



The Paper Birds Theatre Company

Safeguarding Policy

Date created:	2018
Staff responsible:	Kylie Perry
Trustee responsible:	Kerry Hunt
Date of this review:	May 2026
Date of next review:	May 2027

This policy will be shared with all staff, freelance workers, trustees, work placements, trainees and anyone working on behalf of the Company, who are expected to familiarise themselves with and follow its procedures.

The purpose of this policy is to protect children, young people and vulnerable people who connect with The Paper Birds Theatre Company and to provide employees and volunteers with the principles that guide The Paper Birds' approach to child protection and safeguarding.

For the purpose of this policy, children and young people are characterised as people under the age of 18 years old. An Adult at Risk is someone over the age of 18 years, who may need extra support due to factors like age, illness, disability, or mental health issues, and who may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

The Paper Birds Theatre Company, hereafter referred to as 'the Company', is a charitable organisation that engages children and young people through a variety of arts engagement opportunities. Occasionally we facilitate workshops and sessions with people aged over 18 years, and who may be identified as adults at risk. These encounters are often, but not limited to;

- One-off Workshops or series of Workshops programmed and managed by schools, colleges, theatres, arts centres or other cultural and community venues. The Company in these instances is a visiting artist and participants sit under the duty of care of the host venue or partner.
- A project or production managed by the Company where participants are publicly recruited and are under the duty of care of the Company.

The Company's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is:

Georgie Coles, Participation Manager

Email: georgie@thepaperbirds.com

Phone: 07403 917202

In the event that the DSL is unavailable, or the circumstances dictate that a different member of staff should deal with the concern, the Company's Deputy Safeguarding Lead is:



Kylie Perry, Co-Director

Email: kylie@thepaperbirds.com

Phone: 07855 098063

If the nature of the concern needs to be handled directly by the Board of Trustees, the matter should be discussed with:

Kerry Hunt, Trustee

Email: kerry.hunt@roh.org.uk

Phone: 07443 459063

Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

Any safeguarding concern should be reported as soon as possible to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If the DSL is unavailable, the concern should be reported to the Deputy Safeguarding Lead.

If neither the Designated Safeguarding Lead nor Deputy Safeguarding Lead can be contacted, and the concern requires action without delay, the individual should contact the relevant Local Authority safeguarding service or Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for the area in which the safeguarding concern has arisen.

If a child, young person or adult at risk is in immediate danger, the emergency services should be contacted on **999**.

When working in partnership with a school, theatre, arts centre or other organisation, staff should also follow the safeguarding and reporting procedures of the host organisation where appropriate.

All safeguarding concerns and actions taken should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

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Child Protection and Adults at Risk Policy

The Company recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999, the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, and the Care Act 2014.

The Company recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. The Company is committed to practice which protects children and adults at risk from harm. All members of the company accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause people harm.

The Company believes that:

- The welfare of the participant is paramount.
- All people have the right to protection from abuse regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All members and employees of the Company should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The Company will ensure that:



- All participants will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to participants will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the participants to share in the decision-making process.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Creative work that's carried out with children, young people and adults at risk will promote self-esteem and respect for others.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members of the Company provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- It will keep up-to-date with health & safety legislation.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children and adults at risk.
- Safer recruitment procedures are in place and all checks will be carried out. This includes procedures to check the backgrounds and disclosures of all employees, volunteers, trustees, partners or contractors who will supervise, care for, or have significant direct contact with children and adults at risk with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- It will undertake relevant development and training.
- It will hold a register of every child involved in any project recruited and managed by the Company, and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies. All data stored by the Company is done so in line with our GDPR Policy.

Child Protection and Adults at Risk Procedures

Responsibilities of The Paper Birds

The Company will annually review and update the current Schools & Communities Workshop Risk Assessment in line with current health and safety and safeguarding guidance. This review takes place at the start of each new academic year, in September, and is conducted by the Participation Manager. At the outset of any project involving children and/or adults at risk, the company will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.



