

Great Western Youth Band

Child Protection Policy and Procedures – Issue No.2 Reviewed Nov 2014

Introduction

This policy has been adopted by the **Great Western Youth Band** (GWYB) from a policy originally created by the **British Federation of Brass Bands**, as being most appropriate for our work. It establishes our roles, responsibilities and procedures and both highlights the importance of the protection of children and young people, and safeguards all personnel from the risk of false allegations of abuse or poor practice.

GWYB believes that everyone who participates in brass banding is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. To ensure this, we have adopted the following principles that all its personnel should follow, whether in a paid or a voluntary capacity.

GWYB recognises that we all have a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and preventing their abuse and that anyone who may have regular contact with children will be a very important link in identifying cases where a child needs protection.

Policy Statement

GWYB is committed to the following:

- Making the welfare of young people paramount
- Ensuring opportunities for all young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in brass banding in an enjoyable and safe environment.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect young people from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings.
- Taking action swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse.

Terms and abbreviations

- Anyone under the age of 18 is considered to be a child/young person.
- 'Parent' is used as a generic term to include parents, carers and guardians.
- 'Personnel' includes volunteers of the GWYB as well as employees.
- 'Welfare Officer' is the individual within the band with the overall responsibility for this policy

2. Good Practice, Poor Practice and Abuse

To provide young people with the best possible experience and opportunities in brass banding everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrate

exemplary behaviour. This will allow brass banding to make a positive contribution to the development of young people and safeguards their welfare, while also protecting personnel from the risk of false allegations.

2.1 Good practice

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and actions

- Before undertaking any activities involving young people, information will be provided on the level of supervision during the activity.
- Make the experience of brass playing fun and enjoyable; promote fairness and confront and deal with bullying.
- Treat all young people equally; this means giving both the more and less talented members of a group similar attention, time, respect and preserving their dignity.
- Respect the developmental stage of each young person - this means ensuring that the practice intensity is appropriate to the physical, social and emotional stage of the development of the student. Concerts, band competitions, solo competitions etc. must be suited primarily to the needs and the interests of the child, not those of the parents, teacher or band.
- Build relationships based on mutual trust and respect, in which young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and decision-making.
- Always be publicly open when working with children. Be aware of teaching sessions or meetings where a teacher and an individual student are completely unobserved. Inform the parent about the format of the teaching session or meeting
- Where children need to be supervised in the changing rooms, teachers and band helpers should work in pairs, and involve parents if possible. Maintain an appropriate and open environment, with no secrets.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of physical guidance is required in teaching technique, this should be provided openly and with the consent of the student.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate relationship with students. It is inappropriate for teachers and others in positions of authority to have an intimate relationship with a young person, even if they are over 16, the normal age of legal consent.
- Maintain appropriate standards of behaviour at social events that young people attend.
- Be an excellent role model, for example by not smoking or drinking alcohol while working with young people.
- Communicate regularly with parents and involve them in decision-making. Gain their consent in writing to act in loco parentis to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises.

- Be aware of any medical conditions, existing injuries and medicines being taken. Keep a written record of any injury or accident that occurs, together with details of any treatment given. Arrange that someone with knowledge of first aid is readily available
- Gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements, especially if an overnight stay is involved

2.2 Poor practice

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

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with children
- Taking children alone in a car on journeys, however short
- Taking children to your home where they will be alone with you
- Sharing a room with a child
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allowing or engaging in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control
- Letting allegations a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon
- Doing things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves
- Having children stay at your home with you unsupervised

Where cases arise where it is impractical to avoid any of the situations mentioned above, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation and the children's parents.

If during your care of a child you accidentally hurt them, the child seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

2.3 Abuse

Abuse in all its forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated, they may follow an individual into adulthood.

Children with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation, and a powerlessness to protect

themselves, or adequately to communicate that abuse has occurred. Children from ethnic minorities, who may also be experiencing racial discrimination, may be, or feel, doubly powerless in these respects.

