



Blacklight Productions

**CHILD PROTECTION & WELFARE  
POLICY**

2019-2020

Reviewed and Developed: October 2019

Subject to Review: October 2020

## RATIONALE

At Blacklight Productions, we want all of our members to feel happy, safe and secure so that they can benefit fully from their time in school and be enabled to contribute wholeheartedly to our process and work.

We believe that everyone has a right to work, learn and socialise in an atmosphere free from intimidation and fear and we work consistently to try to make certain that Blacklight provides this environment for every member of its community.

We subscribe to the principles that a child's welfare is paramount and that the rights and needs of parents/carers and of our cast/crew must also be recognised and respected.

We are committed to operating at all times within the guidance emanating from *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017* and *The Children First Act (2015)*

We endeavour to offer particular support to those children who are on the Child Protection Register or who are Looked After, whilst guarding their privacy.

We recognise the need to ensure that everyone in, or associated with, our company is aware of the procedures, supports and guidance available in cases where any form of child abuse occurs, is reported to have occurred or is perceived to have occurred. We provide OR source Safeguarding Training for all cast/crew working with children through Blacklight on an annual basis. The Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually. In the area of Cast/crew Recruitment the company adheres to current DES Guidance on vetting.

We value the right of both children and adult cast/crew to privacy and, to this end, we maintain appropriate strict confidentiality in matters of Child Protection/Safeguarding, as in all matters relating to members of our Community. We share information on a need-to-know basis and, in so far as it is reasonable and practical, with the permission of the individuals concerned. We ensure that all written records are filed in a locked cabinet and we exercise great caution when communicating electronically.

**We are committed to the safe management of staff and volunteers in our employ.**

We prioritise safeguarding training, and require all cast and crew working with young people to undertake training before the commencement of any project. We make our policies publicly available, and ensure all cast/crew, and all educators are directed to these policies before the commencement of a project.

*Should we find ourselves working directly with children or young people, we will seek to register as a relevant organisation, to facilitate garda vetting for all adult cast/crew who may come into direct contact with children or young people. Disclosure of criminal activities involving offences against children or vulnerable people will preclude any individual from working with Blacklight on projects involving children or young people.*

## THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM

To ensure the protection of the children in our remit, Blacklight has a Safeguarding Team which has responsibility for managing all matters relating to Child Protection/Safeguarding. Complaints or concerns can be raised with any of these individuals.

The current Safeguarding Team consists of:

Ms. Cliodhna McAllister *Artistic Director*

[Cliodhna.mcallister@gmail.com](mailto:Cliodhna.mcallister@gmail.com)

+353 (0) 83489 2697

**Mandated Person**

***A mandated person is legally obligated to:***

- ***Report harm of children, above a defined threshold, to Tusla***
- ***Assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report***

Ms. Sancha Mulcahy *Creative Producer*

[blacklighttheatrecompany@gmail.com](mailto:blacklighttheatrecompany@gmail.com)

**Designated Individual**

Mr. Henrique Caliento *Creative Producer*

[blacklighttheatrecompany@gmail.com](mailto:blacklighttheatrecompany@gmail.com)

**Safeguarding Champion**

**We will ensure that all children/young people and parents/carers or guardians have access to this policy, and the contact details of all staff. We will communicate our assurance that all complaints will be raised and investigated in confidence, and advise that complaints can be raised with any member of staff.**

***Initial investigations of complaints will be undertaken within 24 hours of the complaint, with a target resolution of not more than three days from the date of the complaint. Resolution decisions and detailed feedback will be provided to the complainant via secure email and in person (if desired, and practical).***

# CHILD ABUSE

Child Abuse falls into four broad categories:

## Neglect

- The persistent or significant neglect of a child;
- The failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or hunger;
- The persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

## Physical Abuse

- Physical injury to a child, whether deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
- Sexual Abuse
- The sexual exploitation of a child for an adult's or another child's own sexual gratification;
- The involvement of children in sexual activities or any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family or societal roles.

## Emotional Abuse

- Persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child.

