

**Child Protection Policy**

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**Contents**

Principles of Child Protection Page 4

Why is Safeguarding Important? Page 6

Recognising Abuse Page 8

Reporting, and Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse Page 11

Staff Code of Conduct Page 13

Allegations Against Us Page 15

Making a Referral to the Local Authority Designated child protection Officer Page 17

Southwark Council; Useful Contacts Page 19

Young People’s Courses Page 20

Staff Working with Young People Training Procedure Page 22

Projects Off Campus Page 24

Recruitment and DBS Check Procedure Page 26

Record Keeping Procedure Page 28

Information Sharing Procedure Page 31

Photography and Recorded Images Procedure Page 33

Telephone and Text Message Contact Procedure Page 35

Email Contact Procedure Page 37

Social Networking Procedure Page 39

Protecting Young People from Harm Online Page 41

**Glossary:**

* **Guardian** - Any person who is the designated carer of a young person e.g. their Social Worker
* **Child/Young Person** - Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th Birthday (as stated in the Children’s Act 1989)
* **Designated Safeguarding Officer** – Previously named Designated Child Protection Officer. To avoid confusion with the adult safeguarding officers at Mountview – also called Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) – this document will use the acronym DCSO to refer to the Designated Safeguarding Officer for Children

**Further Reading:**

* Working Together 2015
* www.nspcc.org.uk

**Useful Contacts:**

**Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts; Designated Safeguarding Officer (for Children):**

Annie Hodson

0208 826 9217

[anniehodson@mountview.org.uk](mailto:anniehodson@mountview.org.uk)

**Southwark Council; Local Authority Designated Officer:**

**Eva Simcock**

020 7525 0689

[eva.simcock@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:eva.simcock@southwark.gov.uk)

When LADO is unavailable, call CP Coordinators in Quality Assurance Unit: 020 7525 3297

**Southwark Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

020 7525 1921

[MASH@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@southwark.gov.uk)

**NSPCC Helpline**

0808 800 5000

Any adult can call for advice/support about any child any time

**Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts – Child Protection Policy**

Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts (Mountview) takes seriously the responsibility to protect and safeguard all children and young people whilst in our care. Child abuse is never acceptable in any community, culture or circumstance therefore all employees have a professional and personal responsibility to be aware of the Mountview Child Protection Policy and to uphold it.

The following statements outline the principles we work to. They are supported by a series of procedures which cover every aspect of the organisation’s work which involves children and young people.

**Principles of Child Protection**

* The well-being and safety of each child is our primary concern and we are committed to treating all children with respect and taking into account their views and opinions.
* Mountview is committed to providing any support we can as soon as a problem emerges and is recognised in a child’s life. We understand the earlier help is given to a young person the less chance issues have to escalate and become damaging.
* Mountview ensures that young people are at the centre of the development of the services we offer them and takes into account their wishes and feelings at every opportunity.
* Children are treated equally regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity in line with the Mountview equal opportunities policy.
* Mountview is committed to working in partnership and where appropriate sharing information and good practice with young people, their parents and guardians and other agencies working with them.
* Mountview recognises that abuse can include physical, emotional or sexual abuse and neglect.
* No member of staff will be employed should they be deemed a risk to children and young people. When appropriate Mountview will carry out DBS and other background checks on staff and they must cooperate with us doing so.
* All staff will be made aware of the principles of the Child Protection Policy during induction and will be regularly updated on any amendments made to the policies and procedures.
* The DSCO (Designated Safeguarding Officer for children) is Annie Hodson (Short Courses Coordinator), her line manager and person responsible for supervising this role is Eddie Gower (Head of Short Courses Department).

**Why is Safeguarding Important?**

The Children’s Act 2004states that all organisations and individuals who offer services to young people are responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The NSPCC states that the number of cases of neglect and emotional, physical and sexual abuse are rising and we need to be vigilant if young people are to remain safe and these figures are to drop.

No single professional should assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to keeping a child safe. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time and all young people are to have the best outcomes everyone who comes into contact with them must recognise they have a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

If a professional has concerns about a child’s welfare and believes they are suffering or likely to suffer harm, then they should share the information with the DSCO or, if this is not appropriate the Local Authority under which the child lives or the NSPCC.

The Children’s Act 1989 requires that we give due regard to the wishes of children. Children are best protected when care is child-centred and professionals are clear about what is required from them individually and how they need to work together.

Working Together 2015 states children have said what they need and it is the following:

* **Vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them
* **Understanding and action:** to understand what is happening, to be heard and understood, and to have that understanding acted upon
* **Stability:** to be able to develop an on-going stable relationship of trust with those helping them
* **Respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
* **Information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
* **Explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
* **Support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
* **Advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views

All children deserve the above. However professionals are asked to be particularly vigilant towards a child’s needs when a child:

* is disabled and has specific additional needs
* has special educational needs
* is a young carer
* is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour
* is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health or domestic violence
* has returned home to their family from care
* is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect

**Recognising Abuse**

All Mountview staff must be committed to the safeguarding of young people and be vigilant at all times in terms of the welfare of the young people in their care.

