

*Policies and Procedures on Safeguarding
Children*

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1. Important details

Reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse

If you have any concerns about abuse you should inform the **designated person who is also the Safeguarding Officer**:

Rashmi Becker
Founding Director, Step Change Studios
2 Mandeville Place
London W1U 2BF
Tel: 07976 363861
info@stepchangestudios.com

Police

In the event of a disclosure being made out of hours and you feel it needs to be referred immediately (e.g. in the case of sexual abuse or physical abuse causing the individual to be in danger), refer the matter straight to the police using 999 (emergency) or 101 (non-emergency).

2. Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Every individual who participates in Step Change Studios is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. Step Change Studios have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for children, all **Responsible Adults** provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

Step Change Studios is committed to devising and implementing policies so that every individual involved in dance and physical activity accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means following procedures to protect individuals and reporting any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Step Change Studios and to allow **Responsible Adults** to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989). This can also be up to the age of 25 years in the case of someone who is receiving help from Social Services or Education.

Capacity refers to the ability to make a decision at a particular time, for example when under considerable stress. The starting assumption must always be that a person has the capacity to make a decision unless it can be established that they lack capacity (MCA 2005).

Responsible Adults in this context are:

- **Employees:** those persons engaged by Step Change Studios under a Contract of Employment.
- **Freelancers:** individuals contracted to Step Change Studios on a freelance basis, and not as an employee
- **Volunteers:** individuals recruited by Step Change Studios on a voluntary basis.

2.2 Policy Statement

Step Change Studios is committed to the following:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Every individual, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in dance and physical activity in a fun and safe environment
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- All suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All **Responsible Adults** who work with children will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures
- All **Responsible Adults** have a responsibility to report concerns to the designated person with responsibility for child protection
- **Responsible Adults** are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred
- Working in partnership with parents/guardian and children is essential for child protection.

We will aim to safeguard children by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for **Responsible Adults**
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with participants, parents/guardian and carers, and **Responsible Adults**
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents/guardian and children appropriately
- Carefully following the procedures for recruitment and selection of **Responsible Adults**
- Providing effective management for **Responsible Adults** through support and supervision
- Recognising some children are additionally vulnerable, for example those with disabilities, because of their level of dependency and possible communication barriers

2.3 Monitor and review the policy and procedures

The implementation of procedures should be regularly monitored and reviewed. The policy should be reviewed every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

Legal Framework

Child Protection

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children's Act 1989
- Children's Act 2004
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Care Act (2014) and other relevant legislation and guidance.

There is also a common law duty of care applicable to organisations not to be negligent and to avoid causing harm or injury.

3. Code of Conduct: Professional Behaviour Policy

Introduction

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities in dance and physical activity everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of **Responsible Adults** or participants in dance to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It IS however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good practice and poor practice.

3.1 Good Practice

All **Responsible Adults** should adhere to the following principles and action:

- Be familiar with and adhere to Step Change Studios' Policies and Procedures on Safeguarding Children. Re-read the policy as necessary to remind yourself of points that are particularly relevant to your area of work
- Keep a register of all individuals attending activities. This should include session/event details (days, times and venue) and the names of the instructor(s) who run the session
- Report any incidents or disclosures to the designated person as soon as possible. In terms of serious incidents such as sexual abuse disclosures or abuse that risks the safety of the child, a report should be made immediately
- Take factual notes of what the child has said about any reported incident or occurrence. Where possible you should quote the child directly
- Conduct yourself in a way that is fair to all children, acknowledging equal opportunities
- Under no circumstances should **Responsible Adults** give out their personal details to participants, or obtain personal details from participants. This includes phone numbers, e-mail addresses and contact through social networking sites. Exceptions may be made if there is a genuine reason that means contact cannot be made via Step Change Studios. In all cases permission must be sought through the designated person
- Do not use inappropriate language or behaviour, either directly to the child in their presence. In order to protect yourself from misunderstandings be aware that comments or behaviour you feel are made in jest or that are 'light hearted,' could be taken the wrong way

