



Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

Rationale

OPIDF recognises that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is the responsibility of everyone and our policy applies to all those who attend our events.

OPIDF is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people up to the age of 18. We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation.

OPIDF acknowledges its duty to act appropriately to any allegations, reports or suspicions of abuse.

OPIDF recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014, the Children Act 1989 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.

OPIDF will ensure that:

- 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
- As a federation, we will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children

In implementing our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy OPIDF will:

- Make all members aware of their legal and moral responsibility to protect young people from harm, abuse and exploitation
- Make all members aware of their responsibility to report concerns that arise about a child or young person to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Ensure the DSL refers any child protection concerns to the statutory protection agencies (i.e. Police and/or Children's Social Services).

This policy will be regularly monitored by OPIDF and will be subject to an annual review.

Date policy agreed: Feb 2025

Date policy to be reviewed: Feb 2026

OPIDF has a designated Safeguarding lead who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy is adhered to. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is **Neesha Morris** and she can be contacted on: Neesha.morris@icloud.com - **FAO Neesha Morris**

There is also a Deputy DSL who is **Matt O'Riordan**

What to do if you think a child could be experiencing abuse and/or neglect

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

Child Protection

Child protection: Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. - ***Working together to safeguard children March 2015***

Recognising the signs & symptoms of abuse:

1. Abuse comes under the main headings of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. See 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youreworried-a-child-is-being-abused--2>

All members are to be given a copy of this document, with a copy of this safeguarding policy and are to sign to say they've read both of them.

Suspicion of abuse:

2. You may observe signs or symptoms which may indicate a child is either suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm:

- Children whose behaviour changes – they may become aggressive, challenging, disruptive, withdrawn or clingy, or they might have difficulty sleeping or start wetting the bed;
- Children with clothes which are ill-fitting and/or dirty;
- Children with consistently poor hygiene;
- Children who don't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities;
- Children who talk about being left home alone;

- Parents who are dismissive and non-responsive to practitioners' concerns;
- Parents who collect their children when drunk, or under the influence of drugs;
- Children who drink alcohol regularly from an early age;
- Children who are concerned for younger siblings without explaining why;
- Children who talk about running away; and
- Children who shy away from being touched or flinch at sudden movements.

Physical Abuse:

3. Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Physical abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Babies and disabled children also have a higher risk of suffering physical abuse.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. Physical abuse can also occur outside of the family environment.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of physical abuse:

- Children with frequent injuries;
- Children with unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones; and
- Children with unexplained:
bruises or cuts;
burns or scalds; or
bite marks.

In the performance sector, physical abuse could also include adult's coercion into or conspiring with children and young people's excessive physical exercise and training and/or deprivation of sufficient rest and sustenance.

Parents and other adults should also be alert to self abuse including cutting and eating disorders.

Physical Abuse:

4. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Although the effects of emotional abuse might take a long time to be recognisable, practitioners will be in a position to observe it, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate.

Emotional abuse may involve serious bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- Children who are excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong;
- Parents or carers who withdraw their attention from their child, giving the child the 'cold shoulder';
- Parents or carers blaming their problems on their child; and
- Parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons. In the performance sector this will also include trainers and mentors in loco parentis.

Sexual Abuse

5. Sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child. You should be aware that many children and young people who are victims of sexual abuse do not recognise themselves as such. A child may not understand what is happening and may not even understand that it is wrong. Sexual abuse can have a long-term impact on mental health.

Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual abuse:

- Children who display knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age;
- Children who use sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have;
- Children who ask others to behave sexually or play sexual games; and
- Children with physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online. A significant number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care and education at some point.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual exploitation:

- Children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- Children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- Children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- Children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant;
- Children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- Children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- Children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
- Children who regularly miss school or education or don't take part in education.

Neglect

6. Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter. It is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development.

Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse. It is important that practitioners remain alert and do not miss opportunities to take timely action. However, while you may be concerned about a child, neglect is not always straightforward to identify.

Neglect may occur if a parent becomes physically or mentally unable to care for a child. A parent may also have an addiction to alcohol or drugs, which could impair their ability to keep a child safe or result in them prioritising buying drugs, or alcohol, over food, clothing or warmth for the child. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal drug or alcohol abuse.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of neglect:

- Children who are living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe;
- Children who are left hungry or dirty;
- Children who are left without adequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat;
- Children who are living in dangerous conditions, i.e. around drugs, alcohol or violence;
- Children who are often angry, aggressive or self-harm;
- Children who fail to receive basic health care⁴; and
- Parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or are injured

Disclosure

Disclosure of abuse

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control, but do not delay in taking action
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Do not promise confidentiality. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Make it clear to the child that you will need to share the information with others and that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that they 'did the right thing' in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you will do next
- Speak immediately to the DSL. It is that person's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities.
- Never investigate or take sole responsibility for a situation where a child makes a disclosure.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead would discuss concerns with a parent/carer if this was thought not to place the child at further risk. When the disclosure is about something a parent/carer has done, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should always seek advice from Children's Social Care First. (See Appendix 1)

If You have any concerns that a child may be experiencing or at risk of harm or neglect and are unable to contact the DSL please contact the relevant Children's services (where the child lives).

Photographs and Images of Children

There are risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on websites and in other publications such as competition syllabi and promotions. Photographs can be used as a means of identifying children when they are accompanied with personal information, for example 'this is X who goes to X school who likes to dance'. This information can make a child vulnerable to an individual who may wish to start to 'groom' that child for abuse.

Secondly the content of the photo can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. There is evidence of this adapted material finding its way onto child pornography sites.

OPIDF always considers the potential risk in relation to the use of images of children and young people on their website, syllabi and other material. Use of names of individuals in photographs is limited.

OPIDF permits the use of personal photograph taking, but parents/carers are advised that this is for personal use only.

If parents or other members of the audience are intending to photograph or video an event they should be made aware of OPIDF's policy. **The use of cameras or mobile phones and camera or filming capability in dressing rooms and other inappropriate environments is expressly forbidden.**

Parents/Carers

OPIDF believes it to be important that there is a partnership between member schools, their parents and the federation. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the federation and to share responsibility for the care and safeguarding of the children.

- All parents will have access to a copy of the organisation's Child Protection/safeguarding policy and procedures.
- All parents/carers have responsibility of their children after classes, at competitions or performances.

Member Teachers

All OPIDF members will abide by the Safer Working Practice guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguardchildren--2>

- Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear

Allegations against adults/members

Any report of concern about the behaviour of a member of OPIDF or or allegation of abuse against a member of staff must immediately be reported to the DSL or who will refer to the appropriate Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). If the DSL is unavailable, it must be reported to the deputy.

Responsibilities of the federation:

When organising and running events, at the outset of the event OPIDF will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process
- Identify at the outset the person who will have designated responsibility for child protection
- Engage in effective recruitment of individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting.
- Ensure that the children are supervised by a responsible adult at all times when under the federations responsibility.
- Ensure parents are aware of their responsibility to safeguard their child.
- Ensure that the DSL knows how to contact Children's Social Care if they need to report any concerns.

APPENDIX 1

Disclosure

- If a child discloses abuse or what may seem to be abuse;
 - Begin by believing the child
 - Remain calm
 - Do not ask any leading questions, use the following strategy:
 - T – Tell me
 - E – Explain that to me
 - D – Describe that to me
-
- Make some notes and contact:
 - DSL: **Neesha Morris** neesha.morris@icloud.com FAO: Neesha Morris

Ensure the notes contain the following information:

Name of child

Gender

DOB

Date of disclosure

Time of disclosure

Words the child has said

Words you have said

