

## CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

There is a body of legislation, government guidance and government standards designed to ensure that children and vulnerable adults in need are protected from harm. These include:

- Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board (Plymouth City Council)
- Children Act 2004 & Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department for Children, Schools and Families)
- Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport (NSPCC's Children Protection in Sport Unit)
- Care Standards Act 2000 (Department of Health)

Plymouth Dance is committed to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. PD strives to ensure that all children and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst engaged in activities or events delivered by us.

We have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults who participate in our classes, activities and events, so that they do so in a safe and positive atmosphere, free from harassment and bullying.

The implementation of this policy is mandatory for all staff and freelance workers engaged by Plymouth Dance.

The Plymouth Dance Child Protection Officer is June Gamble.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Plymouth Dance accepts the moral and legal responsibility to implement procedures, to provide a duty of care for children and vulnerable adults, safeguard their wellbeing and protect them from abuse when they are engaged in activities delivered by us.

#### Policy Aims

This Child and Vulnerable Adults Policy is provided as part of an induction package to all those engaged, whether paid or unpaid, who will have direct contact with children or vulnerable adults. The aims are:

- Helping to raise awareness of the duty of care responsibilities relating to children or vulnerable adults, in dance.
- Actively encouraging good practice amongst all staff and volunteers of Plymouth Dance, and promote wider awareness wherever possible.

- Endeavour to create a safe and healthy environment at all our activities, avoiding situations where abuse or allegations of abuse may occur.
- Listening to children or vulnerable adults, minimising dangers and working closely with other agencies.
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults, dependant on level of engagement are well informed, supported and trained. All staff, paid or otherwise, will be subject to the relevant screening and checks.

**Objectives to achieve these aims:**

- To provide training and an off-site manual for our staff, enabling them to recognise the potential signs and indicators of abuse and improve good practice.
- Aid all staff to respond sensitively and seriously to a child or vulnerable adult who discloses information about abuse and be confident and able to take appropriate action swiftly. Regardless of whom the allegation is about.
- To maintain a level of good working practice at all times and therefore reducing the risk to children and vulnerable adults under the care of our staff.
- To promote the general welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults during our activities and events.
- To develop effective procedures for recording and responding to incidents and accidents.
- To develop effective procedures for recording and responding to complaints of alleged or suspected child abuse.

**Plymouth Dance recognises that:**

- A child's and vulnerable adult's welfare is paramount and that we have both a moral and legal obligation to ensure a duty of care under the Children Act 2004.
- All children and vulnerable adults irrespective of their culture, disability, gender, ethnicity or sexual preference have the right to protection from abuse.

**Child:**

- Anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purposes of this policy.

**Vulnerable Adult:**

- Anyone 16 years and over whom for the time being is vulnerable by virtue of disability, illness or mental health problems and is therefore unable to safeguard their own welfare.

**REGONISING SIGNS OF ABUSE**

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place even for those experienced in working with abuse. Plymouth Dance acknowledges its staff, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, are not experts at such recognition. It is important therefore to recognise that **it is not their responsibility to decide whether or not abuse is taking place, but to report it when they have concerns or suspicions and where an allegation has been made.**

The concern that the child or vulnerable adult may have been abused could relate to something which has happened whilst the child is engaged in an activity delivered by Plymouth Dance, or it may be a disclosure made by the child or vulnerable adult to a staff member or volunteer or a concern about something the child or vulnerable adult has experienced outside of the activity delivered by Plymouth Dance. Either would require a proactive response.

There are many ways in which abuse may manifest itself, for example:

- 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 person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her;
- someone else, a child or adult, expresses concern about the welfare of another person;
- unexplained changes in behaviour over time e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper;
- inappropriate sexual awareness;
- engages in sexually explicit behaviour in games;
- is distrustful of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship will 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.

This list is NOT exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the above is NOT proof that abuse is actually taking place.

During Covid-19, or any similar circumstance, where all communication and delivery is done virtually, these signs will be significantly more difficult to notice.

