



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

Introduction

- Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company is a not-for-profit organisation (Company Number: 11545463) based in Stanwick, Northamptonshire, UK
- Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company is managed by three Company Directors. One of the Company Directors has the particular responsibility for safeguarding children.
- The Company has adopted this safeguarding children policy and expects every adult working or volunteering at Laugh Out Loud Theatre to support it and comply with it. Consequently this policy shall apply to all staff, managers, directors, volunteers or anyone working on behalf of Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company.
- A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989)

Purpose of the Policy

- This policy is intended to protect children and young people who receive any service from us, including those who are children of adults who may receive services from us.
- As an organisation we believe that no child or young person should experience abuse or harm and are committed to the protection of children and young people. This policy is intended to provide guidance and overarching principles to those who represent us as staff or volunteers, to guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

Children's Rights

All children have needs and rights:

- The need for physical care and attention
- The need for intellectual stimulation
- The need for emotional love and security
- The need for social contact and relationships
- The right to have their needs met and safeguarded
- The right to be protected from neglect, abuse and exploitation
- The right to be protected from discrimination
- The right to be treated as an individual

The Risks to Children

Nearly every child grows up in a safe and happy environment and it is important not to exaggerate or overestimate the dangers. Nevertheless, there are situations where children need protecting, including:

- Sexual abuse
- Grooming

- Physical and emotional abuse and neglect
- Domestic violence
- Bullying, cyber-bullying, acts of violence and aggression
- Victimisation
- Self-harm
- Crime
- Exploitation
- Inappropriate supervision by staff or volunteers
- Unsafe environments or activities

Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company Protection Policy

In our provision for children we 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 will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All staff have a responsibility to report concerns both to the Company child protection lead and to the relevant child protection lead at the venue they are working in

Policy Statement

Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company staff and volunteers have a professional duty to take such steps that are reasonable to see that children are safe from harm while involved in Company activities. Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in its activities through adherence to the Safeguarding Children Policy it has adopted.

Policy Aims

The aim of the Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company Safeguarding Children Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst learning /engaging with the Company
- Allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Policy Implementation

Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company Safeguarding Children Policy will be implemented by adhering to the policy guidelines contained within this document. All staff /volunteers who work with children must comply with this Policy in conjunction with the Company's Code of Conduct, failing which disciplinary action may be taken under the Company's Disciplinary Procedure. The guidelines cover three main areas:

- Staff recruitment, support and training
- Staff conduct
- Safeguarding Children procedures

Staff recruitment, support and training

For staff working with children at Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company, safe recruitment will be ensured by checking their suitability to work with children:

- Pre-activity training, including:
 - Activity requirements and responsibilities are clarified
 - Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified
 - Staff sign the Company's Code of Conduct for staff and the Safeguarding Children Policy.
- Staff are selected on their suitability for the activity requirements and responsibilities and their ability to demonstrate that they can work safely with children.
- In response to Home Office and Ofsted advice all Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company staff that are left unattended with children or young people or have the opportunity to build an ongoing relationship with young people over a period of time will be required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS check).
- All appropriate staff will receive a copy of Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company Safeguarding Children Policy and a copy will also be available on the Company's website.

Staff Conduct

All staff and volunteers should demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from allegations of misconduct.

Good practice means that you:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Never allow yourself to be left alone with a child.
- Never make gratuitous physical contact with a child (there may be occasions where a distressed child needs comfort which may include physical comforting and staff /volunteers should use their discretion to ensure that it is appropriate and not unnecessary or unjustified contact). Be cautious about physical contact in games. Where physical contact is inescapable (e.g. to demonstrate equipment or a particular exercise/move) staff /volunteers should be aware of the limits within which such contact should take place and of the possibility for misinterpretation of such contact.
- Always use staff and visitor toilet facilities.
- Treat all children equally, and with respect and dignity. Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company take positive action to eliminate discrimination against any person or group of people. Staff /volunteers should ensure that children are protected from discrimination on any grounds, including ability and challenge discriminating comments and behaviour.
- Never contradict an instruction given by a teacher or other member of staff (unless that instruction may cause physical or mental harm to anyone).
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child).
- Conduct yourself in a manner that sets a good example to the children. Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of/whilst responsible for children.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Never use physical force against a participant, unless it constitutes reasonable restraint to protect him/her or another person or to protect property. If it is necessary to restrain a participant because they are an immediate danger to themselves or others or to property then the minimum amount of force should be used for the shortest amount of time. Remain calm and get the attention and support of appropriate staff. The incident should be recorded in writing, with a witness statement (where possible), immediately afterwards.
- Never use physical punishment
- Ensure that should any child suffer from illness or injury they are passed on to the appropriate member of staff.
- Always refer any problems to the child protection lead member of staff and the appropriate person in the venue.

