

**SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT**

**Introduction**

Riverside Theatre Company (RTC) is an inclusive theatre company for children and young people aged 7 to 18. Members gain much from participating in RTC activities. They benefit from many opportunities for social and emotional development whilst advancing their performing arts skills. It is important that children and their parents feel assured that RTC is providing a safe, wholesome developmental environment. RTC has procedures in place to ensure this.

The purpose of this policy statement is:

* To protect children and young people who attend Riverside Theatre Company from harm.
* To provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection. This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Riverside Theatre Company, including committee members and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers and students.

**Legal Framework**

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from nspcc.org.uk/child protection.

**Supporting Documents**

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

* Role description for the RTC designated Child Safeguarding Officer.
* Dealing with disclosures and concerns about a child or young person.
* Managing allegations against staff and volunteers.
* Child protection records retention and storage.
* Code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
* Safer recruitment.
* Adult to child supervision ratios.
* Behaviour codes for children and young people.
* Photography and sharing images guidance.
* Online safety.
* Anti-bullying.
* Whistleblowing.

We believe that:

* Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind.
* We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

* The welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take.
* Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people’s welfare.
* All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse.
* Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
* Extra safeguards may be needed to keep children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse.

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

* Valuing, listening to and respecting them.
* Appointing a nominated child protection lead for children and young people, and a lead trustee/board member for safeguarding.
* Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
* Developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures.
* Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all staff and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently.
* Recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
* Recording and storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance.
* Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and their families via production guidelines before shows.
* Making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern.
* Using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately.
* Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers 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 have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place.
* Building a safeguarding culture where staff and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.

**Contact Details**

Nominated Child Protection Lead

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Trustee / Senior Lead for Safeguarding and Child Protection

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

This policy was last reviewed on 19 November 2023.

For any further advice please contact: NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000.

**Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures**

Supporting Documents

1. Role description for the RTC Child Safeguarding Officer.
2. Dealing with disclosures and concerns about a child or young person.
3. Managing allegations against staff and volunteers.
4. Child protection records retention and storage.
5. Code of conduct for staff and volunteers and chaperones.
6. Adult to child supervision ratios.
7. Behaviour codes for children and young people.
8. Photography and sharing images guidance.
9. Safer recruitment.
10. Online safety.
11. Anti-bullying.
12. Whistleblowing.
13. **Role of the RTC Child Safeguarding Officer**

It is the role of **all** adults at RTC to ensure the safety of children in their care.

However, it is the responsibility of the RTC Child Safeguarding Officer to:

* Introduce and implement the safeguarding policy within RTC.
* Receive and advise on any disclosures.
* Initiate action where appropriate using the CCC guidelines for reporting a disclosure https://www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/
* Keep confidential information on any matters referred and make them available to the trustees, social service or police as necessary.
* Ensure that records are kept regarding any allegations or disclosures.
* Ensure that chaperones have up to date chaperone licences and RTC tutors have enhanced DBS checks.

Guidance for the Child Safeguarding Officer

When reports of possible misconduct are raised, a decision must be made as to whether the allegation is abuse.

* Parents/carers should be informed to clarify initial concerns. This must be done carefully and sensitively. However in circumstances where a child may be placed at greater risk if such concerns were shared with parents, they should not be informed.
* Social services should be contacted or the Police if a child is in immediate risk of harm. Records of the communication and the designation of the official informed should be kept in case future contact is necessary.
* If an adult accidentally hurts a child or causes them distress in any manner, the adult must report the incident to the Safeguarding Officer with a brief written report as soon as possible. Parents/ carers should be informed of the incident.

**2. Dealing with Disclosures and Concerns about a child or young person**

If a child or young person is about to make a disclosure:

* Explain confidentiality. Adults at RTC have the responsibility to notify the RTC Child Safeguarding Officer of Social Services in the event of a disclosure. Never promise that the information will remain a secret.
* Allow the child or young person to speak without interruption. Never suggest words or finish sentences for them. The information needs to come direct from the child or young person.
* Never question the child or young person or attempt to investigate.
* Try to alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, remain non-judgmental and offer support.
* Most importantly LISTEN.

