



# Exeter Little Theatre Company

## Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Date of publication: July 2016

Review date: July 2017 –Reviewed Mark Bendell 22/07/17

Review date: July 2018 –Reviewed Mark Bendell 01/11/18

Review date: July 2019 –

Designated Safeguarding Trustee

Mark Bendell

(Safeguarding Trainer – Devon County Scouts, )

Appointed July 2016

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer .....

Appointed July 2016

President

Jenny Wilkins

Chair

David Gunn-Johnson

### **POLICY STATEMENT AND PRINCIPALS**

This policy sets out the ELTC safeguarding portfolio including child protection, member and staff behaviour, recruitment, allegations against staff, complaints, junior member behaviour (junior members and junior guests are referred to throughout as 'minors')

This policy is available on the ELTC website and is included in information given to all new members. *(As of 01/11/2018 Website is under review and policy is currently unavailable online)*

Our core safeguarding principles are:

- ELTC's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is of paramount importance
- A safe environment for all is essential for the flourishing of the dramatic arts.
- This policy will be reviewed annually unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review.

### **Child protection statement**

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all members especially those under the age of 18. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming

environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all trustees, staff and members and are consistent with those of the Devon safeguarding children board (DSCB).

### Policy principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection
- All members and staff of ELTC, whether they hold office or not, have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm
- Anyone involved in child protection issues, child or adult, will receive appropriate support

### Policy aims

- To provide all Trustees, staff and members with the necessary information to enable them to meet their child protection responsibilities
- To ensure consistent good practice
- To demonstrate ELTC's commitment with regard to child protection to members, their families and the community at large

### Terminology

**Safeguarding** and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults refers to the process of protecting both from maltreatment, preventing the impairment of health or development, ensuring that children learn in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children and adults to have the best outcomes

**Child protection** refers to the processes undertaken to protect children who have been identified as suffering, or being at risk of suffering significant harm.

**Staff** refers to all those working for or on behalf of ELTC, full time or part time, temporary or permanent, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

**Trustee** refers to those who are so appointed under the Charity Commission rules and who will, by definition, also be a committee member.

**Child** includes everyone under the age of 18.

**Minor** - where this is used it is deemed to refer both members and guests under the age of 18 for whom ELTC has any degree of responsibility. e.g. a minor on the premises, whether by legitimate invitation or not.

**Parent** refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents.

### Safeguarding legislation and guidance

- The statutory guidance **Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2015** covers the legislative requirements and expectations on individual services (including schools and colleges) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It also provides the framework for DSCBs to monitor the effectiveness of local services, including bodies such as ELTC.

- The statutory guidance **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015** is issued under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the Education (Non-Maintained Special Schools) (England) Regulations 2011. While ELTC is not, by definition, a school it is or may be from time to time a designated place of learning for children. Therefore ELTC holds itself subject to such practices and disciplines as may apply under Statutory Guidance.
- **What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015 - Advice for practitioners** is non statutory advice which helps practitioners (everyone who works with children) to identify abuse and neglect and take appropriate action. A copy is held in the Preston Street office for the use of all members.

In the UK, more than 50,000 children are annually subject to a child protection plan. Research suggests that one child a week dies from abuse and one child in six is exposed to violence in the home. The prevalence of neglect continues to be a major concern and online abuse is increasing. The sexual exploitation of children is a growing problem and disabled children are three times more likely to be abused and neglected.

Those who, through their work with the ELTC Youth Group have contact with children (junior members) may be in a position to observe changes in children's behaviour and the outward signs of abuse. Children may also turn to a trusted adult in the organisation when they are in distress or at risk. It is vital that all those who work with the Youth Group, or have access to the members thereof are alert to the signs of abuse and understand the procedures for reporting their concerns. ELTC will always act on identified concerns

## Roles and responsibilities

| Key personnel   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| Designated Safeguarding Trustee                       | Mark Bendell       |
| Appointed July 2016, Reappointed July 2017, July 2018 |                    |
| Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer                | .....              |
| Appointed July 2016                                   |                    |
| President   | Jenny Wilkins      |
| Chair   | David Gunn-Johnson |

### The Designated Safeguarding Trustee:

- has the status and authority within ELTC to carry out the duties of the role and is appropriately trained, with updates every two years
- acts as a source of support and expertise to the members of the organisation.