All Mountview staff should be aware that abuse to young people is described in four categories:

* **Physical Abuse**: is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts. Children who are physically abused suffer violence such as being hit, kicked, poisoned, burned, slapped or having objects thrown at them. It can also include parents or guardians making up or causing the symptoms of illness in their child, for example giving them medicine they don’t need and making the child unwell.
* **Emotional Abuse:** is the ongoing emotional maltreatment or neglect of a child. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It can include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. It can also involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another or making a child frequently feel frightened or in danger. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
* **Sexual Abuse:** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether the child is aware of what is happening or not. The activities may involve physical contact or non-penetrative acts. They may also include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Signs of sexual abuse include:
  + Knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age
  + Children who use sexual language that you wouldn’t expect them to have
* **Neglect:** is the most common form of abuse in the UK. It is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect can involve a parent or guardian failing to:
  + Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
  + Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
  + Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inappropriate guardians)
  + Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

Whilst these are the most prevalent forms of abuse Mountview recognises that safeguarding action may also be needed to protect young people from:

* Peer bullying, including online bullying and prejudice-based bullying
* Racist, disability and homophobic or transphobic abuse
* Gender based violence/violence against women and girls
* Radicalisation and/or extremist behaviour
* Child sexual exploitation and trafficking
* The impact of new technologies on sexual behaviour, for example sexting
* Teenage relationship abuse
* Substance misuse
* Issues that may be specific to a local area or population, for example gang activity and youth violence
* Domestic violence
* Female Genital Mutilation
* Forced marriage

Whilst it is impossible to list all the ways in which abuse or neglect can be recognised all Mountview staff should be familiar with some of the main signs that are seen to be indicators of abuse or neglect. These signs are as follows:

* Changes in behaviour, young people may become aggressive, challenging, disruptive withdrawn or clingy
* Young people who are regularly seen in clothes that are ill fitting and/or dirty and who have consistently poor hygiene
* Young people who talk about being left at home with inappropriate carers or strangers
* Parents who are dismissive and non-responsive to practitioners concerns
* Parents who are withdrawn from their children or who openly humiliate them
* Parents who collect their children when clearly drunk, or under the influence of drugs
* Young people who refer to drinking alcohol or taking drugs under the age of consent
* Young people who are concerned for younger siblings with no obvious reason
* Young people who talk about running away
* Young people who shy away from being touched or flinch at sudden movements
* Young people who self-harm

In addition to all of this Mountview staff should also be aware that unfortunately harm is most commonly caused to young people by someone they know, e.g.

* A family member or person who is trusted and welcome within their family setting
* Another young person
* An employee of an organisation offering a service such as education or care to young people

If a member of Mountview staff has any concerns about a Young Person or fellow staff member these should be reported to the DSCO immediately. A record of these concerns will then be kept and, depending on the concerns, a referral to the LADO will be made or follow up discussions will be carried out and recorded until the matter is considered resolved.

**Reporting, and Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse**

Young people will commonly try to hide any abuse that they are experiencing and when approached about it will sometimes behave in an irrational and aggressive way. Therefore it is essential that staff handle any concerns they have about a young person’s welfare in a responsible and knowledgeable manner. Staff must:

* Take any and all allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse and/or a child’s welfare seriously regardless of whether they are their own or have been raised by other young people, their parents/guardians or other staff members.
* Report the concerns, regardless of their severity, to the DSCO as a matter of urgency (any concerns raised will be recorded following the Mountview Record Keeping Procedure).

It is possible that a child who is or has suffered abuse will confide in you. If this should happen the following action should be taken:

* Listen carefully to what is said and allow the young person to tell you at their own pace
* Avoid asking leading questions, if you do they must only be for clarification
* Manage your own feelings and do not offer any opinion, judgement or advice
* Let the young person know that they have done the right thing in disclosing and, whilst you will not be able to keep the matter a secret, assure them that you will only tell the people who need to know and who will be able to help and support them.

**Staff are reminded that under no circumstances should any disclosures of abuse given by young people be kept secret. There is no question that if a young person is suffering abuse this must be reported and if disclosures are kept secret this is considered to be enabling the abuser.**

* Ask the young person what steps they would like taken to protect them now that they have made the disclosure and assure them we will do our best to take these steps and any action that we do take will be in the interests of keeping them safe
* Inform the young person what you are going to do next and reassure them that they will be kept informed at all times from now on about how the situation is being handled.
* As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation make a note of what was said, using as much as possible the young person’s own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record and bear in mind it should be written in clear and concise language that could be understood by anyone who reads it.
* Speak immediately to the DSCO. They will keep a record of what you have said and if appropriate liaise with the Local Authority Designated child protection Officer (LADO) in confidence. It is then the responsibility of the LADO to take further action.

**Remember, it is not the responsibility of the DSCO, or anyone at Mountview to decide if a child is being abused or not. Our responsibility is to ensure any relevant information about a young person is passed on to the LADO in a clear and timely manner.**

**Staff Code of Conduct**

Mountview is confident that if staff follow all the procedures set out in our Child Protection Policy allegations of abuse will never be raised against them. However, in some cases, young people can express abuse in abstract ways and lash out at those helping them. This puts Mountview staff in a position of vulnerability that allegations may be brought against them, stating that they may have caused harm to a young person.

