



## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Our work in schools and the community**

Over the past fourteen years Tinderbox Theatre Company has worked consistently with young people, schools and community groups across Northern Ireland, bringing quality drama programmes that accompany some of our productions.

#### **Purpose of the Safeguarding Policy**

Everyone who participates in activities with Tinderbox Theatre Company should be kept safe while they are doing so. Tinderbox Theatre Company aims to ensure that all of those who require additional care and protection, whether a child, young person or adult, are protected while they are engaged in our activities.

**Under the terms of the Children (NI) Order 1995  
THE SAFETY OF THE CHILD IS PARAMOUNT**

A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years.

### **STRUCTURES AND ROLES**

#### **Roles and reporting structure**

The Designated Officer has specific responsibility for child safety.

#### **Designated Officer**

**The Designated Officer is the Producer, Jen Shepherd  
Her number is 028 9043 9313**

The Designated Officer maintains an overview of all work involving children and young people, and works with all other staff as the main point of contact for matters of safeguarding, and the contact person for parents, guardians and carers of children and outside agencies.

All staff, including freelance workshop leaders, must report any concerns directly to the Designated Officer.

### **STAFF CONDUCT AND SAFEGUARDING**

#### **Code of Conduct**

All Tinderbox Theatre Company staff must sign up to and abide by the Code of Conduct attached to this Policy. The induction of staff will include detailed discussion of the requirements of this Code. Any breach of the Code of Conduct will result in Tinderbox Theatre Company disciplinary procedures.



### **Good practice**

- Treat all children with respect. Listen to them carefully and take them seriously.
- Put the welfare of children/adults who require additional safeguarding first (it is more important than, for example, completing all workshop tasks)
- Make their experience with Tinderbox Theatre Company positive and enjoyable: promote fairness and equality, challenge bullying or discriminatory behaviour
- Maintain professional behaviour at all times: make sure your own language, conversation and attitude are appropriate
- Treat everyone equally regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation
- When working with mixed age groups, for example 16-25, take particular care to safeguard the younger participants from inappropriate behaviour such as smoking, drinking and sexual activity
- Follow the procedures for reporting concerns outlined below. Never agree to keep information relating to the harm of a child or adult who requires additional safeguarding secret
- Avoid being left alone with a single child where possible. Meetings with children or young people should take place as openly as possible. Small group work, where the ratio is one company facilitator to no more than 5/6 group members, should be conducted within the agreed workshop space.
- Show respect, be patient and listen
- Set a good example by using appropriate language, attitude and demeanour at all times
- Conduct activities within sight or hearing of others. Where possible involve more than one child in a conversation
- Stop or cancel activities if conditions are unsafe or unreasonable demands are being made
- Keep physical contact to an appropriate level. What that level is in relation to a specific activity should be discussed with the company beforehand and then with the lead contact person in the host organisation. Be prepared to adjust the activity to allow for changing circumstances
- Stay in prescribed areas and avoid wandering around the facilities
- Use staff not children's toilets and always ask for a private changing area
- Be as careful leaving as arriving
- Secure equipment of any kind that could be used unsafely or as a weapon (scissors, staple guns, penknives, etc) must be kept away from children and used by them only under supervision
- When working without a supervising partner organisation, obtain consent of parents/carers in advance for under-16s to participate in the activity
- When working without a supervising partner organisation, collect emergency contact details and medical conditions information from all participants before beginning the activity
- When working without a supervising partner organisation, make children and adults who require additional safeguarding aware of health and safety procedures, including evacuation, at the start of the activity



