



Ledger Dance Studios Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

At Ledger Dance Studio, we believe that every participant deserves to have a fun and secure experience. As a school entrusted with the care of young people, we have both a moral and legal obligation to ensure that our coaches, teachers, staff, and volunteers provide the highest standard of care possible.

This policy applies to all activities offered by Ledger Dance Studios, including our weekly classes, intensive and event days, and competition work. It applies to all members of our team, including tutors, managers, volunteers, chaperones, and anyone else working on behalf of Ledger Dance Studios.

Our goal is to promote good practice and provide children and young people with appropriate safety and protection while in our care. We want our staff and volunteers to feel informed and confident in responding to specific child protection issues. For the purposes of this policy, a child or young person is defined as anyone under the age of 18, as outlined in the Children's Act of 1989.

2. Policy Purpose

The objective of this policy is twofold:

1. To ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people who receive services from Ledger Dance Studios, including the children of adults who avail of our services.
2. To provide our staff, volunteers, and all those who work on behalf of Ledger Dance Studios with a comprehensive set of principles that govern our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

Our commitment to safeguarding and child protection is of utmost importance to us. We recognise the responsibility we have towards the children and young people who engage with our services, and we are dedicated to creating a safe and secure environment for them. This policy outlines the measures we have put in place to ensure that all children and young people who receive our services are protected from harm, abuse, and neglect. It also

provides guidance to our staff and volunteers on how to identify and respond to any concerns they may have regarding the safety and well-being of the children and young people they work with.

At Ledger Dance Studios, we believe that every child and young person has the right to be safe and protected from harm. We are committed to upholding this right and ensuring that our services are delivered in a manner that prioritises the safety and well-being of the children and young people we serve.

3. Guiding Principles

The following principles serve as a guide for all aspects of safeguarding activity carried out by individuals at every level of Ledger Dance Studios:

- Childcare that is respectful and informed.
- Timely safeguarding action.
- Involvement of others on a need-to-know basis only.
- Early identification and management of actual or potential risks.
- Fulfilment of duties with the utmost level of professional behaviour.
- Active commitment from all members in promoting and maintaining a safe community.

These principles are the foundation of our safeguarding efforts, ensuring that every individual involved in our community is treated with respect and care. We believe in taking swift and appropriate action when necessary, while also maintaining confidentiality and involving only those who need to know. By identifying and managing risks early on, we can prevent potential harm and maintain a safe environment for all. Our commitment to professionalism and ethical behaviour is unwavering, and we expect the same from all members of our community. Together, we can promote and maintain a safe and secure environment for everyone at Ledger Dance Studios.

4. Legal Framework

This policy has been carefully crafted to ensure the protection of children, drawing upon a range of legal and regulatory guidance. The following laws and regulations have been taken into account:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedom Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014

These laws and regulations provide a comprehensive framework for safeguarding children and ensuring their rights are protected. By adhering to these guidelines, we can ensure that our policies and practices are in line with the highest standards of child protection.

5. Definitions and Key Terms

- **Safeguarding:** Protecting children and young people from maltreatment, preventing impairment of their health or development, ensuring that they are growing up in safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all children to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- **Child Protection:** The specific procedures and measures taken to protect children who are suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm.

6. Good Practice

At Ledger Dance Studios, our primary focus is providing children with exceptional experiences while ensuring their safety and well-being through a strong ethical framework. We understand that distinguishing between poor practice and abuse can be challenging. While our staff and participants aren't responsible for determining if abuse is occurring, they must identify and act on any concerns about poor practice or potential abuse, as outlined in sections 10 to 13. This section provides the tools to differentiate between good and poor practice, helping us create a safe, nurturing environment for all our students.

To ensure the safety and well-being of all young people at Ledger Dance Studios, all personnel must follow these principles:

- **Work openly:** Avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage transparent communication to prevent misconduct.
- **Provide personal support carefully:** When assisting children, ensure another responsible adult is present and communicate your actions to the child and their parent/carer.
- **Create a positive environment:** Promote fairness, address bullying, and foster an engaging atmosphere for all.
- **Treat everyone with respect:** All young people deserve respect and dignity, regardless of background or abilities.
- **Prioritise the child's welfare:** Always put the young person's best interests first.
- **Maintain appropriate boundaries:** Avoid personal relationships with children and keep a safe distance. Physical contact should be necessary, consensual, and appropriate.
- **Obtain parental consent:** Secure written consent for transportation, travel, and emergency medical treatment.
- **Ensure proper supervision:** Never use drugs, misuse medications, or consume alcohol when responsible for a child.
- **Be a role model:** Avoid smoking or drinking alcohol around young people.
- **Give constructive feedback:** Offer positive, developmentally appropriate feedback, prioritising the child's welfare over personal achievements.
- **Document injuries:** Record any injuries, treatments, and near misses.

