



Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Philippa Bradshaw & Nate Ballew
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POLICY STATEMENT

House of Mash & CircusMASH fully recognise its responsibilities for child and vulnerable adult protection. We are fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of all children, young people and adult students that take part in activities. Everyone has a right to protection, and the needs of disabled individuals and others who may be particularly vulnerable, including those who are neurodivergent individuals. CircusMASH will ensure the safety and protection of all children and young people involved in its activities through adherence to the safeguarding guidelines adopted by CircusMASH. Coaches and volunteers should show respect and understanding of the rights, safety and welfare of other staff, leaders and volunteers and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of CircusMASH. The process of implementing the policy is the responsibility of the Director and the safeguarding officer.

CircusMASH acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance, complying with best practice and Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Board requirements.

CircusMASH believes that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. This policy seeks to ensure that CircusMASH undertakes its responsibilities with regards to the protection of children and adults and will respond to concerns appropriately. The policy establishes a framework to support paid and unpaid staff in their practices and clarifies the organisation's expectations. This is to ensure that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and there are robust procedures, support and guidance available.

The policy and procedures will be shared with everyone and are mandatory for everyone involved in CircusMASH. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

LEGISLATION

There are numerous pieces of legislation that impact on the policy and procedures such as:

- Children and Young Persons Act 1933
- Children Act 1989 United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989
- Human rights Act 1998 Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2
- Legislation to protect children from adults who pose a risk Sex Offenders Act 1997
- Protection of Children Act 1999 Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

MONITORING

The policy will be reviewed every year, or in the following circumstances:

Changes in legislation and/or government guidance

As required by the Local Safeguarding Children Board

As a result of any other significant change or event

Policy Aims

- Provide children and young people with appropriate safety and protection while they are in the care of CircusMASH
- Create an environment where young people feel safe and secure, have their viewpoints valued, are encouraged to talk and are listened to
- Develop awareness in all staff and volunteers of the need for child protection and of their responsibilities
- Allow all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues
- To ensure all staff and volunteers are able to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people
- To promote safe practice and challenge poor practice
- To ensure that appropriate action is taken as a result of any concerns or allegations.
- To ensure that all CircusMASH staff who are involved in a role with children have been through appropriate pre-recruitment checks
- To ensure that all CircusMASH Youth Circus Trainers involved in a role with children have attended safeguarding or child protection training at a level appropriate to their role in the Company, which covers the above areas

The policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that all children

- Have a positive and enjoyable experience of circus at CircusMASH in a safe and child centered environment
- Are protected from abuse whilst participating in circus as well as outside of the activity

As part of our safeguarding policy CircusMASH will

- Promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people

- Ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern
- Ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
- Prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals
- Ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation

INTRODUCTION

All staff at CircusMASH that work with children must ensure that

- The welfare of the child or young person is paramount, and the environment is kept safe and secure
- All children and young individuals, whatever age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief 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 staff (paid/unpaid) working for CircusMASH have a responsibility to report concerns to the safeguarding officer Philippa Bradshaw (pip@houseofmash.com)

BEHAVIOUR STATEMENT

In order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made all staff (paid or unpaid) should demonstrate exemplary behaviour by:

- Treating all young people equally, and with respect and dignity
- Ensuring that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- Always putting the welfare of each person first before winning or achieving goals
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognising the development of needs and capacity, avoiding excessive rehearsal or performance schedules and not pushing them against their will
- Being an excellent role model
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given
- Making circus enjoyable and promoting fair play
- Ensuring if any physical support is required it is provided openly with agreement beforehand
- Ensuring that children are never left unsupervised

If you have any questions regarding the behaviour statement, please raise them with Philippa Bradshaw, the safeguarding officer. The following should be avoided except in emergencies (for example, if a child sustains an injury and needs to be taken to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to collect a child at the end of a session). If cases arise where these

situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the child's parent/guardian.

