

The **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (SVGA) 2006** was passed to help avoid harm, or risk of harm, by preventing people who are deemed unsuitable to work with children and **vulnerable** adults from gaining access to them through their work.

The Citizens Theatre has a duty of care to safeguard all children, young people and adults with whom we work. This policy is designed to protect those more at risk who may have difficulty and/or may need assistance protecting themselves from significant harm or exploitation, by reason of age, learning or cognitive impairment, physical and/or sensory impairment or mental health. Jointly, in this policy they will be referred to as **vulnerable people**.

A **child** is defined as someone up to and including the age of 18 in The Children Act 1989. Extensions of this exist for young people who are disabled or those in local authority care settings. This policy extends to any child involved with the Citizens Theatre.

A **vulnerable adult** is a person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. Whether or not a person is vulnerable in these cases will depend upon surrounding circumstances, environment and each case must be judged on its own merits.

This policy covers all employees, self-employed workers, volunteers and Board members.

Where abuse happens

- Abuse can happen to anyone;
- Abuse can happen anywhere;
- Abuse can be done by anyone;

What abuse is

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person.

Abuse can be about harming somebody or failing to keep them safe from harm. There are different types of abuse. People can be abused in more than one way:

a) Emotional abuse

When someone is being harmed, some level of emotional abuse is usually involved, but emotional abuse can happen on its own. Emotional abuse can include lots of things. It could be:

- making someone feel worthless, unloved, or not good enough;
- making them feel very frightened or insecure;
- teasing, shouting at, or threatening someone;
- never praising someone - never telling them they are good at things;
- stopping someone from making choices and never letting them take risks and try new things;
- keeping them away from their friends, family and support networks;
- ignoring their privacy and dignity.

b) Neglect

This is when someone's basic physical and emotional needs are not being met. It could be:

- not giving someone enough food, shelter or physical care;
- failing to supervise vulnerable people and leaving them to take risks they are not ready for;
- not making sure they have good enough health or medical care.

c) Physical abuse

This is when someone hurts a vulnerable person on purpose, or when they know someone will get hurt, and does nothing to stop it. This could be:

- hitting, shaking, burning, scalding, kicking, or suffocating someone;
- making someone ill, or pretending they are ill, or using medication in the wrong way, on purpose;
- using physical restraint in the wrong way or force feeding someone;
- exposing a vulnerable person to harmful or illegal substances.

d) Sexual abuse

With children under 16, this involves forcing or encouraging them to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This could be:

- penetrative and non-penetrative sexual acts;
- encouraging children to watch sexual acts;
- using children to make videos and pictures of sexual activities;
- encouraging them to do sexual things they are too young to be involved in.

With children over 16, or vulnerable adults, sexual abuse can still happen. It could be:

- when someone is raped or sexually assaulted;
- when someone is forced to do a sexual act that they did not want to do;
- when someone is encouraged to do a sexual act when they didn't understand it, and didn't know they could say no.

e) Financial or material abuse

This is when someone steals money or things from a vulnerable person. It could also be when they trick a vulnerable person into giving away their money and the things they own.

f) Discriminatory – including racism, or sexism, or behaviour that is based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Signs of abuse

People don't always tell you they have been abused or harmed. There are many other signs of abuse. But you must remember they do not *always* mean that abuse has happened. These signs should not be ignored. Always talk about them with a colleague and/or line manager.

Some possible signs of abuse are:

- Unexplained reactions towards particular people or places;
- Sudden changes in behaviour that are not expected;
- Behaving in a way that seems odd for the person's age or development;
- Sexualised behaviour that seems odd for the person's age or development. This could include actual sexual behaviour, but also could be drawing or writing about sex, or talking a lot about sex or saying sexual words;

