

Safeguarding Policy - Children

At Rhythmix Academy we recognise that the welfare of children is of paramount importance. We have a responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of all children and young people we work with and have an explicit duty to do so under the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and the Education Act 2002.

A 'child' is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age is living independently, in further education, or working does not change his/ her entitlement to services or protection as a child.

At Rhythmix Academy we believe that all children without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs and that no child, or group of children should be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access the services and support to meet their needs.

All staff and volunteers have a strict duty never to subject a child to any form of harm or abuse. Failure to adhere to these procedures will be treated as gross misconduct.

Children and their parents/ carers who attend Rhythmix Academy may view our policy where appropriate and a copy will always be kept in our reception.

Designated safeguarding lead:

The designated safeguarding person (DSP) within our organisation is Emma Groves

As safeguarding lead, they have completed additional training to fulfil this role:

- UK Coaching – Safeguarding & Protecting Children

The Designated Safeguarding Person will advise members of staff and visitors to Rhythmix Academy on best practice and expectations. They will be responsible for the monitoring and recording of any safeguarding concerns and for ensuring that all concerns are shared with the appropriate statutory authorities.

Charlotte Hathaway has also completed the UK Coaching qualification in safeguarding and protecting children.

All staff and volunteers at Rhythmix Academy should be made aware of this policy and should be able to demonstrate their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, including how to raise concerns with both children's social care and the police. Staff and volunteers shall be made aware of this through appropriate trainings and briefings.

Overview of responsibilities:

All staff and volunteers must report all concerns to the designated safeguarding lead at the nearest available opportunity.

It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers at Rhythmix Academy to take steps to protect children, to keep them safe from hazards and to take appropriate action in the event of an accident.

It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to take reasonable steps to protect children and young people from harm and abuse while in contact with our organisation and our staff

and to report any incident of or suspicion of abuse to the Designated Safeguarding Person or in their absence to the appropriate statutory authority.

All staff working at Rhythmix Academy who have contact with children and young people are required to hold a valid, clear DBS check.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people means:

Protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of a child's health or development, ensuring that children are growing up with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to ensure that children have the best life chances.

At Rhythmix Academy we will do this by:

- Identifying and responding to concerns about a child or young person
- Providing a safe environment
- Supporting development through dance in a way that fosters a sense of belonging / sense of self/ sense of community/ sense of independence
- Supporting young people to communicate freely with us, supporting their communication methods, providing time and space to talk
- Fostering an environment of trust and building appropriate professional relationships

Consent and information sharing:

Issues of consent are essential to effective safeguarding practice. Additional consent must be sought for any activity that is out of the usual parameters of our work. Basic consents for day to day activities will be sought through enrolment process and appropriate organisational guidance shall be provided to ensure those consenting have clear and transparent information on what they are consenting to.

Significant harm is no exception to this. Before making a referral to Children's Social Care parents or carers must be informed that you are doing so, including the reasons why and must be asked for consent to do this. It should be noted however that in cases where parents, carers or children do not agree to information being shared you are still able to refer to Children's Social Care without consent but it is important to explain clearly to social care why consent cannot be established and to make a record of this.

Instances where you may not wish to seek consent are where:

- Discussion with parents/ carers could place the child or other members of their family at increased risk
- The child is in immediate danger (e.g. requires medical attention)
- Having the discussion with parents may put you or another member of staff at risk.

It is often necessary to share information to provide support and prevent impairment or to protect a child from harm. Decisions to share will be appropriate, necessary, and proportionate. You must record your decision and the reasons for it, whether you choose to share information. If you decide to share you should record what you shared and who you shared with.

Child protection:

Is part of safeguarding children and promoting welfare. It refers to activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

This is about abuse and maltreatment of a child. Someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them, or by others (for example over the internet.) They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child/children. Abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, neglectful, or multiple types of abuse. Please see appendix for definitions of types of abuse.

All staff and volunteers should be able to recognise and know how to act upon evidence that a child's health or development is being impaired or that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. All concern about harm must be recorded and shared with the Designated Safeguarding person.

No professional should assume that another will pass on information about the safety of a child. If a professional has concerns about a child's welfare and believe they are or are likely to suffer significant harm they have a responsibility to inform Children's social care.

