

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Harwich Festival and Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre

Policy 03 | Version 2.0 | Revised 25 October 2026

Owner: General Manager and Safeguarding Lead | Scheduled review: 25 October 2027

Our commitment

We are committed to protecting children from harm and supporting their welfare in Harwich Festival and HAHC activities. A child is anyone under 18. Every child has the same right to protection, regardless of background, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. Some children face additional barriers to communication or reporting; we will adapt support to their needs.

This policy applies to trustees, staff, volunteers, artists, contractors and partners delivering work for us. It covers face-to-face and online activity. Adults' safeguarding is addressed separately in Policy 02. Independent hirers must identify their own safeguarding responsibilities and lead, use suitable staff, and cooperate with venue arrangements. A hire agreement does not remove HF's responsibilities for its own actions or areas of control.

Who to contact

The safeguarding lead is Christopher Berwick, General Manager: 01255 319191; contact@harwichfestival.com. The centre address is Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre, Main Road, Dovercourt, Essex, CO12 4AJ. Trustees oversee safeguarding and must arrange and communicate a briefed alternative contact when the lead is unavailable.

- Immediate danger or a serious medical emergency: call 999.
- Essex Children and Families Hub: 0345 603 7627; ask for the priority line for immediate risk of significant harm.
- Out of hours or bank holidays: Essex Emergency Duty Team, 0345 606 1212.
- Allegations about an adult working or volunteering with children: Essex Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), 03330 139 797; LADO@essex.gov.uk.

Anyone may contact these services directly. If a concern involves the lead, bypass them, contact the relevant external service and notify the Chair of Trustees privately at the centre address. Do not use a shared mailbox accessible to the person concerned. Urgent reporting must not wait for a trustee meeting or an internal response.

Recognising concerns

Be alert to physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, grooming, exploitation, domestic abuse, child-on-child abuse, online abuse, trafficking, radicalisation and harmful practices. Indicators may include unexplained injuries, fear, withdrawal, inappropriate sexual knowledge, unexplained gifts, changes in behaviour or a child saying that something is wrong. Indicators do not establish proof, and a concern can exist without obvious signs.

Listening recording and referral

Ensure immediate safety, listen attentively and take the child seriously. Reassure them that telling someone was right and that abuse is not their fault. Explain that information must be shared with people who can help. Do not promise secrecy, question repeatedly, investigate, suggest answers or confront the person alleged to have caused harm. Ask only minimal, open clarification needed for immediate protection and referral.

Report to the safeguarding lead immediately, unless the concern involves them or delay would be unsafe. Write a factual record as soon as possible, using the child's own words, and include dates,

times, observations, those present and action taken. Sign and date the record. Preserve original evidence securely; do not circulate it in general email or messaging groups.

The lead must assess immediate protection, consult or refer to Essex services promptly and record the decision. Involve parents or carers where safe and appropriate, but do not do so where it could increase risk or compromise an investigation; take statutory advice. Data protection does not prevent necessary, lawful safeguarding information sharing. Record what was shared, with whom and why.

Allegations about workers and volunteers

Report relevant allegations to the LADO without delay and follow their advice, including the applicable referral timescale. The lead or an unconflicted trustee must consider protective steps, support for everyone involved and any police or DBS referral duty. Do not conduct a substantive internal investigation before seeking statutory advice where this could prejudice enquiries. Treat temporary changes in duties or suspension as protective measures, not findings of guilt.

Record lower-level concerns about boundaries or conduct too, so patterns can be identified. Apply whistleblowing routes where an internal response is unsafe or ineffective. Trustees must consider Charity Commission reporting and insurer notification separately.

Safe recruitment and supervision

Assess each role, obtain appropriate references, check suitability and right to work where required, and undertake DBS checks only at a level for which the role is eligible. Barred-list checks require the relevant legal eligibility. Reassess roles when duties or DBS rules change. A certificate alone does not establish suitability. Policy 17 sets out recruitment and ex-offender arrangements.

Plan supervision, ratios, arrival and collection arrangements, toilets, changing, emergencies and accessibility for each activity. For HF-led children's group activities, plan at least two suitably recruited adults and increase supervision where age, needs, activity or risk requires it. This is our operating safeguard, not a universal legal ratio. Do not run an activity where safe supervision cannot be achieved.

Avoid isolated one-to-one working. Necessary individual support must be risk assessed, observable where possible and known to the responsible organiser. Provide toilet support according to age, independence, dignity and assessed need; never impose a blanket rule that every child must be accompanied into a toilet. Plan intimate or personal care with suitable consent, competence and safeguards.

Behaviour contact and images

Treat children respectfully. No bullying, humiliating punishment, sexualised behaviour, exploitative relationships or unnecessary physical contact is acceptable. Explain necessary physical support and seek the child's agreement where possible; urgent action to prevent harm must be proportionate and recorded. Children must not be supplied with alcohol or illegal drugs, and weapons are prohibited.

Use authorised organisational channels to communicate; do not form private social-media relationships with children through the role. For identifiable promotional images of children, obtain and record appropriate parent or carer permission and the child's agreement, respect refusals and avoid identifying a child's location or sensitive circumstances. Never take images in toilets, changing areas or other private situations. See Policy 22.

Lost missing or uncollected children

Notify the activity organiser and lead immediately. Keep a found child in a safe, observable place with two appropriate adults where possible; do not leave other children unsupervised. Record a description, time and location. Check the immediate area safely while maintaining supervision, and use discreet staff communications. Do not publish identifying details or make public announcements that create risk.

If a child is missing, assess urgency immediately and call police without delay where there is danger, vulnerability or the circumstances warrant it; there is no waiting period before reporting a child missing. Contact the parent or carer where safe. Do not allow an unverified person to collect a child. Verify identity and authority using the organiser's agreed collection information. For an uncollected child, maintain supervision, contact authorised carers and seek Essex services or police assistance if safe collection cannot be arranged. Record the incident and review the arrangements.

Records training and review

Keep records on a restricted safeguarding file under Policy 20. Train and brief staff, volunteers and relevant partners before duties and refresh training according to role and risk. Make reporting routes accessible to children and carers. Trustees must review this policy and its use at least annually, after a serious incident and whenever activities, guidance or legal requirements change.

Prepared for adoption. Record authorised approval in the master register. Review sooner after a significant change or incident.

Reference guidance

[gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) - safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees

schools.essex.gov.uk - reporting concern about child

escb.co.uk - allegations management in the childrens workforce