



# SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Updated 03.09.2022

## Introduction

This policy was drawn up with close reference to the document “Safe from Harm”, which was prepared by the Home Office (1993) as a code of practice for safeguarding the welfare of children and young people (up to the age of 16) in voluntary organisations in England and Wales.

It supports and reinforces “The Children Act (1989)”. It is applicable to all Board members, volunteers and consultants.

It is designed to encourage the development of good practice in Les Crocodiles, to prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children and young people whilst they are in the care of the Organisation and to protect those who work with children and young people from unfounded accusations or from behaving in ways which may be well-intended but inadvisable.

**It is everyone’s duty, both to prevent abuse and to report any abuse discovered or suspected.**

The policy consists of:

- A. Policy Statement
- B. Procedures
- C. Guidelines for the Implementation of the Procedures

## A. Policy Statement

Les Crocodiles seeks to serve the needs of children and young people, promoting a sense of wholeness of life. In doing so, we take seriously the welfare of all children and young people who access our services and activities with a view of preventing physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people and, to this end, recognises its responsibility to implement, maintain and review the following procedures.

We continuously remind board members, volunteers and consultants that there are positive ways of protecting children and young people. Children need:

- to feel safe and secure
- health and happiness
- appropriate affection
- lots of smiles
- praise and encouragement
- to be able to talk to someone
- to be listened to
- new experiences
- respect for their feelings
- rewards and treats

## B. Procedures

### Definitions and examples of the different types of abuse

The following may help you decide whether a child's welfare is at risk of abuse, harm or neglect.

**Physical:** where children and young people receive physical harm or injury. This includes unexplained or hidden injuries or those which have received no medical attention.

Signs that may suggest physical abuse:

- multiple bruising to different parts of the body
- bruising of different colours indicating repeated injuries
- fingertip bruising to the chest, back, arms or legs
- burn of any shape or size
- an injury for which there is no adequate explanation

Signs that may suggest neglect:

- squalid, unhygienic or dangerous home conditions
- parents who fail to attend to their children's health or development needs
- children who appear persistently undersized or overweight
- children who continually appear tired or lacking in energy
- children who suffer frequent injuries due to lack of supervision

**Sexual:** where adults seek sexual gratification by using children and young people. This includes allegations made by the child or young person, pre-occupation with sexual matters, sexual activity through words, play or drawings, severe sleep disturbances with fears and phobias, being sexually provocative with adults.

Signs of possible sexual abuse:

- something a child has told you
- something a child has told someone else
- a child who shows worrying sexualised behaviour in their play or with other children
- a child who seems to have inappropriate sexual knowledge for their age
- a child who may be visiting or being looked after by a known or suspected sexual offender

**Emotional:** where children and young people are harmed by a constant lack of love and affection, or threats and taunting. This includes regression in behaviour, nervousness, sudden under-achievement, inappropriate relationships with peers/adults, attention-seeking, running away/stealing/lying, looking uncared for.

Signs which may suggest emotional harm:

- Children whose behaviour is excessive. For example excessive bedwetting, overeating, rocking or head banging
- Children who self harm. For example, they may cut or scratch themselves or overdose
- Children who attempt suicide
- Children who persistently run away from home



- Children who show high levels of anxiety, unhappiness or withdrawal
- Children who usually seek out or avoid affection

**NOTE:** Physical abuse and neglect are difficult to hide. Sexual abuse can be almost impossible to identify and prove. Many symptoms of distress can point to abuse but there may be other explanations. It is important, therefore, that the above signs are not taken as indications that abuse has taken place. They should make us stop and think, but not necessarily jump to conclusions.

### Recording of disclosure/concerns

If note taking is inappropriate, or not possible at the time, the board member, volunteer or consultant involved should immediately afterwards make a written note of any key points and mark it “CHILD PROTECTION – STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL”, using the child’s own words and phrases, if possible. These notes must be kept as originals, timed, dated and signed, as they could well be used as evidence in court. As soon as possible the board member, volunteer or consultant must seek out the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO). If that person is unavailable, the information should be forwarded to the Chair of Les Crocodiles.

Disclosure information from a child or young person cannot be discussed with any other individual other than the CPO or the Chair of Les Crocodiles.

Following consideration, the CPO may decide to make a referral to Children’s Social Care or the Police.

### Physical Evidence

If any physical injuries or bruising are noticed it is appropriate, as a caring adult, to ask the child how they sustained the bruise, graze, scratch, bite or other mark on their body. All such marks or injuries howsoever caused, must be recorded on a “Body Map Record” and handed to the CPO with the child’s explanation attached. You must not examine a child beneath their clothing, ask any leading questions or conduct any further investigations.

### Designated Child Protection Officer

In the absence of a CPO, the Chair will adopt the role as the designated senior member of the board.

