

London Gypsy Orchestra

Child Protection Policy

Policy Statement

This policy was updated on the 1st of February 2013

London Gypsy Orchestra is committed to a practice which protects children from harm. Members, staff and volunteers in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

Responsibilities

London Gypsy Orchestra will:

- Promote the health and welfare of children and adults at risk by providing opportunities for them to take part in arts activities safely.
- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children and adults at risk.
- Promote and implement appropriate procedures to safeguard the wellbeing of children and adults at risk and protect them from abuse.
- Recruit, train, support and supervise its staff, members and volunteers who will be working directly with children to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children at risk from abuse and to minimise risk to themselves.
- Require employees, contractors and volunteers working directly with children to adopt and abide by this Child Protection Policy and these Procedures.
- Respond to any allegations of misconduct or abuse of children at risk in line with this Policy and these Procedures as well as implementing, where appropriate, the relevant disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- Review and evaluate this Policy and these Procedures on a regular basis.

Principles

The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting them from abuse. Children and adults at risk have a lot to gain from involvement in the arts. Their natural sense of fun and spontaneity can blossom in a positive environment. Such an environment provides an excellent opportunity for them to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own unique potential. This policy and procedure is based on the following principles:

- 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;
- All staff (paid/unpaid) have a responsibility to report concerns to the Designated Person/s with responsibility for child protection.

We will aim to safeguard children by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents and carers, staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Carefully following the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through support, supervision and training.
- We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice regularly.

This policy sets out agreed guidelines relating to the following areas:
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- Responding to allegations of abuse, including those made against staff and volunteers
- Recruitment and vetting of staff and volunteers
- Supervision of organisational activities.

1. Forms of abuse

These definitions are based on those from Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department of Health, Home office, Department for Education and Employment, 1999).

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing harm to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described as factitious illness, fabricated or induced illness in children or “Munchausen Syndrome by proxy” after the person who first identified this situation. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they get through having a sick child.

Physical abuse, as well as being the result of a deliberate act, can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve making a child feel or believe they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of the other person.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may also involve causing children to feel frequently frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Bullying

Bullying can be defined as deliberately hurtful or insulting behaviour by a child/vulnerable adult to another child/vulnerable adult. Bullying may take a physical, verbal, emotional or sexual form that undermines a child's/vulnerable adult's confidence and causes them to suffer stress.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, buggery or oral sex, or non-penetrative acts such as fondling.

Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or a carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, leaving a young child home alone or the failure to ensure that a child gets appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

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. These four definitions do not minimise other forms of maltreatment.

Note

Recent guidance notes mention other sources of stress for children and families, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, the 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.

2. Recognising and Responding to Abuse

The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.

Physical signs of abuse:

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls or games
- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- Cigarette burns
- Bite marks
- Broken bones
- scalds
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Neglect-under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Reluctance to get changed, for example, wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home

Emotional signs of abuse

The physical signs of emotional abuse may include:

- A failure to thrive or grow particularly if a child puts on weight in other circumstances e.g. in hospital or away from their parents' care
- Sudden speech disorders
- Persistent tiredness
- Development delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Being unable to play
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Fear of making mistakes
- Self-harm
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour

Sexual Abuse

The physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal area
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming withdrawn or aggressive
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Having nightmares
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Eating problems such as over-eating or anorexia
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Saying they have secrets they can not tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- Acting in a sexually explicit way with adults

Neglect

The physical signs of neglect may include:

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- Constantly dirty or smelly
- Loss of weight or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect include:

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- Having few friends
- Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised

3. What to do if you suspect that abuse may have occurred

1. You must report the concerns immediately to the designated contact person/s.

The role of the Designated Person/s is to:

- Obtain information from staff, volunteers, children or parents and carers who have child protection concerns and to record this information.
- Assess the information quickly and carefully and ask for further information as appropriate.
- They should also consult with a statutory child protection agency such as the local social services department or the NSPCC to clarify any doubts or worries.
- The Designated Person/s should make a referral to a statutory child protection agency or the police without delay.

The Designated Person/s have been nominated by the London Gypsy Orchestra to refer allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities.

2. Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.

3. It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies. If for any reason you believe that the nominated persons have not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is up to you to contact the child protection agencies directly.

Allegations of physical injury or neglect

If a child has a symptom of physical injury or neglect the Designated Person/s will:

1. Contact Social Services for advice in cases of deliberate injury or concerns about the safety of the child. The parents should not be informed by the organisation in these circumstances.
2. Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The Designated Person/s will inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.
3. In other circumstances speak with the parent/carer/guardian and suggest that medical help/attention is sought for the child. The doctor will then initiate further action if necessary.
4. If appropriate the parent/carer/guardian will be encouraged to seek help from Social Services. If the parent/carer/guardian fails to act the Designated Person/s should in case of real concern contact social services for advice.
5. Where the Designated Person/s are unsure whether to refer a case to Social Services then advice from the Area Child Protection Committee will be sought.

Allegations of sexual abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse the Designated Person/s will:

1. Contact the Social Service duty social worker for children and families directly. The Designated Person/s will not speak to the parent (or anyone else)
2. If the Designated Person/s are unsure whether or not to follow the above guidance then advice from the Area Child protection Committee will be sought.
3. Under no circumstances should the Designated Person/s attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegation or suspicions of sexual abuse. The role of the Designated Person/s is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and to provide this information to Social Services whose task it is to investigate the matter under section 47 of the Children Act.