### **Poor practice**

- Avoid unobserved one-to-one contact with a single child/young person
- Do not give any child or adult who requires additional safeguarding a lift in your car
- Do not take a child or adult who requires additional safeguarding to your home
- Do not initiate any physical contact with children. If a child initiates physical contact with you, deflect and prevent this as far as possible
- Do not exchange personal mobile phone numbers, email addresses or social media contact details
- Do not smoke, drink alcohol or take recreational drugs around children or adults who require additional safeguarding, or before taking responsibility for children and adults who require additional safeguarding
- Do not make sexually suggestive comments or jokes, or engage in 'horseplay' or physical games. If a child or adult who requires additional safeguarding makes inappropriate comments or jokes, challenge them and make it clear that this will not be allowed
- Do not use sarcastic, demeaning or belittling language
- Do not promote particular religious or political beliefs
- Do not do things of a personal nature which the child can do for themselves
- Never reprimand or shout at a child. You are not engaged to act in a disciplinary capacity. In the case of indiscipline ask for an intervention by the supervisor from the partner organisation. In the case of serious indiscipline discontinue the activity.
- Facilitators who are involved in relationships with other facilitators or staff should ensure that their personal relationships are not openly displayed and do not affect their role within the outreach programme.
- No child or young person will be placed under any undue pressure or duress while participating in any Tinderbox event. Our ambition is to provide a safe space where the young people are at ease sharing their creative ideas with their peers.

### **Never**

- Work or perform on jointly facilitated projects without supervisory staff or volunteers present. The parents, guardians, carers or supervisors from partner organisations are responsible for supervising children and no Tinderbox Theatre Company employees – individually or together – should be left alone with children for any length of time.
- Hit or physically assault or abuse children
- Show favouritism towards a child
- Comment on personal appearance or dress
- Promise to keep secrets
- Belittle or demean children
- Embarrass, ignore or single out a child
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching
- Engage in sexually provocative games
- Allow children to engage in abusive peer activities, e.g. bullying, mocking or initiation ceremonies
- Offer lifts to children or permit them to travel in a company vehicle
- Arrange meetings with children outside organised activities without the prior consent of parents and Tinderbox Theatre Company
- Bring any alcohol into a host organisation, even for consumption during non- working hours
- Turn up for work smelling of alcohol



- Smoke inside the grounds of host organisations, or in the presence of children or young people
- Bring any type of prescription drugs into a host organisation, unless medically necessary. If necessary (e.g. inhaler, epi-pen) ensure they are kept on your person at all times, or with the host organisation
- Bring items of value to workshops or activities unless absolutely necessary. Mobiles must be switched off during all activities
- Use profane or explicit language or engage in conversations of an adult nature while in the host organisation. Many schools and groups have 'no swearing' policies which Tinderbox Theatre Company must respect
- Never undermine, ridicule or insult the staff or volunteers of a host group
- Offer alcohol, cigarettes or drugs (even headache tablets) to a child

### **Position of trust**

Although children aged 16 and 17 are legally of age to consent to some types of sexual activity, it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over, who is in a position of trust with a child of this age, to engage in sexual activity with that child or in the presence of that child (Sexual Offences Act 2003).

- Avoid any behaviour which might allow a sexual relationship to develop between the person in a position of trust and the children in their care
- Any sexual relationship within a position of trust relationship is unacceptable so long as the relationship of trust continues
- All those working for Tinderbox Theatre Company in any capacity have a duty to raise concerns about behaviour of staff, volunteers, managers and others, which may be harmful to those in their care, without prejudice to their own position or fear of retribution
- Allegations relating to a breach of this code may be reported to the police and Children's Services and may also be investigated in line with Tinderbox Theatre Company disciplinary procedures

## **WELFARE CONCERNS AND REPORTING**

### **Concerns about welfare**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for Tinderbox Theatre Company in any capacity to decide whether or not child abuse, neglect or risk of harm has taken place. But it is your responsibility to act on any concerns by contacting the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies both to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within Tinderbox Theatre Company and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

### **What constitutes a child protection concern?**

A child protection concern is any concern, which relates to the possibility of a child suffering harm or abuse. The most likely examples of this in the context of Tinderbox Theatre Company activities are:

- Worrying remarks made by a child
- Situations where a child has been exposed to potential risk of harm
- Concern about the behaviour of a worker (e.g. inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour, negligence or favouritism)



- Disclosures –when a child tells you that they are/have been harmed or abused in any way

### **Responding to concerns**

It is not Tinderbox Theatre Company staff's responsibility to investigate any concern, or decide whether or not it constitutes abuse. Employees simply need to ensure that all information is passed to the Designated Officer without delay. All concerns should be recorded, no matter how insignificant the information may seem.

