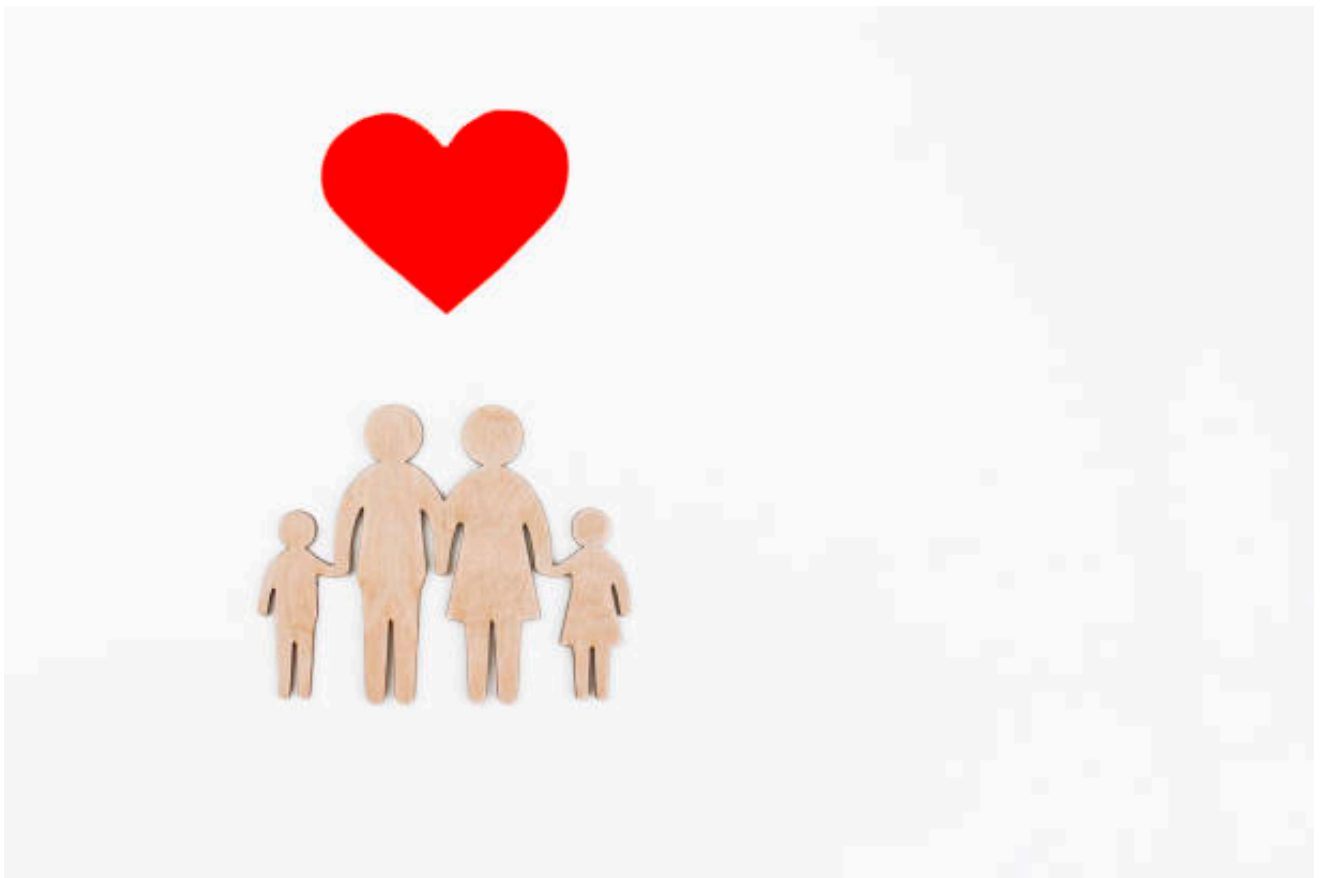

East Suffolk Stage Arts

Child Protection Policy

December 2023



Child Protection Policy

Organisation: East Suffolk Stage Arts

Correspondence address: 36 Gibbons Street, Ipswich, IP1 2HL

Purpose of organisation: Theatre arts school

Policy Statement

East Suffolk Stage Arts (hereafter “ESSA”) recognises that all children and young people have the right to protection from abuse. ESSA takes its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people seriously. We will:

- Respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and provide parents and children with the opportunity to voice their concerns.
- Have a system for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.
- Maintain good links with statutory child care authorities.

The Policy

ESSA recognises that many children and young people today are the victims of neglect, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Accordingly, ESSA has adopted the policy contained in this statement (hereafter “the policy”). The policy sets out agreed guidelines relating to responding to allegations of abuse, including those made against staff and volunteers.