- Ensure that children and young people are supervised at all times.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

Safeguarding will also be a standing agenda item at Board meetings, ensuring regular trustee oversight of safeguarding practice, any concerns or incidents, training requirements and policy updates.

Unsupervised Contact

- The Company will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children or adults at risk.
- If possible, there will always be two adults in the room when working with children or adults at risk.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.

Physical Contact

- Staff will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children and adults at risk.
- Staff will only touch participants when it is necessary in relation to demonstrating a particular activity.
- Staff will seek the consent of the participant prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Managing Sensitive Information

- The Company writes a bespoke Media Consent Policy for each project it manages involving children and young people. These include detailed procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs of participants. An example of a recent project Media Consent Policy can be found [here](#).
- Permission will be sought from the parents or carers either directly by the Company, or on behalf of the Company via a project partner organisation, for use of photographic material featuring children or adults at risk for promotional or other purposes.
- The Company's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.



- The Company will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its staff and participants, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as disclosure certificates.

Suspicion of Abuse

- If a member of staff sees or suspects abuse of a child or Adult at Risk while in the care of the Company, they will make this known to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If it is suspected that the Designated Safeguarding Lead is the source of the problem, staff will report concerns to the Deputy Safeguarding Lead.
- Staff will keep notes of any incident witnessed for use in any follow-up investigation.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the Company, that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the project and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children or participant until a resolution to the allegation has been sought.

Disclosure of Abuse

If a child or person confides in a member of staff that abuse has taken place either within the care of the Company or outside of the care of the Company, staff are instructed to:

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| • Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action. |
| • Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the participant to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer. |
| • Don't promise to keep it a secret. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Make it clear to the participant that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help. |
| • Reassure the participant that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone. |
| • Tell the participant what you are going to do next and who you have to talk to. |
| • As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the participant's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record. |
| • Speak immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police. |



Types of Abuse – Glossary

Below are descriptions of various forms of abuse. This glossary is listed here to support and educate both core and freelance staff at The Paper Birds when working with children and adults at risk. Please adhere to the relevant protocol listed above if you suspect that any person you are working with is subject to any of the forms of abuse listed below:

Online Abuse

Online abuse encompasses any form of mistreatment that takes place over the internet, whether through social media, online gaming, or mobile phones. Children, young people and adults at risk may encounter cyberbullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or emotional abuse online. Children and adults at risk may face online abuse from individuals they know as well as strangers. This type of abuse can be linked to abuse in the physical world, such as bullying or grooming, or it may occur solely in an online environment, like coercing people into engaging in sexual activities via the internet. The persistent nature of online abuse can make a child or adult at risk feel trapped, as abusers can reach them at any time and even intrude into private spaces like their bedrooms. Additionally, images and videos can be stored and shared widely.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child or adult at risk is coerced or forced to participate in sexual activities. This abuse does not always involve physical contact and can take place online. Sometimes, the person may not recognise the abuse or realise it is wrong.

There are two main types of child/adult at risk sexual abuse: contact and non-contact abuse. Contact abuse involves physical contact, such as penetration.

Non-contact abuse includes activities where the abuser does not physically touch the person, such as grooming, exploitation, convincing the person to engage in sexual acts online, or exposing themselves.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse refers to intentionally inflicting harm or injury on a child or adult at risk. It includes actions such as hitting, shaking, poisoning, burning, drowning, suffocating, kicking, hair pulling, striking with objects, throwing, or making the person ill.

