

Safe guarding policy for The Little Story Telling Company (TLSTC)

Introduction

TLSTC provides stories and workshops for children aged 2 years and upwards. In the majority of settings individuals should never be left alone with children. There should always be a parent, carer or member of staff present. However, if in the unlikely event an individual is left alone with a child the guidelines within this document should be followed. This is to safeguard the child and adults at the sessions and ensure good practice is followed. All staff at TLSTC should have a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check and a certificate to show they do not have a criminal record and are safe to work with children. The DBS certificate should be taken to all events and shown to the appropriate member of staff if required.

In providing stories and workshops for children and young people TLSTC must ensure that:

- 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 and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All individuals working for TLSTC have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate individual within the setting they are attending i.e. Children's Centre, school, hospital etc.
- All individuals working for TLSTC should understand that it is not their role to decide if abuse has occurred, but to report any concerns to the appropriate authority or colleague.

Policy statement/aims

- TLSTC has a duty of care to safeguard all children from harm.
- All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.
- The aim of TLSTC child protection policy is to promote good practice by providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in their care.

Promoting good practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can provoke strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with judgments about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the childcare environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A childcare worker, teacher, coach, official or volunteer will have regular contact with children and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice and or abuse should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

Good practice guidelines

Individuals should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all children with equal concern and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each child first.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making activities fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play. Activities should be age appropriate.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to the child's needs as identified in partnership working with parents and other relevant professionals involved in the child's care.
- Consulting with children and their parents. Involving parents/carers wherever possible.
- Being an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol, or using personal mobiles in the company of children.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism to both children and adults.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of children including those with additional needs - avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Providing opportunities that will challenge but are achievable.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the facility being attended i.e. school, hospital, Children's Centre or the child's parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session (in general all children are accompanied by parents/carers or a responsible adult at TLSTC events):

- Avoid spending time alone with children away from others.
- Avoid taking or dropping off a child to an event or activity.
- Avoid taking photographs of children unless written permission has been given by parent/carer.
- Not taking personal mobile phones into sessions. There should be somewhere where they can be stored and accessed on breaks only.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a toilet or changing facility with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children to meet or stay with you at your home.
- Invite children to 'become friends' on social networking sites such as Facebook.

N.B. It is unlikely, but may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or have a disability. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding of responsible adults within the setting attended and/or with consent of the parents of the child involved. There is a need to be responsive to the child or young person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the individual within the setting you are attending who is the designated child protection liaison person (usually the supervisor or manager) and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed unless doing so puts the child at additional risk:

- If you accidentally hurt a child.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions or displays sexual activity.
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.
- If a child discloses abuse of any kind – physical, emotional, sexual, neglect.
- If any adult behaves in a way is inappropriate or may pose a threat to the safety of children.

photographs or film footage of young children in vulnerable positions. All individuals should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the designated child protection liaison person at the setting you are attending.

Any photos should be taken using TLSTC's own camera – not personal ones or personal mobile phones (this is only appropriate for private sessions. Stories and workshops within public settings e.g. schools, Children's Centres, hospitals are not allowed if they involve pictures of children. Photos of the setting are allowed once permission has been sought from a member of staff at the setting). Images should be downloaded and printed off as soon as possible and the originals deleted.

Verbal permission should be sought from parents in private sessions to take photographs and they should be aware of how they will be used by the TLSTC.

Use of mobile phones.

Access to a phone is required for all sessions in case of emergencies and during performances to provide music (mobile phones will be in full view of staff at the setting during the performance). It should be noted however, with the development and advance of mobile technology this may now pose a threat to the safety of children – images and video footage can be taken and uploaded to the internet without anyone being aware. Therefore, in situations where the setting provides access to a telephone for emergencies and once the performance has finished the mobile phone should be placed in a secure place. Similarly, there should also be consideration taken regarding the children's use of mobiles during their time with TLSTC (this generally does not apply as the majority of children are too young to have a phone, will not have access to one in the setting or will be accompanied by their parents).

Recruitment and training of individuals

There are no plans to take on staff at TLSTC and all events are currently run exclusively by the owner Mandy Hartley. However, if in the future any staff or volunteers are recruited a copy of these guidelines will be given to each individual for them to follow. Checks will also be made to ensure staff have read and understand the guidelines. Mandy Hartley has had a DBS check through her work in schools as a STEM Ambassador. She takes a copy of her DBS certificate to all events for staff at the session to check if necessary.

