



China Plate Artist Wellbeing Policy

&

Guidelines/resources for producers, staff and artists on working practices

Last updated: January 2019

Written by China Plate Senior Producer Rosie Kelly. Created in consultation with Artist Wellbeing Practitioner Lou Platt.

Further input from Nikki Disney, Dr Clark Baim, Griffyn Gilligan and Kaya Stanley Money

Supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.



Overview:

China Plate's mission is to **challenge the way performance is made, who it's made by and who gets to experience it**. As part of this mission, we are committed to enabling and facilitating professional, ethical and productive working environments for artists that stimulate creative freedom and risk taking whilst safeguarding physical / mental health and wellbeing.

This policy and list of resources aims to provide practical guidelines for safe practice and a duty of care for lead artists (the lead practitioner on a project), creative team members and China Plate employees, in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. It is intended to allow for relaxed, robust and open dialogue to happen around wellbeing and care.

It will be implemented and revisited throughout the entire creative process, from project inception to touring, in conjunction with the specific needs of the production and creative team.

This policy is created for internal use (all staff, artists, creatives working under auspices of China Plate projects / productions) and also in order to promote our values in the wider sector.

Notes:

This policy is particularly relevant to artist led, studio scale work – usually (but not exclusively) using devising processes within the rehearsal room. China Plate intends to update the policy in due course to cover mid-scale productions and companies.

This document is open to change if/when necessary and should be updated in consultation with China Plate's Senior Producer, Artistic Directors and external consultants.

Every China Plate production/project is assigned an executive producer, a lead producer and a lead artist. The executive producer maintains artist partnerships and strategic planning, and provides supervisory support to the lead producer. The lead producer oversees and manages the production, including project management, fundraising, financial management, tour booking and future planning. The lead artist is the main point of contact regarding planning, decision making and creative direction - this can be an individual artist or an established company. If the lead artist is a company of more than one person, a specific member of that company will be selected as the main contact for the implementation of this policy.

The use of the term 'company members' in this policy refers to anyone employed to work by China Plate on a specific production. This includes (but is not limited to) the creative team, technical team and China Plate staff working on that project.

This policy will be directly implemented on productions/plays produced by China Plate, where a lead artist and company are employed. However the values and approaches within this policy will inform other China Plate projects including artist development programmes, training courses and festivals.



Implementation of this policy has the potential to generate a large volume of personal data, which will be treated on a strictly confidential basis, and only shared with the express permission of the individuals involved.

This policy adheres to China Plate's Equal Opportunities Policy and Action Plan.



China Plate Artist Wellbeing Policy

Company duty of care relating to artist wellbeing:

China Plate's core values are:

- Quality and expertise
- Collaboration and connectivity
- Integrity and courage
- Inclusivity and openness
- Diligence and generosity

China Plate is committed to the following principles and values within working environments and relationships:

- Mutual trust and respect between all professionals
- Transparency and open communication
- Professionalism
- Ethical practice
- Creating a safe environment where care is prioritised

China Plate pledges to promote these principles and values through:

- Active listening
- Being responsive
- Proactively finding the best ways of working
- Holding and promoting clear boundaries

This includes:

- Implementing and facilitating a Company Wellbeing Strategy for each production or project, created in discussion with the lead artist, and covering the wellbeing of all company members and China Plate staff assigned to that project
- Empowering artists' awareness of and responsibility for their own wellbeing
- Seeking to create an inclusive environment in which the creativity of all (whether as artists, audiences, participants or staff members) can flourish. We recognise that particular attention may be needed in cases where a company member is in a minority within the workplace. This is in line with China Plate's Equal Opportunities Policy and Action Plan
- Considering wellbeing at the point of budget creation and ensuring that any decisions/plans made around wellbeing has been as a result



of integrated planning from project inception

- Including a contingency for access and wellbeing in all funding applications going forward, in order to work towards a fully inclusive casting and recruitment process, and to provide support for any unforeseen issues that may arise within the production process for company members relating to mental health/wellbeing
- Providing all China Plate producers with Mental Health First Aid training, and offering permanent staff access to training related to mental health, wellbeing and inclusivity (eg, gender positivity training; disability and equality training; Race, ethnicity and cultural awareness training)
- Disseminating a Health and Wellbeing declaration form to all company members prior to the contracting process
- Disseminating an access audit to all company members prior to the contracting process
- Defining and responding where possible to specific needs of company members at the point of contracting, and throughout the production process
- Facilitating flexible working hours within rehearsal and production schedules when required and where possible
- Working with Artist Wellbeing Practitioners/therapeutic care and/or industry specialists on developing a Company Wellbeing Strategy and ethical practice relating to productions and projects, when required



China Plate staff and artist guidelines related to artist/company wellbeing

The executive producer and lead producer will create a Company Wellbeing Strategy for each production and project that covers all company members employed by the company on a project/production. This is created in discussion with the lead artist and in line with China Plate's pledged duty of care to artist wellbeing. A Company Wellbeing Strategy is strictly confidential, but any offers of support within it should be communicated to all company members prior to production commencement.

