



PERFORMING ARTS

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1 Policy Statement

1.1 Responsibilities

The On Stage Performing Arts known as **On Stage PA** will:

- Accept the moral and legal responsibility to implement procedures to provide a duty of care for young people, safeguard their well-being and protect them from abuse.
- Recruit, train and supervise its employees and volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect young people from abuse and themselves against false allegations.
- Respond to any allegations appropriately and implement the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures.

1.2 Principles

The guidance given in the procedures is based on the following principles:

- The welfare of young people is the primary concern.
- All young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, race origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- It is the responsibility of the child protection experts to determine whether or not abuse has taken place but it is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns.
- All incidents of suspicious poor practice and allegations should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

2 Recruitment, Employment and Deployment of Staff and Volunteers to Work with Children and Young People

2.1 Introduction

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with young people. The same procedures will be adopted whether staff is paid or unpaid, full or part time.



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2.2 Pre-recruitment Checks

The following pre-recruitment checks to staff will always be carried out:

Applications

All applicants whether for paid or voluntary, full or part-time positions will be asked to provide the following information:

- Name, address and National Insurance Number (to confirm identity and right to work).
- Relevant experience, qualifications and training undertaken.
- Listing of past career or involvement in performing arts (to confirm experience and identify any gaps).
- Any criminal record.
- The names of at least two people (not relatives) willing to provide written references that comment on the applicant's previous experience of and suitability for working with children and young people.
- Any former involvement with performing arts.
- Their consent to a DBS check being undertaken.
- Their consent to abide by these procedures.

Applicants will be advised that failure to disclose information or subsequent failure to conform to these procedures will result in disciplinary action and possible exclusion from working for the **On Stage PA**.

2.3a Checks and References

All successful applicants for both paid or voluntary, full or part-time positions will be required to undergo a DBS check. This will be provided free of charge, if those individuals are working directly on behalf of the **On Stage PA**.

2.3b Chaperones

All chaperones will be DBS checked (DBS checks from other companies are acceptable so long as they are no older than 3 years old) or will be a licensed chaperone. Chaperones will be provided with appropriate training of the job role through discussion with the principal and familiarisation with the venue.



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2.4 Interview and Induction

Applicants for full and part-time positions will be asked to attend a formal interview. The interview process will:

- Substantiated the qualifications of the applicant.
- Assess the suitability of the applicant's previous experience.
- Obtain formal approval for a DBS check to be undertaken.

All staff, paid or voluntary will undergo a formal or informal induction in which:

- A profile to identify training needs is completed.
- The expectations, roles and responsibilities of the job are clarified.
- Child protection procedures are explained and training needs established.

Promoting Good Practice with Young People

3.1 Introduction

The following paragraphs indicate the Code of Practice that will be implemented by the **On Stage PA** as part of its aim to prevent child abuse.

3.2 Good Practice Guidelines

All personnel in performing arts should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate:

Good practice means

- Always working in an open environment – avoid private or unobserved situations. Encourage an open environment (e.g. no secrets).
- Treating all young people equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first – before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with performers (e.g. it not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child).
- Making performing arts fun and enjoyable.



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- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance in performing arts.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible, e.g. for the responsibility of their children during changing. If groups have to be supervised changing, always ensure parents/teachers work within the chaperone ratios given by Cambridgeshire County Council.
- Ensuring that at performances, adults who are not chaperoning should not enter children's rooms.
- Being an excellent role model.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people – avoid excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.

Practice to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in a position of responsibility within **On Stage PA** or the child's parents. For example a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Avoid taking children alone on car journeys, however short.
- Avoid taking children to your home where they will be alone with you.

Never

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.



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- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for children they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.
- Constantly shout at and/or taunt a young person to 'keep control'.

Be Aware

It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the pupils involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

If any of the following incidents should occur, you should report them immediately to another colleague and make a written note of the event. Parents or carers should be informed of the incident.

- If you accidentally hurt a person.
- He/she seems distressed in any manner.
- Appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a performer misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.