You may have **reasonable concerns** about a child's safety if you observe:

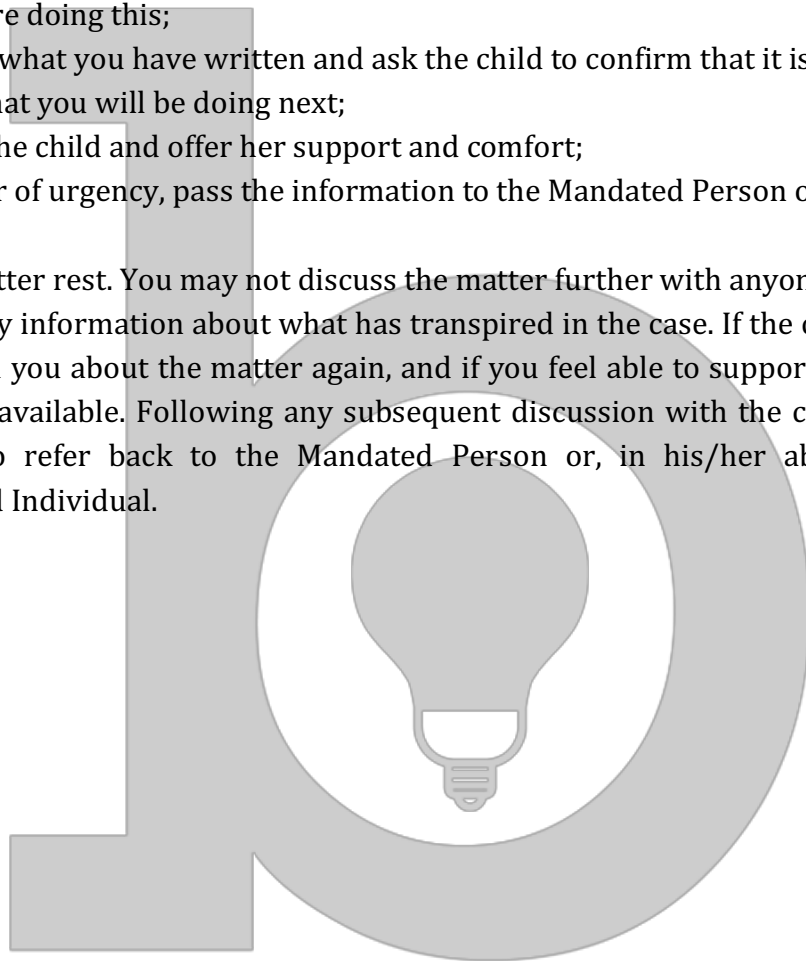
Neglect that becomes typical of the relationship between a child and their parent or carer;

- Insecure attachment;
- Persistent unhappiness;
- Low self-esteem;
- Educational and developmental underachievement;
- Risk taking;
- Aggressive behaviour;
- Disclosure by the child or their siblings/friends;
- The suspicions of an adult;
- Physical symptoms.

## PROCEDURES MANAGING A DISCLOSURE

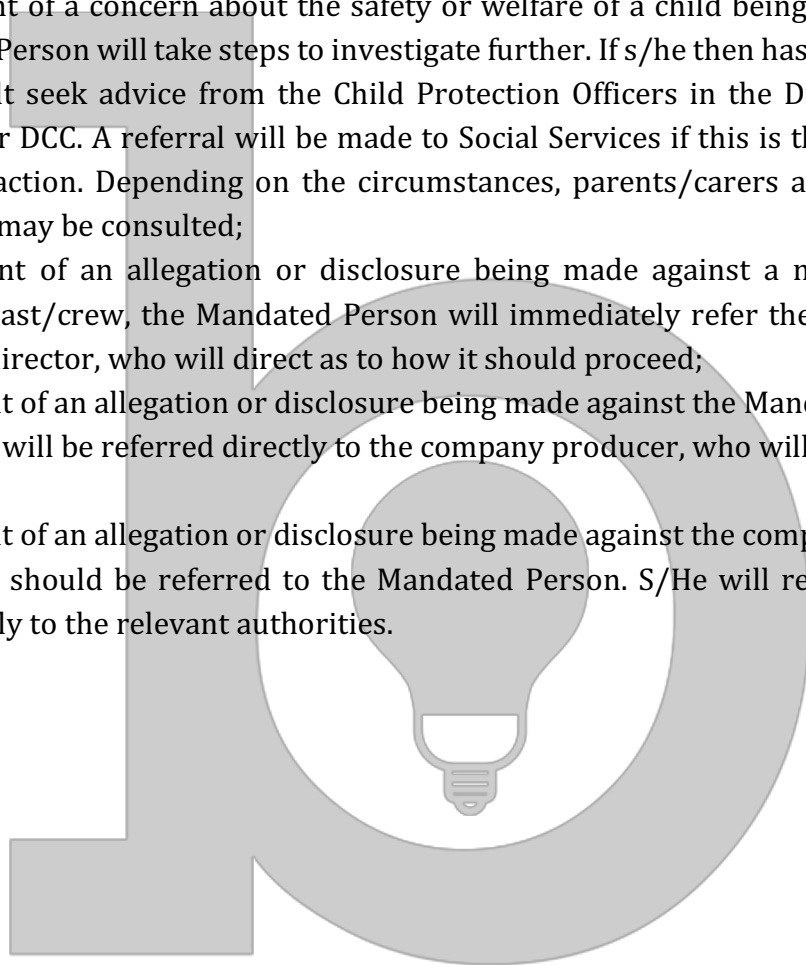
In the event of a child disclosing that s/he has been the victim of abuse the following procedures must be followed:

- Tell the child at the earliest opportunity, and certainly if s/he asks, that you may be/are obliged to pass on what she is about to say/is saying/ has said to the Mandated Person;
- Listen carefully to the child and accept what is said;
- Refrain from asking questions or from making any comment about the allegation;
- Record, in writing and verbatim, what the child is telling you and explain to him/her why you are doing this;
- Read back what you have written and ask the child to confirm that it is accurate;
- Explain what you will be doing next;
- Reassure the child and offer her support and comfort;
- As a matter of urgency, pass the information to the Mandated Person or Designated Individual;
- Let the matter rest. You may not discuss the matter further with anyone nor may you request any information about what has transpired in the case. If the child wishes to speak with you about the matter again, and if you feel able to support him/her, you should be available. Following any subsequent discussion with the child, it is good practice to refer back to the Mandated Person or, in his/her absence, to the Designated Individual.



## PROCEDURES FOLLOWING A DISCLOSURE

- In the event of an allegation or disclosure of abuse being conveyed to the Mandated Person, Designated Individual or Safeguarding Champion, an immediate referral will be made to Social Services. The Social Worker taking the referral, or the Team Leader, will advise the company on the matter of informing the parents/carers, having taken cognisance of the information presented. Social Services will maintain contact with the Designated Teacher until decisions have been taken on the next course of action and will advise as to what the school should do in the interim. Necessary documentation will be completed and forwarded to Social Services;
- In the event of a concern about the safety or welfare of a child being conveyed, the Mandated Person will take steps to investigate further. If s/he then has concerns s/he will consult seek advice from the Child Protection Officers in the Dublin Regional Services, or DCC. A referral will be made to Social Services if this is the appropriate course of action. Depending on the circumstances, parents/carers and/or medical personnel may be consulted;
- In the event of an allegation or disclosure being made against a member of the company cast/crew, the Mandated Person will immediately refer the matter to the company director, who will direct as to how it should proceed;
- In the event of an allegation or disclosure being made against the Mandated Person, the matter will be referred directly to the company producer, who will deal with it herself;
- In the event of an allegation or disclosure being made against the company producer, the matter should be referred to the Mandated Person. S/He will refer the matter immediately to the relevant authorities.