- Avoid spending time alone with a child
- Avoid taking or dropping off a child to an event or activity
- Avoid private or unobserved interaction with young people and encourage open communication with no secrets

You should never

- Discriminate against, show preferential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive, even in fun
- Invite or allow children to your home
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children, which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Condone smoking or the consumption of alcohol by young people under the legal age. You are obliged to report any sightings of this to the young person's parent/guardian
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate contact with young people.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child that they could do for themselves.
- Allow young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged (e.g. swearing, racial/sexual taunts)
- Permit abusive behaviour or activities (e.g. bullying, ridiculing or initiation ceremonies)
- Make assumptions based on rumour or hearsay
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child

ANTI BULLYING AND ABUSE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

All staff, volunteers, members, and parents should understand what abuse is.

- All staff, volunteers and members should know what the company policy is on any form of abuse and follow it when abuse is reported
- All children and parents should know what the company policy is on abuse and what they need to do should abuse arise
- As a company we take bullying seriously

Children and parents should be assured that they would be supported when abuse is reported.

- Any form of abuse will not be tolerated. Circus MASH is committed to providing a supportive, friendly, safe and positive environment free of offensive or abusive behaviour for all staff, volunteers, class members and volunteers

INDICATORS OF ABUSE IN CHILDREN

It is important to acknowledge that most children do not find it easy to disclose their concerns. It is known that the majority of referrals to the statutory agencies are from adults who are expressing concerns for a child or children identified by them as a result of the child's behaviour or presentation. It is critical that we treat reports with the utmost seriousness all reports of observed or identified indicators of possible abuse and respond appropriately.

Abuse is not always easy to identify. There may be many innocent reasons for young people to have bruises. In adolescence, children can be moody and unpredictable in their behaviour. Children can react to external circumstances by a change in behaviour such as bereavement or parental divorce/separation. However some signs may not have an obvious explanation and may indicate that a child may be being abused.

Some indicators of abuse are:

- The child or young person discloses a concern and describes what may be an abusive act
- Another person raises concern about the wellbeing of a child or young person.
- Unexplained or concerning injuries such as burns, cuts, and bruises situated in areas of the child's body which are not normally prone to injury through for example play activity
- Physical injury where the explanation given is inconsistent.
- Unexplained changes in behavior such as a child becoming withdrawn, quiet or aggressive/verbally violent
- Inappropriate sexual awareness and/or behaving in a sexualised manner
- Eating disorder i.e. a child is overeating or showing a loss of appetite
- Excessive weight loss or weight gain for no obvious reason
- Physical appearance becomes unkempt
- The child or young person is withdrawn and isolated themselves from the group and seems unable to make friends
- The child or young person is prevented from socialising with other children
- The child or young person displays a distrust of adults
- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to school, training or sports club
- A drop in performance at school or in the sport

- Physical signs such as stomach-aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing, for example, on food, cigarettes or alcohol
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions
- This is not an exhaustive list of indicators and alone cannot be seen to be definitive proof a child or young person is being abused. CircusMASH does not expect the adults involved in the circus to decide whether a child has been abused but it is everyone's responsibility to act upon their concerns and report any incident immediately

TYPES OF ABUSE

Abuse can and does occur in a wide range of settings. The psychological effects of abuse can be life-long, especially if the individual has not been able to disclose the abuse or access support. Anyone who has been abused as a young person may find it difficult or impossible to maintain stable, trusting relationships, and may become involved with drugs, and experience mental health problems or self-harm.

A child who has been neglected can experience serious impairment in their health and development.

A child may be abused or neglected through

- Inflicting harm
- Failing to act to prevent harm

A child may be abused by

- A family member
- A person within an institutional or community setting
- A person known to them or more rarely by a stranger*
- An adult or adults, or another child or children

*It is recognised through research that children are more likely to be abused by a member of their immediate or extended family, someone within their community or a person in a position of trust than by a stranger.