- Do not smoke, drink or take illegal drugs during or outside the venues of an activity or event
- Make every effort to encourage the participants in Step Change Studios' sessions to adhere to the standards and best practice of this policy. This refers to their behaviour towards staff and their peers
- Do not allow participants to smoke, drink or take illegal drugs on or in the vicinity of any activity that Step Change Studios is delivering
- Don't let inappropriate comments go unchecked in any situation. For example, discourage any comment against Equal Opportunities or which could be considered personally offensive or upsetting to another person. This not only applies to people within the session directly, but also if they are referring to someone without connection to Step Change Studios
- Consider that being safe and feeling safe are two different things. Check that the activity is appropriate to the space, gender, physique and maturity of the participants, the individuality and differentiation of participants' needs and supporting the promotion of self-esteem and assertiveness
- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- Make the experience of dance and physical activity fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- Treat all people equally and with respect and dignity
- Always put the welfare of the participant first, before winning/results
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with participants (e.g. it is not appropriate for **Responsible Adults** to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with any child. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the individual and their parent/guardian. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the individual's consent has been given. I
- Involve parents/guardian wherever possible, e.g. where a child need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents/guardian to take responsibility for their own relative. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents/guardian, or **Responsible Adults** work in pairs.
- Request written parental consent if **Responsible Adults** are required to transport in their cars
- Gain written parental/guardian consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays
- Ensure that if mixed participants are traveling for events, they should always be accompanied by a male and female **Responsible Adult**
- Ensure that at overnight events adults should not enter the room of a child or invite individuals to their rooms
- Always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of the child and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for the organisation's or personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will

- Secure written parental/guardian consent for Step Change Studios to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given
- Where **Responsible Adults** should not be alone with a child, although we recognise that there may be times when this may be necessary.

3.2 Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with a child away from others
- Taking a child alone in a car on journeys, however short
- Taking a child to your home where they will be alone with you
- Sharing a room with a child
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reducing 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 that the child can do for themselves.

When a case arises where it is impractical/impossible to avoid certain situation e.g. transporting a child in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/guardian and the individual involved.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a child, the child seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the individual misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague or the **designated person**, and make a written note of it. Parents/guardians should also be informed of the incident.

3.3 Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment

There is evidence that some people have used activities/events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children in vulnerable positions. All **Responsible Adults** should adhere to the appropriate guidelines detailed below.

Step Change Studios is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable environment for children. Implicit in this is the commitment to ensure that all publications, resources and media represent participants appropriately and with due respect. By adopting the points outlined in these guidelines you will be putting in place the best practice to protect people wherever photographs or recorded images are taken and stored.

The key concerns contained within this Policy regarding the use of images of children relate to:

- The taking of inappropriate photographs or recorded images of children
- Publishing details of children that may lead to the identification of and illicit contact with that child
- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use on child pornography websites.

Recording images of children

There have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children through the use of photographs on websites and other publications. Therefore, the following guidelines should be followed:

- All children featured in photographs/recordings must be appropriately dressed for the activity they are undertaking
- The photograph/recording should ideally focus on the activity. Where possible images of children should be recorded in small groups (the group may comprise any combination of adults and children)
- **Responsible Adults** should still be allowed to use video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid and means of recording special occasions with the written consent of parents/guardian
- Care should be taken in the dissemination and storage of the material.

Publishing images of children

- If a photograph/recording is used, personal details of any child such as email address, home address and telephone numbers should never be revealed
- Ask for parental/guardian written consent to take and use an image of a child. This ensures that parents/guardian are aware of the way the image of their charge is representing the activity/event
- Where a story concerns an individual, particular attention should be paid to ensuring permission is gained from parent/guardian to use a photograph/ recording and relevant details
- In order to guard against the possibility of an individual under a court order appearing on a website, the simultaneous streaming of images onto a website is not recommended. Delayed streaming also provides an opportunity for the editing of inappropriate clips (e.g. disarranged clothing).
- Think about the level of consideration that you give to the use of images in all communications. Apply an increased level of consideration to the images of children used on websites and social media.

Use of photographic/filming equipment by media

There is evidence that some people have used activities and events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage. Therefore, the following guidelines should be followed:

- If professional photographers are commissioned or the press is invited to an activity or event, it is important to ensure they are clear about expectations of them in relation to the welfare of children
- The photographer/camera person must have bona fide identification and be able to produce it on request
- Participants and parents/guardian must be informed that a photographer/camera person will be in attendance at an event and ensure that they give written consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs
- Do not allow unsupervised access to participants or one to one photo sessions at events/activities
- Do not approve/allow photo sessions outside the event/activity.

Use of photographic/filming equipment by parents and spectators

If parents or other spectators are intending to photograph or video at an event, they should also be made aware of the expectations:

- Parents and spectators should be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state their purpose for photography/filming
- Parents and spectators will be informed of any specific requirements concerning photography and filming at activities and events both verbally and through the use of published information at the activity/event.

In addition:

- Participants and parents should be informed that if they have concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography/filming these should be reported to the event organiser or official and recorded in the same manner as any other safeguarding concern
- Event organisers should approach and challenge any person taking photographs who has not made themselves known and/or registered with them. They might need to refer it to the local police force if this person continues to record images unauthorised.