The current Chair of Les Crocodiles is:

**Name:** Camille Bateau

**Telephone:** 07979 851878

### The role of the CPO is to:

- Ensure that child protection procedures are in place and updated as appropriate.
- Ensure that all board members, volunteers and consultants are aware of both the [London Safeguarding Children Board’s Child Protection Procedures](#) and Les Crocodiles’ Safeguarding Policy.
- Be available to provide advice and support to trustees, volunteers and consultants for confidential discussions about concerns.



- Be available to provide support to the children and young people who access our service.
- Liaise with Children's Social Care in accordance with [London Safeguarding Children Board's Child Protection Procedures](#).
- Keep records of any concerns / suspected cases of abuse / referral.
- Review arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people on an annual basis, and support the implementation of any action plan arising from this review.

### Making a Referral

If you are unsure that a child may be suffering but are worried, or if you are concerned that a child has suffered harm, neglect or abuse you should inform the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO).

When the CPO has been informed of a case of suspected abuse or of a young person who may be at risk of abuse, they will make a referral to Children's Social Care. If it is unclear that the matter being referred is a safeguarding concern, the CPO will consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) from Children's Social Care to determine if a formal referral should be made. A log of the discussion must be kept if a referral is not made and the person who made the concern known should be informed of the outcome.

Referrals to the relevant London Borough Children's Social Care should normally be made in writing but social care will accept telephone referrals on the understanding that the referral will be in writing within forty eight hours. All referrals should be made or confirmed using the appropriate pro-forma. All referrals to Children's Social Care should be screened/evaluated by that agency within 1 working day and a decision made regarding the next course of action. Where there is to be no further action, feedback should be provided to the CPO about the decision and the reason for making it in writing within 48 hours.

**If you suspect abuse DO NOT DELAY.**

### If a child or young person wants to talk about abuse

- Accept what the child or young person says, keeping calm and looking at them directly.
- Let them know that you need to tell someone else, do not promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child or young person has broken a rule they are not to blame.
- Be aware that the child or young person may have been threatened.
- Never push for information.
- Reassure the child or young person they were right to tell you and you believe them.
- Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
- Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what was said and when he/she said it. Record dates and times of these events and keep the hand-written record.

## C. Guidelines for the Implementation of the Procedures

- Plan the work of the Organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and young people may occur.



- Arrange that, as far as possible, a worker is not left alone with a child or young person where there is little or no opportunity of the activity being observed by others. This may mean groups working within the same large room or working in an adjoining room with the door left open. This good practice can be of as much benefit to the adult as to the child or young person.
- When meeting with a child or young person individually off site, workers will take reasonable measures to ensure the safety of the child or young person and themselves by informing relevant people where they are going and the time of their expected return.
- Where possible have two workers present with a group.
- If there is only one activity taking place at least two workers must be present.
- Never take a group off the premises with fewer than two adults.
- Think about the use of premises. For example, do not expect children or young people to have to walk along a dark, unsupervised path in order to take part in an activity being hosted by Les Crocodiles.
- Where children and young people have to be transported by car or minibus arrange, as far as possible, to have more than one adult in the vehicle.

#### **Give all board members, volunteers and consultants clear roles**

Abuse of children and young people is most easily concealed where there is confusion amongst adults about roles and responsibilities. Les Crocodiles board members, volunteers and consultants should have a job description, which include their responsibilities for the protection of children and young people.

Volunteers and consultants should also have a clear idea of what is expected of them, as outlined in either a volunteer or consultant contract accompanied by induction and training.

#### **Use supervision as a means of protecting children and young people**

Regular opportunities should be made for workers to meet together to review and plan their work, to share their experiences, to receive training and to talk about their relationships with the children and young people. Special attention should be paid to any situation in which a child or young person is being either highly favoured or harshly treated as these could be signs of abuse.

When possible, leaders of groups should take opportunities to observe those for whom they are responsible as they work with children and young people.

#### **Requirements for Teaching Consultants**

All consultants must provide details of referees along with a copy of their DBS Certificate. References will be sought in writing for all consultants. It will be made clear that the person will be working with children and young people and that their views on their suitability for this work will be taken into consideration. If replies are vague or ambiguous it may be necessary for them to be followed up in person or by telephone.



## **Consultant and Volunteer Application Forms**

All consultants and volunteers need to fully complete an application form and provide details of referees.

References will be sought, in writing, for all workers. It will be made clear that the person will be working with children and young people and that their views on their suitability for this work will be taken into consideration. If replies are vague or ambiguous it may be necessary for them to be followed up in person or by telephone.

All convictions which involve children and young people are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that all convictions which relate to children and young people, however old, must be declared. Information about other criminal convictions must also be given, as these may be relevant to the suitability of the person.