Make Notes

It’s important to keep accurate and detailed notes on any concerns you have about a child. You will need to share these with the RTC Child Safeguarding Officer. Include:

* The child’s details (name, age, address).
* What the child said or did that give you cause for concern (if the child made a verbal disclosure, write down their exact words).
* Any information the child has given you about the alleged abuser.
* All information relating to the incident is strictly confidential and should only be discussed with the RTC Child Safeguarding Officer, Social Services or the Police.

If for any reason you cannot contact the RTC Child Safeguarding Officer, then seek advice from the Children Social Care Team immediately on 0345 045 5203 (Mon-Fri 8am to 6pm) or the Emergency duty team - 01733 234724 (out of hours).

**3. Managing Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers**

Any allegation or concern that a member of staff or volunteer has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child at RTC will be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and promptly, regardless of where the alleged incident took place.

The RTC Child Safeguarding Officer should be informed immediately. Individuals should not attempt to investigate the matter, but should gather the facts of the case and keep written records.

The allegation will then be reported to the relevant agencies; the LADO (Local Authority’s Designated Officer or the Police).

Confidentiality and Support

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of all parties while an allegation or concern is being investigated. This will be explained to everyone involved in the investigation.

Support will be given to the children involved, their parents or carers, and individuals who have had an allegation made against them. This includes:

* Telling parents or carers and the employee or volunteer concerned about the allegation as soon as possible (as long as this does not place any children at further risk of harm).
* Telling all involved how the allegation is going to be managed.
* Keeping everyone informed about the progress and outcomes of the case.

Record Keeping

A clear and comprehensive summary will be kept of:

* All allegations that have been made.
* Details of how allegations have been followed up and investigated.
* Decisions made about the allegation and actions taken.

**4. Child Protection Records Retention and Storage**

Storage of Child Protection Records

Child protection records are electronic and will be kept confidential and stored securely. Electronic files should be password protected and stored on computers with protection against hackers and viruses.

Information about child protection concerns and referrals will be kept in a separate child protection file for each child, rather than in one ‘concern log’. The child protection file will be started as soon the Child Safeguarding Officer becomes aware of any concerns.

**5. Code of Conduct for Staff, Volunteers and Chaperones**

These guidelines are designed to ensure the best possible outcomes and success for children and to protect all adults involved in RTC.

* Everyone should respect the rights, dignity and worth of all and treat everyone equally.
* Everyone should place the well-being and safety of the performer above the development of the performance.
* Always be publicly open when working with young people. Situations where an adult and an individual child are completely unobserved should be avoided.
* If physical contact is necessary, it should be done openly. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about other adults touching their children.
* If groups are to be supervised in changing rooms, it is best practice that adults work in pairs and gender appropriate.
* Where mixed groups take part in activities away from home, they should be accompanied by at least one male and female adult.
* Adults should ensure that the activities which they direct or advocate, are appropriate to the age, maturity and ability of the performer.
* Adults should consistently display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance.
* Adults should only criticise RTC members constructively.
* No child or group of children should be left unattended.
* Language or actions which may cause a child to lose confidence or affect their self-esteem negatively should never be used.
* Adults should be aware of the particular needs, customs and cultural requirements when working with disabled young people, or young people from differing racial or religious backgrounds.
* Adults should be aware that it is inadvisable to:
  + Spend time alone with children away from others.
  + Take children alone on car journeys.
  + Take children to the adult’s own home.
  + If such situations are unavoidable, they should only take place with the full knowledge and consent of the parent/carer and RTC.
  + Message an individual pupil without copying in a parent/carer.

**6. Adult to Child Supervision Ratios**

Any size group of under 18 year olds must have a minimum of two adults present.

For outside engagements, a minimum of two adults and a ratio of 1:10 with a first aider present if possible.

No child or group of children should be left unattended.

For shows, the following chaperone ratios apply:

* **4 - 8 years** - one adult to six children;
* **9 - 12 years** - one adult to eight children; and
* **13 -18 years** - one adult to ten children as per the NSPCC guidelines.

