



Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

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Designated Safeguarding Officers:

Name: Melissa Daly
Email: melissa@opentheatre.co.uk
Mobile: Tel: 07710679172

Name: Carly Mee
Email: carly@opentheatre.co.uk
Tel: 07932875595

Quick link to [Safeguarding Incident Report Form](#)

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POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is made in accordance with Open Theatre's mission and values; to develop, promote and sustain the creativity and artistry of young people with learning disabilities.

Open Theatre believes that all children, young people and adults have the right to access the arts and the wide variety of cultural activity on offer; Open Theatre believes that adults with learning and other disabilities (also referenced as vulnerable adults at risk/vulnerable adults) have the right to access the arts and develop careers in the arts and has a **responsibility to take seriously the wellbeing and safety of all adults with learning and other disabilities involved with the company and our activities.**

The full Policy Statement is available in Appendix 1 of this document.

OPEN THEATRE'S SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURE

REPORTING CONCERNS

When dealing with a safeguarding concern in relation to an adult at risk, you must always:

Gain consent, unless there is an overriding public interest or vital interest, or if gaining consent would put the adult at further risk.

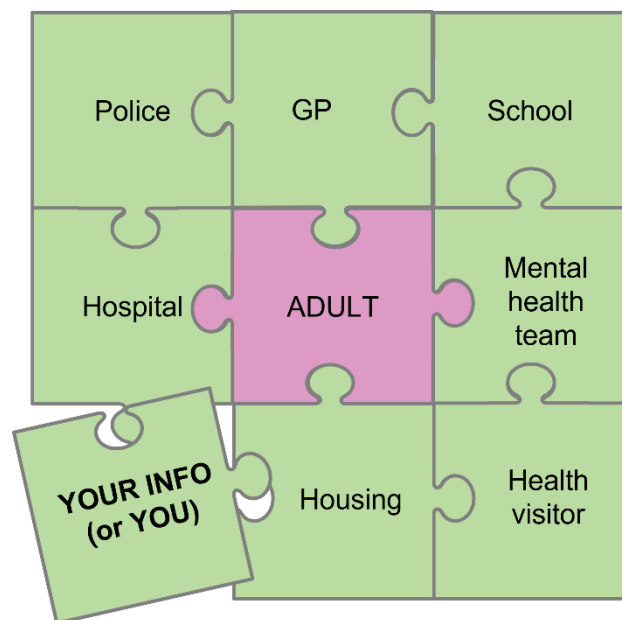
This includes situations where:

- There is a risk or harm to the wellbeing and safety of the adult or others
- Other adults or children could be at risk from the person causing harm
- It is necessary to prevent crime or if a crime may have been committed
- The person lacks capacity to consent

If you have consent, or if the above applies, your role is to report the information to the Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO) for Open Theatre using the Safeguarding Incident Report Form, and also share the information with the setting you are working in, if appropriate.

Guidelines for staff and volunteers on recognising and reporting abuse

You are not expected to make any decisions or judgements on your own. Your responsibility is simply to report any concerns following the procedures above. The Designated Safeguarding Officers hold information on the local and national Safeguarding Reporting Networks and will know what to do next.



Complaints & allegations about Open Theatre staff

If a complaint or allegation concerns another member of the Open Theatre staff team (paid or voluntary), it is important to take a note and report it at once to the Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs), the Director, or the Board of Trustees (whichever is appropriate). Follow [Open Theatre's Whistleblowing Policy](#) in conjunction with this policy.

DISCLOSURES

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

Disclosure is the process by which a person starts to share their experiences of abuse with others. All disclosures should be taken seriously and responded to quickly and sensitively.

You should:

- Stay calm and do not show shock
- Listen and watch carefully
- If appropriate, reassure the person and tell them that they have done the right thing by telling you and that you are treating the information seriously
- Gain direct consent to inform the Designated Safeguarding Leads relevant to the situation
- If consent is not given, or is difficult to obtain and you believe there is an overriding public interest or vital interest, or gaining consent would put the adult at risk of further harm, you must share the information without consent
- Write down what was said as soon as possible to ensure key information/facts are remembered
- Report the disclosure following the process outlined above

You should not:

- Press the person for details
- Make promises you cannot keep (such as this will never happen to you again)

- Contact the alleged abuser
- Be judgmental or ask leading questions (e.g. why do you think this happened?)
- Pass on the information to anyone other than those with a legitimate need to know

Important Note: It would contravene this policy to tell anyone who does not need to know (this includes other staff members, volunteers, Board members).

OPEN THEATRE’S RESPONSIBILITIES

Open Theatre promotes a safeguarding culture that reaches into all aspects of what we do. You can find more information about specific responsibilities below.



RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF STAFF – SAFER RECRUITMENT

Safer recruitment is a set of practices to help make sure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people.

Safer recruitment is a vital part of creating a safe and positive environment and making a commitment to keep children safe from harm. It is a continuing process of improvement.

At Open Theatre:

- All new staff are required to provide two references (including one from their last employer) before a formal contract offer can be made.
- Open Theatre ensures that all current staff and Board members have been subject to an appropriate level **DBS** (formerly CRB) checks and undergo annual Safeguarding training.
- Open Theatre appoints at least two Designated Safeguarding Officers with appropriate level training and the Associate for Business and also a Lead Trustee hold responsibility for overseeing policy formulation.

OPEN THEATRE'S FURTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

We will support staff and volunteers who report suspicions of abuse even if those suspicions and allegations are later judged to be unfounded but were made at the time in good faith.

The Designated Safeguarding Officers will ensure all staff, including freelance & contract staff are offered training, advice, and guidance in relation to this policy every two years and provide regular updates as part of team meetings and Practitioner Training events.

CONCLUSION

Open Theatre takes the safeguarding of individuals (children and adults) with and without (learning) disabilities very seriously and is committed to taking all appropriate action to prevent abuse occurring and to deal with any allegations promptly and effectively.

APPENDIX 1

Open Theatre's Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults – Policy Statement

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is made in accordance with Open Theatre's mission and values to develop, promote and sustain the creativity and artistry of children, young people and adults with learning disabilities.

Open Theatre believes that adults with learning and other disabilities (i.e. adults at risk) have the right to access the arts and develop careers in the arts and **we have a responsibility to take seriously the wellbeing and safety of all adults with learning and other disabilities (i.e. adults at risk) involved with the company and our activities.**

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies, procedures, guidance, and other related documents.

Open Theatre:

- Believes that it is always unacceptable for a person to experience abuse of any kind. **Open Theatre is committed to work in a way that protects adults at risk from harm and recognises our duty to ensure that appropriate action is taken.**
- **Will ensure all suspicions and allegations of abuse are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.** In relation to serious allegations, this may require a referral to adult social care services, social services and/or, the police.
- Will ensure that all adults at risk involved with Open Theatre are **fully informed of how to make a complaint of abuse.**

- Will **acquire verbal or written consent from the individuals before engaging them in Open Theatre's Practice.**
- Will **acquire verbal or written consent** (as above) **to use images and stories for external communication** and ensure that participants see how their story is used in Open Theatre materials.
- Will **acquire consent** (as above) **to administer first aid or other medical treatments.**
- Will **record all injuries or accidents and the treatment given.**

Furthermore, Open Theatre:

- Acknowledges the value of international research indicating that **adults with disabilities are approximately three times more likely to be abused than nondisabled adults.** Also, between 20-40% of adults with disabilities are more likely to suffer with mental health issues.
- Is committed to raising all staff's awareness and knowledge of how to **safeguard adults at risk.**

APPENDIX 2

Definitions and Open Theatre's assessment of risk

DEFINITIONS

The Care Act 2014 changed the way adults (i.e. a person aged 18 or over) are considered "vulnerable". Being "vulnerable" or "at risk" is not something that a person permanently is or isn't. Different people can be vulnerable to different types of abuse at different times. In order to be considered "at risk", an adult must meet **all three** of the following criteria:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) **and**;
- Is experiencing, or is 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.

MAIN FORMS OF ABUSE

Physical	This includes assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, giving the wrong (or no) medication, restraining someone or only letting them do certain things at certain times.
Domestic	This includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse. It also covers so-called 'honour' based violence.
Sexual	This includes rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, taking sexual photographs, making someone look at pornography or watch sexual acts,

	sexual assault or sexual acts the adult didn't consent to or was pressured into consenting.
Psychological	This includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, depriving someone of contact with someone else, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, putting pressure on someone to do something, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or support networks.
Financial or Material	This includes theft, fraud, internet scamming, putting pressure on someone about their financial arrangements (including wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions) or the misuse or stealing of property, possessions or benefits.
Modern Slavery	This covers slavery (including domestic slavery), human trafficking and forced labour. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever they can to pressurise, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse and inhumane treatment.
Discriminatory	This includes types of harassment or insults because of someone's race, gender or gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
Organisational	This includes neglect and poor care in an institution or care setting such as a hospital or care home, or if an organisation provides care in someone's home. The abuse can be a one-off incident or repeated, on-going ill treatment. The abuse can be through neglect or poor professional practice, which might be because of structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation. Neglect and acts of omission This includes ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs,