The following definitions are taken from Chapter 1 of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and additional specific information has been added.

i. 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 fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

In circus an example of physical abuse could include: -

- Setting a training regime that exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.
- Inflicting pain on a child that is beyond an acceptable level of discomfort involved in physical preparation and training.
- Forcing a child into a highly restricted and unhealthy diet that may lead to extreme weight loss.
- Physically pushing, poking, or prodding a child

ii. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

- It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Within circus examples of emotional abuse may include:

- Continually belittling a child's efforts.
- Placing extreme pressure on a child to perform.
- Shouting, laughing, humiliating a child

iii. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether the child is aware of what is happening. This may include:

- Activities that involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts.
- Non-contact activities, such as involving children in viewing, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Within youth circus examples of Sexual abuse may include:

- Inappropriate sexual touching
- Coach to youth circus member's sexual relationship
- Taking inappropriate images

- Use of sexual innuendos direct or indirect
- Displaying sexual behaviour in front of or towards children
- Making comments about a child's developing body which causes embarrassment or discomfort

Child sex abusers can come from any occupational, racial or religious background, and can be male or female. They are not always adults - children and young people can also behave in a sexually abusive way. Usually the abuser is a family member or someone known to the child, such as a family friend. Some individuals will target a sport or activity that allows access to children specifically to commit acts of sexual abuse. Abusers may act alone or as part of an organised group. After the abuse, they will put the child under great pressure not to tell anyone about it. They will go to great lengths to get close to children and win their trust, for example, by choosing employment that brings them into contact with children, or by pretending to be children in Internet chat rooms run for children and young people. Many cases of sexual abuse result from an abuse of that trust by the adult.

iv. Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers).
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect in a circus situation might occur if a teacher or coach fails to ensure children are safe or exposes them to unduly cold temperatures at their training venue or not acting to stop young people from doing things which put them at risk of injury.

Within circus examples of neglect abuse may include: -

- Not providing suitable sustenance during training sessions
- Dirty and dangerous equipment or environment
- Inadequate coaching supervision

BULLYING

Bullying and harassment occurs where repeated deliberate actions by one or more people cause hurt to an individual or group and where it is difficult for the bullied person(s) to prevent or deal with this person's actions. The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently

be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to young people, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

'Kidscape' (www.kidscape.org.uk), a UK charity established specifically to prevent bullying and child sexual abuse, defines bullying as the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person that results in pain and distress to the victim.

It splits bullying into the following categories:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding belongings, threatening gestures)
- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic - because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, teasing
- Cyber - All areas of internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse, mobile threats by text messaging & calls, misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities

Bullying can occur between:

- An adult and young person
- A young person and young person
- A parent and own child

Bullying by children or adults on children will never be tolerated. Bullying may take many forms including physical, verbal, or through the written word, and may be conducted in person or through the actions of another person/other people. Cyber bullying is now recognised as a serious concern and must be dealt with in line with the Anti Bullying policy.

STRATEGIES TO DISCOURAGE BULLYING

- Create an open environment and provide adequate supervision at all times
- Encourage children to speak out and share any concerns with the person in charge, or other responsible adults.
- Take all signs or allegations of possible bullying seriously.
- Responding to victims of Bullying
- Anyone becoming aware that a child is being bullied should offer the child reassurance and try to gain the child's trust.
- Explain that someone in authority may need to be informed.
- Keep accurate records of what happened together with names of those involved and any action taken.
- Report suspicions or concerns to Safeguarding Officer - Philippa Bradshaw.

- Support bullied children
- Children who have been bullied will often need support to deal with the impact of bullying. This may include having a specific person to whom concerns can be raised in specific situation or providing a “buddy”
- CircusMASH may consider holding a reconciliation meeting to help address the issues between the bully and the bullied young person. The safeguarding lead (Philippa Bradshaw) can advise the child or parent to contact Kidscape, a charity that offers support to bullied children as well as day courses to help them deal with bullying and its after effects including how to avoid being bullied in future at www.kidscape.org.uk.

