

NORTHERN VISIONS

Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable People

Northern Visions recognises that everyone has a right to be protected from all forms of abuse and discrimination, and to be treated equally, irrespective of age, culture, disability, employment status, ethnic origin, gender, linguistic preference, marital status, nationality, political affiliation, race, religious conviction, sexual identity or socio-economic group.

- Everyone involved with Northern Visions, in whatever capacity, has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and preventing abuse.
- Northern Visions role is not to investigate but to report suspected cases of abuse.

Definitions

- Children are defined as anyone under the age of 18 years;
- Vulnerable persons include adults with learning, mental health or severe physical, disability;
- All references to children include young people and vulnerable people.

Northern Visions' Responsibilities

- To safeguard and promote the interests and well being of all children with whom we are working;
- To take all reasonable practicable steps to protect children and young people from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment;
- To respect children's rights, wishes and feelings;
- To take seriously, and respond to swiftly and appropriately to, all suspicions and allegations of abuse.

Legal Context

The legislative context within which children and vulnerable adults are protected includes:

- A - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The most important articles in relation to child protection are:
- Article 19 provides that children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse by those looking after them.
- Article 12 further provides that a child who is capable of forming his/her own views should be assured the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, these views being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
- Finally and most fundamentally Article 3 provides that when organisations make decisions, which affect children, the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration.
- B - The Children (NI) Order 1995 states that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration and it is this essential principle, which underpins this Guidance. Within this legislation a child is a person under the age of 18 years.

- C - Data Protection Act (1998). Whilst the Data Protection Act (1984) deals with the right of individuals to obtain copies of individual data held on computer of which they themselves are subject, this legislation which came into effect in 1999 extends the above provisions to manually held data i.e. paper records. Information relating to child abuse or possible abuse is however exempted from disclosure requirements.

Good Practice

- D - The Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003 is there to prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups. The Order strengthens the existing system for checking people seeking work with children and vulnerable adults against lists maintained by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and by the Department of Education.

Northern Visions' Board of Directors will put in place the following directives:

- All programmes involving children are carried out by vetted staff.
- All partners involved in Northern Visions projects and programmes involving young people must have a Child Protection Policy and procedures compatible with Northern Visions' Child Protection Policy.

Expectation of Partners

- Offer safeguards to the children with whom we work and to our members of staff, tutors, freelancers and volunteers;
- Help maintain the professionalism and standards set by Northern Visions.

We recognise that any procedure is only as effective as the ability and skill of those who operate it. Northern Visions will liaise with partners prior to a project, which involves children and young people taking place. Partners should recognise that our staff, tutors, freelancers and volunteers are not experts in the field of child abuse and that it is Northern Visions duty is to report suspected cases of abuse, NOT to investigate cases.

Allegations of Abuse Against Members of Staff, Tutors, Freelancers and Volunteers

Northern Visions' Board of Directors shall be informed of all allegations and will take the appropriate action;

- A record of all allegations shall be maintained;
- The Project Director will have responsibility for ensuring proper supervision of people working with children on Northern Visions' projects;
- If the Project Director is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chair of Northern Visions' Board of Directors. The Chair will then be responsible for taking the appropriate action.

Recruitment and Selecting Staff and Volunteers

When undertaking pre-selection checks for volunteers, tutors, freelancers, or paid staff who will work with children, Northern Visions will require:

- All volunteers and permanent staff to complete an application form;
- Consent to be obtained from applicants for Police and Social Services checks to be made;
- At least two references to be taken up, one of which should, if possible, refer to previous work with children;
- All information received to be treated in confidence.

Child Protection Checklist

- All individuals need to work within the principles of good practice.
- Individuals need to be aware of the legal context within which they work.
- Individuals need to ensure they are aware of the specific needs of the groups they will be working with and discuss with the contracting group how this will impact on their work and how these needs can be met.
- Prior to working in any setting the individual and the relevant staff member should familiarise themselves with both Northern Visions and receiving organisation's Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Policies.

Shared Responsibilities

- Individuals need to have discussed what will be the process if they have a cause for concern during their work and the use of their own organisation's policy / Northern Visions Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Ensure that you are fully aware of the receiving organisation's / group's / club's Child Protection Policy and your responsibility within it. Identify the Designated Officer in the receiving organisation.
- Be familiar with Northern Visions Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Be clear that the supervising adult in the room with you is appropriate i.e. knows the children and/or vulnerable adults and is able to meet their needs and concerns.
- Be aware of the specific and special needs of children, young people and vulnerable adults in the workshop and ensure that consideration is given to enabling their full involvement in the process.

Responding to Disclosure

- It is important that children / young people feel they are being listened to and taken seriously.
- Be honest and do not make promises you cannot keep.
- If the child / vulnerable adult is in immediate danger then consult with the supervising adult re: immediate action.
- Pass on the information as quickly as possible to the supervisory adult and in writing to the Designated Officer in the school / organisation and, if appropriate, follow your own organisation's policy.
- Record your concerns including the exact words of the child / vulnerable adult and copy to Northern Visions Chairperson.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
- Follow the Northern Visions Child Protection Policy and Procedure.

