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**Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People Policy**

**(last updated 03/ 02/ 2021)**

**Any queries relating to this document should be addressed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead:**

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Introduction

Blue Elephant Theatre (BET) aims to deliver a comprehensive programme of high quality productions promoting new work and innovative workshops that are both fun and challenging for the local community, involving professional artists in tailor made projects, providing participants with activities that are life enhancing, in an area fairly starved of performance spaces and community participation.

The two primary aims are:

1. the production of high quality performances, showcasing local/ upcoming new work that is thought provoking, accessible and relevant to the local community.
2. to advance the creative education of young people and encourage the creative experience of participants through a programme of youth theatre activities, school workshops in both primary and secondary schools, and workshops for the community in Southwark, particularly Camberwell

BET is committed to safeguarding the safety and welfare of children and young and vulnerable people who perform, work or visit the organisation.

All the staff and volunteers working in or with the BET will contribute to the safeguarding of Children and Young and Vulnerable People through its policy and guidelines by ensuring that:

* The welfare of the child/vulnerable person is paramount; all children and vulnerable people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, ethnic 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 (paid /unpaid) working in or on behalf of the Blue Elephant Theatrehave a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

Please note that the appointed officer responsible for dealing with concerns relating to Safeguarding is: Jo Sadler-Lovett – Participation & Co-Artistic Director, contactable on 02077010100 and Niamh de Valera, Executive & Co-Artistic Director, contactable on 02077010100.

**Scope of Safeguarding Lead**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) and provides advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters, takes part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings, and/or supports other staff to do so, and contributes to the assessment of children. DSL is the first point of contact for external agencies that are pursuing Child Protection investigations. When an individual concern/incident is brought to the notice of the DSL, they will be responsible for deciding upon whether or not this should be reported to other agencies as a safeguarding issue. Where there is any doubt as to the seriousness of this concern, or disagreement between the DSL and the member of staff reporting the concern, advice will be sought from Southwark Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral will be made to MASH (or its equivalent in another LA if the child resides in a different LA) and/or the police immediately.

The DSL or a deputy will always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns. If in exceptional circumstances, the DSL (or deputy) is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Staff should consider speaking to a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from local children’s social care contactable on 020 7525 1921. For an out of hours social worker, phone 020 7525 5000. In these circumstances, any action taken should be shared with the DSL (or deputy) as soon as is practically possible.

**THE ROLE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The Board of trustees will ensure that the policies, procedures and training in the organisation are effective and comply with the law at all times. Trustees are expected to receive appropriate training on safeguarding regularly.

Within the Board of Trustees, Chair Chris Lawrence and Co-Deputy Chair Maya Pindar are designated 'Safeguarding Trustees'.

Staff/volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse nor are in a position to decide if abuse has occurred. This policy sets out procedures to be followed if there are any concerns.

Policy statement

The Blue Elephant has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in its activities 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 Blue Elephant will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in any event or activity at the venue through adherence to the Safeguarding guidelines adopted by the Blue Elephant Theatre.

A child is defined as under 18 (The Children Act 1989).

Policy aims

The aim of the Blue Elephant Theatre’s Safeguarding Policy is to promote good practice:

* Providing children and young and vulnerable people with appropriate safety and protection whilst attending an event or participating in an activity at the venue;
* Allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

It also aims to:

* Identify the names of responsible persons in BET
* Describe what should be done if anyone has a concern about the safety and welfare of a child or vulnerable person who takes part in BET activities
* Set out expectations in respect of training
* Ensure that those responsible for recruitment are aware of how to apply safeguarding principles in employing staff/recruiting volunteers
* Outline how complaints against staff will be handled
* Set out expectations regarding record keeping
* Outline how the implementation of this policy will be monitored

Promoting Good Practice with Young People

Introduction

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and leisure environments. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A workshop leader, artist, teacher, official or volunteer may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where a young person needs protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document. When a child enters the theatre having been subjected to child abuse outside the environment, drama can play a crucial role in improving the child’s self-esteem. In such instances the theatre must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

Good Practice Guidelines

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within the theatre:

Good practice means:

* always working in a suitable environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment i.e. no secrets).
* treating all young people equally, whilst being aware of individual differences, and with respect and dignity.
* always putting the welfare of each young/vulnerable person first.
* maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with young people (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
* building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process;
* making drama and theatre fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
* Manual/physical support, if required, should only be provided openly and by an individual qualified to give the necessary assistance. Young/vulnerable people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about physical contact and their views should always be carefully considered.
* involving parents/carers wherever possible. If groups have to be supervised in the dressing rooms, always ensure parents/teachers/workshop leaders/volunteers/officials work in pairs.
* being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
* giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
* recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people – avoiding excessive competition and not pushing them against their will.
* securing parental consent in writing to *act in loco parentis*, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
* keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
* requesting written parental consent if members of theatre staff are required to transport young people in their cars.
* Handling all families’ information in-line with GDPR legislation.

