

BLACKPOOL GRAND THEATRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Policy statement

The Blackpool Grand Theatre has a duty of care to safeguard all children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in the arts activities. The Safeguarding Children and Child Protection guidelines adopted by the Blackpool Grand Theatre provide clear direction to staff and volunteers about expected codes of behaviour, the development of good practice and sound procedures. This ensures that child protection concerns may be handled sensitively, professionally in ways to support the needs of the individual.

Policy aims

The aim of the Blackpool Grand Theatre Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice by:

- Creating a positive atmosphere for children, young people and vulnerable adult to working within whilst attending Blackpool Grand Theatre;
- Providing children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Blackpool Grand Theatre;
- Allowing all Blackpool Grand Theatre staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Terminology

- A child - is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).
- To disclose - in the context of Child Protection, the term means to reveal or divulge information about having suffered from abuse or neglect.
- A vulnerable adult - is a person who is or may be in need of community care services because of mental disability or other disability, age or illness, and who is, or who may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.
- A young person - is in the upper age ranges of the official definition of a child. The term has no legal status, but acknowledges that people aged 16 or 17 may not think of themselves as 'children'.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND CHILD PROTECTION

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PROCEDURE FOR PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

The Blackpool Grand Theatre has a duty to act responsibly to ensure that policies and procedures promote safe working practices and a clear understanding of what to do if abuse is suspected or disclosed. In addition there is a responsibility to ensure all staff or volunteers who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults are not placed in a situation where abuse might be alleged.

Good practice guidelines

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children, young people and vulnerable adults' welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice in **planning a project** for work involving children, young people and vulnerable adults means:

- undertaking, at the outset of project planning, a risk assessment, and monitoring risk throughout the project
- identifying, at the outset, the people with designated protection responsibility
- in effective recruitment, including appropriate vetting of staff and volunteers
- knowing how to get in touch with local authority social services, in case you have to report a concern to them
- putting systems in place to create and manage good relationships with parents and other stakeholders
- being aware of the content of the work and the impact it may have on children, young people or vulnerable adults

Good practice in a **physical environment** where there is contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults means:

- always ensuring that someone from the school/educational establishment, youth organisation or care setting is present and therefore meeting their responsibility for ensuring the safety of those in the setting
- monitoring risks throughout the project

Good practice in **physical contact** means:

- maintaining a safe and appropriate distance from participants
- only touching participants when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular arts activity
- seeking agreement of participants prior to any physical contact
- making sure disabled participants are informed of and comfortable with any necessary physical contact

Good practice in **interpersonal dealings** means:

- treating all children, young people or vulnerable adults equally, and with respect and dignity

- always putting the welfare of each participant first, before achieving goals
- building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children, young people or vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process
- giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- making the arts fun, enjoyable and promoting equality
- being an excellent role model for dealings with other people
- recognising that children or young people with disabilities may be even more vulnerable to abuse than other children or young people
- not allowing sexual relationships to develop between artists/facilitators and young people or vulnerable adults

Good practice in managing **sensitive information** means:

- having a policy and set of procedures for taking, using and storing photographs or images of children, young people or vulnerable adults
- careful monitoring and use of web-based materials and activities
- agreed procedures for reporting any suspicions or allegations of abuse
- ensuring confidentiality in order to protect the rights of employees, freelancers and volunteers, including safe handling, storage and disposal of any information provided on artists or arts facilitators (or others involved in arts projects) as part of the recruitment process. (Data Protection Act 1998)

Good practice in **professional development** means:

- keeping up to date with health and safety in artistic practice
- being informed about legislation and policies for protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- undertaking relevant development and training

RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk assessment should be a part of planning any project and should take into account all aspects of the project, but particularly any risks relating to protection of children, young people or vulnerable adults. Risk management should be an on-going part of every project.

Risk assessment

The principle of risk assessment is to consider:

- practical detail of a project
- things that can go wrong in the project
- likelihood of these things going wrong
- impact of these things going wrong

Once this is done:

- you can identify measures to reduce the risk
- you can decide what to do if things do go wrong
- you can allocate roles to monitor and manage child protection

Make sure you set aside enough time to undertake risk assessment and risk management. To ensure that all risks are considered, involve as wide a range of project stakeholders as possible in risk assessment.

Risk assessment and risk management should be done for every project you engage in. When you have done it once you will be able to adapt the exercise for future projects.

RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Project name:
Project leader:
Date produced:
Participants:

Step 1: Prioritise risks

Identify risks and place them on the grid according to the levels of probability and impact of each risk

Step 2: Define actions to be taken

List each risk and identify actions to reduce probability and / or impact

	Risks	Probability H/L	Impact M/S	Actions to reduce probability and/or impact	Due date	Owner
1						
2						
3						
4						

PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO POSSIBLE ABUSE AND TO DISCLOSURE

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in the Blackpool Grand Theatre, in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

Prior to working directly with children, young people or vulnerable adults, the Blackpool Grand Theatre must collate relevant personal details and a contact person with legal responsibility for the child, young person or vulnerable adult, in cases of emergency. The Blackpool Grand Theatre will never assume sole responsibility for a child, young person or vulnerable person.

