

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Last updated: September 2024

1. Introduction

The safety and well-being of children are of utmost importance to Sheba Arts. We are committed to creating a safe and secure environment for all young people involved in our programmes and activities. This Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy outlines our commitment to keeping children safe from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation during their participation in Sheba Arts programmes and activities. It also provides guidelines for addressing allegations of abuse.

We will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

2. Policy Principles

- a. **Best Interest of the Child:** We will always prioritise the best interests of the child in all decisions and actions related to their safety and well-being.
- b. **Zero Tolerance:** We have a zero-tolerance approach to any form of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm during participation in Sheba Arts programmes and activities.
- c. **Safeguarding Responsibilities:** All staff, volunteers, and associates of Sheba Arts have a responsibility to safeguard children and are required to follow this policy.

3. Child Protection Officer

Sheba Arts will appoint a designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy, handling concerns, and reporting incidents, as required by law.

The designated CPO is Nuria Lopez

Email address: admin@shebaarts.com

Help can also be sought at:

NSPCC - 0808 800 5000

Childline - 0800 1111

4. Identification and Reporting of Concerns

- a. Any individual who becomes aware of a safeguarding concern must report it immediately to the designated CPO.
- b. All reports or allegations of child abuse or harm will be taken seriously and treated confidentially, with due respect for the rights of all parties involved.
- c. Reports will be thoroughly and promptly investigated following the organisation's reporting procedures.
- d. If the concern involves the designated CPO, the report should be made directly to Artistic Director :Fereshteh@shebaarts.com

5. Allegations of Abuse

- a. Sheba Arts will cooperate fully with relevant authorities in the investigation of any allegations of child abuse or harm.
- b. The organisation will ensure the safety and support of the child involved during the investigation process.
- c. Staff or volunteers subject to an investigation will be temporarily suspended from duties related to children until the investigation is complete.

6.Safer Recruitment Policy Statement

Sheba Arts is fully committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of children and young people involved in our programmes and activities. As part of this commitment, we have established a robust Safer Recruitment Policy to ensure that all staff and volunteers working with children are suitable and capable of fulfilling their roles responsibly and ethically.

6.1 Safeguard Children: The primary objective of our policy is to safeguard children from any potential risks by employing staff and volunteers who have undergone a thorough recruitment process.

6.2. Vetting and Screening: All staff and volunteers who will have direct or indirect contact with children will undergo a screening process, including reference checks. If a candidate is identified as unsuitable to work with children and young people, they will be rejected. Any concerns about the suitability of

candidates raised during the recruitment process will be responded to according to the safer recruitment procedures.

6.3 Qualifications and Skills: We assess the qualifications, skills, and experience of candidates to ensure they possess the necessary capabilities to work with children effectively.

6.4. Training: Once recruited, all staff and volunteers will receive appropriate training on child safeguarding, the Sheba Arts Code of Conduct, and relevant policies and procedures.

6.5. Supervision and Support: Staff and volunteers will receive appropriate supervision and ongoing support to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

6.6 Reporting Mechanisms: Our policy ensures that all staff and volunteers are aware of their duty to report any concerns or suspicions about child welfare promptly.

6.7. Continuous Improvement: We continuously review and update our Safer Recruitment Policy to align with best practice and changing requirements in child safeguarding.

6.8. Collaboration: We work in partnership with relevant authorities, organisations, and experts in child protection to ensure our recruitment process remains effective and robust.

7.What to do if vetting checks raise concerns

7.1. Self-disclosure forms

If a candidate discloses a caution or conviction on their self-disclosure form, or if we uncover issues about the individual, we will carry out a risk assessment to decide if this is relevant to the post.

7.2. Criminal record checks

People on the barred list must not be given a role that requires them to work or volunteer with children or young people in regulated activity. If you find that someone who has applied to work with children is barred, you should notify the police.

7.3. Carrying out the risk assessment

Decisions about whether to employ or not to employ someone whose vetting checks raised concerns should be made on a case-by-case basis. We only share information about an applicant's criminal records with those who need to know. The applicant should be told who in the organisation knows about their record.

7.4. Storing disclosure and barring checks

We do not store copies of DBS check certificates unless there is a dispute about the results of the check. Instead, we keep a confidential record of the date the check was completed, the level and type of check, the reference number of the certificate, and the decision made about whether the person was employed (with reasons).