Abuse may take a number of forms, and may be classified under the following headings:

Neglect: This is where adults fail to meet a child's basic needs like food, shelter, warm clothing or medical care, or to protect them from physical harm. Children might also be constantly left alone or unsupervised.

Neglect in a banding situation could include a conductor or band manager not keeping children safe, or exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury.

Physical Abuse: This is where someone physically hurts or injures children, for example by hitting, shaking, throwing, squeezing, burning, suffocating and biting or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute physical abuse.

Sexual Abuse: Girls and boys can be abused by adults or other children, both male and female, who use children to meet their own sexual needs. Showing children pornographic material is also a form of sexual abuse.

In banding activities which might involve physical contact with children could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the teacher over young students if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

Emotional Abuse: Persistent lack of love and affection, where children may be led to believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve the child being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous and withdrawn. It may also feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. Emotional abuse also occurs when there is constant overprotection, which prevents children from socialising.

Emotional abuse in banding might include situations where children are subjected by a parent or teacher to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying, racism or unrealistic pressure in order to perform to high expectations.

Bullying: This may be bullying of a child by an adult or another child. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name-calling, graffiti, abusive text messages transmitted by phone or on the internet), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In banding, bullying may arise when a parent pushes a child too hard to succeed, a teacher adopts a win-at-all-costs philosophy, or an official at a contest/ festival uses bullying behaviour.

2.4 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 involved in brass banding are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include:

- 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 child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- Someone else – a child or adult, expresses concern about the welfare of a child
- Unexplained changes in a child's behaviour – e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper - or behaviour changing over time
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour in games
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Difficulty in making friends
- Being prevented from socialising with other children
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite
- Losing weight for no apparent reason
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

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

Signs of bullying may include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctant to go to band rehearsals or to competitions.
- An unexplained drop-off in standard of performance.
- Physical signs such as stomach-aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing on food, cigarettes or alcohol.

- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

3. Recruiting and selecting personnel to work with children

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It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to volunteers as well as paid staff. The fundamental principle is that those in charge of activities involving young people must take all reasonable steps to satisfy themselves as to the suitability of those who are given access to the children in their care.

3.1 Controlling access to children

Applicants for positions that involve significant access to young people (for example junior band conductor) should complete procedures designed to elicit information about their past career, and to disclose any criminal record or other matter that has a bearing on their suitability to work with children.

Consent should be obtained from applicants for checks to be conducted to determine whether the Criminal Records Bureau holds any relevant information on them.

3.2 Vetting

All personnel who will have significant access to young people must first be vetted by obtaining a Disclosure about the individual from the Criminal Records Bureau.

It is important to emphasise that the absence of any relevant disclosure emerging from this vetting process does not guarantee that the individual is safe to work with children, so it should not be relied on excessively. It is only one of a number of factors in the initial assessment of the person's suitability for such responsibilities.

3.3 The Welfare Officer within the band

A Welfare Officer will be appointed from the Management Committee to advise the band committee on compliance with the procedures in this protection policy and act as a focal point for reporting any concerns. This person has the primary responsibility to check that everyone who has significant access to young people within the band is suitable for that role and has been vetted as described above.

3.4 Training

The effectiveness of the policies depends on everyone who is involved being aware of what is good practice and GWYB will ensure there is awareness on the committee and particularly with those working directly with young people.

4. Responding to suspicions and allegations

Abuse can and does occur in the family setting as well as other situations, which may include brass banding or other social activities, and is rarely a one-off event when it occurs

within such a setting. It is crucial that those involved in banding are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action taken.

It is not the responsibility of anyone in a brass band whether paid or voluntary, to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. However, there is a responsibility to inform appropriate agencies of possible abuse so that they can then make inquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child. This applies both to suspicions of abuse occurring within the context of banding activities and to allegations that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

4.1 Receiving evidence of possible abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening ourselves; we may suspect that it is occurring because of signs such as those listed above; it may be reported to us by someone else, or directly by the child affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a child says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives you concern that a child is being abused, you should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child
- Tell the child they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who has a speech disability and/or differences in language
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum necessary so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said, and be careful not to ask leading questions
- Reassure the child, but do not promise to keep the matter secret – explain that to resolve the problem it will be necessary to inform other people as appropriate.