ESSA recognises the need to build constructive links with the statutory services. These guidelines have been prepared in accordance with Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership Procedures. They will be kept under review and supported with appropriate training.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. This policy applies to all staff and volunteers who act on behalf of ESSA and who come directly into contact with young people.

Every individual has a responsibility to inform the safeguarding lead of any concerns relating to safeguarding children. The safeguarding lead must decide if the concerns should be communicated to Children and Families Services, or the police.

Definitions

Child/Young person

In this policy, a child or young person refers to anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This definition applies regardless of whether a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, and their status and/or entitlements to services or protection do not change as a result of any of these circumstances.

Abuse

A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody that may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical, as well as the impact of witnessing the ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse. Children may be abused in a family, or in an institutional or community setting by those known to the, or more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be facilitated to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult, or adults, or another child or children.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Controlling or coercive behaviour

Also known as coercive control, the use of control and coercion in relationships is a form of domestic abuse and, since December 2015, a criminal offence.

Controlling and coercive behaviour is outlined in Government guidance issued under section 77 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 as part of the Government's non-statutory definition of domestic violence and abuse. It is described as:

- Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour; and

- Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim

Coercive control is a form of abuse that involves multiple behaviours and tactics which reinforce each other and are used to isolate, manipulate and regulate the victim. This pattern of abuse creates high levels of anxiety and fear. This has a significant impact on children and young people, both directly, as victims in their own right, and indirectly due to the impact the abuse has on the non-abusive parent. Children may also be forced to participate in controlling or coercive behaviour towards the parent who is being abused.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. Domestic abuse is not limited to physical acts of violence or threatening behaviour, and can include emotional, psychological, controlling or coercive behaviour, sexual and/or economic abuse. Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and adolescent to parent violence. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home.

Domestic abuse continues to be a prevalent risk factor identified through children social care assessments for children in need. Domestic abuse has a significant impact on children and young people. Children may experience domestic abuse directly, as victims in their own right, or indirectly due to the impact the abuse has on others such as the non-abusive parent.

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Extremism

Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society.

Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- a) provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- b) protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- c) ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- d) ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities,

encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Training and awareness

ESSA will provide all staff with adequate safeguarding training in order to carry out their role and responsibilities under this policy. Individuals within the organisation need to be alert to the potential abuse of children both within their families and also from other sources, including abuse by members of that staff and volunteers.

Responding to a safeguarding concern

All members of ESSA should respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child in accordance with these procedures.

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns; however, you must not discuss your concerns with parents/carers in situations where:

- a) this would delay the sharing relevant information with an appropriate person or authority which would increase the risk of harm to the child or young person
- b) asking for consent may increase the risk of harm to the child, young person, you or anyone else.

What to do if children talk to you about abuse or neglect

It is recognised that a child may seek to share information about abuse or neglect with staff and volunteers, or talk spontaneously to individuals or groups. In these situations, you must:

- Remain calm, try not to show that you are shocked or angry
- Listen carefully to the child and allow them to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a child who is freely recalling significant events
- Reassure the child that you are glad they have told you and they have not done anything wrong. Praise them for their bravery.
- As soon as possible, make an accurate record of the information you have been given. Take care to record the time, place and people present at the time the

disclosure was made. Use the child's own words wherever possible and ask the child to check the written record if they are old enough

- Explain that you cannot promise to keep information secret and you may need to speak to others about the information they have shared to keep them safe
- Explain what you are going to do next

What to avoid

- DO NOT ask probing questions or try to "interview" the child
- DO NOT promise to keep secrets. Instead, say that you are going to get help from someone else, as it is your responsibility to keep them safe
- DO NOT ask the child to provide multiple accounts of events to members of ESSA staff. Instead, relay the information to the designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible
- DO NOT make assumptions about what the child is experiencing
- DO NOT describe the abuser using negative words, and avoid judgement words such as inappropriate or problematic.

What to do if you suspect abuse or neglect

You may become concerned about a child for a number of reasons, this may include but is not limited to the child or young person:

- Speaking to you about something which is concerning them
- Telling you about a concern for a friend or other child/children
- Avoiding speaking to you
- They are clearly upset
- Displaying a change in behaviour
- Being disengaged or are having trouble concentrating
- Changing their friendship groups and associates
- Having new marks, bruises or scars, or are trying to conceal them

You may also identify concerns:

- Because of your observations, or
- Changes in performance of the child or young person (relevant for schools, clubs, etc)
- A concern has been raised to you by a colleague, parent or third party

It is good practice to ask a child why they are upset or how a cut or bruise was caused, or respond to a child wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify concerns and result in appropriate action.

