



Protection Policy for Children and Young People

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1. Introduction

The management and employees of EGO Performance Company provide children and young people with the opportunity to participate in workshops and performances through national touring projects, and three youth theatre & music groups in Coventry city. We are committed to ensuring that all our work develops children and young people in an environment that keeps them safe from harm.

EGO recognises that the child's welfare is paramount and that;

- All children and young people whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief, and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Children and young people should be respected and listened to.
- Children and young people should be encouraged to take part in decisions which affect them.

Employees are not expected to know everything concerning child protection but have a duty to:

- Be alert and responsive to problems and the potential indicators of abuse or neglect.
- Be alert and responsive to the risks which individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children.
- Share and analyse information to enable informed assessments and good practice.
- Keep clear, detailed and accurate records.
- Discuss issues and concerns with the Artistic Director/s or General Manager (or if on tour, the Director or the Stage Manager).
- Undertake appropriate behaviour and language.

The Board of Directors has ultimate responsibility for child protection. The Board is responsible for taking all reasonable steps to ensure that EGO Performance Company keeps within legislation and maintains a safe environment for children and young people.

Board member Corinne Emerson is the designated Child Protection representative. It is her responsibility to advise on all issues relating to Child Protection, including this policy. Training is provided for this representative as required to ensure that she is kept fully informed of all current issues relating to Child Protection law and practice.

2. The aim of this policy

1. To safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people involved in our activities and to minimise the risk of them coming to harm.
2. For the purpose of these guidelines the term children and young people refers to anyone under the age of 18.
3. For the purposes of these guidelines all employees, paid or unpaid, freelance artists and the board of trustees working for EGO Performance Company, will be referred to as employees.

3. Recognising types of harm

- .1 Children and young people can be harmed or injured by another person at home, school or in the community. This can involve any of the following;
 - Physical abuse occurring when a child or young person is hurt by another person.
 - Emotional harm occurring when another person adversely affects the emotional development of a child or young person.
 - Neglect occurring when there is failure to meet a child or young person's basic needs.
 - Sexual abuse occurring when the child or young person is forced, manipulated or coerced into taking part in sexual activities to meet another person's own needs.
- .2 More information is contained in Appendix A.

4. Responding to a direct allegation

- .1 If a child or young person goes directly to an employee of EGO Performance Company to tell them that another adult has harmed them it is important to take the allegation seriously, and to remember that it is not the responsibility of the employee to make a decision about whether or not the allegations are true. In these circumstances, the allegations should be immediately reported to the Artistic Director/s, or in their absence the General Manager.
- 4.2 A decision should be made at the earliest opportunity, as to whether or not to contact the duty social worker at Coventry/Warickshire Social Services, or in the case of touring projects, to the nearest local authority where the child or young person lives, to discuss the allegations.
- 4.3 From this discussion the social worker will be able to determine what will happen next, and EGO Performance Company will be guided by the information and advice they are given.
- 4.4 The Artistic Director/s will decide whether or not the allegations should be discussed with the person suspected of causing the risk or harm.

5. Responding to an indirect allegation

- 5.1 Employees of EGO Performance Company may also become concerned about a child or young person in other ways. This may include comments from the child or young person's friends and observations of behaviour.
- 5.2 If the comments or behaviour of a child or young person leads an employee to suspect that they may have been harmed or at risk of being harmed, they should report their concerns at the earliest opportunity, to the Artistic Director/s. The Artistic Director/s will decide if the matter should be reported to Social Services.
- 5.3 The Artistic Director/s will decide whether or not the allegations should be discussed with the person suspected of causing the risk or harm.

6. Appropriate responses to a direct or indirect allegation

- Stay calm, be attentive and reassuring.
- Keep questions to a minimum, and allow the child or young person to speak freely, and in their own words.
- Do not be judgmental.
- Take the allegations seriously
- Do not rush into activity that might be inappropriate.
- Do not make promises you may not be able to keep.
- Tell the child that you are going to speak to someone who can help.
- Tell the child that they have been brave and are not to blame.

Further, it is important to follow these next steps;

- DO NOT SEND THE CHILD HOME if they are at immediate risk
- DO NOT INVESTIGATE - YOUR ROLE IS TO LISTEN AND REFLECT
- TAKE ADVICE from the Artistic Director, Social Services and/or the Police
- Complete the appropriate record forms - see 7. Recording concerns.

7. Recording concerns

It is important to document your concerns at the earliest opportunity. It may be a one-off incident that never leads to any other concerns, or it may be the start of a succession of incidents that give you cause for a greater concern and need to be taken further.