3.4 Children and the Internet

Step Change Studios use some social media (for example Twitter and Instagram) to promote its activities. Step Change Studios will occasionally use these media formats to contact people. All **Responsible Adults** must apply the following safeguarding measures:

- Request permission from the designated person to contact participants from their personal mobile numbers, e-mail addresses or via any social media sites. It will only be deemed appropriate to give permission if the contact cannot be done through Step Change Studios' usual channels of communication
- Step Change Studios will only contact children through their professional pages within these sites, not via their personal pages
- Filming and Photography will not be published by Step Change Studios unless consent has been received
- When distributing Step Change Studios' social media site details, participants will be briefed on the acceptable way of using the sites encouraging respect for their peers, Step Change Studios' team and reputation
- Step Change Studios will do our best to monitor posts on our social media pages of sites, but acknowledge that we cannot be responsible for everything other people write.

3.5 Image Consent

By law, Step Change Studios is required to treat all information with respect, hold it securely, not disclose it to any unauthorised parties, and only use it as required and as consented to and instructed by the individual to whom it relates.

In all cases, consent for use of images where individuals can be identified will be gained and recorded. This is particularly important to demonstrate and document when using any information relating to children.

3.6 Use of contractors and third parties

The consent form will need to specifically state how the images or other personal information will be used and may be shared.

In terms of engaging third parties or freelancers to document or record various activities, agreements must be in place prior to any disclosure of personal information. Agreements must clearly define the use, storage and disclosure of any personal information captured during the engagement. Any agreement should clearly indicate that the use of any personal information captured during the engagement can only be used in the manner compatible with the original consent form.

3.7 Third Party Access

If we receive unsolicited calls from agencies and film companies looking to be linked up with children with a dance background, they must be able to respond to a positive to the following questions or the conversation should go no further:

1. Do all the staff in your organisation who directly work with children hold an advanced DBS certificate?
2. Who is the organisation's lead DBS signatory; can we have access to dialogue with that individual?
3. Will there be chaperones with the children?

We will not divulge any contact details (see Data Protection Policy) without prior consent; we would, however, allow someone access to talk to our dance participants overseen by Step Change Studios once parental/guardian consent has been obtained.

The organisation should be encouraged to provide their contact details and a permission request letter/form for our children to take home and discuss with parents/guardian before handing over their own contact details.

4. Defining Child Abuse

Introduction

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm, it commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are a number of different types of abuse. The abuser may be a family member, someone the person encounters in residential care or in the community. Any individual may abuse or neglect a child directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the child.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood.

Children with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

4.1 Types of Child Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure a child e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse.

This category of abuse can also include when a parent/guardian reports non-existent symptoms or illness deliberately causes ill health in a child they are looking after; this is called Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

In a physical activity/dance situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

- **Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a child they are useless, worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of children that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a child to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in physical activity/dance may occur when the child is constantly criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying.

- **Bullying** may come from another child. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying.

It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In physical activity/dance bullying may arise when a parent or instructor pushes the child too hard to succeed, or another participant or official uses bullying behaviour.

- **Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet the child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Refusal to give love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in physical activity/dance could occur when an instructor does not keep the child safe, or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing children pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

In physical activity/dance, activities which might involve physical contact with a child could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also, the power of the instructor over a child, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

- **Abuse linked to faith /culture:** The legislative framework in the UK does not compromise based on faith and/or culture and all legislation needs to be adhered to. Therefore, the

guidelines for reporting suspected abuse outlined in this policy should be followed.

Abuse linked to culture refers to the type of abuse that children may experience, often justified or condoned based on traditional family practices or community expectations. Abuse linked to faith refers to the abuse of children by those who have power due to their faith or religious connection and who utilise this power to have a negative influence on either the child directly, or in order to impact on the child via parents or the community.

The abuse may take place within a religious setting or other venue where the faith leader/guider is able to continue within their role. Parents and guardians of children may be influenced by faith leaders to take abusive action towards their children in order to 'cleanse' their spirit of a bad habit or correct negative behaviour.

The abuse that children may experience could involve sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and/or neglect. Strong beliefs or a sense of honour or shame can prevent people from seeking or accepting the help they need.

