

Child Protection Policy

SoleStar Arts Ltd

Revised September 2011

- Recruitment and Induction, Suitability of Workers
- Training and Working with Children
- Mechanisms for Reporting Concerns
- How Children's Concerns and Expressions of Need Are Perceived and Responded To.
- Suitability and nature of physical play environment

Recruitment

Child protection awareness and practices are crucial to applicants for paid and voluntary staff that has direct access to children. SoleStar takes the issue of child protection seriously from the recruitment stage and throughout employment/volunteering.

Once an employee/volunteer has joined the team, applicants must produce e.g. a birth certificate or passport or other suitable document to firmly identify. They are required to obtain a CRB enhanced disclosure, to make sure they are suitable to work with and around children and young people. There is also a process of background and character references carried out to ensure the safety of the children and young people within the company.

Training and Working with Children

In training employees/volunteers and management stress the vital importance of acting within the child protection policy of the project, they are given a copy and guidelines stating clearly the steps to be taken e.g. where a worker has a concern about a child, or where a child says or does something which might be a form of "disclosure".

Vulnerable Children/ Young People

Such children and young people may include those with a communication problem, with learning disabilities, those who live in a residential homes setting, those whose home and personal lives are creating severe emotional pressures, and even children and young people whose desire to excel in e.g. a sport or an art makes them vulnerable through their talent to plausible people. It is expressed that the individual child and the setting both need to be taken into account. SoleStar has an inclusive approach to children and young people and an attitude to try to accommodate all abilities - the child protection issues must be carefully weighed in terms of ensuring the right resources are in place.

REPORTING CONCERNS

The one thing management wants to avoid is the situation that although workers had concerns, there were no clear and identified channels to report such concerns. From time to time, anyone working with children and young people may be told things by them, overhear conversations between children, observe behavior or changes of

behavior, perceive what appears to be inappropriate behavior (with an eye to age etc), or have concerns raised in other ways.

If this situation occurs our procedure is as follows;

Report the concern to a senior staff member or someone from the management.

That person will have a clear mandate as to when to approach the issue or relay concerns onwards e.g. to parents/guardian, social services, the police etc.

The management will keep records of concerns, incidents, accidents, and a record of any action taken. Reviewing these reports regularly, on progress, if necessary. Also putting into place any adjustments to prevent a recurrence.

HOW CHILDREN'S CONCERNS AND EXPRESSIONS OF NEED ARE PERCEIVED AND RESPONDED TO

Children may reveal issues giving cause for concern that all is not right in family terms.

Young people attend other facilities, often sporting, and there is the possibility that they may talk about what happens there.

Employees/volunteers may find themselves the recipients of confidences precisely because we operate in ways which engender children's confidence.

An employee/volunteer needs to appreciate, as most do, that children communicate their worries/concerns in a multitude of ways - in fact, direct verbal expression is less likely children/young people may express this in different ways, for example; behavior changes or activity giving cause for concern, perhaps a piece of art work which gives rise to some thought, "inappropriate" activity or knowledge beyond a child's years, flinching when a hand or arm is raised innocently as if scared of being struck, unusual depression, unexplained bruising burns cuts injuries etc.

The Definition of “Harm”

The Act explains that “harm” has the same meaning as in section 31 of the Children Act 1989:

“Harm” means ill treatment or the impairment of health or development [including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another];

“Development” means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;

“Health” means physical or mental health; and

“Ill treatment” includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

Above all, children and young people who are in need or trouble always deserve and need someone who will LISTEN, who will not make judgments, who will not make false promises about keeping a secret when this is not possible, and who will not reject what they are saying as untrue. A troubled child or young person will need to be reassured that their needs are being put first, not being put second fiddle to other concerns. The employee/volunteer is in a unique position in terms of sympathetic environment and of TRUST.

Trust from parents

On the subject of photographs and or filming the children. We will not photograph any child whom does not have a disclaimer form from their parent, carer or legal guardian stating that they give permission for the child in question to be photographed/filmed.

Use of photographs/film, SoleStar has a strict policy when photographing OR FILMING CHILDREN within the company.

The child must feel comfortable being photographed/filmed, we would NEVER insist or force a child to do something they did not feel comfortable doing.

All filming and photography will be carried out by staff or persons which have had background checks and who are never left alone with children without a member of the management team present.

Photography and filming will always be in a safe environment for children.

The publication of photographs and/or films will be for advertising or promotional purposes. Also parents, carers and guardians can purchase photographs and/or films of their child from the company.

SUITABILITY AND NATURE OF ENVIRONMENT

Staffing Ratio

At SoleStar we have a strict staff to child ratio policy that we ensure is in place during sessions and rehearsals;

No OF CHILDREN IN CLASS

AGE	0-16	16-20	21-25	26-30
5-8 yrs	1~8	1~8	1~8	1~8
9-12 yrs	1~8	1~8	1~10	1~12
13-16 yrs	1~8	1~10	1~14	1~18

(1 staff member ~ to every 8 children)

The Premises

The layout of the activity premises and site is considered in terms of children's safety, including from a child protection viewpoint.

Risk assessment includes consideration of not only any physical risks, but building's locations, disposition of rooms are looked at in terms of child protection concerns;

How many rooms - 1, *Dance Studio*

How large – *floor space = approx 15mx20m*

What activities are proposed? – Dance, drama, singing, workshops, games, performing arts.

How will they be supervised? – Keeping the staff to children ratio policy, the children will be supervised by core staff or management and a number of support staff and training support staff.

Are there characteristics of the site which could afford an inappropriate opportunity? -

There are a few factors that the staff takes into consideration. These are; If there is a main road outside the building-make sure all children without written permission from a parent/guardian are supervised when leaving the premises. All other findings are in the risk assessment analysis report.

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline – 0800 800500