Practice to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the theatre or the child’s parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

* Avoid spending time alone with children away from others;
* Avoid taking children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.

Practice never to 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 child;
* allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
* allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
* make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun;
* reduce a child to tears as a form of *control*;
* allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
* do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves;
* invite or allow children to stay with you at your home, especially when unsupervised.

**NB**. It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the young people involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person’s reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. If it is necessary for a child/vulnerable adult to remove clothing for first aid treatment, there will, wherever possible, be another adult present. If a child/vulnerable adult needs help with toileting, nappy changing or washing after soiling themselves, another adult should be present or within earshot. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the member of staff named above as the officer responsible for Safeguarding within the theatre and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed.

* if you accidentally hurt a child.
* if he/she seems distressed in any manner.
* if a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
* if a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Guidelines for Use of Photographic/ Filming Equipment/ Social Media platforms during workshops and performances

There is evidence that some people have used public events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young, disabled or vulnerable people. Any concerns that this may be taking place at a Blue Elephant event or activity must be reported immediately to the Theatre’s DSL.

**Videoing or photographing workshops or performances for monitoring purposes:** young people and their parents/carers must be made aware that they may be filmed or photographed during the workshop or performance and of the reason for this. If footage or an image of a young person is to be displayed or featured in an article or website, parental permission must be gained and the child should not be named alongside the image. Care should be taken in the storing of such films and photographs, especially 'in the cloud'.

As a rule of thumb, we are trying not to normalise any behaviour that a less scrupulous person could take advantage of.

* Staff are not to share their personal numbers/email addresses with young or vulnerable people. They can be shared with parents/carers if absolutely necessary but a line manager should be made aware of this and conversations records should be kept.
* Do not share other people’s personal details without their consent
* Aim to maintain the principle of no 1 - 1 contact even online, e.g. two adults on any (regular) group sessions and sharing social media passwords or co-hosting zoom sessions so that the private messages can be read by other adults

**Video calls**

* No recording as standard
* Reminder to adults to try to avoid using bedrooms as locations for sessions or if necessary, clear the space/ use a blank wall as background
* Account settings should allow people to join without an account
* Waiting Room should always be enabled
* Password protect sessions
* Turn off screen-sharing for anyone but the host(s) unless necessary for an activity
* Save chat if possible and it should generally only be possible for participants to talk to the host and everyone publicly.
* Never share the link to join on public platforms
* Consider locking the room
* Ensuring it is always the parent’s or guest account logging into the session so child-related data is never used
* Facilitators should not use their phones as their host device

**For Participants:**

LIVE VIDEO CHAT

o Be kind.

o Never use your full name, first names will do.

o Make sure people you are living with know you are on a live video chat. Don’t include them in the chat.

o Wear appropriate clothing, even on parts of you that you think won’t be seen.

o Remember it’s easy to misinterpret things online.

o Refer to a group leader directly if you feel worried about anything.

o Do not record or take photos of anything without the others consent.

o If you are worried about anything message the session leader.

**SUBMITTING VIDEOS (for projects like Coronavirus Capsules)**

o Don’t use your full name .

o Don’t film things that might reveal your exact address, school or somewhere you

go regularly (e.g. a sports club or activity).

o Don’t film anyone else under the age of 18.

o Wear appropriate clothing.

o Keep yourself safe - don’t share something that feels too personal, complicated or sad.

**A NOTE ON ZOOM**

Zoom is a computer and phone conference service which allows multiple people to join in an online chat room where we will all be able to see and talk to each other.

