



TEES VALLEY VOICES

Child Protection Policy

Contact Details

Tees Valley Voices Child Protection Officer: Alan Briscoe 01642 890635

Tees Valley Voices Chair: Joan Carter 01642 656273

If you have concerns that a child is being abused or neglected, or that they may be at risk of harm, you should contact:

First contact team, Stockton 01642 527764, or out of hours 08702 402994

Police (Stockton) 01642 607114

NSPCC helpline 0808 800 5000

Childline helpline 0800 11 11

1. Principles

Tees Valley Voices is committed to ensuring that all those associated with the group have positive, enjoyable experiences. Consequently we are committed to ensuring to that all young people who take part in our activities are kept free from harm. We will ensure that:

- a) Everyone is treated with respect and children feel secure and valued.
- b) Activities take place in a safe and secure environment
- c) Adults who work with young people are checked and cleared through the Criminal Records Bureau
- d) Opportunities exist for young people and parents/primary carers to talk to us about any concerns they may have
- e) Young people and parents/primary carers feel comfortable and confident enough to discuss attitudes and behaviours they do not like
- f) Adults associated with Tees Valley Voices will take appropriate action when young people or parents/primary carers express concern about abuse
- g) No adult is left alone with individual young people.

2. Actions

The committee shall appoint a Child Protection Officer (CPO). However, the protection of children is the responsibility of all committee members, employees and volunteers.

The CPO shall supply a copy of the CPP to staff working with young people on behalf of TVV and discuss its contents with each person.

In planning TVV activities, the committee and staff members shall consider the safety and welfare of young people.

3. Recruitment

a) Paid staff working with children

I. Sexual or violent offences against children are a bar to someone working within TVV activities involving children. Judgement shall be applied by the recruitment panel if other offences are revealed.

II. The requirement for a CRB check must be made clear at the start of the recruitment process. It does not need to be part of the advertisement but must be in the literature sent out to anyone responding to an advertisement. The wording to be used is: 'In

accordance with TVV policy, we will ask the successful candidate to be screened by the Criminal Records Bureau.’ Within the job offer, the wording to be used is: ‘It is a condition of your appointment that a Enhanced Disclosure is obtained from the Criminal Records Bureau. If you have been convicted of a sexual or violent offence against a child, you will not be able to work for TVV and the job offer will be withdrawn. Other offences will be treated as matters of discretion.’ Each paid member of staff working with children is subject to a new CRB check for TVV, unless they already have a disclosure obtained for Platform which is less than three years old; certificates from other organisations are not acceptable. If the member of staff begins work before the results of the CRB check come through, he/she must be supervised by an adult whose CRB check has been accepted by TVV. A probationary period should be included for long-term appointments.

- III. If a CRB report includes offences other than child abuse, the recruitment panel will make a decision based on the criteria listed in Appendix 1, and will record the basis of the decision
- IV. Information about CRB Disclosures must be kept confidential. One senior person in TVV shall deal with processing them, and only those involved in recruitment shall have access to them. The individual’s line manager shall be informed only if the offence is directly connected with the job. No records of offences other than the certificate shall be kept, and the certificate shall be shredded after 6 months for unsuccessful applicants.
- V. CRB checks on staff shall be repeated every 3 years.
- VI. The work of the member of staff should be monitored and supervised by observation and through clear reporting structures

b) Committee Members/Charity Trustees. As the committee is involved in making decisions about children’s activities, each committee member must provide a Standard or Enhanced CRB disclosure for the Charity Commission. The disclosure can have been obtained for an organisation other than TVV provided that the person concerned still works with that organisation, and the disclosure is less than three years old. The procedure in a) above shall be followed.

c) Volunteers working with children. If the volunteers are parents of TVV singers, there is no need for a CRB disclosure provided that they always work with a group of children and are never alone with a child. Other volunteers need a Standard CRB disclosure. The procedure in a) above shall be followed.

4. Good practice

The following guidance will help to safeguard both children and staff.

Premises

TVV shall choose premises which are clean, safe and secure. A risk assessment for the venue and activity shall be carried out and kept on file, and risks minimised. TVV’s Health and Safety Policy, including procedure in the case of accidents, shall be followed. H&S advice shall be taken from the main user of the premises and recorded on the risk assessment.

Staffing

The staff: pupil ratio shall be a minimum of 1:20 (more favourable than this if a visit, a performance or other similar activity is taking place), and there shall be a minimum of 2 adults present at every session.

Registration and contact details

Children's emergency contact details, consent forms and significant health and family information shall be read and kept by each member of staff and by the TVV committee. A register will be taken at every session and kept on file for a year. Consent forms must be obtained from parents for all concerts and should confirm that the arrangements have been noted. Where students over 18 are involved in activities, it is advised that they complete consent forms and give medical information.

For first aid issues, refer to recent First Aid Training and TVV Health and Safety Policy.

Staff assisted by volunteers

Staff must ensure that volunteers assisting them have been CRB checked where necessary and are aware of relevant parts of the Child Protection Policy. Staff must brief the volunteers about their role and monitor their work.

