RSC SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PROCEDURE

DECEMBER 2024

GUIDE TO ESSENTIAL READING OF THIS POLICY

The RSC Safeguarding Children procedure, by necessity, covers a broad spectrum of issues in relation to promoting the welfare of children and protecting them from the risk of harm. It is essential that you understand how to apply this document's procedures, and that you can access this document for future reference. Please speak to your line manager or RSC contact if you are unsure about any aspect of this document.

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INTRODUCTION

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. The RSC believes that everybody in contact with children within the RSC has a role to play in safeguarding children. This safeguarding procedure sets out the actions to be taken in the event of a safeguarding matter. This procedure should be read and understood in conjunction with the RSC safeguarding children's policy.

WHAT TO DO FOLLOWING A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN

In the event of a safeguarding matter, it is important that the 5 Rs are followed.

1. **Recognise** signs of abuse or harm via reading this policy and accessing training.
2. **Respond** to concerns and potential abuse in a timely manner via RSC reporting process.
3. **Report** any concerns relating to a child using RSC incident reporting and where necessary external bodies.
4. **Record** effectively any concerns relating to a child, capturing the child's voice, wishes, and feelings where possible.
5. **Refer** concerns about a child to external bodies if deemed necessary, such as the police, social care or local authority.

RECOGNISE

All colleagues working for the RSC may at some point have a concern about the possibility of abuse or harm. Being concerned about abuse could mean that you are told abuse is happening, you witness abuse, you have suspicions regarding the abuse of a child, or you suspect abuse could happen. All colleagues working with children should receive an induction and training that covers how to recognise the signs of abuse. This should include how to recognise abuse in less obvious situations, such as the use of inappropriate restraint, physical contact, or peer-on-peer bullying.

Reporting a safeguarding concern about a child, or reporting concerns about any RSC colleague

If you suspect that a child has been, or could be, at risk of abuse; or is being abused or harmed; or if you believe that a staff member has acted in a way that poses a safeguarding concern to a child; then you must follow the steps outlined:

SAFEGUARDING

If you suspect that a child has been or is being abused or harmed, OR if you believe that a staff member has acted in a way which poses a safeguarding concern to a child, then you must follow these steps.

1

If you have a concern

Immediately discuss your concerns with one of the Designated Safeguarding Officers or Senior Designated Safeguarding Officers.

2

Report your concerns

Report your concerns on the RSC reporting tool using this QR code.

Clearly outline your concerns, including what you have seen, or what the child has said. The form will be sent to the relevant Designated Safeguarding Officer for further action.

3

The Designated Safeguarding Officer

The Designated Safeguarding Officer will discuss the concern with the Senior Designated Safeguarding Officer (or other senior staff) to determine the action to be taken, and if immediate safeguards need to be implemented.

This may mean that other staff need to be spoken to. If the concern is related to a member of staff, HR processes may also need to be engaged. Where necessary, a safety plan/risk assessment may need to safeguard the child and other children.

4

External Services & Support

Where necessary the concern will need to be brought to the attention of external services such as the police or social care.

Advice and guidance can be sought from the police, social care, or by calling the **NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000**

5

Recording & Outcomes

The outcome of the matter should be recorded within 3 days, or 72 hours. Any follow information/meetings to be attended should be prioritised.

Scan this QR code to report your concerns on the RSC reporting tool

Recording a Safeguarding Concern

When recording a safeguarding concern, you must record the following:

- The name, age, and address of the child. alongside the date and time.
- What the child said or did that gave you cause for concern.
- Any information that the child has given you about the alleged abuser.
- Whether the parent or carer is aware of the matter.
- The physical appearance and behaviour of the child.
- What the concern is.
- What action will be taken, and what the rationale is for this.
- Whether any other agencies need to be contacted, and what the rationale is for this.
- What immediate safeguards, if any, need to be put into place.