4. Whilst allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse should normally be reported to the Designated Person/s, their absence should not delay referral to Social Services.

4. Responding to a child making an allegation of abuse

- Stay calm, listen carefully to what is being said
- Find an appropriate 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 to continue at his/her own pace
- Ask questions for clarification only, and at all time avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer
- Reassure the child 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 child's own words as soon as possible, note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated

Helpful statements to make

- I believe you (or showing acceptance of what the child says)
- Thank you for telling me
- Its not your fault
- I will help you

Do not say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure that this is true?
- Why? Who? When? Where?
- Never make false promises

5. What to do after a child has talked to you about abuse

The procedure

1. Make notes as soon as possible (ideally within 1 hour of being told). Write down exactly what the child has said and 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 "Reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse" This form is attached at the back of this policy. (Appendix 1)

2. You should report your discussion with the Designated Person/s as soon as possible. If this person is implicated you need to report to the Director. If both are implicated report to Social Services.

3. You should under no circumstances discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone other than those nominated above.

4. After a child has disclosed abuse the Designated Person/s should carefully consider whether or not it is safe for a child to return home to a 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.

6. Recruitment and appointment of workers and volunteers

In recruiting and appointing workers who will be involved in working directly with children, London Gypsy Orchestra will be responsible for the following:

- Identifying the tasks and responsibilities involved and the type of person most suitable for the job.
- Drawing up the selection criteria and putting together a list of essential and desirable qualifications, skills and experience.
- All applicants should apply in writing and their application will cover their personal details, previous and current work/volunteering experience.
- We will always send a copy of our child protection policy with the application pack.
- We will make sure that we measure the application against the selection criteria.
- All applicants need to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they should be considered unsuitable to work with children. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) requires that people applying for positions which give them “substantial, unsupervised access on a sustained or regular basis” to children under the age of 18 must declare all previous convictions which are then subject to police checks. They can then only be offered a job subject to a successful police check. This includes all potential employees and volunteers. They are also required to declare any pending case against them. All information given will be dealt with confidentially
- We will ask for photographic evidence to confirm the identity of the applicant e.g. their passport.
- We will request to see documentation of any qualifications detailed by the applicant.
- We will always interview our candidates, ask for references, and request a police check if the position involves direct/unsupervised work with children.

7. Allegations against a member of staff

We will assure all staff/volunteers that the LGO will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child. Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

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

Action if there are concerns

a. Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; this will be dealt with as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Designated Person/s or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Chair who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not the organisation should initiate disciplinary proceedings.

b. Concerns about suspected abuse

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

- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- If the Designated Person/s are the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Manager or Chair who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

c. Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The Designated Person/s 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 organisation will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the organisation must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout

8. Supervisory arrangements for the management of LGO activities and services.

We will aim to protect children from abuse and our team members from false allegations by adopting the following guidelines:

- We will keep a register of all team members (both paid staff members and volunteers)
- We will keep a record of all sessions and the evaluation records.
- Our team members will record any unusual events on the accident/incident form.
- Written consent from a parent or guardian will be obtained for every child attending our activities, if unaccompanied by a parent/guardian/teacher.
- Where possible our team members should not be alone with a child, although we recognise that there may be times when this may be necessary or helpful
- We recognise that physical touch between adults and children can be healthy and acceptable in public places. However our team members will be discouraged from this in circumstances where an adult and child are left alone.
- All team members should treat all children with dignity and respect in attitude, language and actions.

9. Support and Guidance

London Gypsy Orchestra is committed to the provision of child protection guidance for all our team members who are involved directly in working with children.

Designated Contact Persons:

Main Contact: Claire Powell

Additional Contacts: Olga Baron, Alison Benson

APPENDIX

INCIDENT RECORD FORM for issues of a child protection nature

Your Name
Your position and contact telephone number
Child's Name.....
Child's address
.....
Child's date of birth
Child's Contact telephone number
Parents/guardians/carers names and address
.....
.....
.....

If reporting concerns on behalf of someone else:

Name
Position
Contact telephone number
Date this person advised you of their concerns/incident
Date of incident/concern arose
Time
Place
Your observations
.....
.....
.....
.....

Was the child/vulnerable adult asked about the incident?: **Yes** **No**

If so record exactly what the child said and what you said. Remember, do not lead the child - record actual details.

Continue on separate sheet if necessary)
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Action taken so far and when
.....
.....
.....
.....

External agencies contacted (date & time)

Enter name of department (Local Authority): Yes No

If yes - details of:

Name and contact number

Details of advice received

Children Services: Yes No

If yes - details of:

Name and contact number

Details of advice received

Police: Yes No

If yes - details of:

Name and contact number

Details of advice received

Governing Body: Yes No

If yes - details of:

Name and contact number

Details of advice received

Other (eg Children 1st): Yes No

If yes - details of:

Name and contact number

Details of advice received

Signature Print name Date

N.B. a copy of this form should be sent to Social Services /local police /governing body after the telephone report.

Remember to maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis - do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know.