<https://zoom.us/>

Recruitment and selecting staff and volunteers

The Blue Elephant Theatre recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and has adopted recruitment procedures that help deter, reject or identify people who may abuse children so that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people working with children. When undertaking preselection checks the following should be included:

* All staff should complete an application form (and volunteers who are new to the organisation). The application form will elicit information about an applicant’s past. If the post is considered regulated activity (sole charge of children) there should be an explanation that the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and information should be requested about any previous – including spent – convictions, cautions, reprimands, warnings or bind-overs.
* All staff working with young or vulnerable people must have had a DBS check in the last three years or must apply for one as soon as selected. If the staff member is deemed to be working in regulated activity, a barred list check will also be requested. As an employer, BET is legally responsible for making sure the job role is eligible before requesting that an employee applied for a standard or enhanced DBS check. Gov.uk has an eligibility tool which can be used for guidance.
* BET feels that it is desirable for all volunteers working with young people to apply for a DBS check. The law has removed supervised volunteers from regulated activity. There is no legal requirement to obtain DBS certificates for volunteers who are not in regulated activity and who are supervised regularly and on a day to day basis by a person who is in regulated activity, but an enhanced DBS check without a barred list check may be requested, in line with BET's risk assessments. Without a DBS check, volunteers, cannot be left with a group of young people without a DBS checked adult.
* Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children will be required. These references must be taken up and confirmed through written contact. This is applicable for both staff and volunteers (unless volunteers were already known to us e.g. a former participant, in which case some discretion may be applied.)
* Evidence of identity (Passport or driving licence with Photo). These items will not be copied or kept, in-line with GDPR legislation.

All prospective employees/volunteers should be interviewed, for volunteers this need not be a formal interview. We will ensure that all employees/volunteers have appropriate qualifications and training.

Should any concerns arise following a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check then this will be passed onto the Executive Committee of the Organisation and the Southwark safeguarding children Board will be contacted for information and guidance. Any Disclosure that causes concern will be assessed to establish the level of risk the subject poses to children, other service users, colleagues, the general public and/or our organisation. A number of questions will be asked:

* Does the offence relate directly to work with children?
* What is the seriousness of the offence/s and the circumstances surrounding it?
* How long is it since the offence was committed?
* Does the subject have a pattern of offending?
* Has the subject’s situation changed since the offence occurred?
* What is the subject’s explanation of the offence?
* Did the subject declare the offence prior to the Disclosure?

If all these questions are not answered satisfactorily then the prospective employee/volunteer will not be allowed to join the organisation. All new employees/volunteers will go through a probation and induction process, including relevant training. Ongoing training and supervision will ensure all employees/volunteers are adequately supported.

Training and supervision of staff and volunteers

New staff and volunteers will have a designated person (their line manager) that will ensure that a proper induction takes place. The supervisor will provide regular support and supervision to the new member of staff and volunteer in all areas of their work including child protection. All new staff and volunteers will read and understand this policy as part of their induction process. Staff and volunteers will be able to identify the signs of abuse and will be confident about the steps to take and who to report any concerns.

All staff will undertake external training on child protection. Until external training is possible, child protection training will be cascaded by supervisors/managers at the Organisation. For volunteers, in house training is sufficient. Training will be refreshed every two years at a minimum. Staff and volunteers will keep a check on visitors and guests whether their visit is by invitation or unsolicited. This will ensure the welfare of the children is safeguarded at all times. Adult to young person ratios should reflect best practice (1:10 max for 10 years and over, 1:8 max under 10).

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned in all safeguarding situations.

Information should be handled and disseminated on a ***need to know basis*** only. This includes the following people:

* The Theatre’s DSL;
* The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused;
* The person making the allegation;
* Social services/police;
* The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at Southwark MASH
* The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).\*

\*Seek social services advice on who should approach alleged abuser.

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

**Definitions of Abuse**

There are four recognised types of child abuse. According to the World Health Organisation, ‘Child abuse’ or ‘maltreatment’ constitutes ‘all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.’ It also includes when someone knowingly fails to prevent serious harm to a child.

* Physical abuse: including hurting or injuring a child, inflicting pain, poisoning, drowning,
* Sexual abuse: including direct or indirect sexual exploitation or corruption of children by involving them (or threatening to involve them) in inappropriate sexual activities.
* Emotional abuse: repeatedly rejecting children, humiliating them or denying their worth and rights as human beings.
* Neglect: the persistent lack of appropriate care of children, including love, stimulation, safety, nourishment, warmth, education, and medical attention.