## **Types of Abuse**

### **Physical Abuse**

Where adults physically hurt or injure children by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting or by giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison. **In a dance context physical abuse can occur when the type of training or activity exceeds the capacity of the child's or vulnerable adult's physical capability.**

### **Sexual Abuse**

This occurs when children or vulnerable adults are abused by adults who use them to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse, kissing, fondling and the showing of pornographic material. Physical contact with children could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. **Dance is a physical activity and can legitimately involve bodily contact. This situation could:**

- **provide the means of an abusive situation occurring**
- **highlight external or a history of abuse**
- **misconstrued situation**

**It is essential that all practitioners use the off-site manual to ensure appropriate use of physical contact, communication and have an aware of sensitivities and situation/environment.**

### **Emotional Abuse**

This may be caused by a persistent lack of love and affection, where a person may be constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted. It may also occur when there is constant overprotection (which prevents people from socialising), or there is neglect, physical or sexual abuse. **In a dance context, emotional abuse might occur if children or vulnerable adults are subjected to excessive criticism, inappropriate personal or sexual remarks, bullying, being exposed to undue or inappropriate pressure or exposed to danger.**

### **Neglect**

This occurs where adults fail to meet the child or vulnerable adults' basic needs such as food or warm clothing, fail or refuse to give love, affection and attention. Victims might also be constantly left alone or unsupervised. Neglect could include not ensuring a person is safe, exposing them to undue cold or to unnecessary risk of injury. **In dance, neglect could occur during organised activities if young people are exposed to the risk of unnecessary injury or there is a failure to ensure their safety.**

### **Bullying**

Bullying is in effect another form of abuse and can be physical, psychological or verbal in nature and can happen in multiple settings including schools which may have a detrimental effect on the involvement of participants. **In dance activities the bully can be**

- **A parent who pushes the child too hard**
- **A dance leader with a "train at all costs" attitude**
- **Another participant who intimidates**

Bullying can take many forms

- Physical: pushing, hitting etc
- Verbal: name calling, teasing, sarcasm
- Emotional: tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating
- Racist: taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact or abusive comments

There are various ways in which bullying shows itself

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration, clingy, depressed, tearful, reluctance to attend training or club activities
- A reduction in the standard of performance
- Physical signs such as headaches, stomach aches, difficulty in sleeping, damaged clothes
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of clothing

### **Effects of Abuse**

Abuse in all its forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be so damaging that, if untreated, they may follow an individual into adulthood.

There have been a number of studies that suggest children with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves, or adequately communicate that abuse has occurred. Children from ethnic minorities who could also be experiencing racial discrimination may feel doubly powerless.

<h3><b>PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE</b></h3>
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To reduce the opportunities for abuse to happen, and the likelihood of allegations to be made, the following basic guidelines will help safeguard children, vulnerable adults, volunteers, staff and other organisations concerned. This section has been divided into two sections:

1. **In the care of children and vulnerable adults:** Aims to promote positive practice and highlight ways of reducing the likelihood of allegations arising whilst working with children/vulnerable adults.
2. **The Organisation:** Aims to protect individuals and organisations when promoting children's / vulnerable adult's activities and events. Working within the guidelines of Plymouth Dance's Health and Safety Policy and by carrying out the necessary Risk Assessments for our activities and events.

### **In the Care of Children and Vulnerable Adults**

It is possible to limit the situations where child/vulnerable adult abuse might occur, by promoting good practice to all staff and volunteers. The following guidelines are examples of care that should be taken when working with children or vulnerable adults:

- Always work in an open environment when working with children or vulnerable adults. Avoid situations where a member of staff and an individual child or vulnerable adult are alone unobserved inexplicably. This also applies to online contact.
- Prior to any online/video/phone communications with children/vulnerable adults, staff must receive written consent from parents/carers.
- Children or vulnerable adults should never be left unattended, whilst in our care. When delivering practical work online, make sure the child/vulnerable adult has emergency contact available where they are, and staff should also

have the adult's contact number should the young person not be able to get hold of them.

- Respect the child or vulnerable adult's and provide a safe and positive environment.
- If any form of physical contact is required, it should be provided openly and according to National Governing Body's guidelines.
- If supervision in changing rooms is required, ensure staff never enter opposite sex changing rooms on their own.
- With mixed groups, supervision should with two adults, ideally male and female member of staff, where possible.
- Staff must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat everyone equally within the context of dance.
- Staff must place the wellbeing and safety of the child or vulnerable adult above the development of performance.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Staff must feel confident to report concerns or worries about other staff members to the appropriate person in authority.

### **All staff and volunteers should be aware that it is not good practice to**

- Have 'favourites' – this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other children or vulnerable adult's and could lead to false allegations.
- Spend unreasonable amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable adult's away from others.
- Take children or vulnerable adults alone on a car journey, however short.
- Take children or vulnerable adults to your home where they will be alone with you
- Arrange to meet them outside of the organised activity.
- Call or message them unless relevant and necessary to the organised activity.

### **You should never:**

- Engage in rough physical games including horseplay.
- Engage in sexually provocative games.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow children or vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged or use it yourself.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child/vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Let any allegations a child/vulnerable adult makes be ignored or go unrecorded.
- Share a room with a child/young person.
- Enter the changing rooms of the opposite sex.
- Do things of a personal nature for children/vulnerable adult's that they can do themselves e.g. assist with changing clothes.

### **Failure to follow these guidelines may well result in formal action under Plymouth Dance's disciplinary procedures.**

In an emergency situation that requires staff to provide intimate care for children or vulnerable adults, particularly if they are very young or are disabled, staff should endeavour to have someone present and fully inform the parents as soon as it is

reasonably possible. In such situations, it is important that you ensure that all staff are sensitive to the child/ or vulnerable adult and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

Parents and Line Managers must be informed of all incidents at the earliest opportunity. This can be done by telephone, email or in writing depending on the situation within 24 hours of the incident.

If a child or vulnerable adult is accidentally injured as a result of your actions, seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, such incidents should be reported as soon as possible to another colleague and a written report made. Parents, carers and supervisors/managers should be informed of all incidents.

If a child or vulnerable adult arrives at the activity showing any signs or symptoms that give you cause for concern you must act appropriately and follow the procedures outlined in 'Procedures'.

## **The Organisation**

### **Recruitment and Selection of Staff/Volunteers**

All dance practitioners (whether freelance, employed or voluntary) who provide or supervise activities for children or other vulnerable persons will be police checked (or will hold an Enhanced Disclosure certificate of not less than 2 years old) to ensure that there are no irregularities in their background which may give cause for concern. Any such person whether paid or unpaid will be provided with the Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and asked to sign to confirm that they have read, understood and will abide by it.

Application forms and application process are designed to ascertain as much information as possible, such as, but not limited to:

- Relevant interests, any gaps in employment and reasons for leaving, educational and First aid qualifications.
- Plymouth Dance reserves the right to check a person's background, obtaining consent for Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks, and require applicants to disclose any previous criminal convictions. Personal identification must be requested. The most reliable forms are birth certificates and National Insurance number. Other forms of identification that can be requested include passport, drivers licence or another form of identification that gives the applicant's full name, date of birth and current address, together with signature and photograph.
- That where necessary, dance practitioners and artists hold adequate professional indemnity and personal liability insurance to cover their teaching role.
- A minimum of two references should be taken up and be from reputable sources and where relevant followed up by letter or telephone call. References should include the person's suitability to work with children/vulnerable adults.
- Social Services and Health checks could also be considered.

- It should be made clear that effective measures are in place to ensure confidentiality of information under the Data Protection legislation.

Should the results of the DBS check raise concerns or issues about the appropriateness of the appointment, the matter will be referred to the Board of Directors for consideration.

## **Induction and Training**

It is important that the recruitment and selection process is followed up by relevant induction's and training.

Staff need basic awareness of the signs and indicators of abuse and an understanding of their responsibility to act swiftly and sensitively when concerns arise. Staff should be aware that:

- Abuse does and can occur and it could be perpetrated by colleagues, who are members of staff within your own team.
- Abusers come from all classes of society, all professions, all races, both genders and all family members. Abusers can be very clever, manipulative and powerful. You cannot tell an abuser by looking at them.
- Abusers can be other children/vulnerable adults.
- Children/vulnerable adults can find it hard to disclose information regarding abuse. They need to be listened to, taken seriously and have their concerns acted upon.

## **Supervision**

In general, people work most effectively where there is a supervisory structure that ensures they are supported, managed and developed. Plymouth Dance will ensure that supervisors are sensitive to any concerns about abuse, act on them immediately, and offer support to those who report it.

It is the responsibility of the dance practitioner to monitor good practice; this can be done in a number of ways, for example:

- Observation of dance leadership practice.
- Staff appraisals, mentoring and providing feedback on performance.
- Children/vulnerable adult's feedback on activities.
- Parental feedback on activities.