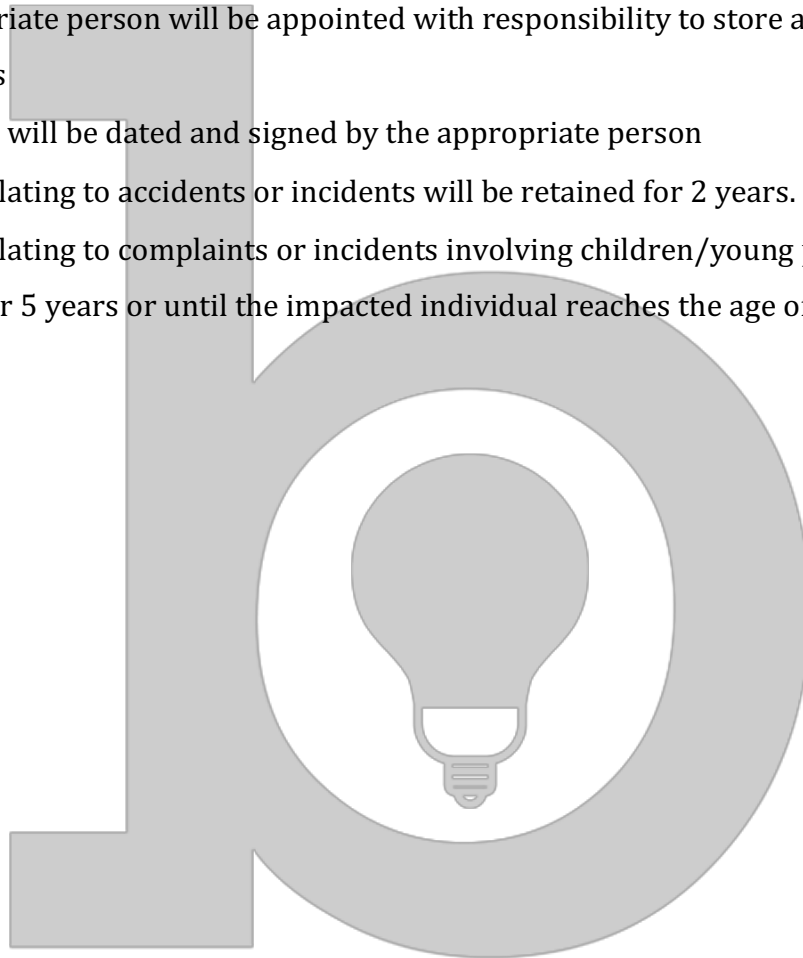


## PROCEDURES MANAGING AN INCIDENT/ACCIDENT

- It is Blacklight's policy that all safety incidents are identified, reported and investigated.
- Incidents can be:
  - Events that involve detriment to the physical or psychological safety of our members;
  - Events that involve safeguarding complaints from our members, or from members of the public to whom we provide a service;
  - Malpractice or the neglect of essential safeguarding responsibilities, that might jeopardise the integrity of the company or our operational efficacy.
- We are comprehensively insured, and require all cast/crew to provide proof of external accreditation for skill-based tasks [working at a height, working with electrical equipment, lifting etc.]
- A comprehensive Prevention and Planning procedure will be followed, to ensure risk is identified in advance of an event, and preventative measures are implemented ahead of time.
  - Risk Assessment forms will be completed for all events;
  - Preventative strategies will be agreed by the company director, producer, and company manager;
  - Risk factors will be consistently monitored throughout the lifespan of a project, and reported on accordingly, with risk management strategies adapted according to need identified through ongoing monitoring.
- As an immediate response to the identification of an incident or action we:
  - Provide care;
  - Prevent further harm by removing the source of the harm, or securing the area;
  - Resume normal service as soon as possible.
- Incidents or accidents are reported / escalated immediately as required, either to:
  - Our First Aid crew member;
  - The event venue (should their policy require it);
  - Emergency services;
  - The parent/carer of the young person involved;
  - If necessary, the parents/carers of other young people present.
- Incidents requiring escalation are recorded, including the decisions taken in responding to the incident.
- Company management will review all recorded incidents to assess the efficacy and compliance of our response. Where a response has been non-compliant, further investigation will be undertaken.
- Investigations following an incident / accident will be undertaken by our company producer, director, and manager.
- Should investigations reveal malpractice, an assessment will be made to determine whether additional training may be remedial, or if further action is required.

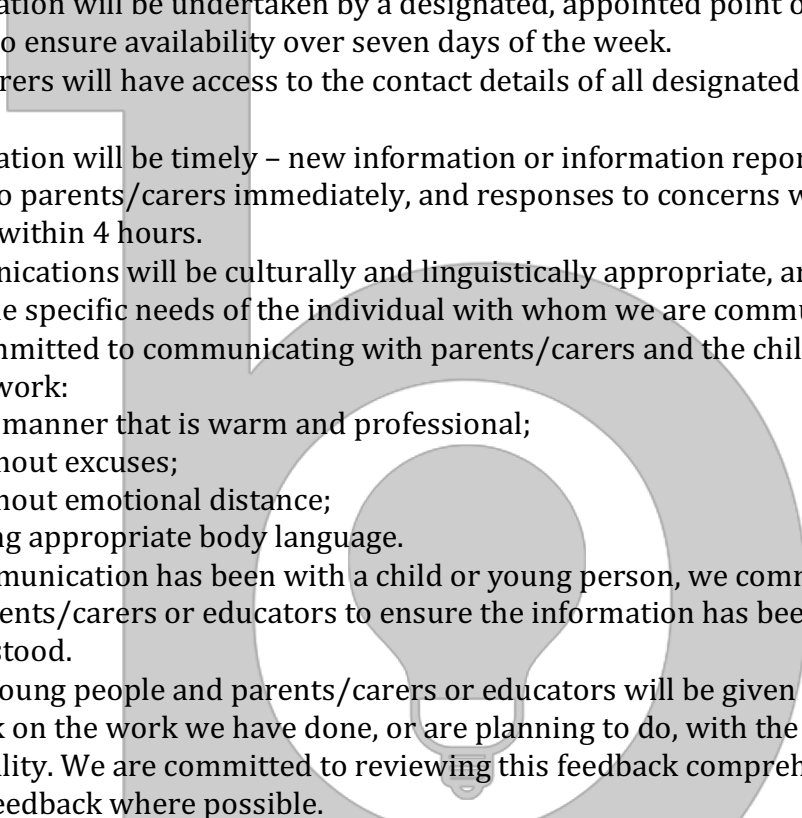
## RECORD-KEEPING

- At Blacklight, we are committed to recording complaints, incident investigation files, and all documents pertaining to children/young people with whom we work.
- We commit to the confidential storage and retention of records, in line with our statutory obligations.
- All staff will be informed of how long each type of record must be kept
- A log will be maintained of the records being stored
- An appropriate person will be appointed with responsibility to store and maintain the records
- All records will be dated and signed by the appropriate person
- Records relating to accidents or incidents will be retained for 2 years.
- Records relating to complaints or incidents involving children/young people will be retained for 5 years or until the impacted individual reaches the age of 21.





## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE OR A PARENT/CARER

- We are committed to the appropriate, timely, and consistent communication with parents, carers, and educators of the young people with whom we work.
  - We are committed to involving parents/carers and young people in our processes and project development.
  - We will create opportunities for children and young people, and their guardians, to input their suggestions and perspectives in conversations about issues that impact them.
  - Parents/carers are invited to all rehearsals and performances that involve their children to ensure transparency and to nurture open lines of communication.
  - Communication will be undertaken by a designated, appointed point of contact, on a rota basis to ensure availability over seven days of the week.
  - Parents/carers will have access to the contact details of all designated points-of-contact.
  - Communication will be timely – new information or information reports will be conveyed to parents/carers immediately, and responses to concerns will be addressed within 4 hours.
  - All communications will be culturally and linguistically appropriate, and will consider the specific needs of the individual with whom we are communicating.
  - We are committed to communicating with parents/carers and the children with whom we work:
    - In a manner that is warm and professional;
    - Without excuses;
    - Without emotional distance;
    - Using appropriate body language.
  - When communication has been with a child or young person, we commit to checking in with parents/carers or educators to ensure the information has been received and understood.
  - Children/young people and parents/carers or educators will be given opportunities to feedback on the work we have done, or are planning to do, with the assurance of confidentiality. We are committed to reviewing this feedback comprehensively, and acting on feedback where possible.
- 

## CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

- At Blacklight, we want all of our members to feel happy, safe and secure so that they can benefit fully from their time with us, and be enabled to contribute wholeheartedly to our process and work.
- We aim, at all times, to behave appropriately and warmly towards each other and to support one another both personally and professionally. As cast/crew members, we are mindful that our behaviour towards children working with us should always be above reproach and we acknowledge the need to exercise prudence in our dealings with such children.
- We subscribe to the following good practice in this area:
  - Our communication with children and young people will be respectful, and will acknowledge the autonomy and dignity of the child or young person. We commit to listening to the young people with whom we work, and actively promoting their input. Attitudes or communications that are teasing, taunting, or otherwise damaging will not be tolerated.
  - When the need arises to work with a child alone it is wise to let another member of cast/crew know that the meeting is happening and where it will be taking place. The venue should, if at all possible, have a window and, if this is not so, a door should be left ajar if this is appropriate to the meeting;
  - It is good practice to avoid unnecessary physical contact with children working with us. We acknowledge, however, that it is neither practical nor desirable to suggest that there should be no physical contact and we would not wish to see a distressed student deprived of a reassuring or comforting touch because of a fear of physical contact. Where a child indicates, however, that s/he is uncomfortable with such contact it should never take place. Additionally, it is prudent to avoid any physical contact which might be open to misinterpretation by the child or by others;
  - Where physical contact is required to maintain the safety of the child or others around him/her that safety must take precedence over all other considerations;
  - There should never be any physical response to misbehaviour, whatever the provocation, except where it is required to maintain the safety of the child or that of others;
  - If it is necessary to administer first-aid this is best done with another person present. The welfare of the child is, however, paramount, and intervention should never be delayed because there is no other adult present;
  - It is inevitable that some of our work will involve the use of sensitive materials and it is very difficult to anticipate when these might impact negatively on children working with us. If the material to be used is very contentious, and if there are concerns about any child in relation to it, it is

good practice to consult, in the first instance, with the affiliate organisation or company director.

- All members of cast/crew are advised that they should not allow children working with us to have access to cast/crew personal mobile phone numbers or to their personal e mail addresses. If contact via mobile phone is necessary, a mobile phone (or a SIM card) provided by the company should be used.
- All members of cast/crew are advised that they should not communicate with children working with us via their personal Social Network pages and that they should exercise prudence in posting personal information which, if posted, should be secured so that children cannot have any access to it.
- When working digitally, all cast/crew must operate within the platform designated by the company, and must communicate via the meeting host. All cast/crew are required to dress appropriately, and to moderate their language and the content of their speech according to company training.

