

HARWICH ARTS & HERITAGE CENTRE

Safeguarding Policy for
Children and Vulnerable Adults

Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy including lost child policy

Policy Statement

The Harwich Arts and Heritage Centre is committed to protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm.

We believe everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

We will make sure that all children and young people have the same protection regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation and recognise that some children and young people may face additional barriers and have additional needs.

Procedures:

- We recognise that all children and vulnerable adults have a right to be free from abuse.
- We will ensure that all our staff and volunteers who regularly come into contact with children or vulnerable adults will be DBS checked.
- As a centre we will seek written permission for photography and film.
- We will actively discourage bullying, or violent or degrading behaviour within groups who use the centre and within any events we hold ourselves, dealing with such incidents should they arise.
- We will respond swiftly and appropriately to all allegations or abuse providing, allowing parents/carers and children/vulnerable adults to voice any concerns.
- The centre will disallow children from consuming alcohol, drugs or smoking and carrying offensive weapons.
- We will appoint a member of staff who will take specific responsibility for Children and Vulnerable Adults safety and act as the main point of contact for parents/carers, children/vulnerable adults, outside agencies and staff.
- We will review the effectiveness of the Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy and activities each year.

Guidelines for the board of trustees, staff and volunteers

- Staff and volunteers should not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children, away from others.
- Regarding toilet breaks for children – they should only be taken in groups by a DBS checked responsible adult, no child should be going to the toilet by themselves.
- Staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children.
- There are however, occasions where physical contact may be unavoidable, such as providing comfort and reassurance for a distressed child or physical support during physical activities such as dance workshops etc. In all cases, physical contact should only take place with the consent of the child or young person i.e. 'Is it ok if I.....?'
- We also require NSPCC guidelines to be followed with regards to adults working with children – so for any group of children there should be two DBS checked adults in case of emergency and to prevent any safeguarding issues,

Types of Abuse - definitions taken from the NSPCC

Physical: physical abuse is any way of intentionally causing physical harm to a child or young person. It also includes making up the symptoms of an illness or causing a child to become unwell.

Sexual: When a child or young person is sexually abused, they're forced or tricked into sexual activities. They might not understand that what's happening is abuse or that it's wrong. And they might be afraid to tell someone. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere – and it can happen in person or online.

Emotional: Emotional abuse is any type of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse. Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare, humiliate, isolate or ignore a child.

Neglect: The ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and the most common form of child abuse². A child might be left hungry or dirty, or without proper clothing, shelter, supervision or health care. This can put children and young people in danger. And it can also have long term effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

Grooming: Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. This includes the issues surrounding county lines.

Online: Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones.

FGM: FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting', but has many other names.

Domestic abuse: any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. It can seriously harm children and young people and witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse.

Contextual safeguarding

Outside of familial relationships there are other risks presented by social conditions:

- Peer on peer relationship abuse
- Criminal exploitation
- Sexual exploitation
- Risks associated with gangs
- Radicalisation
- Trafficking and modern slavery

Sign and indicators of abuse and risk

- Unexplained or untreated bruising/injury
- Suffering continual stomach pains or other ailments without medical explanation
- Aggressive or withdrawn behaviour when asked about injuries
- Sexually explicit behaviour and language
- Unaccounted for sources of money
- Fear of going home to parents or carers
- Changes over time in manner/appearance eg losing weight or looking dishevelled.
- Telling you about being asked to keep a secret.

Responding to signs or suspicions of abuse

Be alert although someone showing these signs may not be being abused – there may be other causes. If none of these signs are present you may also just feel as if something is wrong. If you are worried about a child you believe is being abused you must report it to the designated Child Protection Officer of the centre. If your concerns are about this person please report to the Harwich Festival Director***

You must not initiate a conversation with the child or vulnerable adult to ask them about your concerns.

Guidelines – Responding to disclosures of abuse

If a child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse to you, you should inform the HAHC Child Protection Office.

- Let them know that they are right to tell someone of their concerns.
- Listen attentively
- Stay calm

- Make sure they know they are not to blame for what has happened.
- Explain that you have to tell someone about the abuse, although this may keep them from disclosing more.
- Only ask factual questions – NO LEADING QUESTIONS
- Make a note of what has been said, together with the date and time of your conversation. Then sign it and immediately inform the Child Protection Officer.
- Do not share this information with anyone outside of the HAHC Child Protection Officer.

Procedure for recording concerns

Ensure that the Child Protection Officer maintains a log book in which to record details of any concerns or incidents. Information will be passed on to the relevant authorities immediately by the HAHC Child Protection Officer.

Reviewed: July 2025

Next Review: July 2026

C.Berwick – General Manager