



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.

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/carers at all times.

This policy applies to children and young people under the age of 18 years and 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.

Persons who pose a risk to children and campers who have been excluded from previous camps, or similar camps, will be prevented from attending, where there are clear safeguarding risks identified and the facts have been substantiated.

Who should read this policy?

Everyone at Sacred Arts Camp.

The SAC holding group asks 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 wants parents to note that SAC workers are not required to have a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check/certificate.

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 Lead or a member of the Holding Group.

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.
- Please also refer to Camp Agreements for specific details for 2022 regarding infectious diseases, including Coronavirus (Covid 19).
- The 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 carers/guardians.**
- Another adult aged 27 or above who is 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 camp's safety, realising 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 (also known as 'ground rules') at the beginning of the camp based on what everyone needs to feel safe and to get the most out of the camp. This will be done with each facilitated age group, written in words that all can understand, and shared with all YP workshop leaders 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/carers 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/carers 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.

Those leaders involved with an incident, or responsible for the YP's area/activity, will organise and participate in the mediation process with support from the Safeguarding Lead, Camp Advisor and or HG members as needed (SL/CA & HG will only participate in the mediation process if required). All appropriate people will be invited to join the mediation process to ensure all perspectives can be heard and feelings expressed safely to resolve the incident.

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/carers 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 i.e. leaving camp if necessary.

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. Whilst out on an excursion the camp workers/leaders will be acting "in loco parentis" for all minors they have agreed to be responsible for.

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/carers 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 Lead or member of the Holding Group 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 Lead 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:
 - Ensuring that any child affected is safe and at no further immediate risk.

- 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.
- 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 any anxiety or concern is well-founded. Anyone who suspects child abuse at camp should discuss the matter with the Safeguarding Lead so as to make sure that they are not misinterpreting it. The Safeguarding Lead will discuss the matter with the Holding Group and the camp advisor at the earliest opportunity. Please refer to the Safeguarding Protocol Document for more guidance.

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 as soon as possible after the disclosure. They should tell the Safeguarding Lead (or HG member) 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 an individual feels uncomfortable about a parenting style that is not deemed a safeguarding issue they have neither the duty nor the right to intervene. However, they are encouraged to offer support to the parents/carer to help them function more lovingly. If this is not possible they may benefit from discussing their concerns with another trusted responsible adult/parent to seek further guidance and/or emotional support.

In most cases, if it is agreed to be appropriate, mediation can be arranged through the SL or Holding Group.