- encourages a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings
- is alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers
- has a working knowledge of DSCB procedures
- makes staff and trustees aware of the latest policies on safeguarding
- keeps detailed written records of all concerns, ensuring that such records are stored securely
- refers all cases of suspected abuse to MASH
- devises the ELTC contribution to any child protection plans that may be in place for members, where ELTC has been made aware of such plans
- develops effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies including the DSCB
- ensures that all trustees and staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood the child protection policy
- ensures that the child protection policy and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated annually
- liaises with the chair and president as appropriate
- makes the child protection policy available publicly, on the ELTC website or by other means
- ensures parents of junior members are aware of ELTC's role in safeguarding by providing specific information in junior members' application forms and on the website.

### **The Trustees (The Committee):**

Must ensure that ELTC:

- appoints a DST for child protection and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults, who is a Trustee and who has undertaken training in inter-agency working, in addition to basic child protection training
- ensures that the DSL role is clearly defined (see above)
- has a child protection policy and procedures consistent with DSCB and statutory requirements, reviewed annually and made available publicly on the website or by other means
- has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against trustees, members or staff without exception and allegations against other children
- follows safer recruitment procedures that include statutory checks on staff suitability to work with children and disqualification by association regulations
- considers how junior members may be taught about safeguarding, as part of their membership and function within the organisation

The Trustees (the Committee) nominates a member (normally the Chair) to be responsible for liaising with the local authority and other agencies in the event of an allegation being made against the DST.

A report will be submitted at the Annual General Meeting by the DST as to how the organisations responsibilities have been discharged. Any weaknesses will be rectified without delay.

## **GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES and Trustees and Staff code of conduct**

Good practice includes:

- treating all members with respect, regardless of age or perceived status.
- setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- involving children in decisions that affect them
- encouraging positive, respectful and safe behaviour among junior members.
- being a good listener
- being alert to changes in behaviour and to signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- recognising that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse
- reading and understanding the ELTC child protection policy and documents on wider safeguarding issues
- asking a child's permission before initiating physical contact, such as assisting with dressing, physical support and/ or contact during shows or rehearsals
- maintaining appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between junior members and avoiding the use of sexualised or derogatory language
- being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some children may lead to an increased risk of abuse
- referring all concerns about a minor's safety and welfare to the DST, or, if necessary directly to police or MASH

### **Abuse of position of trust**

All adult members of ELTC should understand that, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, where the first person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. Adult membership of ELTC may be deemed to have conferred a position of trust on the member. This means that any sexual activity between an adult member and a member under 18 may be deemed an offence, even if that member is over the age of consent.

### **Children who may be particularly vulnerable**

Some children may have an increased risk of abuse.

To ensure that all ELTC junior members receive equal protection and where ELTC officers and the DST have been made aware of the contributing circumstances, special consideration will be given to children who are thought to be particularly vulnerable.

Further guidance will be given to members, on request or as part of further awareness training, regarding circumstances deemed to render a child at increased risk.

### **Helping children to keep themselves safe**

Children are taught to understand and manage risk through the PSHE provision in schools. The ELTC policy and practice does not attempt to replace or supplement that provision but is intended to provide a safe environment in which risk is as fully managed as is possible.

### **Support for those involved in a child protection issue**

Child abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for all who become

involved.

We will:

- take all suspicions and disclosures seriously
- refer all allegations and disclosures to the statutory agencies
- nominate a link person who will be the ELTC point of contact for the statutory agencies and for others who may be involved and in need of support.
- maintain confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies
- store records securely
- offer details of helplines, counselling or other avenues of external support
- co-operate fully with relevant statutory agencies.

## **Whistle blowing concerns**

Members who are concerned about the conduct of another member towards a child are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. All members must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount. The DST is in post for members to raise concerns or allegations but will not attempt to manage or investigate those allegations. These will always be referred to the statutory agencies.

Members may always report their concerns directly to children's social care or the police.

## **Allegations against trustees, members or staff**

When an allegation is made against a trustee, a member or staff, these procedures must be followed. It is rare for a child to make an entirely false or malicious allegation, although misunderstandings and misinterpretations of events do happen.

A child may also make an allegation against an innocent party because they are too afraid to name the real perpetrator. Even so, we must accept that some people do pose a serious risk to children and we must act on every allegation.

The DST will not under any circumstances attempt an 'in house' investigation of an allegation. This must always be the subject of action by the statutory agencies. Any action by the DST will be the result of guidance received and with the full knowledge of the appropriate agency.

Members who are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress but this will not be the responsibility of the trustees or the DST. If it is deemed necessary to suspend a person's membership while an investigation is conducted, the Chair will be responsible for informing them.

All members are reminded that publication of material that may lead to the identification of a person who is the subject of an allegation is prohibited by law. Publication includes verbal conversations or writing, including content placed on social media sites

Allegations concerning people who are no longer members of ELTC, or historical allegations will be reported to the police.

