

RSC SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN CODE OF
CONDUCT FOR ALL
COLLEAGUES

DECEMBER 2025

At the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) we strive to foster an environment for children which is safe, child centred, transparent, participatory, and encourages children to understand their rights and feel able to voice their worries or concerns. The RSC is committed to ensuring that children who engage with the RSC have positive experiences underpinned by kindness, care, respect and free from abuse or harm.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to set clear expectations about what conduct is expected from all colleagues (staff, freelancers, volunteers) who interact with children for and on behalf of the RSC.

The rationale for having a code of conduct is to

- ensure that children, young people and colleagues feel safe, valued and respected,
- prevent children from experiencing abuse and harm
- provide a framework for managing allegations and incidents of poor behaviour.

All members of staff, volunteers, freelancers etc. are required to report any breaches of this code by any others working for or on behalf of the RSC.

This code of conduct is divided into five sections.

- 1. Prioritising the welfare of children and young people**
- 2. Respecting Children and Young People**
- 3. Diversity and Inclusion**
- 4. Appropriate Relationships and behaviours**
- 5. Online Safety**

Whilst working with the RSC, all colleagues are acting in a position of trust and have a duty of care towards children and young people. They are likely to be seen as a role model by young people and are required to always act appropriately, including online. You can seek further guidance about the procedure for planned online activity delivered by the RSC in Appendices 4 of the RSC safeguarding children policy.

1. Prioritising the welfare of children and young people

All staff volunteers and freelancers should undertake the following.

- Provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for children and young people by supervising appropriately.
- Ensure that children and young people are in an environment which presents no physical or psychological dangers, and any risks are mitigated by following RSC risk assessment processes.
- Ensure that children are in emotionally safe spaces in which they are encouraged to voice their opinions, concerns, wishes and feelings.
- Have good awareness of issues to do with safeguarding, this includes understanding and knowing how to apply the RSC's Safeguarding policy and how to report a safeguarding concern.
- Ensure that behaviours are managed appropriately and respectfully; children and young people should always understand any risks posed by unsafe behaviour and should understand what this can constitute.
- Never agree to keep any information relating to the harm of a child a secret or take no action under the guise of 'confidentiality'.

- Report any concerns about a child in line with the RSC safeguarding policy.
- Avoid unobserved situations of one-to-one contact with a child. If it is unavoidable, colleagues always need to ensure another adult knows where they are, who they are with and why. The exception to this is chaperones whose role occasionally necessitates one-to-one contact with children, with appropriate risk assessment procedures in place around that contact.
- Follow RSC principles, policies and procedures including policies and procedures for safeguarding and whistleblowing.
- Ensure allegations by a child are reported, including, without exception, any made against the individual with responsibility for that child.
- Always stay within the law This means that colleagues must understand and abide by RSC policies and procedure and relevant legislation such as Children Act (1989), Data Protection Act (2018) and Child Performance and Activities Licensing legislation in England (2015).
- Model good behaviour for children and young people to follow.
- Challenge all inappropriate behaviour where you are able to do so and report any breaches of the code of conduct to the relevant designated safeguarding officer, using RSC incident reporting processes.
- Report any concerns about abusive behaviour perpetrated by other staff, freelancers, and volunteers.

2. Respecting Children and Young People

All colleagues should.

- Always listen to children and respect their rights, being honest and open with them.
- Intervene and/or escalate appropriately if any form of peer-to-peer bullying is observed.
- Work in an open and transparent manner ensuring that no child or young person is given access to information that is not shared with all young people, other than where that information relates to the personal privacy of the child.
- Value and take children's contributions seriously, actively involving them in planning activities and seek their opinion wherever possible.
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy as far as possible.
- Ensure that if you need to comfort a child who has become distressed, you do so in a way which is both age appropriate and respectful of their personal space. This can vary according to the child and judgement will need to be exercised. Always ask the child before you act. Never act in a way which may be perceived as either threatening or intrusive.
- Ensure that preserving a child's dignity is of paramount importance; this is particularly important when considering costume changes, fittings, and rehearsals.
- Always ensure that where you need to break confidentiality to follow safeguarding procedures, it is important to explain this to the child or young person at the earliest opportunity if it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Use constructive and positive methods of developing children's skills, without humiliating or harming them. Never apply or use 'nicknames' with children.

3. Diversity and inclusion

All colleagues should:

- Treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination
- Understand that children and young people are individuals with individual needs.
- Respect differences in age, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability, and religious belief systems, and appreciate that all participants bring something valuable and different to the RSC.
- Challenge or report discrimination and prejudice amongst colleagues and between young people.
- Encourage children, young people, and adults to speak out about attitudes or behaviour that makes them uncomfortable.

