

## Clowns International

### Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Clowns International believes that children and young people have the right to protection from abuse and neglect and that the well-being of children must be the paramount consideration when providing services. Clowns International is committed to ensuring that all members who interact with children and young people can provide a safe environment where children/young people are always safe.

Within the framework of the law (Children Act 1989), Clowns International members and volunteers are obliged to have an important role in the protection of children from abuse, namely: physical, sexual, emotional and that of neglect.

Clowns International will ensure that all activities provided for children/young people are carefully planned and that activities and services are appropriate to the age and needs of the children and young people participating.

Clowns International Child Protection Policy and Procedures apply to all children and young people regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religion.

Clowns International named child protection representative will be the chairperson and their contact details will be available to all members.

If members or volunteers have concerns, however minor, of any issue relating to a child that arouses suspicion, they have a duty to bring those concerns to the attention of the chairperson.

Members must **never** take sole responsibility for a child or young person while performing as a clown. There must **always** be a parent or responsible adult from the receiving group present.

Clowns International recommends that members should take an online level 1 course in safeguarding. The guidance below is not a substitute for a level 1 course but is a source of reference.

There are a number of free safeguarding courses available online for volunteers working in the community, your local authority will help you find a free course if you are not a volunteer.

<https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/free-online-safeguarding-courses/>

As a performer, Clowns do not have to be DBS checked. However, where clowns are running workshops or classes with children or young people, CI would advise that members make themselves aware of the legal regulations in the country where they are performing this work.

#### Child Protection Procedures

If you have any concerns no matter how slight you should share that concern with the safeguarding lead at Clown International.

A concern does not necessarily imply suspicion on the part of anybody else.

A concern is not an accusation.

#### Guidelines for making confidential records of concerns

When a child protection concern arises, it is essential that somebody records what is said or seen and what action was taken. These records are extremely sensitive and should be kept in a locked cabinet or drawer. Access should be limited to the child protection representative and the Chairperson.

These records may be shown to the police or social services and could be used as evidence in court, although this is rare. The child/young person involved can be shown this document, but discretion should be used. If the young person is old enough, their permission should be sought before showing it to their parents/carers.

### **Confidential records should include:**

- Name of child
- Child's date of birth
- Child's language and religion and any known special needs
- Child's address
- Name/s of parents/carers
- Phone numbers of parents/carers and child
- What is said to have happened or what was seen
- When and where it occurred
- Who else, if anyone, was involved and how?
- What was said by anyone else who was involved?
- Any obvious signs – e.g., bruising or bleeding, changed behaviour etc.
- What the child said about what happened and how they described it
- Who has been told about what and when?
- Whether or not the parents/carers know
- Signature of the person who has made the record and the child protection representative
- Date of the record

## **Understanding the different forms of abuse**

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention, they get through having a sick child. Physical abuse can also be caused through omission or failure to act to protect.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities whether the child is aware of, or consents to what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, buggery or oral sex or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. Sexual abuse may

also involve non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from every section of society.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **What to look for:**

#### **Physical Abuse:**

- Visible signs
- Injuries to any part of the body
- Children who find it painful to walk, sit down, move their jaws or exhibit other signs of pain
- Injuries which are not typical of the bumps and bruises associated with children's activities
- The regular occurrence of unexplained injuries
- The child who is frequently injured where even apparently reasonable reasons are given

#### **Behavioural signs:**

- Furtive or secretive behaviour
- Uncharacteristic aggression or withdrawn behaviour
- Compulsive eating or sudden loss of appetite
- The child who suddenly becomes ill co-ordinated
- The child who finds it difficult to stay awake
- The child who is repeatedly absent

### **What to listen for:**

- Confused or conflicting explanations about how injuries were sustained
- Evaluate carefully what is said and preferably document it verbatim
- Consider if the explanation is in keeping with the nature and site of the injury

### **Consider:**

- What you know about the family?
- Is there a history of known or suspected abuse?
- Has the family been under stress recently?
- Do you have concerns about the family?

## **Emotional Abuse**

### **Watch for parent/carer behaviours:**

- Poor attachment with the child
- Unresponsive or neglectful behaviour towards the child's emotional needs
- Persistent negative comments about the child
- Inappropriate or inconsistent developmental expectations of the child

- Parental problems that supersede the needs of the child
- Dysfunctional family relationships, including domestic violence

### **Watch for child behaviours:**

- Signs of low self-esteem, unhappiness, fear, distress, anxiety
- Attention seeking, opposing, withdrawn, insecure
- Failure to thrive/faltering growth, delay in achieving developmental, cognitive or educational milestones

### **Sexual Abuse**

There may be no obvious signs of sexual abuse, but the following may be signs that a child is, or has been, sexually abused:

#### **Physical signs**

- Signs of blood or discharge on the child's under clothes
- Awkwardness in walking or sitting down
- Tummy pains
- Regression into bed-wetting
- Tiredness

#### **Behavioural signs**

- Extreme variations in behaviour (e.g., anxiety or withdrawal)
- Sexually provocative behaviour or knowledge that is incompatible with the child's age or understanding
- Drawings and/or writing that is sexually explicit (this can be an indirect disclosure)
- Direct disclosure: it is important to recognise that young children have neither the experience nor the understanding to be able to make up stories about sexual assault.

### **Neglect**

#### **Physical signs:**

- Abnormal growth including failure to thrive
- Underweight or obesity
- Recurrent infection
- Unkempt, dirty appearance
- Smelly
- Inadequate/unwashed clothes
- Hunger
- Listlessness

#### **Behavioural signs:**

- Attachment disorders
- Indiscriminate friendliness
- Poor social relationships
- Poor concentration
- Developmental delays
- Low self-esteem

### **Environmental signs:**

- Insufficient food, heating and ventilation at home
- Risk from animals in the household
- Inappropriate sleeping arrangements and inadequate bedding
- Dangerous or hazardous environment

### **How to respond to abuse or suspected abuse**

If any member or a volunteer has concerns that a child may be being abused in any form, they must inform the Child Protection Representative (The Chairman) immediately. If the concern is about the actions of the Chairman, they must inform the Vice Chair.