	<p>failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, or not giving someone what they need to help them live, such as medication, enough nutrition and heating. Self-neglect This covers a wide range of behaviour which shows that someone isn't caring for their own personal hygiene, health or surroundings. It includes behaviour such as hoarding.</p>
Online	<p>Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web e.g., computers, tablets, and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including social media, text messages and messaging apps, emails, online chats, online gaming, live-streaming sites. Children and young people can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming. Or the abuse might only happen online.</p>

Any or all of these types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

HOW OPEN THEATRE ASSESSES WHO IS AN ADULT AT RISK, AND WHAT THEY ARE AT RISK OF

Here's an example of how we interpret the definition of an adult 'at risk'.

If an adult has dyscalculia and anxiety around making financial decisions, they might be vulnerable to financial abuse by anyone with access to their finances and/or financial details. It doesn't automatically mean that person is at risk, for example, of physical or emotional abuse. An adult's needs - diagnosed & undiagnosed, the environment they're in and their capacity to protect themselves are all factors in whether they are considered "at risk".

In line with this, we assess each individual's level of risk separately, and don't have blanket rules across the company or for specific groups - like Friday Group or One Of A Kind (OOAK).

We also recognise that the purpose of safeguarding legislation is to prevent abuse from happening. Developing adults' abilities to identify & protect themselves from potential abuse, rather than making those assessments for them, is a vital part of safeguarding. We believe modelling good boundaries, healthy environments and communication around touch, money, and relationships to be a better way of safeguarding adults than forbidding actions or discussions outright.

HOW OPEN THEATRE DOCUMENTS LEVELS OF RISK

We keep notes about individuals' support needs and risk assess specific activities like trips or intensive rehearsals. The Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) and group leaders keep a dynamic awareness of how individuals' changing personal contexts affect their level of risk. A recent bereavement or relationship break-up might make someone less able to protect themselves from emotional abuse, for example - and it's the job of the Designated Safeguarding Officers and group leaders to be aware of how these life events might affect an individual's level of risk.

If a participant is deemed at risk, then it's the responsibility of the DSOs and group leaders to share that with other relevant staff and make sure safeguarding concerns are recorded in line with this policy.

GUIDANCE FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ON RECOGNISING AND REPORTING ABUSE

You are not expected to make a judgement on your own. It is your responsibility to report any concerns and discuss these with the Designated Safeguarding Officers for Open Theatre if necessary (without identifying the adult you are concerned about, if appropriate).

APPENDIX 3

Accountability and the Law

ACCOUNTABILITY & PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Open Theatre's **Board of Trustees** is ultimately responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from, or working with the company (i.e. participants and staff) are not harmed in any way through contact with members of the company and the activities we offer as projects and services.

We have a **legal duty** to act prudently, and this means we must take all reasonable steps within our power to ensure that this does not happen.

We recognise that we have a responsibility to make ourselves aware of what the relevant law is, how it applies to our organisation and to comply with it where appropriate.

We are committed to regular review of our practices and policies including the training of staff, practitioners and volunteers, the provision of suitable supporting resources and information and adopting best practice as far as possible. We are also working to ensure that our policies and procedures are compatible with our **Regional (West Midlands)** and **local Safeguarding teams – namely Birmingham and Coventry City Councils**.

Adults with learning disabilities are an especially vulnerable group referenced under the Equality Act of 2010 as possessing **protected characteristics**. We acknowledge the importance of having proper safeguards in place for their protection.

We also acknowledge the legal frameworks contained in **The Care Act 2014, The Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014, The Human Rights Act 1998** and **The Mental Capacity Act 2005**.

Most of our work takes place in partnership with other organisations such as schools, arts venues, other companies etc. **This is fundamental to our work and to changing perceptions of learning disability within the arts and society.** We will, **wherever necessary and/or appropriate, we will adopt the Safeguarding Policies of our partner organisations.** Open Theatre recognises however that in some cases Open Theatre's approach to specific safeguarding scenarios (outlined below) may be in conflict with partner organisations' safeguarding policies and protocols. Open Theatre invites open dialogue with participants and partner organisations to ensure that the needs of those we work with remains the focus of everything we do and understands that policies and protocols may need to be negotiated when working together. Any changes must be clearly communicated to all parties.

Open Theatre is fully committed to ensuring that all individuals with learning disabilities (children and adults) coming into regular contact with a paid, unpaid staff member or volunteer linked to the company and its services are protected under this Safeguarding Policy.

The **Designated Safeguarding Officers** are responsible for ensuring the implementation of this Safeguarding Policy. All staff have a responsibility for following the procedures in this policy.

