



**SAFEGUARDING POLICY (2023)**  
**Reviewed and updated August 2023 by MHW**

# 1. Statement, Definitions, Aims and Implementation

## 1.1 Statement and Definitions

Big Difference Company believes that every child, young person or adult at risk has at all times and in all situations the right to feel safe and protected from any situation or practice that could result in the person being physically or psychologically damaged.

It is committed to ensuring that in the carrying out of its work all workers uphold the aims of the Big Difference Company Safeguarding Protection Policy.

## 1.2 Definitions

**“Child”** and **“children”** refers to any person under the age of 18. **“Adult(s) at risk”** refers to anyone who is aged 18 and over who: is, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation. This may include people with learning disabilities, sensory impairments, mental health needs, older people and people with a physical disability or impairment. It may also include individuals affected by the circumstances that they are living in. This definition is not exhaustive. It is also noted that an individual’s level of vulnerability, and therefore needs, can vary over time dependent on the circumstances they are experiencing.

The term **“safeguarding”** is a shortening of **“safeguarding and promoting the welfare of”**. Working Together To Safeguard Children 2018 defines safeguarding children as: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children’s health or development; ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. The Care Act 2014 defines safeguarding adults as protecting an adult’s right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Adults have a right to self-determination, meaning that adults may choose not to act at all to protect themselves, or refuse outside support such as safeguarding measures. This makes the matter of safeguarding adults more complex. Big Difference Company recognises this issue and acknowledges an adult’s right to self-determination.

This policy applies to all Big Difference Company employees, trustees, freelance workers, and volunteers (herein referred to as **“workers”**).

This policy has been prepared in accordance with Working Together To Safeguard Children 2018 and The Care Act 2014, as well as other legislative requirements including, but not limited to, The Children Act 1989, The Children Act 2004 and Mental Capacity Act 2005.

This policy has been approved by the Big Difference Company Board of Trustees.

### **1.3 Policy Aims**

- To establish a clear set of guidelines and a code of conduct.
- To ensure that in delivering our work we provide a safe, respectful environment for all.
- To support all workers so that they can make informed and confident decisions in response to Safeguarding issues.
- To ensure that workers are appropriately experienced and supported when carrying out work on behalf of Big Difference Company, their backgrounds checked if necessary and that they are protected from situations that could result in unnecessary risk for either worker or those that we work with.

### **1.4 How we will implement the policy**

In carrying out its work, Big Difference Company will ensure that Safeguarding matters are discussed, and roles and responsibilities clarified: this will include providing freelance/session workers with this policy as well as assessing project partners working practices and policies. This is in order to make sure that protection issues and understanding of them is embedded into our practice and that of our partners.

- Big Difference Company will review and update its Policy on an annual basis or whenever there is a change in safeguarding legislation, a significant safeguarding incident, or significant organisational change.
- Big Difference Company will provide access to training if required, discussion or other support for workers – including signposting to external training.
- Big Difference Company will make sure that all workers have read and understand the most recent company safeguarding policy.
- Big Difference Company will make sure that people we work with, where relevant, are taking safeguarding seriously.
- Big Difference Company workers will be aware of, and prepared to put into operation, the procedures detailed in this policy.

### **1.5 Safeguarding Officer Information**

**Big Difference Company Safeguarding Officer: Michael Harris-Wakelam**

The role of the Safeguarding Officer is:

- to oversee the maintenance and updating of the Safeguarding Policy;
- to ensure that all workers have read and understood the policy;
- to ensure relevant checks are carried out on workers;
- to keep records of any incident or information relevant to child, young person, or adult at risk protection in line with data protection, legal requirements and best practice.

## 2. PROCEDURES

### 2.1 Standards of Conduct

Big Difference Company requires all workers to whom the policy applies to be particularly aware of Safeguarding issues – it must be embedded into worker practice.

Workers will conduct themselves:

\* Professionally                      \*Sensitively                      and                      \*With Knowledge

Workers will have read and understood the Big Difference Standards of Conduct Policy and considered how it impacts on Safeguarding matters.

### 2.2 Keeping Everyone Safe

- Big Difference Company will perform DBS checks on employees who are working with or in regular contact with children or adults at risk.
- Workers who have been DBS checked must not unnecessarily spend excessive amounts of time alone with children or adults at risk.
- Other workers must never spend time alone with children or adults at risk.

Workers must:

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with project participants, clients and audiences.
- Avoid having to transport young people unless this is planned and managed. **Never travel alone with one young or vulnerable person except in the case of an emergency** and in this case, you must inform another Big Difference Company employee immediately.
- Always ensure that the relevant consents are in place: e.g. for media / photographic purposes / travel
- Act as a good role model and treat all children and adults at risk with respect and dignity.
- Be familiar with the correct procedures to be followed in the event of an accident, complaint or alleged or suspected incident of abuse. Keep clear written records of any allegations that a child or adult at risk may make (as detailed below)
- Never meet with children, young people outside organised events, unless it is with the knowledge and consent of the parents, partner organisation and Big Difference Company.
- Never make suggestive comments about, or to, a child or young person, even in fun.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Intervene in the event of any other worker is not adhering to any of the principles above.
- Intervene in the event of abuse, neglect or maltreatment from an outside party.

