

Looe Festival of Words 2025

Safeguarding policy for young people and vulnerable adults

Purpose

This document sets out the policy supporting safeguarding and child protection for Looe Festival of Words employees, contractors and volunteers.

The objective of this document is to provide a framework to ensure young people and adults engaging with Looe Festival of Words do so in a safe environment.

This policy has been written in accordance with Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Area Child Protection Committee's (ACPC) Inter- Agency Child Protection Procedures "Working Together to Safeguard Children" and more information can be found [here](#)

The named Safeguarding Officer for Looe Festival of Words is Liz Manning

Scope

- 1.1. The policy set out in this document (and associated procedures) apply to all sites and activities being used and delivered by Looe Festival of Words
- 1.2. Our policy and procedures apply to all staff, contractors, volunteers, board members, and staff/contractors from partner organisations working on our projects.
- 1.3. Everyone has the right to be protected against risk to their safety, health and well-being and everyone has the responsibility to safeguard others against such risks.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. A child is defined as any young person under the age of 18 years.
- 2.2. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined in KCSIE (2020) as: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
- 2.3. An adult who may have safeguarding needs is defined in The Care Act (2014) as an adult who:
 - 2.3.1. has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
 - 2.3.2. is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect and;
 - 2.3.3. as result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or the experience of abuse or neglect;

The following guidelines have been developed in order to help staff and volunteers to:

- Identify their responsibilities with regard to child protection by safeguarding and promoting the interests and well-being of children with whom they are working
- Understand and implement procedures which will offer safeguards to children, members of staff and volunteer workers, and protect themselves against unjustified allegations of abuse

The guidance in the procedures is based on the following principles:

- The child's welfare is paramount.

- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately with due regard to appropriate levels of privacy and the dignity of those concerned.
- all those involved with safeguarding adopt a multi-agency approach, working in partnership with other key statutory, non-statutory and voluntary sector organisations to support and protect children, young people and adults at risk of harm, abuse or neglect through information sharing and the sharing of best practice to improve safeguarding within our communities.
- all staff understand the benefits of early help and intervention and are particularly alert to the potential need for early help.
- everybody adheres to all statutory responsibilities placed upon them and they maintain professional curiosity, appreciative enquiry and an attitude of it could happen here.
- Working in partnership with children and their legal guardians is essential for the protection of children. Arts workers should also recognise that it is the statutory responsibility of the Social Service Department to ensure the welfare of children by investigating reported incidents of abuse.
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The Policy & Practice

Protective Working Practices

It is possible to reduce situations for the abuse of children and help to protect staff and volunteers by promoting good practice. The following are more specific examples of care that should be taken when working within an arts context and are presented below as a 'common situations' guideline:

- When organising a workshop or participatory event we should always ensure that there are at least two supervising adults present. Schools, colleges or other educational places are obliged to provide supporting adults but you should check that this is the case.
- We would define an adult as someone who is over 18 years of age.
- A supervising adult should not be a member of the group itself (for instance with some youth groups, some may be over 18 years).
- Staff members should be assured that they have reasonable confidence in those persons or that any partner organisation involved has confidence in the selected adults (for instance a primary head teacher might ask a parent to assist with the supervision of a group).
- We should avoid situations where a workshop leader or our staff is alone with a group of young people. We accept that sometimes this is unavoidable (for instance when a colleague leaves the room, is unavoidably late or has to deal with an emergency).
- When organising open workshops ensure that you have parents' names and contact numbers for emergency use i.e. accident or collection for inappropriate behavior. Staff should also have contact numbers for other staff members.
- Avoid talking to young people in changing areas – if you need to speak to someone ask them to leave the changing area.

- When arranging supervision for education settings or youth groups, we should wherever possible ensure that groups are fully and independently supervised by their leaders, whether a school or youth group and that such leaders are working within their own child protection guidelines as well as our own. (For instance education settings have varying policies regarding the ratio of supervisor to child numbers).
- When using a minibus, the supervisor should not be the driver except on short journeys (under 15 miles or thereabouts).
- If a pre-planned event requires transportation, parents will be asked to take responsibility for all transportation. If this is not possible you should obtain written consent from parents ensuring that they are aware of transport implications.
- When we employ a freelance practitioner, we need to ensure that they have a DBS certificate. This is part of the freelance contract procedure and it is the responsibility of the member of staff who engages the artist to ensure that a contract is issued and that the conditions therein are adhered to.
- We acknowledge that performance-based activity may involve person to person contact. If any form of physical contact is required it should be provided openly.