PRINCIPLES – MAKING SAFEGUARDING PERSONAL

'Unless people's lives are improved, then all the safeguarding work, systems, procedures and partnerships are purposeless.'

Safeguarding Adults: Advice and Guidance to Directors of Adult Social Services' ADASS; LGA, (March 2013)

Making Safeguarding Personal is a **shift in culture and practice** in response to what we now know about what makes safeguarding more or less effective from the perspective of the person being safeguarded.

It is about having conversations with people about how we might respond in safeguarding situations in a way that **enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing and safety**. It is about seeing **people as experts in their own lives and working alongside them**. It is a shift from a process supported by conversations to a series of conversations supported by a process.

Empowerment	Presumption of person-led decisions and informed consent.
Protection	Support and representation for those in greatest need.
Prevention	It is better to take action before harm occurs.
Proportionality	Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
Partnership	Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
Accountability	Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

REMEMBER – It is important to respond at the pace that is right for the adult, and puts them in greatest control of what happens in their life.

HOW INDIVIDUALS MAY EXPERIENCE THESE PRINCIPLES WHEN ENGAGED WITH OPEN THEATRE

- People worked together to reduce risk to my safety and wellbeing
- I had the information I needed; in the way I needed it
- I was helped to plan ahead and manage the risks that were important to me
- People working with me understood me i.e. recognised and respected what I could do and what I needed help with
- I had good quality care - I felt safe and in control
- When things started to go wrong, people around me noticed and acted early

- People worked together and helped me when I needed them to do so
- People asked what I wanted to happen and worked together with me to get it
- I understood the reasons when decisions were made that I didn't agree with
- I got the help I needed by those in the best place to give it
- The help I received made my situation better
- People will learn from my experience and use it to help others

Empowerment

- I am consulted about the outcomes I want from the safeguarding process, and these directly inform what happens

Protection

- I am provided with help and support to report abuse
- I am supported to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which I want and to which I am able

Prevention

- I am provided with easily understood information about what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and what I can do to seek help

Proportionality

- I am confident that the responses to risk will take into account my preferred outcomes or best interests

Partnership

- I am confident that information will be appropriately shared in a way that takes into account its personal and sensitive nature
- I am confident that Open Theatre will work together with partners to find the most effective responses for my own situation

Accountability

- I am clear about the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the solution to the problem

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Here are some example scenarios that have arisen through our work with adults with learning disabilities. Here we have outlined our approach to these scenarios and how we aim to keep our participants safe, without undermining the value of building positive working relationships with adults with learning disabilities.

Drama sessions and use of touch

Open Theatre recognises that both close proximity and contact (including physical touch) are an integral part of its practice, which centres around the use of non-verbal physical theatre and has been developed over years of working with young people with learning disabilities and in special schools.

Any close contact and touch will be appropriate to the situation and will be to enable the participants' participation and enjoyment of the activity, or to keep them safe from harm. Wherever possible, consent (verbal or non-verbal) to physical contact during a session will be gained from the adult themselves, or if appropriate their care/support worker.

Anyone has the right to refuse any physical engagement, touch or working in close proximity during an activity and not to be challenged on this.

Open Theatre works with children and young people through activity in and out of school contexts for long periods of time (often over several years and extending into adulthood); therefore building up relationships with its participants and their staff/carers. Relationships must remain professional and appropriate at all times; however Open Theatre staff recognise the need for close physical contact (such as a welcome hug or high five) as part of maintaining this relationship and helping participants to engage in a session. People with learning disabilities may not have the same understanding of boundaries around physical contact that might exist in a traditional professional setting, so should not be made to feel 'naughty' or 'wrong' in

such a situation and Open Theatre staff should behave professionally and explain what is appropriate if this suits the individual and the situation.

Open Theatre also recognises that the lack of physical contact for an adult who needs it can have a detrimental effect on their mental health, wellbeing, and participation in a session.

The above sits within the context of the depth of safeguarding training Open Theatre staff receive, which allows for information giving, understanding, group discussion and use of scenarios. This is complemented by the regular training in Open Theatre's practice and ways of working in different contexts, making staff members knowledgeable of the purpose of physical contact and its appropriate use.

Transport of participants

As part of its work with people with learning disabilities, Open Theatre acknowledges that many of its participants cannot travel independently to reach a session or activity. In most cases support is provided by families, carers, and support workers but at times it may be necessary for Open Theatre to provide this travel support to enable young people and adults to participate in its activities. This could include travelling with someone on a train or bus, providing a lift in a car or walking someone to a mode of transport.

It is best practice that any members of staff supporting a participant with travelling should not do this in isolation and therefore at least 2 members of staff are present.