### **Designated Officer**

**The Designated Officer is the Producer, Jen Shepherd  
Her number is 028 9043 9313**

### **Responding to concerns or allegations of abuse**

If a child or vulnerable adult says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- Stay calm. Do not frighten the child
- Reassure the child that they are not to blame and that they were right to tell you
- Do not make promises of confidentiality
- Listen to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously
- Keep questions to an absolute minimum so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led, or that words and ideas have been suggested during questioning
- Inform the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing
- The child's safety is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a Child Protection issue
- Record all information as soon as you can. Write down what was said, by whom and what was seen and heard
- Report the incident to the Designated Officer (or the General Manager if they are not available). You must report this as soon as possible but in all cases within 1 working day. The Designated Officer will then decide whether or not to refer the case to Children's Services. All referrals must be made within 24 hours of the information being known. If it is decided not to refer to Children's Services, the Designated Officer must keep a record of the concern and what was decided, and must report all concerns and allegations to the General Manager, even if it is decided not to report to the Police/Social Services. This may become relevant later if other concerns are reported
- In all cases if you are not sure what to do you can gain help from the NSPCC 24 hour help line, telephone: 0800 800 5000

### **Recording information**

Information may need to be passed to Children's Services or the police. It should be recorded using the Incident Reporting Form (**Appendix 3**). The form can be completed by the person reporting the concern, the line manager or the Designated Officer.

The information should include:

- The child's name, age and date of birth
- The child's home address and telephone number



- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concern or someone else's
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- A description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. 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/injuries occurred
- Have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail

### **Reporting protocols**

Tinderbox Theatre Company expects its staff to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken. The flowchart included here as **Appendix 1** shows the steps which need to be taken.

If the Designated Officer is not available, the person who has or is aware of concerns should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at your local Children's Services department or the police. Their contact details are given in **Appendix 4**. If there is any doubt, the incident must be reported to the authorities. It may be one of a series of incidents which considered together are a serious cause for concern. It is the responsibility of the Designated Officer to decide whether or not to report to the authorities. If unsure, allegations should be reported.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is extremely important. Both the alleged abuser and the alleged victim have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998. Remember that releasing information inappropriately could jeopardise any criminal investigation. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The Designated Officer
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/police
- The alleged abuser (and their parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws. Staff should follow the following guidelines:

- Compile and label hard copy files carefully
- Lock away files containing sensitive or confidential data and access to the keys must be strictly controlled
- Keep a key log so that it is possible to see who has accessed the cabinet, when, and the titles of the files they have used
- Limit access to records to people in named roles who either need to know about the information in those records and/or who manage the records/files
- If files are to be stored long term, make arrangements for the keys to be passed from outgoing staff to their successors
- If records are stored electronically then password-protect those records, which only limited staff should have access to



- Make arrangements for ongoing management of the records including the review and disposal of records

## **Recognition of Abuse and Poor Practice**

### **What is Abuse?**

Child Abuse is defined by Chapter 2 of the *DHSSPS Co-operating to Safeguard Children* as falling into the following four categories:

#### **1. Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.

##### ***Physical Signs***

- Cuts and bruises inconsistent with falls/rough play such as cheeks or thighs
- Bruises caused by hand marks or fingertips such as slapping or pinching
- Cigarette burns, broken bones, bite marks and scalds
- Self-mutilation or self-harm; cutting, slashing, drug abuse
- Injuries that have not received medical attention

##### ***Behavioural Signs***

- Aggressive behaviour/Temper tantrums
- Flinching when being approached or touched
- Running away from home
- Depression
- Being withdrawn

#### **2. Emotional Abuse**

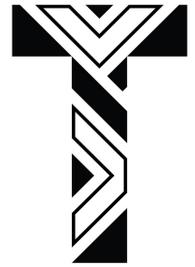
Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

##### ***Physical Signs***

- Failure to thrive or grow emotionally
- Sudden speech disorders
- Developmental delay either physically or emotionally
- Persistent tiredness

##### ***Behavioural Signs***

- Changes or regression in mood and behaviour for example depression, aggression, withdrawal, neediness
- Nervousness or fear of particular adults
- Inappropriate relationships with peers or adults for example excessive dependence
- Attention seeking
- Neurotic behaviour (for example hair-twisting or rocking)
- Inability to play
- Frightened of making mistakes
- Self-harm



