

Safeguarding Policy

Last reviewed: 10/02/2023

Introduction

Spirit Studios aims to support and promote the welfare of all our staff and students, and is committed to seeking to ensure that everyone is in a safe environment conducive to work/study and the enjoyment of a positive experience.

We realise within the normal course of activities our staff may come into contact with children (e.g. staff who are under 18 when they join, or students who are under 18 years of age on entry) or adults who are rendered vulnerable.

For the purpose of this policy, the definitions are:

- Child – any person under the age of 18.
- Vulnerable Adult – a person aged 18 years or over, who is considered vulnerable.

There is a wide scope of circumstances that may place an adult in a vulnerable position including a damaging home environment, bullying, sexual orientation and drug or alcohol abuse. Less obvious examples include: leaving home for the first time, exam stress and peer pressure.

It is easy to see how many of our students will fall into this category.

Safeguarding is the term used to describe how we protect adults and children from abuse or neglect.

Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to all Spirit Studios staff and other authorised guests. Spirit Studios seeks to operate in a manner which safeguards children and adults' welfare wherever appropriate, and recognises that working in partnership with other organisations (as appropriate) will facilitate this. We are committed to promoting good practice in relation to safeguarding.

This policy will assist Spirit Studios in achieving these commitments and in taking reasonable steps to safeguard those who are vulnerable and who come into contact with the school, by ensuring there are clear guidelines and procedures for identifying risk, reporting concerns and that appropriate action is taken.

Examples of areas where staff may have contact with children and adults who may be vulnerable may include (but is not limited to):

- Teaching and support of students

- Open events
- Summer schools
- School visits, and other outreach events or widening participation activities taking place on or off site
- Work experience, or work placements in other professional settings
- Apprenticeships
- Research activities
- Attendance at private functions run commercially by Spirit Studios
- Field trips, excursions & other activities

Implementation

This document sets out how the school may deal with safeguarding issues and the type of action that we may take to manage matters and provide support. Examples of the type of situations which may result in Spirit Studios implementing this policy and procedure may include where:

- a child or adult raises an allegation of abuse, harm or other inappropriate behaviour;
- there are suspicions or indicators that a child or adult is being abused or harmed or is at risk of abuse or harm;
- there are observable changes in a child or adult's appearance or behaviour that may be related to abuse or harm or risk of abuse or harm;
- a concern is raised that an individual presents a risk of abuse or harm towards a child or adult – this might be in relation to downloading or possession of inappropriate images, or a criminal conviction, for example. If there is concern that a member of staff or student may present a risk, Spirit Studios may invoke its risk assessment procedure (see section 8 below);
- there are concerns regarding signs or behaviours which may suggest a risk of abuse or risk of harm;
- there are concerns regarding the presence of radicalisation and/or extremism within any setting, or such issues fail to be appropriately addressed.

The indicators of abuse or harm or risk of such can be very difficult to recognise and it is not a staff member's responsibility to decide whether a child or adult has been abused or harmed or subjected to abuse or harm, but only to raise concerns that they may have. Spirit Studios will have no investigative role, and it is not the place of Spirit Studios staff or students to make a judgement about whether abuse has occurred - this is the remit of external agencies.

Spirit Studios will take all safeguarding concerns including suspicions and allegations of abuse or harm seriously and will report concerns promptly (see section 6 below).

Staff Support

Spirit Studios has processes in place to check the suitability of staff whose duties and responsibilities involve regular contact or supervision of children or adults who may be vulnerable. We seek to ensure that appropriate suitability checks are carried out in relation to staff including criminal record checks and other checks where appropriate (DBS checks).

Staff dealing with students will consider what support may be offered to them both from within the school and externally, and will be encouraged to seek such support (e.g. signposting to local GPs, mental health services or Occupational Health [if they are a member of staff], or support networks at a partner university).

