

Whitstable Community Museum and Gallery

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Written: March 2017

Revised and approved by Trustees 24 January 2022.

Next revision: January 2024

Many children and young adults enjoy visits to Whitstable Community Museum (WCM) each year. The interactions between children and museum volunteers, often on a one-to-one basis, are very valuable learning experiences and great fun. All children visit with family or a responsible adult or as part of an organised school party or youth group. While the primary responsibility for children's welfare in the museum rests with the supervising adult or agency, WCM must ensure that all children and vulnerable adults are safe and protected from harm whilst on its premises. It is also essential that WCM volunteers feel confident that their interactions with children are entirely appropriate.

A person is defined as a child, legally, until they reach their eighteenth birthday. Until that time they are the legal responsibility of their parents/carers, even if that person is not present. In WCM children of 16 or under must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Children of 17 to 18 may enter museum premises without direct supervision and will be welcomed if they are behaving appropriately. However, the museum reserves the right to deny access to any child if they are not accompanied by an adult.

There is no single standard definition of a vulnerable adult in law. However, WCM has adopted the following definition:

A vulnerable adult is a person who is, or may be, in need of community care services because of mental disability or other disability, age or illness and who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

WCM must also protect its volunteers from unfair allegations: the guidelines in this policy will ensure that there is no doubt over obligations and standards. This policy applies to all permanent and temporary staff, volunteers, fee-paid staff, consultants and contractors employed by WCM.



Policy Statement

WCM asserts that every child should have the support and a safe environment to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution

WCM's responsibility for safeguarding the children and vulnerable adults using its services is:

- To ensure that all its volunteers and contractors are clear about their individual behaviour and responsibilities in regard to the safety and enjoyment of visitors, particularly children and vulnerable adults, through its recruitment, induction and training.
- To ensure that its physical and virtual spaces are safe and secure, and promote enjoyable and positive experiences.
- To ensure that all suspicions and/or allegations of abuse will be properly investigated and dealt with appropriately, quickly, and referred to the appropriate agencies where necessary. In particular, if the museum encounters a case that constitutes, or may constitute, a criminal case against a child, the police will be informed.

WCM will therefore ensure that:

All volunteers who may have regular contact with young people and/or vulnerable adults through their volunteering or employment are carefully recruited and security-cleared through a check by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Currently no volunteers fit this category and DBS checks cannot be requested.

All volunteers, fee-paid staff, consultants and contractors are made aware of WCM Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures through induction by their supervisor or line manager, and through regular training.

Teachers, group leaders and any other relevant parties are provided with information about the museum's policy, procedures and expectations regarding the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

The WCM complaints procedure is accessible to all visitors, including children and vulnerable adults

WCM responsibilities for this policy

By creating this policy WCM understands that safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is a responsibility that is shared across the whole museum, however, the Trustees are responsible for this policy and accompanying procedures.

The Trustees are responsible for all procedures relating to the selection and induction of volunteers, including security and disclosure checks, and for advising on any disciplinary action required.

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that all general building and security work taking place on WCM premises, including contractors, takes into account this policy and procedures.

Trustees will monitor the implementation of this policy, through management checks and ongoing assessment, and take appropriate action on any breaches within their areas of responsibility.

Planning for public events and activities will take safeguarding issues into account in their risk assessments and incident planning e.g. referring to the Safeguarding procedures relating to permission for film & photography.

All volunteers have a responsibility to maintain appropriate standards of behaviour with regard to safeguarding and to report lapses in these standards by other volunteers as well as the public. Any concerns or reasonable suspicions of abuse by colleagues should be reported to the Trustees;

Volunteer should report allegations of inappropriate behaviour by the public towards children or vulnerable adults to the trustee on duty who will liaise with Supervising Adult of the group/child concerned and/or the police and social services as necessary.

Recruitment

All volunteer appointments are conditional upon a satisfactory application to the Trustees. All applicants will be required to provide employer/personal referees. For all current posts this level of check is sufficient.

Should any future posts with regular and/or unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults be created, an enhanced disclosure via the Disclosure Barring Service would be required. Currently, no posts fall into this category.

Training

Supervisors/line managers will provide and explain the content of this policy to all new volunteers in the course of their induction process.

Any individual need for more detailed guidance and training will be facilitated by the Trustees

Standards of Behaviour for WCM volunteers, fee-paid staff and contractors

WCM wishes to protect its volunteers and contractors from unfair allegations and to enable them to ensure that they do not find themselves in potentially compromising situations. At the same time, the museum wishes its volunteer to feel empowered to help safeguard children and vulnerable adults. Therefore, WCM volunteers and contractors will:

- Approach any child in apparent distress and offer help but will ensure that they and the child are as visible as possible in a public space.
- Seek assistance from colleagues or supervisors in any situation involving children and/or vulnerable adults so that volunteer avoid finding themselves alone with a vulnerable person. The Front of House team will have two or more volunteers to ensure backup.
- Be aware of the possibility of danger from others and explore situations that seem suspicious.
- Keep a look out for children apparently unaccompanied and communicate the details of any lost children to the trustee on duty who is the Safeguarding representative.
- Keep any lost children in a public area where they can be clearly seen.
- Report any suspicion of abuse or inappropriate conduct immediately to a Trustee, who will in turn inform the Supervising Adult (provided they are not the alleged abuser). Concerns about the conduct of the Supervising Adult will be reported directly to their group's organisation e.g. a school and/or the police, as appropriate.

WCM volunteers and contractors will not:

- Engage in unnecessary or inappropriate physical contact with a child, or other visitor to the museum.
- Physically restrain a child or young person, or any visitor, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. to prevent injury, damage to property or the collections or to prevent theft) and even then only the minimum restraint necessary must be used.
- Make inappropriate or suggestive comments or gestures, or use foul, abusive or racist language to any visitor.
- Physically assault or abuse any visitor.
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves or that a Supervising Adult can do for them, such as accompanying them to the toilet, helping them with their clothing etc.
- Take a child or vulnerable adult into an enclosed space without the responsible adult being present.
- Travel alone in an enclosed, private, vehicle with otherwise unaccompanied children or young people.
- Communicate using social media or private email with any child or vulnerable adult.
- Treat any child or vulnerable adult for first aid without the presence and consent of a supervising adult.

Standards of behaviour and responsibilities for visiting Group Leaders/Supervising Adults

WCM wishes to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected from harm whilst in the museum. In addition to the museum's responsibilities, we expect that all Group Leaders/Supervising Adults will fulfil their own responsibilities.

In particular all Group Leaders/Supervising Adults will:

- Ensure that they comply with WCM guidance on the recommended ratio of supervising adults to children;
- Ensure they supervise the children/ vulnerable adults at all times during the visit.
- Ensure that the children/ vulnerable adults in their care behave appropriately whilst on WCM premises (particularly bearing in mind that the general public may also be present);
- In the case of an accident contact a WCM volunteer immediately;
- In the case of a lost child contact a WCM volunteer immediately;
- Ensure adequate insurance cover for their group;
- Follow instructions from WCM volunteers in the event of any emergency or incident, including but not restricted to fire, security or health and safety threats.