4.2 Recording information

As with other forms of information arising in relation to child protection, information of this kind is highly sensitive and confidential. Accordingly, it should be held under secure conditions and only made available to those who have a definite need for it.

You should make a note as soon as possible of whatever information you obtain, both for your own future reference and possibly for passing on to others, appropriate agencies such as the social services department or the police. In writing such a note, you should confine yourself to the facts, and distinguish between what is your own personal knowledge and what you have been told by other people. You should not include your own opinions on the matter, to avoid the possibility of libel. Information should include the following:

- The nature of the allegation, in as much detail as possible, including times, dates, locations and other relevant information
- Details of the child involved, including name, age, address and other contact details, and identifying who has parental responsibility for the child

- Details of the person against whom the allegation is made, including name, relationship with the child, age and contact details (if known)
- The identity and contact details of any informants or other witnesses
- The child's account, if he or she can give one, of what has happened
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries
- Details of who else has been informed of the alleged incident
- Any other relevant information

4.3 Reporting the concern

Any concern about the welfare of a child should be reported immediately with the person in charge, and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

Within a band: You should inform the Welfare Officer or the person in charge of the band.

In schools: If you are working with schoolchildren as part of the school curriculum or extra-curricular activities you should inform the Head Teacher of the school or his nominee.

With students away from home: If you are working with students away from home (for example on band training camps or at contests), then you should inform the person in charge of the band or the band manager.

Circumstances in which other people might then need to be informed are:

Parents or carers: In most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, they may have experienced bereavement in the family. However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk were such concerns to be shared, e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately. In these situations, or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation, or incident of abuse must be reported to appropriate agencies as soon as possible.

The NSPCC or other agencies: The first consideration is to minimise the danger of further abuse to the child or to other children. The person in charge should seek advice from the local police or social services department or the NSPCC. The allegation should be referred to the police and social services department in any case involving physical or sexual abuse or where the child's safety is otherwise at risk. If the person in charge is not available, or the concern is about the person in charge, the person in receipt of the information or with the concern should contact these agencies direct. Reporting the matter to the police or social services department should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information.

Social Services: When a child protection referral is made its staff have a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from other people who know the child. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the social services department will be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record will also be made of the name and designation of the social services member of staff to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed.

Police: Where the apparent abuse is of a criminal nature; it will be appropriate to inform the police. A record should be made of the crime reference number provided by the police, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed. The police and social services department may also carry out a joint enquiry.

4.4 Disciplinary procedures

For both volunteers and paid staff, if the abuse is alleged to have occurred within the context of brass banding it may also require disciplinary action by the band.

If the matter is being investigated by the police and/or social services, the band may decide to await the outcome of these investigations, which may well influence a disciplinary investigation, although not necessarily so. In appropriate cases, the band will suspend the individual concerned while an investigation is taking place. This is not intended to prejudge the outcome of the investigation, but simply to remove the individual from contact with children until the investigation is concluded. The disciplinary sanctions available include:

- **By the band** – Suspension or exclusion from membership of the individual concerned, and such other sanctions which are provided for within the band's constitution
- **By the BFBB** – recommend to the brass band registry, suspension or withdrawal of the individual's status as a registered player and or recommend to the Association of Brass Band Adjudicators withdrawal of accreditation as an Adjudicator, together with reprimands and such other sanctions which are provided for within the BFBB constitution and rules.

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality for all concerned, and consideration will be given to what support may be appropriate to children, parents, members of staff and volunteers.

4.5 Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made some time after the event, for example, by an adult who was abused as a child by a member of staff who is still working with children. Where such an allegation is made, the procedures given above will be followed. This is because other children, either within banding or outside it, may be at risk from this person.

5. Conclusion

The Great Western Youth Band, by accepting this policy document, is determined to ensure that children and young people can participate in all forms of brass banding activity, and do so, with their safety being of paramount importance.