## **PROCEDURES**

It is important that all staff and volunteers are aware that the first person that encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is the job of Social Services and the Police following a referral. However, you do have a duty of care to the child or vulnerable adult to report any suspicions you might have.



- It is crucial that all staff, practitioners and volunteers, with the responsibility for children or vulnerable adults in their care, are aware of the steps used to recognise signs of child abuse.
- Where appropriate, there must be a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers with legal responsibility whenever there is a concern about a child or vulnerable adult. By talking to parents or carers it might help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child or vulnerable adult seems withdrawn it might be due to a family bereavement.
- We welcome the opportunity to work with any significant adult who can make a positive contribution to that child's or vulnerable adult's life.

However, there are circumstances when a child or vulnerable adult might be placed at even greater risk if such concerns are shared. For example, a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or may not be 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 immediately.

Staff must report all incidents, allegations or concerns to the Child Protection Officer as soon as possible (unless this person is involved in their suspicions, then the Coordinating Producer should be contacted – If the neither are available you should contact the Chair of Board (*Appendix 1: Contact Form*)). They will be responsible for informing deciding the cause of action, including contacting Social Services. If the above people are not available, the person discovering or being informed of the abuse should immediately contact Social Services or the Police, who will decide how and when parents or carers will be informed and ultimately become responsible for the steps taken next.

Plymouth Dance Contact phone numbers:

Child Protection Officer: 07818 518079 (June Gamble)  
 Lead Director for Child Protection: 07767 242169 (Tim Tod)

- If you have concerns about a CHILD call the Gateway 01752 307160 for advice and to discuss your concerns. This number is not for the public. It is only for professionals working with children.

- If you have concerns about a VULNERABLE ADULT call the Plymouth City Council's Social Services and Care Direct Line on 01752 668000 (you will be referred to the Vulnerable Adult Team) for advice and to discuss your concerns.

**Responding to a child / vulnerable adult making an allegation of abuse:**

Abused children or vulnerable adults will only tell people they trust and with whom they feel safe. By listening and taking seriously what the child/vulnerable adult is saying, you are already helping the situation. The following points are a guide to help you respond:

- **Stay calm.**

- **Listen** carefully to what is said.
- Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – **do not promise to keep secrets.**
- **Allow** the child/vulnerable adult to continue at their own pace.
- **Take** action immediately to protect the child/vulnerable adult.
- **Avoid asking questions.** Where it is necessary do so for clarification, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggests a particular answer, including yes/no answers.
- **Reassure** the child/vulnerable adult that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- **Tell them** what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- **Record** in writing as soon as possible.

Stick to the facts and if you give your opinions clearly state that it is your opinion and explain why you have given them. Include:

1. The child's or vulnerable adult's name, address, date of birth
2. The nature of the allegation
3. A description of any injuries
4. Your observations - e.g. physical signs/behavioural signs/indirect signs
5. Record the child's or vulnerable adult's account as close as possible
6. State any action you took as a result of your concerns; this must include who you spoke to, include contact with parents, other staff, or Social Services
7. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of these contacts must be included
8. Sign and date your record
9. Provide a copy to the Coordinating Producer and store the information in accordance with relevant procedures

In **determining** your actions remember that only experienced and specifically qualified and trained professionals should deal with cases or suspicions relating to child abuse. (*Appendix 2: Quick Guide A*)

### **Dealing with Allegations against Staff/Volunteers**

Should a member of staff or volunteer become aware of an allegation (against a colleague) of an incident of abuse taking, or having taken place, it is vital that the following procedures are followed:

- Take the allegation seriously. Report it to the Coordinating Producer as soon as possible (unless this person is involved in their suspicions, then another senior member of staff should be informed) – If the Coordinating Producer is not available you should contact the Chair of Board or the named Child Protection Officer (see contact form). Consider any allegation to be potentially dangerous to the child or vulnerable adult.
- Record all details that you are aware of in your written report, giving details of the allegations, how you became aware of them and any other relevant details. Do not let your own personal opinions or judgement cloud your report. (see above)
- Do not judge or investigate. As an employee or volunteer it is important not to lose focus of your role. By reporting any allegation quickly, the necessary

investigations can be made by trained professionals e.g. The Police and Plymouth Social Services. (*Appendix 3: Quick Guide B*)

