

The Spark Arts For Children

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & VULNERABLE ADULTS SAFEGUARDING POLICY



Code of Behaviour

To be made available to all staff and volunteers working with The Spark.

These guidelines are intended to reduce situations where abuse of children may occur, and help protect staff by promoting good working practice. General Guidelines should be observed at all times in any situation; other guidelines should be referred to in the relevant circumstances / places where work is carried out.

The Spark is committed to practice that protects children from harm.

All staff in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibility to develop awareness of the issues which can cause children harm.

The term 'staff' is here used to include everyone working with The Spark, whether as a freelance, temporary company member, core staff, or volunteer.

General Guidelines:

1. Everyone working with children should be sensitive as to what is appropriate physical contact, both in general terms, and in relation to a specific individual. Staff need to be conscious of situations in which their actions, however well intended, could be misconstrued by others as harmful.
2. Treat all young people with respect. Listen to them carefully.
3. It is not good practice to spend unreasonable amounts of time alone with children away from others.
4. Always be publicly open when working with children. Avoid situations where a leader and individual child are completely unobserved.
5. Children should never be left unattended or be excluded from the group.
6. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms, always ensure leaders where possible work in pairs, and do not to enter changing rooms of the opposite sex.
7. Leaders must place the well-being and safety of the young person above other considerations at all times.
8. If a child or young person is injured whilst involved in a Spark project, the injury is to be recorded and countersigned by the parent or carer of the child.
9. If a child or young person arrives at a Spark project session with an injury, the injury should be recorded and countersigned by the parent or carer. This might be useful if an allegation is made at a later date and also records that the injury was not sustained during a Spark activity.
10. It is not good practice to take children to your home where they will be alone with you.
11. Be aware of and avoid using inappropriate language.
12. Be aware of and avoid using inappropriate physical contact.
13. There may be times when physical contact is unavoidable or positively desirable or necessary, such as providing comfort and reassurance to a distressed child, or physical support, for example when working with a disabled child. Physical contact should only take place with the consent of the child and the purpose of the contact should be made clear.
14. Challenge young people who are using inappropriate language.
15. Act on and record any allegations made by a young person or member of staff.

Other Guidelines:

In Schools

1. Do not accept the help of pupils with any movement of sets or preparation.
2. The Spark staff should stay in the workshop, performance or activity area and avoid wandering around the school unnecessarily.
3. Find out where the staff toilets are – never use the pupils’ toilets.
4. Alcohol and recreational drugs should not be taken onto school premises under any circumstances and staff should not consume alcohol before arriving at the activity session.
5. Do not smoke on school premises.
6. Where it is necessary to take prescribed drugs onto the premises, they should be kept hidden and out of reach of young people.
7. Ensure language and conversation is appropriate.
8. Report any suspicions or allegations of abuse to the General Manager or Leader of the Activity (see main points 5-8 above)
9. Avoid being left alone with a single young person.
10. Do not initiate physical contact with pupils – it should not be necessary. If the nature of the workshop / activity requires any physical contact with pupils, this should be discussed with their teachers in advance.
11. If a child initiates physical contact (i.e. approaches you for a hug), deflect them if possible (e.g. offer them a handshake instead).
12. The Spark staff are not in the school in a disciplinary capacity of any kind (any action taken in this regard is to come from the teachers).
13. Never reprimand or shout at a child.
14. Avoid getting involved in issues that arise amongst the pupils. If a child informs you of a problem, tell a member of the teaching staff. Do not interfere while the teacher deals with the situation.
15. Occasionally The Spark staff might be approached by pupils with personal problems. Without being dismissive, explain that you will have to report this to a teacher. Do not promise to keep the issue secret. You must report this to the lead staff member present and the school headteacher.
16. If something a pupil tells you leads you to suspect they are being abused, you are obliged to report it to the lead Spark staff member and the headteacher.

One to one situations

1. A one to one situation creates a more heightened environment – facilitators should be aware of this and act professionally and accordingly.
2. As far as possible, any one to one situations should take place in an environment that can be observed.

If you have any concern or wish to report an allegation, please contact the Spark’s Project Manager in the first instance, who will then contact the Spark CPO.

The Spark Child Protection Officer is Harriet Roy (General Manager) 0116 261 6893

The Spark trustee with responsibility for the Spark Arts for Children’s safeguarding policy is Jasbir Mann.

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Appendix 1: Checklist – responding to a child making allegations of abuse

- Stay calm
- Be non-judgemental
- Listen carefully to what is said without interrupting
- Find an appropriate opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others - **do not promise to keep secrets**
- Make it clear that you take them seriously
- Allow the child to continue at his / her own pace
- Record only what the child has said. Many cases fall down where it is possible to infer that leading questions were asked even at these early stages
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Reassure them that you are going to do everything you can to help. Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words as often as possible in a clear and factual manner, using Incident Report Form (Appendix ?)
- Information that should be recorded includes:
 - date and time of incident and / or disclosure,
 - any names mentioned
 - to whom the information was given
 - what was said or done by whom
 - any action taken by the organisation
 - where relevant: reasons why no referral to a statutory agency was made
 - ensure that the record is signed and dated
- Record every incident of suspected, alleged or disclosed abuse you encounter
- The information will be received by the General Manager and stored in accordance with the requirements detailed in the Data Protection Act 1998. It will then only be shared by those who need to know, i.e. senior management of the company, the chairman, and social services staff as necessary.

Things to avoid:

- Do not quiz for more information
- Do not speculate or make assumptions
- Do not voice negative judgements about the situation or the abuser
- Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Do not promise that 'everything will be alright'
- Do not offer to keep it confidential

Remember:

It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the first person who encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is the task of a professional child safeguarding agency, following a referral to them of concern about a child.