Children at risk of abuse

Purpose and aims of the procedure

We aim to ensure that any children who are involved with Middlesbrough Youth Theatre, or otherwise known to the organization, receive any support that is needed if they are at risk of abuse.

This policy provides clear direction to all leaders in identifying children who may be in need of protection, and gives guidelines as to how to provide this protection.

Types of abuse

**Physical abuse** is violence causing injury, or occurring regularly throughout childhood. This may happen when:

* A child is injured by means of hitting, shaking, squeezing, or otherwise hurt by deliberate or unnecessary means
* Someone attempts to drown or suffocate a child
* Someone gives a child alcohol, poison or inappropriate drugs
* Someone induces or fabricates the symptoms of illness in a child

In some cases the injuries may be deliberate, where in others they may be accidental as a result of the child being knowingly put at risk.

**Emotional abuse** is persistent or severe ill treatment of a child which is likely to cause serious damage to their wellbeing. This includes:

* Persistently withholding affection
* Frightening the child regularly, via shouting, threats, or other means
* Hurting another person or pet in order to distress or frighten a child
* Being so over protective of a child that they are not able to develop and live a normal life
* Involving a child in illegal behaviour
* Leading a child to believe that he/she is worthless, without value or inadequate. This may involve (but is not restricted to) homophobic, racist, or otherwise discriminatory behaviour.

**Sexual abuse** occurs when somebody uses power or control in order to involve a child in sexual activity. This may include (but is not restricted to):

* Forcing or otherwise coercing a child to partake in sexual activity, either with or without awareness from the child
* Encouraging children to behave provocatively, in sexually inappropriate ways
* Showing children pornographic material, involving them in the production of this, or otherwise recording or photographing children in this manner
* Involving children in involvement or discussion with innapropriate material of a sexual nature.

**Neglect** is the persistent failing to meet a child’s needs, whether physically, psychologically or emotional. For example, this may include:

* Failure to provide appropriate basic needs, such as clothing, food, warmth, hygiene or education
* Failing to provide supervision in order to ensure that child is kept safe and away from danger.

Ways that abuse may be brought to leaders attention

Abuse may be flagged to leaders in a number of ways, including:

* Direct disclosure from the child
* Direct disclosure about another child
* Information being disclosed which is not a direct disclosure, but is worrying enough to concern leaders
* A leader may have concerns about a child’s appearance, or an adult’s behaviour towards the child
* A parent or carer may make a disclosure about concerns that they have for a child
* A parent may offer information that is not a direct disclosure, but provides suitable cause for conern.

Talking to a child who has disclosed allegations of abuse relating to themselves or others

* Reassure the child that they have done nothing wrong, and are not at fault
* Explain to the child that you must now take steps to ensure their safety
* Ensure the child understands what you will be doing next, and which other people must now be informed of the situation
* Listen, but ensure not to question or lead the child in their disclosure
* Ask the child what they would like to happen now
* Ensure the child has contact information for support lines which may be needed.

Helping a child in immediate danger, or in need of urgent medical attention

* If a child is with you and in immediate danger keep the child with you and contact the police
* If the child is in immediate danger and is not with you contact the police and explain the situation to them
* If he/she needs immediate medical attention, call and ambulance and ensure the child receives first aid while you wait
* Ensure you contact the supervisor/manager/director or named person for child protection to ensure they know what is happening.

A decision will have to be made over whether to involve the child’s family or guardian, and the LA care authority children’s social care department, and when they should be informed. If the police or health services have been called they should be involved in this decision, and the following issues should be considered:

* The child’s views and feelings
* The parent’s right to know
* The impact of telling (or not telling) the parent
* The current assessment of the risk to the child and the source of that risk
* Any risk management plans that are currently in place.

Once the immediate risk has been dealt with the flow chart below should be followed.

Keeping a record of your concerns

Use the example record file attached to this document to record any concerns and actions taken, this can be forwarded to statutory child protection authorities if referral to them is needed.

The form should be signed and dated by all involved, and kept confidential on the child’s file. The name of the person supplying notes should be written besides each section.

Useful contact details

Supervisor/Manager: Wendy Lowe, 07806795301

Named Person for child protection and deputy: Celia McEwen, 07940997510

Local police: 101 (non emergency) or 999 (emergency), post:

Cleveland Police

Shared Service Centre

Ash House

Princeton Drive

Thornaby

Stockton On Tees

TS17 6AJ

LA children’s social care department: teescpp.org.uk, 01642 726004 (first contact), 08702 402994 (out of hours emergency)

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 or help@nspcc.org.uk

ChildLine: 0800 1111(textphone 0800 400 222) or www.childline.org.uk

Reporting child protection concerns

If a child is in need of emergency medical attention, or is in immediate danger, follow procedure as outlined above.

You should them take the steps outlined in the flowchart on the following page to ensure the concern is dealt with appropriately.

**No Longer Concerned**

No further child protection action is needed. Staff member and supervisor/manager to discuss whether to discuss the initial concern with other services (eg school) to ensure that the child’s needs are being fully met.

**Concerned**

Named person refers to children’s social care department and confirms this in writing within 48 hours,

If any uncertainty about the concerns remains, the named person should discuss with the children’s social care department, or with the NSPCC helpline without disclosing the identity of the child or family involved.

Member of staff makes notes of their concerns using the reporting form, and discusses them with supervisor/manager. The named person the child protection should also be involved in this discussion.

Member of staff has concerns about a child’s safety or welfare

If the child’s family does not already know about the concern, the member of staff or manager discusses it with them, **unless:**

* a family member may be involved in abusing the child
* someone may be placed in danger by involving the family
* informing the family may interfere with a criminal investigation

If any of these circumstances apply, discussion with the family should only take place after this has been agreed with the LA children’s social care department.