- **Abuse of people with a disability:** Some children with a disability are mentally or physically more vulnerable than others, which could make it easier for abusers to exploit them. They may also find it more difficult to recognise and report abuse, and to be believed. For example, if their disability means that they:
 - Have limited life experiences and so have not developed the social skills needed to work out what the behaviour and attitudes of others mean. This could make them less able to understand what appropriate and inappropriate behaviour is
 - Have been encouraged to comply with other people's wishes and not to question authority figures
 - Are afraid to challenge potentially abusive situations because of fear of the consequences. It is often easier to be compliant and pleasing rather than to risk angering an authority figure and getting into trouble
 - May not be able to report abuse either because there is no-one they can report it to or because they do not have the appropriate language to use
 - May not be able to recognise that abuse has taken place
 - Feel powerless because they have to depend on others for personal support may not be able to remove themselves physically from abusive situations
 - Are not believed because their authority figures cannot accept that anyone would abuse a disabled person
 - -May not have anybody they can trust and confide in – may feel guilt or shame about the abuse which prevents them from reporting it
 - May not have a sense of ownership of their own bodies because they are so used to being examined physically by others as part of their medical and physical care
 - Have low self-esteem and a poor self-image.

In addition to the four main types of abuse shown above, children with a disability in residential homes or other institutions might experience:

- **Institutional abuse** - when staff in a home or other institutions sacrifice the needs, wishes and lifestyle of a disabled person in favour of the institution's regime. For example, by showing lack of respect for a child's dignity or privacy, or denying them the opportunity to make day-to-day choices or decisions about their life.
- **Financial abuse** - deliberate misuse and exploitation of a disabled person's money or possessions. For example, if someone takes a child's money to spend on themselves.

Any or all of these types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

Incidents of abuse may be multiple, either to one person in a continuing relationship or service context or to more than one person at a time. This makes it important to look beyond the single incident or breach in standards to underlying dynamics and patterns of harm. Some instances of abuse will constitute a criminal offence. In this respect children are entitled to the protection of the law in the same way as any other member of the public.

In addition, statutory offences have been created which specifically protect those who may be incapacitated in various ways. Examples of actions which may constitute criminal offences are: assault, whether physical or psychological, sexual assault and rape, theft, fraud or other forms of financial exploitation, and certain forms of discrimination, whether on racial or gender grounds.

Criminal offences: These offences differ from all other non-criminal forms of abuse in that the responsibility for initiating action rests with the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service. Also, when complaints about alleged abuse suggest that a criminal offence may have been committed, it is imperative that reference should be made to the police as a matter of urgency.

Important Notes:

- It is accepted that in all forms of abuse there are elements of emotional abuse, and that some children are subjected to more than one form of abuse at any time. The above definitions do not minimise other forms of maltreatment.
- Other sources of stress for children and families, can include social exclusion, domestic violence, mental illness of a parent or carer, or drug and alcohol misuse. These may have a negative impact on a child's health and development and may be noticed by an organisation caring for a child. If it is felt that a child's well-being is adversely affected by any of these areas, the same procedures should be followed.

4.2 Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with abuse in children, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications of abuse may include one or more of the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- An injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- The person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- Another person expresses concern about the welfare of a child
- Unexplained changes in a person's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- Distrust of adult's, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Difficulty in making friends
- Being prevented from socialising with others
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite
- Losing weight for no apparent reason

- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.

Signs of bullying include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or competitions
- An unexplained drop off in performance
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food
- A shortage of money or frequents loss of possessions

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is **NOT** the responsibility of those working with Step Change Studios to decide that abuse is occurring. It **IS** their responsibility to act on any concerns.

5. Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

Introduction

It is not the responsibility of anyone working with Step Change Studios in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the individual. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/ suspicions of abuse occurring within Step Change Studios and to allegations/suspicious that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspicious.

5.1 Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in this document, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the individual affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If an individual says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- **Stay calm** so as not to frighten the individual
- **Reassure** the individual that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **Listen** to the individual, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **Keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the individual has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify
- **Inform** the individual that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell them that this is to help stop the abuse continuing
- **Safety of the child** is paramount. If the person needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a

child protection issue

- **Record** all information
- **Report** the incident to the **designated person**.

Anyone who wishes to seek guidance from an external agency may contact the Police or Social Services Department (via Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (IPOC) if applicable). Guidance and advice is also available from the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or Childline on 0800 1111 or the Pan European number – 116 111(whilst in Europe).

5.2 Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- The person's name, age and date of birth
- The person's home address and telephone number
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- A description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also, any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- Details of witnesses to the incidents
- The person's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- Have the parents/guardian been contacted? If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail.

5.3 Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Step Change Studios expects all **Responsible Adults** to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the **designated person** and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the **designated person** from Step Change Studios is not available you should take responsibility and seek advice from Childline or the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at your local social services department or the police.

Where there is a complaint against a **Responsible Adult** there may be three types of investigation.

- **Criminal** in which case the police are immediately involved
- **Child protection** in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- **Disciplinary or misconduct** in which case Step Change Studios will be involved

Step Change Studios are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for child protection.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern.