In line with the Prevent Strategy (see Appendix 1), protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation), whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

In addition to these types of abuse and neglect, members of staff will also be alert to following specific safeguarding issues:

**Mental Health**

We are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Our staff members however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

**Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)**

CCE is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into any criminal activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. CCE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

CCE can include children being forced to work in cannabis factories, being coerced into moving drugs or money across the country (county lines), forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people. Some of the indicators of CCE are: children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions; children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation; children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being; children who misuse drugs and alcohol; children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education. Any possible CCE case will be shared with the DSL with a view to referring to appropriate agencies following the referral procedures.

**Child Sexual Exploitation**

CSE is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed online. Some indicators of children being sexually exploited are: going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late; regularly missing school or education or not taking part in education; appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions; associating with other young people involved in exploitation; having older boyfriends or girlfriends; suffering from sexually transmitted infections; mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing; drug and alcohol misuse and displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour. A child under the age of 13 is not legally capable of consenting to sex (it is statutory rape) or any other type of sexual touching. Sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence. It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 or 17 year old if that person holds a position of trust or authority in relation to the young person. Non consensual sex is rape whatever the age of the victim. If the victim is incapacitated through drink or drugs, or the victim or his or her family has been subject to violence or the threat of it, they can not be considered to have given true consent and therefore offences may have been committed. Child sexual exploitation is therefore potentially a child protection issue for all children under the age of 18.

Where it comes to our notice that a child under the age of 13 is, or may be, sexually active, whether or not they are a participant of Blue Elephant Theatre, this must be discussed with the nominated child protection lead in the organisation. Each case must be assessed individually. There should be a presumption that a referral is made to the Multi-agency safeguarding hub in order that a full assessment can be made. In the case of a young person between the ages of 13 and 16, an individual risk assessment will be conducted in accordance with the *London Child Protection Procedures*. This will determine how and when information will be shared with parents and the investigating agencies.

**‘Sexting’**

Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal. Sharing youth produced sexual imagery, which is commonly known as ‘sexting’ covers the incidents where:

 A person under the age of 18 creates and shares sexual imagery of themselves with a peer under the age of 18

 A person under the age of 18 shares sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18 or an adult

 A person under the age of 18 is in possession of sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18.

When such an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery comes to a member of staff’s attention, this will be shared with the designated safeguarding lead with a view to referring to appropriate agencies following the referral procedures.

**Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

VAWG is defined as any act of gender–based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. VAWG is the umbrella term which brings together multiple forms of serious violence such as crimes committed in the name of “honour”; domestic abuse; female genital mutilation (FGM); forced marriage; sexual violence, abuse, exploitation and rape; stalking; harassment; trafficking for sexual exploitation; prostitution. If members of staff have a concern about or knowledge of any VAWG incidents, they will share it immediately with the DSL with a view to referring to appropriate agencies. We also note *Southwark’s VAWG Strategy*.

**So-called ‘honour-based’ abuse (HBA) (including Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage)**

HBA includes incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving “honour” often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. All forms of HBV are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and will be handled and escalated as such. If members of staff have a concern about or knowledge of a child that might be at risk of HBA or who has suffered from HBA, they will share it immediately with the DSL with a view to referring to appropriate agencies.

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

FGM is a procedure where the female genital organs are injured or changed without medical reason. It is frequently a very traumatic and violent act for the victim and can cause harm in many ways. The practice can cause severe pain and there may be immediate and/or long-term health consequences, including mental health problems, difficulties in childbirth, causing danger to the child and mother; and/or death.

FGM is a deeply embedded social norm, practised by families for a variety of complex reasons. It is often thought to be essential for a girl to become a proper woman, and to be marriageable. The practice is not required by any religion.

FGM is an unacceptable practice for which there is no justification. It is child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls.

FGM is prevalent in 30 countries and is a deeply rooted practice, widely carried out mainly among specific ethnic populations in Africa and parts of the Middle East and Asia. While FGM is concentrated in countries around the Atlantic coast to the Horn of Africa, in areas of the Middle East like Iraq and Yemen, it has also been documented in communities in Colombia, Iran, Israel, Oman, The United Arab Emirates, The Occupied Palestinian Territories, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. It has also been identified in parts of Europe, North America and Australia.

FGM is illegal in the UK. It is estimated that approximately 60,000 girls aged 0-14 were born in England and Wales to mothers who had undergone FGM and approximately 103,000 women aged 15-49 and approximately 24,000 women aged 50 and over who have migrated to England and Wales are living with the consequences of FGM. In addition, approximately 10,000 girls aged under 15 who have migrated to England and Wales are likely to have undergone FGM.