ABUSE OF POSITION OF TRUST

A relationship of trust exists where an adult, by virtue of their role, is in a position of power or influence over a young person. Although an adult engaging in any sexual activity with a young person under the age of sixteen would be committing a criminal offence, in some circumstances, engaging in sexual activity within a relationship of trust is also a criminal offence. The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000 introduced the offence of abuse of a position of trust. The Act set out a series of occupations to which the legislation applied, which was extended in the Sexual Offences Act (2003). The legislation states that it is a criminal offence for a person in a position of trust to engage in any sexual activity with a person under the age of 18 with whom they have a relationship of trust, irrespective of whether the young person has ostensibly consented to the relationship.

POOR PRACTICE

Poor Practice can be split into a number of groupings. These include:

- Practices that may be on the fringe of abuse and/or if repeated again and again, would amount to abuse. Most of the examples are linked to emotional abuse.
 - Examples include:
 - Name-calling
 - Excessive monitoring of weight
 - Constant criticism of a child
 - Exerting excessive pressure
 - Forcing a child to do something against their will
 - Use of inappropriate language
 - Harassment.
- Breaches of CircusMASH Safeguarding policy and procedures:
 - Examples include:
 - Inadequate safeguarding arrangements
 - Providing inadequate supervision and/or care

- Failure to respond appropriately to concerns
 - Expelling anyone from the club who raises a concern
 - Excluding parents from asking questions about training
 - Inappropriate use of photographic equipment or materials.
- Breaches of recognised best practice in circus training:
 - Examples include
 - Exceeding level of competence and/or qualification
 - Employing practices that are inappropriate for the stage of psychological and physical development of the individual
 - Excessive training or competition
 - Inappropriate/excessive supporting or stretching.
- Practices that may be carried out with the best intentions but that fall into a category of behaviours that are used by people who sexually abuse children to 'groom' their victim:
 - Examples include
 - Offering to give a child a lift home alone
 - Giving a child gifts
 - Having unnecessary physical contact with young people e.g. excessive handling/supporting, cuddling, kissing, 'friendly' taps etc
 - Socialising/having friendships with young people outside training.
- Practices that are known to be significant risk factors in cases of abuse and can never to be condoned:
 - Examples include
 - Taking children to your home or other secluded place unaccompanied by others.
 - Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
 - Sharing a room with a child.
 - Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
 - Making sexually suggestive remarks.
 - Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
 - Allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
 - Allowing allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
 - Carrying out personal care for a child that the child can do unaided
 - Departing from the premises without first supervising the safe dispersal of the children.
 - Abusing a privileged position of power or trust.
 - Resorting to bullying tactics, or verbal abuse.
 - Causing a participant to lose self-esteem by embarrassing, humiliating or undermining the individual.

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from other adults.

It is essential that everyone challenges poor practice, even where there is a belief that the motives of an individual are well meaning. Failure to challenge poor practice can lead to an environment where abuse is more likely to remain unnoticed. CircusMASH accepts that on occasion there may be unplanned situations where the unexpected does occur, which leads to a responsible person being alone with a child.

In addition, situations arise where a young person may:

- Become distressed
- Be accidentally hurt by someone else
- Misunderstand/misinterpret something that has been said or done
- Appear to become sexually aroused in these situations

The individual involved must report the incident immediately to the Safeguard Officer and compile a brief written report of the event. The parent/guardian should also be informed of any significant incident.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS/SUSPICIONS

It is not the responsibility of anyone working with CircusMASH, in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities. CircusMASH will insure 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 vulnerable individual.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

If you witness or suspect any behavior that may be deemed inappropriate you must report it to CircusMASH Directors immediately. Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation.

1. Criminal investigation.
2. A child protection investigation
3. A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

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

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

If a child indicates that he/she is being abused, or information is received which gives rise to concern that the child may be being abused, the person receiving the information should:

- Stay calm and ensure that the child is safe and feels safe
- Listen carefully to what is said, allowing the child to continue at his/her own pace
- Explain that it is likely the information will have to be shared with others - do not promise to keep secrets
- Keep questions to a minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in revealing the information.
- Show and tell the child that what he/she says is being taken seriously and recognise any difficulties inherent in interpreting what the child says
- Tell the child what will be done next, and with whom the information will be shared.
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words as soon as possible. The following information should be recorded:
 - Dates and times
 - Any names mentioned
 - To whom the information was given
 - Information that is fact, hearsay or opinion should be noted as such
 - Ensure the record is signed and dated.