Responsibility

Ian Hu has been appointed Spirit Studios Safeguarding Lead, and Sarah Bradney as our Safeguarding Deputy. Their duties in these roles include:

- To undertake relevant training in safeguarding procedures and ensure their knowledge is kept up to date;
- To ensure all members of staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and receive the training needed to meet those responsibilities.
- To act as a point of contact for those who have safeguarding concerns, receiving information and recording those concerns,
- To act upon concerns as appropriate in the circumstances, for example by making external referrals to social services or police,
- To monitor the implementation of this policy and procedure.

Safeguarding Concerns

It is the remit of Social Services and/or the Police, and not anyone connected with Spirit Studios, to investigate safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding concerns may include concerns regarding a child or an adult's welfare, health or safety, or concerns that the child or adult is being abused or harmed, or is at risk of such.

If any individual raises a safeguarding concern, e.g. they are being abused or harmed, the matter should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer: Ian Hu (or in their absence, the Safeguarding Deputy, Sarah Bradney) without delay. A report (SR1 Form) should be submitted, even if doubt exists as to whether a safeguarding concern should be reported.

If a member of staff becomes aware of a safeguarding issue while on placement or work based learning or in a professional setting they should normally report any concern in the first instance to the Safeguarding Officer of the placement or work based learning provider, or in the professional setting.

If the Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) considers that the child or adult who is vulnerable is being abused or harmed, or at risk of such, he may make a referral to social services or the police as appropriate. The Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) will consult with an identified contact at Social Services or the police to determine whether the allegation warrants further investigation.

If any student or member of staff makes a referral to social services or the police, then they must notify the Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) that a referral has been made as soon as reasonably practicable.

Circumstances may arise in which the school is concerned that staff may pose a risk to the welfare, health and/or safety of a child or vulnerable adult. In these circumstances the Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) will ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out which seek to identify any risks posed by a particular member of staff, and will consider the appropriate way to manage such risks. It is not Spirit Studios' role to investigate the situation, only to assess the risk. Information and concerns will be shared with the member of staff, who will be given the opportunity (in person or in writing) to respond to that information and concerns.

The member of staff will have the ability to respond to any issue raised and has the right to be accompanied to any meeting by a colleague or representative.

Following this process, the Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) will determine whether or not the member of staff poses any risk and if so what the risks are and how these should be managed. The outcome of the risk assessment process may be (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Make a referral to an external agency, e.g. the police or social services.
- Take action under an alternative procedure, e.g. dealing with matters of conduct
- Suspend the member of staff to allow further investigation to take place
- Notifying the member of staff's line manager that conditions must be met to allow the member of staff to continue working
- No action to be taken, where an allegation is unfounded.

Termination of Contract

If Spirit Studios decides to terminate a member of staff's contract or to terminate their involvement in activities that involve children or adults who are requiring activities which make them vulnerable as a result of suspected abuse or harm, or risk of abuse or harm, the school is under an obligation to notify the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Recording Concerns

The Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy) is responsible for ensuring that a record is made of the risk assessment process and outcomes. He is responsible for monitoring matters and/or conducting further risk assessments where appropriate, taking into account up-to-date information.

Accurate recording is essential, as there may be legal proceedings at a later date. If possible, a verbatim record of the person's account of what occurred in their own words should be recorded, which should include details of the nature of the allegation or concern, and a description of any injury (you must NOT remove clothing to inspect any injuries or take photographs). Times, dates, places and any other detail should be included.

Written records of any safeguarding concerns will be retained for as long as is necessary for the purpose for which it was obtained, or as legally required or lawfully permitted.

Such written records will be held centrally and separately from a member of staff's or student's personal records.

Training

All staff will receive training and guidance appropriate to their role. All staff will be made aware of this policy and procedure and related guidance. Staff are required to complete and pass a level 2 Safeguarding course and a level 2 Prevent course.