Suspected abuse and the child

Definitions and signs of abuse can be found in appendices at the end of this policy.

What to do if you suspect that abuse may have occurred

You must report the concerns immediately to the designated person

The role of the **designated person** is to:

- Obtain information from **Responsible Adults**, children or parents/guardian who have child protection concerns and to record this information
- Assess the information quickly and carefully and ask for further information as appropriate
- Check whether your assessment has been completed; if so, add to it and contact the person who reported the suspicion or allegation
- Consult with a statutory protection agency such as the local children's social services department or the NSPCC to clarify any doubts or worries
- If concerns persist the lead professional (or **designated person** if concern is of a child suffering or likely to suffer significant harm) should make a referral to a statutory protection agency or the police without delay.
- Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.
- It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to the relevant protection agencies. If for any reason you believe that the nominated person has not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is up to you to contact the protection agencies directly.

Disclosure of physical injury or neglect

If a child has a symptom of physical injury or neglect the designated person will:

- Contact Social Services for advice in cases of deliberate injury or concerns about the safety of the individual. The parents/guardian should not be informed by the organisation in these circumstances.
- Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The **designated person** will inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.
- In other circumstances speak with the parent/guardian and suggest that medical help/attention is sought for the individual concerned. The doctor will then initiate further action if necessary.
- If appropriate the parent/guardian will be encouraged to seek help from Social Services. If the parent/guardian fails to act the **designated person** should, in case of real concern, contact social services for advice.
- Where the designated person is unsure whether to refer a case to Social Services then advice from the Local Area Children's Safeguarding Board or NSPCC will be sought.

Disclosure of sexual abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse the designated person will:

- Contact the Children's Social Service duty social worker and families directly. The designated person will not speak to the parent (or anyone else).

- If the designated person is unsure whether or not to follow the above guidance then advice from the Local Area Children's Safeguarding Board or NSPCC will be sought.
- Under no circumstances should the designated person attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegation or suspicions of sexual abuse. The role of the designated person is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and to provide this information to Social Services.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse should normally be reported to the designated person, their absence should not delay referral to Social Services.

What to do after a person has talked to you about abuse

- Make notes as soon as possible (ideally within 1 hour of being told). You should write down exactly what the person has said, what you said in reply and what was happening immediately before being told (i.e. the activity being delivered). You should record the dates, times and when you made the record. All hand written notes should be kept securely.
- You should use the form '**Confidential Abuse & Major Incident Record Sheet.**' This form is in the Appendices of this policy.
- You should report your discussion to the designated person as soon as possible. If this person is implicated you need to report to the second designated person. If both are implicated report to Social Services.
- You should under no circumstances discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated above.
- After a person has disclosed abuse the designated persons should carefully consider whether or not it is safe for a child to return home to potentially abusive situation. On these rare occasions it may be necessary to take immediate action to contact Social Services to discuss putting safety measures into effect. If a person is at immediate risk of harm, or if you believe a crime has been committed, contact the police on 999 or 101.

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services. This is because other children involved in Step Change Studios' activities and events or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

5.4 Concerns outside the immediate activity/dance environment (e.g. a parent or guardian)

- Report your concerns to the **designated person**
- If the designated person is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local social services department or the police immediately
- Social Services and the designated person from Step Change Studios will decide how to inform the parents/guardian
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis.

5.5 Confidentiality

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:

- **Designated person** of Step Change Studios
- The parents/guardian of the child
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/police

- The alleged abuser (and their parents/guardian if the alleged abuser is a child)

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

5.6 Internal Inquiries and Suspension

- The designated person 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 designated person from Step Change Studios will assess all individual cases to decide whether the **Responsible Adult** can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases a decision must be reached based upon the available information which could suggest that on the 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.

6. Safer Recruitment Policy

6.1 Recruitment and appointment of **Responsible Adults**

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to all **Responsible Adults**. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children the following steps should be taken when recruiting:

- Identifying the tasks and responsibilities involved and the type of person most suitable for the job.
- All **Responsible Adults** should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about the applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- We will make sure that we measure the application against the selection criteria.
- All applicants will sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they should be considered unsuitable to work with children. Employment which enables the post-holder to have access to persons under the age of 18 in the course of their normal duties is exempt from The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) and therefore all spent and unspent convictions must be disclosed, including any pending case against them. This will then be subject to enhanced disclosure certificate from DBS or enhanced and barred disclosure if employment falls under 'regulated activity' as set out in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. This applies to potential **Responsible Adults**. It is important that our applicant in this category understands that all information will be dealt with confidentially and will not be used against them unfairly.
- We will ask for photographic evidence to confirm the identity of the applicant e.g. their passport and evidence of their right to work in the UK.
- When appropriate we will request to see documentation of any qualifications detailed by the applicant.
- We will request two written references from people who are not family members or friends and who have knowledge of the applicant's experience of working with children. We will ask the referee to comment on their suitability for working with children. We will try to follow up written references with a telephone call.
- We recommend that all staff subscribe to the Disclosure Barring Service update service.

