



# Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

Policy Version: 1

Date Approved: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Next Scheduled Review: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2027

Approved By: Michael Harris – Technical Manager

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

If you are worried a child is being harmed or at risk, please contact:

### Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

✉ [MASH@iow.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@iow.gov.uk) | ☎ 01983 823 435 (office hours)  
✉ Out of office hours: ☎ 0300 555 1373

### IW LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)

✉ [LADO@iow.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@iow.gov.uk) | ☎ (01983) 823 723

If a child is in immediate danger or at serious risk of harm, call the police on 999.

## **1. Introduction**

Cowes Fringe is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people who engage with our festival, events, performances, workshops, rehearsals and any associated activities. We recognise that all children and young people have a fundamental right to be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm.

Cowes Fringe believes that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff, volunteers, contractors, performers, chaperones and anyone working on behalf of Cowes Fringe must take an active role in ensuring that children are protected, respected and listened to.

This policy sets out how Cowes Fringe will meet its safeguarding responsibilities and the procedures that must be followed if concerns arise. Failure to follow this policy may result in removal from duties, termination of contracts, or referral to statutory agencies.

## **2. Scope of this Policy**

This policy applies to:

- All Cowes Fringe employees.
- All volunteers.
- Freelancers, contractors and suppliers.
- Event partners, venues and third parties acting on behalf of Cowes Fringe.
- Performers and production teams where children may be present.

This policy applies to all settings where Cowes Fringe operates, including but not limited to performance venues, outdoor spaces, rehearsal rooms, community halls, workshops, backstage areas, dressing rooms and any online/virtual activity run by Cowes Fringe.

Cowes Fringe also recognises that safeguarding responsibilities extend beyond direct contact with children. This includes photography, video, online communications, social media, transport arrangements and supervision arrangements.

## **3. Safeguarding Principles and Commitment**

Cowes Fringe will:

- Put the welfare of children and young people first.
- Provide a safe environment where children feel welcome and protected.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns are taken seriously and acted upon promptly.
- Work in partnership with parents, carers and statutory agencies.
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion, ensuring that children are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or background.

- Ensure that safeguarding practice is embedded in planning and delivery of all events.

Cowes Fringe recognises that children can be harmed by adults or by other children, and that safeguarding includes peer-on-peer abuse, online harm, exploitation and radicalisation.

## **4. Relevant Legislation and Guidance**

This policy is informed by and should be read in conjunction with relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance, including:

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Department for Education) – used as best practice guidance.
- The Education Act 2002 (safeguarding duties in education settings – referenced as best practice).
- Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- NSPCC guidance on safeguarding in the voluntary and community sector.

Cowes Fringe will review this policy whenever updated statutory guidance is issued, including changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

## **5. Definitions of Abuse and Safeguarding Concerns**

Cowes Fringe adopts the statutory definitions of abuse as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children. Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse may occur within the family, in an institutional or community setting, or online.

The four main categories of abuse are:

### **Physical Abuse:**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates symptoms or deliberately induces illness in a child.

#### Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or making fun of what they say or how they communicate.

#### Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. It may also include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

#### Neglect:

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failing to ensure adequate supervision, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Other safeguarding concerns may include:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and County Lines
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Forced Marriage
- Honour-based Abuse
- Domestic Abuse
- Radicalisation and Extremism
- Online Safety Risks
- Peer-on-peer abuse (including sexual violence and harassment)
- Bullying, discrimination or harassment

Any concerns relating to these issues must be treated seriously and reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff, volunteers and contractors have a duty to safeguard children and young people.

This includes:

- Being alert to signs of abuse or neglect.
- Listening to children and taking them seriously.
- Reporting concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Following this policy and any associated procedures.
- Maintaining professional boundaries.

Cowes Fringe will ensure safeguarding is a standing item in event planning and risk assessment. Safeguarding will be considered when planning venues, backstage areas, performer access, workshops and any activities involving children.