8. Behaviour Code for Adults working with Children at Sheba Arts

Sheba Arts Staff and Volunteers are responsible for:

prioritising the welfare of children and young people

providing a safe environment for children and young people

ensuring equipment is used safely and for its intended purpose

having good awareness of issues to do with safeguarding and child protection and taking action when appropriate.

following our principles, policies and procedures including our policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection

staying within the law at all times

modelling good behaviour for children and young people to follow

challenging all inappropriate behaviour and reporting any breaches of the behaviour code to CPO (Nuria)

reporting all concerns about abusive behaviour, following our safeguarding and child protection procedures, this includes inappropriate behaviour displayed by an adult or child and directed at anybody of any age.

Respecting Children and Young People

You should:

listen to and respect children at all times

value and take children's contributions seriously, actively involving them in planning activities wherever possible

respect a young person's right to personal privacy as far as possible

If you need to break confidentiality in order to follow child protection procedures, it is important to explain this to the child or young person at the earliest opportunity.

9. Diversity and Inclusion

You 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 gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability and religious belief systems, and appreciate that all participants bring something valuable and different to the group/organisation

challenge discrimination and prejudice

encourage young people and adults to speak out about attitudes or behaviour that makes them uncomfortable.

10. Appropriate Relationships

You should:

promote relationships that are based on openness, honesty, trust and respect

avoid showing favouritism

be patient with others

exercise caution when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people

ensure your contact with children and young people is appropriate and relevant to the nature of the activity you are involved in

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

if a child specifically asks for or needs some individual time with you, ensure other staff or volunteers know where you and the child are

only provide personal care in an emergency and make sure there is more than one adult present if possible

11. Inappropriate Behaviour

When working with children and young people, you must not:

allow concerns or allegations to go unreported

take unnecessary risks

smoke, consume alcohol or use illegal substances

develop inappropriate relationships with children and young people

make inappropriate promises to children and young people

engage in behaviour that is in any way abusive, including having any form of sexual contact with a child or young person

let children and young people have your personal contact details (mobile number, email or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account

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 to or in front of children and young people.

12. Procedure for Handling Allegations of Abuse Made Against a Member of Staff or Volunteer

To ensure a prompt, consistent, and sensitive response when allegations of abuse are made against an adult working or volunteering at Sheba Arts. This procedure outlines the steps to take to address such situations while prioritising the safety and well-being of all individuals involved.

I. Initial Response: If an allegation of abuse is made, any staff member or volunteer who receives the information must treat it seriously and with utmost confidentiality. Listen carefully and empathetically to the individual making the allegation, ensuring they feel heard and understood. If the allegation involves immediate danger or risk, ensure the safety of the alleged victim and others as a top priority.

II. Reporting the Allegation: The person receiving the allegation must report it immediately to the designated safeguarding lead of the organisation, Nuria Lopez.

III. CPO Responsibilities: The CPO will report the allegation immediately to the relevant agencies, such as the NSPCC helpline (0808 800 5000), local child protection services, or the police. If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member, they may be suspended with pay during the investigation, in accordance with legal requirements. The CPO will maintain a detailed and secure record of all actions taken throughout the investigation.

IV. Support and Communication: Keep affected parties informed about the progress of the investigation while respecting their privacy and confidentiality. In case of an external investigation involving law enforcement or other organisations, cooperate fully and provide requested information as necessary.

V. Sharing Concerns with Other Organisations: Share information with other organisations only when it is essential to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people. When sharing information, ensure that it is done in a confidential and secure manner.

VI. Conclusion of the Investigation: Once the investigation is complete, the CPO will evaluate the findings and determine appropriate actions, which may include disciplinary measures, termination of employment or volunteer status, or other actions as warranted. 'Settlement agreements' must not be used in cases of abuse. The alleged victim and any affected parties will be informed of the investigation's outcome and any actions taken, while adhering to confidentiality and privacy considerations. If the allegation is unfounded, steps should be taken to support the reputation and well-being of the alleged perpetrator.

VII. Learning and Improvement: Following the conclusion of the investigation, conduct a review of the organisation's response to identify any areas for

improvement in handling similar situations in the future. Provide training and support to staff and volunteers on recognising, reporting, and preventing abuse. This procedure reflects our commitment to maintaining a safe and inclusive environment for all individuals involved with Sheba Arts. It is essential that all staff members and volunteers adhere to these steps and cooperate fully in any investigation. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.