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Recognition of Poor Practice, Abuse and Bullying

4.1 Introduction

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. The staff and volunteers in performing arts, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, are not experts at such recognition. However they do have a responsibility to act if they have any concern about the behaviour of someone (an adult or another child) towards a young person. The **On Stage PA** designated child protection officer will therefore encourage and expect staff to discuss any concern they may have about the welfare of a person immediately with the designated person.

4.2 Abuse

Abuse can happen wherever there are young people and young people of any age can be abused. The effects of abuse can be damaging long term.

Abuse and Neglect

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

- **Neglect** – where adults fail to meet a child's basic needs like food or warm clothing, fail or refuse to give children love, affection and attention. Children might also be constantly left alone or unsupervised.
- **Physical abuse** – where adults physically hurt or injure children by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting or by giving them alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison. Attempted suffocation or drowning also comes within this category. Examples of physical abuse in performing arts maybe when the nature and intensity of dance training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.
- **Sexual abuse** – where girls and boys are abused by adults (both male and female) who use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing children pornographic material (books, videos, pictures) is also a form of sexual abuse. In performing arts dancing which involve physical contact with children could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. The power of the teacher over young performers, if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing.
- **Emotional abuse** – where a child may be constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous and withdrawn. It may also involve a persistent lack of love and affection or constant over-protection that prevents a child from developing socially, as well as within cases of neglect, physical or sexual abuse.



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Emotional abuse in performing arts may occur if children are subjected to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations consistently.

Indicators of abuse

Indications that a child may be being abused include the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Has difficulty in making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other children.
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Loses weight for no apparent reason.
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is not the responsibility of those working for **On Stage PA** to decide that child abuse is occurring but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

4.4 Bullying

It is important to recognise that in some cases of abuse, it may not always be an adult abusing a young person. It can occur that the abuser may be a young person, for example in the case of bullying. Bullying may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. This is defined as *repeated (systematic) aggressive verbal, psychological or physical conduct by an individual or group against another person or persons.*

Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons being overweight, physically small or having a disability. Belonging to a different race, faith or culture can result in overt racism.

Bullies come from all walks of life. Typically, they have low self-esteem, are excitable, aggressive, jealous. Crucially, they have learned how to gain power over others and there is increasing evidence to suggest this can lead to crime.

- A parent who pushes too hard.
- A teacher who places unfair pressure on a person.

Bullying can include:

- Physical: pushing, hitting, kicking and punching etc.
- Verbal: name-calling, spreading rumours, constant teasing and sarcasm.
- Emotional: tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring.
- Racist: taunts, graffiti and gestures.
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact or abusive comments.

There are a number of signs that may indicate that a young person is being bullied:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down.
- A drop off in performance in performing arts.
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing for example on food, cigarettes or alcohol.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.



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5. Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegation

5.1 Introduction

False allegations of abuse do occur. However, if a young person says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a young person is being abused, you should react immediately, and take the allegation seriously.

5.2 Responding to Disclosure

Actions to take:

The person receiving information concerning disclosure should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Tell the child he/she is not to blame and that it was right to tell.
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who has a speech disability and/or differences in language.
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Reassure the child but do not make promises of confidentiality which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Make a full record of what had been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.

Actions to avoid:

The person receiving the disclosure should not:

- Panic.
- Allow your shock or distaste to show.
- Probe for more information than is offered.
- Speculate or make assumptions.
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Approach the alleged abuser.
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets.



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5.3 Responding to Suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working under the auspices of performing arts in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place.

However, there is a responsibility to protect children in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

Sharing Concerns with Parents

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, there may be a reasonable explanation. He/she may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation or divorce or bereavement.

When it is Not Appropriate to Share with Parents

However, there are circumstances in which a young person might be placed at even greater risk if such concerns were shared (e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately). In these situations or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the person in charge as soon as possible and recorded. **Parents should not be contacted if the concern is about sexual abuse. This will be done by the local authority and the police at an appropriate time.**

Designated Officer

On Stage PA has designated Miss Hannah Sharman to be the lead person on Child Protection issues and has completed a voluntary DBS check for quality assurance purposes.