## **Training**

It is advisable that the trustees and staff receive training to enable them to recognise the possible

signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation and to know what to do if they have a concern.

The DST should be qualified to provide basic awareness training to the Trustees and any staff. The DST should receive training updated at least annually, including training in inter-agency procedures.

## **Safer recruitment**

In the event that ELTC should recruit members or staff or appoint volunteers with responsibility for children the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2015) will be followed as closely as possible

The DST will be involved in each appointment.

All appointees will sign to confirm they have received and read a copy of the ELTC child protection policy and will be made aware of the disqualification and disqualification by association legislation.

## **Photography and images**

The vast majority of people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely innocent and legitimate reasons. Sadly, some people abuse children through taking or distributing images, so we must ensure that we have some safeguards in place.

To protect junior members we will:

- seek their consent for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications)
- seek parental consent
- use only the child's first name with an image
- encourage junior members to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

## **CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE & PROCEDURES**

### **Recognising abuse - four categories**

To ensure that our members are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect.

#### **Physical 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 (this used to be called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, but is now more usually referred to as fabricated or induced illness).

#### **Emotional abuse**

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 online 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, although it may occur alone.

## **Sexual 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 (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

## **Neglect**

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 care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## **Bullying**

While bullying between children is not a separate category of abuse and neglect, it is a very serious issue that can cause considerable anxiety and distress. At its most serious level, bullying can have a disastrous effect on a child's wellbeing and in very rare cases has been a feature in the suicide of some young people.

All incidences of bullying should be reported to the DST and will be managed, where necessary, with the assistance of parents and in extreme case, with the help of external agencies.

## **Indicators of abuse**

Physical signs define some types of abuse, for example, bruising, bleeding or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while a child has been inadequately supervised. The identification of physical signs is complicated, as children may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further

violence or trauma if they 'tell'. Trustees, staff and members should never, without appropriate medical training, attempt to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate. It is therefore vital that trustees and staff are aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns, however unformed, to the Designated Safeguarding Trustee.

**It is the responsibility of trustees, staff and members to report their concerns. It is not their responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.**

A child who is being abused, neglected or exploited may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- show signs of pain or discomfort
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- be concerned about changing backstage or during rehearsals
- look unkempt and uncared for
- change their eating habits
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- appear fearful
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety
- self-harm
- frequently miss sessions, arrive late or leave the session without explanation
- show signs of not wanting to go home
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- challenge authority
- be constantly tired or preoccupied
- be wary of physical contact
- be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age
- acquire gifts such as money or a mobile phone from new 'friends'

Individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They should be viewed as part of a jigsaw, and each small piece of information will help the DST to decide how to proceed.

**It is very important that concerns are reported – 'absolute proof' that the child is at risk could come too late.**

## **Impact of abuse**

The impact of child abuse, neglect and exploitation should not be underestimated. Many children do recover well and go on to lead healthy, happy and productive lives, although most adult survivors agree that the emotional scars remain, however well buried. For some children, full recovery is beyond their reach, and the rest of their childhood and their adulthood may be characterised by anxiety or depression, self-harm, eating disorders, alcohol and substance misuse, unequal and destructive relationships and long-term medical or psychiatric difficulties.

## **Taking action**

**Any child, in any family in any organisation could become a victim of abuse. ELTC and its members should always maintain an attitude of "it could happen here".**

Key points for to remember for taking action are:

- in an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, if necessary call 999.
- report your concern as soon as possible to the DST, definitely by the end of the day
- do not start your own investigation.
- share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family.
- complete a record of concern.
- seek support for yourself if you are distressed.
- report directly to MASH if you are unable to contact the DST.

### **If you are concerned about a minor's welfare**

There may be occasions when you suspect that a child may be at risk, but have no 'real' evidence. The junior member's behaviour may have changed, their behaviour could be bizarre, they may write stories or poetry that reveal confusion or distress, or physical but inconclusive signs may have been noticed. In these circumstances the child may seek an opportunity to talk. The signs they have noticed may be due to a variety of factors, for example, a parent has moved out, a pet has died, a grandparent is very ill or an accident has occurred. It is fine to ask them if they are OK or if they can be helped in any way.

Any such conversation should be recorded in note form immediately after the event and the DST given the notes.

### **If a child discloses to you**

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual; their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell; they may have lost all trust in adults; or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault. Sometimes they may not be aware that what is happening is abusive.

