

THAMES OPERA COMPANY











SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE UPDATED NOVEMBER 2021

Philosophy:

As safeguarding is a priority throughout the organisation, Thames Opera Company (TOC) has a coordinated approach to child protection and works in close collaboration with schools and other agencies including Social Services, the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and the Police. All of TOC's employees and volunteers accept that the welfare of the child is paramount and recognise that safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility, and ensures that safeguarding training is a central part of the induction for employees, volunteers and trustees, along with awareness of TOC's suite of policies and procedures.

The definition of 'child' or 'young person' relates to anyone under the age of 18, and also to those above the age of 18 who are vulnerable for reasons of mental and physical ability.













TOC's employees and volunteers have a professional and legal responsibility to:

-  adhere to this Safeguarding Policy
-  adhere to the Code of Conduct Policy
-  promote safeguarding to all
-  ensure that children feel safe at all times
-  prevent the abuse of, promote the welfare of and protect from harm, all the people with whom they work regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity, location, political or immigration status.
-  value, listen to and respect the children and young people participating in any TOC project or activity
-  be alert to the potential of young abusers and challenge bullying in any form
-  take all allegations of abuse seriously and know how to respond to a child or adult's disclosure of abuse and know what to do with the information
-  to 'whistle blow' if they become aware of an abusive situation within the work setting
-  adopt this policy and adhere to TOC's associated policies and procedures

SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

TOC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and rights of all children and young people. Our aim is to create and maintain the safest possible environments in which pupils can learn and to take every reasonable step to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm. We recognise the unique status of children and young people and seek to ensure that they are respectfully treated as individuals.

TOC has a professional and legal responsibility to:

-  recruit all employees and volunteers safely by ensuring that all the necessary/appropriate checks are made as set out in the Safer Recruitment Policy
-  provide effective management of staff and volunteers through induction, supervision, support and training
-  appoint a designated person who will take specific responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection and act as the main point of contact for parents, children and outside agencies.
-  appoint a designated Safeguarding trustee to take responsibility to audit and monitor safeguarding policies, procedures and recordkeeping who ensures the board are informed of when this has happened and action that must be taken in response to this monitoring
-  ensure access to confidential information is restricted to the designated person and the appropriate external authorities, as appropriate.
-  review the effectiveness of this policy annually and ensure that it is endorsed by the Board of Trustees
-  create risk assessments
-  seek parental consent
-  provide emergency information
-  provide first aid by a qualified first aider on site
-  report accidents on site
-  adhere to legal child-to-adult ratios and ensure appropriate supervision

Roles and responsibilities:

The designated person within the company responsible for Safeguarding and Child Protection is:

TBC

The Safeguarding Lead for the Board of Trustees is

TIM DRAKES

It is not the role of the designated person or TOC to decide whether abuse has taken place or not. The responsibility of the designated person is to ensure that concerns are shared and appropriate action taken.

The role of the designated person is to:

- ✚ assume overall responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection for the Company
- ✚ ensure the Safeguarding Policy is up-to-date and is readily accessible.
- ✚ ensure the Single Central Record (checks and training for employees, volunteers and trustees) is up-to-date
- ✚ ensure all employees and trustees have signed to confirm they have read the current Safeguarding Policy
- ✚ help TOC's employees, volunteers and trustees to understand the key issues in relation to Safeguarding and the cultural/education sectors through appropriate training, as part of induction.
- ✚ be a point of contact within the organisation for employees, volunteers, trustees and partners in relation to Safeguarding and Child Protection
- ✚ be aware of local statutory Safeguarding procedures and networks
- ✚ receive, record and assess information from employees and volunteers who have a child protection concern.
- ✚ record and report the issue to the Safeguarding Officer within the venue where the events were taking place (ie. school, theatre, community centre etc.), or contact Social Services and/or the police
- ✚ make a formal referral to a statutory child protection agency or the police if appropriate
- ✚ record concerns and actions in the child protection log
- ✚ ensure everyone is accountable for safeguarding and encourage adults and children, who report a concern, to follow up to ensure appropriate steps have been taken; these people are made aware that, should they feel the Designated Safeguarding Lead has not acted appropriately, they can make a referral directly to Social Services and notify the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Matthew Smith (contact details are at the bottom of this policy).













