

Omnibus Safeguarding Children Policy

1. General Policy Statement

1.1 Omnibus has a duty to ensure that it promotes the welfare and safeguarding of children and young people.

1.2 The Trustees are committed to ensuring that the organisation:

- Provides a safe environment for children and young people
- Identifies children and young people who are victims of abuse or are at risk of harm.
- Takes appropriate action to see that such children and young people are kept safe from harm

1.3 In pursuit of these aims, the trustees will approve and annually review policies and procedures with the aim of:

- Raising awareness of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people and the promotion of a safe environment for them.
- Providing procedures for reporting concerns
- Establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff.
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are safely recruited.

1.4 Throughout these policies and procedures, reference is made to “children and young people”. This term is used to mean “those under the age of 18”. The governing body recognises that some adults are also vulnerable to abuse, accordingly, Omnibus has create a Safeguard Adults at Risk Policy. However, this policy encompasses Omnibus’ policies for safeguarding all vulnerable groups. The following procedures may be applied (with appropriate adaptations) to allegations of abuse.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 **Safeguarding Lead Person** - The organisation has nominated **Fiona Mactaggart**, fionamactaggart1997@gmail.com as lead person with special responsibility for safeguarding children and children protection issues. The member of staff on site to be contacted is Artistic Director Marie McCarthy, marie.mccarthy@omnibus-clapham.org.

2.2 **Training** - Staff and volunteers working with children will receive adequate training to familiarise them with child protection issues and responsibilities and the organisation’s procedures and policies, with refresher training at least every 3 years.

2.3 The governing body will receive from the designated senior member of staff with lead responsibility for safeguarding an annual report which reviews how the duties have been discharged.

OMNIBUS THEATRE

- 2.4 The designated senior member of staff with lead responsibility for safeguarding issues is **Fiona MacTaggart**, fionamactaggart1997@gmail.com. The member of staff on site to be contacted is Artistic Director Marie McCarthy, marie.mccarthy@omnibus-clapham.org.
- 2.5 She has a key duty for raising awareness within the organisation of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people and the promotion of a safe environment for the children and young people.
- 2.6 She is responsible for ensuring that exempted questions are asked on relevant volunteer and employment application forms in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and any other applicable legislation.
- 2.7 She has received appropriate training and should keep up to date with developments in child protection issues. She will also have responsibility for making new staff and volunteers aware of the existing safeguarding policies.
- 2.8 She will be the main contact point for Child Protection issues and will have contact details for relevant organisations available for employees and volunteers. This list will usually include contact details of relevant individuals and provisions such as LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding) including the local police and the Disclosure and Barring Service referral unit.

3. Definitions

The governing body recognises the following as definitions of abuse:

a) Physical Abuse

Physical abuse causes harm to a child's person. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating. It may be done deliberately or recklessly or be the result of a deliberate failure to prevent injury occurring.

b) Neglect

Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet a child or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It will result in serious impairment of the vulnerable adult's health or development.

c) Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves a child or young person being forced or coerced into participating in or watching sexual activity. It is not necessary for the child to be aware that the activity is sexual and the apparent consent of the child is irrelevant.

d) Emotional Abuse

OMNIBUS THEATRE

Emotional abuse occurs where there is persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection. It causes severe and adverse effects on the child or young person's behaviour and emotional state, resulting in low self-worth. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse.

4. Regulated Activity and eligibility for DBS Criminal Record checks

- 4.1 Under the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, an individual working unsupervised with children is considered to be engaged in regulated Activity and must have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check which will involve a check of the children's barred list, in order to perform their duties.
- 4.2 However, an individual working in a directly and permanently supervised position is not considered to be engaged in regulated activity but should still have an enhanced DBS disclosure check. However, because they are working in a supervised role the enhanced check will not include a check of the children's barred list.
- 4.3 Note that applications for a DBS enhanced check can only be submitted where the applicant is aged 16 or over at the time of making the application.

5. Duty to refer to the DBS (Now Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS))

- 5.1 The Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 both make it mandatory to refer anyone known to pose a threat of harm to a child or vulnerable people to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This means that the designated member of staff responsible for safeguarding must not knowingly employ anyone who poses a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults, this includes anyone who is believed to have committed a relevant conduct while on the job or who has a record of such conduct.
- 5.2 The organisation has a legal duty to refer an employee or volunteer who poses a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults to the DBS, failure to do so can result in a fine and/or up to 5 years imprisonment. There must be sufficient and solid evidence that the employee or volunteer poses a risk of harm before they can be referred to the DBS. The DBS will not consider evidence based on rumour or unsubstantiated reports. The employer should also inform the police and other relevant authorities if they believe a relevant conduct has occurred.
- 5.3 Referral forms can be downloaded from the DBS's website www.gov.uk/dbs.

6. 'Relevant conduct' under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

OMNIBUS THEATRE

In addition, the governing body accepts the following definitions of relevant conduct under Schedule 3 of the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 in relation to the barring of those who pose of a risk of harm to children. A relevant conduct is a conduct which must be referred to the DBS and which could lead to a barring decision. It includes any:

- conduct which endangers a child or is likely to endanger a child
- conduct which if repeated against or in relation to a child would endanger that child
- conduct involving sexual material relating to children (including possession of such material)
- conduct involving sexually explicit images depicting violence against human beings
- conduct of a sexual nature involving a child

7. The DBS's barring process

7.1 Whenever new relevant information (such as a conviction or caution) becomes known, the information will be sent to the DBS. The DBS will consider this information, together with other information known on the individual, and decide whether it indicates that the individual poses a risk of harm to vulnerable groups. If so, the DBS will commence its barring process and the DBS will issue a disclosure certificate to the applicant with the barring information.