## **7. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**

Cowes Fringe will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to take responsibility for safeguarding and child protection matters.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

Name: Michael Harris

Role/Position: Technical Manager

Telephone: 07597394235

Email: [mike@cowesfringe.com](mailto:mike@cowesfringe.com)

The DSL will:

- Act as the main point of contact for safeguarding concerns.
- Keep up to date with safeguarding legislation and guidance.
- Liaise with local authority services such as MASH and the LADO.
- Ensure records are maintained securely.
- Provide advice and support to staff and volunteers.
- Ensure appropriate referrals are made.
- Ensure safeguarding procedures are followed during events.

## **8. Key Safeguarding Contacts**

If a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, call the emergency services:  
Emergency Services (Police/Ambulance): 999

Isle of Wight Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):  
Telephone (Office Hours): 01983 823 435  
Out of Hours / Emergency Duty Team: 0300 555 1373  
Email: mash@iow.gov.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – Allegations Against Staff:  
Telephone: 01983 823 723  
Email: lado@iow.gov.uk

NSPCC Helpline (advice and anonymous reporting): 0808 800 5000  
Childline (support for children): 0800 1111

Cowes Fringe Anonymous Reporting Contact (internal):  
Email: mike@cowesfringe.com  
  
Telephone: 07597394235

These contact details must be reviewed and updated regularly.

## **9. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns**

Any safeguarding concern must be reported as soon as possible. Concerns may arise from:

- A child disclosing information.
- A child's behaviour or presentation.
- Information from another person.
- Observations of interactions between adults and children.
- Online or social media activity.

If you are concerned about a child, you must:

1. Report it immediately to the DSL.
2. Record the concern factually and accurately.
3. Do not investigate or attempt to gather evidence yourself.

If the DSL is not available and you believe the child is at immediate risk, you must contact MASH or the Police directly. You must then inform the DSL as soon as possible.

All concerns will be treated seriously, sensitively and confidentially.

## **10. Responding to a Disclosure**

If a child discloses abuse or harm, staff and volunteers must follow the guidance below:

- Stay calm and listen carefully.
- Allow the child to speak freely; do not interrupt.
- Do not ask leading questions. Use open questions only if needed (e.g., “Can you tell me more about that?”).
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that you may need to share information to keep them safe.
- Do not express shock, anger or disbelief.
- Do not make judgements about any person involved.
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible using the child’s own words where possible.

You must pass the information to the DSL immediately.

## **11. Managing Allegations Against Staff, Volunteers or Contractors**

Any allegation or concern that a member of staff, volunteer, contractor or person connected to Cowes Fringe has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm;
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children; must be reported immediately to the DSL. The DSL must then contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advice.

Cowes Fringe will take immediate steps to ensure the safety of children, which may include suspending the individual from duties while the matter is investigated. Suspension is a neutral act and does not imply guilt.

No internal investigation should take place until guidance has been received from the LADO and/or Police. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible.

## **12. Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries**

All adults working with children on behalf of Cowes Fringe must maintain professional boundaries at all times.

Staff and volunteers must:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity.
- Use appropriate language and behaviour.
- Avoid being alone with a child where possible.
- Ensure any one-to-one work is visible and recorded.
- Avoid inappropriate physical contact.
- Avoid favouritism or singling out a child.
- Never develop or attempt to develop an inappropriate relationship with a child.
- Never communicate with children via personal social media accounts or private messaging.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- Use physical punishment.
- Use degrading or humiliating treatment.
- Allow or engage in bullying, discriminatory or sexualised behaviour.
- Provide alcohol, tobacco, vapes or illegal substances.
- Take children to their home or transport them alone without prior written agreement.

### **13. Physical Intervention and Managing Behaviour**

Cowes Fringe promotes positive behaviour management. Physical intervention should never be used as a form of punishment.

Physical intervention may only be used in exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to prevent:

- A child harming themselves.
- A child harming others.
- Serious damage to property.

Any physical intervention must be reasonable, proportionate and the minimum required.

Any incident involving physical intervention must be reported to the DSL immediately and recorded in writing, including:

- The reason intervention was necessary.
- The type of intervention used.
- Witnesses present.
- Any injury or distress caused.

Staff must not restrain a child unless trained to do so or in emergency circumstances.

