

GLOUCESTERSHIRE DANCE

Protection of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Policy Statement

Gloucestershire Dance (GD) has a duty of care to ensure the safety and welfare of every child, young person and vulnerable adult that participates in its programmes.

GD staff members responsible for safeguarding are:

- The Director, and
- The Chair

The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that at least one of these posts is filled at all times.

All children, young people and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse, and must be listened to, treated with respect and taken seriously, so that each situation can be fully evaluated and staff can act in their best interests.

Staff and volunteer checks:

All GD staff and volunteers will be required to complete a CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) Disclosure Form, unless they can provide a Disclosure Certificate from Gloucestershire LEA for a comparable role dated within the previous 3 months. This is a legal requirement and employment may not commence until a Certificate has been issued. From October 2009 on the expiry of current CRB certificates, all staff and volunteers must be registered on the ISA (Independent Safeguarding Authority) database.

Staff and volunteer CRB forms must be renewed every three years. The Business Manager will keep a record of CRB certificate dates of issue for all staff and volunteers and issue reminders when they are due for renewal.

In the case of a gap between CRB checks, for whatever reason, staff and volunteers will not be able to work directly with children, young people or adults and permissions to access GD's computer or hard copy files will be removed until the new CRB certificate is received.

All staff must undertake appropriate Child Protection training and will be made aware of the procedures laid out in the Policy, which must be followed when necessary to ensure that prompt, appropriate and effective help is given to children, young people and vulnerable adults and their families. The Business Manager will keep a record and issue reminders and/or organise appropriate training, after a 3 year lapse from a staff member or volunteer's last training course.

Contractual staff, freelancers and partner organisations:

Where work is sub-contracted or carried out in partnership with others, contracts will ensure adherence to GD's minimum Child Protection standards as outlined in this policy and copies of relevant documentation to evidence this will be required

prior to commencement of work.

Recruitment and induction:

When recruiting, GD will:

- include reference to safeguarding and CRB checks in advertisements
- ensure all posts (including volunteers) have job descriptions and person specifications including a safeguarding statement
- short list based on formal application forms
- base interview questions on job descriptions and person specifications
- comply with GD's equal opportunities policy
- make no formal offer of a job until two references have been received, a CRB check or ISA registration checked, and other appropriate checks completed

Staff and volunteer inductions will include discussion of this policy and responsible staff, as well as location / links to external guidance on working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. All new staff and volunteers will be given a hard copy of GD's staff handbook, including this policy, and be told where policies are kept electronically.

All staff and volunteers will be alerted when any changes are made to the policy and issued with new, amended Staff Handbooks.

Signs and symptoms of abuse:

Some signs and symptoms are common to all forms of abuse - for example low self-esteem. Clusters of possible indicators are particularly important as is duration, intensity and frequency of signs and symptoms.

Physical marks such as hand slap marks, grip marks, bruising in unusual places, black eyes (although these can often be the result of accidents), burns and scalds in unusual positions or in a definite shape, bite marks, multiple or fractures of varying ages.

These are the indicators most likely to be seen by a dance worker.

Poisoning, such as making a child take alcohol or medicine may also be noted. Poor physical care, including inadequate hygiene; inappropriate dress, constant hunger and lack of attention to medical needs may indicate neglect.

Possible behavioural indicators of abuse include a fear of adults generally or certain adults, poor peer relationships and inability to make friends, aggression and acting out, social isolation and withdrawal, pseudo maturity, frozen awareness (a lack of expression and watchfulness), detachment, sleep disturbance, running away, eating disorders, low attainment or sudden drop in school performance, self destructive behaviour, including substance abuse.

The signs and symptoms you note may not indicate abuse but you may have one piece of the jigsaw which is important when added to other people's information. Some children who are being abused may not show any obvious signs or symptoms.

Steps in dealing with disclosure:

Make sure that there is a quiet place to talk where there will be not be interruptions and ensure that the other children, young people or vulnerable adults

in your care are supervised. Remember to:

- Be accessible and receptive
- Listen carefully and ask open, non-specific questions to clarify.
- Keep questions to a minimum and never lead the child, young person or vulnerable adult as leading questions may invalidate their testimony in court.
- Use the words that the child, young person or vulnerable adult uses.
- Take what they say seriously e.g. “this is very serious, I’m sad this has happened to you”.
- Reassure them that they are right to tell e.g. “I’m glad you told me. That was the right thing to do”.
- React calmly as over-reacting can frighten them and compound feelings of fault.
- Check out your understanding with the child, young person or vulnerable adult of what has happened if you are not clear what they are telling you.
- Tell them that they are not to blame. Children, young people and vulnerable adults are the victims of abuse, never the cause.
- Explain what will happen next as clearly as possible.
- Tell them that you are going to get help for them and their family.
- Prepare them for the fact that you must involve others. They will possibly be interviewed by the police and a social worker and may need a medical examination to check that they are okay.
- Explain that you cannot personally protect them, but you will support them in telling the right people to make sure it does not happen again and that you will have to tell someone else.
- Write down details of your conversation with the young person or vulnerable adult immediately to ensure details of the conversation are not forgotten.

Report all suspicions or disclosures within 24 hours to staff members responsible for safeguarding. If unable to do this, report to an appropriate line manager.

