**Invisible Army**

**Safeguarding Children Policy**

Invisible Army believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by a commitment to practice which protects them.

We recognise that:

* the welfare of the child/young person is paramount
* all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief,

sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse

* working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The purpose of the policy:

* To provide protection for the children and young people who are involved in Invisible Arm’s projects, including the children of adult participants.
* To provide ourselves and volunteers with guidance on Safeguarding procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

This policy applies to us (Carina Andrews and Tina Gue), volunteers or anyone working on behalf of Invisible Army.

It is our policy that no-one shall work with children and young people within Invisible Army who:

* Has been convicted of or has received a formal police caution concerning an offence against children as listed in the First Schedule of the Children and Young People’s Act 1933; or
* Has been convicted of or has received a formal police caution concerning sexual offences against children and young people.
* Is registered on either of the two new DBS barred lists for children & vulnerable adults. (previously known as the protection of Children Act list, protection of Vulnerable Adults Act list and List 99)

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

* valuing them, listening to, and respecting them
* adopting child protection guidelines through procedures for ourselves and volunteers and updating these when necessary, with research on most up to date and reputable child safeguarding information.
* we will ensure we both have an up to date enhanced Disclosure and Barring check.
* sharing information about child protection and good practice
* sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.
* ensuring regular pre-briefs and debriefs which offer support and guidance.

# The role of us and volunteers

We and volunteers working on behalf of Invisible Army have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of children.

We and volunteers may receive disclosures of abuse and observe children who are at risk. This policy will enable us/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific protection issues.

If/when we/volunteers wish to spend 1-1 time with a child, consent will be gained from their parent/guardian. These 1-1s will take place in a public space or with two members of staff/volunteers. It will be made clear to the child that any information they share will be shared with their parents and then consent will be requested to share any information further. This information may be in the form of photography or written word.

If photographs are being taken in any private space, written consent will be gained prior from the child’s parent, and the door to the room will remain open. Those photographs will then need written consent from the parents before sharing further.

# Procedure in the event of a disclosure

It is important that children are protected from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously.

This procedure must be followed whenever an allegation of abuse is made or when there is a suspicion that a child has been abused.

Promises of confidentiality should not be given as this may conflict with the need to ensure the safety and welfare of the individual.

A full record shall be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information.

This should include information in relation to the date, the time, the place where the alleged abuse happened, your name and the names of others present, the name of the complainant and, where different, the name of the child who has allegedly been abused, the nature of the alleged abuse, a description of any injuries observed, the account which has been given of the allegation.

# What to do if a child or adult discloses harm to you

**Receive**

* Listen to the child
* If you are shocked by what they are saying, try not to show it
* Take what they say seriously
* Accept what the child says
* DO NOT ask for (other) information

**Reassure**

* Stay Calm and reassure the child that they have done the right thing in talking to you
* Be honest with the child so do not make promises you can’t keep
* Do not promise confidentiality – you have a duty to refer the child who is at risk
* Acknowledge how hard it must have been for the child to tell you what happened

**React**

* React to the child only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer this matter, but do not interrogate them for details
* Do not ask leading questions
* Explain what you have to do next and to whom you have to talk
* Explain and if possible seek agreement that you will have to discuss the situation with someone else and will do so on a ‘need to know’ basis.

**Record**

* Make some brief notes at the time and write them up more fully as soon as possibly
* Take care to record timing, setting and personnel as well as what was said
* Be objective in your recording – include statements and observable things rather than your interpretations or assumptions

**Act Now**

* Discuss the matter with the Child Protection representative immediately

# Responding to an allegation

Any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to:

* the police on 999 if you are currently witnessing a child being harmed or in a situation of immediate risk.
* to **First Response** straight away on **0117 903 6444** if your concern relates to a disclosure of abuse requiring a same day response.
* When First Response offices are closed call the **Emergency Duty Team** on **01454 615 165**
* for all non-emergency reports to First Response complete online referral form -

[www.bristol.gov.uk/social-care-health/make-a-referral-to-first-response](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/social-care-health/make-a-referral-to-first-response)

A written record of the date and time of the report shall be made, and the report must include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported. The telephone report must be confirmed in writing to the relevant local authority child social services department within 24 hours.

# Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Child protection raises issues of confidentiality which should be clearly understood by all.

We and volunteers have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies, and adult social services.

Clear boundaries of confidentiality will be communicated to all.

When a safeguarding concern has been raised, all personal information regarding a child will be kept confidential. All written records will be kept in a secure area for a specific time as identified in data protection guidelines. Records will only record details required in the initial contact form.

When a safeguarding concern has not been raised personal information regarding a child will be consented by their parents to be kept in a secure area for a specific time as identified in data protection guidelines. Any information that is shared will be consented by a written signature, from the child’s parent/guardian on our consent forms.

If a child confides in us and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that we tell the child sensitively that we have a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies.

Within that context, the child should, however, be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.

Where possible, consent should be obtained from the child before sharing personal information with third parties. In some circumstances obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable as the safety and welfare of the child is the priority.

We should assure the child that we will keep them informed of any action to be taken and why. The childs’ involvement in the process of sharing information should be fully considered and their wishes and feelings taken into account.

**Legal framework**

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

The Children Act 1989 (England & Wales) and s.31 (9 and 10) as amended by the Adoption & Children Act 2002

United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991

Data Protection Act 1998

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Children Act 2004

Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000

Protection of Children Act 1999 and The Police Act 1997

Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Rehabilitation of offenders Act (NI order) 1974 (UK wide)

Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013

Working together 2015

**This has been confirmed by:**

Tina Gue

Carina Andrews

Date: 30/07/2021