



## **Safeguarding Policy Code of Good Practice**

### **Introduction**

At Sacred Arts Camp we have developed an understanding of how to create an environment of intimacy, creativity and spontaneity. Having a small, closed camp without use of alcohol and drugs, produces a deep and fulfilling sense of openness, trust, safety and community that so often gets obscured among the challenges of ordinary life.

This means that alongside, and perhaps because of, the experience of greater openness, there has to be a greater awareness and clarity around boundaries. Therefore we are setting out a Safeguarding Policy to increase clarity and help make camp safe for more of the openness which we value.

**Schedule One offenders and people who have been excluded from previous camps, or similar camps, where there are clear safeguarding risks identified and the facts have been substantiated, will also be prevented from attending.**

This policy is underpinned by the values and principles of the Sacred Arts Camp ethos.

We aim to:

Adopt the highest possible standards and take reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of everyone at the camp while upholding our main aim of providing an enjoyable and safe experience for everyone at the camp. However all campers are made aware when booking and when they arrive at the camp that children remain the responsibility of their parents at all times.

This policy applies to children and young people under the age of 18 years. Similar guidelines need to be applied when dealing with vulnerable adults. All references to a child or children in this policy and guidelines should be taken to refer to those referred to above.

It is impossible to ensure that no child ever comes to harm while at SAC, however implementing this policy and following the guidelines will enable us to undertake our work with children, confident that we have taken all reasonable precautions to prevent harm occurring, while being prepared to deal with an incident should it occur.

### **Who should read this policy?**

**Everyone at Sacred Arts Camp.**

The SAC holding group ask that all campers and workers read this policy. It is important that we are all aware of the issues relating to safeguarding and it is essential we do not become complacent and believe 'it could never happen to me'.

The SAC holding group want parents to note that SAC workers are not required to have a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure.

## **Basic Principles**

- Everyone to be treated with respect and dignity.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of any child at camp.
- Respect the wishes of a child as you would an adult. Be aware of raising your voice, issuing threats, using sarcasm, name-calling or isolating a young person as a result of their behaviour. This is an abuse of power and akin to bullying. There should be no abuse or exploitation, no scape-goating, ridiculing or bullying.
- Remember that children regard adults as role models and adults must ensure their behaviour, language, gestures, etc. are appropriate and above reproach.
- Safety in numbers should be a golden-rule. We all need to be aware of the potential risks when an adult is alone with children – risks to the child, but also for the adult if unfounded accusations are made. We recommend that with the exception of your own child or children for whom you have been asked to be in *loco parentis*, you avoid being alone with a child/children, in a private space, if you are out of earshot or hidden from the view of others.
- All people at the camp have a responsibility to avoid putting children in a situation in which there is significant risk to their health and safety. If you have any concerns about someone's behaviour you are encouraged to discuss this with the Safeguarding Liaison.

## **Rubella and other infectious diseases**

- If there is the possibility that a family at camp has been in contact with rubella (German measles) in the three weeks prior to camp, or if someone develops it within three weeks following camp, it is vital to let the Holding Group know so that women in the early stages of pregnancy can take medical advice.
- Holding Group should also be notified of any other infectious diseases.

## **Responsibility for children and adolescents**

- **Children and young people under the age of 18 remain the responsibility of their parents or guardians.**
- Another adult known to the parents may act in *loco parentis* provided they have an agreed arrangement. This may be made when an adult is going off site for a few hours or is in a meeting, but arrangements must be clear and acceptable to the child and to the adults involved.
- In any case, a child should not be left in the care of an adult who is not their parent (including, for instance travelling in a car) unless that adult is formally acting *in loco parentis*.
- No one should invade the privacy of anyone when they are using the toilet, showering, etc.

## **Teachers, workshop leaders and camp workers**

- We have a dedicated team of skilled workers; however our workers are not responsible for the care of children and adolescents unless this has been specifically arranged.
- Children and adolescents are free to leave a workshop at any point.
- Parents/individuals wishing to offer activities will need to work together with the creativity team or holding group to make sure that they are supported. Parents are entitled to a full description of the activity and the level of support available.
- Teachers, workshop leaders and camp workers agree to do their best to be sensitive to the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, particularly when an imbalance of power may exist or be perceived to exist. They agree not to use their roles as teachers, workshop leaders or camp workers to manipulate or indulge in favours that otherwise would not be given freely. The teachers, workshop leaders or camp workers agree to hold with integrity the whole camps safety, realizing that personal connections with members of the camp are in service to the camp as a whole.

- Many SAC Workshops involve spiritual practice that can awaken many qualities within us, including romantic and sexual feelings. Teachers and workshop leaders understand that even though these feelings may arise, they will not be acted upon. Teachers and workshop leaders agree not to pursue a sexual or romantic relationship with participants in the camp during SAC. We will not act in any way that could take advantage of any participant's vulnerability.

### **The management of behaviour and relationships at Sacred Arts Camp**

Our policy of managing behaviour and relationships is based on mutual respect, honesty, trust, open-hearted communication, co-operation, inclusiveness, honouring diversity and love.

We encourage all those working with children and young people to engage with them to develop a code of conduct at the beginning of the camp based on what everyone needs to feel safe and to get the most out of the camp. This can be done with the respective age groups and then put together in words that all will understand.

This code will be written down and shared with all attending activities organised by camp workers to ensure a consistent loving approach.

If the code of conduct is ignored then those young people who have acted in a way that harms another, emotionally or physically, by word or deed, will be encouraged to be accountable for their actions and given the opportunity to make amends.