Except in exceptional circumstances, (exceptional circumstances are defined as where a young person is at risk unless the member of staff takes appropriate steps to ensure their safety).

Staff should **never**:

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- Take young people alone on car journeys, however short
- Take children to their home or a space where they will be alone with them.

Staff must never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- Allow children to use any form of inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for children they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow children to stay at their home

If you accidentally hurt a child or he/she seems distressed in any manner, or appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incident as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief written note of it.

This document will be updated as and when other scenarios or common situations become evident or relevant.

Staff Recruitment

Reviewed July 2024 V2 Feb 2025

As part of the recruitment process those who work with children will be asked to complete a Self Disclosure Form declaring any criminal offences, cautions or Bound-over orders and including any “spent” convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974(Exemptions) order 1975). This declaration may be followed up with checks on records. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences relating to abuse is automatically excluded from working with young people.

All staff and freelance practitioners (and where relevant Trustees and volunteers) working directly with young people under the age of 18 will be vetted for previous relevant convictions that may make them unsuitable for work with children. In practice, DBS checks will be carried out by an authorised organisation on our behalf.

Training

It should be recognised that DBS checks are only part of the process to protect children from possible abuse by members of staff, volunteers etc. These checks will be operated in conjunction with appropriate training of staff and volunteers so that they are aware and sensitive to potentially abusive situations.

Responding to Concerns;

If a child wants to tell you something ‘confidential’ inform them you may need to pass this on. If this is the case, we should follow the detailed guidelines issued with this policy.

If a child discloses to a worker, or the worker sees visible signs of suspected abuse the worker should;

1. Objectively listen and retain the information given by the child (write this down as soon as possible). Observations made, along with any information offered by the child should be recorded – it is important that workers stick to facts, not suppositions. All records must be handled confidentially and appropriately.
2. Any obvious physical injuries should be dealt with by a qualified first-aider and noted in the accident book
3. In most circumstances it would be important to talk to parents/carers, to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, he, or she, may have suffered bereavement in the family. Again, the checking with the parent should be undertaken with care and objectivity. Workers should be aware that there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk if such concerns were shared with parents/carers. In these cases the next steps should be taken without consultation with parents/carers.
4. Where a worker has received evidence of information which leads them to suspect abuse of a child the nominated person, Caleb Barron, should be immediately informed.
5. Where this is not possible and the worker feels that the indications are conclusive or lead to strong concern for the child’s safety and well-being they must report.

5.1 The information to report in Cornwall is :-

Cornwall

- Multi-agency Referral Unit: 0300 123 1116
- Out of Hours Service: 01208 251300

Isles of Scilly

- Children's Social Care: 01720 424483
- Out of Hours Service: 01720 422699

Police

- 101

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/> provides details for all safeguarding services in the South West England.

If you have concerns about a professional or volunteer working with a child you need to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly on 01872 326536.

5.2 Local Authority arrangements may vary when referring allegations of abuse or general safeguarding concerns about young people under the age of 18 years or in the case of adults at risk of harm under the definition of the Care Act 2014. You should refer to the Local Authority Multi-Agency Safeguarding Unit, Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (SCP) or Boards (SCB) or Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) for contact details, advice and the referral process.

5.3 Allegations against professionals (teachers, social workers, care/childcare workers etc.) working with children or adults should be made to the relevant LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedure.

6 Where the nominated person has been informed of a potential abuse situation they will inform the local authority or other relevant organisation and maintain confidential records of both the incident and the reporting conversation. The Chair of the board will also be informed of the action taken. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the Social Services Department should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should 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.

Information passed to the Social Care Department must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record. Information should include the following:

- Nature of the allegation.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries occurred.
- The child's account if it can be given of what has happened and how any bruising or other injury occurred.
- Any times, dates or other relevant information.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.

7 Once Social Care departments have been informed of suspected child abuse they have a 'duty' to investigate the incident. The source of that information may or may not be disclosed.

Complaints of abuse against workers.