- **Maintain respect in all interactions:** Use respectful language and behaviour, avoiding favouritism or encouraging infatuation.
- **Acknowledge special circumstances:** How obligation of care may look different for supporting those with additional needs or from other vulnerable groups

If anything that you encounter during the execution of your duties or in relation to Ledger Dance Studios operation causes concern, this should be escalated immediately.

7. Defining Child Abuse

Child abuse, in its various forms—physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect—occurs within relationships of trust and involves a misuse of power. It can affect any young person, regardless of age, gender, race, or ability. Abusers may include family members, caregivers, or individuals encountered in community or recreational settings. Abuse can also occur when someone fails to prevent harm. Children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable due to factors like stereotyping, discrimination, and isolation. Preventing child abuse and safeguarding vulnerable individuals requires collective effort and vigilance.

8. Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** Intentionally harming a young person through actions like hitting, shaking, or burning, as well as giving inappropriate substances. It also includes situations where a caregiver causes illness or falsely reports symptoms, known as Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Characterised by persistent ill-treatment that makes a child feel worthless, frightened, or inadequate. This can include unrealistic expectations, constant criticism, name-calling, or bullying, which damages self-esteem and emotional well-being.
- **Neglect:** Occurs when an adult fails to meet a child's basic needs, leading to severe health or developmental issues. This includes not protecting a child from harm, neglecting medical care, or failing to provide affection and attention. Neglect can also happen in performance settings if safety and well-being are not prioritised.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Involves coercing or enticing a child into sexual activities, whether physical (like assault) or non-contact (like inappropriate behaviors or exploitation). Both adults and other children can be perpetrators. Recognizing and addressing sexual abuse is crucial to protecting children.
- **Child Sexual Exploitation:** Occurs when a child is manipulated or coerced into sexual activities for the perpetrator's benefit, often involving technology. This can also occur in contexts where power dynamics might lead to abuse, such as in the performing arts.
- **Bullying:** While not a form of abuse itself, bullying can stem from abuse and have severe impacts. It includes physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual mistreatment. Addressing bullying involves creating a safe, supportive environment and ensuring effective intervention and support systems are in place.

9. Indicators of Abuse

Recognizing abuse can be challenging, even for experienced individuals. Here are some key signs that a child may be experiencing abuse:

- **Unexplained Injuries:** Bruises, cuts, or burns, especially in uncommon areas, or injuries with inconsistent explanations.
- **Behavioural Changes:** Sudden shifts in behaviour such as becoming withdrawn, overly aggressive, or unusually quiet.
- **Inappropriate Behaviour:** Unusual sexual knowledge or explicit behaviour.
- **Distrust of Adults:** Mistrust or fear of adults, particularly those they should normally feel safe with.
- **Social Issues:** Difficulty making friends, social isolation, or reluctance to interact with peers.
- **Eating Patterns:** Significant changes in eating habits, such as overeating or loss of appetite, and unexplained weight loss.
- **Personal Hygiene:** Neglect of personal hygiene, becoming increasingly unkempt.
- **Performance Drops:** Decline in school or activity performance, or reluctance to participate.
- **Physical Complaints:** Frequent stomach aches, headaches, sleep issues, bedwetting, or other unexplained physical symptoms.
- **Material Signs:** Sudden influx of gifts or money, damaged clothing, or signs of substance abuse.
- **Distressing Written Work:** Written material that includes inappropriate or distressing content.

This list is not exhaustive, and the presence of these signs does not confirm abuse. Any concerns should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, Evie Ledger-Knapp. It is crucial to handle these matters with sensitivity and prioritise the safety and well-being of the child.

10. Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

At Ledger Dance Studios, it is not the duty of any staff member, regardless of their position, to determine whether or not a child has been subjected to abuse. However, it is their obligation to report any concerns to the appropriate authorities, who can then investigate and take the necessary steps to safeguard the child. In the event of allegations or suspicions of abuse, it is crucial to follow the correct protocol. This section outlines the steps to take in response to such situations.

- **Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse**

There are several ways in which one may become aware of possible abuse. It could be witnessed firsthand, suspected due to signs of abuse, or reported by someone else or the young person themselves. However, it is crucial to respond appropriately, especially in the latter case. If a young person confides in you about being abused, it is essential to remain calm and reassure them that they are not to blame. Listen attentively and ask only necessary questions for clarification. Let them know that you must inform others to protect them and prioritise their safety above all else. If the child requires urgent medical attention, call an ambulance, and if they are in danger, contact the police immediately. Record all

information and report the incident to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, Evie Ledger-Knapp without delay.

If you are unsure of what to do, seek assistance from the NSPCC helpline at 0808 800 5000. Remember, it is our responsibility to protect and safeguard young people from harm, and every action we take can make a significant difference in their lives.

- **Recording Information**

In order to ensure that information is as helpful as possible, it is crucial to create a detailed record at the time of disclosure or concern. When recording, it is important to stick to the facts and differentiate between one's own knowledge and what others have said. Personal opinions should not be included.

The information that should be included in the record is as follows:

- The child's name, age, and date of birth.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether the person making the report is expressing their own concern or someone else's nature of the allegation, including dates, times, and any other relevant information.
- A description of any visible bruising or injury, including location, size, etc. Additionally, any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes, should be noted.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if possible, of what has happened and how any bruising or injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted? If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

By following these guidelines, we can ensure that all necessary information is recorded accurately and efficiently. This will help to protect the child and ensure that appropriate action is taken.

- **Reporting the Concern**

Concerns regarding the safety and well-being of a child or young person can manifest in various ways. It is crucial to take the following core actions in such situations:

- Immediately take any necessary emergency action to alleviate any immediate risk to life or limb (call 999)
- Discuss your concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer, Evie Ledger-Knapp
- Make a brief factual note of what you have seen, heard, or become concerned about (within an hour, if possible)
- Listen attentively, avoid asking leading questions, and treat all information confidentially
- Ensure that safeguarding action is taken.

All instances of actual or suspected child abuse must be reported without delay (within 24 hours) to the appropriate agencies. It is essential to report all suspicions and allegations. It is understandable that strong emotions may arise, particularly in cases where abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. However, it is crucial to recognise these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. If the Designated Safeguarding Officer is unavailable, it is your responsibility to seek advice from the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at the local social services department, or the police.

In cases where there is a complaint against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation:

- Criminal, in which case the police are immediately involved
- Child protection, in which case the social services (and possibly the police) will be involved
- Disciplinary or misconduct, in which case Ledger Dance Studios will be involved.

Any suspicions or allegations of child abuse must be reported to the appropriate child protection agencies. Social services, under The Children Act 1989, are required to investigate all referrals, including interviewing the child and family, gathering information, and coordinating with the police.

If abuse by an employee or volunteer is suspected, report it to Ledger Dance Studios immediately. The studio will then notify social services and contact the child's parent or carer based on social services' guidance. The Principal will handle media inquiries and any necessary disciplinary actions.

It is important to note that allegations of abuse may be made after the event. In such cases, the same procedures must be followed to ensure the safety of all children who may be at risk from the alleged abuser. By taking swift and appropriate action, we can protect our children and ensure their safety and well-being.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):**
 - **Responsibilities:** Oversee safeguarding procedures, ensure staff are trained, and handle allegations or concerns.
 - **Contact:** Evie Ledger Knapp, ledgerdancestudios@gmail.com, 07889598886
- **Staff and Volunteers:**
 - **Responsibilities:** Adhere to safeguarding policies, report concerns, and participate in training.
- **Parents and Carers:**
 - **Responsibilities:** Support safeguarding measures, communicate concerns, and collaborate with staff including responding to further consent forms.

13. Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is crucial. Information should be shared only on a need-to-know basis. This includes the Designated Safeguarding Officer, the child's parents (if safe), relevant safeguarding agencies (e.g., Social Services, Police), the alleged abuser (and their parents, if they are a child), and the Principal of Ledger Dance Studios (when appropriate).

