

Cymdeithas Ddawns Werin Cymru



Welsh Folk Dance Society

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PROTECTION POLICY

The Welsh Folk Dance Society aims to safeguard the welfare of children and young people participating in its activities. In doing so its officers, members of its Executive Committee and volunteer workers will take account of and comply with current legislation and best practice.

The Welsh Folk Dance Society also aims to do whatever possible, so far as this is reasonably practical, to ensure the health and safety of officers, members of the Executive Committee, volunteer workers and members under its care.

With this in mind the Welsh Folk Dance Society will draw the following to the attention of officers and members of its Executive Committee and volunteer workers :-

INTRODUCTION

As leaders responsible for children and young people it is necessary to be aware of the need to protect the children and young people in your care and to recognise the importance of promoting good practice. As many members of the Society and those taking part in our activities under the age of 18 it is important that the contents of this policy be implemented.

Recruitment and selection procedures should be applied to all personnel, whether paid or unpaid, where the work involves direct contact with children and young people. Those who volunteer or are requested to undertake such work should be asked to provide, unless these details are already known :-

Details of previous experience, voluntary or paid, of working with children and young people.

Permission to contact at least one person who has experience of their work or contact with children/young people.

Details of any convictions for criminal offences against children including any spent convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. It should be made clear to all workers, paid or unpaid, that the position involves work with children/young people and is therefore exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which means that all convictions however old must be declared.

All workers, paid or unpaid, must of course be assured that this information will be dealt with confidentially.

At least two references should be sought, at least one of which should comment on the person's experience of paid or voluntary work with children and young people.

All such workers should be asked at some point to produce evidence of their identity.

Where there is doubt, it may be necessary to consider undertaking a police check. Welsh Office criteria for gaining police checks suggest that, as a general rule, police checks should be carried out where work involves "substantial level of access to children, which may also be unsupervised, and will be regular or sustained". The following should be considered in reaching a decision on whether a police check may be necessary :

Will there be one to one contact?

Is it likely that no other adult will be present?

Will there be regular contact?

Are the children particularly vulnerable?

Examples of work where checks should be considered include full or part time youth club leaders or youth workers. Each of these equates to volunteers involved in providing workshop activities for children and young people.

GUIDELINES

Child abuse is one of those problems which requires those working with children and young people to be alert and responsive to any of the signs. Do not ever think that you could never be placed in the position of reporting child abuse - you may become suspicious of an injury on a child, a child may confide in you or you may just realise that a child whom you have come to know quit well starts to act out of character. All of these may be the signs of child abuse and it is your legal responsibility to do something about it.

Recognising child abuse or receiving disclosure of abuse is always stressful and upsetting and in many cases it is much easier to convince yourself that there is really no problem and do nothing about it - this can be very dangerous! But what do you do if you suspect child abuse? Worse still, what can you do if you are wrongly suspected of child abuse?

These guidelines are designed to help anyone working with the under 18 year old age group to :-

Recognise the signs of child abuse, whether physical, emotional or sexual

Know how to deal with it

Understand their legal responsibility

Minimise situations which may lead to false accusations of child abuse

To convince people that the consequences of doing nothing may be very serious or even fatal

To provide guidance and protection for both the young person and you in carrying out your responsibilities

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE ?

Physical Where young people receive physical hurt or injury

Sexual Where adults seek sexual gratification using children or young people

Emotional Where young people are harmed by a constant lack of love and affection or

are in receipt of threats, taunting etc.

HOW TO RECOGNISE CHILD ABUSE

Noticeable injuries or changes in behaviour patterns may be the result of a number of things, abuse being only one. The following information is intended to make you stop and think but not necessarily jump to conclusions.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

It can be very difficult to establish whether a physical injury has been caused by accident or by abuse. Ask the child about the injury and if you are not happy with the explanation given then report your suspicions to the Local Authority Child Protection Unit.

It is always worthwhile making contact with your Child Protection Unit in advance to introduce yourself and ensure that you know the correct procedure for future reference, Keep the telephone number handy so that you do not have to search for it if needed.