You never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Share a room with a child.
- Engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Abide Children's inappropriate use of language and/or behaviour. This should always be challenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Let allegations made by a child go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home or arrange meetings with them.

Safeguarding Children Procedures

Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company will:

- Ensure we have a lead member of staff for safeguarding children who has received appropriate training and support for this role.
- Ensure every member of staff knows the name of the lead staff member responsible for safeguarding children and their role.
- Ensure all staff understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the lead staff member. However, staff should remember that they are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.
- Develop and then follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer.
- Adopt a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.

What is abuse?

Child Abuse is term used to describe a range of ways in which people harm children. Child abuse is neglect, physical injury, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or emotional abuse inflicted or knowingly not prevented, which causes significant harm or death.

Awareness of actual or likely occurrence of abuse

There are a number of ways in which abuse can become apparent:

- A child discloses abuse.
- Someone else discloses that a child has told him/her or that he/she strongly believes a child has been or is being abused.
- A child may show signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no satisfactory explanation.
- A child's behaviour may indicate that it is likely that he/she is being abused.
- A member of staff's behaviour or the way in which he/she relates to a child causes concern.

Issues of Disclosure

Becoming aware of abuse can cause a multitude of emotional reactions, which are personal to each individual. Whatever the reaction and however the abuse has become apparent, actual or suspected, it must be responded to in the correct manner according to the procedure outlined here. Even if the truth of the disclosure is uncertain – an appropriate response has to be made. A response in accordance with the procedure outlined here will be supported by the lead member of staff and ultimately Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company.

What to do upon suspicion or disclosure

- Stay calm and don't panic
- Don't over-react (it is extremely unlikely that the participant is in immediate danger)
- Listen, hear and believe
- Don't probe for more information (questioning the child may affect how the child's disclosure is received at a later date)
- Give time to the person to say what they want
- Don't make assumptions, don't paraphrase and don't offer alternative explanations
- Reassure & explain that they have done the right thing in telling you
- Explain that only those professionals who need to know will be informed
- Don't promise confidentiality
- Don't promise to keep secrets
- Don't promise that everything will be OK (it might not)
- Act immediately in accordance with the procedure in this policy
- Don't try to deal with it yourself
- Record in writing as near as verbatim as possible what was said as soon as possible
- Don't make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- Immediately report the suspicion, allegation or disclosure to the appropriate member of staff at the venue
- Immediately report the suspicion, allegation or disclosure to the Company lead member of staff
- Inform but don't 'gossip' with colleagues about what has been said to you

Health and Safety Aspects of Safeguarding Children

Before starting any event / activity for unaccompanied children or young people, the Company Directors will carry out a risk assessment and then take steps to minimise all risks to health and safety. Parents and children will be made aware of any particular risks and of the steps to be taken to minimise those risks. The Company Secretary will keep a record of all risk assessments.

Sufficient adults must be present at any event or activity for unaccompanied children and young people to enable one adult to deal with an emergency while another adult supervises the children and young people not directly affected by the emergency.

Policy on the Prevention of Bullying

We will not tolerate the bullying of children or young people either by adults or other children / young people. If any incident of child-on-child bullying should arise at a Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company event or activity, those involved will be separated immediately and the parents of the children involved will be asked to deal with the matter.

The Company Directors will review all incidents of child-on-child bullying and assess the likely future risk to children. If appropriate, the Company Directors will consider banning a child from future events and activities, but only in full accordance with the rules and regulations of Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company.

Allegations of adults bullying children will be taken very seriously and dealt with immediately. The Company Directors will review the allegations and the likely risk to children and, if appropriate, consider banning the staff member or volunteer from any future work with Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company.

Photographing Children

Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company staff and volunteers will take suitable photographs of children attending our events and activities for marketing purposes and publish them on our website and social media sites. However, we will only do so with the permission of the parents / legal guardians of the children.

Managing behaviour, discipline and acceptable restraint

Adults supervising children at Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company events and activities must never use any form of corporal punishment. If physical restraint is absolutely necessary to prevent injury or harm to any person or to prevent serious damage to property, then the minimum necessary restraint may be used, but for that purpose only.

Unacceptable behaviour at Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company events and activities for unaccompanied children will generally be stopped by separating the children from each other and from the group. The miscreants will be suitably supervised and will be returned as soon as possible to the care of their parents / legal guardians.

Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company may apply a further disciplinary sanction, namely banning the child from one or more future events and activities over the following 18 months.

A parent or legal guardian who is aggrieved by this ban may appeal to Laugh Out Loud Theatre Company who will hear the views of all relevant persons. The decision of Laugh out Loud Theatre Company is final.

This Policy has been drawn up in accordance with the following:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- General Data Protection Regulation
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice – guidance on the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system for children and young people aged 0-25 , 1st September 2014
- Information sharing – advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services
- Working together to safeguard children 2017