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation.
- A child protection investigation
- A Disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and Social Services investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

What to do if there are concerns:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the CEO will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or volunteer worker should be reported to the Director unless the allegation is against the Director when it should be reported to the Chair of Board, who will take such steps as is necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The 'nominated person' will refer the allegation to the Social Services Department (who may involve the police).
- The parent/carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Social Services Department.
- The nominated person should also notify a member of the executive committee and they should decide who would deal with any media enquiries.
- Every effort should be made to ensure confidentiality is maintained for all concerned
- The executive committee or director, whichever is appropriate, will make an immediate decision to suspend any individual accused of abuse pending further police and Social Services inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the Social Services or police inquiries, the Board must assess all cases under the appropriate misconduct/disciplinary procedure, to decide whether a member of staff or a volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases those concerned must reach a decision based upon the information available which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children must always be paramount.
- Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents, members of staff and volunteer workers.

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (eg by an adult who was abused as a child by a member of staff or volunteer worker who is currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made the organisation should follow the normal organisational procedure and report the matter to the Social Services Department.

APPENDIX A – FORMS OF ABUSE

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) and other government guidance identifies several categories of abuse. Safeguarding themes of concern that are specific to our age group include:

- Child & Adult Exploitation (Sexual, Criminal, Gangs etc)
- Sexting, Revenge pornography or other inappropriate use of social media.
- Emotional abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Controlling or coercive relationships/abuse
- Neglect or self-neglect.
- Mental Ill health, self – harm and / or suicidal ideation.
- Hate crime or Hate related incidents
- Peer on peer abuse, including bullying, initiation / hazing. This can be direct / indirect and off-line / on-line
- Sexual violence or harassment.
- Radicalisation
- Child Trafficking and Modern Slavery
- Grooming
- Female Genital Mutilation

These and other types of abuse can relate to either a child under the age 18 years or to an adult at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

Physical Abuse

This is anything that causes physical harm, injury or illness.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child / young person.

Emotional/Psychological Abuse

This is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a vulnerable person such as to cause severe and persistent effects on their emotional development.

Sexual Abuse

This involves forcing or enticing a child/young person or adult who is vulnerable to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact or non-contact, such as involving children/young people/adults in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

This is the persistent failure to meet the child/young person/ adult (who is vulnerable) basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the individual's health or development.

Self-Neglect/Harm

This is not a direct form of abuse, but staff need to be aware of it in the general context of risk assessment/risk management and to remember that they may owe a duty of care to a child/young person or adult at risk of harm, abuse or neglect, who places themselves at risk in this way. A refusal to engage

with services does not override a duty of care to support individuals and they should continue to be encouraged to access support.

Domestic Abuse/Teenage Relationship Abuse

Abuse can be either in the form of being personally abused within a relationship or for a child or young person to witness this within their home, perhaps involving parents/carers.

Financial or Material Abuse

This includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, enduring power of attorney, or inheritance or financial transactions, or the inappropriate use, misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Discriminatory Abuse

This includes racist, sexist, or other forms of abuse that are based on a person's protected characteristics and other forms of harassment, or similar treatment. This can be viewed by a victim as hate crime and the Police can prosecute on this basis.

Sexting and Revenge Porn

New legislation came into force in April 2015 to prevent sexually explicit photographs or videos being shared or posted to cause harm or distress to the person subject of the material. The new law includes uploading to the internet, sending by text, email or messaging platforms, as well as simply showing someone a physical or electronic image.

Radicalisation

This is a process by which a person comes to support terrorism and/or forms of extremism leading to them committing acts of violence or the support of violence by others in a group. Young people and adults who may be vulnerable are often targeted by groups. They may be drawn into association with these groups through internet chat rooms, possibly motivated by a wish to belong or to make a stand or a difference. Read PREVENT (Radicalisation & Extremism) Policy.

Exploitation

Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive another person into sexual, criminal or gang related activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact: it can also occur using technology.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

This is an unacceptable and illegal (in the UK) form of abuse and violence towards girls and women involving female circumcision or mutilation of the female genital. There have been incidences of FGM in the South West including Devon and Cornwall.

Peer on Peer abuse / Sexual Violence and Harassment

Peer on peer abuse occurs when a young person is exploited, bullied and / or harmed by their peers who are the same or similar age. 'Peer-on-peer' abuse can relate to various forms of abuse (not just sexual abuse and exploitation), and crucially it does not capture the fact that the behaviour in question is harmful to the perpetrator as well as the victim. Research suggests that girls and young women are more at risk of abusive behaviours perpetrated by their peers; however, it can also affect boys and young men. Specific attention should be given to individuals with learning difficulties or disabilities, LGBTQ and those who are from different communities.