Reporting Procedure

- Ensure that procedures for responding to concerns are discussed at the planning meeting for the work and that a process for doing this is agreed. The Designated Officer needs to be named and contact details given.
- Always inform the supervising adult of concerns as quickly as possible.
- Be objective and concise on the 'Cause for Concern Form' and forward within 72 hours to the Designated Officer of the school, group, organisation (as above) and copy to the Northern Visions Chairperson.
- Ensuring the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is safeguarded is a shared responsibility. You can talk with the Northern Visions Chairperson at any time.

Recording

- Ensure that your recording is factual, in a neutral language and concise.
- Ensure you record the name of the Supervising Adult and Designated Officer of the school, group, organisation or club.
- Ensure the Cause For Concern Form is forwarded within 72 hours.
- Ensure confidentiality of sensitive information.
- D - The Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003 is there to prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups. The Order strengthens the existing system for checking people seeking work with children and vulnerable adults against lists maintained by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and by the Department of Education.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN FORM

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS

Name of child / young person / vulnerable adult

Date, day, time

Observation i.e. behaviour / injury / cause for concern

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Child / young person's statement / comments

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Name/s of Supervising Adult

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Action agreed to be taken – date / time, who to be informed

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Copy sent to:

Designated Officer of school / organisation / group / club.

Name Date

Northern Visions Designated Officer Name Date

Name of Trainer/creative specialist

Signed Date

Contact Number

Follow-up action: TO BE COMPLETED BY NORTHERN VISIONS CHAIRPERSON

Name. Date

Signed

Follow-up of Outcome(IF APPROPRIATE)
.....

Name (Chairperson)....., Date

Signed

Code Of Behaviour For Specific Art Forms

The following are generic areas to consider across all art forms:

Children, young people and vulnerable adults must be treated with respect at all times.

Children, young people and vulnerable adults have a right not to partake in an activity, which they feel uncomfortable with.

The need to seek permissions required from parents / primary carers /children and young people.

The need to obtain consent / release forms for use of any material produced by participants e.g. film, video, photography etc. These Consent / Release forms must provide as much information as possible for parents / carers to give informed consent.

The need for the provision of information in advance in relation to the content and requirements of the performance / workshop e.g. methods, touch etc.

The need for content and material that is age specific and appropriate to the needs of the group.

Any creative medium can invoke personal reactions and emotions in participants and therefore sensitivity and awareness is important.

Craft

This covers a wide variety of craft forms and it is important to provide children, young people and vulnerable adults with an opportunity to explore these. In relation to child protection good practice issues the following are issues to be aware of:

Children, young people and vulnerable adults and the supervising responsible adult should be told in advance what, if any, physical touch will be involved.

Consent from the child / vulnerable adult should be received before any physical touch is carried out.

Awareness that children, young people and vulnerable adults do not harm or attempt to harm themselves or others with any of the craft materials.

Good practice in working with crafts would indicate that physical touch is only necessary to guide the person's hands in the activity and therefore this should be a light minimal touch. For example, in teaching pottery that the trainer / creative specialist is in front of the child and places their hands gently on top of the child's hands to demonstrate the craft as opposed to from behind.

Music

The wide variety of music forms and expressions makes the community we live in come alive. It covers the traditional, modern - i.e. electronic, techno, dance, hip hop, jazz, world - classical, opera, rock, pop and orchestral. In relation to child protection good practice issues the following are specific areas to be aware of:

The teaching of specific musical instruments will involve at times the physical touch of children and young people to ensure they are following the teacher's directions. Good practice would highlight the importance of ensuring that children and young people are informed that touch may be involved.

Physical touch may involve the touching of the diaphragm to enhance / demonstrate breathing techniques. This needs to be carried out firstly with permission and secondly as lightly and as sensitively as possible.

The importance of recognizing that touch or personal space being invaded is and can be a very threatening experience. Therefore all trainer/creative specialists must be aware of their need to respect personal space and if touch must occur it is carried out in a respectful manner but importantly with consent.

An example is in teaching the drums, given the difficult task of teaching a child or young person how to co-ordinate four limbs it may be necessary to stand behind the person and lean over them. This can be very threatening and good practice would highlight the importance of a child's comfort with this and if any discomfort / hesitation is shown then it must not occur.

Literature

The art of story telling is to be recognised as an exciting way for children and young people to allow their imagination to expand.

In relation to child protection good practice issues the following are specific areas to be aware of:

The importance of recognising the need for language to be respectful and not to be abusive, degrading or exclusive.

That a literature facilitator needs to recognise the special needs within the group and ensure that these are given due consideration to ensure inclusivity.

It is important that the material is age specific and appropriate to the age group/special needs of those undertaking the workshop.