**Mountview staff are committed to following the below procedures when working with young people and recognise that they should:**

* be responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct that would lead any reasonable person to question their motives and intentions
* never engage in sexual contact or a sexual relationship with a young person they are working with

**The Mountview employee handbook states that no member of staff is permitted to enter into a sexual relationship with a student. Staff who work with young people are also reminded that the ‘Sexual Offences Act 2003’ states the age of consent is raised to 18 years in cases where adults are employed in positions of power i.e. a teacher over young people.**

* never engage in or ignore from others abusive or discriminatory behaviour towards a young person and always remember that abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional

**All staff are reminded that emotional abuse can come in many forms and what can seem like ‘fun and games’ or ‘horseplay’ is completely unacceptable if it is in any way defamatory towards a young person. Staff must be vigilant against engaging in or encouraging this kind of behaviour themselves and must also be vigilant of others, including other young people, engaging in it too.**

* always promote equality and create an environment where young people feel safe to express themselves and empowered to share in decision-making
* always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback, never negative criticism
* never trivialise the feelings, concerns or beliefs expressed by a young person; this includes any concerns raised regarding abuse or discrimination
* always put the welfare of each and every young person in a group first before achieving goals
* never give personal money to a young person
* never invite a young person to their private address or arrange private meetings with a young person outside the Mountview campus. Any meetings on Mountview campus must be agreed and recorded by the member of staff’s line manager
* always take registers accurately and be vigilant as to where young people are whilst they are under your supervision

**Registers are a useful tool in tracking a young person’s behaviour. Patterns of attendance can be particularly useful in cases when abuse is alleged against another young person in a group. Also if an allegation of abuse is brought against a member of staff registers can show what time a staff member has spent with a young person and who else may have been present at that time.**

* never rely on their own reputation or track record with the Mountview as protection or guarantee of favourable treatment.

**Allegations Against Us**

It is understood that from time to time concerns or complaints may be brought against members of Mountview staff from the young people they work with, their parents/guardians and or other staff members. These concerns will usually be dealt with by the staff member’s line manager quickly, and with no further action needing to be taken, should all parties involved be satisfied that the situation has been resolved.

In these instances a full record of what happened and why a decision was made not to refer the allegation to the LADO will be kept in line with the Mountview Record Keeping Procedure.

Any allegations against staff that turn out to be fabricated will be removed from a staff member’s record.

**If an allegation is brought against a member of Mountview staff that cannot and should not be resolved in house the following procedure will be followed:**

**An allegation may relate to a person who works with young people who has:**

* **behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child**
* **possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child**
* **behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children**
* The employee and young person involved along with their parent/guardian will be:
  + made aware of the matter and that it is being treated seriously and will be referred to the LADO immediately for investigation.
  + given a named representative at Mountview, usually the DSCO, who will keep them updated during the investigation process and who will ultimately inform them of the outcomes and next steps after the investigation is complete.
  + made aware that, no matter what the details of the allegation are everyone involved has the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection Act 1998.

**The time between an allegation being made and the LADO being contacted should be no longer than 48 hours.**

* The matter will be recorded following the Mountview Record Keeping Procedure and reported to the LADO.
* Mountview is committed to following, without questions, the advice and recommendations given by the LADO as soon as they are given. This advice may involve the LADO advising the member of staff be suspended pending the investigation outcome.

* The LADO will interview the young person, their parent/guardian and the member of staff in question. The LADO will then assess the situation and advise on the best action Mountview should take.

**Mountview will, only when appropriate, endeavour to ensure that the young person and member of staff continue to be members of the organisation throughout the investigation and once the matter is closed. However if it is the case that the LADO advises the staff member be suspended whist the investigation is ongoing, if they are invited to return to work once the investigation is completed full support will be given by Mountview to ensure this happens in an appropriate and responsible manner.**

* Once the LADO has made their recommendations the employee and young person along with their parent/guardian will be informed of these by the named Mountview representative. Where appropriate Mountview will be fully supportive in helping those involved follow the recommendations.
* If the LADO’s decision is that the allegations are not of concern and the member of staff and the young person can continue to work together the matter must be considered closed and should have no effect on the way the young person and that staff member interact with one another. If it is determined that this will not be possible, the young person and staff member will not be permitted to work together in the future.

**Other staff members and young people within the organisation, apart from those who it is vital know, should not be informed of the matter at any point. Any members of staff or other young people who are informed must be aware that if their behaviour towards the young person or member of staff changes in an inappropriate way their place in a group or employment at Mountview may be jeopardised.**

* If the LADO advises that we remove the staff member from further work with young people (or would have, should the staff member have left during the investigation process) because the staff member poses a risk of harm to young people, Mountview must by law make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

**Making a referral to the Local Authority Designated child protection Officer**

If the DSCO at Mountview feels any information they have regarding a young person suggests the young person may be experiencing abuse or neglect this information will be passed on the LADO. Once this has happened any further action that needs to be taken will be carried out by the local authority.

The LADO will offer guidelines on how to deal with each individual case. However it is of paramount importance that Mountview staff remember that unless told otherwise they should, where possible, continue to behave as they have previously around the young person whose case has been referred.

If a referral is accepted by the LADO as concerning enough for further action to be taken, the lead professional role will fall to a social worker. The social worker will then clarify with Mountview, taking into account all records taken of incidents involving that young person, the nature of the concerns and how and why they have arisen.

Within one working day of a referral being received the social worker should make a decisionabout the type of response that is required. This will include determining whether:

* the child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required
* the child is in need, and should be assessed under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989
* there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, and whether enquires must be made and the child be assessed under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989
* any services are required by the child and family and what type of services
* further specialist assessments are required in order to help the local authority to decide what further action to take

Once this assessment has taken place the social worker will do the following:

* inform the child and family of the action that will be taken
* see the child as soon as possible
* where necessary the LADO will contact professionals from other parts of the local authority such as housing and health organisations
* where there is a risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm, local authority social workers, the police or NSPCC will use their statutory child protection powers to act immediately to secure the safety of the child

**If it is necessary to remove a child from their home, a local authority must, wherever possible and unless a child’s safety is otherwise at immediate risk, apply for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO). Police powers to remove a child in an emergency should be used only in exceptional circumstances where there is insufficient time to seek an EPO or for reasons relating to the immediate safety of the child. An EPO, made by the court, gives authority to remove a child and places them under the protection of the local authority.**

From this point onwards the social worker will ensure the young person is supported and informed as to what further action will be taken to ensure they remain safe from harm.