If the child indicates that he/she does not wish others to be informed about the allegations, carefully and tactfully explain the reasons why it may be in the interests of everybody if the matter is referred to the appropriate person or department (i.e. Children's Social Care Services/Social Services). The person to whom the disclosure is made is presented with a great responsibility and it is advisable, if there is any uncertainty, to seek advice on how to deal with the issue, from Children's Social Care Services or NSPCC.

WHISTLE BLOWING PROCEDURES

DEFINITION

Whistleblowing is when a worker reports suspected wrongdoing at work. Officially this is called 'making a disclosure in the public interest'.

A worker can report things that aren't right, are illegal or if anyone at work is neglecting their duties, including:

- Someone's health and safety is in danger
- Damage to the environment
- A criminal offence

- The company isn't obeying the law covering up wrongdoing.

If you have any concerns about CircusMASH, and its work, and are not getting the necessary support or resolve from your project line management structure or your issues directory concern it then these should be raised with Joe Fearn. If Joe Fearn isn't available or the issue raised concerns Joe Fearn, the issue should be raised with Jill Arbuckle. All employees are protected by the Public Disclosure Act.

Further advice on this can be found at
Public Concern at (PcaW) Work website
<http://www.pcaw.co.uk/> 020 7404 6609 13

SAFE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

CircusMASH recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse vulnerable individuals and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable individuals are prevented from working with children and/or vulnerable individuals. All employees and volunteers will receive a safeguarding induction at the start of their time with CircusMASH. This induction will help them to

- Analyze their own practice against established good practice to ensure their practice will not result in allegations being made
- Recognise their responsibilities to 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 and vulnerable individuals

A criminal background check or a Disclosure and Barring Service certificate / DBS check will be undertaken for all new CircusMASH team members and volunteers. All staff and volunteers will be required to complete the 'Safeguarding Fundamentals' module on Trainual to ensure that they understand its content.

Circus MASH recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse vulnerable individuals in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with vulnerable individuals.

Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All volunteers/staff should complete an induction process.
- All volunteers and PAYE employees the company will undertake DBS checks and certification for them. They must provide CircusMASH with a copy of this. It is also compulsory that they are registered with the online update service and they must provide a reference, so the company verifier can do regular checks.

- All volunteers/staff should be able to provide evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo).

ONBOARDING & INDUCTION

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

- They must complete the Onboarding module
- They must do an in-person induction in the space.
- The company Code of Conduct should be addressed, read and signed.
- Child protection and safeguarding procedures should be explained, and training needs identified. The Safeguarding Fundamentals module should be completed.

OVERNIGHT STAYS

These guidelines are for overnight stays within the UK. For trips abroad there will be additional guidelines.

A consent form must be completed by parents or guardians for overnight stays, it is essential that parents or carers complete the consent form and the details of the activity must be specified. No child should be allowed to participate in such activities if a consent form has not been completed and returned to the group leader.

Parents must be given full details of the event, including:

- Aims and objectives of the activity
- Date and duration, details of the venue including arrangements for accommodation and supervision
- Travel arrangements
- Name of group leaders and contact numbers
- Information about financial, medical and insurance arrangements

A full risk assessment must be completed and should be given to parents and carers. CircusMASH will ensure the group has adequate and appropriate insurance cover.

- There will always be a fully trained in safeguarding and child protection Welfare Officer on any trip
- There will always be separate sleeping arrangements for youth circus leaders and young people
- There will be separate accommodation for youth participants over 18 years old and those under 16 years.
- All Youth Circus accommodation will be separate for males and females.
- Any parents may only share accommodation with their own children.
- We will ensure accommodation is safe and secure (fire exits, emergency procedures etc.).