- Genital soreness, injuries, or discomfort;
- Sexually transmitted diseases and urinary infections;
- Pregnancy in a young girl, or pregnancy of a vulnerable adult who would not have been able to say no to sex;
- Marks or injuries which are hard to explain, or don't seem like they would happen by accident, or where the way they are explained doesn't make sense;
- Frequent visits to the GP or hospital with injuries;
- Lots of scars which are hard to explain;
- Failing to get medical treatment when it is really needed, or refusing to allow routine health problems to be treated;
- Refusing to allow home visits and not keeping appointments with health and care professionals;
- Being really clingy. Needing lots of attention. Being too eager to please. Asking to be protected;
- Being really withdrawn or frightened;
- Destroying places and things;
- Verbal abuse, violence and aggression towards other people;
- Refusing to let carers meet their needs;
- Lots of difficulties with sleeping;
- Low self esteem and lack of confidence;
- Wandering/absconding/ or frequent absences from school;
- Unexplained change in material circumstances of vulnerable adults;
- Constant hunger. Stealing food. Cramming food;
- Wearing clothing that is often really dirty or not right for the weather;
- Failure to thrive in children. This means when children don't physically grow and develop and put on weight as you would expect. This is very worrying if the child does thrive when they are away from home;
- Self harming, including serious drug or alcohol misuse and eating disorders.

If parents and carers are dealing with very difficult problems in their lives, it *may* make abuse more likely to happen. Some of the problems may be:

- Alcohol or substance misuse;
- Mental illness;
- The parent/carer having unmet needs or being stressed and tired;
- Several members of a family having different needs that all need to be met at the same time;
- Domestic violence.

Good practice guidelines

Everyone working for the Citizens Theatre is expected to demonstrate exemplary behaviour at all times, but particularly when it comes to how they conduct themselves when working with vulnerable people. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate which will also help protect staff members from being the subject of false allegations:

- Actively encourage vulnerable people to be involved in making as many decisions that affect them as possible;
- Encourage vulnerable people to say if they feel they are being asked to do things which create fear or discomfort (socially, emotionally and /or physically);
- Encourage the development of an ethos which embraces difference and diversity and where the rights of all vulnerable people are upheld;
- At least two responsible adults should ideally be present at all times when working with vulnerable people;
- Ascertain if any vulnerable person has health needs that you should know about but remember that no member of staff should administer medication or apply ointment;

- Treat all people equally, and with respect and dignity;
- Seek to build effective and equal partnerships with parents/carers;
- Avoid situations where you may be left alone with vulnerable people;
- Be aware of the language you use and your behaviour when in the presence of vulnerable people – it is essential that vulnerable people understand what is being said to them.
- Avoid inappropriate physical contact and remember that any type of physical contact could be misconstrued;
- Bear in mind that allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (eg by an adult who was abused as a child);
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with vulnerable people (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a vulnerable person or to share a room alone with them);
- Respect a person's right to personal privacy;
- Make the workshop or activity fun, enjoyable and promote fair play;
- Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of vulnerable people;
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism;
- No photography or video recording should be undertaken without the written permission of a parent/guardian/carer and/or a member of school staff;
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given;
- Keep parents/guardians/carers informed about participants' involvement in activities at the Citizens;
- Remain alert to the signs of abuse that a vulnerable person might display;
- Report any suspected poor practice to the appropriate Line Manager and/or a Citizens Theatre senior manager. If the allegation is against the Line Manager or a Senior Manager, report the alleged poor practice to the Executive Director or the CEO.

Poor practice

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough or sexually provocative games;
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- Allow the use of inappropriate language;
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a colleague or participant;
- Invite or allow vulnerable people to stay with you at your home unsupervised;
- Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues;
- Ignore a disclosure or suspicion of abuse in the hope that it will either go away or that someone else will deal with it;
- Permit abusive behaviour eg. bullying, taunting or racist behaviour;
- Show favouritism to an individual;

Procedure

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report it immediately to another colleague and record the incident:

- If you accidentally hurt a participant;
- If a participant seems distressed in any manner;
- If a participant appears to be sexually aroused by your actions;

Induction

All Employees and volunteers should receive formal or informal induction, during which:

- a check should be made that the staff handbook has been made available and that the company's Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Environmental, and Equalities Policies have been read and agreed to. The employee or volunteer should sign to acknowledge this and the permanent member of staff appointing them should check verbally with the employee or volunteer that they have read and understood the policies;
- the job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified;
- Safeguarding procedures should be explained.

Responding to disclosures and suspicions or concerns about abuse.