Staff/Volunteer Interaction with children

Staff will aim for an atmosphere of enjoyment and achievement, fostering the support of pupils for one another and providing activities suited to their age and ability.

Staff should ensure that they are never alone in a room with a child.

Physical Contact

It is unrealistic to suggest that staff teaching musical techniques should touch pupils only in emergencies. Touching is inevitable and can give reassurance. However, perfectly innocent actions can be misconstrued.

Some children do not like being touched, and staff should be sensitive to a child's reactions.

When touching a child, staff must always be clear why they are doing so, must explain the reason to the child, and should always seek their permission. Staff must never touch pupils, however casually, in ways or on parts of the body that might be considered indecent.

In rare cases, and as a last resort, staff may have to physically restrain a child to prevent injury or damage. No more than the minimum force shall be used and the member of staff shall remain calm, matter-of-fact and in control of him/herself. Any act of physical intervention shall be reported to the Child Protection Officer.

Keeping a professional distance

Teachers often foster a strong rapport with children they teach, but staff should avoid bringing personal issues (e.g. where they live, home life, relationships) into conversations. Such discussions could be misconstrued by pupils and lead to difficult situations.

Staff shall never give pupils their home address, email address or a contact telephone number. The TVV Secretary's contact details should be used. All letters to parents or pupils shall be on TVV headed paper and shall come from, and usually be returned to, the Secretary. Any correspondence (other than standard letters) must be agreed with the committee. Copies of outgoing correspondence shall be kept on file for a year.

Travelling by car

Staff shall not transport pupils in their own vehicles, except on very rare occasions, even though this is not illegal.

Children not collected on time

In information to parents, the importance of collecting children on time should be stressed. It is also vital that rehearsals finish on time so that there is no excuse for parents being late. If a child is not collected as usual, staff shall make every effort to contact the child's parent/carer to clarify the situation. A child shall not be taken home by a person other than the parent/carer unless the member of staff has been informed of the arrangement in writing by the pupil's parent or carer. Staff shall not leave a pupil unattended while he/she is waiting to be collected. As a last resort, the member of staff may have to take the child home by car. If this happens, the child must be asked to travel in the rear of the vehicle.

If late collection of a pupil becomes a regular occurrence, the member of staff shall inform the TVV committee so that appropriate action can be taken.

5. What is child abuse?

There are four types of child abuse, namely:

Physical abuse:

The intentional, non-accidental use of physical force that aims to hurt, injure or destroy that child.

Emotional abuse:

The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children to frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Sexual abuse:

The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, or to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles.

Neglect:

When chronic inattention is given to the child by their parents/primary carers or care givers in the areas of medical, educational, stimulative, environmental, nutritional, physical or emotional needs.

6. Possible signs of Child abuse (see appendix 2)

Adults associated with Tees Valley Voices will look out for the following possible signs of child abuse. However, it is understood that not all young people manifesting these symptoms will necessarily be suffering abuse. Caution, sensitivity and common sense will shape precisely how adults respond to these symptoms.

7. What to do if child abuse is suspected.

If a change in the child's behaviour has been noticed, it may be appropriate to speak first to the child's parents or guardians. It may be that a bereavement, or difficulty with school work has caused the child to be unhappy. However, if the concern is about physical or sexual abuse, talking with these adults may put the child at greater risk. TVV staff can discuss with the Child Protection Officer any concerns they have and shall report promptly to the Child Protection Officer if they detect signs of child abuse in the children with whom they work. Staff should not take sole responsibility in these matters, but seek advice and support. It is the Child Protection Officer's responsibility to decide on the action to be taken, and this may require contacting Social Services or the Police, who have responsibilities under the Children's Act.

If the Child Protection Officer is not available, or is the subject of concern, the person receiving the information may have to do this personally. If in doubt, advice can be obtained in confidence by telephoning the 24 hour NSPCC free phone helpline – 0800 800 500.

For advice on dealing with disclosures deriving from young people, see appendix 3

For procedure to be adopted in the case of suspicions/allegations, see appendix 4.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation:

Once a year staff and committee/trustees associated with Tees Valley Voices will meet to discuss the extent to which practice conforms with the content of the policy. Three years following adoption of the policy, staff and committee/trustees staff and committee/trustees associated with Tees Valley Voices will meet to discuss whether the policy needs revising in the light of new child protection legislation and best practice advice.

This Policy was adopted on:.....(date)

This Policy will be reviewed by:.....(date)

Officers in Tees Valley Voices responsible for ensuring that the policy is put into practice:

Name (print).....Signature.....

Name (print).....Signature.....

Name (print).....Signature.....

Name (print).....Signature.....

Appendix 1

Criteria pertaining when offences other than child abuse appear on a CRB report

- How serious was the offence?
- The circumstances surrounding the offence and the time elapsed since it took place.
- Whether the offence is a one-off or whether there is a pattern of habitual offending.
- Any rehabilitation programmes the applicant has undertaken.
- The possible impact on the applicant if the offence became known.
- The type of work the applicant will be doing.
- The supervision that can be put in place
- The risk to others involved in the job.
- The risk to the reputation of Tees Valley Voices.