We note a new duty that was introduced on 31 October 2015 that requires teachers, which includes qualified teachers or persons who are employed or engaged to carry out teaching work in schools and other institutions to report ‘known’ cases of FGM in girls aged under 18 to the police. The duty applies to any teacher who is employed or engaged to carry out ‘teaching work’, whether or not they have qualified teacher status, in maintained schools, academies, free schools, independent schools, non-maintained special schools, sixth form colleges, 16-19 academies, relevant youth accommodation or children’s homes in England (ie work like Creative Minds and Speak Out would be included). The duty does not apply in relation to suspected cases – it is limited to ‘known’ cases’ (i.e. those which are visually identified or disclosed to a professional by the victim). It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils or students. The duty does not apply in cases where the woman is over 18 at the time of the disclosure/discovery of FGM (even if she was under 18 when the FGM was carried out). Further information on this duty can be found in the document “*Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation – procedural information*”. A useful summary of the FGM mandatory reporting duty is available in *FGM Fact Sheet*.

Staff/ volunteers in our organisation will personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out (calling 101 is recommended). Unless the facilitator/ staff member/ volunteer has good reason not to, they will discuss any such case with the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy)

**Private Fostering**

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more. Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage). Great grandparents, great aunts, great uncles and cousins are not regarded as close relatives.

The law requires that Southwark Council should be notified if anyone is looking after someone else's child for 28 days or more. The purpose of the council's involvement is to support the child and private foster family (and wherever possible the biological parent/s) with any issues arising. These may be practical issues such as benefits, housing, immigration or emotional issues such as keeping contact with biological family, maintaining cultural identity.

Schools have an obligation to report private fostering and so suspicions of this while working in a school should be passed on to a school's DSL as well as discussed with Blue Elephant’s DSL. If working outside a school, advice about whether there is a need to notify the council, can be obtained by calling **07539 346808** or sending an email to ***privatefosteringadvice@southwark.gov.uk***.

REFERRALS

Where there is a safeguarding concern, we take into account the child’s wishes and feelings when determining what action to take and what services to provide. We have systems in place for children to express their views and give feedback. We acknowledge that children who are affected by abuse or neglect may demonstrate their needs and distress through their words, actions, behaviour, demeanour, school work or other children. Ultimately, all our systems and processes operate with the best interests of the child at heart.

Referrals to services regarding concerns about a child or family typically fall into three categories:

 Early Help Services;

 Child in need - Section 17 (Children Act 1989) referrals;

 Child protection - Section 47 (Children Act 1989) referrals.

*The Southwark Safeguarding Board Multi Agency Threshold Guide* sets out the different levels of need and detailed guidance about how concerns within these different levels should be responded to by Southwark agencies.

Safeguarding referrals should be made to Southwark Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (*MASH*) via the *Referral Form*. Prior to any written form being sent as a referral to social care, there should be a verbal consultation with the MASH social worker or manager, by calling the duty desk on **020 7525 1921,** to ensure that making a referral is an appropriate action. The parent/carer will normally be contacted to obtain their consent before a referral is made. However, if the concern involves, for example alleged or suspected child sexual abuse, Honour Based Abuse, fabricated or induced illness or the Designated Safeguarding Lead has reason to believe that informing the parent at this stage might compromise the safety of the child or a staff member, nothing should be said to the parent/carer ahead of the referral, but a rationale for the decision to progress without consent should be provided with the referral.

Responding to suspicions or allegations against staff

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in the Blue Elephant Theatre*,* in a paid or unpaid capacity to take responsibility for deciding whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

The Blue Elephant Theatre will assure all staff/volunteers 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 or vulnerable person.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation

* A criminal investigation,
* A safeguarding investigation,
* A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and safeguarding investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action if there are concerns

The following action should be taken if there are concerns:

Poor Practice

* If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the Theatre’s DSL will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
* If the allegation is about poor practice by the Theatre’s DSL, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the LADO at Southwark's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

Suspected Abuse

* Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Theatre’s DSL, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the person in question and anyone else who may be at risk.
* The Theatre’s DSL will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if *out-of-hours.*
* The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
* The Theatre’s DSL should also notify the LADO at Southwark MASH, who will deal with any media enquiries.
* If the Theatre’s DSL is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the LADO at Southwark MASH who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

Confidentiality

Every effort should 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 Theatre’s DSL;
* The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused;
* The person making the allegation;
* Social services/police;
* The LADO at Southwark MASH
* The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).\*

\*Seek social services advice on who should approach alleged abuser.