This accountability could take the form of a brief conversation focussed on encouraging the young person to put things right for themselves or a mediated meeting between the young person who has ignored the code and those who have been affected. This approach will also identify if there is responsibility on both sides of what has happened.

If the young person is unwilling to engage in a healing process initially then they will be invited to return to their circle to give them time to reflect. Parents may need to be contacted to explain the situation.

The wishes of the young person and their need for time will be respected, but it will be made clear that their participation in future workshops and activities is conditional on their putting right the harm they have caused.

If a young person's conduct is causing serious cause for concern (on-going bullying or targeting of another child or group, for example) then a mediated meeting may be arranged involving the parents and those who have been affected. This will take the form of a mediation circle in which the main focus is to repair the harm, give everyone a chance to share their perspectives and their feelings and be re-integrated back into their circle and the camp.

At no time will voices be raised in anger, threats issued or sanctions given. These are counter-productive in the context of the camp and inconsistent with the camp's ethos. Parents are asked to respect these guidelines so that as adults we are responding consistently with love and respect. (Support and advice on mediation-type responses can be offered by those working with the young people).

There are occasions when a young person is unable to respond to this approach and excludes him or herself from opportunities for repairing the links with the rest of the camp. If this self-exclusion lasts for more than a few days then it might be better for the young person and their family to address the issues in familiar surroundings.

## Physical environment

For any off camp excursions - any dangers inherent in a site, such as cliffs, rivers or busy roads within walking distance, should be made known to parents before they attend an event, so that they have the information to decide whether the risk is acceptable.

## Behaviour of adults

Guidelines are for the protection of adults as well as children. It is never enough to protest that we meant no harm and that our actions are being misinterpreted. We each have a responsibility to act transparently and with such a margin that no error of interpretation is possible.

- Aside from the *in loco parentis* arrangements described above, **adults should endeavour not to be alone with a child who is not their own**. This applies both to informal situations and to organised activities such as workshops.
- Other adults should make themselves available as necessary to see that such situations do not arise. Parents are in any case encouraged to attend workshops with their children where the child is likely to need support in order to cope with the activity.
- SAC is a family event with people from a wide range of backgrounds, and we should behave sensitively and with discretion.
- We need to be especially alert to the potential sexual, physical or emotional abuse. Avoid unsolicited references to sexual matters. If you are asked about such issues ensure that others are within earshot. It is important that young people do feel able to bring these subjects up with people they trust, but be aware of the risks of engaging in such discussion should what you say prove to be upsetting. If you feel inexperienced to respond ask the young person if there is anyone else they feel safe to go to. Do not assume that every young person feels safe to talk to their parents about these issues.
- If we think someone is acting unsafely or in a way that might be misconstrued, we must be prepared to speak to him or her or to someone responsible.

## Action in the event of serious concern or an incident:

1. In the first instance please alert the Safeguarding Liaison if you have a concern regarding the welfare of a child or are approached by a distressed child with a story that causes concern.
2. The Safeguarding Liaison will discuss the case with the rest of the Holding Group and the Camp Advisor to ascertain the next step.
3. Depending on the incident the next steps are likely to include:
  - Listening to those directly affected, identifying what they need and ensuring that these people have at least one member of the Holding Group for support and as a point of contact.
  - Hearing from anyone implicated/named as involved in causing distress or harm and ensuring that those involved have at least one member of the Holding Group for support and as a point of contact.
  - Ensuring that any child affected is safe and at no further immediate risk.
  - Identifying with all the parties if a face-to-face meeting to clarify the situation would be welcome or appropriate.
  - Deciding, as a Holding Group, in liaison with all those affected, what the next appropriate steps are to repair the harm and move forward.

## **Cases of suspected abuse**

There are four likely scenarios which we need to be aware of and prepared to deal with if necessary. These are:

1. There is suspicion or evidence that a child is being abused by a member of the camp or other person associated with SAC.
2. A child accuses a member of the camp or other person associated with SAC of abusing them.
3. Abuse takes place or is suspected during the camp by an individual unrelated to SAC.
4. A child discloses abuse happening elsewhere e.g. at home.

For any allegation we must consider, in this order,

- a) The protection of the child involved in the incident
- b) The rights of the parents to have information to help them safeguard their children
- c) The protection of the other members of the camp community, including all children and adults.
- d) The protection of an adult who may be falsely accused.
- e) The protection of the camp.

Before precipitating irreversible action we should help each other explore whether an anxiety is well-founded. Anyone who suspects child abuse at camp should discuss the matter with the Safeguarding Liaison so as to make sure that they are not misinterpreting it. The Safeguarding Liaison will discuss the matter with the Holding Group and the camp advisor at the earliest opportunity.

Where the suspected abuse is physical rather than sexual it may be appropriate to encourage people to discuss the issues raised in a non-judgemental context, ensuring that the issues raised are not a matter of differing parenting styles. If, however, there is suspected serious physical harm to a child the matter will be dealt with accordingly.

**Anyone who suspects abuse should not ask the child questions about it.**

Anyone to whom a child discloses abuse should listen supportively without actively responding and without promising secrecy. They should also write a verbatim report. They should tell the Safeguarding Liaison and not discuss it more widely.

**In an extreme situation where the police need to be called immediately, the Holding Group must be notified.**

Where there is no evidence of child abuse SAC campers have neither the duty nor the right to intervene or to report to a family simply because a child is being treated, within the family, in a way which they personally find unacceptable. The only effective intervention in a case that is not outside the law is to befriend the family and support them to function more lovingly.

**In most cases, if it is agreed to be appropriate, mediation can be arranged.**