Mountview will be informed where appropriate of what action is being taken. This will include details of who the young person’s primary carer is. This will be either:

* the social worker and/or foster care family if the young person has been taken into care
* the young person’s parents and the social worker if the young person has remained in their home but has been put on a care plan
* the young person’s parents if, after the allegations have been fully investigated, the decision has been made that no further action should be taken

**Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts is based in the borough of Southwark therefore Southwark Council is our local authority. The LADO in Southwark is Eva Simcock who can be contacted on 020 7525 0689 or via email at eva.simcock@southwark.gov.uk. See the ‘Southwark Council; Useful Contacts’ list for full details of people who can offer help and how to contact them if you are concerned about the welfare of a child.**

**Southwark Council; Useful Contacts**

The Local Authority Designated child protection Officer (LADO) at Southwark Council is **Eva Simcock**. She can be contacted on **020 7525 0689** or via email at **eva.simcock@southwark.gov.uk.** The LADO is mainly designated to liaise with organisations who work with young people.

In Southwark, the LADO role is based within the Quality Assurance Unit.

**020 7525 3297** - QAU duty number

**020 7525 0387** - Head of social work improvement and quality assurance

Southwark Council advise that individuals who wish to report or discuss any concerns regarding young people should call their **MASH Team** on:

**020 7525 1921** (during core hours 9am to 5pm)

**020 7525 5000** (out of hours)

[MASH@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@southwark.gov.uk)

Concerns can also be reported in writing to:

**MASH Team**

Sumner House

Sumner Road

London

SE15 5QS

**Southwark Safeguarding Children Board**

**160 Tooley Street**

**PO Box 64529**

**London**

**SE1P 5LX**

**Young People’s Courses**

For people aged 6 – 18 years Mountview runs Saturday Schools and other young people’s courses. For the duration of these classes we offer a secure environment where young people can explore and develop their creativity. The below guidelines state the basic principles we work to for our Saturday School, these guidelines equally apply to all other young people’s courses.

* Classes run from 9am – 4pm. However it is expected that young people will arrive outside of these times and therefore a member of Mountview staff designated to work with young people will be onsite from 8am – 4:30pm. Young people are not permitted to be onsite outside these hours. If they wish to be, arrangements must be made with the DSCO or their supervisor who will ensure an appropriate member of staff will be onsite to supervise.
* In line with the Mountview Health & Safety Policy before young people arrive on any given day we ensure all classroom and areas where young people will spend time are safe, clean and fit for purpose.
* Young people will not be permitted to attend classes without returning a parent/guardian signed enrolment form containing the following information:
* Parent/guardian contact details
* Alternative emergency contact details
* Details of any medical conditions we should be aware of

**It is expected that, for many reasons, a young person who wishes to attend classes may be unable to obtain the above information with the signature of a parent/guardian. In these situations Mountview will review the young person’s individual situation and may accept the signature of another appropriate relative or carer over the age of 18 years.**

* It is understood that any young person under the age of 12 years old will be collected and picked up from Mountview campus (main reception or designated rehearsal studio) by a parent/guardian known to us, unless we have been informed of alternative arrangements. It is expected that young people over the age of 12 years may make their own way to and from Mountview. All children, regardless of age, are the responsibility of their parent/guardian until they enter our premises to attend classes and leave at the end of their session.
* Young people under the age of 12 years will not be allowed, under any circumstances, to leave Mountview campus unaccompanied during class or break times. Students over the age of 12 years may leave with prior parental permission. However they must sign in and out with a designated member of Mountview staff giving a time frame in which they will return.
* During break times young people will not always be directly supervised. However there will always be a designated member of Mountview present in recreational areas to ensure the environment is safe and secure.
* If a young person is absent for more than two consecutive sessions without prior arrangement we will ensure a parent/guardian is informed and the whereabouts of the young person during these sessions is confirmed.
* When planning and delivering lessons for young people Mountview staff must take into account who is in the group they are working with. Material will always be exciting and stimulating for all members without being challenging in terms of any young person’s personal experiences, age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity.
* Whilst at Mountview young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own decisions and choices and behave in a manner that is respectful to their peers and Mountview staff; any behaviour deemed unreasonable will be treated seriously and with zero tolerance. If a young person is considered to be behaving unreasonably their parent/guardian will be invited to discuss the matter with the Mountview DSCO and their supervisor. A decision will then be made as to whether or not the situation can be resolved. If the situation cannot be resolved the young person will no longer be permitted to attend classes or be onsite at Mountview campus.
* Whilst we make every effort to ensure that they do not, incidents may occur during session times at Mountview that cause distress to a young person. If they do, the parents/guardians of any young person involved will be informed of the incident and be invited to discuss the matter with the DSCO, their supervisor and any other member of Mountview staff who may have been involved or who hold information relevant to the incident.

**Staff Working with Young People Training Procedure**

Mountview understands that in order for us to safeguard effectively it is essential that all staff who work with young people are well informed, and trained where appropriate in child protection.

The DSCO at Mountview has overall responsibility to ensure that their knowledge of current legislation and best practice in child protection is up to date. This is done by attending regular training sessions with external organisations, usually the NSPCC, and reading any updated or new legislation relating to safeguarding released by the Government, NSPCC and other recognised institutions and organisations.