Responding to general suspicions:

Statements about or allegations of abuse or neglect made by children and adults must always be taken seriously. If an TOC employee or volunteer becomes aware of suspected abuse or if a concern arises from their own observations, they should not attempt to investigate the situation any further or interview the child or young person regarding the situation. This action could complicate a sensitive situation and interfere with legal proceedings.

There is however a responsibility to protect children and any suspicions or allegations brought to the attention of an employee or volunteer should be reported to TOC's designated person responsible for Safeguarding and Child Protection, at the earliest opportunity. Employees and volunteers should not attempt to investigate any matter themselves; this is the responsibility of social services and/or the police.

Procedure when responding to a concern:

If a child confides in a TOC employee or volunteer, below are guidelines on how to deal with a disclosure:

-  listen carefully to what the child is saying
-  react calmly so as not to frighten the child and take what they say seriously
-  avoid leading the child or judging what they say
-  do not promise to keep a secret; make the child aware that if they tell you something in confidence, you may need to tell someone else who can help
-  keep questions to an absolute minimum to ensure a clear accurate understanding of what has been said
-  make a full record of what has been said, heard and/or seen on a TOC Safeguarding form (on display in the office and to be held by persons off site); as soon as possible. This should include the date, time, facts, observations and discussions that are relevant. You must ensure that the correct name and address of the child or young person is recorded. This record should be factual and not include opinions or personal interpretations of the facts presented. Records should then be signed and dated by you and given to the Designated Safeguarding lead in person who will also sign and date the form
-  the designated person will discuss the incident with the employee/volunteer who received the disclosure and ask them to return in due course to follow up with them as part of due diligence to ensure actions have been taken (as appropriate)
-  The Designated Safeguarding Lead should immediately inform the educational provider when there is a concern about a child. When off site, the designated person will consult the relevant Safeguarding Officer within the venue where the events were taking place (i.e. school, theatre, community centre etc), or contact Social Services and/or the police
-  the designated person records all action on the form. In the event of no action, clear reasons are given
-  the designated person must report back to the employee/volunteer to confirm they have acted on the information given. However, actions remain confidential and are not disclosed, unless there is a specific reason to do so.
-  once feedback has been given, the Designated Person for Safeguarding dates when feedback was provided on the back of the form and files it in the locked Safeguarding file in the office.
-  if further actions are taken by external providers (educational providers, social services or police), the Designated Safeguarding Lead must follow up to ensure these actions are undertaken and record each contact on the original safeguarding form.

Allegations against members of staff:

TOC takes every measure to minimise situations where abuse could take place by ensuring all employees (including freelance facilitators) and volunteers working with children are DBS checked and references obtained, and safeguarding training is provided before adults work with children. If an allegation is made about an TOC employee or volunteer, TOC will act swiftly and report it to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) within one working day. The LADO will make a decision as

to what further actions should be taken (including contacting the police). A criminal investigation, a child protection investigation and/or a disciplinary or misconduct investigation may then follow. Whilst the LADO is investigating, the member of staff/volunteer must not work with children and should immediately be removed from working with children from the point at which an allegation is made. If an allegation is made about a member of staff not working for TOC (e.g. a member of school staff) TOC will report the allegation to the school's designated safeguarding lead at that school and ask that they immediately remove the person from working with children (LADO protocol) and that they contact the LADO within one working day. It is the responsibility of TOC's Safeguarding Lead to follow up to ensure this was done.

Images of children:

The collection of images (still photographs and film) for promotional purposes by TOC employees, or those authorised to do so on TOC's behalf, is acceptable providing permission has been granted by the individuals who will be photographed/filmed or their parent or guardian. These images must be securely stored by TOC and should not be stored on the hard drive of PCs or laptops of individual freelance facilitators or volunteers engaged on TOC projects, nor should they be shared, published, distributed or appear on websites, blogs or any other electronic media without the express permission of the Senior Management team at TOC. Also see 'Digital Safety Policy'.

