



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (Including Adults at Risk)

Actcessible is fully committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people, and vulnerable adults with whom we work. We believe that everyone, regardless of age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation, has the right to protection from harm, abuse, and exploitation. Our safeguarding approach is holistic, proactive, and integrated into every aspect of our work.

Legal Framework

Safeguarding is everyone's legal and moral responsibility.

The Children Act 1989 and 2004, as well as the Care Act 2014, place a statutory duty on all individuals and organisations to ensure the welfare of children and adults at risk. Actcessible expects all staff, freelancers, volunteers, trustees, and collaborators to remain vigilant and proactive. Failing to act on concerns, or assuming someone else will, may result in preventable harm.

Our safeguarding policy is based on the following legislation and guidance:

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (current statutory guidance)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current statutory guidance, where applicable to work in education settings)
- The Care Act (2014)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Actcessible has appointed a Designated Safeguarding Lead and a Deputy DSL to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are fulfilled. The DSLs are trained and responsible for the following:

- Acting as the main point of contact for safeguarding concerns
- Coordinating safeguarding actions and maintaining safeguarding records

- Liaising with statutory authorities and, where appropriate, the board of trustees
- Ensuring all personnel understand their duties and receive appropriate safeguarding training
- Reviewing policies and procedures annually or when legislation changes

Definitions

Child: A child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently, is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, or is in hospital or custody does not change their status or entitlement to protection under safeguarding law.

Adult at Risk (formerly referred to as a Vulnerable Adult): An adult at risk is someone aged 18 or over who:

- has care and support needs (whether or not those needs are being met),
- is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and
- as a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse or neglect.

This may include, but is not limited to, adults with learning disabilities, mental health conditions, physical or sensory impairments, cognitive impairments, or those experiencing temporary vulnerability due to illness, trauma, or social isolation.

Child Abuse: Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional, sexual mistreatment, or neglect of a child that results in actual or potential harm to their health, development, or dignity. It can occur in any setting, including within the family, institution, or community.

Types of Abuse (Applicable to both Children and Adults at Risk)

- **Physical Abuse:** The intentional infliction of pain or injury. This may include hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Emotional or Psychological Abuse:** The persistent emotional maltreatment of a person. This can include threats, humiliation, verbal abuse, intimidation, blaming, controlling behaviour, coercion, harassment, or isolating someone from others.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Involves forcing or enticing someone to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. This includes rape, sexual assault, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, and involving someone in the production or viewing of sexual materials.
- **Neglect and Acts of Omission:** The persistent failure to meet a child or adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It includes ignoring medical, emotional, or physical care needs, withholding assistance, or failing to provide access to appropriate services.
- **Financial or Material Abuse:** Includes theft, fraud, exploitation, misuse of property, possessions or benefits, coercion in relation to financial affairs or wills.

- **Discriminatory Abuse:** Abuse based on race, gender, age, disability, religion or belief, cultural background, sexual orientation, or any other form of identity. It can include verbal abuse, unequal treatment, harassment, or hate crimes.
- **Organisational (Institutional) Abuse:** Neglect or poor professional practice as a result of structure, policies, processes, or culture within an organisation. This may involve lack of person centred care, abusive regimes, improper use of restraints, or disrespectful treatment.
- **Self Neglect:** When someone neglects to care for their own health, hygiene, or surroundings, to the extent that it threatens their wellbeing. This includes hoarding, failing to seek medical help, or living in unsafe conditions.
- **Modern Slavery:** The exploitation of people through coercion, threats or deception. It includes human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, and debt bondage.
- **Domestic Violence and Abuse:** Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading, or violent behaviour between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members. It can include physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse, and so called 'honour' based violence.
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):** A form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. It involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non medical reasons. FGM is illegal in the UK and must be reported to authorities if identified.

Indicators of Abuse

Recognising the signs of abuse is critical to safeguarding. Abuse may present in many ways and can be physical, behavioural, emotional, or even subtle changes in attitude or engagement. No single indicator is conclusive on its own, but a combination of signs, or a change in someone's usual behaviour, may raise concern.

All staff, freelancers, and volunteers at Actaccessible are expected to remain alert to these indicators and report concerns promptly, even if they are unsure whether abuse is taking place. It is not your role to investigate, but it is your duty to pass on concerns.

General Signs of Abuse (Children or Adults at Risk):

- Sudden changes in behaviour or mood (withdrawal, aggression, anxiety, fearfulness)
- Frequent absences or lateness without explanation
- Reluctance to be left alone with a particular person
- Disclosure of abuse (spoken, written, drawn, or acted out)
- Fearful responses to touch, closeness, or authority figures
- Signs of confusion, disorientation, or inconsistent stories
- Inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour for age/stage
- Visible injuries or marks (bruises, burns, scratches) in various stages of healing
- Deterioration in appearance, hygiene, or clothing
- Self harm, substance misuse, or eating disorders

Responding to Accidents, Misunderstandings or Incidents

Actcessible recognises that accidents, misunderstandings, or minor incidents may occur during rehearsals, performances, workshops, or events. These may not meet the threshold for a safeguarding referral but still require appropriate handling, documentation, and follow up.