Dealing with disclosures

The following action should be taken if a vulnerable person who has suffered abuse confides in you:

Please note: It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has taken place, but always remember that an offence could have occurred and that this evidence could be used in court if it has any substance. You must abide by the following guidelines if a disclosure occurs:

1. Remain calm and in control but do not delay acting.
2. Listen carefully to what is said. Allow the vulnerable person to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask leading questions that suggest a particular answer.
3. Don't promise to "keep it a secret". Use the first opportunity you have to say that you will need to share the information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
4. Reassure the vulnerable person that they did the right thing in telling someone.
5. Tell the vulnerable person what you are going to do next.
6. If the disclosure occurs out with the Citizens theatre building, pass it on immediately to the local responsible adult (e.g. teacher). If staff dismiss or ignore your concerns and you are still worried, speak privately to their manager if this is possible (eg the Headteacher). If the manager will not act on your concerns, report them to your line manager at the theatre.
8. As soon as possible after the disclosure, make a note of what was said using the proforma provided for this purpose. As much as possible, use the vulnerable person's own words. Note the date, time, any names mentioned and who you shared the information with, if anyone. Make sure you date and sign the record.
9. Pass the written record to your line manager.
10. Do not discuss incident with anyone else.
11. Ask for support for yourself if you feel you need it.
12. In certain instances, it will be appropriate for the Executive Director to make the decision to inform the authorities of the disclosure. Where it is perceived that the vulnerable person is in immediate danger, the Executive Director may take the decision to contact the police.

Dealing with suspicions or concerns about abuse

The following action should be taken if you suspect a vulnerable person may be suffering abuse in some way:

Please note: It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. You must abide by the following guidelines if you are concerned about a vulnerable person:

1. Do not attempt to investigate.
2. If when you are working out with the Citizens theatre building you suspect or are concerned that a vulnerable person is being abused, voice your concerns to the local responsible adult (eg teacher). If staff dismiss or ignore your concerns and you are still worried, speak privately to their manager if this is possible (e.g. the Headteacher). If the manager will not act on your concerns, report your suspicions to your line manager at the theatre.
4. As soon as possible after becoming aware of possible abuse, make a note of what has happened using the proforma provided for this purpose. Note the date, time, and who you shared the information with, if anyone. Make sure you date and sign the record.
8. Pass the written record to your line manager.
9. Do not discuss the incident with anyone else.
10. Ask for support for yourself if you feel you need it.
11. In certain instances, it will be appropriate for the Executive Director to make the decision to inform the relevant authorities of the disclosure. Where it is perceived that the vulnerable person is in immediate danger, the Executive Director may take the decision to contact the police.

Concerns about suspected abuse

The Citizens Theatre will support and protect any member of staff or volunteer who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a person.

Any suspicion that a person has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer or by anyone else connected with any Citizens Theatre activity either in the building or off site should be reported to either the Executive Director or the Artistic Director/CEO, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the person in question and any other person who may be at risk.

In certain instances, it will be appropriate for the Executive Director to make the decision to inform the relevant authorities of the disclosure. Where it is perceived that the vulnerable person is in immediate danger, the Director may take the decision to contact the police.

If the Executive Director or the Artistic Director/CEO is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chair of the Citizens Theatre Board.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

Consideration should be given to the kind of support that vulnerable people, parents and members of staff may need. Reference to helplines and support groups may help the healing process.

Action if bullying is suspected

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set above.

Actions to help the victim and prevent bullying:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously;
- Encourage people to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment;
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately;
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else;
- Report any concerns to your line manager or to an appropriate responsible adult wherever the bullying is occurring (eg a teacher in school).

Action towards the bully(ies):

- Where appropriate, talk with the bully(ies) and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. If you are confident that it is not going to cause further distress or hurt, seek an apology from the bully(ies) to the victim(s);
- Inform the bully's parents or a responsible adult, as appropriate;
- Impose sanctions as necessary;
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour;
- Inform line management of action taken.

Policy review

The Citizens Theatre Safeguarding Policy is reviewed:

- at least annually; or,
- Whenever there are changes in relevant legislation.

Key staff/Board with Safeguarding Responsibilities

- Executive Director - Alex McGowan
- Chair of the Citizens Theatre Board - April Chamberlain

Glasgow City Council safeguarding and social care contact:

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