### **14. Supervision of Children, Chaperones and Parents**

Cowes Fringe will ensure appropriate supervision arrangements are in place for events involving children.

Parents and carers remain responsible for their children at all times unless otherwise agreed in writing. If Cowes Fringe is providing a structured activity such as a workshop or performance rehearsal, the responsible adult in charge must ensure appropriate supervision ratios and safeguarding measures.

Chaperones:

- Chaperones must understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Chaperones must not leave children unattended.
- Chaperones must ensure children are not left alone with adults who are not authorised.

Where children are performing, a designated safe waiting area should be provided where possible. Access to backstage areas must be controlled.

## **15. Drop-Off and Pick-Up Arrangements**

Where Cowes Fringe organises activities where children may be dropped off, clear arrangements must be communicated to parents/carers.

- Drop-off and collection times must be agreed in advance.
- Children under the age of 12 must be collected by a parent/carer or a named authorised adult.
- A register should be kept where appropriate, recording arrival and departure.
- Any late collection must be reported to the DSL.
- If a child is not collected and no contact can be made, the DSL should consider contacting MASH or the Police.

Children should not be allowed to leave alone unless written parental consent has been received.

## **16. Photography, Video Recording and Use of Images**

Cowes Fringe recognises that photography and video can be a valuable part of celebrating performances and promoting the festival. However, we also recognise the need to protect children's privacy and reduce safeguarding risks.

Cowes Fringe will:

- Seek consent from parents/carers for photographing or filming children where possible.
- Ensure that images are used appropriately and stored securely.
- Avoid identifying children by full name in promotional materials unless consent has been given.

- Ensure that images are not used in a way that could put a child at risk.

Staff, volunteers and contractors must not:

- Take photographs or videos of children on personal devices unless authorised.
- Share images of children on personal social media accounts.
- Post images of children without the appropriate permissions.

Parents and audience members may be permitted to take photos/videos for personal use, unless otherwise stated. Where this is allowed, Cowes Fringe may display signage reminding attendees that images should not be shared publicly without consent.

## **17. Online Safety and Social Media**

Cowes Fringe acknowledges the risks posed by online communication and social media.

- Staff and volunteers must not privately message children via personal accounts.
- Any online activity involving children must be supervised and moderated.
- Any safeguarding concerns arising from online activity must be reported to the DSL.

Cowes Fringe will take reasonable steps to ensure that any online platforms used are safe and appropriate.

## **18. Record Keeping and Confidentiality**

All safeguarding concerns, disclosures and incidents must be recorded accurately and stored securely.

Records must:

- Be factual and not include personal opinion.
- Include dates, times and signatures.
- Be stored securely (locked cabinet or password protected system).

Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis. Cowes Fringe recognises that confidentiality cannot be promised if a child is at risk of harm.

Cowes Fringe will comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, recognising that safeguarding is a lawful reason to share information where necessary.

## **19. Training and Safer Recruitment**

Cowes Fringe will ensure safeguarding training is available and that key safeguarding roles understand their responsibilities.

Training should include:

- Basic safeguarding awareness.

- How to recognise signs of abuse.
- How to respond to disclosures.
- Reporting and recording concerns.
- Maintaining professional boundaries.

Cowes Fringe will also take steps to ensure safer recruitment practices where appropriate, including DBS checks where required for staff and volunteers in regulated activity.

## **20. Whistleblowing**

Cowes Fringe encourages staff and volunteers to report concerns about unsafe practice, misconduct or breaches of this policy.

Concerns may be reported to the DSL, the Festival Director, or anonymously via:  
Anonymous reporting contact: [mike@cowesfringe.com](mailto:mike@cowesfringe.com)

Staff and volunteers will not be penalised for raising genuine safeguarding concerns.

## **21. Policy Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually (or sooner if required) to ensure it remains up to date with legislation and guidance.

Review Date: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Next Review Due: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2027

Cowes Fringe will ensure that safeguarding procedures are monitored and improved based on learning from incidents, feedback from partners, and updates to safeguarding guidance.

Signature: Michael Harris

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026