

Tall Stories Theatre Company Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy



Introduction:

Tall Stories Theatre Company perform to family audiences as part of our commitment to bring great stories to life for audiences of all ages. We perform in the UK and around the world to audiences in theatres and schools and via live-stream. We provide occasional workshops and on certain occasions we have children in our sole care, e.g. Summer School. Throughout this work, Tall Stories are committed to ensuring we support children's rights and create and maintain the safest possible environment for children.

This policy applies to staff, freelance staff, the board of trustees and anyone working directly or indirectly on behalf of Tall Stories. It covers all work with those under the age of 18.

We believe and recognise that:

- Children and young people have the right to freedom from abuse and harm. The welfare of children and young people is paramount.
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people by practising in a way that protects them and keeps them safe.
- All children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from harm or abuse.
- Some children and young people are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers, schools and other agencies is essential in promoting children and young people's welfare.

To support this, we will:

- Appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead to oversee safeguarding.
- Recruit those we work with safely, ensuring that appropriate checks are made.
- Implement Disclosure of Abuse Guidance and make it available to anyone working on behalf of Tall Stories with children and young people.
- Ensure that we have effective complaints procedures in place and use these procedures to manage any allegations against staff appropriately.
- Ensure that we provide a safe physical environment for children, young people and staff by applying health and safety measures.
- Endeavour to make sure that one-on-one interactions or situations between a member of staff and a child are avoided wherever possible. Our policy is that a child and an adult should never be left alone together and all staff members are made aware of this.

Procedures to follow if you suspect that a child is at risk of harm

We have a statutory duty to notify agencies if we have a concern about children's safety and welfare (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018).

- Where there is a concern about a child's welfare or wellbeing or a concern that a child is in need of protection, this should be recorded on the concern form and then passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for action (or if unavailable then seek advice from the local child services contact team)
- All staff and volunteers are aware that they must report concerns immediately
- All records of concerns, emails, notes of phone conversations and actions are filed confidentially and securely
- Staff know that when they have concerns about a child's welfare they need to:

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- Focus on the needs of the child – their physical and emotional welfare
- Be sensitive
- Talk it over with one of the Designated Members of Staff
- The flowchart for 'Making a child protection referral to children's social care' is displayed and attached to this policy.
- Concerns will be discussed with parents unless this would put the child at further risk of serious harm
- Unless we are advised otherwise by Children's Social Care the recording forms will be shared with parents

Disclosure of Abuse Guidance

- Reassure the child, including letting them know that it is not their fault, that they have a right to tell and that the information will be shared only with those who need to know and can help.
- Avoid expressions of distress or shock.
- Do not make false promises, i.e. that you will keep the information a secret or that the police will not be involved; do not promise confidentiality. Make the child aware at the earliest sensitive opportunity who you are going to tell to help make them safe.
- Use the child's language or vocabulary
- If the child has disclosed sexual abuse, ask them when it happened but nothing more. Whether a child is asked this question will depend upon the child's age and understanding
- As soon as possible write a factual first-hand account of what was said and done.
- Speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible after the event.
- Any concerns about a child from observations rather than disclosure (e.g. marks or bruises, something they say in passing or the condition that they are in) should be passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible and followed through appropriately.
- Recording is central to safeguarding and protection; it is vital that concerns including those small or vague are recorded accurately so that they can be monitored and emerging patterns noticed.
- Dealing with issues of child abuse can be distressing for the adult to whom the abuse is disclosed or who has concerns. It is important that you talk about your feelings after the event, however it is essential to keep the child(ren)s name(s) and details confidential.

Logging a concern

All information about the suspected abuse or disclosure, or concern about radicalisation, will be recorded on the **Logging a concern** form as soon as possible after the event. The record should include:

- date of the disclosure, or the incident, or the observation causing concern
- date and time at which the record was made
- name and date of birth of the child involved
- a factual report of what happened. If recording a disclosure, you must use the child's own words
- name, signature and job title of the person making the record.

The record will be given to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will decide on the appropriate course of action.

For concerns about **child abuse**, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will contact Social Care. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow up all referrals to Social Care in writing within 48 hours. If a member of staff thinks that the incident has not been dealt with properly, they may contact Social Care directly.