Guidance for Staff

All staff who have regular one-to-one contact with students who are under the age of 18 or who are deemed vulnerable, should adhere to the following guidance to ensure safety both for themselves and the subject:

- Respect all individuals whatever their age.
- Place the safety and wellbeing of the subject first. It must be placed before any personal or organisational goals and before loyalty to friends and colleagues.
- Form appropriate relationships with the subjects. These should be based on mutual trust and respect.
- Be aware of the relative powerlessness of subjects compared to staff members.
- Be committed to actively preventing the exploitation and abuse of children and vulnerable adults.
- Conduct meetings with the subject either with another staff member present or in an open environment (e.g. leave office door open, and do not hold meetings when working alone).
- If physical contact is necessary, e.g. for demonstration purposes, ensure it takes place only with the full consent of the subject and that its purpose is clear.
- Do not use touch as a form of communication, even to comfort a subject who is distressed.
- Consider the implications of transporting subjects in your own vehicle; offer alternatives wherever possible so the subject travels with peers.
- Consider your expected behaviour and what might be considered unacceptable, e.g. sexually suggestive comments, inappropriate language.
- Be mindful that it is a criminal offence for any person in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under 18.
- Remember that it is illegal for students who are under 18 to buy alcohol, and that it would not be appropriate to offer them alcohol. Planning and organisation of events involving students should take this into account.

If a child or adult discloses that they are experiencing abuse or harm, or if there are suspicions a child or adult is at risk of abuse or harm, consider the following:

- Make yourself available to talk to them even if you are busy
- Remain calm
- Be supportive
- Listen without interrupting; allow them to talk at their own pace

- Take what the person says seriously
- Reassure them that it was right to tell someone
- Use language they understand
- Ask questions for clarification purposes only; try not to ask leading questions
- Explain what will happen next, i.e. that disclosure of relevant information may need to be made to the Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy)
- Write down verbatim immediately afterwards what was said, including the time, place and any other observations: sign and date the record.
- Note the student's age, gender and ethnicity
- Pass the report (SR1) to the Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy).
- Remember that you may need support too. Seek advice and support for yourself from your line manager.

Please DO NOT:

- Panic
- Display shock or distaste, or disbelief
- Delay
- Promise to keep secrets
- Ask leading questions or make suggestions on what occurred
- Ask the person to repeat the story unnecessarily
- Express any opinions about what you are told, or make comments about the abuser
- Discuss the disclosure with anyone other than the Safeguarding Officer and other relevant personnel
- Start to investigate
- Contact the alleged abuser

It is important that you support the subject through this consultation stage, however it is important to note the difference between offering support and counselling.

While a member of staff who is offering support will almost certainly be using counselling skills (such as empathic listening, body language, minimal encouragers, etc.), it's important they do not consider themselves to be delivering counselling, which requires a more intensive level of training, especially in the area of risk management.

Offering support involves:

- Working within the ethical and professional framework of the institution (i.e. Spirit Studios).
- Using 'counselling skills' such as listening and reflection to create a space for people in need of support to feel heard. Exploring solutions, if appropriate, always within the support-seeker's frame of reference.
- No knowledge of counselling theory - just good listening skills.
- Not stepping into a different role outside of the normal role (i.e. tutor / admin worker / director).
- Not being expected to make judgments on complex ethical issues or multi-layered mental health or social problems.
- Never trying to diagnose (i.e. "you are suffering from OCD").

Counselling involves:

- Working within the framework of a professional body, such as the BACP.
- In depth training on recognising and de-escalating risk.
- Working with various therapy modalities depending on the specific presentation of the problem and person.
- A knowledge of mental health and other peripheral issues and how these might impact the work.
- A detailed knowledge of complex ethical issues and boundaries from working with vulnerable people.

Appendix A : Types of Abuse

It is vitally important that all staff understand the range and types of abuse that can be experienced by young people and vulnerable adults; some of the following are obvious examples, but some others may not be so obvious or easy to identify. The Department of Health defines abuse as, 'A violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to the abuse.' Abuse can be physical, financial, verbal or psychological. It can be the result of an act or a failure to act.