Safe recruiting practice will be followed:

- **Advertising posts** – your organisation's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children should be clearly stated in any information provided to candidates. Any advert / information provided to candidates should also state if the role is subject to DBS and Barred List Checks.
- **Job Description / Person Specification / Role Profile** – the roles and responsibilities relating to safeguarding should be clearly stated in any job description / role profile.
- **Application Form** – wherever possible an application form should be used rather than accepting CVs; a simplified version can be used for volunteer posts.
- **References** – references should be taken to obtain information to support appointment decisions. Where possible a reference should be obtained from the current employer and / or the last employer where the applicant worked with children.
- Ensure that at least one member of any interviewing panel should have completed safer recruitment training.

- **Selection** – organisations should use selection process (including interviews) to explore, not only, the skills but also the motivation for working with children and young people.
- **Pre-appointment checks** – these will include identity checks, right to work in the UK, professional qualifications and registration / regulations appropriate to the post. This may also include health checks.
- Recruiters should, where possible, undertake safer recruitment training and it is best practice to and professional qualifications and registration / regulations appropriate to the post. This may also include health checks.
- Recruiters should, where possible, undertake safer recruitment training and it is best practice to ensure that at least one member of any interviewing panel should have completed safer recruitment training.

NB. Not all the above will be relevant for volunteer posts, but we need to remember that children and young people view volunteers as being safe adults. It is therefore important that there is a relevant but robust process in place for volunteer appointments.

TLSTC recognise that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All volunteers/staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact before employment/voluntary work commences.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving license with photo) should be sought.
- Details of staff/volunteers successful DBS confirmation should be recorded on a 'Central Record document'

Interview and induction

All employees and volunteers should receive an induction, during which:

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures).
- Their qualifications should be substantiated with evidence of the originals checked.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified and any questions discussed and clarified.
- Expectations of behaviour and conduct should be clearly explained and given in writing.
- Child protection procedures are explained and a check made to ensure the member of staff has read and understands the guidelines.
- Staff should be asked to sign to say that they have received copies of, and understand the organisation's behaviour and conduct policy as well as their responsibility to report any concerns regarding Child Protection Policy.

Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to support staff and volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is not likely to result in allegations being made.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- Work safely and effectively with children.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working at TLSTC, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there **is** a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate member of staff within the setting for that session or social services if it is a private session.

TLSTC should reassure all staff/volunteers that it 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 or even a combination of all.

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

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information should be used to reach a decision.

Action if there are concerns

1. Concerns about poor practice within a setting:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the designated child protection liaison person within the setting should be informed.
- If the allegation is about the poor practice of the designated child protection liaison person, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, any person may report directly to social services who will decide how to deal with the allegation and advise regarding whether to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse:

Any suspicion that a child has been abused either by a member of staff, a volunteer or a parent/carer must be reported to the designated child protection liaison person at the setting attended, 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. If the child protection liaison person is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made directly to their manager.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a 'need to know' basis only. This includes the following people:

- The child protection liaison person.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The person making the allegation.

In English law, where there are concerns that a child is, or may be, at risk of significant harm, the prevailing consideration is to safeguard the child and confidentiality may be overridden in such situations.

Any information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Allegations of previous (historical) abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (for example by an adult who was abused as a child or an allegation about someone who is still currently working with children has abused).

Where such an allegation is made, staff should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the designated child protection liaison person at the setting attended, social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside the setting, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

Action if bullying is suspected

Bullying is also classed as abuse and the following action should be followed.

Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately).
- Help the victim to speak out and make all children aware of the importance to tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the club/setting's child protection liaison person.

Action towards the bully:

- Talk with the bully, explain the situation, and try to get the bully to understand the consequences of their behaviour.
- Seek an apology to the victim(s).

- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully compensates the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully to change behaviour.
- Inform all staff members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.
- Most 'low level' incidents will be dealt with at the time by staff and volunteers. However, if the bullying is severe (e.g. a serious assault), or if it persists despite efforts to deal with it, incidents should be referred to the designated child protection liaison person and may lead to criminal charges.

3. Concerns outside the immediate club environment (e.g. a parent or carer):

- Report your concerns to the child protection liaison person within the setting you are attending who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- Maintain confidentiality on a **need to know** basis only.

4. Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

The child's name, age and date of birth of the child. The child's home address and telephone number (staff within the setting should have these details).

Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else. The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information. Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.

A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes. Details of witnesses to the incidents.

The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred. Have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?

Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.

If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said? Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details. The name of the person who took the referral should be recorded.

Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.

**Further confidential advice can be sought from
NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or Childline on 0800 11 11.**

Signed by: M.Hartley

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Reference for this document: "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2023)