- Addition to this the ratio to children over the age of 11 years will be 1 Youth Circus trainer to every 8 children.
- The youth circus trainer must hold an updated DBS certificate, be fully aware and follow the company's Child protection and Safeguarding procedures.
- Rules regarding the trip will be agreed beforehand between trainers and children.
- The trainers and youth circus participants will have a daily meeting to discuss any issues or problems.
- There should always be a qualified first aider and a full and up to date first aid box
- If any of the group have any medical issues, the leader must ensure that appropriate club members are aware of how to deal with any situation.
- All members of the group including parents and trainer will receive a detailed pack of all details of the trip.
- Room shares will be arranged before the trip with parents and children informed.

TRANSPORT

If traveling by car or minibus, CircusMASH will check

- That the supplied vehicle has the correct insurance, MOT, working seat belts and roadside recovery.
- That the driver has the correct licence
- Pick up points will be organised so that the driver will not be alone with any children or young people

If travelling by public transport, an additional risk assessment will be carried out before the trip.

WELFARE OFFICERS

At any events, there will be a designated welfare officer. Their role will include

- Ensuring that parents and children are aware of the role and responsibilities
- Reporting any incidents in line with Circus MASH reporting procedures (Welfare Officers should have access to all emergency contact numbers)
- Taking a child-focused approach and responding to the needs of children during the event, working in partnership with other staff to resolve any welfare related issues that need to be addressed at the event
- Assisting the event organiser with the implementation of procedures for photography and the use of video cameras at the event and managing any issues that arise out of these policies.
- Supervision and coordination of accommodation at the event
- Leading the supervising of the Youth Circus participants during non-circus training periods
- Ensuring all participants fully understand their responsibilities in relation to the code of conduct

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

The importance of detailed planning and preparation to secure the success and safety of a visit, journey or activity cannot be overstated. Such planning is a prime responsibility for any coach and will depend to a large extent on the coach being able to anticipate all the potential risks, dangers and difficulties which could arise, and then making plans to avoid and eliminate them as far as possible.

It is vital that planning and preparation take place as early as possible to ensure ample time for all the procedures to be completed before the visit.

DUTY OF CARE

All employees/staff have a duty of care as laid down in Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, which states that whilst at work, every employee must take care for the health and safety of himself and of other persons who may be affected by his acts or omissions. Our coaches and volunteers are in "loco parentis" during sessions and activities, meaning that they are expected to exercise the same standard of care as a reasonably careful and responsible parent. They must therefore take all reasonable steps to ensure that every child under his or her control is not exposed to unacceptable risk. This also in the case of pupils who are 18 or 19 years of age even though they are no longer regarded as minors.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL MISUSE

The youth circus has a clearly defined policy on dealing with smoking and alcohol or drug abuse by pupils/young people taking part in a visit of any kind. Any child or young person found smoking, drinking alcohol or taking drugs will have the substance confiscated and the parents will be informed. An incident report will be written with close monitoring and review of the situation.

The use of any controlled drug other than under medical supervision is illegal and strictly forbidden. Disciplinary Action will be taken against any employee believed to be abusing drugs or other substances whilst on duty. Some proprietary or prescribed medicines may have a detrimental effect on the ability of employees to carry out certain tasks. Employees must inform management if such medicines are being taken so that a decision can be made as to their suitability to accompany a group.

CircusMASH has a clearly defined policy on dealing with smoking. The general policy of the Youth Circus discourages smoking.

- All smoking is prohibited for Youth Circus members.
- Employees or volunteers must not buy cigarettes or give them etc for young people under the age of 18.
- Employees or volunteers should not smoke in front of children. Adults may withdraw at agreed times in order to smoke always ensuring that adequate supervision remains for the group.
- Youth Circus coaches and volunteers must not smoke in front of members and must take steps to not smell of smoke.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE USE OF IMAGES AND VIDEOS

CircusMASH will

- Avoid using children's full names (first name and surname) in photograph captions
- Use a parental permission form to obtain consent for a child to be photographed/videoed
- Obtain verbal permission by children and young people to take photos and to use their image (in addition to the written permission of parents/guardians)
- Consider the use of the images of children and ensure that they are suitably dressed to reduce the risk of inappropriate use