Consult social services on who should approach the alleged abuser. Store all information securely, with access limited to authorized personnel only, in line with data protection laws. Handling information with care and sensitivity is essential to protecting privacy and safety.

12. Internal Inquiries and Suspension

The Designated Safeguarding Officer, Evie Ledger-Knapp, will decide on suspending any individual accused of abuse pending police and social services inquiries. Ledger Dance Studios prioritises the welfare of children and handles all allegations seriously. After inquiries, each case will be assessed to determine if reinstatement is appropriate or if termination or changes in duties are needed. The Principal will make the final decision. We are committed to handling all allegations with care and ensuring a safe environment for our children.

13. Safer Recruitment and Working

Ensuring the safety of children is of utmost importance, and as such, it is imperative that all reasonable measures are taken to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with them. This applies to both paid staff and volunteers, regardless of their employment status. To achieve this, we have implemented a rigorous safer recruitment process that effectively screens and identifies any unsuitable candidates. Our commitment to safeguarding children is unwavering, and we will continue to prioritise their safety above all else.

14. Controlling Access to Children

At Ledger Dance Studios, we take the safety and security of our students very seriously. To ensure that we only employ the most trustworthy and reliable staff and volunteers, we have put in place a number of safeguards prior to employment.

Firstly, all staff and volunteers are required to read both the safeguarding manual and all Ledger Dance Studio's policies. By working with Ledger Dance Studios all staff and volunteers are expected to follow all policies.

In addition, any applicants who will be working with or have access to personal data are required to undergo an enhanced DBS check within the last 3 years. This is a rigorous background check that helps us to identify any potential risks or concerns. These references are always taken up, particularly in cases where the applicant is external to our school. Finally, we require proof of identity from all applicants, such as a passport or driving licence with a photo. This helps us to ensure that we are hiring the right person for the job. By implementing these safeguards, we are able to provide a safe and secure environment for our students, and peace of mind for their parents and carers.

19. Interview and Induction

To ensure the safety and professionalism of our theatre school, all staff and volunteers will be required to participate in an interview, as determined by the Principal. Additionally, all employees and volunteers must complete an induction process, during which several important steps will be taken:

- Firstly, we will verify that the application form has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures. Any required actions will be taken at this time.
- Secondly, we will substantiate all qualifications to ensure that our employees and volunteers are fully equipped to perform their duties.
- Thirdly, we will clarify job requirements and responsibilities to ensure that everyone is on the same page and understands what is expected of them.
- Fourthly, we will explain the expected professional conduct, policies, and procedures of the company as well as have staff and volunteers read the staff handbook to ensure that everyone is aware of our standards and expectations.
- Finally, we will explain our safeguarding procedures and identify any training needs, such as basic child protection awareness, to ensure that everyone is equipped to handle any situation that may arise.

We take the safety and professionalism of our school very seriously, and we believe that these steps are necessary to ensure that we maintain the highest standards possible.

20. Training

The safeguarding process at Ledger Dance Studios is comprehensive and thorough. In addition to pre-selection checks, all staff and volunteers who have access to children or personal information are required to undergo a DBS check, which is renewed every 3 years minimum. This ensures that only individuals with a clean record are allowed to work with children. Furthermore, all staff, volunteers, teachers, and helpers in some circumstances may be required to undertake relevant safeguarding training and approved home study. This training helps them to analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice and to ensure that their practice is likely to protect them and others. It also helps them to recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse. Additionally, the training teaches them how to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns and work safely and effectively with children. To facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection, all staff and volunteers receive advisory information outlining good/bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person. Staff are also encouraged to engage with the Designated Safeguarding Officer if they require further training or would like to discuss the options of further safeguarding training.

At Ledger Dance Studios, we take the safety and well-being of our students very seriously. Our safeguarding process is designed to ensure that all staff and volunteers are equipped

with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide a safe and nurturing environment for our students.

21. Additional Contact Details

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

Name: Evie Ledger-Knapp

Telephone:

Email: Ledgerdancestudios@gmail.com

CEOP – www.ceop.police.uk

NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000

We review this policy annually. This policy was reviewed on 26th July 2024, and it is next due for review on 26th July 2025.