Debut Dance Academy
Safeguarding Policy

Debut Dance Academy is committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which the children in our care are protected from abuse, harm and radicalisation.

Debut Dance Academy will respond promptly and appropriately to all incidents or concerns regarding the safety of a child that may occur. Debut Dance Academy's child protection procedures comply with all relevant legislation and with guidance issued by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

There is a Child Protection Officer (CPO) available at all times classes are in session. The CPO coordinates child protection issues and liaises with external agencies (eg Social Care and LSCB). Matters regarding staff welfare and protection will be handled by Debut Dance Academy's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Debut Dance Academy's designated CPO is Sofia Higham. Debut Dance Academy's designated DSL is Sofia Higham.

Child abuse and neglect

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly, or by failing to protect them from harm. Some forms of child abuse and neglect are listed below.

- **Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making the child feel that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- **Physical abuse** can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may be also caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child.
- **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This can involve physical contact, or non-contact activities such as showing children sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs. It can involve a failure to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, to protect a child from physical and emotional harm, to ensure adequate supervision or to allow access to medical treatment.

Signs of child abuse and neglect

Signs of possible abuse and neglect may include:

- significant changes in a child's behaviour
- deterioration in a child's general well-being
- unexplained bruising or marks
- comments made by a child which give cause for concern
- reasons to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting, eg in the child's home, or that a girl may have been subjected to (or is at risk of) female genital mutilation, or that the child may have witnessed domestic abuse
- inappropriate behaviour displayed by a member of staff, or any other person. For example, inappropriate sexual comments, excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their role, or inappropriate sharing of images.

If abuse is suspected or disclosed

When a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff, that member of staff will:

- reassure the child that they were not to blame and were right to speak out
- listen to the child but not question them
- give reassurance that the staff member will take action
- record the incident as soon as possible (see *Logging an incident* below).

If a member of staff witnesses or suspects abuse, they will record the matter straightaway using the **Logging a concern** form. If a third party expresses concern that a child is being abused, we will encourage them to contact Social Care directly. If they will not do so, we will explain that Debut Dance Academy is obliged to and the incident will be logged accordingly.

Peer-on-peer abuse

Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Peer-on-peer abuse is taken seriously by staff and will be subject to the same child protection procedures as other forms of abuse. Staff are aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.

Staff will not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people. The presence of one or more of the following in relationships between children should always trigger concern about the possibility of peer-on-peer abuse:

- Sexual activity (in primary school-aged children) of any kind, including sexting
- One of the children is significantly more dominant than the other (eg much older)
- One of the children is significantly more vulnerable than the other (eg in terms of disability, confidence, physical strength)
- There has been some use of threats, bribes or coercion to ensure compliance or secrecy.

If peer-on-peer abuse is suspected or disclosed

We will follow the same procedures as set out above for responding to child abuse.

Extremism and radicalisation

All childcare settings have a legal duty to protect children from the risk of radicalisation and being drawn into extremism. There are many reasons why a child might be vulnerable to radicalisation, eg:

- feeling alienated or alone
- seeking a sense of identity or individuality
- suffering from mental health issues such as depression
- desire for adventure or wanting to be part of a larger cause
- associating with others who hold extremist beliefs

Signs of radicalisation

Signs that a child might be at risk of radicalisation include:

- changes in behaviour, for example becoming withdrawn or aggressive
- claiming that terrorist attacks and violence are justified
- viewing violent extremist material online
- possessing or sharing violent extremist material

If a member of staff suspects that a child is at risk of becoming radicalised, they will record any relevant information or observations on a **Logging a concern** form, and refer the matter to the CPO.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM. There is a range of potential indicators that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, which individually may not indicate risk but if there are two or more indicators present this could signal a risk to the child or young person. Victims of FGM are likely to come from a community that is known to practise FGM. Professionals should note that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity should always be shown when approaching the subject. FGM is illegal in the UK and is a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act (section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon staff to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18.

Debut Dance Academy will follow normal safeguarding procedures and discuss concerns with the DSL immediately. Staff must personally report to the police where they discover that an act of FGM has been carried out. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary actions. If staff have a

concern they should activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children's social care

Logging a concern

All information about the suspected abuse or disclosure, or concern about radicalisation, will be recorded on the **Logging a concern** form as soon as possible after the event. The record should include:

- date of the disclosure, or the incident, or the observation causing concern
- date and time at which the record was made
- name and date of birth of the child involved
- a factual report of what happened. If recording a disclosure, you must use the child's own words
- name, signature and job title of the person making the record.

The record will be given to the Debut Dance Academy's CPO who will decide on the appropriate course of action.

For concerns about **child abuse,** the CPO will contact Social Care. The CPO will follow up all referrals to Social Care in writing within 48 hours. If a member of staff thinks that the incident has not been dealt with properly, they may contact Social Care directly.

For minor concerns regarding **radicalisation,** the CPO will contact the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). For more serious concerns the CPO will contact the Police on the non-emergency number (101), or the anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321. For urgent concerns the CPO will contact the Police using 999.

Allegations against staff

If anyone makes an allegation of child abuse against a member of staff:

- The allegation will be recorded on an **Incident record** form. Any witnesses to the incident should sign and date the entry to confirm it. The incident record form will then be given to the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) who will alert a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- The LADO will advise if other agencies (eg police) should be informed, and Debut Dance Academy will act upon their advice. Any telephone reports to the LADO will be followed up in writing within 48 hours.
- Following advice from the LADO, it may be necessary to suspend the member of staff pending full investigation of the allegation.
- If appropriate, Debut Dance Academy will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Promoting awareness among staff

Debut Dance Academy promotes awareness of child abuse and the risk of radicalisation with all staff. Debut Dance Academy ensures that:

- the designated CPO has relevant experience and has received appropriate training in safeguarding and the Prevent Duty, and is aware of the Channel Programme and how to access it.
- safe recruitment practices are followed for all new staff
- all staff have a copy of this **Safeguarding policy**, understand its contents and are vigilant to signs of abuse, neglect or radicalisation
- all staff are aware of their statutory duties with regard to the disclosure or discovery of child abuse, and concerns about radicalisation
- Debut Dance Academy's procedures are in line with the guidance in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)' and staff are familiar with 'What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused (2015)'.

Use of mobile phones and cameras

Debut Dance Academy may take photographs for marketing purposes. Photographs will only be taken of children with their parents' permission. Neither students or visitors may use their mobile phones to take photographs at Debut Dance Academy.

Contact numbers

Social Care: 0300 555 1384
Social Care out of hours contact: 0300 555 1373
LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer): 01962 876364
LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board):01962 876355
Police: 101 (non-emergency) or 999 (emergency)
Anti-terrorist hotline: 0800 789 321
NSPCC: 0808 800 500

This policy was adopted by: Debut Dance Academy	Date: 19.07.2026
To be reviewed: July 2027	Signed: S.Higham

Written in accordance with the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2017): Safeguarding and Welfare requirements: Child Protection [3.4-3.8]* and *Suitable People [3.9-3.13].*

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Sofia Higham

Sofia@debutdance.co.uk

07881 292981