- 7.1 A written record of all allegations should be made by the Artistic Director/s or General Manager. This should include;
 - The child or young person's name, address and date of birth.
 - The nature of the allegation
 - A factual description of any visible bruising or other injuries
 - The child's account, if they can give it, of what has happened and how any injury has occurred
 - Any times, dates or other relevant information
 - A clear distinction between fact, opinion or hearsay
 - Who has been involved and what action has been taken
 - Date and time of the record
- .2 A copy of the record should be sent to the Social Services person who received the referral.
- .3 A copy of the record will be kept on file at EGO Performance Company offices for 6 months, and then destroyed.

8. Recruitment

- .1 All recruitment information will state EGO Performance Company's commitment to the protection of children and young people.
- .2 All paid employees will be asked for two written references in order to establish their background, and suitability for working with children and young people.
- .3 All employees working directly with children young people, and employees likely to come into regular contact with children or young people will be subject to an Enhanced check using the government's Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure service.
- .4 Any causes for concern brought to light by these checks will be appropriately investigated by the Artistic Director/s or General Manager.
- .5 The panel interviewing potential new employees will include a question on the protection of children and young people, to ascertain the attitude of the applicant to the issue, and to highlight EGO Performance Company's policy.
- .6 All new employees will undertake a Child Protection induction by their line manager upon appointment which will include guidance on how to read and use this policy.

9. Secure Storage, Handling , Use, Retention & Disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information

- 9.1 As an organisation using the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure service to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust, EGO Performance Company complies fully with the CRB Code of Practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information.
- 9.2 Disclosure information should be kept securely, in lockable, non-portable, storage containers with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties.
- 9.3 In accordance with section 124 of the Police Act 1997, Disclosure information is only passed to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties.
- 9.4 Disclosure information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.
- 9.5 Once a recruitment (or other relevant) decision has been made, we do not keep Disclosure information for any longer than is necessary. This is generally for a period of up to six months, to allow for the consideration and resolution of any disputes or complaints. If, in very exceptional circumstances, it is considered necessary to keep Disclosure information for longer than six months, we will consult the CRB about this and will give full consideration to the data protection and human rights of the individual before doing so. Throughout this time, the usual conditions regarding the safe storage and strictly controlled access will prevail.
- 9.6 Once the retention period has elapsed, we will ensure that any Disclosure information is immediately destroyed by secure means, i.e. by shredding, pulping or burning. While awaiting destruction, Disclosure information will not be kept in any insecure receptacle (e.g. waste bin or confidential waste sack). We will not keep any photocopy or other image of the Disclosure or any copy or representation of the contents of a Disclosure. However, notwithstanding the above, we may keep a record of the date of issue of a Disclosure, the name of the subject, the type of Disclosure requested, the position for which the Disclosure was requested, the unique reference number of the Disclosure and the details of the recruitment decision taken.

10. Raising awareness

- 10.1 All employees will receive a copy of this policy, and an opportunity to discuss the document with the Artistic Director/s or General Manager.
- 10.2 All employees will be asked to sign a document which states that they have read and understood the policy.
- 10.3 The Artistic Director/s and General Manager, and other employees working directly with children and young people will be offered relevant training.
- 10.4 It will be the responsibility of EGO Performance Company employees, working directly with children and young people to inform them of this policy and what to do if they want to talk to someone about a concern.

11. Good practice guidelines

11.1 If you work with children you must accept that you are exposed to a certain level of risk. It is impossible to cover every eventuality relating to the right or appropriate behaviour for every situation. Use your common sense, keep alert and discuss best practice with the Artistic Director and don't put yourself at risk. The following do's and don'ts will help clarification of what to do or not do and generally raise your awareness and help protect yourself.

11.2 DO

- Treat everyone with respect.
- Provide an example you wish others to follow.
- Plan activities which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight and hearing of others.
- Remember that someone may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned.
- Recognise that caution is required even in sensitive moments of counselling such as when dealing with bereavement, bullying or abuse.
- Keep in areas with plenty of witnesses.
- Keep colleagues informed - where you are, with whom, for what purpose.
- Avoid physical contact where possible.
- Avoid being in a room alone with a child and if it is unavoidable ensure the child is between you and the door. Use rooms with windows.
- Keep records of concerns.
- Discuss even the slightest concern with the Artistic Director.
- Ask for further guidance on anything you are unclear about.
- Feel confident to challenge any behaviour of colleagues that could compromise them.
- Report any inappropriate behaviour of colleagues to the Artistic Director.
- Appreciate your colleagues looking out for you.
- Help create a protective ethos and culture within our working environment.
- Discuss any support or training needs.
- Remember you cannot promise confidentiality
- Ensure ratios are good enough to enable appropriate supervision/staff protection