The DSCO at Mountview delivers regular training and Child Protection Policy update sessions for all staff that work with young people.

**The following procedures are followed to ensure that all staff working with young people have up to date knowledge of child protection and safeguarding policies in place at Mountview:**

* As part of their induction each member of staff that will work with young people is given a short version of our Child Protection Policy. This document outlines the most important and relevant aspects of child protection at Mountview.

**The DSCO will go through all aspects of the booklet with the member of staff ensuring they understand each section of the policy and can ask any questions for clarification. The staff member is then urged to read the full Mountview Child Protection Policy and come back and ask any questions about the policy and our procedures at any time.**

* At the beginning of each term of young people’s classes all staff who will be working with young people attend a 1 hour training session with the DSCO who will go over the basic principles of child protection and then focus on one aspect of safeguarding that is currently relevant. Staff are encouraged to share their own experiences and examples best practices in the chosen aspect.

**The decision on which subject is chosen to focus on may depend on incidences that have occurred within Mountview or in the wider community that highlight a specific subject and suggest it should be discussed in more detail.**

* These sessions are recorded and if any concerning comments or suggestions are made by a member of the team during discussion these points will be resolved out of the meeting during a 1-2-1 session between the member of staff and the DSCO.
* If an event at Mountview or in the wider community occurs that suggests staff need to be updated on a safeguarding issue immediately an extra training session can be called at any time.
* At every training session staff are reminded that if they have any concerns about a young person they should discuss them with the DSCO as soon possible.

**Once a concern is raised by a member of staff Mountview is committed to ensuring the concern is discussed regularly and the student monitored until the issue is considered resolved or no longer relevant by both the staff member who raised it, and the DSCO. A full record of the original report and the ongoing discussions will be kept.**

**Projects Off Campus**

From time to time Mountview will deliver projects or training off campus and will take our young students to external venues. Before either of these happen we will complete a risk assessment in line with the Mountview Health & Safety Policy. Once it has been deemed that the off campus project poses no unreasonable risk we will go ahead.

In instances where we are delivering training or projects off site we will endeavour to follow the procedures and policies of the organisation or venue we are delivering at unless they have a major conflict with the principles we work to.

If an instance occurs where there is a conflict between our policies and the policies of the external organisation the practitioner involved should make a decision on which policy to follow and make a record of the incident that occurred that lead them to make their decision, and why they followed the policy they did.

**In instances where Mountview takes groups of our young students off campus we will follow the below procedures:**

* A signed consent form will be received from a young person’s parent/guardian before they are allowed to take part in the trip. The consent form will state that the parent/guardian is happy for the young person to attend the trip and that they have received and understood a letter containing the following information:
  + The reason for the trip
  + Content e.g. if it’s a theatre trip details of the show
  + Location and timings
  + Information about travel to and from the location
  + The name of the trip chaperone who will be responsible for all child protection and health and safety considerations for the young people on the trip, and how to contact them.
* The named chaperone will be responsible for the safeguarding and wellbeing of all students on the trip including registering them in and out at the beginning and end of the event. The chaperone will be supported by other members of Mountview staff where group numbers require.
* The named chaperone will hold a sealed pack of information about each member of the group. Information held will include the following about each young person in the group:
  + Any relevant medical information
  + Contact details for parents/guardians
  + Emergency/alternative contact information in case parents/guardians cannot be contacted
  + Contact details for the young people in case they do not arrive at the agreed trip location in good time
* After a trip is complete and all young people have been signed out the chaperone will let the Mountview DSCO (in instances where they are not this person) know this has happened and the trip is complete.
* If any concerning incidents occurred during the trip the chaperone will let the DSCO know immediately and record them in writing as soon as is possible.
* The chaperone will return the sealed pack of student information to Mountview campus as soon as possible after the trip so the information can continue to be stored securely.

**Recruitment and DBS Check Procedure**

Mountview recognises that the safe recruitment of staff employed to work with children and young people is one of the most important aspects of child protection and takes its recruitment procedure seriously.

Following a recruitment process that includes a face-to-face interview and satisfies the Mountview DSCO and their supervisor that the person employed meets the requirements of the job description and person specification, the following procedures will be followed by Mountview Short Courses Department to ensure the person employed is suitable to work specifically with children and young people.

**Mountview is committed to following the below procedures when recruiting staff who will work with young people:**

* Mountview considers someone who is suitable to work with young people will;
  + Like young people and be passionate about creating a space where young people can be creative and have good outcomes in a safe environment
  + Be good at building effective working relationships with others and working as part of a team
* Be able to see different points of view
* Be a good communicator and a good listener
* Be able to be calm and patient and to be decisive
* Be proactive in gathering facts and taking action to ensure the safety of others
* Mountview will ask for at least two references for staff employed to work with young people that make specific reference to that person’s suitability to work with children. We will question and consider any gaps in employment history, vague statements or unsubstantiated qualifications and frequent changes of employment that are uncharacteristic of a person’s career path.
* Mountview will take a copy of an original passport from all staff employed to work with young people as proof of identity.
* Any member of staff who works regularly and is unsupervised with young people must have an enhanced DBS check which includes barred list information that has been processed within the last three years.

**An individual’s DBS check must be clear of any concerning information relating to their suitability to work with young people. If the DBS check does have information on it that does not relate to young people we will consider employing that person on an individual basis.**

* Mountview prefers to complete all DBS checks in house. However we will accept enhanced DBS checks from other organisations. Mountview does however also reserve the right to, at any time, request a new enhanced DBS check to be completed in house.

