

Our Safeguarding Policy

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and members of Wigan Little Theatre.

The purpose of this policy:

- To protect children, young people, Adults at Risk, and all other people connected to our Charity;
- To provide staff and volunteers with overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding.

Wigan Little Theatre believes that a child, young person or Adult at Risk should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of our volunteers and members is paramount,
- All members, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Working in partnership with children, young people, vulnerable adults, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting welfare.

We will seek to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Officer
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Supporting staff and volunteers through supervision, training and regular contact and reviews
- Recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with our staff and members
- Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, vulnerable adults, their families and carers appropriately
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against members appropriately
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our members by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance

Legislation and Guidance

In keeping safe all its service users, WLT takes account of the following legislation and guidance:

- The Children Acts 1989, 2004;
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006;
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991;
- The Data Protection Act 2018;
- The Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003;
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012;
- The Children and Families Act 2014;
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0 to 25 years - Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities; HM Government 2015, last updated 30th April 2020
- Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers; HM Government 2018 (updated 2018)
- , last updated 1st May 2024;
- Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; HM Government 2023;
- The Care Act 2014;
- The Care Act 2014 Care and Support Statutory Guidance (specifically the safeguarding section of this);
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005;
- Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE); HM Government 2023
- Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings: code of practice; HM Government; 2023

Types of Abuse

Physical abuse: is a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse: is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on

children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children 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 maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse: is perpetrated by both men and women. Children can also abuse other children (Peer on Peer Abuse). Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.

Child sexual exploitation: (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

County lines: is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children (disabled children are particularly vulnerable) to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Neglect: is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

Grooming: very commonly plays a key part in the sexual abuse of children. It refers to a process by which an individual manipulates those around them – typically (but not only) the child – to provide opportunities to abuse. It can involve communication with a child where this is an intention to commit a sex offence in person and/or online.

Extremism: goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable, including the young, by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society. Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Calls for the death of members of our armed forces is classed as extremist.

Female genital mutilation (“FGM”): Involves procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure has no health benefits for girls and women. The Female Genital Mutilation Act makes it illegal to practise FGM in the UK or to take women and girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in another country.

Bullying: is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person this may be by an adult towards a child or peer on peer abuse. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. Bullying can be:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically) sending hurtful text messages, tormenting, (e.g. hiding equipment/threatening gestures);
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence;
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments;
- Discriminatory comments, jokes about or targeted abuse aimed towards disabled children, homophobic, transphobic, sexist, gendered, racist or faith based comments;
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.

Cyberbullying: is when a person uses technology i.e. mobile phones or the internet (social networking sites, chat rooms, instant messenger, tweets), to deliberately upset someone. This could take the form of posting derogatory abusive comments, videos or images on social media. Bullies often feel anonymous and ‘distanced’ from the incident when it takes place online and ‘bystanders’ can easily become bullies themselves by forwarding the information on.

Online Safety: All adults concerned WLT are advised and encouraged to communicate with those under 18 via the parent/Guardian. Adults who work with children in WLT should not communicate with children via any social media App. Alternatively, if this is not a suitable method of communication, WLT advise that a relevant secure App is used. Alternatively, a third party over 18 MUST be included in the communication, such

as the Project Safeguarding Lead. If there are any concerns relating to a child being at risk of harm through online communications, then the Incident Reporting Form should be completed and a Report to CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) should be made at <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>

Discriminatory abuse: Abusive or bullying behaviour because of discrimination occurs when motivated by a prejudice against certain people or groups of people. This may be because of an individual's ethnic origin, colour, nationality, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability.

Actions may include unfair or less favourable treatment, culturally insensitive comments, insults and 'banter'. Discriminatory behaviour is unacceptable. This includes incidents on and off the sport cheer performance or training (including social media).

Poor practice: This is behaviour that falls short of abuse but is nevertheless unacceptable. It is essential that poor practice is challenged and reported even where there is a belief that the motives of an individual are well meaning. Failure to challenge poor practice can lead to an environment where abuse is more likely to remain unnoticed. Incidents of poor practice occur when the needs of Children, Young People and Adults at Risk are not afforded the necessary priority, compromising their welfare, for example, allowing abusive or concerning practices to go unreported, placing Children, Young People and Adults at Risk in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations, failing to ensure the safety of Children, Young People and Adults at Risk, ignoring health and safety guidelines, or giving continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to individuals.