**7. Behaviour Codes for Children and Young People**

Aim of the Code of Conduct

The Riverside Theatre Company code of conduct is there so that the Riverside group can achieve its stated aims and:

* Produce a great show for everyone to enjoy.
* Involve every member and encourage everyone to work well as a team.
* Be creative and have fun.

To achieve these aims it is expected that every member will:

1. Inform a Committee member or tutor at the earliest possible time if you are unable to attend. Non attendance without informing an appropriate person will lead to sanctions.

2. Arrive promptly on all occasions.

3. Stay within the designated rehearsal or production areas unless they have checked out with a member of the Committee or staff.

4. Dress appropriately - this means:

* Wear suitable clothing, i.e. Riverside top and loose fitting trousers or leggings.
* Wear suitable shoes such as jazz shoes or trainers. (RTC will not be held liable for anyone working barefoot).
* No jewellery except for single studs.

5. Behave appropriately - this means:

* Listen and follow appropriately all directions given by the tutors and Committee.
* Remain quiet in rehearsal or production areas while others are working.
* Treat others with politeness, in the way we, ourselves would like to be treated.
* Do not engage in behaviour that is excessively noisy, physical or upsetting to others.
* Bad language is unacceptable.
* No eating at all (including chewing gum) except during breaks.
* Tidy up and leave areas we have used in the same condition as we found them.

If the Code is breached, members will be warned and may lose their part in any planned show.

**8. Photography and Sharing Images Guidance**

We recognise that:

* Sharing photographs and films of RTC’s activities can help us celebrate the successes and achievements of our children and young people, provide a record of our activities and raise awareness of our organisation.
* The welfare of the children and young people taking part in our activities is paramount children, their parents and carers have a right to decide whether their images are taken and how these may be used, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
* Consent to take images of children is only meaningful when children, their parents and carers understand how the images will be used and stored, and are fully aware of the potential risks associated with the use and distribution of these images
* There are potential risks associated with sharing images of children online.

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

* Always asking for written consent from a child and their parents or carers before taking and using a child’s image.
* Always explaining what images will be used for, how they will be stored and what potential risks are associated with sharing images of children.
* Making it clear that if a child or their family withdraw consent for an image to be shared, it may not be possible to delete images that have already been shared or published.
* Changing the names of children whose images are being used in our published material whenever possible (and only using first names if we do need to identify them).
* Never publishing personal information about individual children and disguising any identifying information (for example the name of their school or a school uniform with a logo).
* Making sure children, their parents and carers understand how images of children will be securely stored and for how long (including how we will control access to the images and their associated information).
* Reducing the risk of images being copied and used inappropriately by:
  + Only using images of children in appropriate clothing.
  + Using images that positively reflect young people’s involvement in the activity.

Photography And / Or Filming for Personal Use

When children themselves, parents, carers or spectators are taking photographs or filming at our events and the images are for personal use, we will publish guidance about image sharing in the event programmes and/or announce details of our photography policy before the start of the event.

This includes:

* Reminding parents, carers and children that they need to give consent for RTC to take and use their images.
* Asking for photos taken during the event not to be shared on social media or asking people to gain permission from children, their parents and carers before sharing photographs and videos that include them.
* Recommending that people check the privacy settings of their social media account to understand who else will be able to view any images they share.
* Reminding children, parents and carers who they can talk to if they have any concerns about images being shared.

Photography And / Or Filming for RTC’s use

Children, young people, parents and carers must be made aware that photography and filming is occurring and written consent should be sought. If we hire a photographer for one of our events, we will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

* Providing the photographer with a clear brief about appropriate content and behaviour.
* Ensuring the photographer wears identification at all times.
* Informing children, their parents and carers that a photographer will be at the event and ensuring they give written consent to images which feature their child being taken and shared.
* Not allowing the photographer to have unsupervised access to children.
* Reporting concerns regarding inappropriate or intrusive photography following our child protection procedures.