**Whilst the DBS advise that organisations should carry out their own checks, if an individual has a DBS check from another organisation where they held a similar position and level of responsibility and they have not had any break in employment there is no requirement to complete a new check.**

* Any member of staff employed by Mountview to work with young people who does not have an enhanced DBS check will be shadowed by a responsible member of staff who is DBS checked until a check is completed.
* It is expected that there will be members of Mountview staff on site during the time young people are also present who do not have enhanced DBS checks. These people will not have been employed to work unsupervised with young people and are at no point permitted to form relationships or be alone with young people.
* Mountview accepts that background and enhanced DBS checks do not 100% protect young people and we will not employ anyone who has a clear DBS check but who fails the Harm Test\*. We also ensure that good references or a good reputation as an employee of Mountview, whilst highly valued, do not replace vigilance and awareness of key safeguarding procedures.

*\*****The Harm Test:*** *There are occasions where a person may not have engaged in relevant conduct but there are still serious concerns about their suitability to work with young people. For a person to fail the harm test there needs to be credible evidence of a risk of harm to children. This could be substantiated statements made by an individual regarding a person’s behaviour, or conduct that has not directly harmed a young person but would make them an unsuitable role model for children. A ‘feeling’ that a person represents a risk to young people would not be considered a failure of the Harm Test.*

*An example of this would be; if a person has admitted they have sexual feelings towards young people, but have never acted on them, they would not be put on the barred list. However they would fail the harm test.*

*Protocol states that when this admission has been made the DBS should be informed. If the person applies for a DBS check and the Police believe there is a risk to young people if they are employed in the role applied for they will disclose the information to the organisation requesting the DBS check. This information will not be included in the DBS certificate issued, as a person cannot go on the barred list or have a criminal record brought against them if not engaged in relevant conduct.*

**Record Keeping Procedure**

Mountview understands that well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. The below procedure outlines how Mountview obtain any information we need about the young people we work with and how we store this information in a safe and effective manner.

Mountview asks that all students complete application and enrolment forms before they attend classes with us. These forms ask for details, such as a student’s own and their parent/guardians contact details and any medical or other conditions we should be aware of, in order to work with a young person effectively.

We will also, from time to time, ask for additional forms to be completed giving specific parental consent for special instances such as talking students off campus.

**Mountview is committed to following the below procedures when recording and storing any information regarding young people:**

* All information will be kept in a locked drawer and/or password protected computer. These will only be accessible by the Mountview executive team, the DSCO and their supervisor.
* Information will be kept confidential and only be given out if specific permission is granted. Information that could get passed on will normally be:
* **Email addresses:** All staff are permitted to, with permission from the DSCO and their supervisor, following the guidelines in the ‘Email Contact Procedure’ contact their students directly via email.
* **Medical and other personal conditions:** Parents/guardians are made aware that if a young person’s experience at Mountview can be improved, or they can be made safer by staff that work with their child being made aware of a condition, it will be disclosed. This disclosure will be made via a discussion between the staff member and the DSCO and or their supervisor, and a note being put in the register of the child’s class.

**Registers must be kept up to date and secure at all times. Staff must keep their registers with them whilst teaching a class in case of an evacuation but they must make sure that the registers are kept in a place that they cannot be accessed by students. It is suggested that staff keep registers in a bag or sealed folder during teaching sessions.**

* Any information regarding a young person who attends Mountview will be kept as long as they are a student with us and for 3 years following their leaving date.
* Any forms giving consent to take photographic and recorded images of young people will be kept for as long as the images are stored and used by Mountview.
* Once the time has come to destroy information it will be deleted from any computer it is kept on and any paper documents, including consent forms and photographs will be shredded and destroyed using a professional document disposal system.

As an organisation that works with young people, Mountview has a responsibility to keep records of any concerning information or incidents that occur involving young people. If social services decide at any point to investigate allegations of harm or abuse relating to a young person that has attended Mountview they will require these records to be handed to them.

**Personal information held about young people is subject to a duty of confidence and should normally not be disclosed without the consent of the subject. However, the law permits the disclosure of confidential information where it is necessary to safeguard a young person.**

**Mountview is committed to following the below procedures when recording and storing any concerning information regarding young people:**

* All concerning information will be kept in writing in a locked drawer and/or password protected computer. These will only be accessible by the Mountview executive team, the DSCO and their supervisor.

**Concerning information is anything that is considered unusual or out of character for a young person or anything that makes us think they may be experiencing or at risk of experiencing harm or significant harm. Recording concerning information does not automatically mean a referral is made, however clear records showing a path that leads to a referral are vital if one is made.**

* Any concerning information must be recorded following the below guidelines:
  + be written as soon as possible
* use clear language that could be understood by anyone who reads it at any time
* be concise and as accurate as possible
* not show any opinion or bias
* Records of concerning information must be kept for 75 years.

**Unfortunately most allegations of abuse do not occur until many years after the abuse took place. In these instances any records kept regarding a young person at the time they were being abused are vital.**

**Information Sharing Procedure**

Mountview recognises that from time to time we may be asked to share information or records held about a young person or staff member who has or currently attends classes or works with us.

This of course brings in to play concerns about what data should be shared and honouring General Data Protection Regulation and Human rights Act 1998.

Neither General Data Protection Regulation nor the Human Rights Act 1998 are barriers to sharing information. Both acts balance the rights of the information subject and the need to share information about them to ensure the safety of others. Fears about information sharing cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people at risk of abuse or neglect.