The intention of the Company Wellbeing Strategy is to empower the artists' awareness of and responsibility for their own wellbeing.

From our experience, this needs particular attention when working with artists using autobiographical material, as the likelihood of a detrimental effect on their or others' wellbeing or mental health is higher in these cases. However, the process will apply to all productions, be they biographical or fictionalised work, as company wellbeing and mental health may still be affected in these instances.

Artist and company wellbeing should be considered from project inception, and contingency for wellbeing and/or specific provision should be written into project budgets when possible.

It is acknowledged that the Company Wellbeing Strategy is subject to change as the project progresses, in response to changing circumstances and unforeseen company member needs. In cases where China Plate can not offer unforeseen care due to budgetary constraints, they will endeavour to work with the artist/company member to provide support where possible (ie, signposting to relevant external support).

Every production will adhere to a basic Company Wellbeing Strategy that includes:

1. A commitment to China Plate's stated principles and values, as outlined in the Artist Wellbeing Policy
2. Budgeted contingency for therapeutic care when not directly integrated into the process
3. Dissemination of China Plate's Health and Wellbeing declaration form and access audit prior to the contracting process
4. Assignment of a China Plate producer (usually the lead producer) as the main point of contact regarding health and wellbeing provision
5. Assignment of an additional China Plate staff member (not directly working on the project) as an alternative contact regarding wellbeing and health matters (should a company member feel uncomfortable speaking to the project producer)
6. An agreement on rehearsal room environment including:
 - access provision
 - daily rehearsal and production week working hours
 - personal provision within rehearsal room
 - clarification of roles and expectations within the rehearsal room and schedule
 - inclusion of the [Equity Safe Space Document](#) within the working space



7. Discussion around preferred methods of audience / media feedback and reviews

A more detailed or bespoke Company Wellbeing Strategy may also include:

1. Flexible working hours or rehearsal schedules – agreement that the company will endeavour to facilitate flexible working hours for company members if/when needed and where possible
2. Integration of therapeutic and/or creative care into working process (eg, Artist Wellbeing Practitioner*, Counsellor, Dramatherapist, Psychodramatist)
3. Guidelines to working with Intimacy and Sex Scenes (Ita O'Brian) or offer/provision of Intimacy/Movement Director during rehearsals
4. Integration of professional/clinical consultants (eg, medical, educational, etc) into creative process (to ensure ethical practice regarding audiences, marketing materials, venue communications, etc)
5. Offer or provision of Artistic Associate* during rehearsals/production
6. Communication of specific needs to rehearsal/touring venues concerning the wellbeing of the entire company, specific company members, venue staff and/or audience/participants. This may include a specific code of conduct prepared by the company, pre-show information, access provision, break out spaces (for company and/or audience), pre-show announcements, trigger warnings, freesheets, etc
7. Offer of training in rehearsal room techniques around creative team wellbeing (eg, check in and check out, PACE)*

China Plate staff, artists and/or creative team members will be made aware that there are resources available to them should they think that any artist's or creative team member's physical or mental health is at risk due to conditions, circumstances or pressures related to the production. These resources are there not only to assess safe working practices, but also to assess the implications of either continuing or ending activity. This assessment will always be an open, honest and transparent discussion between all parties involved.

**(see additional information and resources for further information)*



Additional information and resources for China Plate staff and artists

Examples of collaborators / additional roles within the rehearsal room

What is an Artist Wellbeing Practitioner?

An Artist Wellbeing Practitioner (AWP) works closely with artists in order to provide emotional and psychological support to the artists themselves and those they work with. An AWP also takes into consideration the art itself and works with the artist to help them take safe yet radical risks. An AWP will use compassionate discussion, therapeutic techniques, strategy and policy, in order to bring about revolutionary and radical care for artists, audiences and others. This can be particularly relevant when working with autobiographical, semi-autobiographical and/or biographical material, but is not exclusive to this as fictionalized work can often touch the personal spirit in powerful ways. An AWP can support individual artists, creative teams, producing companies and arts-based institutions. An AWP is someone who has experience / training in therapeutic support (i.e. a Counsellor, Dramatherapist, Psychotherapist).