- 1.Immediate Response & Reporting:**Any member of staff, volunteer, or freelancer who witnesses or is informed of an accident, misunderstanding, or notable incident must ensure immediate safety, provide first aid if needed, and report to the DSL on the same day.
- 2.Incident Documentation:**The person reporting must complete an Incident Report Form within 24 hours.
- 3.Review and Parent/Carer Communication:**The DSL or senior leader will review the report and inform parents/carers where appropriate.
- 4.Serious Incident Reporting:**If the incident meets the Charity Commission's criteria for a serious incident, it will be escalated to the trustees and reported promptly and as soon as reasonably possible after the trustees become aware of it.
- 5.Record Keeping and Review:**Reports are kept securely in accordance with Actcessible's documented retention schedule, taking account of statutory guidance, limitation periods, insurance requirements and safeguarding needs.

Safer Recruitment and DBS Checks

We are committed to safer recruitment practices. All employees, volunteers, trustees, and freelancers who will have direct or unsupervised contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults must:

- Undergo the appropriate level of DBS check before starting any role for which a check is legally eligible and required
- Have their DBS status reviewed through the DBS Update Service where available, or through proportionate repeat checks based on the role and level of risk
- Register for the DBS Update Service where appropriate
- Receive induction training on safeguarding before commencing their role

Records of DBS checks are securely stored and monitored by the DSL. Individuals who do not hold the clearance required for their role will not be permitted to undertake the relevant regulated or unsupervised activity.

Training and Awareness

All individuals working or volunteering with Actcessible will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role. Training will include:

- Recognising the signs of abuse and neglect
- Responding appropriately to disclosures and concerns

- Internal reporting procedures
- Online safety and professional boundaries
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion in safeguarding

Safeguarding training will be refreshed annually and form part of mandatory induction for all new team members.

Recognising and Responding to Concerns

What to Do if a Team Member Has a Safeguarding Concern:

- **Ensure Immediate Safety:** If someone is in danger or seriously hurt, call emergency services (999).
- **Report Immediately to the DSL:** Contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- **Complete a Safeguarding Concern Form** within 24 hours and submit it securely to the DSL.

What to Do if a Child or Young Person Makes a Disclosure:

- Stay calm, avoid shock or disbelief
- Listen carefully and allow them to speak freely
- Take what they say seriously
- Do not promise to keep secrets, explain you must share it with someone who can help
- Reassure them that telling you was the right thing to do
- Explain what will happen next and who you must report it to
- Write down exactly what was said, using their own words wherever possible
- Sign, date, and time your notes
- Report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and submit a Safeguarding Concern Form within 24 hours

Referral Procedure to Children's Social Services

When a concern meets the threshold for referral, the DSL or a senior staff member will assess the concern within 24 hours and make a referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care. A written log will be maintained, and follow up will occur if no response is received within 3 working days.

Referral Procedure to Adult's Social Services

When a safeguarding concern relates to an adult at risk, the DSL will assess the concern within 24 hours. If the threshold is met, a referral will be made to the Adult Social Services Safeguarding Team. The adult will be involved in decisions where possible, and consent will be sought unless others are at risk or a crime has been committed.

Governance Oversight

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Safeguarding Trustee

Chair of Trustees

Artistic Director

All safeguarding reports are reviewed by the DSL and reported to the Safeguarding Trustee and Chair of Trustees. Serious incidents will be escalated to the Charity Commission.

Suspension Pending Investigation

If an allegation is made about a staff member, volunteer, or freelancer, they will be immediately removed from the project or setting. Actcessible may formally suspend the individual pending investigation. This decision is made by the DSL in consultation with the Safeguarding Trustee and Chair.

Referral and Investigation

Investigations may be conducted by the police (criminal), social services (protection), or internally (disciplinary). Actcessible will cooperate fully with statutory agencies.

Confidentiality and Support

All parties involved in an allegation will be treated with confidentiality, fairness, and respect. Support will be made available to all affected individuals.

Online Safety

We use only official channels for communication, gain consent for online engagement, supervise virtual workshops, prohibit private messaging, and train staff on digital safeguarding.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Safeguarding information is treated with sensitivity and shared only on a need to know basis in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the DSL and the Board of Trustees.

Safeguarding Contact Details

Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Email:safeguarding@actcessible.co.uk

Phone: 01283 702640

Deputy DSL:

Email:safeguarding@actcessible.co.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Where an allegation concerns a person who works with children, Actcessible will contact the appropriate LADO for the relevant local authority without delay. The DSL will maintain an up to

date internal list of LADO contact details for the areas in which Actcessible operates and will verify details through the relevant local authority or safeguarding partnership before making a referral.

NSPCC Helpline:0808 800 5000

This policy was originally adopted by the Actcessible Board of Trustees on:28/07/2025

This policy was last reviewed, amended and approved by the Actcessible Board of Trustees on:05/08/2026

To be reviewed annually or as needed.

Signed:James Michael Dean, Chair of Trustees

Date:05/08/2026