Include in the report:

- i. Date and time.
- ii. Your name.
- iii. The name (and date of birth if you know it) of the victim.
- iv. As many contact details as possible for the person (names of family members, addresses, telephone numbers).
- v. Nature of the concern (record what has been said to you by the child, young person or vulnerable adult) Use their own words. Be accurate and be sure to distinguish fact from opinion. Note what you have observed directly (for instance behaviour or injuries). Note the names of any witnesses.
- vi. If it is not the victim making the disclosure, has he/she been spoken to? If so what was said?
- vii. Whether the parents/carers have been contacted and if so what has been said.
- viii. Name of the alleged abuser.

If however, a dance leader discovers a child, young person or vulnerable adult who has unexplained or inconsistent injuries or shows signs of neglect or emotional abuse, they should:

- Inform the person responsible for safeguarding or, if in a school, the school's designated safeguarding staff member immediately.
- If a child needs urgent medical treatment, they must first be taken to Accident and Emergency who should be informed of any suspicions of abuse. The above procedures should then be followed.
- Always keep a record of concerns and what action you took. (These should be confidential except for consultation with the designated leader).
- Note any differences between an injury and the account of how it happened or conflicting versions of events, and be aware of possible differences between children from different cultural backgrounds in the way symptoms may be communicated.

The person responsible for safeguarding must report the matter to the Board of Directors, seek advice externally and share the report with relevant authorities within one week.

Allegation of previous abuse:

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults).

Where such an allegation is made, the same procedures will be followed as detailed above and the matter reported to the social services or the police. This is because other children, young people or vulnerable adults either within or outside the arts, may be at risk from this person.

Suspected abuse by a staff member, volunteer or freelance staff:

Any suspicion that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been abused by either a member of staff, a freelance worker or a volunteer should be treated seriously and reported to the Director and/or person responsible for safeguarding within 24 hours, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child, young person or vulnerable adult and any other person who may be at risk from this person.

If the Director is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the other person responsible for safeguarding, the Chair of the Board/Vice-Chair or appropriate Line Manager if none of these individuals are contactable within the timeframe.

Advice should be sought from the Local Authority Designated Officer within 48 hours. No further investigation must be carried out until that advice has been received.

Internal enquiries and suspension:

The Director will make an immediate recommendation to the Management Board about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended from working with children, young people or vulnerable people pending further enquiries. The Management Board in turn will take a decision within 24 hours on the suggested suspension for duties pending further police and social services enquiries.

All GD staff and volunteers must assist the police and/or social services with their

enquiries, including carrying out an internal enquiry if instructed by the authorities. Internal enquiries will be completed within 28 working days.

Even if social services or police investigation clears the individual concerned of any blame, GD will carry out its own further enquiries to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated to their normal activities and how this can be sensitively handled.

This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Management Board must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults should always remain paramount.

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 and should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people in line with data protection laws. This includes the following people:

- The designated leader.
- The Director of GD.
- The parents/carer of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The person making the allegation.
- Social Services/police.
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Support to deal with the aftermath:

Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children, young people and vulnerable adults, along with parents and members of staff. Use of Helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. Contact Social Services Direct or NSPCC 0800 800 500.

Any party not satisfied with the way the matter has been handled should follow GD's grievance and disciplinary procedures as outlined in the relevant policies.

Use of photographs and/or video:

There is evidence that some people have used events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children, young people and vulnerable adults in exposed positions. It is advisable that all leaders be vigilant, with any concerns being reported to the designated leader.

Permission must always be obtained from parents/carers of children, young people and vulnerable adults before any photographs or videos are taken. Permission must be obtained for each specific event/performance. All photographic and video materials should be kept in a secure place and used solely for the purpose that they were obtained.

Performances that are open to the public must be clearly signposted 'No Photography or Video Recording Permitted'. Schools, parents/carers should be forewarned that they will not be able to take any pictures. Most venues will already have signs displayed.

Review:

This policy will be reviewed annual at Board level, following consultation of Child Protection experts and the latest legislation and best practice guides. Issues arising concerning the performance of the organisation against this policy and / or any changes in law or policy relating to Child Protection will be discussed with staff and volunteers in staff meetings and, where appropriate, further discussed at the Finance & General Purposes sub-committee quarterly meetings.

Next annual review date: February 2010

Definitions:

Child: A child is defined as up to and including the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

Young Person: The term acknowledges that individuals, e.g. 16 or 17 year olds may not consider themselves as children and are often referred to as young people.

Vulnerable Adult: Persons aged 18 or over who are or who may be in need of community care services because of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who are or who may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Physical Abuse: May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Also includes Munchausen Syndrome by proxy, whereby a parent feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health in a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Emotional Abuse: Persistent emotional ill-treatment which is likely to cause serious harm to a child, young person or vulnerable adult's emotional development. May involve conveying that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate and cause them to feel frightened, in danger, be exploited or corrupted.

Sexual Abuse: Forcing or enticing a child, young person or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. May involve physical contact, penetrative or non-penetrative acts, also includes involving them in watching pornographic material or watching sexual acts.

Neglect: The persistent failure to meet a child, young person or vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. May involve a parent or carer failing to provide food, shelter and clothing, or a failure to protect from physical harm and danger, or allow access to medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, their basic emotional needs