What is abuse?

There are four main categories of abuse;

- 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 of 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 of vulnerable adults can be rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the person does not consent or cannot consent or is pressured into consenting. 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, young person's or vulnerable adult'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, young person or vulnerable adult from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of a child's, young person's or vulnerable adult's basic emotional needs.

Indications of abuse.

Direct allegation may be made by –

- a) the child, young people or vulnerable adults himself/herself
- b) another child, young people or vulnerable adults
- c) an adult
- d) someone anonymously

Direct observation of –

- a) physical injury
- b) poor physical condition (indicating lack of care, nourishment or hygiene)
- c) an adult's behaviour towards the child
- d) a child's behaviour towards the child

Observed changes in a child, young people or vulnerable adults attitude or behaviour including

- a) attitudes to work/activities
- b) standards of attainment
- c) concentration
- d) use of language (swearing or sexually explicit words)
- e) attention seeking behaviour with adults or children
- f) social behaviour (becoming aggressive or withdrawn)
- g) inappropriate sexual behaviour

If there is evidence or suspected abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult the matter should be reported to the Child Protection Officer,

Action to take in cases of disclosure.

It is possible that a child, young person or vulnerable adult who is suffering or has suffered abuse will confide in you. This is something you should be prepared for and must handle carefully. The following action should be taken if there are concerns of abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult: *see next page*

GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW IF YOU SUSPECT, OR ARE TOLD OF, ABUSE

Adults looking after children, young people or vulnerable adults should be aware of the risks of abuse (by adults or other young people), and take steps to reduce those risks.

Adults in charge of children young people or vulnerable adults should know what to do if they suspect that someone is being physically or sexually abused, or if someone tells them that this is happening.

The following key points give guidance on what to do and not to do:-

- Always stop and listen straight away to someone who wants to tell you about incidents or suspicions of abuse.
- If you can, write brief notes of what they are telling you while they are speaking. *These may help later if you have to remember exactly what was said – and keep your original note, however rough and even if you wrote on the back of something else (it's what you wrote at the time that may be important later – not a tidier/improved version you wrote up afterwards!) If you don't have the means to write down at the time, make notes of what was said as soon as possible afterwards.*
- Do not give a guarantee that you will keep what is said confidential or secret. *If you are told about abuse you have a responsibility to tell the right people to get something done about it (see below). If asked, explain that if you are going to be told something very important needs to be sorted out, you will need to tell the people who can sort it out, but that you will only tell people who absolutely have to know.*
- Don't ask leading questions that might give your own ideas of what might have happened. *Not "did he do X to you?" – just ask "what do you want to tell me?" or "is there anything else you want to say?"*
- Immediately tell the Child Protection Officer, (unless accused or suspected of abusing, in which case you should tell the Blackpool Grand Theatre Board Chairman). *Don't tell other adults or young people what you have been told.*
- Discuss with the Child Protection Officer whether any steps need to be taken to protect the person who has told you about the abuse (this may need to be discussed with the person who told you).
- Never attempt to carry out an investigation of suspected or alleged abuse by interviewing people etc. *Social Services and Police are the people trained to do this – you could cause more damage and spoil possible criminal proceedings.*
- As soon as possible (and certainly the same day) the Child Protection Officer should refer the matter to the local Social Services Department (helped by your notes). *Follow their requests about what to do next. They will set up any necessary investigation and they can advise you – that is their statutory job.*
 - Never think abuse is impossible in your place of work or group, or that an accusation against someone you know well and trust is bound to be wrong.
 - Children and young people often tell other young people, rather than staff or other adults, about abuse.

Required information for social services or the police about suspected abuse

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of 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 the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS RELATING TO A MEMBER OF THE BLACKPOOL GRAND THEATRE.

The Blackpool Grand 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.

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

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

Action if there are concerns

1. Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the designated Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Blackpool Grand Theatre Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Blackpool Grand Theatre Board Chairman who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- The Child Protection Officer should also notify the Chief Executive Officer and Blackpool Grand Theatre Board Chairman, who in turn will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Blackpool Grand Theatre Board Chairman 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 Child Protection Officer.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation.
- Social services/police.
- The Chief Executive Officer
- Blackpool Grand Theatre Board Chairman
- Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

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 Child Protection Officer and Chief Executive Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Chief Executive and Blackpool Grand Theatre Board Chairman 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, 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 the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse:

- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of staff may need. Use of help lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.
- Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

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, either within or outside the theatre, 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.

Rights and confidentiality

If a complaint or allegation is made against a member of staff, he or she should be made aware of his or her rights under both employment law and internal disciplinary procedures. This is the responsibility of the officer who is responsible for personnel in the organisation.

No matter how you feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the person who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.

In criminal law the Crown or other prosecuting authority has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.