APPENDIX B– SIGNS AND INDICATORS OF POTENTIAL ABUSE

1. Overview

Signs of abuse can be many and varied but can also be innocent indications of a transition to adult life. However, they should always be considered as potential causes for concern and followed up / monitored in a sensitive way, with appropriate records dated and kept securely.

Welfare concerns may arise in many different contexts (Contextual Safeguarding) and can vary greatly in terms of their nature and seriousness. Abuse can occur in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to victim or by a stranger, including, via the internet. Extra-familial harm takes a variety of different forms including (but not limited to) sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and serious youth violence. In the case of female genital mutilation, children may be taken out of the country to be abused. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. Abuse and neglect can happen over a period of time but can also be a one-off event. Abuse and neglect can have major long-term impacts on all aspects of a victim's health, development and well-being.

2. Possible indicators of abuse

- Behaviour changes, extreme behaviours both introvert as well as extrovert.
- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong
- Don't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities.
- Regularly missing from education, poor attendance and poor punctuality.
- Concerned for younger siblings without explaining why.
- Shy away from being touched or flinch at sudden movements.
- Physical injuries, including bruises, particularly if reasons for these do not appear plausible or if injuries are repeated or self-harm is suspected
- Emotional distress, fear, unwillingness to go home
- Expressed fear of, or strong effort to avoid individuals without an obvious reason
- Sudden changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming very withdrawn or aggressive
- Significant loss/increase of weight or poor hygiene or appearance
- Hungry at college with no money to buy food or borrowing money to buy food
- Poorly dressed or equipped for college
- Sudden changes of living circumstances, e.g. moving out of home to live elsewhere
- Sudden acquisition of jewellery, gifts from older girl/boyfriends
- Alcohol abuse or substance misuse.
- Displaying knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age
- Asking others to behave sexually or play sexual games out of context
- Physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy
- Expression of radicalised views to others – racism, extreme political views, animal rights, religious ideology etc.
- Expression of Interest in weapons, explosives etc.
- Talking about travelling abroad to conflict zones such as Syria

- Parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons or blaming their problems on their child.
- Parents who are dismissive and non-responsive to practitioners' concerns.

Further signs / indicators specific to children can be found at:

[What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners \(March 2015\)](#)

Appendix C Staff Guidelines on Handling a Disclosure

As an arts worker working with children on a regular basis you may be the first person to sense that something is wrong with that child, or you may be the person to whom a child decides to confide about abuse. It is therefore important that you know what to do if you suspect abuse.

If a child discloses to you as an arts worker;

1. **STAY CALM.** Try not to transmit your anger, shock or embarrassment to the child. Remaining calm will help lessen the effect of the trauma and will help and reassure the child.
2. **LISTEN TO THE CHILD WITH AN OPEN MIND.** Children rarely lie about abuse.
3. **DO NOT PROMISE TO KEEP THE DISCLOSURE A SECRET.** Children may well ask you to do this. You cannot and it would be wrong to deceive the child. Explain as simply as you can what and who you will have to tell. A child may beg you not to say anything because they are frightened, but they would not have said anything unless they wanted the abuse to stop.
4. **ALLOW THE CHILD TO TALK BUT DO NOT PRESSURISE.** Remember it is better if the child does not have to repeat the story over and over again. Do not question the child about what he/she is saying, and certainly do not use any leading questions. Make a full written record as soon as possible after the child has spoken to you.
5. **REPORT THE INCIDENT ACCORDING TO THIS POLICY.**
6. **AFTER THE INCIDENT SEEK OUT SOMEONE TO TALK TO IF YOU NEED TO.** You may need to unburden yourself and come to terms with the emotions and feelings you have been experiencing.

ABOVE ALL, DON'T PANIC, ENSURE YOU ARE AWARE OF THE PROCEDURE, AND USE IT TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION AS EFFECTIVELY AND QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. NO-ONE CAN HANDLE THIS TYPE OF SITUATION ALONE EFFECTIVELY – SEEK SUPPORT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Your contact for support is the Safeguarding Office.