Referring

In some instances, it may be appropriate for a DSO to refer safeguarding issues to external bodies for further investigation and support. In the event of a safeguarding issue whereby it is deemed necessary to refer to social care, it is important to remember that each local authority will have their own reporting process and procedure in place, as well as a 24/7 duty advice line. Colleagues should always record any referral to social care or external bodies for transparency purposes, and to enable staff to follow up reporting concerns where necessary.

Colleagues should be mindful that they may need to support external agencies with subsequent investigations and may be required to attend meetings and divulge further information.

Colleagues can also contact the **NSPCC helpline** to seek assurance and guidance on safeguarding matters on **0808 800 5000**.

Consent

The NSPCC (2024) has produced useful guidance around consent and reporting a safeguarding concern. The NSPCC advises that if a child asks you not to share what they have told you, you must report it, if doing so will promote their welfare. This is in line with the Children Act (1989). Parents should be informed of the situation and any reports or referrals made about their child, unless informing them will put the child at risk.

Storing Safeguarding Reports

All safeguarding reports must be kept securely and in line with the RSC Data Protection Policy and as set out in the Privacy Notice: Data Protection Policy.pdf

Escalation Process: What to do if a safeguarding concern is not being acted upon

To protect sensitive personal information, and in line with RSC Data Protection Policy, RSC colleagues may report and record a safeguarding concern without being made aware of the outcome. Reassurances should be given by the designated safeguarding officers that the matter is being dealt with.

However, any RSC colleague is permitted to escalate concerns if they feel that the concerns are not being dealt with effectively by the RSC, or by other external agencies. In this instance staff and volunteers can refer to the RSC ‘speaking up’ policy.

Outside of the RSC, should colleagues feel that a safeguarding concern is not being acted on appropriately, they can contact the police, social care (the local authority in which the child resides), the local authority designated officer (LADO), or the NSPCC helpline.

Safeguarding Allegations Against RSC Staff and Volunteers

An allegation concerning RSC colleagues may mean that HR processes are also initiated. A referral may be made to the local authority designated officer (LADO) in the relevant local authority in which the alleged perpetrator resides. If the concerns relate to the designated safeguarding officers, or the senior designated safeguarding officer, or other senior management team, RSC colleagues may use the 'Speaking Up' policy for guidance on how to raise a concern.

If a member of staff resigns or ceases to provide their services, it should not prevent an allegation or concern from being followed up to conclusion.

A complaint of abuse against a member of staff may lead to three types of investigation. These are:

- A criminal investigation.
- A child protection investigation or enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act (1989) undertaken by the local authority in which the child resides.
- An investigation by the RSC.

The RSC will decide if an individual accused of abuse should be suspended from work pending enquiries by the police or social care. Advice and support will be provided to the person suspended from work by a member of the People team, or an appropriate line manager. An internal investigation may lead to a disciplinary process for the member(s) of staff concerned.

Investigations may refer to the LADO and DBS for considerations to bar. The charity commission and regulatory body may also be notified. It is the responsibility of the senior designated safeguarding officer to make this decision within the time periods given by the DBS service.

Recruitment of Chaperones

The RSC recognises that chaperones are in a unique position, as they are responsible for supporting the emotional and physical health of children who are performing, a role that requires a high level of integrity and professionalism. Therefore, the RSC support the following minimum standards for chaperones before consideration or commencement of a role.
Chaperone applicants must have at least one year's experience of working with children and young people. This can be both in a paid or a voluntary capacity.

- A minimum of two references must be obtained, and one must be from the current or most recent employer. References should specifically ascertain if there is any information known to the referee that would mean that the prospective chaperone is a danger to children or vulnerable people.
- Chaperones engaged by the RSC on an ongoing basis must engage in onboarding training that covers children's safeguarding (Level 3), neurodiversity, behaviour management (to include bullying), children's mental health and wellbeing, as well as health and safety. Chaperones must update this training annually. RSC will ensure that this training is offered in a way that reflects the unique needs of children who perform. All chaperones irrespective of whether employed for a day or longer must have an induction that includes the process for reporting concerns.
- Chaperones must always adhere to the RSC code of conduct. Staff should use the 'Speaking Up' policy to address or report any breeches of the code of conduct relating to children in the 'reporting a concern' pathway stipulated in this policy.