- Signs that may indicate physical abuse include:
- Any bruising on a pre-walking baby
- Multiple bruises on various body parts
- Bruises of different colours, suggesting repeated injuries



- Fingertip bruises on the chest, back, arms, or legs
- Burns of various shapes or sizes
- Injuries that lack an adequate explanation

Neglect

Neglect is the consistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, likely leading to serious harm to their health or development. Neglect can start during pregnancy due to maternal substance abuse. After birth, it may involve a caregiver's failure to:

- Provide proper food, clothing, shelter, or a safe environment (including abandonment or exclusion from home)
- Protect the child from physical or emotional harm or danger
- Ensure appropriate supervision, even if using inadequate caregivers
- Access necessary medical care or treatment
- Attend to the child's emotional needs

Signs that may suggest neglect include:

- Living in unsanitary, unsafe, or dangerous conditions
- Caregivers neglecting the child's health or developmental needs
- Children who consistently appear underweight or small for their age
- Children who frequently seem tired or lacking in energy
- Children suffering from recurrent injuries due to inadequate supervision

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse involves the ongoing mistreatment or neglect of a child or adult at risk's emotional well-being, sometimes referred to as psychological abuse. It can cause serious harm to emotional development and health.

Emotional abuse might involve deliberately frightening or humiliating a person, isolating them, or ignoring their needs.

People who face emotional abuse often endure other types of abuse or neglect simultaneously, though this is not always the case.



Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation occurs when children or young people under 18 are manipulated or forced into sexual activities in exchange for something they desire or need, such as:

- Food
- Accommodation
- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Cigarettes
- Affection
- Gifts
- Money

“Child sexual exploitation may also occur via technology without the child realizing it, such as being encouraged to share sexual images online or via mobile phones without immediate gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child wield power over them due to age, gender, intellect, physical strength, or other resources. Coercion, intimidation, and violence are common, and the child’s lack of choice often results from social, economic, or emotional vulnerability.” (DCSF, August 2009).

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical purposes, sometimes referred to as female circumcision, cutting, or sunna.

Though cultural, social, or religious justifications are sometimes provided, FGM is considered child abuse, is dangerous, and is a criminal offense.

FGM has no medical benefits, does not enhance fertility, and does not make childbirth safer. It aims to control female sexuality and can cause severe and lasting harm to both physical and emotional health.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse encompasses any form of controlling, bullying, threatening, or violent behaviour between individuals in a relationship. It goes beyond physical violence to include emotional, sexual, financial, and psychological abuse.

Domestic abuse can occur within any relationship and may continue even after the relationship has ended. All genders can be victims or perpetrators.

Repeated exposure to domestic abuse can also be considered a form of abuse. Furthermore, teenagers and adults at risk can experience domestic abuse in their own relationships. Such abuse can have serious and lasting effects on those involved.

The UK Government defines domestic abuse as:



“Any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between individuals aged 16 or older who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”

Recording

- In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency or relevant local authority.
- An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken eg. suspension of an individual, where relevant the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, and the name of the person reporting and to whom it was reported.
- The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation. Any records will be disposed of responsibly after the investigation has been closed.

Rights & Confidentiality

- If a complaint is made against a member of the Company, they will be made aware of their rights under the Company’s disciplinary procedures.
- Both the alleged abuser and the person who is thought to have been abused have the right to appropriate confidentiality. Personal information will be handled in accordance with current UK data protection legislation, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information relating to a safeguarding concern will only be shared with those who need to know in order to protect the child, young person or adult at risk, or where there is a legal requirement to do so. Care will be taken not to compromise any potential investigation through inappropriate disclosure of information.
- In criminal law, the Crown, or other prosecuting authority, has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Accidents

- To avoid accidents, all participants will be advised of “house rules” regarding health and safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds and will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a participant is injured while in the care of the Company, the injury will be recorded in the Company’s accident book. This record will be countersigned by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.



- If a participant joins the project with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be countersigned by the Designated Safeguarding Lead. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the participant did not sustain the injury while participating in the project.

Digital and Online Safety Protocol

Online Participatory Delivery

The Paper Birds deliver online participatory projects using online meeting platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. The Company recognises that this context requires particular guidelines and considerations.

