Blade Education Safeguarding Policy June 2012

Blade Education believes that it is always unacceptable for a child, young Person or vulnerable adult to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults, by a commitment to practice which protects them.

We recognise that:

 the welfare of the child/young person/vulnerable adult is paramount

 all children, young people and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse

 working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and their agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The purpose of the policy:

- ✓ To provide protection for the children and young people who receive Blade Education's services, including the children of adult members or users.
- ✓ To provide protection for any vulnerable person working with Blade Education.
- ✓ To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and seasonal workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Blade Education.

We will seek to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults by:

 valuing them, listening to and respecting them

 adopting safeguarding guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers

 recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made

 sharing information about safeguarding protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers

 sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately

 providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Policy aims
The aim of the Blade Education Safeguarding Policy is to promote good practice: Providing children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Blade Education. Allow all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues.

Promoting good practice
Abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the working environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

Good practice guidelines
All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treating all children, young people and vulnerable adults equally with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each vulnerable person first.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with all children and vulnerable adults (eg it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children and vulnerable adults to share in decision making.
- Ensuring that if any form of physical support is required, it should be provided openly and appropriately.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible.
- Ensue that if mixed groups are taken away for the day or night, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Request written parental consent if it is required to transport young people in their cars.

Practices to be avoided
The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (eg the vulnerable person sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to collect a child), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of a senior member of company staff and/or the vulnerable person's parents/carers.

Otherwise, avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children and vulnerable adults away from others.
- Taking or dropping off a child or vulneralbe adult to an external event or location.

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 room with a child or vulnerable adult.
- 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 or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child or vulnerable person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children or vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

NB It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents/carers and those involved. There is a need to be responsive to a 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 or vulnerable adult 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 another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents/carer of the child or vulnerable adult are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a child or vulnerable person.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- if a child or vulnerable adult appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a child or vulnerable adult misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Use of photographic/filming equipment
There is evidence that some people have used children's events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled people in vulnerable positions. All staff should be vigilant and any concerns should to be reported to the Local Child Protection Officer.

Any and all photography and filming done with children should only be undertaken with the permission of both the child / children involved and the parents / carer of the child involved in the filming or photography.

Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers
Blade Education recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children or vulnerable adults in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults.

Pre-selection checks must included 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 or vulnerable adults. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity should be provided (eg passport or driving licence with photo).

Interview and induction

- All employees (and volunteers) will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive formal or informal 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.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- They should sign up to Blade Education's Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- Safeguarding procedures are explained and training needs are identified.

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

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- Work safely and effectively with all vulnerable people.

Blade Education requires:

- Relevant personnel to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young or vulnerable person.
- Relevant personnel to undergo relevant first aid training (where necessary).

Responding to allegations or suspicions
It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Blade Education, 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 through contact with the appropriate authorities.

Blade Education will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child or vulnerable adult.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child or vulnerable adult protection investigation
- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child or vulnerable adult protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action
1. Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Board of management will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Board of Management, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the relevant Director who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse:
Any suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Board of Directors, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the person in question and any other persons who may be at risk.

- The Board of Directors refer the allegation to the social services department which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the child or vulnerable adult will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- If a member of the Board of Directors is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Manager or in his/her absence the Chairman who will refer the allegation to social services.

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 Officer
- the parents/carers of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- social services/police
- the alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

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

Internal enquiries and suspension

Blade Education will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Blade Education Board of Directors will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Blade Education Board of Directors must reach a decision based upon the available information, which could suggest that on a balance of probability it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child or vulnerable person should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, vulnerable adults, parents, carers and members of staff may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, Email: bac@bacp.co.uk, Internet: www.bacp.co.uk

Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Action if bullying is suspected

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children and adults 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 tell the person in charge or someone in authority.

- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe.
- Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) 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 Board of Management or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action towards the bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour.
- Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully(ies)'s parents/carers.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

3. Concerns outside the immediate working environment (eg a parent or carer):

- Report your concerns to the Board of Directors, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- If a member of the Board of Directors is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.
- Social services and the Board of Directors will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- The governing body should ascertain whether or not the person/(s) involved in the incident play a further role in Blade Education.
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.
- See 4. below regarding information needed for social services.

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 or vulnerable adult's name, age and date of birth.
- The child or vulneralbe person's home address and telephone number.
- 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 or vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents/carers been contacted?

- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child or vulnerable adult was not the person who reported the incident, has the child or vulnerable adult been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct, or the **NSPCC Child Protection** Helpline on **0808 800 5000**, or **Childline** on **0800 1111**.

Declaration
On behalf of Blade Education, we, the Board of Directors, will oversee the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

Mary Forsdyke
Beth Hooper
Alastair Deacon

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