**Mountview is committed to following the below procedures when sharing any personal or sensitive information held**

* When a request for information is received Mountview will first ask for the following information from the requestor in writing:
  + Their identity
  + What information is specifically required
  + A clear and legitimate reason for the request
  + An explanation of how the information will help in safeguarding another person
  + Information on how the information will be used and stored if we share
* Once this is provided and Mountview is satisfied that we do have the information requested we will consider if the records we hold are likely to safeguard and protect another. We will do this by considering if our records are:
  + Necessary and proportionate
  + Relevant
  + Adequate and good quality
* Accurate and up to date (if historical explain why)
* Secure (if they will be kept secure after they have been passed on)
* We may also seek the advice of a third party, such as the LADO, as to whether or not we should share the information requested.
* Mountview will then make an informed decision as to whether or not to share the information. We will endeavour to do this in a timely manner so as not to block any investigation.
* If we decide we will share we will ensure this is done securely and, whilst consent is not needed to share information, if appropriate we will contact the person we are sharing about to let them know what is happening and to ask for their consent. If consent is not given we will still share.
* Regardless of our decision to share or not we will keep a clear record of what happened, our reasons for our final decision and how we shared the information if we did.

**Photography and Recorded Images Procedure**

Mountview will, with permission from parents/guardians, take photographs and recorded images that include the young people we work with, as these images can be valuable promotional and recording tools for us.

Alongside this Mountview does not wish to prevent parents/guardians or other invited spectators being able to take legitimate photographs or recorded images.

However Mountview is committed to providing a safe environment for all young people and understands there are child protection issues related to the use of images of children and young people. Therefore we follow the below procedure to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect young people from the inappropriate or uninformed use of their images.

**Mountview is committed to following the below photography and recorded images procedure:**

* On registration for any of our Young People’s Projects parents/guardians will be asked to sign an enrolment form giving consent for images of their child to be taken by Mountview and, if the child performs in a show where there is an invited audience\* (normally consisting of friends and family of other performers), other audience members.
* Care will be taken to ensure that any images taken are not sexual or exploitative in nature nor open to obvious misinterpretation and misuse.
* Any concerns relating to the misuse of images of young people will be acted upon swiftly in accordance with our reporting procedures outlined on our Child Protection Policy.

*\*Any images taken by said audience must be used privately and the following procedure points relate only to images taken by Mountview.*

* If consent to take images of a child is not given by a parent/guardian, Mountview will take every precaution to ensure that images of that child are not taken and if they are that these images are destroyed immediately.
* Images will not be published with any identifying information apart from the young person’s name and the project they were involved in.
* Anyone employed (subject to our Employment Procedure) to take images of young people who is not a member of Mountview staff will be supervised at all times by a member of Mountview designated to work with young people and will be reminded that Mountview will hold the copyright to any images taken.

**‘Images’ relates to still photography and film including sound.**

**Telephone and Text Message Contact Procedure**

Telephone conversations (via mobile phone and landline) and text messages (via mobile phone and ‘Text Local’ website) are one of the most effective ways we at Mountview can contact young people outside the time they are with us. Whilst there are safeguarding issues related to this, the following procedure outlines a way in which we can use telephone conversations and text messages to contact young people in a safe and responsible manner.

**Mountview is committed to following the below procedures when using telephone conversations and text messages to contact young people:**

* On registration for any of our Young People’s Projects parents/guardians will be asked to sign an enrolment form giving permission for Mountview to contact the young person via a given telephone number. It will be at the parent/guardian’s discretion if this number is their own and we should contact the young person via them or if it is the young person’s own direct number. The following procedure relates to instances when the number given is the young person’s own direct number.
* Only the telephone numbers we have parental permission for can be used to contact a young person.
* Any telephone conversation should only take place through a Mountview on campus landline number (usually 020 8826 9217) or via a Mountview designated mobile phone number.
* Telephone contact should only be made by the Mountview executive team or DSCO and their supervisor and under no circumstances should any other member of staff make telephone contact with young people.
* Text message conversations may also take place between young people and the Mountview executive team or DSCO and their supervisor. These conversations should only take place via a Mountview designated ‘Text Local’ account or via a Mountview designated mobile phone number.
* Any text message conversation should be logged. All messages must be saved and kept (both incoming and outgoing) and should be accessible at any time by Mountview executive team or DSCO and their supervisor.
* All contact with young people should be within the context of Mountview and no personal conversations should take place.
* No aggressive or sexual language or images, or abbreviations that could be misunderstood (e.g. LOL and emoticons) should be used.
* Mountview will only use telephone or text message contact between the hours of 9am – 9pm.
* If a young person discloses concerning information via a telephone or text message conversation with Mountview this must be reported to the DSCO who will act accordingly in line with the Mountview Child Protection Policy.

**Email Contact Procedure**

Due to the nature of our work with young people Mountview finds it invaluable to be able to contact them when they are not with us. This contact can help prepare young people for lessons and projects and therefore improve the experience they have when they are with us.

Mountview is fully aware however that to protect the young people we work with guidelines must be put in place to ensure that young people are contacted in a responsible and regulated manner.

Email is the most frequently used and effective way in which we do this. All staff permitted to contact young people via email must follow our Email Contact Procedure.