11.3 DO NOT

- Put yourself into a situation that could be misinterpreted or a place that cannot be seen.
- Permit abusive activities.
- Play overly physical contact games (tag is ok - mud wrestling isn't).
- Have any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking out the facts.
- Allow yourself to be drawn in to any attention seeking behaviour such as tantrums or crushes.
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- Show favouritism to any individual or have a 'best friend'.
- Make suggestive remarks or gestures.
- Rely on your good name to protect you.
- Believe 'it could never happen to me'.
- Lock doors.
- Encourage or participate in any avoidable out of work situations with children you work with.
- Share a room with a child on trips.
- Establish a relationship with children in an out of work situation.

11.4 CONTACT

You cannot avoid contact with a child or young person when you work with them, but use your common sense. Avoid physical contact wherever possible and where you cannot, always be able to justify why you did what you did. You need to make reasonable judgements for safety and care situations. Activities that need careful attention, justification and common sense include:

Helping children with clothes: encourage them to put them on themselves, help only when essential and with witnesses.

Comforting distressed children: justify the contact, let others know, have witnesses, and try to keep it short term. Keep hands visible.

Appropriate affection: wherever possible use verbal encouragement, state your feelings, praise, smiling etc. If a child does not get affection at home, try not to make the mistake of over compensating when they are with you.

Protecting a child from hurting themselves or others / physical intervention:

intervene carefully if essential with others present wherever possible.

First aid: ask the child to remove any necessary clothing or have a witness present and wherever practical take the first aid to the child.

If a child touches you, or attaches himself or herself to you as a special friend, or has a crush on you - you must inform the Artistic Director and encourage them to be less tactile and understand that their behaviour is inappropriate -set clear boundaries with the child. Agree appropriate strategies to deal with this and keep people aware of progress.

Escorting children: try to avoid, but if essential try to ensure two people escort and that the Artistic Director knows when you are doing this.

Lateness: if a child is continuously late being picked up, raise the issue with the parents.

Working with children with special needs/disabilities: many of the same needs arise as detailed above, clothes, physical help, accidents etc. Use your common sense, make sure there are witnesses and remember the needs of the child must come first.

12. Allegations against employees

12.1 An allegation against an employee will be dealt with by EGO Performance Company's disciplinary procedures process. EGO appreciates that employee's need support through such incidences and will endeavour to keep the employee informed and offer sources of support for them.

12.2 As part of the process the employee is likely to be suspended to enable a full investigation to be undertaken - this is not confirmation of guilt but to protect the employee. For the individual this can feel like punishment and belief in the accuser - BUT THIS IS NOT THE CASE - it is just the procedure.

12.3 Confidentiality in the work place is important to enable an employee to return to work in the best possible environment if the allegation does not lead to dismissal. If an allegation is made to you about a colleague you must listen, make notes and consult a designated person immediately.

12.4 Keep an open mind even if the allegation made is about a colleague you know professionally or socially.

12.5 There are several possibilities when an allegation is made against an employee:

- The allegation is unfounded and malicious or there has been a misunderstanding.
- The allegation is unfounded in relation to the person named, but the child has been abused by someone else.
- The allegation has some foundation but the worker was naïve or lacking in social skills rather than intentionally abusive – counselling, advice or training may be required and the situation will need monitoring.
- The allegation is founded and can be proved 'beyond reasonable doubt' e.g. for prosecution.
- The allegation is founded, cannot be proved beyond reasonable doubt but can be proved 'on the balance of possibilities' e.g. for disciplinary action / dismissal. EGO's disciplinary procedures are different from any police investigation and there may be employment implications even if there is no police prosecution.
- The allegation is founded in the judgement of investigating professionals but there is insufficient or no evidence to corroborate the child/adult's statement.

13. Support

13.1 Working in the field of potential child protection issues means making difficult professional judgments. It is demanding and can be distressing and stressful. Get advice and support from management, peers or designated people as appropriate.

13.2 As stated in the procedures you must report concerns and disclosures to the Artistic Director/s or General Manager to act on as necessary. It is not necessary for anyone else to know, but it is important that you get any support you need.

