

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Tilly's Dance Factory recognise that when working with or having contact with children we have a responsibility to promote and safeguard their welfare. This policy sets out guidelines relating to the following areas:

1. Policy statement
2. Recognition of abuse
3. Responding to allegations of abuse or neglect, including those made against leaders
4. Maintaining a safe environment

1. Policy Statement

Tilly's Dance Factory is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for children and young people

We believe

1. The safety and welfare of children should always be of paramount importance, whatever the circumstances.
2. That everyone with a role in working with children has a responsibility to safeguard and promote a child's welfare particularly when it comes to protecting children from abuse.
3. Special care is needed in dealing with children whose age, inexperience or physical state makes them particularly vulnerable to abuse.
4. Sufficient training must be made available to volunteers to provide them with the necessary knowledge to ensure safe care is always maintained.

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2. Recognising Abuse

The following behavioural signs may be indications of abuse, but they must not be taken in isolation from other circumstances in a child's life. One sign on its own may not be an indicator of abuse.

Possible indicators of physical abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them.
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Injuries which have not received medical attention which you would expect a reasonable parent to give / arrange.
- Instances where children are kept away from the group inappropriately.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming.
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental explanation (eg. several cigarette burns in one place - one accidental - several?).
- Cutting / slashing / substance abuse.

Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- Child with an excessive pre-occupation with sexual matters and a detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, who regularly engages in age-*inappropriate* sexual play.
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults.
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home.
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, or sometimes overt or veiled sexual connotations.

Emotional Indicators of Abuse

- Marked changes or regression in mood and behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression / aggression.
- Nervousness / frozen watchfulness.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and / or adults.
- Attention-seeking behaviour.
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away / stealing / lying.

Indicators of Possible Neglect

- Inadequate food and nutrition.
- Inadequate shelter or living conditions.
- Inadequate clothing.

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- Exposure to physical danger or harm.
- Failure to ensure the child receives access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

3. Responding to Allegations of Abuse

- It is not the responsibility of anyone working for Tilly's Dance Factory to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.
- This organisation has appointed a person responsible for Child Protection matters.
- If you suspect that abuse may have taken place you must report concerns as soon as possible to the Child Protection Officer. The Officer will be responsible for referring allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. In the absence of the Child Protection Officer or the concerns relate to the Officer the concerns should be reported to the Hertfordshire County Council, Children, Schools & Families Department (01438 737500).
- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- If a child discloses abuse, listen carefully to what they have to say but do not question them. Reassure them that it is safe to talk and write down what was said as soon as possible afterwards.
- Do not inform the alleged abuser about any suspicion of abuse or disclosure until advice has been given on this by the statutory agencies.

4. Maintaining a safe environment

- Where possible work in an open environment .Avoid being alone with a child or being in an unobserved situation. Encourage openness and an environment in which there are no secrets.
- Treat all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that if mixed groups are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. (NB however, same gender abuse can also occur)
- Ensure that at any residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Secure parental consent in writing to *act in loco parentis*, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Request written parental consent if it is necessary to transport young people in cars.
- Do not invite children or young people into your home

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- **Practice never to be sanctioned**

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised

Our Child Protection Officer is:

Tilly Beau – 07792 265256

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