If you are concerned about a child you must share your concerns. Initially you should talk to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. You should make a note of your concerns and any actions agreed following your discussion with the Safeguarding Lead.

How to raise a concern

You must report any safeguarding or child protection concerns as soon as possible to the ESSA Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). It is the job of the DSL to take the lead on all safeguarding and child protection issues and to support other staff in dealing with any concerns that arise. They are responsible for deciding the appropriate course of action to take when addressing a concern and making referrals to other agencies such as children's social care, or supporting other staff to do so. Contact details for the East Suffolk Stage Arts DSL, Natalie Curtis, can be found at the bottom of this document.

In the event that the DSL is unavailable, or you are unsatisfied with the DSL's decision in a child protection case, you may need to make a referral yourself. In this case, first consult the Suffolk Threshold Matrix (2022)¹ which will help you determine the level of concern; the document also contains guidance on the type of support needed at each level and which agency to make a referral to. If you are still unsure whether or not a referral is required, you can contact the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) Professional Consultation Line and talk to a MASH social worker for advice. You can find the number in the useful contacts section of this document. **If you feel a child is at immediate risk of harm you must call the police on 999.**

Always take steps to involve the child's parents/carers before making a referral, unless to do so would put the child at risk, for example in cases of domestic abuse.

If you have concerns about an adult in a position of trust, you can make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). You will find their contact details in the useful contacts section of this document.

¹ Suffolk Threshold Matrix (2022). Available from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62ea37b2f412d231ae2c2f35/t/6397478b9bec9118ce5a039d/1670858635778/Suffolk-Threshold-Matrix-2022.pdf>

Informing parents

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 sets out the requirements for how organisations obtain, use and share information.

ESSA will be transparent and accountable in relation to their use of data for collecting, storing, and sharing information.

Information to be shared with another agency will usually require explicit consent except where there are concerns for the welfare or safety of the child. In these circumstances the need for consent changes where it is believed that a child has or is likely to suffer:

- Significant harm and/or;
- Has developmental and welfare needs which are likely only to be met through provision of family support services (with agreement of the child's parent).

For cases not reaching this threshold, it is good practice to be open and honest at the outset with the parents/carers about concerns, and the need for a referral. All reasonable efforts should be made to inform parents/carers prior to discussing concerns with Children and Families Service; however, this should not be delayed if concerns cannot be discussed with the parents.

Where the child expresses a wish for his or her parents not to be informed, their views should be taken seriously and a judgement made based on the child's age and understanding, as to whether the child's wishes should be followed (see <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines/>).

There may be some circumstances where it is not appropriate to seek consent, either because the individual cannot give consent, it is not reasonable to obtain consent, or where seeking consent would put a child or young person's safety or well-being at risk.

Where a decision to share information without consent is made, a record of what has been shared should be kept along with the reason why consent was not obtained. This can be done by filling out an ESSA Safeguarding Record Form.

Consultation with the Children and Families Service

The Suffolk Safeguarding Children Partnership document, Suffolk's Threshold of Need Guidance 2022² should be used to help identify if a concern should be referred to the Children and Families Service. Where concerns are to be raised with the Children and Families Service, the Safeguarding Lead will contact the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership Customer First helpline to discuss the concerns with the Children and Families Service before making a referral.

You may also wish to consult with the Children and Families Service for advice before making a referral if, for example

- You have been unable to contact the Safeguarding Lead and you believe the child is at risk of harm
- You remain unsure after internal consultation as to whether safeguarding concerns exist
- When there is disagreement as to whether safeguarding concerns exist, or
- When the concerns relate to any member of the organising committee.

² Suffolk Threshold of Need Guidance (2022). Available from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62ea37b2f412d231ae2c2f35/t/6397613e4e53b02a77047b7e/1670865216990/Suffolk-Threshold-of-Need-Guidance-2022.pdf>

Useful contacts:

MASH Safeguarding Hub - The MASH Professional Consultation line and the webchat are there for you to discuss the most appropriate and effective way of providing or obtaining help and support for a child (or adult) you feel is at risk of abuse. This will include advice and guidance about making a referral where necessary, including how to involve parents.
Tel: 03456 061499

Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership - Visit the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership website for information regarding making Multi-Agency referrals, advice on how to complete a Multi-Agency Referral form.

Customer First (for immediate safeguarding concerns) Tel: 0808 800 4005

Website: <https://www.suffolksp.org.uk/#gsc.tab=0>

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - Contact the LADO if you have concerns about an adult working with a child/young person that you would like to report, including paid staff, volunteers and agency workers.

Tel: 0300 123 2044

Email: LADO@suffolk.gov.uk

DSL Contact details:

ESSA Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Natalie Curtis

Email: natcurtismusic@gmail.com

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