

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & PROCEDURES**

- Box Clever produces contemporary theatre with and for young people, particularly between the ages of 5 and 18.
- Working with young people and performing to young people is both inspiring and rewarding. The collaboration of artist and young person is essential in making our work challenging, new and relevant.
- The Company recognises that it has a duty of care to safeguard young people involved with our work as participants and audience, and to create a positive and safe environment for them.
- All young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- It is the responsibility of all individual Company members to follow guidelines and procedures and promote this child protection policy.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately, and all staff, freelancers and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the Administrator, Artistic Director or Trustees.
- Child abuse is defined as any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.
- Bullying is defined as being psychological, verbal or physical in nature. It involves an imbalance of power in which the powerful attack the powerless, and occurs over time rather than being a single act.
- All reasonable steps are taken within the recruitment process (detailed in RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE) to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with young people, including police checks to ensure that no one has a conviction for criminal offences against children.
- All employees, freelancers and volunteers will have clear established roles for their work with young people and receive induction and training including explanation of child protection procedures and as appropriate, use of photographs and videos of young people (detailed in PHOTOGRAPHS & VIDEOS PROCEDURE).
- The GOLD Sub Committee will monitor and update the Child Protection Policy and Procedures on a regular basis.

### **1. GOOD PRACTICE**

The aim of Box Clever's Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice and all personnel are encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations.

The following includes common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with participants.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making theatre fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- 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.
- The adult should explain the reason for physical contact to the young person, which should always be intended to meet the child's needs, **not** the adults. Unless the situation is an emergency, the adult should ask the young person's permission.
- Touring company members are **never** expected to act *in loco parentis* (being legally responsible for a child in the absence of the child's parent or regular carer). They will identify in advance who is undertaking this role (usually the teacher) particularly if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Touring company members working with young people within a school environment under the supervision of a teacher, should not lose their temper or discipline the young people. The responsibility for crowd control and discipline is with the teachers. Teachers must be informed of dangerous, disruptive or abusive behaviour shown by young people.
- When it is necessary for staff and/or freelancers to be in sole charge during an out-of-school project, they will work with the young people in teams of at least two people, and one person will always be responsible for monitoring the welfare of the young people during the activities, ensuring health and safety requirements are met (as advised by the Production Manager and Administrator), and ensuring that young people are always supervised including lunch breaks.
- As preparation for projects where staff and/or freelancers will have sole charge for the young people, the Company will ensure that the written permission of all parents and guardians are obtained, that an up-to-date essential medical information form is completed, that contact details are shared, that a parent or agreed substitute adult collects and delivers the young person to the project, that a risk assessment is undertaken by the Production Manager, and that a representative of the Company's commissioning client is invited to attend all activities as an external third party. (Standard forms are on page 7, 8 and 9)
- Discipline in such projects, should only be used to develop a sense of responsibility for behaviour; develop respect for others and their property; reinforce positive behaviour or attitudes; reinforce awareness of health and safety aspects of the activity.
- After all workshops, projects and school visits evaluation forms are completed by teachers, and debriefs take place with staff and freelancers to ensure that any problems are aired and are addressed in the future.

Prior to tours and as part of the induction and rehearsal process, company members will receive specific training on strategies on how best to deal with young people and promote this good practice.

## **2. PRACTICES TO BE AVOIDED**

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies (such as when a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital immediately or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session). If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the teacher, or Box Clever's General Manager, Artistic Director or Trustees, or the child's parents:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- Avoid taking or dropping off a young person to an event

## **3. PRACTICES THAT SHOULD NEVER 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 young person
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching (touching genital areas, buttocks or breasts)
- Allow physical contact to take place in secret or out of sight of others
- Allow young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- Reduce a young person to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow young people to stay with you at your home unsupervised
- Use discipline impulsively to gain power, or to embarrass or humiliate a young person.

## **4. INCIDENTS THAT MUST BE REPORTED/RECORDED**

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the young person are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a participant.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a young person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

## **5. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for Box Clever, 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 through contact with the appropriate authorities.

Box Clever 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 the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

### **Action if there are concerns**

1. Concerns about poor practice:
  - If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the General Manager or Artistic Director, supported by the GOLD sub committee will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
  - If the allegation is about poor practice by the General Manager or Artistic Director, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Trustees 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, or elsewhere (such as if a child confides in a member of staff), should be reported to the teacher in charge, and/or the General Manager or Artistic Director supported by the GOLD Sub committee, 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, which may include referring the allegation to the social services department
  - If the General Manager or Artistic Director are the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Trustees who will take necessary steps.

### **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 General Manager and/or Artistic Director
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation.
- Social services/police.
- The Trustees
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Social services advice should be sought.

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 Administrative Producer or Artistic Director 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 GOLD Sub Committee 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, GOLD Sub committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which confirms that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true and puts decisions and reasons in writing. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

### **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, Box Clever will 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**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to allegations or suspicions' above.

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.
- 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 school (wherever the bullying is occurring) and the General Manager or Artistic Director.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct, or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or Childline on 0800 1111.

**How We Behave**

Box Clever wants to give young people the opportunity to explore their ideas using drama in a fun, fair and safe way.

Therefore we expect that everyone working with us agrees to the following:

- Everyone should be treated equally and fairly.
- Everyone’s opinions and ideas have equal worth.
- Everyone has the right to work safely, in a supportive environment.
- Physical or verbal bullying will not be tolerated.
- We live in a multi-cultural society and we ask that everyone respect each other’s personal beliefs and culture.
- The basis of all theatre practice is teamwork and co-operation: we need everyone to respect these ideals.
- If a group member does not co-operate with these basic rules, they will be given a warning. If someone gets three warnings, they will be asked to leave.
- Everyone will commit 100% to all the workshops and the performance.
- Parents/carers undertake to get their child to the workshops for 10am and collect them at the end of the day at 4pm, or to supply written permission for other arrangements.

**Please sign below if you agree.**

We agree to follow the *How We Behave* list:

Signed by Young Person .....

Name of Young Person (please print) .....

Signed by Parent/Carer .....

**Photographs/Video Consent Form**

Box Clever may photograph or video the drama workshops.

The Company recognises the need to ensure the welfare and safety of all young people involved in drama.

Under our child protection policy we will not permit photographs, video or other images of young people to be taken without the consent of teachers/parents/carers (if the subject is under the age of 16) and the young people themselves.

Box Clever will take all steps to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they are intended, within the project or to reasonably promote the aims of Box Clever Theatre Company. If you become aware that these images are being used inappropriately you should inform Box Clever immediately.

**TITLE OF PROJECT .....**

Name of Student:.....

I,.....  
[name of parent/teacher of young person ]

consent to Box Clever photographing and/or videoing the above named individual's involvement in the theatre activities relating to the above named project.

Signature:.....

Date:.....