Seeking medical attention:

If a child has a physical injury, and there are concerns of abuse, medical attention should be sought immediately. Any safeguarding concerns should be shared with ambulance or hospital staff and then must be reported to children's social care.

Nothing should be allowed to delay urgent medical treatment.

Referring a concern and your DSP:

Our Designated safeguarding person will act on behalf of Rhythmix Academy in referring concerns or allegations of harm to Children's social care or the police as appropriate. If the designated safeguarding lead is in any doubt information should be shared with children's social care for a second opinion. It is not the role of the DSP to investigate only to collate information, clarify details of the concern and facilitate information sharing. In the absence of the DSP the individual who has the concern is responsible for contacting children's social care and the information should be shared with the DSP retrospectively.

The contact number for children' social care is 0300 123 4043 or if the child is in immediate danger call 999.

Protection of children:

At Rhythmix Academy we will make every effort to protect children from harm when they are visiting our setting/ attending our classes. We will do this through:

- Appropriate recruitment procedures
- Provision of safeguarding training for all staff and volunteers
- Ensuring all staff hold clear current DBS checks
- We will take all reasonable steps to ensure health safety and welfare for all those who access Rhythmix Academy
- We will not harm or abuse children within our care and will take all reasonable steps to ensure no one working with us community could harm or abuse a child in our care.
- We will ensure good reporting to our DSP and onward to children's social care wherever we suspect harm and will foster an environment of good communication, transparency, and trust.

Allegations against staff members/ volunteers:

If any member of staff has concerns about another member of staff or volunteer at Rhythmix Academy such as

- Believing they have behaved in a way that has harmed or may cause harm to a child
- Having possibly committed a criminal offence against or relating to a child
- Behaved toward a child in a way that indicates he/ she is unsuitable to work with children.

The allegation or concern should be reported to the manager with responsibility for dealing with allegations immediately. This is Emma Groves.

Neither the member of staff who has raised the concern/ allegation nor the member of staff who is alleged against should be allowed to question children or be part of any further investigation.

The designated manager for Rhythmix Academy will report the matter to the Local Authority designated Officer (LADO) if necessary.

If an allegation or concern arises about a member of staff, outside of their work with children, and this may present a risk or harm to a child/ren for which that member of staff is responsible, the general principles outlined in this policy will still apply.

Staff recruitment:

When recruiting paid staff and volunteers it is important to always ensure appropriate trainings and checks are carried out. This will ensure potential staff and volunteers are screened for their suitability to work with children and young people.

Code of Conduct for Staff:

All Rhythmix Academy staff must:

- Treat all children and young people with respect.
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow.
- Ensure that whenever possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others.
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy/encourage young people to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Be aware that physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted.
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people.
- Be familiar with the Rhythmix Academy's anti-bullying policy.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspensions of abuse.
- Employees should give guidance and support to inexperienced helpers, for example, volunteer assistants who may be working with them temporarily.

Staff must not:

- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour/make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or young people.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts.
- Either exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- Show favouritism to any individual.
- Rely on your good name or that of the organisation to protect you.
- Believe “it could never happen to me”.
- Take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach.

Project Planning, Supervision, Risk Assessment and Risk Management:

Rhythmix Academy of Dance recognises that planning for the proper supervision of children is one of the most effective ways of minimising opportunities for children to suffer harm whilst in our care.

Planning:

- Lesson co-ordinators should plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities for the children involved in the project.
- Planning should ensure that all children should always be adequately supervised and engaged in suitable activities.
- Organisers should obtain, in writing, parental consent to children joining an organised project. The purchase of a ticket or place on a project shall be deemed to be such consent.

Supervision:

- Project Managers must be satisfied that those workers and adults who work on projects are fully competent to do so and that appropriate checks have been made.
- Children must always be supervised
- Children must not be left unsupervised at any venue.
- Workers should always know where children are and what they are doing.
- Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment should have constant adult supervision.
- Dangerous behaviour by children should not be allowed.

Risk Assessment in relation to child protection:

The principle of risk assessment is to consider:

- The practical details of a project
- Things that could go wrong in a project
- The likelihood of things going wrong
- Impact of these things going wrong

Once this is done:

- You can identify measures to reduce the risk
- You can decide what to do if things go wrong
- You can allocate roles to monitor and manage child protection.