**Mountview is committed to following the below procedures when using email to contact young people:**

* On registration for any of our Young People’s Projects parents/guardians will be asked to sign an enrolment form giving permission for Mountview to contact the young person via a given email address. It will be at the parent/guardian’s discretion if this address is theirs, and therefore we should contact the young person via them, or if it is the young person’s own direct email.
* Only the email address we have parental permission for can be used to contact a young person.
* Staff members who hold a Mountview email account e.g. [fullname@mountview.org.uk](mailto:fullname@mountview.org.uk) must only use this account to contact young people. These email accounts can be accessed at any time by the Mountview executive team and the DSCO and their supervisor.
* Staff with child protection responsibilities that do not hold a Mountview email address are, at the discretion of Mountview executive team or DSCO and their supervisor, permitted to use their own personal email accounts to contact young people. In this instance all communication must be cc’d to the DSCO’s email address: [anniehodson@mountview.org.uk](mailto:anniehodson@mountview.org.uk).
* All emails sent via a Mountview email account must be saved and kept (both incoming and outgoing) and can be accessed at any time by the Mountview executive team and DSCO and their supervisor. Those not sent from a Mountview email should be deleted and will be kept through the Mountview email account they have been cc’d to.
* All contact with young people should be within the context of Mountview and no personal or ‘spam’ emails should be sent.
* No aggressive or sexual language or images, or abbreviations that could be misunderstood (e.g. LOL and emoticons) should be used.
* Mountview will only use email communication with young people between the hours of 9am – 9pm.
* If a young person discloses concerning information via an email to Mountview this must be reported to the DSCO who will act accordingly in line with the Mountview Child Protection Policy.

**Social Networking Procedure**

Mountview recognises the important role that social networking websites play in the ways in which young people communicate and will regularly use these sites as a way of interacting with young people.

However we also recognise the potential safeguarding issues social networking sites bring and therefore Mountview requires that all staff follow our Procedure on social networking.

Mountview Social Networking Procedure relates only to the use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr. Under no circumstances are staff permitted to communicate with students through any other social networking site.

**Mountview is committed to following the below procedures when using Social Media:**

* All staff must use a separate account created and designated for the use of Mountview. This account should be used for Mountview purposes only and not as a personal account, and can be examined at any time by the Mountview executive team and staff designated with child protection responsibilities.
* Any communication using social media should be logged. All messages must be saved and kept (both incoming and outgoing) and instant chat must not be used at any time to communicate with young people.
* All contact with young people should be within the context of Mountview and no personal conversations should take place.
* No aggressive or sexual language or images, or abbreviations that could be misunderstood (e.g. LOL and emoticons) should be used.
* Mountview will, when appropriate, post updates between the hours of 9pm – 9am. However no direct communication should take place with young people between these hours.
* Following the guidelines in our ‘Photography and Recorded Images Procedure’ Mountview will, with signed parent/guardian permission, use images taken by Mountview on social media sites.
* If a young person discloses concerning information via a social networking site, either directly or indirectly with Mountview, this must be reported to the DSCO who will record the posts in question and act accordingly in line with the Mountview Child Protection Policy.
* Mountview reserves the right to remove any posts made by young people on our social networking pages deemed inappropriate. These posts will be recorded, including a reason why the posts were removed, in accordance with our record keeping procedure.
* Mountview advises that all staff ensure the settings on their own personal social networking accounts are set to ‘Private’ so images and posts cannot be accessed by the young people they work with.
* Mountview staff must not link with the young people they work with on social networking sites.

**Protecting Young People from Harm Online**

In 2015 3,150 young people, some as young as 9, contacted the NSPCC ChildLine service with concerns they were being groomed online and 7,296 counselling session were held by the NSPCC with young people who had talked to ChildLine about online bullying.

Mountview does not encourage or facilitate young people to use the internet or social networking sites on campus. However we will from time to time use social networking to communicate with young people and agree that the internet can be extremely beneficial for young people, they can use it to learn, communicate, develop, create and explore the world around them. However too often it leaves them vulnerable and exposed them to experiences that they find upsetting therefore we cannot ignore the risks young people face when online.

Should a young person who is a member of Mountview disclose that they are receiving abusive or threatening or inappropriate messages online we will offer the below advice.

**Mountview advises the following procedure for any young person experiencing online abuse:**

* Do not respond to any abusive messages or engage with the site user who is sending the messages.
* Print and save all abusive messages. Most cases of online abuse are now illegal in the UK. If a decision is made to prosecute the perpetrator of the abuse copies of the messages will be vital.
* Look at the privacy and safety settings of the site for instructions on how to block the user who is sending the messages.
* Remove any personal information from the site in question e.g. home or email addresses and telephone numbers.

**It is advised that young people who are experiencing online abuse should be encouraged to remove their entire profiles from the site/s they are receiving threatening message through. However experience shows that young people are often reluctant to do this as, although the sites are causing them harm, they are places where they find support and connect with their peers.**

**Whilst is may be difficult to ask a young person who is experiencing abuse to do something that may, in the first instance, cause them more emotional stress it is key to advise them that doing this will have the best overall outcome.**

* Tell as many people as you feel comfortable with about what is happening.

**In some cases of online abuse the abuse will come from a person acting anonymously who is actually known to the victim. It is believed that if the abuse is disclosed and talked about openly and publicly, especially with people who are perceived to be in position of power i.e. teachers, parents etc., commonly the abuse will stop.**

* Mountview will always, where appropriate, tell a young person’s parent/guardian about any disclosure of online abuse and support where possible the decisions they make on how to take the matter further.

**The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEPO) and NSPCC provide useful advice for young people and their parents/guardians on how to stay safe online and the next steps to take if someone has experienced online abuse.**