SEXUAL ABUSE

This is much more difficult to identify than physical abuse as there may not be any outwardly visible signs.

Indications of sexual abuse could be :-

- Emotional or behavioural changes, for example a normally quiet child may become loud and aggressive or a boisterous child may suddenly become quiet and passive
- Sexually explicit talk and behaviour, inappropriate to the child's age
- Uncharacteristic eating disorders
- Depression and suicide attempts

However it is much more likely to be discovered by means of a disclosure, either accidental, deliberate or through a third party.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Probably the most difficult type of abuse to recognise, where some of the indications may include :-

- Low esteem and a lack of confidence (always thinking their contribution is "rubbish" and needing constant reassurance)
- The child having extreme difficulty in forming friendships, thus becoming a "loner"
- The child frequently used as a "scapegoat" by other children
- The child being withdrawn, introverted and depressed

SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE

As a voluntary worker, you may gain the trust of children and young people to such an extent that it is you to whom they choose to talk if they have something they wish to disclose. Many workers may not know how to deal with this disclosure but it is important to remember that it is your duty to both prevent abuse and report any abuse discovered or suspected.

If a child or young person wants to talk to you in confidence

Accept what they say, keeping calm and giving them your undivided attention
Let them know that depending what the problem is, you may need to tell someone else so do not promise confidentiality

Reassure them that you will not be shocked or judgemental

Reassure them that even though they may have broken a rule, they are not to blame

Recognise the child/young person's fears and feelings - be aware that they may have been threatened

Reassure them that they were right to tell you

Discuss the options with the child/young person and agree a future action, recognising your legal responsibilities

Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what was said and when he/she said it. Record dates and times of these events and keep a handwritten record

Never examine a child/young person except in an emergency such as an accident.

In this case, always have another person present (a good of thumb would be that an examination starts when a child's clothing is removed and the child's body is felt for signs of injury. A peep down a child's collar to spot signs of injury to neck or back could be described as observation, rather than examination). If in doubt - leave well alone for the experts

Never push for information. It is inadvisable to question the child/young person too closely. This must be left to a counsellor skilled in the asking of such questions and aware of the sensitivities required

Procedure guidelines if abuse is disclosed or suspected

DO NOT DELAY

CONTACT THE STATUTORY SERVICES RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD

PROTECTION IN YOUR AREA, i.e. Social Services, NSPCC or the Police

KEEP A WRITTEN RECORD OF ANY ACTION TAKEN

Be aware that there are procedures for investigation cases where a child is at risk. Social Services may set up a Case Conference. If you are invited to attend to give information, or support the parent/family. You need to clarify in what capacity you have been invited, i.e. as a member of the Conference or as support.

PROTECTING OUR LEADERS

Leaders are at increasing risk of accusations of unacceptable behaviour towards young people. The following 10 points of advice and guidance are aimed at minimising these risks.

1. Do not rely upon good nature to protect you.
2. Do not, for one moment, believe "it could never happen to me".
3. Whilst respecting the need for privacy and confidentiality, try never to be alone with a young person. When one to one situations are unavoidable, ensure unlimited access by others is available.
4. Never engage in inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
5. If you suspect that a young person is developing a 'crush' on you, discuss it with other leaders and explore constructive ways of dealing with it in a proper manner.
6. Similarly, if you notice one of your colleagues is at risk of false accusations, draw this to his/her attention and suggest they adhere to the guidelines.
7. Mixed groups (especially residential ones) should always have mixed leadership.
8. If you are feeling emotionally disturbed, or you feel an abnormal affection for a

young person, withdraw from the situation and discuss the matter with a trusted friend.

9. Never, never take a chance.

10. Be aware that young people can fabricate stories that can place you in a bad light.

Do not allow circumstances to develop where a young person's false story can be given credence.

The abuse of children is most easily concealed, and therefore perpetuated, where there is confusion amongst adults over roles, responsibilities and accountability. Therefore, risks are minimised if all paid staff and volunteers have clear roles, outlining their task and responsibilities, thus allowing each adult the opportunity to continually check on the actions of others.