- When school aged work experience students (up to age 18) attend projects or workshops they won't be expected to hold a DBS certificate, however they must be accompanied by a **Responsible Adult** with an Enhanced Certificate at all times. Work experience students from University or over the age of 18 will be expected to undergo an Enhanced disclosure from DBS.

6.2 Interview and Induction

All workers and volunteers involved in dance provision will be required to undertake an interview. Anyone involved in delivering or supporting Step Change Studios' dance provision should receive formal or informal induction during which:

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self disclosures
- Their qualifications should be substantiated
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified
- Every appointed individual is issued with a copy of this policy on the start of their role with Step Change Studios, and be kept up to date with any amendments.
- Step Change Studios will keep a record of all Safeguarding training undertaken by workers and volunteers.

7. Whistleblowing Policy

Step Change Studios has a whistleblowing policy to enable all **Responsible Adults** to report any internal wrongdoing and disclose information which they believe shows malpractice, impropriety, criminal activity, or dangers to health and safety. Our whistleblowing policy aims to:

- Encourage all **Responsible Adults** to feel confident in raising serious concerns
- Provide clear procedures for raising those concerns and to receive feedback on any action taken
- Ensure all **Responsible Adults** are aware of how to pursue concerns if they aren't satisfied with the way concerns were dealt with
- Protect "whistleblowers" from possible reprisals or victimisation if there is reasonable belief that they have raised any concerns in good faith.

8. Records, Confidentiality & Information Sharing

All children, and their families are entitled to their privacy. However, where there are concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, those concerns and the necessary personal information will need to be shared with those who can make decisions about action to safeguard the individual.

There is nothing in any legislation that prohibits the sharing of confidential and personal information where there are concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or where a criminal act may be, or may have been committed.

All **Responsible Adults** should make written notes at the earliest opportunity and these should be passed to the designated person who must keep all written documents relating to a safeguarding issue in a secure place.

These detailed records should be kept until Step Change Studios is confident that the information is held accurately with the agency responsible for taking further action to safeguard the child, i.e. partner agencies, social services or the police. A chronology of decisions made and actions taken can then be kept on file, once the detailed records are deleted or destroyed. This record should be held until the 75th birthday of the individual in question.

Where concerns have been raised about a **Responsible Adult** and these relate to behaviour that has harmed, or may have harmed a child; possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child; or behaved in a way that indicates the individual is unsuitable to work with children then:

- The designated person receiving the information must follow correct procedures and bring in police if an offense has occurred
- A clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made, details of how the allegations were followed up and resolved, and of any action taken and decisions reached, will be recorded
- This record will be kept in the person's confidential personnel file and a copy should be given to the individual
- Such information will be retained on file indefinitely

The purpose of the record is to enable accurate information to be given in response to any future request for a reference. It will provide clarification in cases where a future DBS disclosure reveals information from the police that an allegation was made but did not result in a prosecution or a conviction. It will also prevent unnecessary re-investigation if, as sometimes happens, allegations resurface after a period of time.

Step Change Studios has a Duty to Refer to DBS any **Responsible Adult** who has been dismissed, redeployed, retired/redundant or resigned where Step Change Studios believe that this person has either:

- Engaged in relevant conduct or
- Satisfied the harm test or
- Received a caution for, or been convicted of, a relevant offence

9. Declaration

On behalf of **Step Change Studios I**, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

Signed:

.....
Name:
Rashmi Becker

.....
Position within Step Change Studios
Founder & Director

.....
Date:
13/08/2023

APPENDIX 1: Outline of Policies for Parents / Guardians

Step Change Studios believe that the welfare of all children is paramount. We will ensure that our policies and activities are empowering and enabling, creating a safe and creative environment for participants. Please find below a brief outline of our policies. Our policy and procedure on safeguarding children is available on request.

Safeguarding Policy

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- It is not the responsibility of staff, freelancers or volunteers to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred, but they do have a responsibility to report concerns to the Director of Step Change Studios 'designated person' who will assess and refer to authorities or agencies as appropriate.

We will aim to safeguard children by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for all **Responsible Adults**
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with participants, parents/guardians and **Responsible Adults**
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents/guardian and children appropriately
- Carefully following the procedures for recruitment and selection of all **Responsible Adults**
- Providing effective management for all **Responsible Adults** through support, supervision and training
- Recognising some children are additionally vulnerable, for example those with disabilities, because of their level of dependency and possible communication barriers.