The following list offers some examples but is not exhaustive:

Physical abuse or violence, including hitting, shaking, throwing, slapping, pushing, kicking, poisoning, or the giving or supply of illegal drugs, misuse of medication, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, restraint or otherwise causing physical harm, or inappropriate sanctions, cultural issues such as 'honour-based' violence or forced marriage. Signs to look out for:

- An inconsistent explanation given for the injury you can see
- No explanation at all or the explanation later changes
- A history of frequent injuries
- An unreasonable delay in seeking medical advice
- Multiple facial bruising, especially to the mouth, eyes or ears
- Bite or burn marks
- Bruises
- Aggressive behaviour or outbursts of temper
- Running away from home or showing a fear of going home
- Reluctance to get undressed for sporting or other activity
- Ensuring the arms and legs are covered, even when it is hot
- Depression or mood swings that are out of character
- Flinching when someone gets close (as though they are expecting to be harmed).

Sexual abuse, including grooming, rape and sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the person has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting; the activities may be physical or non-physical, e.g. involving vulnerable adults looking at, or in the production of, sexual images; sexual teasing or innuendo. (Grooming can occur when a child is drawn into a sexual relationship with an adult and the adult shrouds the interaction in secrecy); signs to look out for:

- Running away from home or care
- Withdrawn or overly compliant behaviour
- Depression, self-harm or suicidal behaviour
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Eating disorders (for example anorexia or bulimia)
- Having unexplained amounts of money
- Alluding to secrets that they cannot disclose

Psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Signs to look out for:

- A lack of facial expression
- A lack of self-esteem
- Being distrustful of any kindness or consideration shown to them
- Eating disorders
- An excessive deference towards others
- An excessive need for approval, attention and affection
- Self-harming.

Financial abuse, including theft, fraud, exploitation, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits; signs to look out for:

- Unexplained loss of possessions or money
- Stealing (under coercion, to give money to an abuser)
- Bills not being paid (for example rent or utility bills)
- A lack of money to pay for basics such as food and clothes.

Physical or emotional neglect and acts of omission, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to protect a vulnerable adult from physical or emotional danger or to ensure adequate supervision, failure to provide access to social care health, or educational services, the withholding of necessities such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating; and benefits; signs to look out for:

- Stealing or gorging on food
- Inappropriately or inadequately dressed
- Loss of interest in academic work and there are frequent absences

Discriminatory abuse, including harassment or insults because of someone's race, gender or gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; signs to look out for:

- racist or sexist comments or innuendo
- verbal or physical abuse because of a disability
- harassment because of a sexual orientation.

Internet/electronic abuse, the use of modern communication technologies (e.g. Internet, text or video messaging, e-mail, chatrooms, social media networking sites) to embarrass, humiliate, threaten, intimidate or bully an individual in an attempt to gain power and control over them.

It is important to note that abuse can:

- consist of a single act or repeated acts;
- be intentional or unintentional, or result from a lack of knowledge;
- be an act of neglect, an omission or a failure to act;
- cause harm temporarily or over a period of time;
- occur in any relationship;
- be perpetrated by anyone, individually or as part of a group or organisation;
- often constitute a crime, i.e. physical, sexual abuse for example, downloading or using pornographic images of children or vulnerable adults and/or storing them on school computers or equipment.

The following may indicate that abuse is taking place (this list is not exhaustive):

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries, particularly if such an injury is unlikely to have occurred accidentally;
- An injury for which the explanation appears inconsistent;
- The child or adult describes an abusive act or situation;
- Unexplained changes in behaviour;
- The display of inappropriate behaviour (sexual or otherwise);
- Apparent mistrust of others;
- The person appears increasingly unkempt.

Appendix B : Safeguarding Flowchart