Ratios of Chaperones to Children

- The legal maximum ratio of children to a chaperone is 1:12. the RSC takes the safety and welfare of children who perform seriously and therefore will generally use a ratio of 1:6.
- Only in an emergency can a chaperone leave a child in the supervision of another person. If this happens, the supervision must be undertaken by two RSC colleagues, one of whom must be DBS checked.
- Where children are working on non-licensed performances as part of creative learning activities, including talent development projects, approved chaperones will be employed as necessary, and in line with risk assessments relating to numbers of children, and the length and duration of the activity they are undertaking.

Auditions

When attending an audition, children should be met by an RSC staff member who is DBS checked. No lone working shall take place at auditions, and staff present will always include a licenced chaperone.

Stage Rehearsals, Performances, and Dressing Rooms

- While on stage all children remain the responsibility of the chaperones, and they must always have them in view. Chaperones and staff should check that it is safe and appropriate before bringing children onstage.

**DfE (2015) Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England the Children (Performance and Activities) England Regulations 2014 DfE et al (2015) Examples of best practice – child performance and activities licensing by local authorities in England*

- Separate dressing rooms must be provided for children, which must be gender specific and gender neutral. If possible, these dressing rooms should have their own toilet facilities. If this is not possible, specific toilets within the theatre should be assigned for children's use only. It is recognised that facilities will differ across venues and that it may not always be possible to follow this best practice guidance.
- Where 'quick change' spaces are used, mixed-sex spaces are permitted if the child actors have an appropriate base layer of clothing, such as vests and cycling shorts. Risk assessments will be undertaken in these situations and advice sought from the senior designated safeguarding officer and safeguarding committee to establish best practice.

Licences

- Child Performance and Activities Regulations 2014 require that all children, from babies until they cease compulsory school age, must have a licence to perform. A child whose 16th birthday falls between 1st September and 31st August remains of compulsory school age until the last Friday in June of the academic year of their 16th birthday.
- The licence must be issued by the local authority in which the child resides. The licence holder, usually the company manager, is responsible for observing the conditions of the licence. The licence holder should be familiar with the responsibilities of the role, including the logging, storage, and follow up on any licence inspections and actions. Children do not have to have a licence to attend auditions.

Accommodation and travel during performances

- Children who are on a performance licence and are required to travel with the RSC to perform will always travel with a registered chaperone, except for when they are travelling with a parent or carer.

- A child may only stay in a place approved by the local authority for the area in which they are to perform. The licencing department at the local authority will determine if it wishes to vet the accommodation or not.
- The RSC must advise the licencing department of accommodation arrangements. Responsibility for informing the local authority of the plans for accommodating child performers lies with the licensee.
- Rented property: Up to three children may share a room in a rented property provided by the RSC. This must be risk assessed and safety planned, and all children, parents, and carers must sign an agreement confirming they understand the risks before the accommodation arrangement can take place.

Hotels for children involved in RSC Performances

In the event that children involved in RSC productions need overnight accommodation, a hotel room will be booked by the RSC. The producer or relevant project manager is responsible for conducting a risk assessment of the hotel in conjunction with the chaperone and designated safeguarding officer.

Hotel bedrooms should have ensuite facilities, with the chaperone sleeping in a room that is adjacent to or opposite the children's bedrooms.

If there is only one child on tour, then parents and carers will be contacted to determine if they are able to offer support to supervise in this instance. If this is not possible, a suitable hotel should be sought that allows for the chaperone to sleep in a room with an interconnecting door. If this is not feasible, a risk assessment should be completed and approved by the licensee and senior designated safeguarding officer.