If a participant is over 18 years of age and therefore an adult, it is acceptable for 1 member of staff to support them with travelling to or from a session, if necessary, as long as permission is gained from the participant and where appropriate from a parent/carer too. If an Open Theatre staff member travels with an adult participant on their own, another member of the Open Theatre Company must know about this, prior to the travel taking place.

Any member of staff using their own vehicle for work-related purposes to transport participants must possess a current, full, valid driving licence and have Business Car Insurance in relation to their employment with the company.

Communication & social media

Open Theatre recognises that its participants may need to use various forms of communication to suits their needs, in order to participate in Open Theatre activities.

Open Theatre staff mobile phone numbers are made available to participants and parents/carers as needed to aid participation in activities of the company. Open Theatre staff are not expected to share their personal phone number with participants if they don't wish to and requests for work mobile phones are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

The use of text messages, phone calls and WhatsApp groups are recognised by the company as suitable ways to communicate with some of its participants, especially those that are unable to communicate through email.

All staff using personal mobile phones for communication with participants must make their messages available to Open Theatre Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) or the Director as appropriate on request. Any reports of inappropriate use of communication by participants or staff members must be reported immediately to Open Theatre's DSO's.

Open Theatre recognises that social media forms part of communication with participants and it is therefore acceptable to be linked on social media platforms with participants or parents/carers who are **over** 18 years of age. This must always remain professional and appropriate to the relationship formed between staff and participants. Staff should also never feel pressured to accept another member of staff or participant on a social media platform, this is a personal choice. It is **not** acceptable for any member of staff to be linked on social media platforms to a participant under 18 years of age.

HOW OUR PARTNERS MAY EXPERIENCE THE MAKING SAFEGUARDING PERSONAL PRINCIPLES WHEN ENGAGED WITH OPEN THEATRE

Empowerment

- We give our partners a copy of our Safeguarding Adults Policy and request they adopt similar principles
- We consult our partners before we take any action unless they are directly implicated in safeguarding issues
- Where someone lacks capacity to make a decision, we always act in his or her best interests

Prevention

- We can effectively identify and appropriately respond to signs of abuse and suspected criminal offences and can offer advice and training to our partner organisations to do the same
- We make staff aware, through provision of appropriate training and guidance, of how to recognise signs and take any appropriate action to prevent abuse occurring. We are open to sharing these resources with partner organisations on request
- In all our work, we consider how to make communities safer

Proportionality

- We discuss with the individual and where appropriate with partner agencies the proportionality of possible responses to the risk of significant harm before we take a decision
- Our arrangements support the use of professional judgement and the management of risk

Partnership

- We have effective local information-sharing and multi-agency partnership arrangements in place and staff understand these. We foster a “one” team approach that places the welfare of individuals above organisational boundaries.

Accountability

- We will work to ensure the roles of all partners are clear, together with the lines of accountability
- Staff understand what is expected of them and others
- Partners recognise their responsibilities to each other, act upon them and accept collective responsibility for safeguarding arrangements.

Abuse is a deliberate act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to harm a person's safety, wellbeing and development. Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional. Abuse may not, however, fall easily into these categories and staff/associates are not expected to be experts in the field.

DELIVERING OPEN THEATRE'S PRACTICE ONLINE

The principle at play here is that despite not being with the adult physically, we still owe a duty of care, and the same level of safeguards need to be taken that would have been applicable had the adult been physically present at their setting. Moreover, this safety is not only limited to keeping vulnerable adults safe from adult content. Practitioners who come into contact with the vulnerable adults via a digital method must look out for the signs that may indicate abuse and follow the protocol outlined in this policy.

What measures can be taken to increase security online?

- To keep the virtual experience safe for both the Practitioners and students, the Company will ensure consent is gained for all online activity as it would be for a physical session. Practitioners will follow protocols and procedures put in place by the school or setting hosting the session.
- If Open Theatre are hosting sessions, we will use appropriate platforms with inbuilt security to ensure that connections are encrypted, and no security breach is possible.

- Contingency plans will be written into risk assessments to ensure that if something goes wrong, there is a plan in place. All risk assessments carried out should also include reference to any material that is to be sent out or shared via recording with the participants.
- The mediums of communication need to be regulated, and the use of personal social media accounts for such purposes should not be used with children and young people. One-to-one sessions are not permitted, especially for underage children without the presence of an adult guardian and all sessions should be conducted in a well-lit place without any pictures or personal materials in the background.

**For any comments/corrections to this policy, please contact:
Michelle Bould (Associate Business) at michelle@opentheatre.co.uk.**