In addition to this

- There are written expectations of professional photographers or the press who are invited to an event, making clear the company's expectations of them in relation to child protection
- Photographers will not have unsupervised access to children
- We will not approve photography sessions outside the event or at a child's home without suitable supervision
- During showings parents and audience members will be asked not to take any photos or videos, or post any images onto social media. An announcement will be made at the start of youth circus or community performances
- Photos of children will be stored in a secure way. In line with GDPR legislation
- Always use a parental consent form to request the use of a child's image for publication. The parent should be encouraged to discuss the matter with their child before signing a consent form

The use of video equipment can be a valuable aid to coaching. The guidelines below should be implemented to safeguard against inappropriate practice

- Ensure that the performers and their parent/guardian are aware of the purpose of the filming as a coaching aid and consent is obtained

- Ensure that the person designated for participants welfare is present to ensure that performers are protected against inappropriate filming
- Care should be taken to securely store the video materials to avoid inappropriate usage

SPOTTING AND MANUAL SUPPORT

Supporting and shaping the Youth Circus participant is an essential part of coaching circus in that it helps the participant to understand shapes, movement patterns and complex skills, but also reduces the risk of injury due to a fall or error in performance.

Detailed guidance on appropriate supporting techniques is provided as part of the ongoing CircusMASH training. The key points on safe spotting and manual support are:

- The trainer must ensure that support is only used when necessary and “over-handling” is avoided
- The circus trainer must always be alert to the possibility of performance errors or anxiety, which may increase the risk of injury
- Supporting techniques must not inhibit performance
- Physical contact should not be invasive of sensitive areas of the body i.e. genital areas, buttocks or breasts. Infrequent non-intentional physical contact can arise out of error on the performer or coach’s part. Such situations should not be ignored and need to be acknowledged through an apology to the participant and reported to the Safeguarding Officer or head coach and parents. Any written report should be made of any incident
- If a participant or parent has any concerns, they should be raised with the Safeguarding Officer. In any circumstance where abuse is suspected, CircusMASH Youth Circus reporting procedures should be followed

FLEXIBILITY/STRETCHING EXERCISES

There are a range of techniques and types of exercise for extending flexibility that involve the application of force. These techniques can also lead to the person applying the force coming into close proximity with the youth circus participant and having prolonged contact with areas of their body.

Circus trainers must follow the following guidelines:

- Use slow, progressive and prolonged stretching exercises, within the “discomfort zone”, rather than what might be considered to be excessive force
- Avoid exercises that place the trainers and participants body in “close proximity” and might be seen as unnecessary by the less- informed parent or observer
- Be sensitive to how the exercise might be perceived by the parents and children
- Use partner exercises with more experienced youth circus members where possible.

PRIVATE LESSONS

If Youth Circus members wish to take their training to one to one, then the lesson must be booked through the normal CircusMASH channels. The parents must be present at all times during the training unless there is another class going on in the space.

COMMUNICATION

Due to Child licensing for shows, we may be required to send information about Youth Circus participants such as name, date of birth and address. This is to inform their local council safeguarding officer that they are involved in performance.

No member of CircusMASH staff or Youth Circus staff must contact a child or young person directly by phone, email or social media. All communication should be through parents or as a group forum and to the whole group never to an individual.

When making communication they must always relate to Youth Circus activities.

No coach or CircusMASH member must ever accept a Youth Circus participant as a friend on Facebook or any other kind of social media.

Parents, guardians and youth circus participants will have access and have an induction to CircusMASH Child protection Policy and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Parents are asked to make sure the children know who the company's Safeguarding Officer is.

We aim to create an environment where children and young people are listened to.

DROP OFF/COLLECTION OF MEMBERS

Parents/Guardians have full responsibility for their child until they are taken into the circus class. The coaches then take on a duty of care. Parents/Guardians are asked to come to the building with their children wherever possible, to ensure that they are safely inside.

