

Documentary Film Makers' Co-operative

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

January 2012

Child Protection Policy

1. Introduction

Everyone who works for, or participates in the **Documentary Film Makers' Co-operative (DFMC)** activities is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. The DFMC have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, its personnel, coaches and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

The DFMC is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone involved in its film production and other activities accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to follow procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of DFMC and to allow members, employees and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989)

1.1 Policy Statement

The DFMC is committed to the following:

- ^ the welfare of the child is paramount
- ^ ensuring that all children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity entrusted into the care of DFMC for any period of time, are and will feel contented and safe.
- ^ taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- ^ treating all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse seriously and responding to them swiftly and appropriately
- ^ all DFMC's personnel who may in the course of their work for DFMC work with children, will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures
- ^ working in partnership with parents, child-guardians and children, for the protection of children

1.2 Monitor and review the policy and procedures

All DFMC personnel is urged to report any challenges, difficulties, gaps and areas that indicate child protection needs and/or the need to amend this policy, to the DFMC Board of Directors, and if deemed appropriate (see below) to other authorities.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

2. Promoting Good Practice

2.1 Introduction

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities in film production activities, all DFMC directors, members, employees and volunteers must operate within the terms and conditions of DFMC's Policies.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of members, employees, volunteers or participants to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child, as explained in section 4.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good practice and poor practice.

2.2 Good Practice

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and action:

- ⤴ always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- ⤴ make the experience of working on a film or being filmed an enjoyable and rewarding experience: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- ⤴ treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity
- ⤴ always put the welfare of the young person first, sacrificing the acquisition of desired film content if need be.
- ⤴ maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children and young people (e.g. it is not appropriate personnel or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to be alone with them in a room during recording)
- ⤴ avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given
- ⤴ involve parents/guardians wherever possible, e.g. where young people need to change cloths, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. For children under 16, parental consent to film the child is mandatory (always required) and parents / guardians must be given the option to be present during interviewing and filming a child under 16 years of age.
- ⤴ written parental consent must be obtained if DFMC personnel is required to transport young people in their cars
- ⤴ gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays
- ⤴ ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff

- ⤴ ensure that at away events adults should not enter a young person's room or invite young people to their rooms
- ⤴ be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people
- ⤴ always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- ⤴ recognising the developmental needs and capacity of the young person. DFMC directors, camera and sound operators must sacrifice seeking or retaining sought after recorded material (video, photographic stills, and audio) of children and young people under 18 if its recording or its broadcast puts the psychological and/or physical welfare of a child at risk. No child or young person should be persuaded or coerced into agreeing to do or say something on camera or audio recording that they feel reluctant or uncomfortable doing or saying.
- ⤴ secure written parental consent for the DFMC to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- ⤴ keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given

2.3 Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- ⤴ unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- ⤴ taking young people alone in a car on journeys, however short
- ⤴ taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- ⤴ sharing a room with a young person
- ⤴ engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- ⤴ allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- ⤴ allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- ⤴ making sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- ⤴ reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- ⤴ allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- ⤴ do things of a personal nature that the young person can do for themselves

When a case arises where it is impractical/impossible to avoid certain situation e.g. transporting a young person in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/guardian and the young person involved.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a young person, the young person seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the young person

misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

3. Defining Child Abuse

3.1 Introduction

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm, it commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.** The abuser may be a family member, someone the young person encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a young person directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the young person.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a young person at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood.

Young people with disabilities or otherwise disadvantaged, may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

3.2 Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse: where adults physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse.

This category of abuse also includes when a parent/carer reports non-existent symptoms or illness deliberately causes ill health in a young person they are looking after. This is called Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

In a filming situation, physical abuse may occur when a child is asked to do undertake in front of the camera, strenuous physical activity of a nature and intensity that exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

Emotional Abuse: the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of young people that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a young person to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in filming may occur when a young person is asked to relate unpleasant experiences or make self-incriminating statements on video or audio recordings, or is expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of allowing children or young people to undermine their own dignity by recording them name calling, bullying or using the camera or audio recordings to spread rumours.

Planned DFMC filming shoots will be designed to prevent children and young people from disclosing information that could be held against them at any time in the future (e.g. lead to future employment discrimination), or cause them future discomfort or embarrassment (ghosts that come back to haunt them).

During film editing, further scrutiny will be applied to ensure all material which could cause children or young people under 18 discomfort, embarrassment or future negative repercussions, is excluded from the film.

The content of all DFMC video, film and audio recordings destined for broadcast will be vetted by a lawyer with appropriate specialisation to ascertain that the welfare of any child or young participants who features in the recordings, is not compromised in any way.

Bullying may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are four main types of bullying.

It may be *physical* (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), *verbal* (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), *emotional* (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or *sexual* (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In the media, bullying may arise when a parent or film maker (producer, director, camera or audio operator) pushes the young person too hard to disclose certain information or perform to a desired standard.

Neglect occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Refusal to give love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in interviewing and filming could occur when the personnel present do not keep the young person/people safe, or expose them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

Sexual Abuse occurs when adults (male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing young people pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

The DFMC requires that children and young people aged under 16, and those aged under 18 who are looked after by local authorities or are under a court order, are only interviewed and recorded in the presence of 2 or more DFMC personnel. The DFMC requires that a parent or legal guardian of any child aged under 16, signs a consent form permitting the DFMC to interview and/or film the child prior to the child being interviewed and/or filmed.

4. Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- ⤴ unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- ⤴ an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- ⤴ the young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- ⤴ another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person
- ⤴ unexplained changes in a young person's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- ⤴ inappropriate sexual awareness
- ⤴ engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- ⤴ distrust of adult's, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- ⤴ difficulty in making friends
- ⤴ being prevented from socialising with others
- ⤴ displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite
- ⤴ losing weight for no apparent reason
- ⤴ becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Signs of bullying include:

- ⤴ behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down.
- ⤴ an unexplained drop off in performance
- ⤴ physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- ⤴ a shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is **NOT** the responsibility of those working in DFMC to decide that child abuse is occurring. It **IS** their responsibility to act on any concerns.

5. Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Group or Public Events

There is evidence that some people use filming events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. All DFMC personnel should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the DFMC directors.

All parents should be made aware, and required to give their consent when DFMC personnel use recording equipment to record their child even if only in crowd scenes e.g. during a lesson in a class room.

6. Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

6.1 Introduction

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in DFMC in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within DFMC and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspicions.

6.2 Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in section 3 of this document, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- ⤴ **stay calm** so as not to frighten the young person
- ⤴ **reassure** the child that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- ⤴ **listen** to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously
- ⤴ **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify
- ⤴ **inform** the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- ⤴ **safety of the child** is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue
- ⤴ **record** all information
- ⤴ **report** the incident to the club/welfare officer

In all cases if you are not sure what to do you can gain help from NSPCC Wales help line (Mon – Fri 10.00am – 6.00pm). Tel No: 0808 100 2524 or the NSPCC 24- hour help line Tel No: 0808 800 5000.

6.3 Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- ⤴ the child's name, age and date of birth
- ⤴ the child's home address and telephone number
- ⤴ whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- ⤴ the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information

- ⤴ a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- ⤴ details of witnesses to the incidents
- ⤴ the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/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

6.4 Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations MUST be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

The DFMC expects its members and staff to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the nominated DFMC director is not available you should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at your local social services department or the police. Telephone numbers can be found in your local directory.

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 the Documentary Film Makers' Co-operative will be involved

As mentioned previously in this document the DFMC are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for child protection.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by a member, employee or a volunteer should be reported to the DFMC Board of Directors who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- ⤴ DFMC will refer the matter to social services department
- ⤴ the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department
- ⤴ the DFMC will decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- ⤴ if a DFMC member or volunteer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the DFMC Board of Directors who will refer the matter to social services

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services. This is because other children to be filmed in the future may be at risk from the alleged abuser. **Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.**

6.5 Concerns outside the immediate Filming Environment (e.g. a parent or carer)

- ⤴ Report your concerns to the DFMC Board of Directors who should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the DFMC and acted outside the dictates of this Child Protection Policy.
- ⤴ If the Board of Directors are not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local social services department or the police immediately
- ⤴ Social Services and the DFMC will decide how to inform the parents/carers
- ⤴ Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis

6.6 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 DFMC Board of Directors
- ⤴ The parents of the child
- ⤴ 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.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

6.7 Internal Inquiries and Suspension

- ⤴ The DFMC Board of Directors will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and/or social services inquiries.
- ⤴ Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries, the DFMC will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases the DFMC must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

7. Recruiting and Selecting Personnel whose work brings them into contact with Children

7.1 Introduction

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to paid staff and volunteers, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children the following steps should be taken when recruiting.

7.2 Controlling Access to Children

All staff and volunteers should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about the applicant's past and a self disclosure about any criminal record.

- ⤴ If brought to work on a film project that is specifically about children under 16, the DFMC will ensure that at least one adult who has passed an Enhanced Criminal Record Check is present at each encounter between DFMC personnel and children, in addition to ensuring that no child or young adult under the age of 18 is left alone in the presence of just one DFMC director/member/employee/volunteer.
- ⤴ If brought to work on a film project that is specifically about children under 16, then at least one confidential reference regarding previous work with children should be obtained. This reference MUST be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- ⤴ All applicants are asked to provide evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo)

7.3 Interview and Induction

All DFMC personnel and volunteers will be required to undertake 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 a statement that they agree to comply to DFMC's **Policies** and its **Membership Criteria**
- ⤴ Child Protection Procedures are explained and training needs identified e.g. basic child protection awareness

7.4 Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help DFMC personnel, members and volunteers to:

- ⤴ Analyse their own practice against what is deemed 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 and/or abuse
- ⤴ Respond to concerns expressed by a child
- ⤴ Work safely and effectively with children

The DFMC requires that:

- ⤴ Any work it carries out with children under 16, or under 18 if under a court order or in the care of a local authority, is done in the presence of 2 or more adults including one who has had a up-to-date Enhanced CRB Check.
- ⤴ All members who work for the DFMC, volunteers and trainers undertake relevant child protection training or undertake a form of home study, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of positive culture towards good practice and child protection

- ⤴ All members 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

Declaration

On behalf of **Documentary Film Makers' Co-operative** we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the **Child Protection Policy** and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

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| Signed: Name: Nicolette Burford de Oliveira Position within Documentary Film Makers' Co-operative: Founding Director Date: | Signed: Name: Milton Myrie Position within Documentary Film Makers' Co-operative: Director Date: |
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