A determined, convicted abuser may well tell a lie. It is for this reason that a reference should be obtained. If the volunteer has moved frequently from one (voluntary) job/organisation to another it would be advisable to find out why.

## **Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Requirements**

Enhanced DBS checks should always be carried out on all who work with children or young people. Due to the fact that sometimes DBS checks take a long time to be processed, while the check is moving through the system the person will be allowed to work with Les Crocodiles but will never be left in an unsupervised situation, with no co-worker.

## **Explore an applicant's experience of working or having contact with children before appointment**

More time talking with a worker before appointment will give the opportunity to find out about the candidate's contacts with children and young people. These may be through previous work within or with Les Crocodiles, through family contacts, through work with a voluntary organisation or in other ways. If there is any doubt about the suitability of the staff, volunteer or consultant, this should be explored further through searching questions.

Confirm with other external groups/organisations, who work with children and young people and who wish to work with Les Crocodiles that they undertake to follow the Home Office code of practice "Safe from Harm".

It is recommended that should Les Crocodiles acquire their own premises in the future and are contemplating hiring out the premises to other groups/organisations whose work involves children and young people that the following clause be added to licenses: "The Licensee confirms that he/she is familiar with the Home Office code of practice "Safe from Harm", has an understanding of it and undertakes to follow the code of practice contained therein in relation to work with children and young people under the age of 16 years".

## **Duty to Refer**

Wherever possible, staff will deal with incidents and disclosures within the organisation by reporting it to the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO). In his or her absence, to the Chair of Les Crocodiles. In the absence of both the CPO and the Chair, staff should refer the matter to the next Board member i.e. the Treasurer or Secretary. When an incident is more serious a referral or reporting of the information will take place. Such agencies could be Children's Social Care, Childline, NSPCC, CCPAS or the Police Child Protection Unit.



If staff, volunteers or consultants are uncomfortable reporting incidents to the designated CPO, they can contact an independent whistleblowing company, Safecall. They can be contacted on 0800 915 1571 or online on [www.safecall.co.uk/report](http://www.safecall.co.uk/report) where an anonymous report can be made detailing any concerns raised.

### **Issues of Confidentiality**

If a child or young person requests confidentiality they must be told that this cannot be promised and it should be explained that staff have a responsibility to share information with those adults who will be able to help protect them from harm. The child or young person should be reassured that only staff who need to know about it will be told. This could result in the pupil not continuing the conversation, in which case your enquiries should not be pursued but concerns recorded in writing and handed to the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO).

Staff should take care not to discuss information given in confidence outside the appropriate professional contexts. All documentation regarding the disclosure should be treated and marked as “CHILD PROTECTION – STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL” and should only be shared with others on a need to know basis.

### **Working with Parents and Carers**

The designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) and other professionals should aim to work in partnership with parents and carers by attempting to discuss any concerns they have with them where possible. Permission should be sought by the CPO from the person holding the parental responsibility for the child before discussing a referral about them with other agencies, unless this process may in itself place a child at risk of significant harm or prejudice a criminal investigation. Social Care advice may be sought on the issue, as appropriate.

### **Regulating and Vetting Visitors**

All visitors, parents/carers to any premises at which Les Crocodiles are holding activities for children and young people will be required to wait in the designated area at all times, to the exception of Les Crocodiles classes for children aged 2 years old and less, classes during which parents are required to stay with the child. They will not be permitted to enter any rooms or parts of the building in which the children or young people are taking part in activities. Should they need to speak to or see their own child or young person, that child or young person will be escorted to and from the designated area.

Arrangements for visiting children or young people whilst taking part in activities being organised by Les Crocodiles can be agreed in advance by a trustee or the School Administrator, where appropriate.

All staff, volunteers and consultants are responsible for ensuring that visitors are carefully monitored, in a manner appropriate to the individual circumstances. **Under no circumstances, should any visitor ever have unsupervised access to other children.** Staff are expected to challenge anyone on site if they are unsure of their identity.

### **Harassment and Bullying Policy**

Les Crocodiles has and follows a harassment and bullying policy, with which children and staff are familiar. Children who are bullied are supported, and those who may bully others are also subject to a risk assessment. Les Crocodiles recognises the fact that bullying is a form of abuse most children fear. The designated Child



Protection Officer (CPO) and Chair of the board will review records of bullying incidents at least once a month in order to take action where feasible to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying.

### **Use of Mobile Phones and other Multimedia Devices**

Given the potential for misuse, Les Crocodiles provides guidance for staff, volunteers, consultants and children and young people on the use of mobile phones, laptops and other multi-media devices. Young people, for example, are not permitted mobile phones with image capability (i.e. camera or video facilities) or internet access, and staff are not permitted to use mobile phones to record or store images of any children or young people taking part in activities organised by Les Crocodiles at any time, to the exception of the usage of mobile phone to register attendance and to share images with the child's parent or guardian to illustrate child progress.

