

Safeguarding policy for children and vulnerable adults (Vers. 2024)

Purpose

This policy statement describes how the Berwick Literary Festival (BLF) seeks to safeguard children and vulnerable adults at events or activities which are organised by BLF. It outlines the responsibilities of employees and volunteers of BLF who organise or assist on such occasions and lists the procedures which should be followed in the event of any incident of possible harm.

The policy statement and procedures have been drawn up in order to enable BLF to:

- promote good practice and work in a way that can prevent harm, abuse and coercion occurring.
- ensure that any allegations of abuse or suspicions are dealt with appropriately and the person experiencing abuse is supported.
- stop that abuse occurring.

Introduction

The objectives of BLF are the promotion of literature in written form, spoken and performance. BLF is a charity supervised by Trustees and its annual festival is organised by an Executive Committee (formed of volunteers) which reports to the Trustees.

Among the methods through which these aims are pursued, the principal activity which brings representatives of BLF into contact with the public is the organisation of an annual festival of talks on literary and historical subjects held within the town, normally in October. In addition, BLF organises in conjunction with Berwick Rotary Club a short story competition with the town's schools which concludes with a public awards ceremony and sponsors the delivery of educational workshops attended by pupils of the town's schools as selected by the school.

The guidelines in this policy statement have been drawn up principally with these events in mind (but apply equally to any other activities organised by BLF) to ensure that there is clarity about the obligations and standards which should be observed by those involved.

BLF does not own or manage any premises of its own, and it currently has only one (0.15 FTE) freelance employee. Its events and activities are run entirely by volunteers and take place in local halls or rooms which are hired for the occasion. The majority of activities are not specifically directed at children or vulnerable adults, but people in these categories may be among the participants.

When members of BLF volunteer to assist at events organised by other organisations, they are subject to the safeguarding policies operated by those organisations.

In 2020 and 2021 the Festival was held entirely online via Zoom, and since then some sessions each year will be disseminated on Zoom, and those responsible for administration of online events have the capacity to observe behaviour that breaches this policy, to exclude and identify persons so behaving, and to report them to Zoom for wider sanction.

Child & Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy Statement

BLF believes that everyone with whom its members come into contact, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief or ethnic origin, has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. BLF will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by members or volunteers.

This policy addresses the safeguarding of any child (under the age of 18); of any adult with learning difficulties or physical disability; and of any other adult who might be deemed vulnerable due to age, infirmity and/or personal circumstances. The policy applies to all employees and volunteers who are engaged in activities organised by BLF.

Abuse is the physical, sexual, emotional or psychological exploitation of a vulnerable person, including discrimination against and financial violation or exploitation of a vulnerable person. A further guide to definitions of abuse is given in Appendix A below.

In order to implement the policy BLF will:

- Listen to and value the statements of children and vulnerable adults.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults who attend our events.
- Report concerns to OneCall (Northumbria) or other agencies that need to know and involve parents and children appropriately.
- Provide effective management for volunteers through instruction, supervision and support.
- Ensure that trustees and volunteers are aware of the policy and procedures for response.
- Review this policy annually or whenever required by changes in the law.

Responding to incidents of abuse

If an allegation is received, a trustee or volunteer should:

- Reassure the person concerned
- Listen to what they are saying
- Record what has been said or witnessed as soon as possible
- Remain calm and avoid showing shock or disbelief
- Tell the person that the information will be treated seriously
- Refrain from starting to investigate or asking detailed or probing questions
- Refrain from promising to keep it a secret.

If abuse has just taken place or abuse has been witnessed the priorities will be:

- To call an ambulance if required
- To call the police if a crime has been committed
- To preserve evidence
- To keep oneself and other volunteers and persons present safe
- To inform one of the BLF's Safeguarding Persons
- To record what happened and pass the information to one of the Safeguarding Persons.

All situations of abuse or alleged abuse should be discussed with one of the BLF's Safeguarding Persons. If a trustee, member of the Executive Committee or a volunteer feels unable to raise this concern with the Safeguarding Person, then concerns can be raised directly with OneCall (Northumbria). The alleged victim should be told that this will happen.