Safer recruitment

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Safe recruitment and selection practice is vital to safeguarding and protecting children. The following applies to employees in roles involving working directly with children or performing in schools. Please refer to the Safe Recruitment Policy for more detailed information.

- Enhanced DBS checks are carried out before employment commences.
- DBS disclosures are recorded in staff files.
- All new members of staff working directly with children will receive an induction in Tall Stories' staff conduct and expectations and will sign to agree they have understood our policies, procedures and basic safeguarding practices.

Responding to allegations made against a member of staff/volunteer

All staff must be vigilant in relation to inappropriate behaviour displayed by members of staff, or any other person working with the children. Examples include inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual roles and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images.

All concerns about staff should be reported immediately to the designated safeguarding lead. It is the responsibility of this designated safeguarding lead to report allegations to, and otherwise liaise with, the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has the responsibility to manage and have oversight of allegations against people who work with children

If anyone makes an allegation of child abuse against a member of staff:

- The allegation will be recorded on an incident record form. Any witnesses to the incident should sign and date the entry to confirm it.
- The allegation must be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The LADO will advise if other agencies (e.g. police) should be informed, and Tall Stories will act upon their advice. Any telephone reports to the LADO will be followed up in writing within 48 hours.
- Following advice from the LADO, it may be necessary to suspend the member of staff pending full investigation of the allegation.
- If appropriate, Tall Stories will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Children's peer-on-peer abuse

Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Peer-on-peer abuse is taken seriously by staff and will be subject to the same child protection procedures as other forms of abuse. Staff are aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.

Staff will not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people. The presence of one or more of the following in relationships between children should always trigger concern about the possibility of peer-on-peer abuse:

- Sexual activity (in primary school-aged children) of any kind, including sexting
- One of the children is significantly more dominant than the other (e.g. much older)
- One of the children is significantly more vulnerable than the other (e.g. in terms of disability, confidence, physical strength)
- There has been some use of threats, bribes or coercion to ensure compliance or secrecy.

If peer-on-peer abuse is suspected or disclosed, we will follow the same procedures as set out above for responding to child abuse.

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When performing to an audience including children and young people, we will:

- Endeavour to perform material suitable for the age group as specified on our publicity material.
- Ensure that material streamed online is done through safe and secure platforms.
- Ask that venues retain a reasonable front-of-house staff to audience ratio at each performance.

When performing at schools, we will:

- Commit to consulting schools on their relevant safeguarding procedures in advance.
- Request that Tall Stories and any performers be informed of any additional needs of any children before the performance commences if relevant.
- Ensure that schools retain a reasonable teacher to child ratio at each performance. Our performers must never be expected to supervise children or young people alone.

Use of Photographic/ Filming Equipment

- Information and photographs will be recorded and stored professionally and securely.
- Photographing and filming children under the age of 18 who are in the care of Tall Stories (e.g. attending Summer School) is allowed only when a legal guardian (parent/carer) has given prior consent.
- If Tall Stories intends to photograph or film children at a school they will speak with the host organisation and issue photo permission forms and guidelines to parents in advance. These forms must be signed by a legal guardian and returned on or before the day of photography/filming. If forms are not returned photography and filming is not permitted.
- If Tall Stories intends to photograph/filming children in an audience at a theatre, signs will be placed visibly in the auditorium and front of house alerting audience members to the fact and allowing them to opt out if they wish.

Safeguarding Lead

Name: Natalia Scorer

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Contact numbers

Child Services Contact Team: 020 7527 7400 / csctreferrals@islington.gov.uk

CSCT out of hours: 020 7226 0992 (after 5pm weekdays/weekends/public holidays)

LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer): Tim Djavit 020 7527 8102

Police: 101 (non-emergency) or 999 (emergency)

Anti-terrorist hotline: 0800 789 321

NSPCC: 0808 800 500 / Text Helpline 88858

Information available through the NSPCC, Islington Safeguarding Children Board and the Out of School Alliance has guided this policy. We are committed to reviewing this policy regularly. Any suggestions, recommendations or feedback on our policies and procedures are welcome.

This policy was written by Harriet Billington, Production Coordinator and Natalia Scorer, Creative Programme Manager

This policy was last reviewed on 8th June 2021

Overleaf: 'Making a child protection referral to children's social care' flow chat