What is an Artistic Associate?

When an artist has numerous roles within the creative process/rehearsal room (e.g. writer, performer, subject, director), or has other needs related to access requirements or physical/emotional wellbeing, then an Artistic Associate may be needed in order to help relieve added pressures and/or provide support.

Examples of techniques for wellbeing within the rehearsal room

NB, Different techniques will be appropriate for different creative teams and rehearsal room/production environments. All creative team members should be invited to take part.

Check in and Check outs

In the simplest form, Check Ins/Outs are 15-30 minute moments at the beginning and end of each creative day - be that devising, rehearsing or performing - which aim to provide a practical container that holds and encourages authenticity, connectivity, open-communication, clarity, self and other-awareness, and empathy. They can provide a moment to express unresolved conflict; to acknowledge strengths and achievements; to voice uncertainties, fears and trepidations.

*If Check in and Check out is adopted by the company, responsible facilitation is **essential** for safe practice. It should, when possible, be taught to the team by an Artist Wellbeing Practitioner or someone trained in safe facilitation of the process. To find out more about Check-Ins/Outs see www.artistwellbeing.com/blog*

P.A.C.E.

When the creative process becomes stressful, and anxiety levels rise, it can be really useful to PACE yourself. This is an acronym that stands for four useful approaches/ways of being to remember when bogged down in the dark depths of creation.

P is for Playful.



A is for Accepting.

C is for Curious.

E is for Empathic.

When faced with an artistic or personal block in the process, ask yourself "Am I still being playful? Am I accepting or am I blocking something? Am I being curious about what is happening? Am I being empathic and seeing the situation from someone else's perception?"

7-11 Breathing

This is a method to manage stress and anxiety. The aim is to simply breathe in for less time than you breathe out. Breathing in for 7 and out for 11 is the ultimate aim but this may need building up to. In times of high anxiety and trauma, lung capacity can be compromised and so 7-11 may initially be a bit too much so start with a lower number, 2:4, and then slowly build it up: 2:4, 4:6, 7:11. The theory behind this: We have two types of nervous system; the SNS (sympathetic nervous system) and the PNS (parasympathetic nervous system). The SNS comes online when in times of stress and releases hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol - really useful when we need to take flight, fight or freeze. Some artists thrive off this but staying in this state can often lead to burn-out and anxiety. In contrast the PNS comes online when no threat is detected and releases hormones such as serotonin and oxytocin which promote feelings of safety and security, in turn leading to enhanced abilities to learn, play, create, love, take safe risks and relate to self & others in a free-flowing way. So how is our breath connected to these systems? Our breath can be a powerful tool that can reactivate our PNS when in times of stress. The inbreath is more associated to triggering the SNS (i.e. when shocked we take *in* a sharp quick breath), and the outbreath is more associated to the PNS (i.e. when relieved/de-stressed we send *out* a sigh of relief). And so by mindfully paying more attention to the *outbreath* we can pro-actively re-calibrate our nervous systems and restore feelings of calm and creativity. This takes practice and is a mindful activity. The more you do it, focusing on the outbreath and feelings of calm, the more you will strengthen this positive internal trigger. Start with small numbers and then build it up. This is also a good way to manage physical pain too.



List of resources for producers and artists

MIND

A charity providing advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Artist Wellbeing

Website of Artist Wellbeing Practitioner Lou Platt, incl blog posts from the industry on wellbeing

<https://www.artistwellbeing.com/>

MAYK's Mental Health Policy

<http://www.mayk.org.uk/news/mayks-mental-health-policy>

Arts Minds

An information hub with practical resources for those working in the arts, set up by BAPAM, Equity, The Stage and Spotlight

<http://www.artsminds.co.uk/>

The Actor's Centre Mental Health Support

Weekly group sessions and monthly wellbeing drop in sessions for anyone working in the arts

<https://www.actorscentre.co.uk/about/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support>

Playing Sane

A website dedicated to the relationship between mental health and acting, aiming to offer information and signposting to actors, their colleagues and carers across the industry.

