to what is said
3. Find an appropriately early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.
4. Allow the child to continue at his/her own pace
5. Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
6. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
7. Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
8. Record in writing what was said using the child’s own words as soon as possible – note date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated.
9. Contact your designated person

REMEMBER: It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies following a referral to them of concern about a child.

**2.2 Responding to signs or suspicions of abuse**

See appendix 1 for details

**2.3 Responding to allegations of abuse against a member of staff, worker or volunteer**

See appendix 2 and 3 for details and a checklist

**2.4 Recording and information sharing**

In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, it is vitally important to record the details of an allegation or reported incident, regardless of whether or not the concerns are shared with a statutory child protection agency.

An accurate note should be made of:

* Date and time of the incident or disclosure
* Parties who were involved
* What was said or done and by whom
* Any action taken by the organisation to investigate the matter
* Any further action eg suspension of a worker
* Where relevant, reasons why there is no referral to a statutory agency
* Names of persons reporting and to whom reported

The record should be clear and factual as it may be needed by child protection agencies investigating the incident and may, in the future, be used as evidence in court. Keeping such a record may also help protect the Leicester Theatre Group.

**2.5 Confidentiality Policy, and Retention and Storage of documentation**

As a general rule, all personal information that is acquired or held in the course of working with children and young people should be treated as confidential and stored securely. Particular care should be taken with sensitive information.

Consideration should also be given to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which requires that information is obtained and processed fairly and lawfully; that it is accurate, relevant and not held for longer than is necessary; and kept securely.

**2.6 Handling and Safekeeping of Disclosure Information**

As an organisation using the DBS service to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust, the Leicester Theatre Group complies fully with the relevant working practices regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure Information.

Disclosure information will never be kept in an applicants personnel file and is only passed to those who are authorised to receive it

We recognise that it is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.

We do not keep disclosure information for any longer than is absolutely necessary. This is generally a period of up to six months to allow for consideration and resolution of any disputes.

**Appendix 1 - Definitions of abuse:**

Abuse is defined as

* Physical abuse
* Emotional abuse
* Sexual abuse
* Neglect

Physical abuse includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning or misuse of medications, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on that person’s emotional development. It may involve making the individual feel or believe that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may also involve causing the person to feel often frightened or in danger. It may involve exploitation or corruption.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child or young person is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. Sexual abuse also includes non-contact activities such as involving children or young people in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Sexual abuse may be same sex or opposite sex, may be by other children, young people or adults. People from all walks of life may be sexual abusers.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s or young person’s basic physical and or/psychological needs, likely to result in the severe impairment of the person’s health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failure to protect a child or young person from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

**Appendix 2 - What to do if you have concerns about a member of staff or a volunteer in relation to child protection**

1. Discuss with Nikki Strickland or Karl Strickland
2. Nikki or Karl to investigate, gather facts and information from all relevant parties
3. Nikki or Karl determine if there are concerns relating to child protection or not
4. Nikki or Karl determine if the matter requires referral to Child Services and / or Police.
5. Staff, volunteers or other members may be asked to leave Leicester Theatre Group for the duration of the investigation
6. Nikki or Karl to determine if there are any matters to refer to Disciplinary procedure

**Appendix 3 – checklist for reporting suspected abuse**

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| Requirement | Details (to be recorded) |
| Name of child |  |
| Age and date of birth |  |
| Religion |  |
| Ethnicity |  |
| First language |  |
| Disability |  |
| Any special factors?  |  |
| Parents/carers name(s) |  |
| Home address and phone number |  |
| Are you reporting your own concerns or passing on those of somebody else?  |  |
| Brief Description of what has prompted the concerns: include dates, times etc of any specific incidents. |  |
| Any physical signs / Behavioural signs / indirect signs |  |
| Have you spoken to the child? If so, what was said?  |  |
| Have you spoken to the parent(s)? If so, what was said?  |  |
| Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, give details.  |  |
| Have you consulted anybody else? If so, give details.  |  |
| Your name and position:  |  |
| To whom reported and date of reporting:  |  |
| Signature |  |
| Today’s date |  |