Types of abuse:

Child abuse and neglect can take many forms, we formally recognise five types of abuse: Bullying, Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Neglect, as well as the Prevent Duty.

Bullying:

TOC employees and volunteers should challenge bullying in any form (i.e. physical or emotional). Physical bullying can take the form of attacks, such as hitting, kicking, taking or damaging belongings. Emotional bullying may be a verbal assault, including name-calling, insults, repeat teasing, sectarian/racist assaults, or it may take more indirect forms, such as spreading malicious gossip, rumours or excluding someone from a social group. Bullying is not an accepted behaviour towards anyone working with TOC; be they child, parent, teacher, volunteer or employee. Anyone found to be bullying others will be dealt with seriously both in regards to the behaviour exhibited and the reasons for the behaviour.

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child or young person, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, pushing, confinement to a room or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs

of another person. It may involve causing children or young people frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child or person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Please also see the NSPCC website for information around Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and forced marriage.



Neglect:

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's or vulnerable person's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. The views of teachers, parents and carers will be sought and taken into account in situations where there are concerns for a child's welfare unless it is believed that this might compromise the safety of the child, another person or a criminal investigation. Children's wishes and feelings will also be taken into account according to their age and understanding. Children's right to confidentiality will be respected and information will only be shared in the interest of the child.

Prevent Duty

The government's Prevent Duty aims to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. When there is a concern that a child or adult is at risk of being drawn into extremist groups, including white supremacist groups, the procedure for reporting must be followed, as detailed above. Once a pink Safeguarding form has been completed and handed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Designated Safeguard in lead must then contact the police on 101, or 999 if there is an immediate threat. Where the report concerns a child, the child's school must also be informed (after contacting the police).

Recruitment of staff and volunteers:

-  as part of TOC's application process, all applicants must complete an application form where they are asked about previous experience of working with children and young people. Included in this form is a declaration stating that there is no reason why they should not be considered suitable for working with children and young people.
-  as part of TOC's recruitment and vetting process, Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks (including the Child Barred List) will be required for all employees and volunteers that have unsupervised access to children. This will include all freelance facilitators, visiting artists,

mentors, support workers, trustees, chaperones and taxi/bus drivers who transport children and/or young people.

- ✚ evidence of identity (passport or driving licence photograph), will be required supported by original birth/marriage certificate, utility bill to confirm address and National Insurance number for verifications.
- ✚ two professional referees must be taken up and confirmed through place of work telephone/email contact; private contact details will only be used in the event of using character references. All references must contain two professional references or one where there is a gap in employment of over five years.
- ✚ Gaps in employment history will be checked
- ✚ right to work in the UK
- ✚ No job offer will be confirmed until all of these checks have taken place.

Training of staff and volunteers:

TOC will offer all its employees and volunteers Safeguarding training to ensure that:

- ✚ they are asked to read TOC's Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing Policy, and Digital Safety Policy and sign to say they have read them.
- ✚ employees and volunteers are also given copies of the following policies: Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity.
- ✚ they undergo online safeguarding training and notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead once this has been completed before working with children
- ✚ they work safely and effectively with children and young people, in line with the Code of Conduct and policies listed above
- ✚ they recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse
- ✚ respond to, record and communicate concerns expressed by a child, young person or vulnerable adult
- ✚ their good practice is likely to protect them from false allegations

Code of conduct policies are read and signed by all adults working or volunteering at TOC – employees (including freelance facilitators), trustees and volunteers:

Employees and volunteers working on TOC's projects and activities have a responsibility to be positive role models for children and young people and to help build their confidence, remember children learn by example.

Further information:

NHS Direct 0845 4747

The NSPCC provides advice and support to adults who are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child. The NSPCC support service is free and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and you don't have to say who you are.

ChildLine is a confidential service for children and young people offering information and support.

Contact ChildLine anytime - calls are free and confidential. Website: www.childline.org.uk

If you think a child is in immediate danger, telephone the police.

Designated person:

The designated person within the company responsible for Safeguarding and Child Protection is:
TBC

Chair of the Board of Trustees:

TBC – Matt.Smith@thamesopera.org.uk