<https://www.playingsane.org/about/>

Theatre helpline

24 hour confidential service providing advice & support for any theatre professional

<http://theatrehelpline.org/>

UK Theatre and SOLT guidance, report and resources

Encouraging safe and supporting working practices

<https://uktheatre.org/theatre-industry/guidance-reports-and-resources/safe-and-supportive-working-practices/>

Ita O'Brien

Intimacy Coordinator and movement director

<https://www.itaobrien.com/>

Stage Weight Wellbeing

Links, articles and posts around the wellbeing of artists by Dramatherapist Nikki Disney

<http://www.nikkidisney.com/stageweight>



This document provides a basic template for creating a company wellbeing strategy – not all questions will be relevant to all productions and the strategy can be added to/amended to suit specific productions. It is to be completed by the executive and/or lead producer in discussion with the lead artist. It can be revisited and updated throughout the development /production / touring process. This form is STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL and should only be accessible to the designated lead artist (or designated contact within a company), executive producer and lead producer.

Company wellbeing strategy

Project name:

Lead artist/company <i>(incl name of designated lead artist within company if required)</i>	
China Plate executive producer	
China Plate lead producer	
China Plate alternative contact	
Last updated	

Considerations - material:

<p>What is the show about?</p> <p>Why this show? Why you? Why now?</p> <p><i>(brief details)</i></p>	
<p>Is the show autobiographical? If yes, is it based on a traumatic event?</p> <p><i>(brief details)</i></p>	
<p>Who is going to be involved?</p> <p>What are the creative teams roles?</p> <p>Will anyone be working in multiple creative roles within the rehearsal/production/touring period <i>(eg, writer/director/performer/workshop leader/subject etc)</i></p> <p><i>(if known or imagined...)</i></p>	

<p>Is there going to be any wrap-around or outreach activity?</p> <p><i>(if known or imagined)</i></p>	
<p>What considerations are needed regarding the sensitivity of the source material and/or content?</p> <p><i>(eg, material/stories with potential for negative/triggering impact on core team, participants, audiences, etc.)</i></p>	
<p>What ethical considerations are there regarding the source material and/or production?</p> <p><i>(eg, are you addressing a specific demographic of people? Are you publicising other people's stories? Are you using verbatim text? etc)</i></p>	
<p>What are the considerations around wrap-around/outreach activity?</p> <p><i>(eg, are you working with a specific demographic of participants? Are you working with triggering material?)</i></p>	

Considerations - creative team:

<p>Considering the content of the show, are there any themes or topics that the creative team should be made of aware of on initial approach?</p> <p><i>(ie, at the point of casting, initial conversations, etc)</i></p>	
<p>Are there any considerations for the creative team, gathered from the Health and Wellbeing declaration forms?</p> <p>Are there any other declared personal matters to consider?</p> <p><i>(eg, childcare responsibilities, duties of care, etc)</i></p>	

Are there any considerations/requirements for the creative team, gathered from the access audit?	
Are there any challenges that the creative team might face during the rehearsal/production/touring period? <i>(eg, outdoor working, durational performances, nudity, scenes of an intimate/sexual nature, intensive schedule, non-typical working environment, etc)</i>	

Actions:

NB, any actions or schedules within the strategy of care should be communicated to the creative team (privately if specific to one person) prior to the start of each rehearsal/production/touring period. NB, Do not share this document.

Access provision in place for creative team	
Typical working hours and schedule	
Required practical provisions in rehearsal room <i>(eg, additional break out space, specific seating, artistic associate, etc)</i>	
Professional consultants engaged in the project Include details of involvement. <i>(eg, medical/education/etc)</i>	
Therapeutic/creative care/consultants engaged in the project. Include details of involvement. <i>(eg, Artist Wellbeing Practitioner, Counsellor, Intimacy Director, etc)</i>	
Support/information in place regarding the ethical considerations of the source	

<p>material for:</p> <p>1) Creative team <i>(eg, signposting to support, briefing on audiences and potential impact on audiences, etc)</i></p> <p>2) Audiences <i>(eg, freesheet information, signage, FOH briefings, plans for dealing with impact on audiences, etc)</i></p> <p>3) Venue staff/crew <i>(eg, venue staff briefings, incl operators, FOH staff, etc)</i></p>	
Agreed/discussed methods/preferences for audience feedback and reviews	
Support in place regarding any wrap around/outreach activity	
Other plans for care agreed with lead artist	
Any actions discussed, but not implemented at this time	

Evaluation and forward planning:

Ongoing evaluation/analysis of process <i>(if applicable)</i>	
Things to consider going forward? <i>(eg, into next phase of development, touring, etc)</i>	