## **2.2 Project Partners**

In most cases where Big Difference Company is working with a project partner on the delivery of a project, the project partner themselves is ultimately responsible for the welfare of the participants in the projects. However, Big Difference Company still takes responsibility to interrogate the policy and practice of their project partners.

In all cases where Big Difference Company is working with a project partner to deliver a project, Big Difference Company should seek to assess the suitability of the project partner's safeguarding policies for the project that is being undertaken. When Big Difference Company is working with a project partner to deliver a project for children or adults at risk the project partner's policy and procedures should be held on file for the duration of the partnership alongside contact information for the project partner's designated safeguarding lead.

In the event of Big Difference Company deeming the project partner's safeguarding policy unsuitable for the project that is being undertaken, Big Difference Company will either provide a safeguarding partnership agreement (such as The UK Kids' Comedy Festival Venue Safeguarding Agreement) or cease to work with the project partner.

Safeguarding partnership agreements will make the project partner aware of their role and responsibilities in safeguarding in line with Big Difference Company's policy and designate a safeguarding officer within the project partner. Any agreement will last for the duration of the partnership and should be reviewed annually.

In any case, Big Difference Company will signpost its own safeguarding policy and best practice guides (such as Leicester Comedy Festival Venue Best Practice Guide).

## **2. What to Do and Who to Tell – when and how**

### **What to do if abuse is suspected**

### **What to do if someone discloses information to you \***

For most projects Big Difference Company workers will be working with project partners that are themselves ultimately responsible for the welfare of the young people involved in projects. However, Big Difference Company expects its workers to understand how to respond in any situation that may arise.

### **What to do if a service user/participant discloses information to you**

In Many cases abuse and neglect goes unreported at the time, and in most cases a friend or relative will be confided in. However, in the event that this happens in the context of Big Difference Company work:

Firstly, DO provide the time and space necessary to listen to the person concerned.

**As soon as possible during the conversation you must:**

Re-assure the person that they are right to have chosen to confide in someone

Be honest with them, which will involve letting them know that you will have to tell someone else about what they have said

**Do Not Promise Confidentiality\*\* :**

It is suggested that often in this situation the person confiding asks this. This is understandable but you must be honest and open about the need to tell someone else. You will need to handle the situation sensitively.

**You must take seriously any complaint or allegation:**

However, never interrogate or question the person other than to clarify your understanding of what they are saying or what they mean. In particular, do not ask leading questions

As soon as possible after you have been confided in you must make a written note of what was said, using the persons own words. Do not trivialise or exaggerate what you have been told. This is particularly important in order not to jeopardise any investigations that follow.

To Clarify - **it is not your role to investigate** - but to pass on all information to the relevant bodies or people.

You will be discreet.

You will bring the matter to the attention **only** of the necessary people. These people are:

- 1 - the Big Difference Company Safeguarding Officer who will help to decide on a course of action
- 2 - the project partner responsible for the welfare of child, young or vulnerable person in their care: this will in most cases be their Child Protection officer, but it could be the lead project worker, teacher, support worker

It is important for you to be aware that individual workers are not responsible for furthering investigations.

**What to do if you have concerns about a vulnerable person, or if you have concerns about a BDC co-worker or a project partner**

Generally, you should raise concerns first with the Big Difference Safeguarding Officer - who will help decide upon a course of action. This is likely to include informing relevant project partners as well as other relevant bodies.

You might however use your judgement and decide that immediate action is needed. Find a relevant person from the project partner group (i.e. teacher / youth or support worker), share your concerns with them, or a BDC colleague. Just remember, that the safety of vulnerable people is the most important thing. Always and as soon as you are able let the Big Difference

Company Safeguarding Officer know what has happened. Together you will decide upon a course of action.

Big Difference Company will keep the relevant notes and information securely on file in line with data protection and best practice guidelines. All workers will take responsibility for ensuring that this happens.

**What to do in the case of: a person making a complaint or allegation about you or another Big Difference Company worker**

Where allegations are made another Big Difference Company worker must be informed immediately – this may mean the Big Difference Company Safeguarding Officer if they are there, or it could mean that another worker who is working on the project is informed. It may also require that a project partner colleague is informed immediately.

The nature of the allegations may require that the worker against whom to complaints/allegations have been made will need to leave the situation – this decision should be taken in conjunction with colleagues.

Workers must as soon as possible make a note of what was said or alleged. Do not trivialise or exaggerate what has been said. Make note of all other details as relevant to the situation and what occurred – follow the advice above.

The Big Difference Company Safeguarding Officer must be informed of the situation as soon as possible. They will decide upon a course of action, which may include informing relevant project partner individuals as well as other relevant bodies

**In all cases you must be aware that your first commitment is to the welfare of the child, young or vulnerable person concerned.**

**IF ALEGATIONS OR CONCERNS INVOLVE THE SAFEGUARDING OFFICER A TRUSTEE WILL BE INFORMED IMMEDIATELY AND THEY WILL DECIDE UPON THE APPROPRIATE COURSE OF ACTION**

\* Disclosure - as used here - is the term officially used to describe the situation when a person reveals information to another person about a situation of abuse or neglect

\*\* It is both your, and Big Difference Company's, legal and professional obligation to inform the relevant bodies (and only the relevant bodies) when a disclosure has been made.