Risk assessment and risk management should be carried out for every project

Photo & Video Procedures

- Photo and video consent from parents is obtained in our enrolment process and is updated every 2 years.
- Avoid using children's names in photographic captions. If the child is named, avoid using his or her photograph. If the photograph is used, avoid naming the child.
- Always use a parental permission form to obtain consent for a child to be photographed / videoed
- Where possible, obtain the child's permission to use their image.
- Only use images for the specific purpose which has been agreed with the parents/carers and child.
- All images of children must be stored safely and securely.
- Only use images of children in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.
- Address the use of images of children on the organisation's website and with agencies who use our photographs in publicity material. Avoid personal information about children which could be used by an individual to learn more about a child.

Response Procedures to Safeguarding Concerns

Rhythmix Academy recognises the importance of having clear procedures to enable staff to handle situations where an appropriate response is needed to a child protection concern.

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully to what is said
- Find an appropriately early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.
- Allow the child/adult to continue at his/her own pace
- Ask questions for clarification only, and always avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Reassure the child/adult that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- Record in writing what was said using the facts from the statement.
- Contact your designated person (Emma Groves)

It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies following a referral to them of concern about a child if necessary.

Recording and Information Sharing Safeguarding Concerns

In all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, it is vitally important to record the facts of an allegation or reported incident, regardless of whether or not the concerns are shared with a statutory child protection agency.

An accurate note should be made of:

- Date and time of the incident or disclosure
- Parties who were involved
- What was said or done and by whom
- Any action taken by the organisation to investigate the matter
- Any further action e.g. suspension of a worker 10

- Where relevant, reasons why there is no referral to a statutory agency
- Names of persons reporting and to whom reported

The record should be clear and factual as it may be needed by child protection agencies investigating the incident and may, in the future, be used as evidence in court.

Confidentiality Policy, and Retention and Storage of Documentation

As a general rule, all personal information that is acquired or held in the course of working with children and young people should be treated as confidential and stored securely. Particular care should be taken with sensitive information.

Consideration should also be given to the Data Protection Act 1998 which requires that information is obtained and processed fairly and lawfully; that it is accurate, relevant and not held for longer than is necessary; and kept securely.

As an organisation using the DBS service to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust, Rhythmix Academy complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure Information.

Rhythmix Academy of Dance is not a DBS Registered Body and therefore will only record the date of a Disclosure, the body through which the Disclosure was made, and its reference number. As a matter of good practice:

- Disclosure information will never be kept in an applicant's personnel file and is only passed to those who are authorised to receive it.
- We recognise that it is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.
- We do not keep disclosure information for any longer than is necessary. This is generally a period of up to six months to allow for consideration and resolution of any disputes.

Signed: **Emma Groves**

Dated: 22/06/2023

Appendix A:

Definitions of abuse:

Physical abuse: A form of abuse that may involve hitting shaking throwing poisoning burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately causes illness in a child.

Emotional abuse: The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved inadequate, or valued in so far as they meet the needs of another person only, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as the over protection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (or cyber bullying), causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse: Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing rubbing, touching outside of clothing. They may also include noncontact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching 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 also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect: The persistent failure to meet a child's physical and/ or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home and abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers); ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include an unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

This is not a complete list, just examples. It is essential to remember it is not the role of staff or volunteers to determine whether abuse has taken place. It is simply to identify concerns and share them first with the DSP and then the Local Authority.

Appendix B:

Harm or the potential harm to a child may come to your attention in a number of ways:

- Information given to you by the child, his/ her friends a family member or close associate
- The child's behaviour may become different from the usual, be significantly different from the behaviour of their peers, be bizarre or unusual or may involve 'acting out' harmful situations through play.
- An injury may arouse suspicion if; it does not compare with the explanation given, different individuals give different explanations, the child appears anxious when discussing the injury, a child is pre mobile or has limited mobility and is bruised.
- Suspicion is raised as a picture of events is built up over time
- A child or young person is known to be having contact with an individual/s that have been identified as presenting a potential risk of harm to children.
- A parents behaviour before the birth of a child may indicate the likelihood of significant harm to an unborn child for example substance misuse.

Appendix C:

Managing a disclosure from a child:

- Listen carefully
- Do not ask leading or probing questions
- Never stop an individual who is talking freely
- Never promise to keep a secret
- Be reassuring they have done the right thing in disclosing
- Following the disclosure record the information and pass it on to your DPS.