Hazing: Any rituals, initiation activities, actions or situations, with or without consent, which recklessly, intentionally or unintentionally endangers the physical or emotional wellbeing of Children, Young People and Adults at Risk.

Peer-on-peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour: Children can abuse other children. This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying);
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- Sexual violence, such as rape and sexual assault;
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- 'Upskirting', which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm;
- Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery); and
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Infatuations: Children, Young People and Adults at Risk may develop an infatuation with a member of Staff who works with them. Such situations should be handled sensi-

tively to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. Staff should be aware that in such circumstances, there is a high risk that words or actions may be misinterpreted and that allegations could be made against Staff. They should therefore ensure that their own behaviour is above reproach. A member of Staff who becomes aware that a Child, Young Person or Adult at Risk may be infatuated with him/her or with a colleague, should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with the Safeguarding Team.

Domestic violence or abuse: is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. It can seriously harm children and witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse. It's important to remember domestic abuse:

- Can happen inside and outside the home;
- Can happen over the phone, on the internet and on social networking sites;
- Can happen in any relationship and can continue even after the relationship has ended;
- Both men and women can be abused or abusers.

Child Criminal Exploitation: is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity

(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Abuse of a position of trust: This is a legal concept within The Sexual Offences Act 2003. It involves an adult of 18 or over engaging in sexual activity with or in the presence of a child or young person under 18 (even if the young person is over the age of consent), where the older person is in one of a number of specific roles and positions of responsibility towards the child or young person. These are defined in the legislation and currently include teachers, care workers, youth justice workers, social workers and doctors, sports coaches and religious leaders. A number of specific offences may be committed during the abuse of a position of trust. These include 'causing or inciting a child' to engage in sexual activity, 'causing a child to watch a sexual act' and many others.

Responsibilities under Working Together to Safeguard Children

Under Chapter 1 of this statutory guidance it is the responsibility for staff and volunteers working for or on behalf of WLT to share information and work together with statutory partners if they have concerns that a child or young person may be at risk of abuse or neglect. Once a referral has been received by a local authority children's social care team, they should, within one working day, make a decision about the type of response that is required and acknowledge receipt to the referrer. Feedback should also be provided to the referrer on decisions taken by the local authority. For example, the local authority, may take the view that the child and family are in need of support services, or may decide that the child is in need of protection. If WLT believes that the position taken by the local authority is inadequate to protect the child or young person, we will consider escalating the referral within the Local Authority. It is not the job of WLT to take a view on whether abuse has taken place or is at risk of taking place, nor is it the job of WLT to conduct an assessment on this matter; this is the role of the statutory agencies such as the local authority and police.

Working with Children and Young People or Young Adults with Additional Needs or Disabilities

Abuse of children and young people/young adults with additional needs can be at increased risk of abuse, and this abuse may be less likely to be identified and acted upon for a variety of reasons, communication barriers, being vulnerable to bullying and intimidation, multiple care givers, and isolation and poorly co-ordinated services.

Adults at Risk of Harm

A person aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and

- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

This may include people with learning disabilities, sensory impairments, mental health needs, older people and people with a physical disability or impairment. It may also include people who are affected by the circumstances that they are living in, for example experiencing domestic violence. This list is not exhaustive. An individual's level of vulnerability to harm may vary over time depending on the circumstances they are in and their needs at that time.

Types of Abuse

The Care and Support Act 2014 statutory guidance refers to 10 different types of abuse affecting adults. They include:

- **Physical** – this is 'the use of force which results in pain or injury or a change in a person's natural physical state' or 'the non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment'. It may include behaviours like the misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint or the use of inappropriate sanctions, as well as the actions more commonly associated with physical abuse (such as slapping, pushing etc)
- **Sexual** – examples of sexual abuse include the direct or indirect involvement of the adult at risk in sexual activity or relationships which they do not want or have not consented to. Specific behaviours could include:
 - > rape
 - > indecent exposure
 - > sexual harassment
 - > inappropriate looking or touching
 - > sexual teasing or innuendo
 - > sexual photography
 - > subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts
 - > indecent exposure
 - > sexual assault
 - > putting pressure on the young adult to consenting to sexual acts
- **Emotional and psychological** – this is behaviour that has a harmful effect on the person's emotional health and development, or any form of mental cruelty that results in mental distress, the denial of basic human and civil rights such as self-expression, privacy and dignity. Specific behaviours might include:
 - > threats of harm or abandonment
 - > deprivation of contact
 - > humiliation
 - > blaming
 - > controlling
 - > intimidation
 - > coercion
 - > harassment
 - > verbal abuse
 - > cyberbullying
 - > isolation
 - > unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks

- **Organisational** – institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult at risk by a regime, or individuals within settings and services, that adults at risk live in or use. It may include care or support provided in the person's own home. Such abuse violates the person's dignity, resulting in lack of respect for their human rights. It may range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.
- **Discrimination** – this type of abuse may include:
 - discrimination based on gender, race, colour, language, culture, religion, politics or sexual orientation
 - discrimination based on a person's disability or age
 - harassment and slurs which are degrading
 - hate crime
- **Financial and material** – this is the use of a person's property, assets, income, funds or any other resources without their informed consent or authorisation. It may include:
 - theft
 - fraud
 - internet scamming
 - exploitation or coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions
 - the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits
- **Neglect and acts of omission - examples of this might include:**
 - ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs
 - failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services
 - the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating
- **Self-neglect**
 - This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour like hoarding.
- **Domestic violence and abuse** – this is abuse in the context of an intimate relationship that may be any or a combination of physical, sexual, psychological/emotional, or financial
- **Modern Slavery – examples of this might include**
 - Human trafficking
 - Forced labour
 - Domestic servitude
 - Sexual exploitation, such as escort work, being forced to be a sex worker, and pornography

- Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to

It should be noted that the legislation and guidance makes it clear that this list is not exhaustive and that those working with adults at risk should be open to the possibility of other forms of abuse, including:

County lines: The organised criminal distribution of drugs by gangs from the big cities into smaller towns and rural areas using Children, Young People and Adults at Risk. Gangs recruit Children, Young People and Adults at Risk through deception, intimidation, violence, debt, bondage and/or grooming. Gangs also use local property as a base for their activities, and this often involves taking over the home of an Adult at Risk who is unable to challenge them. County line gangs pose a significant threat to Children, Young People and Adults at Risk upon whom they rely to conduct and/or facilitate such criminality.

Cuckooing: Cuckooing is a term often linked to county lines. Cuckooing is when gangs establish a base in the location they are targeting for drug dealing and to operate their criminal activity from, often taking over the homes of adults at risk by force or coercion. People exploited in this way will quite often be exposed to physical, mental and sexual abuse, and in some instances will be trafficked to areas a long way from home as part of the network's drug dealing business. Victims of 'cuckooing' are often drug users but can include older people, those suffering from mental or physical health problems, female sex workers, single mums and those living in poverty. Victims may suffer from other forms of addiction, such as alcoholism.

Radicalisation: The process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism. Anybody from any background can become radicalised. The grooming of Children, Young People and Adults at Risk for the purposes of involvement in extremist activity is a serious safeguarding issue.

Key Principles

Safeguarding adults can be complex. Adults have the right to self determination and may choose not to act to protect themselves. Safeguarding adults means creating a culture that informs the adult and consults them on all decisions affecting them and works in partnership with them.

As a principle, safeguarding concerns should be disclosed with the adult to establish their views and involved them in the safeguarding process. However, this in some cases, may not be possible. If in doubt, staff should share their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

The Care Act: The six principles of the Care Act apply:

- Empowerment – supporting the young adult to make their own decisions and informed consent
- Protection – support and representation for those in greatest need
- Prevention – it is better to take action before harm occurs, including signposting to agencies that can help

- Proportionality – proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented
- Partnership – local solutions through services working with their communities
- Accountability – accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding

If a member of staff or volunteer has a concern that the Adult lacks capacity to make a decision, then they should share their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer. Decisions about capacity can only be made by a Medical Professional.

A summary of the key elements can be found on

www.scie.org.uk/publications/adultsafeguardinglondon/files/protecting-adults-at-risk-in-london.pdf

Contact Details

Chairman and Designated
Safeguarding Officer
Ryan Shaw
Phone: 07904 023670

Dept Chair
Anne Woolley
Phone: 07799 061558

Wigan Council Local Authority Designed Officer
(For concerns about professionals and volunteers who work with children or young people)
Phone: 01942 486034

Wigan Council Children's Duty Team
(for concerns around family issues)
01942 828300

NSPCC Helpline
0808 800 5000

Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed: August 2024

Signed: Ryan Shaw on 07904 023670 or Lauren Brown on 07411 275119.