It is the responsibility for the designated person in charge to inform the local authority through the contact centre without delay if abuse is suspected. If the person in charge is not available or the concern is about the person in charge, the person with concerns or being informed of them should immediately phone the social care contact centre on 0345 045 5203. Visit the link <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/children-s-social-care/safeguarding-children-and-child-protection/>

In these circumstances, you do not have to give your name but it is helpful if you can. The social care team, together with the designated person in charge where appropriate, will decide how and when parents or carers will be informed.



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Records and Information

Information passed to the social care team or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern.

Information should include the following:

- The nature of the allegation.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Any times, dates or other relevant information.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay (information given by others).

Reporting the matter to the police or social care department should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the social care department should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the social care member of staff or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow up is needed.

5.4 Allegations against Staff or Volunteers

This includes anyone, working with children in a paid or voluntary capacity. Child abuse...can and does occur outside the family setting. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur within other settings (e.g. sport or other social activities). Recent inquiries indicate that abuse that takes place within a public setting is rarely a one-off event. It is crucial that those involved in performing arts are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action taken. It is important that any concerns for the welfare of the child, arising from abuse or harassment by a member of staff or volunteers, should be reported immediately.

Seek Advice

The designated person may be informed of situations where there is uncertainty about whether the allegation constitutes abuse or not and therefore are unclear about what action to take. There may be circumstances where allegations are about poor practice rather than abuse but those responsible should always consult senior colleagues and gain advice from social care, police or the NSPCC if there is any doubt. Sometimes it may be one of a series of incidents which when added together cause concern.



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Support for the Reporting of Suspected Abuse

It is acknowledged that feelings generated by the discovery that a member of staff or volunteer is, or may be, abusing a child, will raise concerns among other staff or volunteers. This includes the difficulties inherent in reporting such matters.

On Stage PA assures all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith (without malicious intent), reports his or her concern about a colleague's practice or the possibility that a child may be being abused.

Types of Investigation

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff, there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation.
- A child protection investigation.
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

Civil proceedings may also be initiated by the person/family of the person who alleged the abuse.

The results of the police and social services investigation may well influence the partnership's disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action if there are concerns:

The following action should be taken if there are concerns:

Poor Practice

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the designated person will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the designated person, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be referred to Social Care. They will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.
- If the incident of poor practice is suspicious, all details should be recorded and reported to Social Care.



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Suspected Abuse

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the designated person, who will take such steps as are considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The designated person will refer the allegation to social care who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if 'out of hours'.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social care department.
- If the designated person is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made directly to Social Care who will then take responsibility for the action outlined above.

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. This includes the following people:

- Social care/police.
- The designated person in charge.
- The person making the allegation's parents/carers.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused (as appropriate).
- The person making the allegation.
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the abuser is a child) *.
- Seek advice from Social Care on who should approach the alleged abuser.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data Protection Laws e.g. that information is accurate (and is regularly updated), relevant and secure.

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- **On Stage PA** should make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social care inquiries.



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- Irrespective of the findings of the social care or police inquiries **On Stage PA** must assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled with other staff or volunteers. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases **On Stage PA** must reach a decision based on the available information that could suggest, on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children should always remain paramount.

Support to Deal with the 'Aftermath'

Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff. Use of Helplines and support groups, open meetings etc. to maintain an open culture and to help the healing process. The British Association of Counselling Directory may be a useful resource.

Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

5.5 Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegation of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child by a member of staff who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, the organisation should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to social care or the police. This is because other children may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the detail of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

5.6 Action if Bullying is Suspected

The same procedure should be followed as set out in Section 5 if bullying is suspected.

- Action to help the victim and prevent bullying: Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns - help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority – create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).



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Action towards the Bully *if it is another child:*

- Talk with the bully, explain the situation, and try to get the bully to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim.
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.