- The Company will ensure that all sessions take place using a Paper Birds licenced account (eg. @thepaperbirds.com) on the relevant platform, eg. Zoom or Teams.
- All facilitators will only have contact with teachers/ organisers via an official @thepaperbirds.com registered email account, unless there is a need to use text message during the session (due to loss of internet connection).
- We will ensure we have the appropriate telephone contact details of the teacher or organiser, in case of emergency or technical difficulties.
- All sessions will be password protected, or invite only, with links never shared in public spaces.
- The Company will encourage all staff to consider in advance what can be seen in their backgrounds.
- We will treat the main workshop room as we would a physical room, requiring at least one member of staff from the school or institution to be in attendance whenever a Company member is present on a call if participants are present.
- All staff to plan accordingly in the event of 'screen-sharing' to ensure that only appropriate content is shared, and minimise the risk of private or unsuitable computer tabs/windows being screened to participants.
- Facilitators will wear appropriate clothing and be presentable.
- Facilitators will not use offensive language or terminology that may offend or make participants uncomfortable.
- Facilitators will deliver the session from an appropriate location, free from distractions, noise or other people. They will try to ensure the best possible internet connection.

Safe Recruitment

Safe recruitment means taking steps to ensure only individuals who are suitable for working with young people and adults at risk, whilst keeping them safe from harm and risks, are appointed. The following



process will be adopted and applied consistently when appointing a new facilitator or staff member. All facilitator roles with the Company are freelance roles rather than employed salaried roles.

Job Advertising

When any form of advertising is used to recruit facilitators, the following information will be reflected:

- aims of the organisation and where appropriate, the particular programme involved
- a detailed role description including the qualities, qualifications and standards required in the successful candidate, and details of the checking procedures to be carried out.
- the organisation is an equal opportunities employer, operating within common safeguarding standards
- a job or role description, including roles and responsibilities
- a person specification which clearly states qualifications and experience required
- a self-disclosure form (see Recruitment of Candidates with a Criminal Record Guidance)

All applicants will submit a CV and a cover letter outlining how and why they are suitable for the role.

References

Contact details of two written references (not relatives) are required, one of which should be a previous employer. References will only be taken up when the position is offered to the applicant and will be requested via email and confirmed by telephone. A reference provided by phone only will not be accepted. References will be sought directly from the referee. References or testimonials provided by the candidate will never be accepted.

Where necessary, referees will be contacted by telephone or e-mail in order to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies. A detailed written note will be kept of such exchanges.

Where necessary, previous employers who have not been named as referees will be contacted in order to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies. A detailed written note will be kept of such exchanges.

Referees will always be asked specific questions about:

- The candidate's suitability for working with children, young people or adults at risk.
- Any disciplinary warnings, including time-expired warnings, that relate to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk
- The candidate's suitability for this post.

All appointments are subject to satisfactory references prior to the provisional start date.



DBS Checks

All facilitators or staff with significant access to, or responsibility for, children, young people or adults at risk, will be required to complete an enhanced level DBS check. All advertised roles make clear that the candidate will be subject to a DBS check. The applicant has a responsibility to disclose any previous convictions, in line with the relevant legislation.

Interview & Audition Process

Short-listing of candidates will be against the person specification for the post and carried out by a minimum of two fully trained staff members.

Interviews and workshop auditions will be carried out by a minimum of two fully trained staff members and will always be conducted face-to-face.

All candidates will be asked the same questions. Questions will relate to the person specification to explore experience and suitability for the role. The interview will be used to:

- Explore the candidate's suitability to work with participants.
- Explore their attitude and their motivations for applying for the role.
- Explore any gaps in work history.
- Check the candidate's identity.

Appointment

All facilitator roles with the Company are subject to a DBS check. Appointed applicants will be informed that the appointment is subject to satisfactory DBS certificate and two references. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar a person from working with the Company, but this will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of any offences.

All facilitators undergo an induction and training programme, which will cover the organisation's Safeguarding, Child Protection and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedures.

Safeguarding Parameters

Whilst this policy outlines the responsibilities of The Paper Birds in safeguarding and the processes that should be followed by anyone working for or representing the company, it is the individual's responsibility to follow through any safeguarding concerns with the support of the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Should you not be able to contact the safeguarding lead or any of the senior management team it is still your responsibility to follow up the concern, contacting the local authority where appropriate.