



Recognising and responding to abuse and bullying

The purpose and aim of this policy statement is:

- to protect children and young people under the age of 18 involved in any activity run by the Sevenoaks Entertainers from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- to outline the conduct that Sevenoaks Entertainers expects from all our members, staff and volunteers. The term 'staff' includes trustees and members undertaking duties for the organisation, whether paid or unpaid.

Recognising abuse and bullying:

It can be very hard for children and young people to speak out about abuse. Often, they fear there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone what's happening to them. It is vital that children and young people are able to speak out and that whoever they tell takes them seriously and acts on what they've been told. People who work with children need to be able to recognise the signs and know how to respond appropriately.

'Bullying is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021).

It can involve people of any age, and can happen anywhere – at home, school or using online platforms and technologies (cyberbullying). This means it can happen at any time. Bullying/cyberbullying can be a form of discrimination, particularly if it is based on a child's disability, race, religion or belief, gender identity or sexuality.

Bullying and abuse may include:

Verbal abuse:

- name-calling;
- saying nasty things to or about a child or their family.

Physical abuse:

- hitting a child;
- pushing a child;
- physical assault.

Emotional abuse:

- persistent emotional maltreatment of a child to cause severe adverse effects on the child's emotional development;
- conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved;
- making threats;
- undermining a child;
- excluding a child from a friendship group or activities;
- not giving child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them.

Neglect:

- persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, often resulting in impairment of the child's health or development;
- failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing;
- failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger;
- failing to ensure adequate supervision;
- failure to access appropriate medical care or treatment.



Sexual abuse (*which can be perpetrated by men, women and other children*):

- forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of what is happening;
- activities involving physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts;
- non-contact activities, such as production of sexual images, looking at sexual images or encouraging children to behave in a sexually inappropriate way;
- grooming a child for potential abuse (including online);
- sexually exploiting children for money, drugs, alcohol, accommodation, gifts or offers of work/roles – can occur through the use of technology without the child's recognition.

Cyberbullying/online bullying:

- excluding a child from online games, activities or friendship groups;
- sending threatening, upsetting or abusive messages;
- creating and sharing embarrassing or malicious images or videos;
- 'trolling' - sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks;
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll;
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child;
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name.

What to do if you are concerned about a child or young person:

Suspicion of abuse:

If you see or suspect any abuse of a child (as outlined above) while in the care of the Sevenoaks Entertainers, please make this known to the **nominated child protection lead (details below)**.

Make a note of any observations for your own records of what you witnessed and any response; share these at the earliest opportunity with the person responsible for Child Protection.

If a serious allegation is made against any member of Sevenoaks Entertainers, including chaperones, venue staff, etc. immediate action will be taken to ensure the individual has no further contact with the child until the investigation is concluded.

Responding to claims of abuse:

- **Listen carefully to what they're saying.**
Be patient and focus on what you're being told. Try not to express your own views and feelings. If you appear shocked or as if you don't believe them, it could make them stop talking and take back what they've said.
- **Allow the child or young person to speak at their own pace without interruption, accepting what is said and only ask questions for clarification.**
Avoid leading questions, only prompting the child where necessary with open questions to clarify information. For example, Tell, Explain, Describe.
- **Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you.**
Reassurance can make a big impact. If they've kept the abuse a secret it can have a big impact knowing they've shared what's happened.
- **Tell them it's not their fault.**
Abuse is never a child's fault. It's important they hear, and know, this.



- **Say you'll take them seriously.**
They may have kept the abuse secret because they were scared that they wouldn't be believed. Make sure they know they can trust you and you'll listen and support them.
- **Don't promise to keep it a secret.**
Make it clear to the child that you will only tell the people who need to know and who are able to help.
- **Explain what you'll do next.**
For younger children, explain you're going to speak to someone who will be able to help. For older children, explain you'll need to report the abuse to someone who can help.
- **Don't confront the alleged abuser.**
Confronting the alleged abuser could make the situation worse for the child.
- **Report what the child has told you as soon as possible.**
Report as soon after you've been told about the abuse to the person responsible for Child Protection so the details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly. It can be helpful to take notes as soon after you've spoken to the child. Try to keep these as accurate as possible.

Responding to incidents or allegations of bullying:

- **Listen** to all the children involved to establish what has happened.
- **Record details** of the incident and any actions you've taken.
- **Inform** your nominated child protection lead.
- **Inform** parents and carers (unless doing so would put a child at further risk of harm).
- **Provide support** to the child/children being bullied, children who witnessed the bullying and the child/children who has been accused of bullying.
- **Ask the child/children** who have been bullied what they would like to happen next.
- **Consider appropriate sanctions** for children that have carried out bullying.
- **Continue to monitor the situation** even if the situation has been resolved.

Whistleblowing:

Should you feel that your concerns have not been acted upon, have been covered up, or have not been dealt with appropriately, you can contact:

- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line – 0800 028 0285
- Kent County Council child safeguarding – 0300 411 111

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from: www.nspcc.org.uk/childprotection



Supporting documents:

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies, procedures, guidance and other related documents:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Code of Conduct
- Ensuring photographs and images of children are taken, stored and shared appropriately

Contact details:

Nominated child protection lead:

Name: Jamie Thomas

Phone/email: 07912 443241 / jamie.thomas@talk4writing.com

Deputy child protection leads and committee members:

Name: Jessica McEwen (Chair)

Phone/email: 07736 048101 / Jessica@thedancestudio.biz

Name: Jenna Warner (Vice-Chair)

Phone/email: 07816 590056 / ualllovejenna@gmail.com

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.
This policy was last reviewed on: 6th March 2024

Signed:

Date: 06/03/2024