7.2 The applicant should be advised by the designated member of staff to make a representation to the DBS regarding the barring information. The DBS will assess the barring information and representation and decide whether to bar the applicant. If there is sufficient barring evidence, the applicant will be placed on the **Children's Adults Barred List** or the **Adults at Risk Barred List** or both depending on the offence. The applicant must then be removed from regulated activity.

7.3 The applicant has the right of appeal to a tribunal and must be advised of this right. Serious offences committed against children or vulnerable people will lead to automatic barring and the applicant will have no right to make representations or to appeal against a barring decision.

7. Dealing with Disclosure of Abuse and Procedure for Reporting Concerns

7.1 If a child or young person tells a member of staff about possible abuse:

- Listen carefully and stay calm.
- Do not interview the child, but question normally and without pressure, in order to be sure that you understand what the child is telling you.
- Do not put words into the child's mouth.
- Reassure the child that by telling you, they have done the right thing.

OMNIBUS THEATRE

- Inform the child that you must pass the information on, but that only those that need to know about it will be told. Inform them of to whom you will report the matter. Don't promise confidentiality – never agree to keep secrets.
- Note the main points carefully using the Omnibus Safeguarding Incident Record Form.
- Make a detailed note of the date, time, place, what the child said, did and your questions etc.
- Staff should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves but should report them immediately to the Designated Senior Member of Staff.

8. Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff.

The procedures apply to all staff, whether trustees, administrative, management or support, as well as to volunteers. The word "staff" is used for ease of description.

8.1 The Organisation recognises that the Children's Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child is of paramount concern. It is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions in connection with a member of staff can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career. Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the organisation will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.

8.2 If a child or young person makes an allegation against a member of staff about possible abuse:

- Follow the procedure outlined in 7.1 above
- In the event of an allegation being made against the Designated Senior Member of Staff, it should be reported to the Chairperson of the Trustees who in conjunction with the staff member will make further records and notes about the issue using the Incident Record Form.
- The Designated Senior Member will normally suspend the person against whom the allegation has been made with immediate effect in such a manner as not to disclose its reason, pending further advice, decisions and actions by the appropriate authorities.
- For the avoidance of doubt the person is to be told that they are suspended pending investigation

10. Safer Recruitment and Selection Procedure

Omnibus will follow safer recruitment and selection procedures (detailed in the Recruitment Policy). These should be reviewed regularly in order to ensure that they take account of the following:

- They should apply to staff and volunteers who may work with children.
- The post or role should be clearly defined.
- The key selection criteria for the post or role should be identified.
- Vacancies should be advertised widely in order to ensure a diversity of applicants.
- Obtain professional and character references.

OMNIBUS THEATRE

- Verify previous employment history.
- Disclosure and Barring Service disclosure/List 99 checks (maintain sensitive and confidential use of the applicant's disclosure).
- Use a variety of selection techniques (e.g., qualifications, previous experience, interview, reference checks).

Online Safety and Safeguarding

Omnibus Theatre works with children, young people and adults as part of our online activities. The aims of our online safeguarding policy are to:

- Protect all children, young people and adults who make use of technology as part of their engagement with us.
- Ensure our organisation is operating in line with our values and within the law regarding how we behave online.

When working with young people or vulnerable adults online the safeguarding measures and procedures outlined elsewhere in this policy remain in place. In addition:

General:

- Omnibus Theatre will ensure that platform used for engagement is suitable for vulnerable adults. Platform accounts will only be set up using Omnibus domain email addresses, never personal ones.
- When working with young people Omnibus Theatre commits to ensuring parents and carers are aware of the benefits and risks of online work. Written consent will be obtained from all participating young people's parents or carers.
- There will be at least two adults present in each online workshop, including one member of the Omnibus Theatre team.
- Any data collected will be stored securely and in line with GDPR.
- Staff will undertake all online safety training offered.

When Using Zoom:

- A new meeting room will be used for each new session.
- The Zoom link or password will be emailed to participants directly, and never posted publicly.
- A designated Omnibus Theatre team member will lead on Zoom facilitation, ensuring no one whose name is not on the attendees list is allowed into the space from the waiting room.
- Screen sharing will be turned off.
- Screen recording will be turned off.

OMNIBUS THEATRE

- Attendees will not be allowed to join the space until the workshop facilitator is present.
- If a screenshot is to be taken all attendees will be informed of this and will have the opportunity to turn off their video and hide their name if they wish.

Omnibus Theatre is a multi-award-winning independent theatre in Clapham, South London. Finalist in the Fringe Theatre of the Year 2020 and 2023 The Stage Awards, Off-West End Award winner 2018 and 2020, and recipient of the Peter Brook/Royal Court Theatre Support Award in 2016. The heart of the organisation's ambitious programme lies in classics re-imagined, modern revivals and new writing. Omnibus Theatre also provides a platform for LGBTQ+ work and aims to give voice to the underrepresented and challenge perceptions. Since opening in 2013 notable in-house productions include *Woyzeck* (2013), *Macbeth* (2014), *Colour* (2015), *Mule* (2016), *Spring Offensive* (2017), *Zeraffa Giraffa* (2017), *Queens of Sheba* (2019), *The Little Prince* (2019), *RICE!* (2021), *The Human Connection* (2021), *The Girl Who Was Very Good At Lying* (2021), *FIJI* (2022), *SAD* (2022), *DRUM* (2022), *The Woman Who Turned into a Tree* (2023) and *Compositor E* (2023).

Omnibus Theatre is led by Artistic Director Marie McCarthy and Executive Director Bridget Kalloushi. Patrons include Dame Judi Dench, Sir Lord Michael Cashman, Paulette Randall MBE and Rikki Beadle- Blair MBE

Omnibus-Clapham is a registered Charity (number 1143709) and a company limited by guarantee (number 07032543).

Ratified: 29 January 2025