### **Talking with an Independent Person**

Arrange for a person to be available for children and young people to talk to if they feel that they have been abused in any way. The person should be totally independent of the activities of the children and young people but should be someone to whom they could relate. It may be necessary or appropriate to ask someone from a different organisation, for example Childline or NSPCC to undertake this role. Please speak to the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) to arrange this.

If this is done the appointed person must be given clear, written guidelines as to what action to take to stop any abuse disclosed by a child or young person, otherwise they may unwittingly permit the abuse to continue. It is strongly recommended that contacts should be by telephone rather than one-to-one.

### **Letting children and young people know that a person is available for them to talk to**

Display the number of Childline or a similar organisation on a notice board which is regularly seen by children and young people.

Make sure that all adults working with children and young people know the name of a suitable person with whom they could put the child or young person in contact, or to whom they could turn to for help.

Consider the need also to provide opportunities for workers to talk to independent people about any difficulties or anxieties in relation to their work.

### **Concerns involving a member of staff**

Any concerns that involve allegations against a member of staff, volunteer or consultant should be referred immediately to the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) who will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for the relevant Borough Council (to discuss and agree further action to be taken in respect of an allegation). Any child protection allegation concerning the Chair should be referred to another trustee and vice versa.

### **Support for staff subject to allegations**

The designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) will inform any member of staff who is subject to an allegation about that allegation as soon as possible but (s)he will have to follow directions from Children's Social Care and/or the police as to what can be shared and when.





It is recognised that any allegation of abuse will cause the member of staff anxiety and advice will be given as to possible avenues of support from, for example, the Citizen's Advice Bureau or their union, professional association or Committee Members.

Any member of staff subject to an allegation will be given a copy of the leaflet "A guide for staff and volunteers who work with children and are faced with an allegation of abuse".

### **Safely Relating to Children**

Staff, volunteers and consultants must be aware of the potential problems associated with making physical contact with children, especially with children of the opposite sex. Contact must always be appropriate to the relationship of professional carer with a client. Some children and young people may have been damaged by inappropriate contact and they may be very sensitive or unable to process contacts appropriately. Acceptable "safe hugs" can be beneficial to our children and should normally take place in the presence of another member of staff. As a staff team, we should always be alert and ready to advise our colleagues, if anything might be seen as improper.

There may be times when it is appropriate for staff to spend one to one time with a child. Staff should always ensure that proper safeguards are in place for the protection of both themselves and the child e.g. making sure that other staff are aware and will check irregularly that everything is okay, and keeping doors open. Regard should always be given to the potential additional problems of caring for children of the opposite sex. Advice should be taken from senior staff regarding what is acceptable or unacceptable risk-taking in this area.

### **Relationships between Peers**

Les Crocodiles needs to be concerned about the quality of relationships between girls and boys. Day to day management will depend upon the judgement of staff in changing circumstances. In managing such relationships we need to consider what a sensible parent would do.

- Children must not be unsupervised in rooms with children of the opposite sex.
- Holding hands, walking arm-in-arm and cuddling are not acceptable.
- Couples may not sit together.
- "Love bites" or any deliberate marking of partners, including tattoos, should be reported. Children with visible marks will be sent back home.
- Sexual intercourse or any other intrusive sexual activity is absolutely forbidden. Technically it is child abuse for children under the age of 16 and should be reported as such. Staff need to take special care to supervise children who are thought to be sexually active.
- Staff should not act as messengers or letter carriers between couples. Nor should they write letters or cards on behalf of children in relationships.
- If children are unable to show a reasonable degree of self control in relationships then it may be necessary to take steps to ensure that contact is minimised.



## **Film Classifications and Computer Games**

When hiring or purchasing a film for children and young people or taking them to the cinema, staff should satisfy themselves that the classification of the film e.g. "U", "PG", "12A", or "15" is appropriate for the age of the children and young people, even if only one young person is in the "wrong" category. This also applies to DVD's brought in by young people.

Under no circumstances are young people allowed to watch a film where the age classification is above the young person's age.

The above conditions also apply to Computer Games.

## **Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) and monitored in accordance with best practice. Staff, volunteers, consultants and committee members will be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures whenever they have had occasion to put them into practice.

## **Useful Contacts**

In Hackney, child protection work is done by:

### Children and Young People's Access and Assessment Social Work Service

Mon-Fri 9am-5pm      0208 356 5500.

Emergency 24hrs      0208 356 2710

Email      [cscreferrals@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:cscreferrals@hackney.gov.uk)

Childline      0800 1111      [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

NSPCC      0808 800 5000      [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Victim Support Helpline 0845 30 30 90      [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

City & Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board      0208 356 4183      [www.chscb.org.uk](http://www.chscb.org.uk)