## **Confidentiality**

- Confidentiality must be maintained. It is extremely important that any allegations are not discussed (unless absolutely necessary) as any breach of confidentiality could be damaging to both the child or vulnerable adult and any investigation that may follow.
- In dealing with any case of suspicion or allegation relating to child abuse all staff should be made aware that any breaches in confidentiality could be very damaging to the child or vulnerable adult, their family and any child protection investigations, which might take place.
- If enquiries arise from the public (including parents) or any branch of the media, it is vital that all staff are briefed so that they do not make any comments regarding the situation. They should be informed who the relevant designated spokesperson will be, and all enquiries should be directed through them. Staff should reply 'no comment' to all questions.
- Personal details of any child or vulnerable adult protection issue must not be discussed, (unless absolutely necessary), and then prior permission should be sought from those leading the investigation.
- The sharing of information should be on a need to know basis with the agencies and individuals concerned.
- It is important to ensure that only those who need to know are given the relevant information, so it protects the rights of both the victim and the alleged perpetrator.
- Informing parents of a child or vulnerable adult you may have concerns about needs to be dealt with in a sensitive way and must only be done in consultation with a statutory agency e.g. Social Services.
- Any individual under suspicion has the right to be notified about the cause for concern. This will be done in joint consultation with Social Services and the Police. It is important that the timing of this does not prejudice the investigation.

## **Off Duty Contact between Staff/Volunteers and Children or Vulnerable Person**

Members of staff/volunteers must maintain a professional relationship with children and vulnerable adults during any off-duty contact, continuing to follow the guidelines and policies set out for working contact.

Staff/volunteers should be particularly careful to limit and, if possible, eliminate any one-to-one contact. This should also include driving persons to and from activities. Where an arrangement is made in an emergency, it is important to ensure there is a second adult in the vehicle.

## **Dealing with the media**

Members of staff should refer all media enquiries to Coordinating Producer and if questioned by the media should respond with 'no comment'.

## **Photography, videoing and filming of children and vulnerable adults:**

Staff should be vigilant at all times and any people using cameras or videos at Plymouth Dance activities or events should be approached and asked to complete a Media Consent Form. (*Appendix 4*)

When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to cover activities or events, ensure that you make your expectations clear in relation to child protection:

- Check credentials of any photographers and organisations used.
- Ensure identification is worn at all times, if they do not have their own – provide it.
- Do not allow unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults or one to one photographic sessions.
- Do not allow photographic sessions outside of the activities or events, or at a child's or vulnerable adults home.
- Parents must be informed that photographs of their child or vulnerable adult may be taken during activities and media consent forms need to be signed agreeing to this (*Appendix 4: Media Consent Form*). This must include information about how and where these photographs will be used.

### **Children and vulnerable adults in publications and on the Internet**

Websites and publications provide excellent opportunities to broadcast achievements of individuals and Plymouth Dance to the world and to provide a showcase for activities of children or vulnerable adults. Displaying certain information about children or vulnerable adults could place them at risk.

Any Plymouth Dance publications or information used on the internet must never:

- Include personal information that could identify a child or vulnerable adult. For example, home address / email address.
- Publish any information about a child or vulnerable adult without written consent from the child or vulnerable adult's parent / guardian (*Appendix 4: Media Consent Form*).
- Remember that a child may be subject to a protection issue or a custody dispute.
- Use individual's full names for photographs, where possible use a team / group photograph and use the team / group name.

## APPENDICES

Contact Form  
Quick guide A  
Quick guide B  
Media Consent Form  
Incident reporting form  
Recommended legislation / reading

## DECLARATION

Plymouth Dance is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all people by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm.

As an employee of Plymouth Dance it is therefore important that you have taken the time to thoroughly read this Child and Vulnerable Adults Policy. By being made aware of the policy, it is our intention to ensure that all employees, freelancers and volunteers are pro-active in providing a safe environment for the people in their care. Any disciplinary measures required as a result of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with normal disciplinary procedures.

All Plymouth Dance policies are to be read annually by all Plymouth Dance Directors, staff and volunteers, as well as whenever a policy is updated.

**Date of adoption:** 21st July 2020    **Review date:** 21st July 2021