Up to two children of the same gender may be expected to share a hotel room. There may be occasions when this is not possible, and there may be occasions when more than two children are required to share a hotel room. On these occasions, a risk assessment should be used to highlight any issues and how these may be addressed. The most important consideration is to ensure that children are appropriately supervised, and their welfare promoted in line with their age and understanding.

Children of Performers

The nature of production can mean that rehearsals can be scheduled at short notice or during evenings and weekends when it is difficult to obtain childcare. This may affect the children of actors. This may mean that children of actors accompany their parent to the RSC. In this instance, all policies and procedures will apply to any child or children of performers, including the provisions in this policy to safeguard such children appropriately.

In exceptional circumstances the RSC may employ a chaperone to support the child or children. The arrangements made will be in line with the child's age, ability, and understanding, and will be based upon the safest possible option for the child. The designated safeguarding officer must conduct a risk assessment or safety check, which should include the provisions to be made if the child requires personal care.

Medical Emergencies

The RSC engages with children and young people in a number of different and creative ways, which can involve intense physical activity. Injuries may occur. Any child requiring emergency medical attention should be taken to the nearest accident and emergency department by two staff from the RSC, if the parent or carer is not available.

If a parent or carer unreasonably refuses medical treatment once at a health care provider, then the medical professionals will be responsible for making the decision about how to proceed.

If the injury is not deemed to require the support of emergency services, and a parent or carer refuses medical treatment with what is deemed to be undue consideration, then the incident must be logged using the usual pathway for reporting a safeguarding concern. This may be prior to a child being taken to or contacting a health care provider.

As part of the enrolment process for cast members a person with parental responsibility must sign a medical consent form for such circumstances. The parent or carer should always be notified if first aid is administered, or contacted immediately if significant injuries are sustained.

Making a safeguarding referral

A safeguarding referral to the local authority should always be directed to the relevant local authority of the child's domestic residence. The relevant contact details will be found on the local authority's website, and on the website of the local safeguarding children board for the area.

For concerns about the behaviour of a staff member, volunteer, or someone who works on behalf of RSC, you can follow the process outlined in this document. You can also contact the relevant local authority, who will bring the matter to the attention of the local authority designated officer (LADO).

The LADO in the area for where the alleged person of concern resides will be appointed to investigate the matter. The designated safeguarding officer or senior designated safeguarding officer may also refer a concern relating to a staff member or volunteer to the LADO.

LADO in Stratford-upon-Avon
Tel: **01926 743433** Email: lado@warwickshire.gov.uk

Making a safeguarding referral in the Borough of Camden *(Matilda The Musical)*
020 7974 3317 / 6600 / 4094 (9am to 5pm)
Out of hours **020 7974 4444**

Police in Stratford upon Avon – child protection referrals **01962 415834**

For free 24-hour advice on safeguarding concerns call **NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000**

For a child/young person to speak confidentially about their concerns and worries, advise that they call **Childline** on **0800 1111** or childline.org.uk.

Disclosure and Barring Services **01325 953795**

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command **0870 000 334 33**

Roles of external bodies whom it may be deemed necessary to refer to in the event of a safeguarding matter.

Police

You should contact the police if you believe that a child's immediate safety is compromised.

Local Authority

If a safeguarding matter is brought to the attention of the RSC, and it requires additional support, it may be appropriate to refer to the local authority, otherwise known as social care. The matter should always be reported to the relevant local authority where the child resides.

The threshold for social care involvement is if it is believed that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, 'significant harm.' Following further assessments, if social care considers the child to be in need or further support, they may offer additional services to children and families to promote the child's welfare.

Contact details for each local authority can be found online by searching for the name of the area and children's social care department.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

A LADO works for the local authority. The role of a LADO is to coordinate the response to concerns that an adult who works with children may cause harm. The investigation will be conducted by the local authority in which the alleged perpetrator resides.

NSPCC

The NSPCC offers a helpline ran by a specialised team of professionals who can listen, advise, and take any action needed in terms of safeguarding children.

The number is **0808 800 5000**.