If it is appropriate and there is consent from the individual, or there is a good reason to override consent, such as risk to others, a referral should be made to Onecall (Northumbria). If the individual experiencing abuse does not have capacity to consent, a referral can be made without that person's consent, in their best interests.

Reporting

Any persons with suspicions of abusive behaviour should contact one of the BLF's Safeguarding Persons.

If an incident of abuse is witnessed or reported, the details should be recorded in writing as soon as possible. A checklist of details is given in Appendix B. Information about any incident should be kept strictly confidential, insofar as it is consistent with protecting the vulnerable person.

The Trustees will be informed about any report of abusive behaviour and the consequent actions taken; such reports must however take care not to breach the conditions of confidentiality.

Safeguarding Persons

The Safeguarding Persons are the Chair of the BLF Trustees and the Festival Director. Contact details are given at Appendix D.

If neither of the Safeguarding Persons can be reached, a contact list of useful agencies and sources of advice can be found in Appendix C.

The roles and responsibilities of the Safeguarding Persons are:

- to ensure that all Trustees, Executive Committee members and volunteers are aware of what they should do and who they should go to if they have concerns that a vulnerable person may be experiencing, or has experienced abuse or neglect
- to ensure that concerns are acted on, clearly recorded, and referred to Onecall (Northumbria) where necessary
- to follow up any referrals and ensure the issues have been addressed
- to report to the committee any incidents of abusive behaviour and the consequent actions taken
- to reinforce the utmost need for confidentiality and to ensure that committee members and volunteers are adhering to good practice with regard to confidentiality and security.

Training and Awareness

Copies of the Safeguarding Policy will be provided to all Trustees and members of the Executive Committee. Instructions about the policy and procedures will be given to other volunteers as appropriate to the roles they are undertaking.

This policy will be reviewed before the annual general meeting of the Trustees of Berwick Literary Festival charity or at another time if required to do so by a change in the law.

APPENDIX A. Definitions of abuse

“Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons”
(*No Secrets* Department of Health, 2000)

Abuse includes:

- physical abuse: including hitting, slapping, punching, burning, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint
- sexual abuse: including rape, indecent assault, inappropriate touching, exposure to pornographic material
- psychological or emotional abuse: including belittling, name calling, threats of harm, intimidation, isolation
- financial or material abuse: including stealing, selling assets, fraud, misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits
- neglect and acts of omission: including withholding the necessities of life such as medication, food or warmth, ignoring medical or physical care needs
- discriminatory abuse: including racist, sexist, that based on a person’s disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment
- institutional or organisational: including regimented routines and cultures, unsafe practices, lack of person-centred care or treatment

Abuse may be carried out deliberately or unknowingly. Abuse may be a single act or repeated acts.

People who behave abusively come from all backgrounds and walks of life. They may be doctors, nurses, social workers, advocates, staff members, volunteers or others in a position of trust. They may also be relatives, friends, neighbours or people who use the same services as the person experiencing abuse.

APPENDIX B. Checklist of details to be recorded about an incident of abuse

Name of child / vulnerable adult

Age and date of birth (if known)

Any special factors (e.g. disability)

Parents/ carers / responsible adult's name(s)

Home address

Telephone number(s)

Time and date of the incident

Venue where the incident took place

Exact location where the incident happened (e.g., floor, area)

Description of what has prompted concerns (please include details of the specific incident and the background to it happening)

Describe any physical or behavioural indicators which have been observed

Have you or anyone else spoken to the child / vulnerable adult and if so, what was discussed?

Have you or anyone else spoken with the parents /carers / or other adults and if so, what was said and to whom?

To whom has it been reported?

Date and time reported

Your name and role

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C. Contact details for external agencies

Onecall (Northumbria - multi-agency for healthcare and adult social care)

Tel: **01670 536 400** (available 24 hours daily)

Email onecall@northumbria.nhs.uk

Northumbria Police

For non-emergency assistance, phone: 101

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline.

Tel: 0800 800 5000

IF IT IS AN EMERGENCY, PHONE 999.

APPENDIX D. Contact details for BLF's Safeguarding Persons**Chairman, BLF Trustees:**

The Rt Revd Dr Stephen Platten

01289 305067 / 07531 020808

stephen.platten@icloud.com

Festival Director:

Andrew Deuchar

07861 769233

andrewdeuchar1@gmail.com