If a minor talks to you about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, **you will need to let the child know that you must pass the information on** – you are not allowed to keep secrets. The point at which you tell the member this is a matter for your judgement. If you jump in immediately the child may think that you do not want to listen, if left until the very end of the conversation, he or she may feel that they have been misled into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

During such a conversation with a child you should:

- allow them to speak freely
- remain calm and not overreact – they may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting their listener
- give reassuring nods or words of comfort – 'I'm so sorry this has happened', 'I want to help', 'This isn't your fault', 'You are doing the right thing in talking to me'
- not be afraid of silences –remember how hard this must be for the child
- **under no circumstances** ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what the minor's mother thinks about all this. Do remember your TED questions: Tell me.... Explain..... Describe.....
- at an appropriate time tell the child that in order to help them, the you must pass the information on

- not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused
- avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying things such as 'I do wish you had told me about this when it started' or 'I can't believe what I'm hearing' may be a member's way of being supportive but may be interpreted by the child to mean that they have done something wrong
- tell the minor what will happen next. The junior member, or guest, may agree to see the Designated Safeguarding Trustee. Otherwise seek advice yourself from MASH (see below)
- report verbally to the DST even if the child has promised to do it by themselves
- write up the conversation as soon as possible, timed and dated, and hand it to the designated trustee. If you need to make the referral yourself hand the notes to the police or social worker who makes contact
- for your own sake, seek support if you feel distressed

### **Notifying parents**

The DST will take advice before attempting to make contact with the parents in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure. That advice will first be sought from MASH.

### **Enquiry to MASH**

The DST will make an enquiry to MASH if it is believed that a junior member is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The child (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that an enquiry is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child.

Any member may make a direct enquiry or referral MASH to children's social care if they genuinely believe independent action is necessary to protect a child.

### **Children with sexually harmful behaviour**

Children may be harmed by other children or young people and there may be occasions when a child's behaviour towards another junior member warrants a response under this child protection policy. Research suggests that up to 30 per cent of child sexual abuse is committed by someone under the age of 18.

The management of children and young people with sexually harmful behaviour is complex and will be referred to the relevant agencies to maintain the safety of the whole group. Young people who display such behaviour may be victims of abuse themselves and the relevant agencies will follow child protection procedures for both victim and perpetrator. Staff, members or trustees who become concerned about a minor's sexual behaviour, including any known online sexual behaviour, should speak to the DST as soon as possible.

### **Confidentiality and sharing information**

All will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the minor and adult member involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

Members and staff should only discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Trustee or committee chair. That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

However, following a number of cases where the responsible officer had failed to act upon concerns raised remember that **any** member can contact children's social care if they are concerned about a child.

Child protection information will, where retention is absolutely necessary, be stored and handled in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. All written information and records will be stored in a locked facility and any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals. However it is not anticipated that ELTC will need to do so and any action and recording of action will be under the auspices of the police or social services.

Information sharing is guided by the following principles. The information is:

- necessary and proportionate
- relevant
- adequate
- accurate
- timely
- secure

Information sharing decisions will be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share

The DST will normally obtain consent from the junior member and/or parents to share sensitive information within ELTC or with outside agencies. Where there is good reason to do so, the DSL may share information *without* consent, and will record the reason for not obtaining consent.

## **Reporting directly to child protection agencies**

Members may follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy, however, they are also encouraged to share information directly with children's social care, police or the NSPCC if:

- the situation is an emergency and the Designated Safeguarding Trustee, the President and the chair of committee are all unavailable
- they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the minor's safety
- for any other reason they make a judgement that direct referral is in the best interests of the child.



**For Early Help, Consultation and Enquiries please contact:**

Telephone: **0345 155 1071**

E-mail: [mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk)

Fax: 01392 448951

Enquiry Form available at:

[www.devon.gov.uk/mash-enquiryform.doc](http://www.devon.gov.uk/mash-enquiryform.doc)

Post: **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, P.O. Box 723, Exeter EX1 9QS**

**Emergency Duty Team** – out of hours

**0845 6000 388**

**Police** – non emergency – 101

**For all LADO enquiries** Exeter (01392) 384964

Or

**<http://www.devon.gov.uk/lado>**

Glossary

| Acronym | Definition                                      |
|---------|---|
| DSCB    | Devon Safeguarding Children’s Board             |
| MASH    | Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub                   |
| MACSE   | The Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation Forum |
| PSHE    | Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education |
| DBS     | Disclosure and Barring Service                  |
| SRE     | Sex and Relationship Education                  |
| DfE     | Department of Education                         |
| LADO    | Local Authority Designated Officer              |
|         | Designated Safeguarding Trustee                 |
| DST     |   |
| KCSiE   | Keeping Children Safe in Education              |