13.3 If you talk to family and friends you must not give information that would identify individuals.

14. Review

14.1 This policy will be reviewed and updated bi-annually.

APPENDIX A - THE CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

The Children's Act (1989) introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold which justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. The local authority is under a duty to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where it has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

The formal child protection procedures are operated by Coventryshire County Council Social Services Department to provide services for children in need of protection. Referrals are made to them when there are concerns about a child's welfare, and an assessment of the needs of and risks to the child is undertaken. When contact is made to Social Services concerning a child's welfare it is the responsibility of the department to clarify with the referrer: the nature of the concerns, how and why they have arisen, what appear to be the needs of the child and family, and whether the child may need urgent action to make them safe from harm. If the referred case constitutes, or may constitute, a criminal offence against the child, Social Services should always inform the police at the earliest opportunity. This will enable both agencies to consider jointly how to proceed in the best interests of the child. If the Artistic Director informs Social Services, this should be confirmed in writing. At the end of any discussions or dialogue about a child, the referrer and Social Services should be clear about who will take what action, or that no further action will be taken. Both parties should record this.

Significant harm is a matter of judgement in each case. The 'significance' may be in the severity of an injury or from long-term impact. 'Harm' is defined in the Children's Act (1989) as ill treatment or impairment of health or development. Ill-treatment includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical. Health includes both physical and mental health. Development includes: physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. A child who is at risk of significant harm can be placed on the Child Protection Register under the following categories:

NEGLECT, PHYSICAL ABUSE, SEXUAL ABUSE, EMOTIONAL ABUSE

APPENDIX B -DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

The following categories and descriptions help understanding of the different types of abuse that can cause significant harm to a child or young person (Definition from: Coventryshire County Council, Education, Child Protection Service).

Neglect includes not only poor physical care and inattention to the child's basic needs, e.g. for regular feeding, cleanliness and clothing, but also a failure to provide the necessary stimulation to sustain behavioural and emotional development.

Physical Injury includes actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child including deliberate poisoning, suffocating and Munchausens syndrome by proxy. Seemingly trivial injuries should not be ignored because abuse can and does sometimes escalate if it goes unchecked.

Sexual Abuse includes actual or likely exploitation of a child or adolescent. The child may be dependent and/or developmentally immature. Adults or older children may sexually abuse both male and female children. Sexual abuse can occur without any physical contact e.g. being forced to watch sexual activity. Children may also be made to take part in pornographic activity.

Emotional Abuse includes sustained and repeated responses to the child's behaviour, which is so negative, inconsistent, rejecting or inappropriate, that the child shows serious difficulties in emotional development. What makes the parental behaviour abusive is that it typifies the relationship with the child. It is thus not usually indicated by a specific incident but is observed in the interaction with the child, and the ongoing relationship between child and parents(s). One child may be a scapegoat or treated completely differently from his or her siblings.

These categories do not tie in exactly with legal definitions of 'significant harm', which may be used in Court proceedings. E.g. 'sexual abuse' is not defined in the Children Act. Where there is a difference in interpretation, the Court's definition will be used.

APPENDIX C - SIGNS OF ABUSE

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Improbable explanations for injuries
- Untreated injuries or lingering illness not attended to
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Shrinking from physical contact
- Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted
- Fear of undressing
- Fear of medical help
- Aggression / bullying
- Over compliant behaviour or a 'watchful attitude'
- Running away
- Significant changes in behaviour without explanation
- Deterioration in work
- Unexplained pattern of absences, which may serve to hide bruises or other physical injuries

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Continual self-deprecation
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Self-harm or mutilation
- Compulsive stealing / scrounging
- Drug / solvent abuse
- 'Neurotic' behaviour - obsessive rocking, thumb-sucking, and so on
- Social isolation - does not join in and has few friends
- Desperate attention - seeking behaviour
- Eating problems, including overeating or lack of appetite
- Depression, withdrawal

Possible Signs of Neglect

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Untreated medical problems
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationship
- Compulsive stealing or scrounging
- Constant tiredness

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Bruises, scratches, burns or bite marks on the body
- Scratches, abrasions or persistent infections in the anal or genital regions
- Pregnancy - particularly in the case of young adolescents who are evasive concerning the identity of the father
- Sexual awareness inappropriate to the child's age - shown, for example, in drawing, vocabulary, games and so on
- Frequent public masturbation
- Attempts to teach other children about sexual activity
- Refusing to stay with certain people or go to certain places
- Aggressiveness, anger, anxiety, tearfulness
- Withdrawal from friends

Possible Signs in Older Children

- Promiscuity, prostitution, provocative sexual behaviour
- Self-injury, self-destructive behaviour, suicide attempts
- Eating disorders

Tiredness, lethargy, listlessness
Over-compliant behaviour
Sleep disturbances
Unexplained gifts of money
Depression
Changes in behaviour