



## Curious Motion - Physical Contact in Dance Policy

### OVERVIEW

#### Who is this policy for?

This policy is for Curious Motion's practitioners, artists, volunteers, and participants to reference. It should be considered within the context of their experience/ role and further support and training is provided on an ongoing basis.

#### Why do we have this policy?

Curious Motion recognises that people have different histories and experiences of touch and physical contact outside of class or rehearsal. We respect this and understand the complexity and sensitivity required around this. Therefore, this policy aims to provide guidance on how we put this into practice in our work.

#### How should this policy be used?

This policy offers guidance to ensure Curious Motion's team and participants feel supported and equipped with the appropriate knowledge when considering touch and physical contact within our work. This policy is not exhaustive and recognises the bespoke and unique nature of Curious Motion's interactions; the shifting landscapes of people's wellbeing and experiences, sessions and projects, and the inevitable change and sensitivity that our work requires.

This policy forms part of the induction and welcome process for all team members, including volunteers. It is also made available to be used by our wider community, including our participants and partners.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy.

### STATEMENT

We respect that individuals come with unique histories of touch, and vulnerabilities can arise from this. This includes everyone we engage with - participants, audiences, artists/ practitioners, volunteers, and other team members. Therefore, it is important that our community is appropriately supported and equipped to ensure we can create safe environments.

Dance artists are particularly adept at understanding and utilising physical contact and touch, due to their skills and experience of embodied knowledge. The artists and practitioners at Curious Motion offer an approach that centres somatic and sensory experience, embodiment, and the interconnectedness of the whole person, body, mind and soul. Our dance artists and practitioners understand the power and benefits of responsible touch in supporting wellbeing. This policy draws on this experience and knowledge.

### BENEFITS OF TOUCH AND PHYSICAL CONTACT

When used appropriately and responsibly, touch and physical contact can be very beneficial. In some cases, it can be vital in supporting a person with their wellbeing.

Contexts where touch and physical contact may be appropriate and important:

- To support an individual with their posture or alignment, particularly regarding physical safety during classes and workshops.



## Curious Motion - Physical Contact in Dance Policy

- In costume settings, such as before, during or after a performance where a person may need support with a quick change or managing specific costume items.
- In choreographic or rehearsal settings, where the choreography itself may involve touch and/or physical contact may occur as part of the creative process.
- Naturally occurring physical contact, such as a hug, shaking hands, or a 'high-five' due to a variety of contexts.

### **Example from Curious Motion's classes:**

Participants in a class were working on sensing, understanding, and utilising their shoulder blades to gain more range of motion and carry out specific movements with their arms with more ease and efficiency.

For most of the group, this was not an experience they had had before. The group is well established; participants know each other well and there is a strong sense of trust amongst the group.

The session's artist began this activity by demonstrating how the shoulder blades move and function via physical demonstration and verbal information. She could see this was helping to some extent, but further information was needed, particularly a more 'felt' experience.

So, she then guided participants to use their own hands to reach around and touch their shoulder blades (with care and sensitivity to mobility and discomfort), guiding them to feel the bones, where they sit, their shape, texture, surrounding musculature etc, and move their shoulders around as they do this. This was helpful to some extent but required an amount of mobility from participants, which was not comfortable for everyone.

She then asked a participant she knows well if she could demonstrate further by placing her hands on the participant's shoulder blades, asking her to move her shoulder blades around whilst her hands were placed there – she would utilise a small amount of pressure to guide the participant as they moved. The participant gave consent and the artist and participant explored this with the rest of the group watching.

The participant commented on how helpful this was - they felt more connected to and aware of this part of their body and could understand more easily how to approach the dance activity.

The whole group was then offered the opportunity to try this together in partners if they chose to. The artist guided the process and ensured everyone was using touch appropriately and had choice over whether they wanted to try it.

The group commented on how helpful this was and were then able to put what they had experienced into action when dancing. This has also supported them with their overall awareness of their bodies, developing a more embodied experience, increasing possibilities for functional and easeful movement, and utilising this in their everyday lives.

### **RECOMMENDED PRACTICES**

These recommendations are for guidance only, providing an overarching framework that should be considered alongside the specific context of the activity/ project/ experience.

#### **Consent**



## Curious Motion - Physical Contact in Dance Policy

Always ensure consent is given by the person or people involved – this means the person or people give their permission for touch/ physical contact to take place. You should provide full information on what this involves and why as part of the consent process.

Touch or contact should never be used without consent.