If any member or a volunteer has a concern regarding another member's conduct with a child, they must communicate these concerns to the child protection representative immediately.

### **If a child/young person discloses abuse:**

#### **DO**

*Do* always treat any allegations extremely seriously and act towards the child/young person as if you believe what they are saying, irrespective of their level of development or communication

*Do* tell the child/young person that they were right to tell you

*Do* reassure them that they are not to blame

*Do* be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why

*Do* tell the child/young person what you are doing, and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening

*Do* take further action – you may be the only person able to prevent further abuse – tell your immediate supervisor immediately

*Do* write down everything said and what action was taken (see guidelines for recording) – always state facts and not opinions

*Do* seek medical attention for the child/young person if necessary

*Do* inform parents/carers – unless there is suspicion of their involvement

#### **DON'T**

*Don't* make promises you can't keep

*Don't* interrogate the child – it is not your job to carry out an investigation - this is the responsibility of the police and social services who have experience in this.

*Don't* cast doubt on what the child has told you, don't interrupt or change the subject.

*Don't* say anything that might make the child feel responsible for the abuse

*Don't do nothing* – make sure you tell the child protection representative immediately – they will take the lead in following up your concerns and seeking further advice.

### **Guidelines for making confidential records of concerns**

When a child protection concern arises, it is essential that somebody records what is said or seen and what action was taken. These records are extremely sensitive and should be kept in a locked cabinet or drawer. Access should be limited to the child protection representative and the Chairperson

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## Taking Action

If the Clowns International's child protection representative wishes to seek advice about whether to make a referral, or if they want to make a referral, they should contact the **Social Services Duty and Assessment Team (DAT)**. Below is an example of where to contact. Best to research each local authority however, each contact will assist or direct you to the correct local office.

**Brighton & Hove: 01273 296000 or 07699 391462**

The Local Authority Safeguarding Board will decide about the next course of action within 24 hours following discussion with the person making the referral and by liaising with other agencies, as necessary. An investigation may then be initiated to determine whether there is 'reasonable cause' to suspect that a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. Social Services will advise the child protection representative as soon as they can.

## Other useful telephone numbers:

- Police 999/101
- NSPCC 24-Hour Helpline 0808 800 5000
- Childline 0800 1111
- Family Lives 0808 800 2222
- Contact local Agencies to specific areas.

Clown's International should be aware of the **Area Child Protection Committees (ACPC)** that are responsible for making sure that child protection arrangements are operating effectively in their area and co-ordinating child protection across agencies.

Clowns International should ensure that links are made with other agencies that have a role in identifying, reporting, and investigating cases of suspected abuse. These include Social Services Departments, Education Departments, Police, Schools, Health Professionals, Probation Services and other Voluntary Agencies.

### **Staff Training and Supervision**

Members and volunteers working with children/young people should have basic training and induction to cover basic definitions of abuse, recognising signs of abuse, behaviour of abusers, how to respond to allegations or concerns about abuse and what action to take. Child protection representatives should have further training to ensure they are clear about the agencies to contact and how to contact them if child protection concerns arise. They will also have the responsibility to ensure that members and volunteers know how to respond where there are concerns about a child/young person.

#### **These measures should ensure that:**

- Members and volunteers fully understand the Child Protection Policy and Procedures and how this should be implemented.
- That they adhere to the code of conduct for members and volunteers working with children/young people
- That they remain vigilant and responsive

### **Code of Behaviour for members and volunteers working with children/young people**

The following points may be supplemented by service specific policies and procedures that are in place to take account of the particular needs of the children/young people being worked within the project – e.g. behaviour policies, safe transport procedures, procedures to be followed if a child is lost or collected late and dealing with aggressive behaviour.

#### **In general, members and volunteers should observe the following:**

##### **Appropriate conduct and relationships with children/young people**

- Avoid initiating physical conduct with children/young people
- Avoid physical expression of emotion such as kissing or hugging
- Avoid intrusive forms of play (e.g., tickling, or rough and tumble)
- If physical contact is initiated by a child or a young person, cease it as soon as possible without making them feel rejected
- Avoid any physical contact when alone with a child/young person
- If a child/young person persists in inappropriate physical contact, it must be explained that members and volunteers should not kiss or hug people they work with
- It is good practice for all members to work alongside a colleague where possible as this helps to ensure the safety of children/young people and helps to protect members and volunteers against false allegations.
- Avoid any situation which leaves a member alone with a child or young person.

#### **When working with children/young people, Clowns International members and volunteers must not:**

- Have any sexual contact with children/young people

- Lend or borrow money or property
- Give or receive significant gifts
- Carry out exclusive or secret relationships
- Take service users into their homes

All **Clowns International members** and volunteers should strive to develop working relationships with colleagues that are based on mutual respect. All members are expected to contribute and take responsibility for creating a positive working environment and for conducting themselves in a professional and courteous manner.

All members and volunteers must be aware that any issues around suspected abuse are confidential. Incidents must not be discussed with anyone other than those staff and managers who are immediately involved with the investigation.

### **Use of the Complaints Procedure**

Members should ensure that **Clowns International** Concerns and Complaints Procedure is explained to service users, and parents/carers where appropriate, so that they are able to voice any concerns and complaints.

### **Review**

Signature of Chairperson..........Dated...11 April 2022....

Deanna Hartmier

This policy and its associated procedures should be reviewed annually