The Youth Circus coaches have a duty of care until the children are collected by the same adult that dropped them off at class or another known person to the coach. If this is a different person then the tutor should be informed of this at the drop off.

LATE PICK UP

The following information provides guidance on how to respond where a parent, for whatever reason, does not arrive at the required time to collect their child.

All parents must be advised that in the event that they are delayed for any reason, they must:

- Contact the circus at the earliest opportunity
- Provide clear guidance on what they wish the company to do e.g. consent for another parent to transport their child home.

CircusMASH Youth Circus coaches and staff must

- Not leave until the parent has collected the child. Wherever possible, a member of staff or volunteer should not be left alone with the child.
- A list of parent contact details and emergency numbers can be accessed through Classes4Kids
- Never leave a child or young person alone unless she/he is over 16 and then only with parent's permission
- Carry out appropriate assessments of situations as they arise, acknowledging that some young people aged 16 and over can go home alone if their parents are delayed.

Only young people who have had permission to leave on their own will be allowed. It is up to the Youth Circus tutor to be aware of this and it can be accessed on Class4Kids.

The CircusMASH Staff must not

- Take the child home or to another location.
- Ask the child to wait in a vehicle or the spaces with them alone.
- Send the child home with another person without permission.

If the parent is considered by the club as being unduly late, Circus MASH Staff should:

1. Attempt to contact the parent
2. Attempt to contact the emergency contact person nominated.
3. If there is no reply from the emergency contact, ask the child if there is another family member who may be contacted.
4. Wait with the young person(s) at the circus space with at least one other staff member or parents.
5. Respond to any instructions received from the parent
6. If no-one can be reached, contact the local police or Children's Social Care Services to enquire about the best course of action.

PERSISTENT FAILURE TO COLLECT A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON ON TIME

Parents, who persistently fail to collect a child on time or have not arrived after a reasonable period of time and have given no prior notice or informed the circus they are delayed, may be failing to provide adequate care for their child. If the parent makes no effort to contact the club or provide reasonable explanation for the delays, the Youth Circus

Safeguarding Officer and Youth Circus coach should arrange to meet with the parent to discuss the matter. If there is no change, the Safeguarding Officer should either contact the children's team at the local Children's Social Care Services or seek advice from the Birmingham Council Safeguarding Officer. If a parent arrives to collect a child and there is concern that the parent's ability to take appropriate care of the child may be impaired (e.g. the parent is considered to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs to the extent that she/he is unfit to drive, and/or take care of the child) the club should seek advice from the police or Children's Social Care Service immediately.

LOST CHILDREN PROCEDURES

In the rare event that a child goes missing from the circus, the following guidelines have been devised to outline the actions that should be taken.

At the point that a child has been identified as missing the company should:

- Ensure that other children in the group are looked after appropriately while a search for the child concerned is conducted.
- Inform the child's parents if they are present, or nominate an appropriate person to telephone them and advise them of the concern. Reassure them that everything is being done to locate the child.
- Organise all available responsible adults by areas to be searched. It is best to take a short time to organise the search properly so that all places are searched fully.
- Search the area in which the child has gone missing including the office, toilets, storage rooms, public and private areas and the CircusMASH grounds.
- Request all those searching to report back to a nominated adult at a specific point.
- Make a note of the circumstances in which the child has gone missing and where he/she was last seen
- Prepare a detailed physical description of the child, including:
 - Approximate height
 - Build
 - Hair and eye colour
 - Clothing he/she was wearing

As this will be required by the police Report the concern to the police if the search is unsuccessful.

This must happen no later than 30 minutes after the young person's disappearance is noted, even if the search is incomplete.

- Follow police guidance if further action is recommended and maintain close contact with the police
- Ensure that you inform all adults involved including the parents, searchers and police if at any stage the child is located
- Refer the concern ASAP to the Safeguarding Officer.

Reviewed

15/01/2025

Philippa Bradshaw

Safeguarding Office

&

Nate Ballew

Development Coordinator