

The Bristol School of Dancing has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for children all staff, chaperones, parents/legal guardians and volunteers accept their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to ensure that everyone follows procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities. This should be read in conjunction with our Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually and includes the use of photographic and video images.

THE THREE ELEMENTS OF OUR POLICY

Prevention through awareness of each individual child's needs

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

Procedures for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases, of abuse.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of The Bristol School of Dancing and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

PREVENTION

We recognise that the 'entertainment industry' can be a very 'adult' environment and we expect that all staff, chaperones, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and anyone else who comes into contact with children behave in an appropriate manner at all times, and remember that 'The Welfare of the Child is Paramount'.

The Bristol School of Dancing will therefore;

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel welcome and familiar with their environment and are informed of personal (toilets, dressing rooms etc) and emergency arrangements (fire exits, meeting points etc) and any Health and Safety Procedures (dangerous equipment, First Aid etc)
- Inform each child who the appropriate person or people are to speak to should they have any questions, problems or concerns
- Ensure that all children are treated equally and with respect and dignity
- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and unnecessary physical contact with children) and involve/allow parents/chaperones wherever possible, to take responsibility for the child/children they are responsible for (parents must only have responsibility for their own child)
- Recognising the individual needs of the child e.g. recognising when a child may be tired and may need a break
- Ensure that children are supervised appropriately

DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

A child is abused or neglected when somebody inflicts harm, or fails to act to prevent harm. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection.

Physical Abuse – May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after.

Sexual Abuse – Forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening, may involve: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities; or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect – Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Emotional Abuse – The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age and developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, for example witnessing domestic abuse within the home or being bullied, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

PROCEDURES

The Bristol School of Dancing will follow the Child Protection Procedures that have been endorsed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Suspicion of Abuse – If you see or suspect abuse of a child, immediately make this known to the designated individual/manager responsible for child protection.

Disclosure of Abuse – If a child tells you that they or another child or young person is being abused:

- Always stop and listen straight away, show that you take their allegations seriously

- Encourage the child to talk, but do not ask leading questions, interrupt or ask the child to repeat themselves
- Never promise that you will keep what is said confidential or secret – explain that if you are told something very important you will need to sort it out, but that you will only tell the people who need to know
- Record what you have been told accurately and as soon as possible. Use the child's own words if possible. Make a note of the time, location, whether anyone else present and of the child's demeanour
- Ensure that your concerns are reported immediately to the designated individual/manager
- Do not confront the alleged abuser

Handling Allegations

- If a child makes an allegation against a member of staff it must be reported as a matter of urgency to the designated individual/manager for child protection who will refer to the Intake and Assessment team
- If the allegation is against the designated person then the information should be reported to another senior manager or directly to Children's Services (This would generally be referred to the authority in which the alleged incident took place)
- The alleged perpetrator should not be made aware of the allegation at this point

Recording – In all situations the details of allegation or reported incident must be recorded. Make accurate notes of time, dates, incident or disclosure, people involved, what was said and done and by whom, action taken to investigate, further action taken e.g. suspension of individual and if relevant: reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, name of person reporting and to whom it was reported.

The record must be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know.