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

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

* The Theatre’s DSL will consult with LADO at Southwark MASH and/or social services before making the 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 Theatre’s Board 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 Theatre’s Board of Trustees must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children and vulnerable people should always remain paramount.

Support to Deal with the *Aftermath*

* Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff. Use of Helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association of Counselling Directory (**The British Association for Counselling Accredited Services Directory** is available from The British Association for Counselling, Tel: 01455 883300 E-mail: [bacp@bacp.co.uk](mailto:bacp@bacp.co.uk), website [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bac.co.uk/)) and may be a useful resource.
* Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

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, the theatre should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the 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

The same procedure should be followed as set out in the Section relating to responding to suspicions or allegations, if bullying is suspected.

Action to Help the Victim and Prevent Bullying:

* Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
* Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
* Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
* 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 Theatre’s Safeguarding Officer and/or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action Towards the Bully(ies):

* Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully (ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
* Inform the bully’s parents.
* Insist on the return of *borrowed* items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
* Provide support for the workshop leader of the victim.
* Impose sanctions as necessary.
* Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
* Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
* Inform all organisation members of action taken.
* Keep a written record of action taken.

A Quick Guide to Procedures

This guide is designed to inform the most appropriate action in relation to concerns about either a parent or carer (e.g. outside the immediate environment).

**Q: Are you concerned about the behaviour of a parent or carer?**

Record what the child has said, or what has been seen. Include dates and times and, if possible, send a copy to Theatre’s DSL.

Report your concerns to the Safeguarding lead as soon as possible. If the Theatre’s DSL or deputy DSL are not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to make a referral on 020 7525 1921. For an out of hours social worker, phone 020 7525 5000. Social Services and the person reporting concerns should decide how to involve parents and carers.

**YES**

Remember:

* Maintain confidentiality on a *need to know* basis only.
* Ensure the Theatre’s DSL follows up with social services.

**This guide is designed to inform the most appropriate action in relation to concerns about a member of staff or volunteer within the theatre.**

**Are you concerned about the behaviour of a member of staff or Volunteer?**

**YES**

Could it also be child abuse?

Is it serious poor practice/an alleged breach of the code of ethics and conduct?

# YES

**YES**

The Theatre’s DSL will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

Report concerns to the Theatre’s DSL (unless – see below) who must then ensure the safety of the child (and other children). This person will then refer concerns to the Social Services (who may involve the police).

If concerns remain refer to the Chair of the Southwark Council Safeguarding Children Board and the theatre’s Board who will decide how to deal with the issue in conjunction with the Child Protection Officer.

If allegation/concern relates to the Theatre’s DSL, refer directly to the Southwark MASH, and the Board who in consultation with the Safeguarding Officer will facilitate referral of the concerns to social services who may involve the police.

**Disciplinary Committee investigation**

In all cases ensure the appropriate regional Development Manager is contacted who will then advise the Safeguarding Officer/the Board.

**Possible Outcomes of Hearing:**

1. No case to answer.
2. Warrants advice/warning as to future conduct/sanctions.
3. Further training and support needed.

**Possible Outcomes:**

1. police inquiry
2. Criminal proceedings
3. Referral back to Disciplinary Committee
4. Possible civil proceedings

# Appeal’s Committee

## If you do not know whom to turn for advice or are worried about sharing your concerns with a senior colleague, you should contact Southwark social services direct on 020 7525 1921 (9am – 5pm) or 020 7525 5000 (out of hours) or on mash@southwark.gov.uk (or the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000)

How to record information about concerns or disclosures

Information passed to the social services or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern.

It is really important to allow the child or young person to disclose in their own time and in their own way. Often people can give vague or ‘jumbled’ accounts that can appear confusing.

Where possible take the person making the disclosure to a quiet space and invite another adult to be present. If this is not possible, take the person to a quiet corner of the room, within sight and earshot of another adult. Remember to take a paper and pen with you. It is really important not to interrupt someone’s flow as they may not be able to restart. Instead of interrupting take down notes of what they say, using the same language that they use. DO NOT ask leading questions and DO NOT make suggestions, the disclosure must be an honest account in the child’s own words. However, you should ask questions and seek clarification on any information that is not clear.