4. Appropriate relationships and behaviours

All colleagues should:

- Promote relationships that are based on openness, honesty, trust, and respect.
- Respect their position of trust and maintain appropriate boundaries and relationships with young people.
- Avoid showing favouritism.
- Be patient with children and young people.
- Exercise caution when discussing sensitive issues with children or young people.
- Ensure contact with children and young people is appropriate and relevant to the nature of the activity they are involved in.
- Ensure email contact is always with the appropriate adult (parent, agent, carer, teacher) and never with the child.
- Ensure that if any kind of physical support is required during any activities, it is provided only, when necessary, in relation to the activity or child's needs. (See Physical Contact Policy and Procedure for further guidance):
- Ensure that whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people. If a situation arises where you are alone with a child or young person, ensure that you are within sight or can be heard by other adults.
- Only provide personal care in an emergency and make sure there is more than one adult present if possible unless it has been agreed that the provision of personal care is part of your role and you have been trained to do this safely.
- Listen to any concerns that parents/carers may have and respond, escalate the concerns to the DSO in line with the RSC's Safeguarding policy and procedure.

4.1 Inappropriate Behaviour

Colleagues Should NEVER:

- Allow safeguarding concerns or allegations relating to safeguarding to go unreported.
- Ignore bullying of a child by another adult or another child.
- Take unnecessary risks, for example undertake activities that have not been appropriately and rigorously risk assessed.
- Smoke or consume or be under the influence of alcohol in front of children or use illegal substances.
- Use physical punishment or shouting to manage behaviour.
- Wear clothing that displays offensive words or images.
- Ask children and young people to keep secrets.
- Unnecessarily divulge personal information
- Discuss personal political opinions or share personal opinions about topics relating to religious beliefs or politics with or in front of children.
- Make inappropriate promises to children and young people, for example promising to keep secrets.
- Engage in behaviour that is in any way abusive, including inducing or grooming children to have any form of sexual contact. Under section 16 of The Sexual Offences Act 2003 it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.
- Let children and young people have personal contact details (mobile number, email, or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account. RSC colleagues are not permitted to 'friend' any children or young person or have any other kind of contact on social media including with children who have previously been engaged in productions or projects with the RSC.
- Act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive.
- Patronise or belittle children and young people.
- Make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory, or sexually suggestive comments or gestures about or in front of children and young people. This includes sharing any personal information of a sexual or inappropriate nature.
- Swear or use other offensive language, including sexually suggestive remarks, verbally or in any form of communication with children and young people. The use of swear words in the presence of children and young people, even if not directed at them, is **never appropriate**. Attitudes, demeanour, and language all require care and thought.
- Engage in gossip or hearsay about children, young people, or their families or carers.
- Invite or allow a child they have met through work into their home or contact them outside of work. The exception to this is where their own child may be friends with a child that is or has been part of the company. In such instances, the Designated Senior Safeguarding Officer (Director Creative Learning and Engagement) should be notified in writing.
- Trivialise the abuse of children or its effects.
- Communicate via letter, email, social media, phone or any other means with children and young people known to the RSC outside of the remit of RSC work.

- Offer to transport a child alone in their car unless in an emergency and having notified their line manager or relevant DSO.
- Engage in or allow any games or initiate any games in which touch could be seen as provocative or sexual in nature, this includes observation of games and touch between children and between staff/volunteers and children.
- Play online games with any child unless part of official RSC business using professional accounts and devices.
- Send any illegal or inappropriate content (written, images or icons) including sexting* via mobile phones or by any electronic device.
- Use their work or personal digital camera/phone/video to take images of children unless this is part of RSC official business and has been agreed and documented as part of their role or for specific projects by their line manager. N.B. all images must be uploaded to MAB and deleted from the device within 72 hours.

5. Online Safety

We recognise that online safety is an essential part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. All colleagues are expected to use online platforms and social media (whether work-related or private) responsibly and in a way that upholds professional boundaries at all times. This includes not engaging in private or inappropriate online communication with children within RSC productions or projects, not sharing personal contact details, and not posting or sharing content that could compromise the safety or dignity of children, families, other colleagues, or the reputation of the RSC. Sharing any information regarding productions, schedules and casting is strictly prohibited. Colleagues should not post videos, photographs or content relating to children within RSC productions or projects, past or present other than publicity images that have been approved for the purpose of promoting the RSC's work. All colleagues should be aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues.

- Children are at risk of abuse and other risks online as well as face to face.
- When communicating with children online all staff and volunteers must observe the same rules of behaviour as if speaking with them in person.
- RSC IT equipment or devices and personal devices (including computers, laptops, mobile phones, tablets, notebooks, etc) must not be used to view, download, create or share (with colleagues or children) illegal content including abusive images of children.
- The RSC applies the same principles, expectations, and standards for interacting and communicating with children online as in other areas of practice.
- It is important to remember that maintaining personal and professional boundaries online is as important as face-to-face interaction.
- The RSC has specific protocols and processes in place to ensure the safety of children online which can be found within the main Safeguarding Children Policy.
- Further Guidance can be found in Appendix 4 of the RSC Safeguarding Children Policy.

Other policies to note The safeguarding children code of conduct are in addition to the other requirements of behaviour detailed in the following policies, which are all available on the RSC Intranet or on request from hr@rsc.org.uk

Respect Policy

Alcohol and Drug Misuse Policy

Disciplinary Policy

Anti-Harrassment, Discrimination and Bullying Policy

IT Security Policies