It is important to remember that clear communication is very important and there can be barriers to ensuring people fully understand what they are consenting to. For example, if English is not their first language, or they have a learning disability. Consideration and respect should also be used around communication methods, for example, some people may use a communication aid, Makaton, or sign language, rather than verbal communication.

Therefore, it is very important that consent is considered within the specific context and situation.

When asking for consent, a person, particularly a participant, should never be approached from behind. A participant may not want to be touched for all sorts of reasons, all of which are valid and should be respected. Requesting consent gives them the option to say 'no' to unwanted physical contact.

Consent can be withdrawn at any time, and this must be respected immediately without challenge or negative consequence.

### **Practices: artist/practitioner to participant**

- When physical contact may be made, it is important to be clear about where you will be touching them. For example: 'Is it ok if I put my hand on your hips to adjust your pelvis?' In this way the artist/practitioner is as clear as possible about what will happen and why.
- Contact by the artist/practitioner is made with particular awareness of the needs of each individual participant, to assist the participant in achieving the aims of the session and getting the most benefit from their experience.
- Contact will not involve force or the use of any instrument.
- Artists/practitioners will be mindful of location and avoid situations where they are isolated with a participant; all classes should be held in studios and dance areas with windows and/or an open door; practitioners should avoid working alone and should seek advice from Curious Motion's Designated Safeguarding Lead if no other team member is present/will be present at a session.
- Artists/practitioners, adults and leaders in the studio have the ability and responsibility to prioritise safety to allow participants to voice their concerns. Participants should be encouraged to discuss any worries with staff or an independent listener.
- Both participants and artists/practitioners should report any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Samantha McCormick, [sam@curiousmotion.org.uk](mailto:sam@curiousmotion.org.uk))

### **Practices: participant to participant**

- All participants will treat any physical contact with due sensitivity and care, and with due regard for the wishes of other participants. All participants will seek consent before making physical contact with another participant. If consent is withheld the participant will respect the other participant's wishes.
- Participants should avoid situations where they are isolated with another participant.
- Both participants and practitioners should report any concerns to the Artistic Director, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

### **Frequency**



## Curious Motion - Physical Contact in Dance Policy

Touch and physical contact should only be used where required and appropriate. It should not be a 'given' or carried out without careful consideration.

The frequency of touch and physical contact will vary depending on the situation – for example, in classes and workshops physical contact is often only used occasionally, but in rehearsals or creative processes it may be required more often.

Touch may also be essential for some participants to ensure they get the most from the session/ activity/ project. For example, a participant with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) may find touch is the most appropriate way to experience and explore the activity. This should be considered on an individual basis with the specific participant(s).

### Children and Adults at Risk

Physical contact with children or adults at risk should not, in general, be initiated by the practitioner/ artist/ volunteer, any other team member, or any other participant. However, in exceptional circumstances, such as preventing a fall or managing challenging behaviour, physical contact can be initiated by the practitioner/ artist/ volunteer to ensure the safety of those involved.

Curious Motion recognises that physical contact may naturally occur, and may be more likely to occur, with some people, particularly children – for example, they may want to hug to say hello or goodbye, or if they feel stressed or overwhelmed. In these situations, if the physical contact is appropriate and entirely initiated by the child, this may be deemed appropriate. However, team members and participants should never see this as permission to then initiate touch or physical contact on future occasions.

Children may also make physical contact with each other, for example holding hands as they dance together. For the most part this is natural, inevitable, and important for their wellbeing, However, safeguarding must always be front of mind and the use of touch and physical contact considered carefully within this. Curious Motion's artists and practitioners are skilled at monitoring and understanding this and take overall responsibility for ensuring it is incorporated and managed appropriately (please see below for further information on responsibility).

### Responsibility

The artists/ practitioners and other team members leading an activity/ project have overall responsibility for both the physical and psychological safety of everyone involved. Volunteers also take some responsibility and should follow the guidance of the artist/ practitioner/ professional leading the activity/ project or supporting them to lead an activity.

This policy is also made available to participants to support them to consider their own thoughts and requirements regarding physical contact, and how they might then approach this when joining in with an activity. Curious Motion's artists and team will always support participants in ensuring physical contact and touch is used appropriately.

## RAISING CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS

If you have any concerns or questions whatsoever, either about this policy or regarding your own experience with physical contact in our sessions or projects, please contact Samantha McCormick, Artistic Director/ CEO on [sam@curiousmotion.org.uk](mailto:sam@curiousmotion.org.uk).



## Curious Motion - Physical Contact in Dance Policy

### REVIEW

Last review and approval: February 2026

Next review due: February 2027