Photography And / Or Filming for Wider Use

If people such as local journalists, professional photographers (not hired by RTC) or students wish to record one of our events and share the images professionally or in the wider world, they should seek permission in advance.

They should provide:

* The name and address of the person using the camera.
* The names of children they wish to take images of (if possible).
* The reason for taking the images and/or what the images will be used for.
* A signed declaration that the information provided is valid and that the images will only be used for the reasons given.

RTC will verify these details and decide whether to grant permission for photographs/films to be taken. We will seek consent from the children who are the intended subjects of the images and their parents and inform the photographer of anyone who does not give consent.

At the event we will inform children, parents and carers that an external photographer is present and ensure the photographer is easily identifiable, for example by issuing them with a coloured identification badge.

If consent to take photographs is not given

If children, parents and/or carers do not consent to photographs being taken, we will respect their wishes. We will agree in advance how they would like to be identified so the photographer knows not to take pictures of them, and ensure this is done in a way that does not single out the child or make them feel isolated. We will never exclude a child from an activity because we do not have consent to take their photograph.

Storing images

We will store photographs and videos of children securely, in accordance with our safeguarding policy and data protection law. We will keep hard copies of images in a locked drawer and electronic images in a protected folder with restricted access. Images will be stored for a period of 2 years.

**9. Safer Recruitment**

Tutors and staff closely involved with RTC pupils will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check. It is important that the staff read and support the RTC safeguarding policy and work closely with the committee to ensure that pupils’ safety and well-being comes first. They will be required to agree to and follow the code of conduct for adults.

**10. Online Safety**

RTC will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

* Providing clear and specific directions to staff and volunteers on how to behave online through our behaviour code for adults.
* Supporting and encouraging the young people at RTC to use the internet, social media and mobile phones in a way that keeps them safe and shows respect for others.
* Encouraging parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online.
* Developing clear procedures to enable us to respond appropriately to any incidents of inappropriate online behaviour, whether by an adult or a child or young person
* Reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly
* Ensuring that user names, logins, email accounts and passwords are used effectively
* Ensuring personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our organisation is held securely and shared only as appropriate
* Ensuring that images of children, young people and families are used only after their written permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given
* Examining and risk assessing any social media platforms and new technologies before they are used within the organisation.

**11. Anti-Bullying**

We recognise that:

* Bullying causes real distress and affects a person’s health and development.
* In some instances, bullying can cause significant harm.
* All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
* Everyone has a role to play in preventing all forms of bullying (including online) and putting a stop to bullying.

We will seek to prevent bullying by:

* Developing a code of behaviour that sets out how everyone involved in our organisation is expected to behave, in face-to-face contact and online, and within and outside of our activities.
* Holding regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children and young people who use our organisation about bullying and how to prevent it.
* Putting clear and robust anti-bullying procedures in place.

Regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children and young people will focus on:

* Group members’ responsibilities to look after one another and uphold the behaviour code.
* Practising skills such as listening to each other.
* Respecting the fact that we are all different.
* Making sure that no one is without friends.
* Dealing with problems in a positive way.
* Checking that our anti-bullying measures are working well.

Responding to Bullying

We will make sure our response to incidents of bullying takes into account:

* The needs of the person being bullied.
* The needs of the person displaying bullying behaviour.
* Needs of any bystanders.
* Our organisation as a whole.

Diversity and Inclusion

We recognise that bullying is closely related to how we respect and recognise the value of diversity.

We will be proactive about:

* Seeking opportunities to learn about and celebrate difference.
* Increasing diversity within our staff, volunteers, children and young people.
* Welcoming new members to our organisation.

**12. Whistleblowing**

If there are concerns about the actions or behaviour of an adult involved with RTC then the Chair of RTC should be contacted. The wrongdoing might have happened in the past, be happening now, or be something the whistleblower is concerned may happen in the near future (Gov.uk, 2019).

Ryan Wainwright-Meekins

Email: ryanmeekins96@gmail.com

Additionally, the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line offers free advice and support to professionals with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation.

The Whistleblowing Advice Line can be contacted on:

0800 028 0285

help@nspcc.org.uk