\*Please remember, you cannot promise not to share this information. You can tell the person that you will only share it with people that need to know and who will keep them safe,

Information should include the following:

* Name of child/vulnerable person
* Time, date and location of the disclosure or of when you noticed the concern
* Age of child and date of birth
* Home address and telephone number
* Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns or those of someone else?
* What is the nature of the allegation? Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information. Use the person’s own words as quotes where possible.
* Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
* A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Behavioural signs indirect signs?
* Witnesses to the incidents.
* The child’s account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
* Have the parents been contacted?
* If so what has been said?
* Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
* If it is not the child making the report has the child concerned been spoken to? If so what was said?
* Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser?

**Appendix 1: What is Prevent?**

Prevent is part of the UK’s counter terrorism strategy preventing people from becoming radicalised, involved in terrorism or supporting terrorism. Prevent aims to identify children, young people and families at risk and to assess and reduce that risk. It includes non-terrorist forms of radicalisation including a range of extremist beliefs. It is part of the safeguarding agenda and links to the understanding of respecting and upholding British Values.

As BET is not a school or registered childcare provider, it is not subject to the duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. However, those working with young people at Blue Elephant are aware that radicialisation is a safeguarding concern.

Behavioural indicators

* The following are possible signs that someone is being radicalised or drawn into terrorism:
* Change in behaviour or appearance
* Adopting styles of clothes associated with groups with whom they have had no previous contact
* Becoming isolated from friends, peers or family members
* Becoming involved with groups of pupils who have strong ideologies
* Viewing websites which contain extremist ideologies or symbols
* Attempting to recruit others to an extremist ideology or cause
* Vocalising extremist ideologies or using extreme language
* Questioning identity and sense of belonging
* Glorifying current terrorist activity seen in the media
* Displaying extreme behaviour related to ideology and/or religion
* Requesting extended holidays to unsafe places or places not associated with the family
* Possessing or discussing extremist material
* Family not being aware of absence

Motivators for such behaviours could be wide ranging. Terrorism is very unlikely but not impossible. Whatever the reason for a young person’s behaviour, remember that young people can be vulnerable and will benefit from our support. Please remember that the most important thing is to do something.

**Appendix 2 Safeguarding - additional points when working remotely and delivering activities online**

As a rule of thumb, we are trying not to normalise any behaviour that a less scrupulous person could take advantage of.

* Staff are not to share their personal numbers/email addresses with young or vulnerable people. They can be shared with parents/carers if absolutely necessary but a line manager should be made aware of this and conversations records should be kept.
* Do not share other people’s personal details without their consent
* Aim to maintain the principle of no 1 - 1 contact even online, eg two adults on any (regular) group sessions and sharing social media passwords or co-hosting zoom sessions so that the private messages can be read by other adults

**Video calls**

* No recording as standard
* Reminder to adults to try to avoid using bedrooms as locations for sessions or if necessary, clear the space/ use a blank wall as background
* Account settings should allow people to join without an account
* Waiting Room should always be enabled
* Password protect sessions
* Turn off screen-sharing for anyone but the host(s) unless necessary for an activity
* Save chat if possible
* Never share the link to join on public platforms
* Consider locking the room
* Ensuring it is always the parent who is logging into the lesson so child-related data is never used
* Facilitators should not use their phones as their host device

**For Participants:**

LIVE VIDEO CHAT

o Be kind.

o Never use your full name, first names will do.

o Make sure people you are living with know you are on a live video chat. Don’t

include them in the chat.

o Wear appropriate clothing, even on parts of you that you think won’t be seen.

o Remember it’s easy to misinterpret things online.

o Refer to a group leader directly if you feel worried about anything.

o Do not record or take photos of anything without the others consent.

o If you are worried about anything message the session leader.

**SUBMITTING VIDEOS**

o Don’t use your full name .

o Don’t film things that might reveal your exact address, school or somewhere you

go regularly (e.g. a sports club or activity).

o Don’t film anyone else under the age of 18.

o Wear appropriate clothing.

o Keep yourself safe - don’t share something that feels too personal, complicated or

sad.

**A NOTE ON ZOOM**

Zoom is a computer and phone conference service which allows multiple people to join in an online chat room where we will all be able to see and talk to each other.

<https://zoom.us/>

Declaration:

I have read the above information and agree to follow this Safeguarding policy.

Name: Date:

Signed: