

THE LANGUAGE OF DANCE® TRUST: CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

Policy Statement

The Language of Dance Trust has a duty of care to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults involved in Language of Dance activities from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The Trust will ensure the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults involved in Language of Dance activities through adherence to the Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection guidelines set out below.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

A vulnerable adult is a person who is or may be in need of community care services because of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant or exploitation.

Policy Aims

The aim of the Language of Dance Trust Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- ◆ Providing children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Language of Dance teachers;
- ◆ Allowing all LOD teachers to make informed and confident responses to specific child and vulnerable adult protection issues.

Promoting Good Practice

Abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the arts environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. An instructor, teacher, or assistant will have regular contact with young people and vulnerable adults and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child or vulnerable adult enters a Language of Dance class having been subjected to abuse outside the arts environment, dance can play a crucial role in improving their self-esteem. In such instances the Centre must work with the

appropriate agencies to ensure the child or vulnerable adult receives the required support.

Good Practice Guidelines

All teachers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and caring climate within Dance:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treat all children/vulnerable adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always put the welfare of each child/vulnerable adult first.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate physical and psychological distance with students.
- Refrain from welcoming/farewell embraces.
- Tell children/vulnerable adults, before any movement with touching, exactly what the intention is, and ensure they agree and do not show discomfort.
- Release from touch/hold immediately after demonstration.
- Ensure that children/vulnerable adults receive equal amounts of attention, particularly when teaching two students in partnering work.
- Observe children/vulnerable adults in couple formation or partnering and look out for:
 - a) any discomfort or reluctance to join or touch or hold positions
 - b) any embarrassment at touching or holding positions
 - c) any bullying/aggression on the part of one partner
 - d) any inappropriate/improper words/actions by either/both partners
 - e) any dominating/oppressive/bullying behaviour by either partner
 - f) any whispering/gossiping. Take sensible and appropriate action where necessary
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust that empowers children and vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process.
- Make dance fun, enjoyable and promote fair play.
- Keep up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- Involve parents/guardians/carers wherever possible. For example, encourage them to take responsibility for their children or vulnerable adults in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents, teachers or staff work in pairs.
- Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.

- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children and vulnerable adults – do not teach beyond their mental and physical abilities or push them against their will.
- Obtain parental permission in writing to hold, guide and direct children/vulnerable adults.
- Obtain parental permission in writing for children/vulnerable adults to engage in partner work.
- Know any child/vulnerable adult's medical condition(s) and obtain parental permission in writing to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment if the need arises.
- Invite full involvement and open discussion by children/vulnerable adults and parents/guardians/carers in any aspect of training/teaching.
- Note any irregularity of attendance, late cancellations, regular late coming. Noting who the telephone call is from and whether there is unease in giving a reason. Upon resumption of classes, informally ascertain reasons for absence, etc.
- Note regular late withdrawal from classes/rehearsals on the part of any child/vulnerable adult.
- Try to ascertain reasons for unpunctuality by casual conversation and note any reaction.
- If children/vulnerable adults are 'dropped off' and/or not 'picked up' punctually, ensure they are not left alone or exposed to intimate situations with you or anybody else.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Note and report any observed injuries, bruises, scratches or unusual behaviour.
- Where possible, children/vulnerable adults should have separate changing facilities from adults. These should be gender-based and the children/vulnerable adults should be supervised by their parents/guardians/carers.
- If it is not possible for students to have separate changing facilities from adults, facilities should be gender-based and children/vulnerable adults should be supervised by their parents/guardians/carers. If the gender of a parent/guardian/carer prevents him/her entering, s/he should take up a position near the door of the changing room.
- Obtain parental permission in writing if teachers are required to transport children/vulnerable adults in their cars.

- Obtain parental permission in writing for children/vulnerable adults to be taken on trips. If there are students of both sexes, ensure that male and female staff accompany them and that there is an appropriate number and balance of escorts.

Practices to be Avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone at the Language of Dance Centre or the child's/vulnerable adult's parents/carer. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/vulnerable adults away from others.
- Avoid taking a child/vulnerable adult home after a class.

Practices Never to be Sanctioned

- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Sharing a room with a child/vulnerable adult.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allowing children/vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Permitting smoking in any dancing area.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child/vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Reducing a child/vulnerable adult to tears.
- Playing off one child/vulnerable adult against another or showing favouritism.
- Allowing allegations made by a child/vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Doing things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.
- Inviting or allowing children/vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home.

Incidents that Must be Reported/Recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the school's Child Protection Officer and/or the Language of Dance Centre and record the incident on an Incident/Accident Report Form. You should also ensure the parents/carer of the child/vulnerable adult are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a student.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a student appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a student misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment During LOD Classes

There is evidence that some people have used dance events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children, young people and vulnerable adults in vulnerable positions. All teachers should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the school's Child Protection Officer and/or Language of Dance Centre.

Teachers should discuss the taking of images with the school, parents or other authority responsible. Formal permission should always be obtained before taking any images.

Recruitment and Training of LOD Teachers

The Language of Dance Trust recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Recruitment and training procedures include the following:

- All potential LOD teachers must be certified at the appropriate level by an LOD Specialist before they are permitted to teach an LOD class.
- Consent should be obtained from a potential teacher to request a Disclosure check through the Criminal Records Bureau.
- The potential teacher should provide two confidential references for previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- S/he should sign up to the Trust's policies and procedures.
- Child/Vulnerable Adult protection procedures should be explained to the teacher and any further training needs identified.
- S/he will be required to obtain First-Aid training.

- If teaching an out-of-school hours LOD Club, s/he will be required to cooperate fully with the school's own policies and procedures.

Responding to Allegations or Suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for the Trust, in a paid or unpaid capacity, 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.

1. Allegations or Suspicions within Dance Environment

The Trust will assure all teachers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a teacher there may be three types of investigation:

1. A criminal investigation,
2. A child protection investigation,
3. A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action if there are Concerns

Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the Language of Dance Trust will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Centre itself, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Language of Dance Trust board of directors who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

Concerns about suspected abuse:

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by a member of staff/teacher should be reported to the Language of Dance Centre director, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Centre's director will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.

- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The Language of Dance Trust will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Language of Dance Trust board of directors will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff/teacher can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Trust board of directors must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the Trust should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

Action if Bullying is Suspected

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns. (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.

- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the school and the LODC (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action Towards the Bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the victim's coach.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

2. Allegations or Suspicions outside of Dance Environment (e.g. a parent/carer)

- Report your concerns to the school/organisation's Child Protection Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- See below for the information social services or the police will need.
- Social Services and the Child Protection Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- The teacher should also report the incident to the Language of Dance Trust. The Trust should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the Language of Dance Centre's activities and act accordingly.
- Maintain confidentiality on a **need to know** basis only.
- See below regarding information needed for social services.

Information for Social Services or the Police about Suspected Abuse

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact that took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct, or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or Childline on 0800 1111.

Confidentiality

In all cases, every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The Language of Dance Centre and Language of Dance Trust.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The person making the allegation.
- Social services/police.
- The school/organisation Child Protection Officer.
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure). Social services will advise who should approach the alleged abuser.

Support to Deal with the Aftermath of Abuse

Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of staff/teachers may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, E-mail: bac@bacp.co.uk, Internet: <http://www.bacp.co.uk>.

Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Please note that the Language of Dance Trust supports the Language of Dance Centre and that the Language of Dance Centre operates under the auspices of the Trust, therefore this policy is applicable to all Language of Dance Centre activities.