



## Child Protection Policy

**ESCAPE believes that all children have the right to be completely secure from both the fear and reality of abuse, and we are committed to protecting all the children in our care from harm and provide a healthy and safe environment.**

### **ESCAPE will therefore ensure that:**

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, ethnicity, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- The needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable will be taken into account.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff (paid/unpaid) working within the project have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

### **Policy Aims**

**The aim of Escape Arts Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:**

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Escape Arts.
- Allow all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

### **Promoting Good Practice**

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

### **Recognising Child Abuse**

Child abuse manifests itself in a variety of different ways, some overt and others much less so. Key staff will have child protection training and will be vigilant to signs and evidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect.

**Physical Abuse:** This involves hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, suffocating or any other physical harm. Deliberately causing a child's ill health also constitutes physical abuse.

**Sexual Abuse:** This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact,



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including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. Showing children pornographic materials, sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways also constitutes sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse: Varying degrees of emotional abuse is present in virtually all child protection incidents, but can also constitute abuse in its own right. Emotional abuse involves persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or torture causing, or likely to cause, severe adverse effects on the emotional stability of a child. Such behaviour may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate, or making them feel unnecessarily frightened or vulnerable.

Neglect: Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional or psychological needs, such as is likely to have a severe impact on their health, development or emotional stability. Neglect may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing for a child, or failing to adequately protect them from physical harm or ill health. Neglect can also manifest itself in a failure to meet the basic emotional needs of child.

### Good Practice Guidelines

Escape staff will adhere to the following guidelines in order to protect themselves from false allegations.

- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with young people (eg it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making.
- Making activities fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly. If it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving, young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. If groups have to be supervised in the changing areas, always ensure staff work in pairs.
- Ensuring that if mixed groups are taken away for the day or night, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- **Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or consuming harmful substances such as drinking alcohol or illegal drugs in the company of young people.**
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.



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- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if a staff member is required to transport any young people in cars.
- Ensure each young person has been fully registered with the project by parent/carer.
- Ensure all young people are signed both in and out of the projects.
- Abiding by the E-Safety Policy. Under no circumstance are staff allowed to befriend young people under the age of 18 via any social media or have direct contact via personal mobile phones unless acknowledgement and consent is given by a parent or carer.

### Practices To Be Avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies or where consent has been given. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (eg the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the project or the child's parents.

#### **Otherwise, avoid:**

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking or dropping off a child to an event. This should only be undertaken with written approval of the parent/guardian.

### Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should **never**:

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child.
- Befriend a child via social media.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

**NB** It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the young people involved. There is a



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need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

### **Incidents That Must Be Reported/Recorded**

If any of the following occur Escape staff will report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. They will also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you or a member of staff accidentally hurt a participant
- If a young person seems distressed in any manner
- if a young person appears to be sexually aroused by your or a member of staff's actions
- if a participant misunderstands or misinterprets something you or a member of staff has said or done.

### **Use Of Photographic/Filming Equipment**

ESCAPE staff will supervise all use of photography and film, ensuring written consent has been obtained and safeguarding those young people for whom consent has not been granted.

Escape has developed its own E-safety Policy to take responsibility to support, uphold and promote E-Safety in the organisation. This will:

1. Identify a member of staff who will be responsible for e-safety developments in the organisation.
2. Identify a senior member of trustee board who will be responsible for information security developments within the organization.
3. Create an 'Acceptable Use/Consent Policy' which is used for reference and shared with and signed by parents and guardians.
4. Start to use the educational resources that are available nationally to support all members of the organisation in their understanding of e-safety.
5. Publicise e-safety in our organisation, to parents and to the wider community.

### **Recruitment and Training of Staff and Volunteers**

**Escape Arts** recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

Pre-selection checks will included the following:

- All volunteers/staff will complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.



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- Consent will be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau, as outline in the Escape Safeguarding Policy.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity should be provided (eg passport or driving licence with photo).

### Interview and induction

All employees (and volunteers) will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers will receive formal or informal induction, during which:

- A check will be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures).
- The job requirements and responsibilities will be clarified.
- Child protection procedures will be explained and training needs identified.

### Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process will aim to include training to help staff and volunteers to:

- Established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- Work safely and effectively with children.

### Escape Arts will aspire to enable:

- Relevant staff to attend a recognised good practice and child protection awareness training workshop, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection.
- Where relevant Volunteers to complete recognised awareness training on child protection.
- Relevant personnel to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person.
- Relevant personnel to undergo national first aid training (where necessary).
- Attendance of update training when necessary.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in **Escape Arts**, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.



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## Responding to suspicions or allegation

### Action

#### **1. Concerns about poor practice:**

- If, following consideration, an allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Artistic Director will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Project Manager, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to a designated Trustee member who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

#### **2. Concerns about suspected abuse:**

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Project Manager, then to the Artistic Director, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Artistic Director will refer the allegation to the social services department which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible **following advice from the social services department.**
- The Artistic Director will also notify the relevant Escape Arts Trustees.
- If the Project Manager/Artistic Director is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Trustee who will refer the allegation to social services.

### Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

This includes the following people:

- the Project Manager /Artistic Director
- the designated Trustee
- the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- social services/police
- the alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Escape will seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

Information will be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (eg that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

### Internal enquiries and suspension

- Escape Arts Artistic Director will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.



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- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Escape Arts Trustee Board will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or 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, the Escape Arts Trustee Board must reach a decision based upon the available information, which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

### **Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse**

- Consideration will be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of staff may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, Email: [bac@bacp.co.uk](mailto:bac@bacp.co.uk), Internet: [www.bap.co.uk](http://www.bap.co.uk)
- Consideration will be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Where such an allegation is made, the project will follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside the activity, may be at risk from this person. **Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.**

### **BULLYING**

#### **Action if bullying is suspected**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure will be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

#### **ESCAPE staff will:**

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the Project Manager/Artistic Director or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

#### **Action towards the bully(ies):**

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s) where appropriate.
- Inform the bully(ies)'s parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.



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- Provide support for the victim's coach.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

### **3. Concerns outside the immediate project environment (eg a parent or carer):**

- Report your concerns to the Project Manager/Artistic Director, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- See 4. below for the information social services or the police will need.
- Social services and the Artistic Director will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- The Artistic Director will also report the incident to the Escape Arts governing body. The governing body should ascertain whether or not the person/(s) involved in the incident play a role in Escape Arts and act accordingly.
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.
- See 4. below regarding information needed for social services.

### **4. Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse:**

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

### **Who to Contact:**

If you are worried about any child and think they may be a victim of neglect, abuse or cruelty, contact MASH **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub** on 01926 414144.

The MASH Operating Times are:



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- 8.30am – 5.30pm: Monday – Thursday
- 8.30am – 5.00pm: Friday

Outside of office hours for an immediate concern about a child in danger dial 999. If the concern cannot wait until the MASH reopens and is an Emergency. Out of Hours - contact the Emergency Duty Team on telephone number 01926 886922.

**NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000**  
**Childline on 0800 1111.**

Esafety Training and Resources - [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

Named Staff Member for Child Protection: Karen Williams – Artistic Director Manager

Named Trustee for Child Protection – Marion Morgan

**Agreed and Adopted by the Escape Arts Board of Trustees 23 Oct 2018**  
**Review Date: Oct 2020**