Professional Behaviour Policy

All Responsible Adults are asked to adhere to and be guided by our Professional Behaviour Policy. This includes:

- Conduct yourself in a way that is fair and respectful to all children
- Do not use inappropriate language or behaviour, either directly to the child or in their presence
- Do not smoke, drink or take illegal drugs in front of children you work with during or outside of an activity or events
- Make every effort to encourage participants in activities/events to adhere to the standards and best practice of this policy. This refers to their behaviour towards **Responsible Adults**
- Do not allow children to smoke, drink or take illegal drugs on or in the vicinity of the any of our sessions, including third party venues we use
- Don't let inappropriate comments go unchecked in any situation
- Under no circumstances should **Responsible Adults** working for or supporting Step Change Studios give out their personal details to participants, or obtain personal details from participants. There may be exceptions on specific projects, in all cases permission must be sought through the Step Change Studios' Director.
- Consider that being safe and feeling safe are two different things. Check that the activity is appropriate to the space, gender, physique and maturity of the participants, the individuality and differentiation of participants' needs and supporting the promotion of self-esteem and assertiveness.

Whistleblowing Policy

Step Change Studios has a whistleblowing policy to enable all **Responsible Adults** to report any internal wrongdoing and disclose information which they believe shows malpractice, impropriety, criminal activity, or dangers to health and safety. Our whistleblowing policy aims to:

- Encourage all **Responsible Adults** to feel confident in raising serious concerns
- Provide clear procedures for raising those concerns and to receive feedback on any action taken
- Ensure all **Responsible Adults** are aware of how to pursue concerns if they aren't satisfied with the way concerns were dealt with
- Protect "whistleblowers" from possible reprisals or victimisation if there is reasonable belief that they have raised any concerns in good faith.

Child Protection Procedures

All **Responsible Adults** must report any incidents or disclosures to the **designation person** as soon as possible. In terms of serious incidents such as sexual abuse disclosures or abuse that risks the safety of the child, a report should be made immediately. You must take factual notes of what the individual has said about any reported incident or occurrence. Where possible you should quote the individual directly.

The role of the **designated person** is to:

- Obtain information from **Responsible Adults**, participants or parents/guardian who have child protection concerns and to record this information
- Assess the information quickly and carefully and ask for further information as appropriate
- Consult with a statutory protection agency such as the local children's social services department or the NSPCC to clarify any doubts or worries
- If concerns persist the lead professional (or designated person if concern is of a person suffering or likely to suffer significant harm) should make a referral to a statutory protection agency or the police without delay.

APPENDIX 2: Guidance Notes for Safe Touch

All **Responsible Adults** should adhere to and be guided by the following principles:

- Safe Touch may not always be appropriate.
- **Responsible Adults** do not have the right to touch children during projects without their permission.
- **Responsible Adults** should examine whether it is necessary to use touch or whether clear verbal instruction, visualisation techniques or demonstration can be as effective.
- Where touch is deemed necessary, it should be relevant to the person's participation in and understanding of the activity and should not be used in order to encourage familiarity.
- Where it is deemed necessary to have physical contact with a child to instruct them then permission must be sought before contact is made.
- For touch to be 'safe touch' it needs to be:
 - Necessary – demonstration and verbal instruction is not adequate
 - Permitted – permission for contact is sought and given by the child
 - Clear – tell the individual where and how you will touch to give instruction
 - Contextual – explain why you are going to touch.
- Always check your reason for using touch is understood and has been effective.

APPENDIX 3: Confidential Abuse & Major Incident Record Sheet

To be used in incidents of allegations or situations of abuse, or incidents where a child's safety has been seriously threatened.

Organisation

Name of person reporting

Name of child

Age and date of birth

Ethnicity

Religion

First language

Disability

Parent(s)/guardian's name(s)

Home address/Tel no

Are you reporting your concerns or reporting someone else's. Please give details.

Brief description of what has prompted the concerns: include date, time, and specific incidents.

Any physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?

Have you spoken to the child? If so, what was said?

Have you spoken to the parent(s)/guardian? If so, what was said?

Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, please give details?

Have you consulted anybody else? Please give details

Person reported to and date of reporting

Signature of person reporting

Today's date

Action taken

Notes

Appendix 4: Minor Incident Record Sheet

This form should be used for less serious incidents, such as pastoral issues or incidents where the child is not immediately in danger or distress.