Appendix 2

Signs of Child Abuse

Adults associated with Tees Valley Voices will look out for the following possible signs of child abuse. However, it is understood that not all young people manifesting these symptoms will necessarily be suffering abuse. Caution, sensitivity and common sense will shape precisely how adults respond to these symptoms.

If a young person:

- Becomes withdrawn or isolated
- Becomes aggressive or starts seeking attention
- Becomes afraid of certain people
- Develops chronic medical problems such as stomach pains or headaches
- Acts in sexually inappropriate ways toward adults or peers
- Becomes anorexic or bulimic
- Fails to thrive
- Is often hungry
- Has regular accidents
- Has poor personal hygiene
- Is regularly tired
- Is reluctant to go home
- Wears inappropriate clothing
- Develops poor social relationships
- Exhibits inappropriate emotional responses
- Exhibits dramatic changes in mood or behaviour
- Engages in drug or alcohol abuse
- Runs away
- Feels depressed
- Has bumps, bruises or wounds
- Has unconvincing explanations for bumps, bruises or wounds
- Tells of a friend with a problem of abuse

Appendix 3

Advice about initial disclosures deriving from young people.

Adults will:

- Reassure the young person that they are doing the correct thing by telling an adult
- Reassure the young person that it is right to talk
- Not blame the young person for the abuse suffered
- Listen to the young person carefully
- Take the young person's word because young people rarely lie about child abuse
- Promise to support the young person
- Inform the young person about what you will do
- Contact the Social services or the Police if it is felt that that the young person is likely to be at risk if they return home
- Thank the young person for confiding
- Report and record the allegation.

Adults will not:

- Promise confidentiality to the young person, otherwise nothing can be done about the allegation and the problem of abuse will persist
- Be judgemental or show anger, disgust or disbelief
- Ask direct questions of the young person
- Minimise the effects of the alleged abuse
- Become unnecessarily involved
- Over dramatise or criticise
- Confront the young person with the abuser or abuser
- Tell off the young person for not confiding earlier
- Try to force the young person to forget

When recording allegations of, or suspicions about, child abuse, adults will try to provide the following information:

- Name of the young person
- Age
- Address
- Any special factors (e.g. the young person has a disability. Lives apart from the biological mother/father, has alleged abuse in the past, etc.)
- Are you reporting your concerns or someone else's?
- Brief description of what has prompted your concerns, including dates, times and specific incidents if possible
- Are there any physical or behavioural signs that prompted, or support, your concerns?
- Have you spoken to the young person who is said to suffer the abuse? If yes, what was said?
- Is anyone alleged to be the abuser?
- Have you consulted anyone else?

Appendix 4

Procedure to be adopted by the Child Protection Officer in cases of suspected child abuse by a person other than a member of TVV staff.

If the Child Protection Officer has reasonable grounds for believing that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, he/she shall, without delay, make a report to Social Services, saying that they wish to discuss a child who may be at risk. This shall be done without prior discussion with parents.

The Social Services Department has a statutory duty to investigate and assess allegations. (Tel contact nos to be given).

If the Child Protection Officer is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist, he/she should consult Social Services informally.

If it is decided that a referral should be made, this must be confirmed in writing to Social Services and a record of the decision kept on file. At this point the decision about who will inform parents shall be taken.

The concerns expressed and action taken shall be recorded by TVV and kept in a confidential file.

Staff may be invited by Social Services to attend a case strategy meeting.

Procedure to be followed when a member of staff is suspected or accused of child abuse.

Following receipt of allegations or suspicions concerning abuse against a child by a member of staff, the CPO shall not discuss the allegation with the member of staff, but shall promptly:

- Inform the Chair of TVV and consult him/her throughout the process
- Obtain the written details of the allegation
- Record details of potential witnesses
- Establish whether an allegation warrants a referral to Social Services.

The CPO and Chair may decide:

- That the allegation is apparently without foundation. Inform member of staff and parents and take no further action.
- That the allegation was prompted by inappropriate behaviour which needs to be dealt with by TVV's disciplinary procedures.
- That there is still some uncertainty but there is reason to suppose that abuse could have occurred and that referral to Social Services through the child protection procedures may be necessary. The CPO will then consult Social Services who will make the decision on referral.
- To make an immediate referral through the child protection procedures.

If a referral is made, confidentiality shall be maintained in order that any subsequent investigation is not prejudiced.

Social Services will call a strategy meeting within 24 hours of the referral. At this meeting, issues of suspension, informing the member of staff, and support for member of staff and child will be discussed.

When interviews have been completed, the strategy meeting will reconvene to discuss the options:

- Criminal proceedings, followed by formal disciplinary proceedings.
- Disciplinary action by TVV
- Training - dealt with by TVV's internal procedures.

If the allegation is found to be without basis, the member of staff shall be informed within 7 working days. A summary of the investigation shall be added to the confidential file.

When disciplinary action has been taken, this shall be recorded on the member of staff's personal and confidential file in accordance with TVV's procedures.