### **3. Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm.

#### ***Physical Signs***

- Constant hunger
- Chronic lack of cleanliness
- Loss of weight or constant underweight
- Inappropriate dress for the weather

#### ***Behavioural Signs***

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting or making use of medical assistance
- Having few friends
- Mentioning that they have been left alone or unsupervised

### **4. Sexual Abuse**

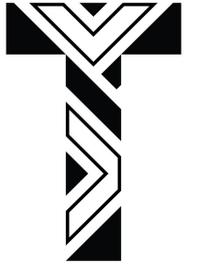
Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

#### ***Physical Signs***

- Stomach Pains
- Discomfort in the genital or anal area
- Medical conditions difficult to spot in comparatively casual contact

#### ***Behavioural Signs***

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group
- Nightmares
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge inappropriate to age or development level
- Pre-occupation with sexual activity through words, drawings or play
- Eating disorders
- Self-harm
- Substance or drug abuse
- Having sudden and unexplained sources of money
- Not being allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults or excessive preoccupation with sexual matters





## APPENDIX 1 - REPORTING CONCERNS PROCESS





## **APPENDIX 2 - INCIDENT REPORTING FORM GUIDANCE**

As an employee or artist employed by Tinderbox Theatre Company, you have a duty of care to ensure that the children who work with Tinderbox are kept safe from harm. Abuse of a child or of an adult with a learning disability is a criminal offence.

If you have a suspicion that someone is being or has been abused, or if an allegation of abuse has been made to you by a child or another individual, it is vitally important that you faithfully, truthfully and swiftly record the details. It is also important that you comply fully with the Child Protection procedures in place of the host organisation (e.g. school, youth club) in which you are working, Tinderbox Theatre Company's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and the full requirements of the law.

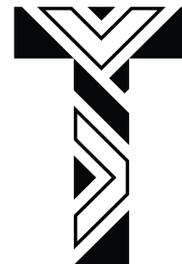
You may not be able to, and are not expected to, complete all of this form. It is designed to act as a checklist for you to record your suspicions or any allegations made to you. There is space provided for you to add any other information you feel relevant and you can provide as many additional sheets as you need.

In addition to completing this form, you must comply with the reporting system demonstrated during your induction. Any suspicion or allegation must be directed to the supervising staff member or Designated Officer of the host organisation, and to Tinderbox Theatre Company's Designated Officer.

**The Designated Officer is the Producer, Jen Shepherd  
Her number is 028 9043 9313**

If you are touring with a Tinderbox Theatre Company show, you should inform the Production Manager that you have a concern and you have the right to be accompanied by them to see the Designated Officer.

A copy of this form should be sent to Children's Services after the telephone report. Remember to maintain confidentiality on a need-to-know basis – only share information if it will protect the child. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know.



### APPENDIX 3 - INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

Your Name:
Your Position:
Child's Name:
Child's Address:
Parent or Carer's Name and Address:
Child's Age/Date of Birth:
Date and Time of Any Incident:
State exactly what the child said or what was reported and what you said: (Continue on separate sheet if necessary).
Action taken so far:
External agencies contacted:
POLICE Yes/No If yes - which: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
CHILDREN'S SERVICES Yes/No If yes - which: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
TINDERBOX CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER Yes/No Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
OTHER (for example NSPCC) Which agency: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
Signature: Print Name: Date:



## APPENDIX 4 - REPORTING CONTACT SHEET

Listed below are the contacts that you should get in touch with to report suspicions, allegations or other matters of concern.

### Primary Contact

This is the first person that any incident should be reported to:

Name: Jen Shepherd

Position: Producer – Tinderbox Theatre Company

Email address: [jen.shepherd@tinderbox.org.uk](mailto:jen.shepherd@tinderbox.org.uk)

Phone number: **028 9043 9313**

### External contacts

In the event that the designated officer is not available get in touch with the agencies listed below:

NSPCC 24-hour advice line: **0808 800 5000**

Children's Services, Belfast HSC Trust – during office hours: **028 9050 7000**

Children's Services, Belfast HSC Trust – outside office hours: **028 9504 9999**

Police non-emergency number: **101**