

# Catchlights Performing Arts Safeguarding Policy

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to protect children and young people involved in the activities of Catchlights Performing Arts Club (referred to as "the Club"). This document outlines the measures we will take to safeguard our members and ensure their safety and well-being.

### 1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all members, staff, volunteers, and participants of the Club. It covers all activities, events, and interactions where safeguarding considerations are relevant.

## 2. Definitions

### 2.1 Child

A child is defined as any person under the age of 18.

### 2.2 Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. It includes:

- Protecting children from abuse and maltreatment.
- Preventing harm to children's health or development.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

## 2.3 Abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can occur in a family, institutional, or community setting. Types of abuse include:

- **Physical Abuse:** Inflicting physical harm or injury.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Causing emotional distress through verbal or emotional mistreatment.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities.
- **Neglect:** Failing to provide necessary care, resulting in significant harm to health or development.

## 3. Key Principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children have the right to protection from abuse.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

## 4. Relevant Legislation

The Club's safeguarding policy aligns with the following UK legislation and guidance:

- **Children Act 1989 and 2004:** Establishes the legislative framework for the care and protection of children.
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006:** Provides the framework for the vetting and barring scheme for individuals working with children.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018:** Statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

## 5. Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

### 5.1 Appointment

The Club will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) responsible for safeguarding issues. The DSO will have the authority to act independently of the Club's management team in matters of safeguarding.

## **5.2 Training**

The DSO will undergo appropriate safeguarding training to remain informed about best practices and legislative changes.

## **5.3 Availability**

Contact information for the DSO will be made readily available to all members, participants, and parents.

# **6. Safer Recruitment**

## **6.1 Recruitment Process**

All staff and volunteers will undergo a thorough recruitment process, including:

- Completion of application forms.
- Conducting interviews.
- Obtaining and checking references.

## **6.2 Background Checks**

Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks will be conducted for all individuals working directly with children.

# **7. Training**

## **7.1 Mandatory Training**

All staff and volunteers must complete mandatory safeguarding training upon joining the Club.

## **7.2 Refresher Courses**

Regular refresher courses will be provided to ensure all members stay up-to-date with safeguarding best practices.

## 8. Code of Conduct

### 8.1 Behaviour and Boundaries

The Club will establish clear guidelines on appropriate behaviour and boundaries. All members must adhere to these guidelines to ensure a safe and respectful environment. Key points include:

- Always act in the best interest of the child.
- Avoid being alone with a child; ensure that interactions are visible to others.
- Maintain a professional relationship with all participants, avoiding any behaviour that could be misinterpreted as inappropriate.
- Physical contact should be minimal and only when necessary for the activity. Always seek consent where possible.

### 8.2 Prohibition of Abuse

Any form of bullying, harassment, or abuse is strictly prohibited. This includes:

- **Physical Abuse:** Any physical harm or threat of harm.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Any form of demeaning, belittling, or inappropriate emotional interaction.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any form of sexual interaction or suggestion.
- **Neglect:** Failing to provide appropriate supervision or care.

### 8.3 Social Media and Communication

- No private messaging between staff/volunteers and children. All communications should be through official channels only.
- Personal information, including images of members of the Club should not be shared online without the express written permission of the Club and consent of the individual(s).

### 8.4 Anti-Bullying Policy

The Club is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment where all members feel valued and respected. Bullying of any form, including verbal, physical, or online harassment, will not be tolerated. The Club's anti-bullying policy includes:

- **Definition of Bullying:** Clearly defining what constitutes bullying behaviour to ensure all members understand what is unacceptable.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** Providing clear channels for reporting incidents of bullying, ensuring that all concerns are taken seriously and addressed promptly.

- **Investigation Process:** Conducting thorough investigations into reported incidents of bullying, involving appropriate parties and taking appropriate action based on the severity of the behaviour.
- **Support for Victims:** Providing support and assistance to victims of bullying, and implementing measures to prevent further incidents.

## 9. Reporting Procedures

### 9.1 Reporting Concerns

All concerns about safeguarding must be reported immediately to ensure swift and appropriate action. The steps include:

1. **Report to the DSO:** The first point of contact for any safeguarding concerns.
2. **Senior Official:** If the DSO is unavailable, report to a senior Club official.
3. **Immediate Danger:** In cases of immediate danger, contact the police directly.
4. **Record the Concern:** Document the concern in detail, including dates, times, witnesses, and any actions taken as soon as possible.

### 9.2 Procedure for Handling Disclosures

If a child discloses a safeguarding concern to you, follow these steps:

1. **Stay Calm and Reassuring:** Listen carefully to what the child is saying without displaying shock or disbelief. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you.
2. **Avoid Promising Confidentiality:** Explain to the child that while you will do your best to help them, you may need to share the information with others who can provide support and keep them safe.
3. **Use Open-ended Questions:** Encourage the child to tell you as much as they feel comfortable sharing. Avoid leading questions or interrupting their narrative.
4. **Do Not Investigate:** It is not your role to investigate the disclosure. Your primary responsibility is to listen, support, and report the concern to the appropriate authorities.
5. **Document the Disclosure:** Make a written record of what the child has disclosed, including dates, times, and any relevant details. This information should be shared with the DSO or senior Club official as soon as possible.
6. **Reassure the Child:** Let the child know that they are not to blame and that they have done the right thing by speaking up. Offer support and reassure them that action will be taken to keep them safe.

7. **Report to the DSO:** Inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or senior Club official immediately about the disclosure. Provide them with the details you have documented.
8. **Follow-Up:** Follow any instructions provided by the DSO or senior Club official regarding further actions or support for the child. Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of the child and their family throughout the process.

### 9.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality must be maintained in all safeguarding matters, ensuring that information is only shared with those who need to know. The welfare of the child takes precedence over confidentiality.

### 9.4 Escalation Process

If the concern is not addressed adequately by the DSO or senior Club official, escalate the matter to the relevant external authorities, such as the local safeguarding board or child protection services.

## 10. Responding to Concerns

### 10.1 Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

Procedures for dealing with allegations against staff or volunteers include:

- **Immediate Suspension:** Suspend the individual involved from their duties pending investigation to ensure the safety of participants.
- **Investigation:** Conduct an investigation in accordance with local safeguarding board guidelines. This includes interviewing witnesses and reviewing any evidence.
- **Support:** Provide support to the individual raising the concern, ensuring they are kept informed of the progress and outcome.

### 10.2 Peer-on-Peer Abuse

Clear procedures will be established for dealing with allegations of peer-on-peer abuse:

- **Separation:** Ensure the immediate safety of all individuals involved by separating the parties if necessary.
- **Investigation:** Conduct a thorough investigation, involving parents/carers and external agencies as required.

- **Support:** Provide appropriate support to both the victim and the perpetrator, addressing any underlying issues and ensuring measures are in place to prevent recurrence.

## **11. Record Keeping**

### **11.1 Detailed Records**

The Club will keep detailed records of all safeguarding concerns, actions taken, and outcomes. These records should include:

- The nature of the concern.
- Details of any witnesses.
- The actions taken in response to the concern.
- The outcome of any investigations.

### **11.2 Secure Storage**

Records will be stored securely to ensure confidentiality and compliance with data protection laws. Access to these records will be restricted to the DSO and other authorised personnel.

### **11.3 Retention Period**

Safeguarding records will be retained for as long as is deemed necessary by the DSO. This will be reviewed periodically.

## **12. Parental Involvement**

### **12.1 Informing Parents**

Parents will be informed about the Club's safeguarding policy. The policy will be available on the Club's website.

## **12.2 Parental Consent**

Parental consent will be sought for activities involving children. This includes:

- Written consent for participation in activities, trips, and events.
- Consent for emergency medical treatment if necessary.

## **12.3 Communication with Parents**

Clear communication channels will be maintained with parents regarding their role in safeguarding. This includes:

- Regular updates on activities and events.
- Clear procedures for parents to raise concerns or provide feedback.

# **13. Safety in Activities**

## **13.1 Risk Assessments**

Risk assessments will be conducted for all activities to identify and mitigate potential hazards. These assessments should include:

- Identifying potential risks.
- Implementing measures to minimise these risks.
- Regularly reviewing and updating risk assessments.

## **13.2 Safe Environment**

The Club will ensure a safe environment, including the safe use of equipment and adequate supervision. This includes:

- Regular safety checks of equipment and facilities.
- Ensuring an appropriate ratio of supervisors to participants.

## **13.3 Managing Trips and Outings**

Procedures will be established for managing trips and outings, including ensuring transport safety. This includes:

- Conducting risk assessments for trips and outings.
- Ensuring appropriate supervision during trips.
- Obtaining parental consent for trips and outings.



## 14. Photography and Filming

### 14.1 Policy on Photography and Filming

A policy will be in place regarding the taking and use of photographs and videos. This policy includes:

- **Consent:** Obtaining consent from parents/carers and individuals before taking photographs or videos.
- **Appropriate Use:** Ensuring that photographs and videos are used appropriately and respectfully.
- **Storage:** Storing images securely, ensuring they are only accessible to authorised personnel.

### 14.2 Obtaining Consent

Consent from parents/carers and individuals will be obtained for the use of photographs and videos in publicity materials. This process includes:

- Providing a consent form at the time of registration.
- Explaining how images will be used and where they may be published.
- Respecting the wishes of parents/carers and individuals who do not consent to photography or filming.

## 15. Monitoring and Review

### 15.1 Regular Review

The Club will regularly review safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure they remain effective. This includes:

- Annual reviews of the safeguarding policy.
- Incorporating feedback from staff, volunteers, participants, and parents.

### 15.2 Annual Safeguarding Audits

Annual safeguarding audits will be conducted to ensure compliance and effectiveness. This includes:

- Reviewing records of safeguarding concerns and actions taken.
- Assessing the effectiveness of training programs.

- Ensuring all staff and volunteers have up-to-date DBS checks and training.

## 16. Contact Information

- **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):** [safeguarding@catchlights.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@catchlights.co.uk)
- **Shropshire Council Child Protection Contact:** 0345 678 9021
- **Local Police:** 101 (non-emergency) | 999 (emergency)

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By implementing these safeguarding procedures and policies, Catchlights Performing Arts ensures a safe and supportive environment for all participants, fostering a culture of vigilance and responsibility.