

## Dealing With Disclosures and Child Welfare Concerns Policy

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Audacity Performing Arts Academy takes disclosures and child welfare concerns extremely seriously and will always take the necessary actions to protect our students and children of our students from harm.

### **INTRODUCTION**

It can be very hard for children and young people to speak out about abuse. Often they fear there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone what's happening to them. Some may delay telling someone about abuse for a long time, while others never tell anyone, even if they want to. It's vital that children and young people are able to speak out and that whoever they tell takes them seriously and takes the necessary action. Even if a child doesn't tell someone verbally about what's happened to them, there may be other indicators that something is wrong. People who work with children need to be able to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect and know how to respond appropriately.

### **DISCLOSURE**

A disclosure has been made when any student has communicated a cause for concern for their well being to anybody working for Audacity Performing Arts Academy. Children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- Directly – making specific verbal statements about what's happened to them
- Indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong
- Behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate)
- Non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

Children and young people may not always be aware that they are disclosing abuse through their actions and behaviour. Not all children and young people realise they have experienced abuse. Sometimes children and young people make partial disclosures of abuse. This means they give some details about what they've experienced, but not the whole picture. They may withhold some information because they:

- Are afraid they will get in trouble with or upset their family
- Want to deflect blame in case of family difficulties as a result of the disclosure
- Feel ashamed and/or guilty
- Need to protect themselves from having to relive traumatic events.

## RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE

Following research which took place in 2019, there were three key interpersonal skills identified that adults can use in response to a disclosure in order to help a child feel they are being listened to and taken seriously:

- Show you care, help them open up: Give your full attention to the child or young person and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, be understanding and reassure them their feelings are important.
- Take your time, slow down: Respect pauses and don't interrupt the child – let them go at their own pace. Recognise and respond to their body language. And remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what's happened to them.
- Show you understand, reflect back: Make it clear you're interested in what the child is telling you. Reflect back what they've said to check your understanding – and use their language to show it's their experience.

If a child tells you they are experiencing abuse, it's important to reassure them that they've done the right thing in telling you. Make sure they know that abuse is never their fault.

Never talk to the alleged perpetrator about the child's disclosure. This could make things a lot worse for the child

It's important to keep accurate and detailed notes on any concerns you have about a child. You will need to share these with your nominated DSL, Laura Wilson and Rhianna Goodwin.

Include:

- The child's details (name, age, address)
- What the child said or did that gave you cause for concern (if the child made a verbal disclosure, write down their exact words)
- Any information the child has given you about the alleged abuser.

You should never wait until a child or young person tells you directly that they are being abused before taking action. Instead, ask the child if everything is OK or discuss your concerns with your organisation's designated safeguarding lead, or the NSPCC helpline. Waiting for a child to be ready to speak about their experiences could mean that the abuse carries on and they, or another child, are put at further risk of significant harm.

At the Audacity Performing Arts Academy, we understand that a child or young person making any type of disclosure is an incredibly brave and hard thing to do, and will always put the child's safety and well-being first.

If a disclosure has taken place, staff should be there for the child or young person, follow all of the advice written above and report this disclosure immediately to Laura Wilson or Rhianna Goodwin (DSL).

## SHARING INFORMATION

Timely information sharing is key to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. People who work with children, whether in a paid or voluntary role, may need to share information about the children and families they are involved with for a number of reasons. These include:

- You are making a referral to arrange additional support for someone in the family
- Someone from another agency has asked for information about a child or family
- Someone in the family has asked to be referred for further help
- A statutory duty or court order requires information to be shared
- You are concerned that a child or a member of their family may be at risk of significant harm
- You think a serious crime may have been committed or is about to be committed which involves someone in the family.

You must always have a clear and legitimate purpose for sharing a child's personal information. Keep a record of the reasons why you are sharing or requesting information about a child or their family. You should also make sure you are not putting a child's safety and wellbeing at risk by sharing information about them.

All professionals have a legal duty to share information relating to safeguarding concerns. If you have gained any concerning information about the welfare of a child or young person, it is important to share this information with your DSL (Laura Wilson and Rhianna Goodwin) who may take further action.

## CONSENT

Children should be given the opportunity to decide whether they agree to their personal information being shared. If a child doesn't have the capacity to make their own decisions, ask their parent or carer (unless doing so would put the child at risk of harm).

If consent is refused or if you're unable to seek consent, you can still share information with relevant professionals, such as your DSL (Laura Wilson or Rhianna Goodwin) particularly when protecting children from significant harm and promoting the welfare of children.

When deciding whether to share information without consent, you should consider each case individually.

- Decide if the need to share information is in the public interest and whether it outweighs the need to maintain confidentiality.
- Consider all the implications of sharing the information, for example if you are sharing sensitive details about a person's life.

If you're not sure what to do, contact the NSPCC (0808 800 5000) helpline for advice.

If you're sharing information without consent keep a written record explaining:

- What steps you took to get consent
- The person's reasons for not giving consent (if known)
- Why you felt it was necessary to share information without consent.

You will have to pass this information onto your DSL and any other agencies which may be involved.

Never promise a child that you will keep the things they're telling you a secret. Explain that you need to share what they've told you with someone who will be able to help.

If a child or young person needs confidential help and advice direct them to Childline (0800 1111)

## **REPORTING CONCERNS**

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999.

If a child is not in immediate danger, follow the Audacity Performing Arts Academy safeguarding procedure by reporting the welfare or safeguarding concerns or disclosure to Laura Wilson or Rhianna Goodwin, your DSL, who will take further action.

THIS POLICY WAS LAST REVIEWED AND UPDATED ON 09/08/2024 BY:

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