Given the nature of creative writing in encouraging and enabling a person to explore their imagination and feelings it will inevitably trigger within people their hidden thoughts and emotions. Trainer/creative specialists must therefore be aware of the experiential nature of creative writing and make children and young people aware of this possibility. If this does occur then following the Policy and Procedure recording procedure is advised.

It is also recognized that many young people will use creative writing to highlight how they are feeling, and may write down their abuse experiences. Trainer / creative specialists must be aware of this and respond appropriately.

Dance

Dance is a physical activity and this is what makes it a creative and joyful art form. In recognising that it is a physical activity it is therefore inevitable that physical touch will be an integral part of that experience. This physical touch can include the teacher / choreographer / dancer having to touch a child, young person or vulnerable adult in order to demonstrate a particular movement or to improve posture. Touch can also be to encourage a child or young person to work in pairs / trios with their peers.

Therefore the touch of children and young people must be recognised as important to the task of the teacher/ choreographer / dancer in order to teach the young people / children.

In relation to child protection good practice issues the following are specific areas to be aware of:

Touch is given and directed in a respectful and non-threatening manner.

Permission is sought from the child for touch to take place.

It is important to highlight to children, young people and vulnerable adults that it is OK to say no and they do not have to partake in any activity which they do not want to.

Awareness of the issues of power, physical size and bullying within a group of young people in encouraging the working of pairs / trios. It is important that young people are made aware if their behaviour is uncomfortable / frightening for their peers

That a teacher / choreographer / dancer is not involved in the changing of children or young people. Privacy for individuals (girls and boys) when changing and separate facilities should be available where possible.

Separate changing facilities should also be available for teacher / choreographer / dancer.

Where possible provision of tutors / supervisors of both sexes should be made available.

Visual / Film

It is important to realise that the increase in visual forms of communication has greatly enhanced our world today, which for the most part is extremely positive. However, the Internet has also provided an avenue for the exploitation of children and young people through images.

In relation to Child Protection good practice issues the following are specific areas to be aware of:

That clear information is given to those persons whether children, young people or vulnerable adults and their parents / guardians / carers as to the exact detail of the visual art being used. Consent for children / vulnerable adults to attend the workshop is received in the first stage of the consent process.

Good practice would recommend that a Release Form for use of visual work / images is forwarded prior to the visual facilitator attending the school / youth club / day centre to be completed by the parents / carers / guardians of the children and or young people who will be attending the workshop.

It is important to understand the motivation of a person who is involved in the sexual exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults and that for them even the most innocent of photographs, images or film can provide them with sexual stimulation.

The inclusion of a child, young person or vulnerable adult's image on a website has been another positive communication medium for visual facilitators to highlight their work and showcase the work of groups. However, the Internet is a medium with no boundaries and therefore an image can be forwarded to any number of other websites / emails / individuals. The security of these images to your particular website cannot be guaranteed.

In recognising these issues it is therefore good practice to ensure that those adults signing a consent form are aware of all the visual mediums that their child or young person's image may be displayed on and permission sought for their consent in this way.

As a visual arts facilitator you must abide by child protection guidelines which would request that you do not place a child in an at risk situation. Therefore it is good practice to question your motivation when considering displaying an image or film of a child or young person and if it is absolutely necessary.

The showcasing of visual facilitators' work is very important for the display of work and in encouraging children / young people and vulnerable adults to continue to explore the visual arts. However, if showcasing a piece of work for which you have received consent in the Release Form also includes the image of another child / young person / vulnerable adult then it is good practice that consent for that image is received from the responsible parent / carer / guardian for that child / adult in that image.

Good practice would highlight that all the material generated in the visual arts workshops remains the property of the individual participants / receiving organisation. Further consent for the showcasing of work needs to be given by the consenting parent / carer / guardian. For further information in relation to issues of copyright / ownership of intellectual property please go to Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) at www.culture.gov.uk.

Visual arts facilitators should never be alone with a child, young person or vulnerable adult in a 'dark' room/ editing studio situation.

Accessing the Internet can provide a breadth and depth of creative opportunities for children and young people and vulnerable adults as indicated earlier, however this needs to be monitored to ensure its safe use. It is therefore important that at the planning stage protocols are agreed that address:

Confirmation that a child protection block is in place on the computers e.g. 'Childnet'.

Levels and quality of supervision are agreed.

Levels of taste and decency and appropriateness of material for the children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is better to err on the side of caution unsure.

Drama

In recognising that physical contact is an integral part of the teaching of Drama, it is important to highlight child protection good practice issues. The following are specific areas to be aware of:

In relation to physical touch it is important that all children and young people are fully aware of the fact that touch is integral to doing drama.

Parents need to be informed by the receiving organisation of the nature of a drama workshop and the role touch plays.

It is also vital to recognise that any type of drama or creative expression of feelings can trigger for any child or young person who has suffered or is suffering.