

Hirer and Permanent User Safety Responsibilities

Harwich Festival and Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre

Policy 28 | Version 1.0 | Revised 25 October 2026

Owner: General Manager | Scheduled review: 25 October 2027

Purpose and application

Set clear responsibilities between HF as operator of HAHC and independent organisations or people using its rooms. This policy informs new or renewed hire and occupancy agreements and induction. It does not itself vary an existing contract or lease; changes must be agreed through the appropriate lawful process. HF-led or jointly produced activity needs its own clear allocation of responsibilities.

HF retains duties for matters within its control, including the premises and equipment it provides. Independent organisers remain responsible for their activity, their workers and the arrangements they agree to supply. A general disclaimer cannot remove liability for death or personal injury caused by HF's negligence or override other duties that cannot lawfully be excluded.

Before use

Identify the organiser, responsible person present, activity, rooms, attendance, timings, access needs, equipment, children or adults at risk, public admission, food, alcohol and other special features. Agree who is organising and supervising the activity, any permissions or licences needed, insurance requirements, and the division of safety and safeguarding responsibilities.

Obtain a suitable activity risk assessment or proportionate written confirmation of arrangements, with supporting evidence appropriate to risk. Explain venue risks and controls; a hirer's assessment does not replace HF's building assessment. Permanent users must coordinate their workplace and shared-area arrangements and notify HF of changes. Do not permit an activity with unresolved serious risks or missing legally required controls.

First aid and emergencies

Agree the first-aid arrangements in writing. State what HF provides and the times it is actually available, and what the organiser must arrange. The organiser must assess its needs, identify a responsible person to coordinate help, and provide trained cover where its assessment, law, licence, insurance or agreed terms require it. There is no automatic requirement for a qualified first aider at every low-risk club session.

Do not assume daytime staff or a person elsewhere in the building will cover an evening session. Shared first-aid cover must be agreed, available and sufficient for concurrent groups. Explain kit locations, emergency calls, ambulance access and reporting. A hirer cannot rely on an untrained coordinator instead of trained cover where trained cover is required.

Brief the organiser on the current evacuation instructions, exits, assembly point, alarm, occupancy limits and assistance arrangements. They must brief their group and keep routes clear. Call 999 directly in an emergency; do not wait for HF to answer a telephone.

Safe use and safeguarding

Keep rooms, shared areas and escape routes safe. Do not alter layouts, fix items to the building, bring hazardous materials, use specialist equipment or arrange works without permission and suitable assessment. Use equipment only as authorised and report defects immediately. Respect security, keys, closing arrangements and other users.

Each organiser must provide suitable supervision, appropriate recruitment and safeguarding arrangements for its activities, consent and collection arrangements where needed, and a route for reporting concerns. HF's own safeguarding responsibilities and direct statutory reporting remain. Images, data and publicity must be handled lawfully and must not imply HF endorsement without agreement. Use the Code of Conduct and relevant policies.

Records changes and incident response

Record induction, agreed responsibilities, documents checked, contacts and review dates. Reassess material changes in activity, attendance, equipment, staffing or room use. Report accidents, near misses, defects and safeguarding concerns promptly, preserving confidentiality and making urgent external reports directly where needed.

HF may stop unsafe activity or restrict access where justified under its authority and agreements, with reasons and fair consideration of legal duties. The responsible dutyholder must consider statutory reports and insurers. Review arrangements at renewals, after incidents and at least annually for ongoing use.

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

Reference guidance

[hse.gov.uk - village and community halls.htm](https://www.hse.gov.uk/villageandcommunityhalls.htm)

[hse.gov.uk - legislation.htm](https://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation.htm)

[legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk) - 2