Date of Report:

Incident Reported By:

Incident Reported To:

Date of Incident:

Venue of Incident:

Details:

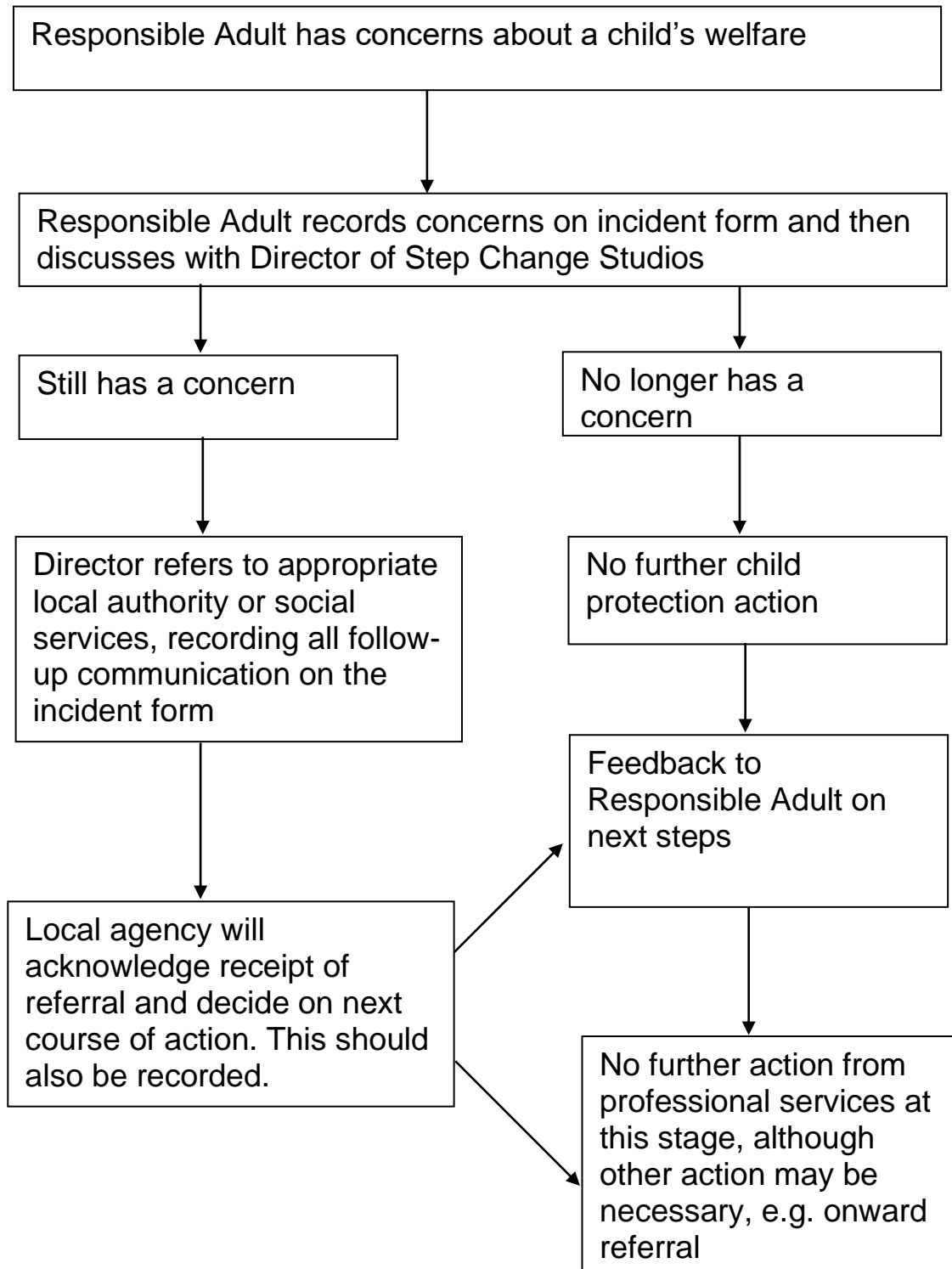
Next Step:

Signed (by designated person):

Name:

Date:

Appendix 5: Process Flowchart



Appendix 6: Declaration

*This form is to be signed by all **Responsible Adults** and work experience students (of all ages) to confirm that they have read and understood Step Change Studios' Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.*

Declaration

Name:

I have read and understood Step Change Studios policy and procedures on safeguarding children, along with the attached appendices. I agree to adhere to and be guided by its terms and to re-read the policy to keep myself aware of best practice.

I know no reason why I should be considered unsuitable to work with children.

I have declared all convictions, or have no convictions or pending convictions against me.

Signed: _____ **Date:**

Please give this form to Rashmi Becker, Director Step Change Studios. It will be kept in your file.